ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: LOOKING THROUGH THEIR EYES: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY OF ASIAN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF RACE, RACIALIZATION, RACISM, AND NEO-RACISM AT A HISTORICALLY WHITE INSTITUTION IN THE UNITED STATES

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The COVID-19 global pandemic has surfaced glaring racial disparities and multiple epidemics. The exacerbated anti-Asian racism and the reemergence of "yellow peril" and "perpetual foreigner" stereotypes has resulted in many Asian international students' increased awareness of race and racism. However, for far too long, international student research has extensively focused on acculturation related needs and related stressors whereas their perceptions and experiences related to race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism remain understudied in the field of higher education. Despite the growing body of literature on Asian international students and race, little research has disaggregated data and focused on how ethnic subgroups of Asian international students—East Asian, South Asian, and Southeast international students—perceive and describe their experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism. Particularly lacking is research on South Asian and Southeast Asian international students' perceptions and experiences. Furthermore, there is a dearth of research that examined how Asian international

students' perceptions and experiences may change over the course of their time in the United States.

This study utilizes a multiple case study methodology and borrows tools from ethnographic methods, which is grounded in EYES theory and neo-racism, to explore and understand Asian international students' perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism at a large, public, Research-1, land-grant, and flagship Historically White Institution ("Global University") in the Middle Atlantic region of the United States. Through participant observation and two-rounds of individual interviews, I compared and contrasted three cases of East Asian, South Asian, and Southeast Asian international students' perceptions and experiences, including five East Asian, six South Asian, and three Southeast Asian international students. The research questions that guided this study were: (1) How do Asian international students perceive and describe their experiences of race, racialization, and of experiencing racism and neo-racism at an HWI? Specifically, how do Asian international students describe how they understand themselves and others regarding race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism? And how do subgroups of Asian international students (EA, SA, and SEA) perceive and describe their perceptions and experiences related to race, racialization, racism and neo-racism? (2) In what ways do Asian international students' perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism change, if at all, over the course of their time in the United States?

Key findings include East Asian, South Asian, and Southeast Asian international students' similar and divergent perceptions of their racial identity and those of other racial groups, as shaped by their home countries' contexts, as well as Asian international students' minimization of the racialization experienced by themselves and others, a colorblind view of

racism, more recognition of neo-racism, and shifting perceptions of racism and neo-racism over the course of their time in the United States. While many Asian international students are vulnerable to racism and neo-racism, they also reinforce racial inequities. These findings point to the importance of recognizing the racial identity and racialized experiences of Asian international students and supporting them in navigating and disrupting racial inequities.

LOOKING THROUGH THEIR EYES: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY OF ASIAN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF RACE, RACIALIZATION, RACISM, AND NEO-RACISM AT A HISTORICALLY WHITE INSTITUTION IN THE UNITED STATES

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Dedication

To my parents, 郑荣涛 and 穆卫红.

Thank you for your unconditional love and support throughout my life. You have sacrificed so much, on so many levels, to nurture me to be the person I am today. You are always my biggest cheerleaders, and I certainly would not be here today without you. This degree is for you as much as it is for me.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

Over the last three decades, there has been a burgeoning number of international students crossing borders to pursue post-secondary education, from 1.3 million in 1990 to 6.1 million in 2019 (UNESCO, 2022). The United States (U.S.) has attracted many international students who seek to gain knowledge, enhance intellectual capacities, acquire intercultural competencies, and obtain higher credentials to secure better employment opportunities (NAFSA, 2020). Within U.S. higher education institutions, international students make up almost 5% of the total number of students in the 2020/21 academic year (Silver, 2021). The hostile political climate, the Trump administration's unwelcoming immigration policies, and the proliferation of alternative study abroad destinations (Redden, 2021; Yu, 2021a) have resulted in a decline in the total number of international students in the U.S. over the last five consecutive years, from 5.3% to 4.6% of all students (Institute of International Education [IIE], 2021a). The COVID-19 global pandemic has exacerbated the decline, with the total number of international students dropping by 15% in the 2020/21 academic year (IIE, 2021a). Despite such declines, the U.S. remains one of the primary study-abroad destinations among international students (IIE, 2020), which is reflected in the 68% rebound in new international student enrollment in fall 2021 (Redden, 2021).

According to the Open Doors Report, approximately 50% of international students in the U.S. pursue undergraduate degrees, 46% of them pursue graduate and professional degrees, and 4% of them pursue non-degree studies (IIE, 2021b). Additionally, approximately 75% of international students enroll in doctorate-granting universities and 52% of international students major in STEM fields (IIE, 2021c; 2021d). Among the first wave of international students in

1949/1950, the top three countries of origin included Canada, Taiwan, and India. Countries such as Mexico, Cuba, the Philippines, and Iran were also among the top countries of origin of international students (Statistics & Data, 2022). Since 2000/2021, the top three leading places of origin of international students in U.S. higher education institutions are China, India, and South Korea (IIE, 2021e; Statistics & Data, 2022). All three countries fall under the Asian region that is predominantly non-White, with both China and South Korea as predominantly non-English-speaking countries. Asian international students constitute approximately 70% of the total number of international students in higher education institutions, within which about 61% of all Asian international students come from East Asian (EA) regions, 31% of them come from South Asian (SA) regions, and 8% of them come from Southeast Asian (SEA) regions (IIE, 2021f). Given the large representation of Asian international students in U.S. colleges and universities, it is imperative for higher education institutions to attend to these students' needs, ensure their positive educational experiences, and help them succeed and persist.

In addition to understanding Asian international students' motivation of coming to the U.S., it is worth noting their post-graduation plans. A notable number of Asian international students permanently settle in the U.S. after completing their studies, especially among those who are in STEM fields (Ruiz & Rudiman, 2018). For those staying in the U.S., they likely become immigrants who work under the federal government's H-1B visa and Optional Practical Training programs. Many of them also facilitate the migration of their relatives and families to the U.S. (Hsu, 2015). Accordingly, many Asian international students and their families constitute a significant percentage of Asian immigrants in the U.S. and their experiences and perceptions in some ways reflect and contribute to the broader Asian American experience.

The Pew Research Center declared that 54% of Asians ages 25 and older have a

bachelor's degree or higher and 55% of foreign-born Asians have a college degree, which are substantially higher than the U.S. population in the same age range (33%) (Rudiman & Ruiz, 2021) and the nonimmigrant counterparts in their home countries (Lee & Zhou, 2015). As many Asian international students migrate to the U.S. for educational purposes, almost a hundred percent of them have a bachelor's degree and many also obtain advanced degrees, exceeding any other groups, including Asian Americans, foreign-born Asians, and the U.S. general population. The high educational attainments of Asian international students mark them a unique population within the Asian immigrant population.

Furthermore, like many Asian immigrants, Asian international students may also bring with them the "success frame" to the U.S.–a "strict definition of achievement and success" (Lee & Zhou, 2015, p. 6) such as expecting good grades and working in high-status professional fields, as influenced by the historical and political context in their home countries (Yam, 2022). The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act that invited highly skilled and highly educated Asian immigrants to the U.S. (Hsu, 2015) and facilitated a hyper-selective immigration process, enabled many Asian immigrants to apply the "success frame" to achieve educational attainment and social mobility in the U.S. However, their success story is often racialized to perpetuate the myth of meritocracy and position of Asians as model minorities (Lee & Zhou, 2015) that functions to disenfranchise Black, Latinx, and Indigenous communities. As many Asian international students come to the U.S. through a hyper selective immigration process, they also experience a similar racialization process.

Despite so, extant literature on Asian international students have not paid enough attention to their experiences as related to race, racialization, or racism in the U.S. Scholars have noted that within research on Asian international students, extant literature and the larger

discourse often depicts them as commodities, monolithic, and deficient (Abdullah et al., 2014; Rhee & Sagaria 2004; Yao & Viggiano, 2019). Rather than "members of the institutional community worthy of basic rights and support" (Yao & Viggiano, 2019, p. 104), higher education institutions, associations, and the media often dehumanize international students as "commodified assets" (Surtees, 2019, p. 50) and resources that accomplish the U.S.'s political, cultural, academic, and economic goals, mirroring a transactional relationship with international students. Additionally, existing literature often lumps all international students into one entity while overlooking their diversity and how their intersecting identities differentially shape their experiences and development (Le & Gardner, 2010; Yao et al., 2019; Yoon & Portman, 2004). Generalizing international students' experiences and development across different cultures, languages, nationalities, ages, genders, academic levels, and disciplines not only assumes that international students are a homogenous group with congruent experiences but the monolithic lens in viewing international students as an aggregate is harmful and deeply alarming (Krsmanovic, 2021).

Furthermore, extant literature often uses a deficit lens to interpret the multitude of challenges that international students face (Abdullah et al., 2014; Rhee & Sagaria, 2004; Yeo, 2020), including English language deficiencies, culturally inferiority, uncritical, self-isolation, and inability to adjust or assimilate to the dominant academic and cultural norms on campus (Hanassab, 2006; Kwon et al. 2019; 2013; Ruble & Zhang; Surtees, 2019; Suspitsyna & Shalka, 2019; Yoon & Portman, 2004). A deficit approach blames international students for what is perceived as their innate deficiencies and expects them to assimilate to the campus culture as passive constituents (Page & Chahboun, 2019), overlooking the impact of institutional structures and systems of oppression on their experiences (Heng, 2018a; Lee & Cantwell, 2011; Yoon &

Portman, 2004; Yao et al., 2019). Nor does a deficit approach considers how international students exercise agency to navigate institutional and structural barriers, establish support networks, and strive towards academic success (DiAnn Borders, 2019; Nguyet Nguyen & Robertson, 2020; Tavaraz, 2021). Undergirding the deficit framing of international students is also the assumption that campus climate is neutral whereas in reality, campus climate, particularly at Historically White Institutions (HWIs) and Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs), is hostile to Students of Color (SOC), including many Asian international students (Yao et al., 2019).

Altogether, higher education institutions often overemphasize international students' acculturation-related needs and related stressors and de-emphasize their perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism. Recognition of international students' perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism are particularly absent from institutional internationalization discourse and strategies (Buckner et al., 2021). The lack of recognition is largely due to the ahistorical lens that many higher education institutions employ that disconnects history of oppression with contemporary contexts. The ahistorical approach has resulted in a lack of education provided to international students to learn about and discuss systems of power and oppression in the U.S. and in their home countries, including topics around race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism (Yao & Viggiano, 2019; Yeo, 2020). Consequently, international students, including many Asian international students' perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism remain overlooked and understudied in the field of higher education. However, since coming to the U.S. is likely the first time that many Asian international students become aware of their racialization and the first time that they receive the racial identity of Asian (Bardhan & Zhang, 2017), it can be jarring for many Asian international

students to navigate the racialization process and to negotiate a new racial label (Fischer, 2021; Yao & George Mwangi, 2022). In addition, when Asian international students transition from being a member of a racial majority to being racially minoritized[1], it is also likely the first time that many have ever experienced a sense of otherness or marginalization in the forms of racism and neo-racism (Young, 2017; Zhang, 2015). Furthermore, many Asian international students may be made unaware of how structural and systemic racism have empowered them to bring the "norms" (i.e., colorism, casteism, and anti-Blackness) from their home countries to HWIs and made unaware of how they are racialized to uphold structural racism at HWIs, and systemic racism in the U.S. and in their home countries.

The COVID-19 global pandemic is a powerful example of racism and neo-racism affecting Asian international students, among others. During the last two years, the COVID-19 global pandemic has revealed multiple systemic issues in the U.S., one of which is systemic racism (Ladson-Billings, 2021). Aside from unveiling major inequalities related to health, the COVID-19 global pandemic has exacerbated anti-Asian racism and violence, partly fueled by the Trump administration's rhetoric about "China virus" and "Kung Flu" (Nguyen, 2021; Nam et al., 2021). According to the Stop AAPI Hate Reporting Center (2021), there were more than 9,081 reports of racist incidents against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, including assault, harassment, and microaggressions from March 19, 2020, to June 30, 2021. Within the higher education context, international students, including Asian and other SOC, have reported experiencing racial discrimination as a result of the global pandemic (Croucher et al., 2020; Koo

[1] I use "minoritized" instead of "minority" to highlight the socialization process of racialization. Minority only attends to the numeric representation of Asian international students in comparison to White students. Minoritized speaks to Asian international students being socialized and marginalized by White supremacy. Regardless of whether Asian international students are numerically the majority or minority at their institutions, I argue that they are marginalized due to their racially minoritized status.

et al., 2021a; Nam et al., 2021; Tessler et al., 2020; Zhai & Du, 2020). Even before the COVID-19 global pandemic and exacerbated anti-Asian racism, multiple studies have shown that international SOC, including Asian international students, experience greater discrimination, including racism and neo-racism, compared to international students who are White (Lee & Rice, 2007; George Mwangi, 2020; Bonazzo & Wong, 2007; Hanassab, 2006; Lee & Opio, 2011; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Yeh & Inose, 2003).

Asian international students are subject to racialization, racism, and neo-racism in the U.S. but their experiences may vary from other racially minoritized groups, such as Black and Latinx international students, due to differential racialization (Delgado et al., 2017; Wong & Ramakrishnan, 2021). Differential racialization attends to "the ways in which the dominant society racializes different minority groups in different ways at different times in response to shifting needs" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2007, p. 137). Data from AAPI Data (2021) highlights the differential racialization of Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) communities, with Asians strongly associated with the perpetual foreigner stereotype and Blacks experiencing systemic violence (Wong & Ramakrishnan, 2021). Positioning "at the conjuncture of White supremacy and anti-Blackness" (Kim, 2018, p. 17), Asians "are figured as not White but also, primarily, as not Black" in an anti-Black society (Kim, 2018). The racialization of Asians and their related experiences of racism exist in tandem with the celebration of their success despite their racially minoritized status, both of which operate within structural anti-Blackness (Lu, 2021) that purport Blacks as "the embodiment of problem" rather than those who "suffer from problems created by antiblackness" (Dumas, 2016, p. 15). Differential racialization is also evident through the strategic recruitment of Chinese and other Asian international students as model minority knowledge workers since early to mid-1800s, who were preferred over Black

students in immigration policies that are steep in anti-Asian exclusion (Hsu, 2015). Given the unique positioning of Asians, it is important to document their unique and nuanced perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism. Differential racialization also speaks to how the same racial group can be racialized differently at different times (Delgado et al., 2017); hence, it is necessary to account for the unique context of the COVID-19 global pandemic when exploring Asian international students' perceptions and experiences. More importantly, to acknowledge and highlight the heterogeneity of Asian international students, it is imperative to disaggregate data by taking an inter-ethnic approach that closely examines similarities and differences between multiple cases of ethnic subgroups, including EA, SA, and SEA international students.

Within extant literature on international students, a small body of literature has examined Asian international students and race and highlighted a variety of alarming findings. Research shows that many international SOC, including Asian international students, perceive race as a distant reality after migrating to the U.S. due to their racial majority and privileged status in a racially homogenous environment in their home countries (Bardhan & Zhang, 2017; Wang, 2010). Another prominent finding is that many Asian international students conflate the definition of race with more familiar social constructs from their home countries such as nationality, ethnicity, geographic location, and social class (Lewis, 2013; Mitchell et al. 2017; Wang, 2010; Wang et al., 2020). Additionally, Asian international students often interpret their experiences of racism and neo-racism as differential treatment based on cultural or personality differences or individual behaviors (Chen, 2021; Jiang, 2021). These interpretations are largely impacted by the different historical, political, and sociocultural contexts in their home countries (Fries-Britt et al., 2014; Lewis, 2013), including the manifestation of anti-Blackness in relation

to colorism and casteism (Patel, 2016). The normalization of these structures and systems in their home countries empower Asian international students to bring these ideologies to HWIs whose structures in turn reify and cement these ideologies. Some Asian international students also internalize racism and neo-racism by blaming their lack of English proficiency (Kondo, 2016; Yeo, 2020; Zhang, 2015) and burdening themselves with the responsibility of overcoming racism and neo-racism (Jiang, 2021; Kwon et al., 2019; Yeo, 2020). Furthermore, research shows that many EA international students hold negative perceptions toward other racially minoritized groups, particularly Blacks and Latinxs, and strongly ascribe to the myth of meritocracy that is detached from the socio-historical contexts in the U.S. and systems of power and oppression (Ritter, 2015; Ritter, 2016; Yeo, 2020). These alarming findings speak to the urgency of further unpacking how Asian international students describe and perceive their experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism, by looking at the nuances within this student group by ethnicity and over time and by interrogating how Asian international students' perceptions and experiences are shaped by the structures and systems at HWIs, in the U.S., and in their home countries.

Statement of the Problem

For far too long, international student research has focused on acculturation related needs and related stressors, mostly from a deficit perspective (DiAnne Borders, 2019; Yao & Viggiano, 2019; Krsmanovic, 2021) whereas their perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism have remained on the back burner. More recent research has brought much attention to race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism. A growing body of research has explored the topic of international students and discrimination (Sato & Hodge, 2009), within which the topic of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism is examined from

different angles. Scholars have explored how international students learn about race with mixed results, ranging from distancing themselves from racism to identifying it distinctively (Mitchell et al., 2017; Fries-Britt et al., 2014). Others have looked at how international students' home countries' contexts shape their experiences and perceptions of race and racial identity, and how their experiences of race and racial identity influence their college and graduate experiences (Lewis, 2013; Yeo, 2020). Studies have examined international students' experiences with racism intertwined with other forms of discrimination (i.e., nationalism, sexism) (Mitchell et al., 2017; Lewis, 2013) and neo-racism (Lee & Rice, 2007). Additionally, studies have looked at EA international students' racial stereotypes towards other racially minoritized groups and how these perceptions may have shaped their relationships with U.S. peers (Jiang, 2021; Ritter, 2015; Ritter, 2016). Furthermore, scholarships that employ critical paradigms and theories (e.g., Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Delgado et al., 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1998) to challenge institutional and systemic racism are emerging (Lewis, 2013; Koo et al., 2021a; Yao et al., 2022; Yeo, 2020), shifting the attention from blaming international students' innate deficiencies to challenging power differentials and institutional and structural inequalities.

Although the emerging research on race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism provides a strong foundation for understanding Asian international students' racialized experiences, additional research is warranted for several reasons. First, extant literature on Asian international students has primarily focused on EA international students, particularly Chinese international students, whose perceptions and experiences serve as the proxy of narratives for all Asian international students. As research shows, Chinese, Koreans, and Japanese are usually the default for Asians, whereas SAs, including Indians and Pakistanis self-identify as Asians but are not by other Asians and racial groups (Lee & Ramakrishnan, 2020). Despite SA and SEA international

students' steady growth in enrollment in higher education institutions (Krsmanovic, 2021), research has not kept pace with the changing student demographics. The COVID-19 global pandemic resulted in a sharp decline in the enrollment of Chinese international students during the 2020/21 academic year (IIE, 2021c). Even before the pandemic, the number of Chinese international students studying in the U.S. has slowed down, likely resulting from geopolitical tensions, visa restrictions, travel bans, threats of Optional Practical Training and suspension of work visas, and global competition (Kim, 2021; Silver, 2021). For example, Yu (2021a) uncovered that many Chinese international students are seeking alternative study abroad destinations such as Singapore and Hong Kong instead of the U.S. Consequently, many institutions are intentionally recruiting international students from India and have also seen a significant increase in the total number of students from India since 2017 (Office of Undergraduate Admissions, 2020). SEA is another potential market for recruitment at many institutions (Office of Undergraduate Admissions, 2020; Fischer, 2022). According to the IIE Snapshot Report (Martel, 2021), 56% of institutions have reported prioritizing recruitment efforts in India and 43% prioritizing Vietnam. Hence, research must be commensurate with the changing student demographics by capturing the unique racial realities of SA and SEA international students, in addition to EA international students.

Second, research informs practice. If research only accounts for EA international students' perceptions and experiences, it runs the risk of painting an incomplete and biased portrait of Asian international students and flattening the multifaceted and nuanced perceptions and experiences of SA and SEA international students. Learning about and understanding SA and SEA international students' perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism can provide higher education and student affairs educators with rich insights to meet

their different needs and promote a campus community where SA and SEA international students feel included, heard, and supported. An inter-ethnic approach in research also helps to inform institutional programs, services, and policies that reflect more comprehensive and in-depth perspectives and experiences of ethnic subgroups, ultimately enhancing the quality of their overall educational experience, a sense of belongingness, and retention and graduation rate.

Third, although examining Asian international students as an aggregate could offer insights on the shared experiences of this group of students, comparing multiple cases of EA, SA, and SEA international students' perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism can illuminate how White supremacy differentially racializes ethnic subgroups within Asian international students (Yi, 2018), as well as the potential egregious impact of differential racialization on their overall experience in U.S. colleges and universities. Given the different historical, political, and sociocultural contexts in EA, SA, and SEA regions, it is also vital to compare and contrast Asian international students by ethnic subgroups and examine how their different home countries' contexts may have played a role in their perceptions and experiences in the U.S.

Fourth, mainstream research often perceives international students as static (Haugh, 2008; Heng, 2018b), little evidence of research is available that examines how Asian international students' perceptions and experiences related to race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism may change over the course of their time in the U.S., particularly comparing pre-arrival and post-arrival in the U.S. Heng (2018b) asserts that international students experience "uneven ascent" (p. 21) during their adjustment in the U.S., implying a non-linear and fluid developmental process over time. Similarly, scholars argue that one's racial identity and perceptions of race change over time (Delgado et al., 2017). Multiple studies have also shown

that foreign-born SOC and international students, including Asian international students, experienced changes in their awareness of race and racial identity through engagement with domestic peers (Fries-Britt et al., 2014; Mitchell et al., 2017; Okura, 2020). Accordingly, more research is warranted that takes a longitudinal approach and captures the fluidity of Asian international students' perceptions and experiences that extends beyond a single moment in time. Furthermore, the pre-arrival and post-arrival comparison is an agentic way of viewing Asian international students' dynamic experiences that counter the deficit and static depiction of this group of students.

Lastly, additional research is warranted that not only documents the experiential knowledge of Asian international students but also seeks to interrogate and dismantle institutional, structural, and systemic racism that shape Asian international students' perceptions and experiences. Not addressing racism and neo-racism in higher education institutions will aggravate a racist and neo-racist campus climate that is not only harmful to Asian international students, but other SOC. Research has shown that for many Asian international students, experiences of racism and neo-racism can hinder their acculturation processes and decrease their overall satisfaction with their education and lives in the U.S. (Perrucci & Hu, 1995; Wadsworth et al., 2008). Daily experiences of racism and neo-racism can also create invisible barriers to their living, learning, motivation, persistence, academic success, and a sense of belonging on campus (Glass, 2014; Karuppan & Barari, 2011; Koo et al., 2021a; Nam et al., 2021; Smith & Demjanenko, 2011). Recurrent encounters with racism and neo-racism can impede Asian international students' psychological health and overall wellbeing (Koo et al., 2021a; Nam et al., 2021; Young, 2017). Furthermore, as the structures of HWIs are deeply rooted in White supremacy and anti-Blackness that continue to enable Asian international students to hold

distorted views (i.e., racial hierarchy) towards other historically disadvantaged racial groups, including Latinxs and Blacks (Ritter, 2015; 2016), Asian international students end up partaking in exacerbating a racialized campus climate and the history of oppression without recognizing or understanding it. Altogether, these research findings speak volumes about the importance of addressing Asian international students' perceptions and experiences to foster a more racially equitable campus climate.

While research addressing international students and race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism is growing, a significant gap remains in work that closely examines ethnic subgroups within Asian international students, Asian international students' perceptions and experiences from a longitudinal standpoint, as well as one designed with the intent of disrupting White supremacy and systemic racism in the field of higher education. My research addressed these research gaps by intentionally recruiting Asian international ethnic subgroups, and by comparing and contrasting perceptions and experiences among EA, SA, and SEA international students. Additionally, my research compared and contrasted Asian international students' perceptions and experiences over the course of their time in the U.S., particularly between pre-arrival and post-arrival in the U.S. Furthermore, my research was grounded in constructivist and critical paradigms and employed critical theories, specifically the integration of a relatively new framework—EYES theory (Yeo, 2020) and neo-racism (Balibar, 2007; Hervik, 2013; Lee & Rice, 2007), to unpack how Asian international students perceived and described their experiences of race, racialization, and of experiencing racism and neo-racism within an HWI. More importantly, I unraveled how institutional, structural, and systemic racism shaped Asian international students' perceptions and experiences to uphold White dominance. Lastly, my study was conducted during a unique context—the aftermath of the COVID-19 global

pandemic—where anti-Asian racism, particularly the "yellow peril" and "perpetual foreigner" stereotypes, were revived (Li & Nicholson, 2021), anti-Blackness prevailed, social justice movements (e.g., Black Lives Matter and Stop AAPI Hate movements) were ignited, and Asian international students likely experienced an increasing awareness of race and racism (Koo et al., 2021a).

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of the study was to use a multiple case study methodology to explore and understand Asian international students' perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism at a large, public, Research-1, land-grant, flagship, and HWI— "Global University" (pseudonym) in a suburban city in the Middle Atlantic region of the Eastern U.S. I took an inter-ethnic approach in comparing and contrasting three cases of EA, SA, and SEA international students' perceptions and experiences as related to race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism. I also explored how Asian international students' perceptions and experiences may have changed over the course of their time in the U.S. Situating at the crux of the "theoretical borderlands" (Abes, 2016, p. 2009) of constructivist and critical paradigms, my study borrowed tools from ethnographic methods (e.g., participant observation, interview, thick description, field note) and looked through the lens of EYES theory (Yeo, 2020) and neo-racism (Balibar, 2007; Hervik, 2013; Lee & Rice, 2007), to explicate Asian international students' perceptions and experiences, as well as employ their experiential knowledge as counter-stories to disrupt institutional, structural, and systemic racism. Guided by the purpose of the study, I explored the following questions:

RQ1: How do Asian international students perceive and describe their experiences of race, racialization, and of experiencing racism and neo-racism at an HWI?

RQ1.1: How do Asian international students describe how they understand themselves and others regarding race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism?

RQ1.2: How do subgroups of Asian international students (EA, SA, and SEA) perceive and describe their perceptions and experiences related to race, racialization, racism and neo-racism?

RQ2: In what ways do Asian international students' perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism change, if at all, over the course of their time in the United States?

Methodology and Conceptual Framework

The multiple case study methodology allowed me to compare and contrast how three cases of ethnic subgroups of Asian international students (EA, SA, and SEA international students) perceived and described their perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism similarly and differently. Additionally, a multiple case study methodology enabled me to examine how Asian international students' perceptions and experiences may have changed over the course of their time in the U.S., from when they first arrived in the U.S. to after they have studied and lived in the U.S. for at least six to nine months. This included students who have been in the U.S. for a longer duration and were able to share their experiences both presently and retroactively. Accordingly, I looked at how Asian international students' perceptions and experiences have been impacted by the historical, political, and sociocultural contexts in their home countries before migrating to the U.S. and how their experiences in the U.S. impacted their changing views of themselves and others regarding race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism, if any. Furthermore, I nested Asian international students' perceptions and experiences in the aftermath of the COVID-19 global pandemic when there was an

exacerbated anti-Asian racism and anti-Blackness, a reemergence of "yellow peril" and "perpetual foreigner" stereotypes (Li & Nicholson, 2021), an uprising of the Black Lives Matter and Stop AAPI Hate movements, and a likely heightened sense of race and racism among Asian international students (Koo et al., 2021a). Specifically, I used various sampling strategies and recruited 14 information-rich participants that constituted three cases of EA, SA, and SEA international students. Additionally, I collected in-depth data through multiple ethnographic methods (Jones et al., 2013). Data was collected in two phases— (1) participant observation and (2) two rounds of semi-structured interviews.

To make sense of the research questions, I paired a multiple case study methodology with the integration of EYES theory (Yeo, 2020) and neo-racism (Balibar, 2007; Hervik, 2013; Lee & Rice, 2007) as the lens through which I interpreted Asian international students' stories. EYES theory represents the "eyes" through which international SOC view themselves and others, how these views change over time, and how these views shape their racial identity (Yeo, 2020). EYES theory specifically attends to the racialized experiences and racial identity transition of international SOC, including Asian international students, at H/PWIs. This theoretical construct also accounts for how historical and sociocultural contexts of international SOC's home countries shape their perceptions of race and racial identity transition in the U.S. (Yeo, 2020). As part of their racialized experiences, international SOC experience racism that is identical and different from those experienced by domestic SOC (Yeo, 2020). Hence, I brought in the theoretical construct of neo-racism to help articulate the "cultural racism" (Balibar, 2007, p. 86) that Asian international students experience due to their foreign status, culture, and language, including accents, including intra-ethnic discrimination across ethnic subgroups of Asian international students. This "cultural racism" functions to legitimize discrimination based on

hierarchies of nationalities and its respective cultures (Hervik, 2013; Lee & Opio, 2011), with the purpose of "marginalizing and assimilating groups in a globalizing world" (Lee & Rice, 2007, p. 389).

In addition, EYES theory emphasizes the campus and social contexts wherein Asian international students are embedded (Yeo, 2020), constituting an indispensable part of the *bounded system* of a multiple case study. The theoretical grounding of EYES theory in CRT (Delgado et al., 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1998) and its emphasis on racialized campus climate and the social environments where racism is endemic and permanent on the local, regional, and national levels (Yeo, 2020), closely aligned with the constructivist and critical paradigms of the study and the purpose of the study—interrogating White supremacy and systemic racism. Furthermore, EYES theory's centering on international SOC's assets, heterogeneity, and the fluidity of their experiences (Yeo, 2020) counter the dominant narratives that depict international students as deficient, monolithic, and static. Furthermore, EYES theory and neo-racism as a conceptual framework spoke to me on a personal level, that constituted the "eyes" through which I observed a group of Asian international students as a participant-observer. Given these reasons, the integration of EYES theory and neo-racism served as a suitable conceptual framework for me to interpret how Asian international students perceived and described their perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism at an HWI.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study extends to scholars and researchers, educators, policymakers, the community under study, society, and myself as the researcher. This study contributes significantly to the academic field of higher education and student affairs and is significant for scholars and researchers. Asian international students constitute sub-regions with

diverse historical, political, and sociocultural contexts. Rather than viewing Asian international students as "blank slates," it is imperative to account for Asian international students' "transnational learning process" (Lien, 2021, p. 7) where they draw from their home countries' contexts and the U.S. context to make sense of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism and how home countries' various contexts shape their perceptions and experiences. As extant literature and discourse continue to rely on the larger racial aggregate, disaggregating Asian international students by ethnic subgroups not only disrupts and diversifies extant literature on international students who are often viewed through a monolithic lens but also (re)humanizes international students by complicating their experiences. Moreover, an inter-ethnic approach that compares and contrasts ethnic subgroups of Asian international students offers valuable insights on how White supremacy differentially racializes EA, SA, and SEA international students. Additionally, a longitudinal approach that analyzes the trajectory of Asian international students between pre-arrival and post-arrival in the U.S. expands the scholarship by explicating the changes in their perceptions and experiences over time. Furthermore, given that EYES theory is a relatively new framework, integrating this theoretical construct with neo-racism sheds light on the utility of this conceptualization in interpreting Asian international students' perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism.

Aside from academic research contribution to the field, my study also has large practical implications for educators. Given the significant representation of Asian international students in U.S. colleges and universities, it is paramount for educators to form a more holistic and deeper understanding of Asian international students' perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism. Without adequate knowledge about how Asian international students delineate their perceptions and experiences, educators may be unprepared to provide support,

services, resources, and programs to facilitate Asian international students in making sense of their racialized experiences, engaging in dialogues around race, and navigating and disrupting racism at H/PWIs. Nor will educators be able to steer students away from internalizing racist and neo-racist experiences and distorted views towards other racially minoritized groups that aggravate the racist and neo-racist campus climate at H/PWIs. Recognizing and learning about the different perceptions and experiences of ethnic subgroups within Asian international students can also help educators move toward a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of the different needs of Asian international students and provide guidance and support according to their needs.

For policymakers, by uncovering Asian international students' perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism, I problematize institutional policies that depict Asian international students as commodities, deficient, monolithic, and static (Yao & George Mwangi, 2022). My study also informs institutional policy decisions that are grounded in anti-essentialist, asset-oriented, and a (re)humanized conceptualization of Asian international students as well as those that are rooted in racial justice and equity ideology. By doing so, higher education institutions, particularly H/PWIs, can better shoulder the responsibility to dismantle institutional, structural, and systemic racism and integrate Asian international students into the campus community and foster their sense of belonging on campus.

This study also adds great value to the community under study and society writ-large. For students, by employing a multiple case study approach that is rooted in constructivist and critical paradigms, drawing from ethnographic methods, I unravel Asian international ethnic subgroups' perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism, especially SA and SEA international students' experiences that remain at the periphery. Moreover, I

amplify Asian international students' voices that counter the dominant narratives of international students. Their powerful stories and voices can serve as counter-stories that challenge the status quo and dismantle White supremacy and systemic racism in the field of higher education (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). As higher education institutions are a microcosm of society (Museus & Truong, 2013), understanding Asian international students' perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism can illuminate how institutional and structural racism are manifested within the higher education sphere, which can shed light on how institutional, structural, and systemic racism functions across other sectors in society. A more holistic and deeper understanding of the manifestation of institutional, structural, and systemic racism in the field of higher education can also help constituents dismantle systems of power and oppression locationally, nationally, and globally.

Lastly, as someone who identifies as a member of the Asian international student community, this study is also deeply meaningful for me as the researcher of the study. I have, and I still am, navigating my racialized experiences, learning about the historical and current racial issues in the U.S., and un-learning the racial hierarchy that pervades throughout my educational and personal journeys. Hence, it is deeply meaningful for me to excavate and document Asian international students' stories and center their voices, in tandem with challenging the harmful views they hold towards other racially minoritized communities; by doing so, contribute to the long-term goal of fostering Asian international students to be equity-minded thinkers. More importantly, I exert Asian international students' stories as counter-narratives to disrupt the deficit, commodified, monolithic, and dehumanized portrayal of Asian international students as well as dismantle White supremacy and redress racial injustice in the field of higher education.

Definition of Key Terms

To help provide important context and background for the study, it is important for me to define some key terms.

International Students

In the U.S. context, an international student is often referred to as someone "who has crossed a national or territorial border for the purposes of education and are now enrolled outside their country of origin" (UNESCO, 2006, p.178). Additionally, an international student is defined as someone "who is not a citizen, national, or permanent resident of the U.S. and who is in this country on a visa or temporary basis and does not have the right to remain indefinitely." (Council of Graduate Schools, 2007, p. 1, cited in Le & Gardner, 2010). In addition to the educational and legal status, international students also embody diverse races, ethnicities, nationalities, national origins, languages, cultures, religions, socioeconomic statuses, classes, genders, sexualities, abilities, academic levels, and many more identity attributes that make up the vast diversity of this group of students (Bonazzo & Wong, 2007; Yeo, 2020). Although some higher education institutions categorize undocumented students as international students, this study recognizes the tremendous harm in lumping two vastly different groups of students together; hence, undocumented students are not within the premise of this study.

East Asian International Students

Asian international students include those from East Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. East Asian (EA) international students come from the Eastern region of Asia, including those who are from China, South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, Hong Kong, Macau, Mongolia, and North Korea (IIE, 2021f).

South Asian International Students

Within Asian international students, South Asian (SA) international students come from the Southern region of Asia, including those who are from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Bhutan, Maldives, and Sri Lanka (IIE, 2021f).

Southeast Asian International Students

Southeast Asian (SEA) international students come from the Southeastern region of Asia, including countries such as Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia, Brunei, Laos, Myanmar, Singapore, and Timor-Leste/East Timor (IIE, 2021f).

Domestic Students

I define domestic students as anyone who is not a temporary resident on a visa or temporarily but are permanent residents, nationals, with or without citizenship, U.S.-born or foreign-born. Racially, domestic students include Black/African American, Indigenous/Native American, Latinx, Afro-Latinx, Middle Eastern, Asian, Pacific Islander, bi-racial, multi-racial, and White.

Students of Color and White Students

This study refers to SOC as those who are Black/African American, Indigenous/Native American, Latinx, Afro-Latinx, Middle Eastern, Asian, Pacific Islander, bi-racial, and multi-racial. I intentionally capitalize SOC as I want to emphasize the history, racial identity, and shared marginalized experiences of these groups of students in comparison to White students, as well as coalition across different racially minoritized groups. I also intentionally capitalize White to highlight the unraced and invisible nature of Whiteness and its associated power dominance and privileges (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Painter, 2020), including rights of disposition, right to use and enjoyment, reputation and status property, and the absolute right to exclude (Harris, 1993). Hence, capitalizing White disrupts the freedom, the neutrality, and “standard” that comes with

being White (Nguyễn & Pendleton, 2020) and emphasizes "the existence of an unjust racial power imbalance" (Painter, 2020). I recognize that the capitalization of White has been intentionally misused by White supremacists and nationalists to invoke violent acts and oppression. However, I echo anti-racist scholars' argument in capitalizing White to explicitly name how Whiteness has functioned and been upheld to maintain its dominance and how higher education institutions, specifically H/PWIs have not held themselves accountable for disrupting White supremacy and systemic racism (Nguyễn & Pendleton, 2020).

Race, Racialization, Racism, and Neo-racism

To better understand Asian international students and race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism in higher education institutions, it is necessary for me to define race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism. I echo critical race scholars' definition of race as socially constructed, ideologically based, and historically rooted rather than simply biological, phenotypic, or genetic (Delgado et al., 2017; Omi & Winant, 2015). According to Delgado, Stefancic, and Harris (2017) and Omi and Winant (2015), race is a central concept that shapes the social organization of the U.S. and drives social inequity. "Race is a concept that signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies." (Omi & Winant, 2015, p. 110). Specifically, race is socially constructed and manipulated by Whites to differentiate racial groups, particularly marking the superiority of White dominance in relation to other racially minoritized groups (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Furthermore, race is unstable and decentered, with its meaning shifting and malleable with time and place (Delgado et al., 2017; Omi & Winant, 2015).

Connected to race, racialization is an "extension of racial meaning to a previously

racially unclassified relationship, social practice, or group," (Omi & Winant, 2015, p. 111) as well as a "sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, lived out, transformed and destroyed" (Omi & Winant, 2015, p. 109). Additionally, racialization refers to an ideological process through which human groups are represented and categorized, and how their differences are naturalized and reinforced by "institutional structures of power" that "generates specific structures of social inequality" (Baber, 2010, p. 245), hierarchy, and stratification on both micro- and macro-levels (Omi & Winant, 2015).

Through the process of racialization, racism functions as a potent tool that upholds White dominance in various spheres of society, at different levels, and in different forms. Racism includes individual acts of discrimination against BIPOC, that encompasses both overt and covert forms of racism. Institutional racism refers to "the myriad of ways that racist attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors are institutionalized" (Liu et al., in progress) and is reified as inequitable policies and practices, opportunities, and outcomes. Structural racism refers to "the myriad of ways that racist attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors are deeply embedded within the [U.S.]'s structures, within institutions and organizations that enable them to enact systemic racism" (Liu et al., in progress) that privileges White people and marginalizes BIPOC in political, economic, and social domains (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). Systemic racism refers to "the myriad of ways racist attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors are distributed across interlocking institutions and organizations within the U.S., with culture being a part of the system" (Liu et al., in progress). Furthermore, I echo critical race scholars' argument that racism is endemic, permanent, and permeates across different arenas in U.S. society (Delgado et al., 2017).

Relatively, neo-racism, in other words, "cultural racism" (Balibar, 2007, p. 86),

describes the discrimination that results from an intersection of race, country of origin, nationality, and its respective cultures (Cantwell & Lee, 2010). Neo-racism is used to justify the hierarchy of nationalities and cultural differences (Lee & Opio, 2011; Hervik, 2013), with the purpose of "marginalizing and assimilating groups in a globalizing world" (Lee & Rice, 2007, p. 389). Moreover, "cultural racism or 'neo-racism' is premised on an understanding of culture as an inherent entity that is presumably biologically connected to the particular groups that are sought to be racialized" (Baber, 2010, p. 246).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I weaved a tapestry of the background of international students, specifically Asian international students, within U.S. higher education institutions, including the problem with overemphasizing this group of students' deficiencies, a monolithic and static lens in viewing their experiences, and the invisibility of their perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism in extant literature and higher education institutional discourse. I provided definitions for a set of key terms as a part of the background and context for the study. I delineated the problem statement— significant gaps in extant literature—and explained how my study addressed these gaps. I explained the purpose of the study and research questions and provided an overview of the methodology and framework that I employed to address the research questions. Lastly, I highlighted the significance of the study in contribution to the field of higher education and student affairs, both academically and practically, as well as significance for the community under study, society, and myself as the researcher of the study. In the next chapter, I review relevant literature as a foundation for my study, introduce the conceptual framework, and elucidate how my study not only built upon prior research but extended it in multiple ways.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

An indispensable component of conducting research is reviewing relevant literature around my research topic. Hence, in this chapter, I review relevant literature as a foundation upon which I design my research. I begin my literature review section by outlining emergent themes in the extant literature on international students in U.S. higher education and problematizing extant literature that employs a deficit lens in framing international students—particularly those of Color. Next, I highlight relevant literature on Asian international students and their perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism in the U.S. To contextualize the racialization, racism, and neo-racism that Asian international students experience in the U.S., I address relevant literature related to the historical, political, and sociocultural contexts in their home countries. I argue that the respective contexts in Asian international students' home countries play a role in their perceptions and experiences in the U.S. Given the inter-ethnic approach of my research and the scarcity of research on the perceptions and experiences of SA and SEA international students, I turn to literature on the historical, political, and social contexts of transnational migration and emigration from SA and SEA to the U.S. and I bring in literature on Asian American students, particularly South Asian American (SAA) and Southeast Asian American (SEAA) students, to shed light on some of the experiences and cultural factors that may shape the experiences of SA and SEA international students. Based on the review of relevant literature, I present evident gaps in extant literature and elucidate how my research addresses those gaps. Finally, I conclude the chapter with a discussion of my conceptual framework that bridges the EYES theory (Yeo, 2020) and neo-racism (Balibar, 2007; Hervik, 2013; Lee & Rice, 2007) to illustrate how these two theoretical constructs interconnectedly inform my study.

Emergent Themes Across Literature on International Students

Abdullal et al,'s (2014) critical analysis of 30 years of research on international students and Krsmanovic's (2021) systematic review of literature from the last decade presented main themes across extant literature on international students, including mobility, academic experiences, sociocultural experiences, mental and physical well-being, transition and adjustment, post-graduation and career outcomes, language, and the impact of international students on the internationalization of curriculum at higher education institutions. Guided by the purpose of my study, I review relevant literature on the mobility of international students in the U.S. and critique institutional recruitment efforts. Additionally, I critically examine international students' academic and sociocultural acculturation, including experiences of discrimination. I end this subsection with a counter-narrative that challenges the extant literature that heavily focus on international students' acculturation-related needs and stressors (Krsmanovic, 2021), particularly rooted in a deficit ideology, as part of my argument for the limitations and gaps in current research on international students.

International Student Mobility and Critiques of Recruitment Efforts

The push-pull framework has been widely used to describe international students' motivation to pursue education abroad. Push factors include lack of specialized fields, lack of educational resources, competitive college entry requirements, and political repression at home; pull factors include greater educational and career opportunities, higher quality of education, a better quality of life, the opportunity to experience new cultures and acquire intercultural competence, and higher academic credentials (Altbach, 2004; Austin & Shen, 2016; Griner & Sobol, 2014; Hazen & Alberts, 2006; Lee, 2008; NAFSA, 2020). Using the lens of positional competition and academic dependency to complicate the push-pull factors, Yao (2021) argues

that international students' motivation to pursue education in the U.S. is driven by the goal to obtain global cultural capital that ties into the perceived higher quality education and English-speaking environment in the U.S., which reinforces the U.S.'s "hegemonic and imperialistic categorization of being the top destination for international students" (p. 160).

Some scholars argue that international student mobility cannot be simply defined by the binary push-pull factors and is more nuanced (Lee, 2008; Yakaboski et al., 2014). For example, Lee (2008) contends that international students' decision-making on which institutions to apply to and enroll in is heavily influenced by institutional rankings, particularly for Asian international students. Within Asian international students, Chinese international students' decision-making is influenced by the health, safety, and visa regulations and policies at the study abroad destination, as amplified by the COVID-19 global pandemic (Yu, 2021b). Dispelling the rhetoric around international students migrating to the U.S. solely for economic and career advancements, Yakaboski and colleagues (2014) discovered that improved marriage opportunities and decreased dowry served as important factors for South Indian international students to pursue graduate degrees. In addition to the original decision to study abroad, international students' motivation to stay or leave the U.S. also varies. Zhou's (2015) study on the different motivating factors that helped international doctoral students persist in their educational journey found that their intrinsic interest in teaching and research, extrinsic motivation to obtain a U.S.-doctoral degree, and the high emotional and social cost of quitting helped them persist despite unsatisfactory socialization experiences in the U.S. Moreover, Hazen and Alberts's (2006) study on college, master's, and doctoral international students' intention to stay in the U.S. or return to their home countries upon completion of their studies showed that job and career opportunities—in the U.S. and their home countries—incentivized international

students to either stay in the U.S. or return to their home countries. Social ties with friends and family back home were found to be the most common incentive for international students to return home (Hazen & Alberts, 2006).

Apart from international students' motivation to pursue and persist in their education in the U.S., another segment of international student mobility is the recruitment of international students as a part of ubiquitous internationalization efforts. Underlying many higher education institutions' efforts of recruiting international students is the "dominant global imaginary" "rooted in Western supremacy" (Stein & de Andreotti, 2015, p. 226), driven by the mission to fulfill economic, political, and diversity needs (Yao et al., 2019; Yao & Viaggno, 2019) and improving institutional rankings and prestige (Knight, 2011). The "dominant global imaginary" (Stein & de Andreotti, 2015, p. 226) narrative is manifested in higher education institutional policies, statements from higher education organizations and agencies of the federal government, and scholarship. Ford and Cate's (2021) analysis of 160 leading U.S. colleges and universities' websites discovered that international students are often "discursively constructed" (p. 1195) by institutions as "global prestige assets" (p. 1206) that serve institutional goals of diversity and globalization, prestige and legitimacy, and economic gain. Joint statements from higher education associations (e.g., ACE, NAFSA, AAU) and higher education news (e.g., Chronicle of Higher Education) describe and arguably dehumanize international students as economic, cultural, and research and academic commodities (Rhee & Sagaria, 2004; Yao & Viaggno, 2019; Yao & George Mwangi, 2022; Yao, 2021). Additionally, the most recent joint statement from the Department of State and Department of Education (2021) frames international students as commodities who "enhance the national security and economy" (p. 3), "benefit American students and communities" (p. 3), "strengthen U.S. higher education" (p. 4), and "support

research and innovation to maintain the U.S.'s competitive edge" (p. 4). Similarly, scholars and researchers often justify the presence of international students on university campuses on their ability to generate revenues and offset budget shortfalls (Hegarty, 2014) rather than humanizing them as "ordinary or unremarkable participants in a campus community alongside their domestic counterparts" (Ford & Cate, 2021, p. 1195).

The narrative of international students as institutional assets and commodities mirrors the tenet of interest convergence suggested by critical race scholars (Yao et al., 2019; Yao, 2021) and is deeply problematic. Interest convergence suggests that subordinate groups' (including People of Color) achievement of justice and equality are tolerated only when they benefit the majority groups (including White people) at a similar or greater rate (Bell, 1980). As many scholars described, higher education institutional policies and discourse cast international students as both "benevolent" (Ford & Cate, 2020, p. 1207)/ "charity" (Stein & de Andreotti, 2016, p. 226) and "profitable" (Ford & Cate, 2020, p. 1207)/ "cash" (Stein & de Andreotti, 2016, p. 226), indicating the supposed win-win situation where international students benefit from studying in the U.S. and higher education institutions benefit from increased profits, prestige, and reputation (George Mwangi et al., 2021). Such a dominant narrative prioritizes the benefits higher education institutions and the U.S. gain while leaving international students' experiences, satisfaction, success, sense of belonging, and well-being on the back burner. During the COVID-19 global pandemic, in tandem with being dehumanized as "cash cows," Asian international students are simultaneously positioned as scapegoats, disease bearers, and political pawns (Yao & George Mwangi, 2022). Although an increasing body of literature has started to emphasize the importance of improving international students' experiences and satisfaction, including redressing their experiences of racism and neo-racism, undergirding many higher education

institutions' motivation of serving international students' needs is to ensure steady enrollment and competitive edge of institutions, as well as to bolster the U.S.'s status as the primary study-abroad destination for international students (Stein & de Andreotti, 2016; Yao et al., 2019).

As international student recruitment is far from being neutral and is power-laden (Lee, 2021), it is important to contextualize international student recruitment by looking at the history of their recruitment. The recruitment of international students can be tracked back to early admission of Chinese international students to enhance the U.S. economy and foreign interests (Hsu, 2015). Since early to mid-1800s, Chinese international students were strategically recruited as "the right kind of Chinese" (Hsu, 2015, p. 10) to enter the U.S. through the "side-doors"—educational and cultural exchanges—in the thick of anti-Asian exclusion. These students' mitigated experiences of exclusion starkly contrast Chinese laborers who were considered "the unassimilable barbaric coolies" (Hsu, 2015, p. 9). Many higher education organizations, missionaries, and internationalists advocated for funding Chinese international students to study in the U.S. as value-added "malleable leadership class" (Hsu, 2015, p. 9), who not only become leaders in their home country and enhance the U.S. foreign influence, but also "by resettling permanently [in the U.S.] contributing their professional and technical skills to the American economy." (Hsu, 2015, p. 11). The early admission of Chinese international students marked a shift in immigration controls from race and national origin-based quota system to a highly strategic criteria that privilege individual merit and attainment (Hsu, 2015), which planted the seed of model minority that gained more traction with the passing of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. Furthermore, the importation of knowledge workers from Asia "rework[ed] hierarchies of race and class" (Hsu, 2015, p. 249) and masked how "systems of

border controls…designate certain racial and ethnic groups for success while severely penalizing others," (Hsu, 2015, p. 5) namely Latinx and Black people.

The exemption of Chinese international students is a poignant example of differential racialization on the structural and systemic level. It exemplifies how "embracing non-Black bodies of Color facilitates, and is facilitated by, antiblackness" (Dumas, 2016, p. 15). Asian international students, as non-Black SOC, are racialized and commodified, yet preferred over Black students in the height of anti-Asian exclusion (Hsu, 2015) in a system that "allow a social recognition of the humanness of others systematically exclude this possibility for the Black" (Dumas, 2016, p. 13). In other words, Asian international students are not simply "passive reactors" in their racialization but participate in it without recognizing doing so. As a result, Asian international students gain global cultural capital but unfortunately, reassert the racial order and consolidate structural and systemic White supremacy and anti-Blackness.

Academic and Sociocultural Acculturation and Experiences of Discrimination

Aside from international student mobility and recruitment as a widely researched topic, international students' academic and sociocultural acculturation has been studied extensively. The acculturation process presents multiple adjustment difficulties and transitional challenges to international students, including language, academic, social, cultural, and financial barriers (Cheng & Erben, 2012; Leong, 2015; Lin & Scherz, 2014; Le & Gardner, 2010; Sherry et al., 2009; Sato & Hodge 2009), which often result in acculturative stress and a sense of isolation and loneliness (Sato & Hodge, 2009) that impede international students' academic achievement, mental well-being, and a sense of belonging (Wu et al., 2015; Yao, 2016). For example, Yao's (2016) study on a group of first-year Chinese international students at an HWI uncovered that limited English language ability and cultural differences inhibited their sense of belonging in the

residence halls. Similarly, Koo and colleagues (2021b) revealed that at various research institutions, Korean international doctoral students' limited English proficiency jeopardized their academic, social, and occupational wellness. The COVID-19 global pandemic has presented additional challenges (e.g., academic, political, financial, and personal) to many international students, compounding their stress and hindering their mental well-being (Moscaritolo et al., 2022; Sustarsic & Zhang, 2022).

International students of different national origins experience various levels of acculturative stress, potentially attributed to various levels of perceived prejudice and discrimination. African, Asian, and Middle Eastern students were found to experience more acculturative stress than students from West Europe and Canada (Hanassab & Tidwell, 2002; Poyrazli et al., 2010; Yeh & Inose, 2003). Additionally, Asian international students reported higher levels of acculturative stress and experienced more academic and social difficulties than their European counterparts (Leong, 2015; Poyrazli et al., 2004; Yeh & Inose, 2003). These findings align with multiple studies that unveiled that international students from predominantly non-White regions experienced more prejudice and discrimination than their White/European counterparts (Bardhan & Zhang, 2017; Hanassab, 2006; Lee, 2010; Lee & Rice, 2007; Poyrazil & Lopez, 2007; Spencer-Rodgers & McGovern, 2002; Yeh & Inose, 2003). Even within international students from predominantly non-White regions, international students from the Middle East and Africa reported experiencing more discrimination than international students from Asia, the Americas, and Oceania (Hanassab, 2006). Along with national origin, age and length of study in the U.S. also contribute to international students' various levels of perceived discrimination. For example, Poyrazli and Lopez (2007) found that among a group of international students of different academic levels (i.e., college, master's, and doctoral), older

international students reported a higher level of perceived discrimination than their younger peers. Furthermore, international students who have stayed in the U.S. for a longer period reported experiencing higher levels of perceived discrimination, likely due to their enhanced ability to recognize discriminatory experiences (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007).

In terms of the contexts where international students experience discrimination, multiple studies suggested that international students experience discrimination and unfair treatment through interactions with faculty, staff, administrators, and peers in academic and social settings both on and off campus (e.g., Cho, 2009; Glass et al., 2015; Hanassab, 2006; Johnson et al., 2018; Yan & Pei, 2018), with more discrimination taking place off campus than on campus (Hanassab, 2006). Despite these studies' attempts to document international students' experiences of discrimination, it remains unclear whether these discriminatory experiences are attributed to race or other factors, or both. Although it remains unknown whether prejudice and discriminatory experiences may or may not hinder international students' academic achievement, scholars argue that the discriminatory experiences exacerbate international students' homesickness (de Araujo, 2011) and stress, hinder acculturation process (Wadsworth et al., 2008), impede overall well-being (Nillson et al., 2008), dampen educational experience and satisfaction (Karuppan & Barari, 2010), and hamper a sense of belonging (Glass, 2013; Slaten et al., 2016).

Within extant literature that examine adjustment difficulties and acculturative challenges, some have explored buffers that mediate international students' acculturative stress and cultivate a sense of belonging (Li et al., 2014; Pendse & Inman 2017). English language proficiency and perceived social support were identified to be significant buffers of acculturative stress. For example, international students with higher levels of English language proficiency and

social support experienced lower levels of acculturative stress (Poyrazli et al., 2004; Yeh & Inose, 2003). Social interactions, particularly with U.S. peers, were suggested to be another buffer for acculturative stress. For example, Poyrazli et al.'s (2004) research suggested that international students of various academic levels, who socialized more with U.S. students, experienced a lower level of acculturative stress than those who socialized more with non-U.S. peers. On the other hand, research showed that at a large public university, relationships with both U.S. peers (in terms of learning U.S. cultures) and co-nationals (in terms of providing social support) contributed to Asian international college students' sense of belonging on campus (Slaten et al., 2016). An enhanced sense of belonging in turn fosters cross-cultural interactions between international and U.S. students, as well as facilitates international students' academic success (Glass, 2013) and persistence at their institutions (García et al., 2019). Despite the benefits associated with socializing with U.S. peers, it is shown that international students, particularly those of Color, face barriers in forming meaningful interactions with U.S. peers, likely due to their experiences of racism and neo-racism during these interactions (Briscoe et al., 2022; Yao et al., 2021). This leads me to the next subsection wherein I challenge extant literature that uses a deficit approach to depict international students and overlooks institutional and structural inequalities when exploring international students' acculturative needs and stressors.

Counter-Narrative of Research on Acculturation

Although earlier research on acculturation offers valuable insights on the academic and sociocultural experiences of international students, scholar of previous studies often adopted a deficit-based conceptualization of international students (DiAnne Borders, 2019; Yao & Viggiano, 2019). The dominant discourse on international students often depicts international students as a problem to higher education institutions (Abdullah et al., 2014; Heng, 2018a).

Higher education institutions, including international student service offices within the institutions, measure international students against normative culture and frames the group as inherently incompetent and unable to adapt or assimilate to the normative culture (Wang & Sun, 2021; Yang, 2020; Yu, 2021b). The deficit-oriented ideology is also evident in extant research that focus on the deficiencies of international students, academically, linguistically, socially, and culturally (Cheng & Erben, 2012; Jin & Schneider, 2019; Jiang, 2014; Leong, 2015; Sherry et al., 2009; Wang, 2016; Xue, 2013; Yeh & Inose, 2013; Zhu & Bresnahan, 2018), overlooking the power imbalances between the researcher and the researched and the power asymmetries between the developed and developing countries (Yu, 2021b). For example, international students, particularly Asian international students, are framed as silent and reticent in the classroom and self-segregated in their social lives (Page & Chahboun, 2019). Yet, this body of literature does not explore *how* and *why* these Asian international students have been silenced and excluded from campus life (DiAngelo, 2006).

Recent literature has excavated the reasons behind why some international students are perceived as silent, isolated, and segregated. Sümer and colleagues (2008) found that international students of various academic levels (i.e., college, master's, and doctoral), the majority from Asian regions, reported a lack of support for their voices in the classroom due to fear of reinforcing negative perceptions about their home countries. Additionally, Rivas and colleagues (2019) pointed out that at a mid-sized public institution, international students from various educational levels felt a deeper sense of social connectedness with fellow international students than with U.S. peers due to a shared appreciation of diverse cultures. In a similar vein, Briscoe et al.'s (2022) longitudinal study at a PWI found that many international SOC felt unwelcomed by U.S. peers but more comfortable establishing friendships with co-nationals and

other international peers. Moreover, Yu (2021b) found that Chinese international undergraduate students exercised self-determining agency by intentionally seeking out and engaging in social interactions with U.S. peers although they did not receive the same level of reciprocity from U.S. counterparts. Similar to many Asian American students who intentionally seek out ethnic enclaves on campus for a sense of community (Museus & Park, 2015), Chen and Ross (2015) found that at a large public research institution, the ostensible self-segregating ethnic enclaves on campus has provided Chinese international undergraduate students with critical academic, social, and emotional support that helped them persist at the institution. Furthermore, Rose-Redwood and Rose-Redwood (2013) asserted that when scholarship adopts an "internationalist perspective" (p. 414) that explores social networks "beyond the confines of the educational institution itself" (p. 414) rather than an "institutionalist perspective" (p. 415) that measures international students against the dominant culture on campus, international graduate students were found to have an extensive social network that included co-nationals, fellow international students, and U.S. peers, in other words, not isolated.

An emerging body of literature is shifting the narrative of international students as "passive reactors" to "interactors with a certain amount of agency" by highlighting their coping mechanisms and resiliency through an asset-based lens (Heng, 2018a; Page & Chahboun, 2019, p. 880). Multiple studies underscored international students' coping mechanisms related to acculturation-based challenges that ranged from applying problem-solving strategies, tapping into campus resources, to relying on a community of support that included co-nationals, fellow international students, and religious communities in the U.S. and family and friends in their home countries (Bertram et al., 2014; Chen et al., 2002; He & Hutson, 2018; Moores & Popadiuk, 2011; Park et al., 2017; Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2013; Yan & Berliner,

2011). For example, Moores and Popadiuk's (2011) study suggested that at a public research PWI, international undergraduate students demonstrated determination and the ability to use struggles as a catalyst for motivation and change to persist in difficult times. Similarly, albeit the multiple challenges presented by the COVID-19 global pandemic, many Chinese international undergraduate students not only considered the pandemic an opportunity for self-development but demonstrated enhanced resilience during the pandemic (Yu, 2021b). DiAnne Border's (2019) research on the acculturation process of international graduate SOC at a public research PWI uncovered how these students leveraged their various *community cultural wealth* (Yosso, 2005) throughout the acculturation and graduate school socialization process. Additionally, international graduate students, including Chinese, Indian, and Vietnamese students, relied on support from faculty advisers and peers (Le & Gardner, 2010); Japanese, Taiwanese, and South Korean international students, in particular, relied on social-emotional support from fellow Asian international students (Sato & Hodge, 2009). On the other hand, some international students used denial and avoidance as coping mechanisms (Park et al., 2017), which could be considered another form of agency that international students enact to protect themselves from challenges.

Although this body of research sheds light on how international students cope with acculturation and its related stress as interactors with agency, international students continue to bear the burden to assimilate to a normative campus culture within an unwelcoming and exclusive campus climate (Sherry et al., 2010; Wang & Sun, 2021). Van Horne and colleagues (2017) revealed that at various research institutions, international undergraduate students reported a comparable level of academic satisfaction with their U.S. counterparts but were far less satisfied socially due to an unwelcoming and exclusive climate that hindered their sense of belonging. Given the multiple marginalized identities that many international SOC hold (i.e.,

race, ethnicity, nationality, immigration status, English as Second Language Learner), expecting international SOC to adapt, adjust, and acculturate continues to burden them with the responsibilities to assimilate to the dominant culture (Koo et al., 2021a; Lee et al., 2019; Yang, 2020; Wang & Sun, 2021), adding additional pressure on international SOC and perpetuating institutional and structural inequalities (Koo et al., 2021a; Yao et al., 2019). Specifically, HWIs are laden with policies, practices, and traditions designed by and for Whites (Allen et al., 1991) that "embody, signify, and reproduce Whiteness and White supremacy" (Bonilla-Silva & Peoples, 2022, p. 2). HWIs are also deeply rooted in anti-Black ideology (Wilder, 2013) and function as sites of anti-Blackness. Accordingly, international SOC, including Asian international students, not only must navigate a myriad of challenges including race, racialization, and racism and neo-racism but also may face obstacles in recognizing and disrupting White supremacy and anti-Blackness that permeate through institutional policies, practices, and discourses at HWIs (Dancy et al., 2018). In order to integrate international SOC and cultivate their sense of belonging on campus, colleges and universities must challenge the inequitable structures and systems (Yao, 2015) and in doing so, shift the rhetoric from blaming international students for their innate deficiencies to disrupting inequitable institutional policies and practices. Following the emergent themes in the extant literature on international students, I review relevant literature on the topic of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism for Asian international students in the next subsection.

Race, Racialization, Racism, and Neo-racism for Asian International Students

To better understand Asian international students' perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism in the U.S., I address relevant literature on the context of racialization and racism in Asia, to illuminate how the historical, political, and sociocultural

contexts in Asian international students' home countries may inform their perceptions and experiences in the U.S. Given the inter-ethnic approach of my research, it is equally important for me to turn to literature on the historical, political, and social contexts of transnational migration and emigration from South Asia and Southeast Asia to the U.S., to better understand SA and SEA international students' perceptions and experiences in the U.S. through a historical and socio-political lens. Following these contexts, I synthesize a growing body of research that looks at how Asian international students view themselves and other racial groups regarding race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism in the U.S. higher education setting. Given the slim body of literature on SA and SEA international students and their racialized experiences, I bring in literature on SAA and SEAA students and their racialized experiences in higher education to offer some valuable insights on SA and SEA international students' experiences. To conclude the literature review, I offer my critical analysis of the gaps in extant literature and explicate how my research addresses the gaps and extends the scholarship.

Racialization and Racism in Asia

Within Asia, there are different historical contexts of neo-colonial nations that were formerly colonized and countries that never experienced European or U.S. colonialism but are deeply influenced by White dominance and "transnational racialization" (Kim, 2008, p. 13). Neo-colonial nation-states, such as India, Malaysia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Philippines, and Pakistan, were colonized by Europeans and the U.S. who used race to differentiate and organize the hierarchies of the Global North at the top and the Global South at the bottom within the world system. In other words, these neo-colonial nation-states are racialized as inferior in comparison to European countries and the U.S. in terms of wealth, power, technology, and knowledge production, through formal colonialism (Christian, 2019; Jackson, 2009).

Specifically, the colonizers used race and constructed racialization and racism as potent tools to facilitate the stratification of the colonizers and the colonized which positions the colonizers as the superior and the colonized as culturally and biologically deficient (Jackson, 2009). Such stratification is fueled by the motivation to deny equality of the colonized and to exploit them for economic, social, and political benefits (Bora, 2019; Jackson, 2009).

These neo-colonial nation-states, despite their formal independent status, remain influenced by the former colonizers economically, politically, and culturally (Jackson, 2009). In other words, neocolonialism, under the ideology of racism, continues to shape the nation-state policies and subjugate post-colonial nations' economic, political, social, and cultural development (Bonsu, 2019; Mentan, 2017; Pierre, 2013; Segell, 2019). Neocolonialism operates under the "belief that the colonizers are superior to the colonized and that the colonizers are altruistically bringing civilization—or in the neo-colonial model, capitalism, and democracy—to the colonized" (Jackson, 2009, p. 162). Moreover, the legacy of colonialism and racism persists through colorism and casteism that hide within the rhetoric of cultural differences (Bora, 2019; Christian, 2019). For example, the racial construct of northeasterns in India is influenced by "colonialism, nationalism, and counter-insurgency" (Bora, 2019, p. 1) as well as casteism (Kikon, 2021). As a result, the violence and discrimination experienced by northeasterns are often framed as cultural differences rather than racism (Bora, 2019).

Apart from the historical context of neocolonialism, the U.S. and other Western countries wield political intervention and militarism (i.e., responding to terrorism), coercive foreign economic policy (i.e., investments, trades, aids, and loans), and cultural imperialism in Asia, to exploit resources and labor and attain wealth, power, and status (Jackson, 2009). One important force is global conflicts and militarization— "war on terror"—that perpetuates White

dominance in Asia (Christian, 2019). The history of global conflicts stratifies the majority of Asian countries as "developing" whereas Western countries are positioned as "developed". Such stratification serves as a root cause of the neo-racism that many Asian international students may experience in the U.S. due to the subjugated status of their home countries in relation to the U.S.

For example, in the Philippines, war-making and race-making are interconnected (Kramer, 2006). The U.S. racialized Whites as "Anglo-Saxons" to legitimize the U.S. war, occupation, and political advancement in the Philippines and racialized the Philippines into "fragmented and warring 'tribes'" incapable of establishing their own nation-state (Kramer, 2006, p. 90). In South Korea, the White American military presence introduced the racist ideology of Whites as superior and Blacks as inferior which fuels Asians' negative stereotypes toward Blacks (Kim, 2008). Consequently, South Korea became an extension of the U.S. empire where U.S. racial ideology was disseminated (Kim, 2022). As a result of global conflicts and militarization, many Asian countries aim to regain the nations confidence by emulating the U.S./West's power and its associated civilization (Kowner & Demel, 2012). Emulating the U.S./West's civilization also means adopting the Western racial ideology that positions Whites at the top and Blacks at the bottom (Kowner & Demel, 2012). For example, in many Asian countries, mixed-blood offspring of Asian women with American GIs, particularly those who are Black, experienced blatant exclusion from citizenship (Kowner & Demel, 2012). Essentially, global conflicts and militarization "imported structural racism in two keyways: by ruling over a non-White country (e.g., Philippines and South Korea) and by introducing a White-over-Black order." (Kim, 2008, p. 40).

Aside from political intervention and militarism, economic coercion and cultural

imperialism are two other prominent historical contexts of neocolonialism. The U.S. and other European countries exert various coercive economic policies that subjugate Asian countries as the Global South and "underdeveloped" (Christian, 2019; Jiang, 2021). Both are sweeping terms used today to differentiate Anglo regions and the rest regarding disparity in wealth and resources (Lee, 2021). Additionally, the brain drains resulting from many Asian international students leaving their home countries to pursue education in the U.S. and the brain gain that the U.S. receives from international students staying in the U.S. post-graduation reinforces the "racial subordination" (Yao et al., 2019, p. 51) of many Asian countries in relation to the U.S. In addition to coercive economic policies, sociocultural domination from U.S./Western imperialism is ubiquitous in the mass media, perpetuating White dominance and anti-Blackness (Lewis, 2013; Ritter, 2016; Willard, 2017). Anti-Black sentiments are apparent in the mainstream social discourse both politically and in everyday life in Asia (Christian, 2019; Jiang, 2021). For example, China often promotes anti-Black sentiments by portraying a deficit framing of African countries in the mainstream social discourse (Christian, 2019; Jiang, 2021). The proliferation of skin whitening beauty products across Asia reflects a deeply rooted cultural norm that associates darker skin with working-class status and lighter skin with higher socioeconomic status (Tai & Sukumaran, 2019). Such a deeply rooted "cultural norm" is not only colorism but also anti-Blackness. The racist branding and history behind a toothpaste known as "Darlie"[2] is a pertinent example (Grundy, 2021).

As a result of the political, economic, and sociocultural influences, Asian

[2] The brand name "Darlie" was originated from "Darkie", a racial slur used against African Americans, and the original logo of the brand was a Blackface. Although the company updated its logo to a more racially ambiguous person, it kept its Chinese brand name as "Black person toothpaste", which continues to racially insult Black/African Americans.

international students may have witnessed racism towards other racial groups despite their perceptions of racialization and racism as distant realities before they migrated to the U.S. (Bardhan & Zhang, 2017; Wang, 2010). Scholars argue that even before European colonialism took place, countries such as Japan, South Korea, and China emphasized "national racial purity" (Christian, 2019, p. 13) and aligned their cultural identity formation with the way White dominance operates in the West. Yengkhom (2019) asserted that although many Indians may consider racism as a historical issue that only exists in the past and/or in Western countries, racism, on both the interpersonal and institutional level, toward northeasterns remains pervasive. In addition, ethnocentrism prevails and serves as a seed for prejudice toward other racial and ethnic groups (Kowner & Demel, 2012), which is reflected through the color-evasive national policies in these countries (Christian, 2019). For example, in South Korea, underpinning the ostensible multicultural policies that promote diverse cultures and values are the expectation for immigrants to assimilate to the dominant culture and language (Shin, 2012).

Furthermore, multiple studies suggested that Asian international students, particularly EA international students, embody preconceived notions of racial hierarchy and prejudicial attitudes towards other racial groups before migrating to the U.S. (Okura, 2021). Ritter's (2016) study at UCLA found that EA international students (i.e., Chinese, Japanese, and South Korean) at both undergraduate and graduate levels held preconceived notions of a racial hierarchy, with Whites at the zenith, followed by EAs and Latinx, and Blacks/African Americans at the bottom. Similarly, both Shin's (2012) and Kim's (2022) research revealed that South Korean international college students considered themselves inferior to Whites and superior to Blacks and SEAs. South Korean students perceived Whites as superior not only because of their skin color but also their symbolic cultural and economic capital (Shin, 2012). In a related vein, Lien

(2021) found that at a public research institution on the West Coast, Chinese international undergraduate students' perception of race and racial hierarchy started to form even before they migrated to the U.S., primarily influenced by mass media across the Pacific, including home countries and the U.S., and from their parents. All these findings imply the endemic and centrality of anti-Blackness in how all of us make sense of human life globally (Dumas & ross, 2016).

All of the above examples illuminate that Asian international students' preconceived racial hierarchy parallels the macro-level racial triangulation—when Whites valorize Asian Americans relative to Blacks to subjugate Blacks and ostracize Asian Americans from political and civic engagements (Kim, 1999)— "a patronizing practice that maintains White dominance" (Poon et al., 2016, p. 474) and anti-Blackness. The racial triangulation is likely informed and shaped by "transnational racialization" (Kim, 2008, p. 13) that occurs historically, politically, economically, and socioculturally, even without the presence of White bodies (Christian, 2019), including in many Asian countries. Based on Nadia Y. Kim's (2021) expansion of Claire Jean Kim's (1999) racial triangulation from a geopolitical standpoint, it is arguable that many Asian international students have already experienced racialization in their home countries before migration to the U.S., and the historical, political, economic, and sociocultural contexts in their home countries inherently shape Asian international students' perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism in the U.S. Additionally, their perception of the "racial triangle" (Kim, 2008, p. 15) unfolds and is either reinforced or challenged through personal experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism after they migrate to the U.S.

Transnational Migration and Emigration from South Asia and Southeast Asia to the United States

Before I continue to synthesize the perceptions and experiences of Asian international students regarding race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism in the U.S., I would like to take a step back and address the broader historical and socio-political contexts of transnational migration and emigration from South Asia and Southeast Asia to the U.S. Orientation to these contexts is an important step to take considering the inter-ethnic approach of my research and the paucity of research on SA and SEA international students in extant literature.

Within South Asia, political, economic, cultural, and educational exchange opportunities altogether enhanced the visibility of the U.S. as a desirable destination for migration and facilitated the aspiration of many SA international students to study in the U.S. (Minocha, 1987). In India, with the establishment of the nation-state in 1947 and the shifting geopolitical climate after WWII (Thomas, 2013), the U.S. became a highly desirable alternative destination to obtain Western education due to its science and technological advancement and independence as a nation (Thomas, 2019; Hsu, 2015). The aspiration of seeking independence and resisting the British Empire, along with establishing a new India has propelled many Indian international students to pursue post-secondary education in the U.S. (Thomas, 2019), whose number exceeded those going to Britain and kept growing ever since (Hsu, 2015). Concurrently, the U.S. became more involved in South Asia by establishing political ties and providing economic assistance, particularly in India (Minocha, 1987). The economic ties were strengthened by the increasing volume of trade and investments in many SA countries (Minocha, 1987).

The political advancement, economic assistance, trading, and investments were in tandem with the promotion of South Asia-American cultural and educational exchange opportunities, evidenced through the founding of the flagship initiative—the Fulbright program in 1946 (Cummings & So, 1985; Thomas, 2013). The Fulbright program and others alike are housed

within public affairs instead of education (Lee, 2021), indicating the purpose of these cultural and educational exchange opportunities as "socializ[ing] students and scholars from abroad into Western thought and promot[ing] allyship with the United States" (George Mwangi et al., 2021, p. 126). Aside from these cultural and educational exchange opportunities, the opportunity to work part-time to cover educational costs while pursuing post-secondary education was another important factor that prompted many SA students to study in the U.S. (Cummings & So, 1985). For example, the number of Indian international students pursuing education in the U.S. increased exponentially from 1,362 in 1949/1945 to 9,9014 in 1973/1974. India became the largest sending country of international students between 2000/2001 and 2007/2008, with 102, 839 Indian international students studying in U.S. institutions in 2007/2008. The number of Indian international students in the U.S. reached 199,198 in 2021/2022 (IIE, 2021e; Statistics & Data, 2022).

The historical and socio-political contexts in Southeast Asia differ from those in South Asia, especially given the political turmoil in many Southeast Asian countries that significantly impacted the migration of Southeast Asians to the U.S. (Yi, 2018). For example, Indonesian international students came to the U.S. to pursue education since the 1950s, including Indonesian faculty and instructors to study at U.S. institutions as sponsored by the Agency for International Development. In the 1960s, the political instability in Indonesia propelled many more Indonesians to migrate to the U.S. and the number of Indonesian students studying in the U.S. grew steadily since then (Yang, n.d.).

In the Philippines, during the U.S. occupation and militarism, the first stream of Filipinx international students were sponsored by the U.S. government to study in the U.S. as *pensionados* as part of the colonial "Benevolent Assimilation" project (Rodriguez, 2016), with

many returning to the Philippines to serve important roles in different sectors of the government after completing their studies (Teodoro, 1999). The return of these *pensionados* inspired many Filipinx international students to pursue education and migrate to the U.S. as permanent residents, who were mostly self-funded (Posadas & Guyotte, 1990). These Filipinx students' colonial status at the time enabled them to pursue post-secondary education in the U.S. despite the exclusionary immigration laws that prohibited their nationalization to citizens (Posadas & Guyotte, 1990). Post-U.S. occupation, to promote human capital for the Philippines's development (Liao & Asias, 2020) and simultaneously boost the U.S. economy, the U.S. continued to offer scholarships to Filipinx international students to study in the U.S. Particularly, the passing of the Education Exchange Act of 1946 allowed the U.S. to recruit Filipinx nurses to study and receive advanced training (Bankston III & Hidalgo, 2016). Concurrently, the U.S.'s expansion in the Philippines has promoted the U.S.'s status as a more powerful nation, educationally, economically, and politically, sharply contrasting the unstable economic and political status of the Philippines. The differential status between the U.S. and their home country compelled many Filipinx international students to migrate to the U.S. to seek better educational and career opportunities (Espiritu, 2016). As a result, the Philippines became one of the top five countries of origin of international students between 1949/1950 and 1955/1956 and remained as one of the top fifteen countries of origin till 1974/1975 (Statistics & Data, 2022).

Similar to the Philippines, in Vietnam, the U.S. government, government agencies, private organizations, and higher education institutions funded a group of elite South Vietnamese international students to study in the U.S. (Nguyen, 2015), driven by the agenda to "train students from South Vietnam with an American-based education in order to combat communism" (Pham, 2003, p. 139). The U.S.'s military involvement and political engagement in

South Vietnam, along with educational exchange programs such as the Fulbright program and the passing of the Educational Exchange Act of 1946 resulted in an increasing number of Vietnamese international students studying in the U.S. (Nguyen, 2015; Pham, 2003). The U.S.'s military and political involvement in the Vietnam war also resulted in an increasing number of Vietnamese refugees fleeing the country and migrating to the U.S. between 1961 and 1975, many of whom ended up pursuing education (Cummings & So, 1985). The refugees' settlement in the U.S. may have impacted the inflow of Vietnamese international students who considered U.S. a preferred destination for study abroad (Nguyen, 2013) who may also be sponsored by their families to migrate to the U.S. (Lee & Zhou, 2015). These contexts altogether help explain the increase of the number of Vietnamese international students from 4,600 in 2005/2006 to 20,713 in 2021/2022, marking it the top fifth country of origin of international students in the U.S. (IIE, 2021e; Statistics & Data, 2022).

As precipitated by political and economic tensions at home, the first wave of Malaysian international students migrated to the U.S. to pursue education in the early 1970s and continued throughout 1980s and 1990s (Koh, 2017). As a result of the British colonial history, Malaysian's education system is racially and linguistically stratified, leaving many students with limited opportunities to access higher education. Accordingly, many Malaysian students sought out education overseas, including the U.S. (Koh, 2017), as motivated by the perceived higher quality and prestige associated with a degree from a Western country and the potential opportunity to settle in the U.S. permanently through the "education-induced migration" (Koh, 2017, p. 238). Consequently, the number of Malaysian international students increased from 7,498 in 1980/1981 to 19,532 in 1985/1986. However, the number of Malaysian international

students in the U.S. declined to 7,795 in 2000/2001 due to the hostile political climate post-9/11 and dropped to 6,910 in 2019/2020 due to the Muslim ban (Shams, 2020).

Divergent from Filipinx, Vietnamese, and Malaysian international students, many Thai international students' migration to the U.S. followed a temporary and circular pattern instead of permanent settlement (Losavio, 2021). Thai international students mostly came from elite and affluent families and were self-funded to pursue educational and cultural experiences in the U.S. (Losavio, 2021). These elite students were motivated by the dual purpose of contributing to Thailand's nation-building and gaining social and economic capital for upward mobility. Sharing similar aspirations to obtain upward mobility, those from lower and middle-class families who excelled academically also earned their spots to study abroad in the U.S. (Losavio, 2021). Additionally, the 1950 Technical and Economic Cooperation agreements between the U.S. and Thailand expanded the opportunities for many Thai international students to pursue post-secondary education in the U.S. (Losavio, 2021). Consequently, the number of Thai international students in U.S. institutions grew from 764 in 1956/1957 to 11,586 in 2001/2002, then remained around 7,000-8,000 between 2010/2011 and 2015/2016 (IIE, 2021e; Statistics & Data, 2022).

Nepal is another Southeast Asian country that sends their students to the U.S. for educational purposes. In 1996, 686 Nepali students migrated to the U.S. to pursue education, with many from higher-caste and affluent families who sent their children to study in the U.S. due to the lack of resources and infrastructure of the education system in Nepal (Miller, n.d.). As a result, in 2003/2004, although the number of Nepali international students in the U.S. was only 4,384, it has more than doubled (9,662) in 2015/2016. In 2021/2022, the number of Nepali international students studying at U.S. institutions reached 11,799 (IIE, 2021e), partly due to the

motivation of many Nepali students to obtain a Western degree that is perceived as more prestigious than one received from Nepal (Miller, n.d.).

The passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 played a significant role in the transnational migration and emigration from South Asia and Southeast Asia to the U.S. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 marked a new wave of migration from predominantly Chinese and Japanese to Indian, Vietnamese, Filipino, Thai, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan, and Nepali (Cummings & So, 1985). For example, the number of Indian international students studying in the U.S. increased from 73 in 1944-1945 to 6,813 in 1964-1965 (Hsu, 2015). Among the highly educated, highly skilled, and highly trained professionals through a "hyper selective" immigration process (Lee & Zhou, 2015, p. 30), many were SA and SEA international students from high-caste and upper middle-class families who sought to leverage quality advanced education from the U.S. for upward mobility or maintaining their social status at home (Gribble & Tran, 2016; Minocha, 1987; Paik et al., 2014; Thomas, 2019; Yakaboski et al., 2014). The exodus of SA and SEA international students migrating to the U.S. for educational purposes was also in part due to the expansion of secondary education in many SA and SEA countries and the swelling of middle-class families (Gribble & Tran, 2016; Thomas, 2019). Despite the expansion of secondary education in many SA and SEA countries, the uneven quality of post-secondary education and the disadvantages in professional and career development could not meet the growing demand of middle-class families (Nguyen, 2015).

In India, the cut-throat competition and limited opportunities to attend elite post-secondary educational institutions resulted in a significant gap in the supply-demand chain, with many Indian international students seeking alternative educational opportunities in the U.S. (Choudaha & Roy, 2015; Najar, 2011). The booming of the IT industry in India and the

advancement of science and technology in the U.S. motivated many Indian international students to pursue computer science and engineering graduate degrees (Choudaha & Roy, 2015). The H-1B program—a highly-skilled work visa that allows international students to work after completing their studies in the U.S.—has a heavy focus on STEM-related companies and requires international students' post-graduation work to align with their degrees. These driving forces altogether prompted many Indian international students to select STEM-related disciplines for their graduate studies (Price, 2022). From 2001/02 to 2008/09 academic years, India served as the largest sending country to the U.S. for eight consecutive years, surpassing China (IIE, 2021e). Between the 2013/14 and 2018/19 academic years, there was a steady growth of Indian international students pursuing higher education in the U.S. However, between the 2016/17 and 2018/19 academic years, the number of Indian international students in graduate-level computer science and engineering majors dipped by nearly 25% (Anderson, 2021), possibly due to chilly immigration policies and travel bans under the Trump presidency. Despite the COVID-19 global pandemic and growing interest to pursue education at alternative destinations such as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, the number of visa applications from India hit a record high in 2021 (Pavithra, 2021), with many still prioritizing the U.S. as a study-abroad destination, particularly in STEM-related fields (Hercog & Van de Laar, 2017).

The desire of middle-class families to obtain upward mobility converges with their home countries' broader goal of developing human capital for nation-building (Khadria, 2009). Hence, many SA and SEA governments saw overseas study as a viable solution that meets the needs of both entities. For example, the Vietnamese government encouraged and sponsored Vietnamese students to study abroad to relieve some pressure from domestic post-secondary education, in tandem with seeking to develop these students as "semi-finished human capital" for nation-

building (Gribble & Tran, 2016; Nguyen, 2013). In addition to the Fulbright program that continues to provide educational exchange opportunities (Nguyen, 2015), new educational exchange programs such as the Vietnam Education Foundation—an independent U.S. government agency—was established in 2000 to foster educational exchange between U.S.-Vietnam, with the focus on engaging Vietnamese international students in STEM-focused graduate studies (Nguyen, 2015). Consequently, the total number of Vietnamese international students who were supported by scholarships from non-government organizations or higher education institutions in the U.S. or self-funded proliferated during the last decade (Nguyen, 2015). Additionally, organizations such as EducationUSA provide advising to many Filipinx high school students to identify scholarships and financial assistance and help them navigate the college application process to increase their enrollment in U.S. colleges and universities (Sarao, 2021).

Many SA and SEA international students transition from temporary residents to permanent residents after completing their studies, who likely facilitate future migration of their friends and families to the U.S. (Minocha, 1987; Hsu, 2015). It is evident that the transnational migration and emigration of SA and SEA international students do not always follow a linear pattern and their emigration is influenced by political, immigration, and educational policies within their home countries and the U.S. It is also evident from these contexts that many middle-class SA and SEA international students, like their EA counterparts, bring with them the cultural capital as immigrants screened by the highly selective immigration process. The highly selective immigration policies are established to fuel a model minority myth and are used to obscure the racial inequalities experienced by other historically disadvantaged racial groups, including Latinxs and Blacks. Following this journey of transnational migration and emigration from South

Asia and Southeast Asia to the U.S., I now turn to the next subsection wherein I address literature on Asian international students' experiences in the U.S., specifically how they view themselves and others regarding race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism.

Experiences in the United States

Based on the review of relevant literature on Asian international students' perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism in the U.S., I found that extant literature often examines international students as an aggregate or examining all Asian international students through a pan-Asian lens. Given the inter-ethnic approach of my research, I intentionally explicated the samples in each study and specified the ethnic subgroups within each study to my best ability. Extant literature included many EA international students as their participants, with some including SA and SEA international students. Yet, even when SA and SEA international students were included, their percentage in the sample was slim in comparison to EA international students from China, Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan. This is one of the significant gaps in research that need to be addressed, which I will detail in the subsection titled "Gaps in Literature".

View of Oneself. Similar to the experiences in their home countries where race is an uncommon social construct, many Asian international students continue to view race as a distant reality that is detached from their self-identification in the U.S. Mitchell et al.'s (2017) study at a large public PWI indicated that international students, including Asian international students of various academic levels, such as those from India, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Taiwan, South Korea, and China, were often surprised and confused to learn that race is a prominent marker that permeates U.S. society after migrating to the U.S. Studies suggested that many Asian international students, including EA, SA, and SEA from China, Taiwan, South Korea,

Bangladesh, India, Vietnam, and Pakistan, have not been exposed to race due to limited knowledge of U.S. history and exposure to racial issues in their home countries (Aggarwal & Çiftçi, 2020; Bardhan & Zhang, 2017; Gerlach, 2015; Mitchell et al. 2017; Wang et al., 2020). As a result, many Asian international students may "use race as a synonym for ethnicity or nationality" (Mitchell et al., 2017, p. 9) and conflate race with more familiar social constructs from their home countries such as nationality and ethnicity and use nationality and ethnicity as the primary lens through which to view themselves (Lewis, 2013; Wang, 2010; Wang et al., 2020).

Conversely, Okura's (2020) longitudinal study at a private university in New York found that newly arrived Chinese international graduate students shifted from a nationality-based identity to a racially-based identity after staying in the U.S. for six months. The students in the study saw race as similar phenotypes with Asians of different nationalities and demonstrated a sense of affinity with other Asians that led to heightened racial consciousness and racial identity (Okura, 2020). The transition from nationality-based to racially-based identification was prevalent among those who socialized with U.S. peers and less so among those who socialized with co-nationals (Okura, 2020). Yu's (2022) study at a Californian public institution discovered similar findings of Chinese international undergraduate students shifting their perceptions of race from nationality-based to phenotype-based after studying and living in the U.S. Furthermore, research suggested that Chinese, Taiwanese, South Korean, and Indian international students, often adopted a color-evasive view of themselves regarding race by associating race with different phenotypes instead of connecting race to systems of power and oppression (Wang et al., 2020; Yeo, 2020).

Contrast the experience in their home countries where racialization is a distant reality,

many Asian international students experience a sense of racial downgrading acutely after migrating to the U.S., from a privileged status in Asia to a marginalized status in the U.S. Many international SOC, including Asian international students from China, Taiwan, India, and Pakistan, describe their racialization as "the same body can be coded in different ways in different locations" (Bardhan & Zhang, 2017, p. 14). When the racial label *Asian* is imposed upon them after migrating to the U.S., many Asian international students, specifically Chinese, view themselves as transitioning from a majority status in their home countries to a minority status within a majority White U.S. society (Wang, 2010; Zhang, 2015). For many Asian international students who come from racially homogeneous environments including EA and Indian and Pakistani international students, adjusting to a racial minority identity for the first time can be jarring (Rao, 2020; Yao et al., 2019). Coupled with this majority to minority status transition is the racial downgrading from a privileged to a marginalized status (Lewis, 2013; Wang, 2010; Zhang, 2015). Feeling forced to identify with the *Asian* racial label and the respective marginalization (Zhang, 2015), many Asian international students, including Chinese, Taiwanese, Indian, and Pakistani, push back against being racialized—and the associated racial downgrading—by either identifying more with their national or ethnic identity or viewing themselves via the international student identity (Bardhan & Zhang, 2017; Zhang, 2015).

While transitioning from a racial majority status in their home countries to becoming racially minoritized in the U.S., many Asian international students likely experience racism and neo-racism as a result of the racialization process (Bardhan & Zhang, 2017; Wang, 2010; Zhang, 2015). These discriminatory experiences stand in stark contrast to their experience of being in the racial majority and privileged status in their home countries (Jiang, 2021; Young, 2017). For example, Chinese international students faced compounded experiences of racism during the

COVID-19 global pandemic, which starkly contrasted with the romanticized imaginary of the U.S. as portrayed in the media (Yu, 2021a). An increasing body of literature documented Asian international students' experiences of racism. For example, Chinese, Malaysian, and Vietnamese international students experienced being called racial slurs (Slaten et al., 2016; Wang, 2010); EA and Indian international students experienced racial stereotypes that included "model minority" and "perpetual foreigner" (Bonazzo & Wong, 2007; Cantwell & Lee, 2010; Yeo et al., 2019); EA, Indian, Malaysian, Vietnamese, and Pakistani international students experienced racial microaggressions such as being excluded from class and group discussions and being tokenized as the diversity placeholder in the classrooms (Bardhan & Zhang, 2017; DiAngelo, 2006; Houshmand et al., 2014; Kondo, 2016; Slaten et al., 2016; Sato & Hodge 2016; Wang, 2010; Yeo et al., 2019; Zhou et al., 2005); and Japanese international students experienced being lumped together with other Asian ethnic groups (Bonazzo & Wong, 2007). Additionally, Nam et al.'s (2021) study uncovered that Chinese international undergraduate students encountered more racist incidents in social settings than in academic settings.

Aside from experiences of racism, Asian international students are also subject to neo-racism. Neo-racism, or "cultural racism" (Balibar, 2007, p. 86) is based on race, as well as nationality, culture, and language, including accent, and is used to legitimize discrimination based on hierarchies of nationalities and its respective cultures (Lee & Opio, 2011). Studies found that many EA international students encountered hostility towards their home countries or respective cultures and were discriminated against due to perceived limited English proficiency (Bonazzo & Wong, 2007; Kondo, 2016; Kwon et al., 2019; Koo et al., 2021b); EA, Indian, and Pakistani international students were ridiculed by accents (Houshmand et al., 2014; Yeo et al., 2019); and EA and Indian international students had negative interactions with faculty,

administrators, and peers on campus and with community members off campus (Dos Santos, 2019; Gopal, 2016; Johnson et al., 2018; Lee, 2007; Lee & Rice, 2007; Lee, 2010; Lien, 2021; Park et al., 2017; Sato & Hodge, 2009). Neo-racism also manifested in many EA and Indian international students' experiences of being excluded from funding or job opportunities, unfair treatment from faculty and administrators, and having difficulty forming relationships with U.S. peers (Hanassab, 2006; Lee, 2007; Lee & Rice, 2007). For example, Cantwell and Lee's (2010) study at various public research institutions in the U.S. and the U.K. found that EA and Indian postdoctoral fellows were stereotyped by faculty as "hard workers," "invisible," and "lacking career advancement ambition," which deprived them of opportunities to advance to faculty positions. During the COVID-19 global pandemic, experiences of neo-racism and fear of racist threats led to many Chinese, South Korean, and Indian international students' heightened awareness of neo-racism and a sense of exclusion (Koo et al., 2021a). Despite a sense of loneliness from quarantine orders as of the COVID-19 global pandemic, these students perceived staying at home as a shield from experiencing racism and neo-racism (Koo et al., 2021a).

Asian international students may have ambivalent feelings toward their experiences with racism and neo-racism due to the different experiences from their home countries. Many EA, Indian, and Malaysian international students are caught by surprise by their experiences of racism and neo-racism and feel somewhat unprepared to cope with these experiences (Koo et al., 2021a; Nilsson et al., 2008). Accordingly, Chinese, South Korean, and Indian international students tend to apply different coping mechanisms in response to racism and neo-racism but rarely allude to their experiences with systems of power and oppression (Yeo, 2020). For example, Chen's (2021) study at a public research HWI in New York found that many Chinese, Indian, and Vietnamese international students drew from their transnational backgrounds by

comparing their home countries' sociocultural context with that in the U.S. to make sense of their racist incidents in the U.S. during the COVID-19 global pandemic; thus, did not recognize their experiences as racism (Chen, 2021). Additionally, multiple studies revealed that many EA international students internalized racism and neo-racism by blaming their lack of English proficiency (Kondo, 2016; Yeo, 2020; Yu, 2021c; Zhang, 2015) and burdening themselves with the responsibility of overcoming racism and neo-racism (Kwon et al., 2019; Yeo, 2020; Yan & Pei, 2018), which resulted in many of their internalized inferiority to Whites and as outsiders in the campus community (Sato & Hodge, 2009; Yao, 2019).

Furthermore, multiple studies found that many EA and Indian international students adopt a color-evasive lens in viewing their experiences of racism and neo-racism and attribute their experiences to either cultural or personality differences or individual behaviors (Bonazzo & Wong, 2007; Chen, 2021; Jiang, 2021; Yeo, 2020). There are multiple reasons why many EA and Indian international students may adopt a color-evasive lens in viewing their experiences of racism and neo-racism. Due to the pervasive color-evasive and ahistorical norms in many higher education institutions, many Asian international students are not provided with the opportunity to learn about or talk about racial issues in the U.S.; hence, some of them may or may not recognize racial microaggressions that are more subtle and implicit (Wang et al., 2020; Yu, 2022). Others may consider racism and neo-racism as a thing of the past, thus, do not consider it an issue that they will face (Lien, 2021). I argue that the lack of racial knowledge—the sense of "unknowing"—of many Asian international students is likely enabled and perpetuated by the deeply ingrained White supremacist and anti-Black structures at many higher education institutions, particularly HWIs. Additionally, the seemingly color-evasive lens could be one of the coping mechanisms that EA and Indian international students use for self-preservation. For

example, Yan and Pei (2018) implied that due to fear of losing their F-1 student visa, some international students blamed themselves or the situation itself instead of speaking up about their discriminatory experiences to protect their immigration status. Despite personal experiences of racialization, racism, and neo-racism, many Asian international students, particularly EA international students, also harbor racial hierarchy and racist ideologies towards other racial groups (i.e., Blacks, Latinxs, and SEAs), as I detail in the next subsection.

View of Others. Although Asian international students are racialized as "minority" in the U.S., they are not simply "passive reactor" during the racialization process. Rather, they participate in it by bringing preconceived "norms" (i.e., colorism, casteism, classism, and anti-Blackness) from their home countries to the U.S., which are often reinforced through their increased exposure to the mass media and interactions with different racial groups in the U.S. (Lewis, 2013; Zhang, 2015). Many EA, SA, and SEA international students continue to view Blacks/African Americans in a negative light as shaped by the mass media in the U.S. and their home countries as well as racial experiences in the U.S. (Johnson et al., 2018; Jiang, 2021; Kim, 2022; Lien, 2021; Ritter, 2016; Talbot et al., 1999; Yu, 2022; Zhang, 2015). For example, Chinese international students' distorted views toward Blacks/African Americans are reinforced by White peers who interpret their encounters with Blacks/African Americans with negative stereotypes of Blacks/African Americans (Zhang, 2015). On the other hand, at a mid-sized public university in the Midwest, some Asian international students, including EAs, SAs, and SEAs, started to shift their attitudes towards Blacks/African Americans and challenge the stereotypes of Blacks/African Americans in the mass media in their home countries after forming close personal relationships with Black/African American students (Talbot et al., 1999).

Aside from perceptions of Blacks/African Americans, increased exposure to mass media

and racial encounters has also resulted in many EA international students' negative perceptions of Latinx communities (Johnson et al., 2018; Ritter, 2016) and mixed view of Asian Americans, with some perceiving Asian Americans as foreigners in the U.S. and others perceiving Asian Americans as culturally different from Asian international students (Lynch, 2021; Mitchell et al., 2017; Ritter, 2016; Wang et al., 2020). EAs, particularly Chinese and South Korean international students' views of Asian Americans as culturally different could also stem from their experiences of "intraethnic othering" from Asian American students who intentionally distance themselves from Asian international students due to the pervasive White dominant culture on campus (Kwon et al., 2019, p. 61). Divergent from their view of other racial groups, EA international students' racist experiences have shifted their perceptions of White Americans from friendly to hostile (Sato & Hodge, 2009; Sato & Hodge, 2016; Yao, 2021). This perception intensified during the COVID-19 global pandemic when Asian international students, particularly Chinese international students, experienced racism during interactions with White Americans (Nam et al., 2021).

Asian international students' view of others regarding racialization, racism, and neo-racism varies within themselves. On the one hand, consistent with the lens through which they describe their own racialized experiences, many EA and Indian international students adopt a color-evasive lens in viewing others' racialization and experiences of racism. Strongly endorsing the myth of meritocracy, many Chinese, South Korean, and Indian international students believe that everyone, regardless of their race and ethnicity, should be treated equally and opportunities should be granted to those who put in the most effort (Kim, 2022; Lien, 2021; Yeo, 2020). Accordingly, they perceive other racially minoritized groups such as Blacks/African Americans as unfairly benefiting from affirmative action policies and Asians receiving exclusionary and

unfair treatment (Jiang, 2021; Lewis, 2013; Lien, 2021; Yeo, 2020). Such color-evasive ideology is largely detached from the sociohistorical contexts and systems of power and oppression in the U.S. (Yeo, 2020). I argue that such color-evasive ideology is also likely informed and shaped by the early recruitment of Asian international students to the U.S. based on individual merit and attainment (Hsu, 2015).

In addition, Ritter's (2015) study on EA international students' racial stereotypes at UCLA clearly showed that among Chinese, Japanese, and South Korean international students at both undergraduate and graduate levels, many considered dating Whites as preferable to Asians, with Blacks/African Americans, Latinxs, and SEAs as the least desirable. Using the same dataset, Ritter's (2016) study highlighted the racial hierarchy held by many EA international students, with Whites at the zenith, EAs in the middle, followed by Latinxs, with Blacks/African Americans and SEAs at the bottom. On the other hand, Ritter (2016) highlighted that some EA international students who have lived in the U.S. for a longer duration, particularly those who have taken diversity courses or have shared living quarters with racially diverse roommates, may begin to challenge their preconceived racial hierarchy. Similarly, Zhang's (2015) study at a large Midwestern university found that some Chinese international students started to understand the issues with White/Eurocentric policies, values, and cultures as well as the racialization and racism experienced by other racially minoritized groups. This shared sense of experience with racialization and racism has led to international SOC's, including Chinese, Taiwanese, Indian, and Pakistani international students' increased empathy toward other racially minoritized communities (Bardhan & Zhang, 2017; Lien, 2021). Furthermore, Lien's (2021) study unveiled that some Chinese international undergraduate students used terms like "systemic discrimination" and "structural oppression" to (p. 7) interpret incidents of racial inequality,

largely due to their expanded access to social media and opportunities to learn about race through U.S. history classes. Despite these promising findings, Lien (2021) discovered that some Chinese international undergraduate students continued to harbor racist stereotypes towards Blacks/African Americans even after taking courses on U.S. history, ethnic studies, and sociology, partially due to deeply rooted racism in their home countries. I argue that by remaining complacent in preconceived racial hierarchy, Asian international students likely benefit from maintaining the racial order in exchange for upholding White supremacist and anti-Black structures in HWIs, without recognizing or understanding it.

In comparison to research that explores the perceptions of Asian international students in viewing themselves, Talbot et al.'s (1999) research on EA, SA, and SEA international students, Ritter's (2015; 2016) studies on EA international students, and Lien's (2021) research on Chinese international undergraduate students were the only publications that examined Asian, particularly EA international students' perceptions of other racial groups. Hence, additional research is warranted that challenges the racial hierarchy held by many Asian international students; of particular importance is explicating the perceptions of SA and SEA international students towards other racial groups. Furthermore, additional research is necessary to interrogate how structural racism at HWIs not only enable Asian international students to bring the "norms" in their home countries (i.e., colorism, casteism, classism, and anti-Blackness) to HWIs but also how these "norms" are reified and cemented through the structures at HWIs. Given the slim body of research on SA and SEA international students' perceptions and experiences in extant literature, I bring in literature on Asian American students, particularly SAA and SEAA students, to offer additional insights on the matter in the next subsection.

Racialized Experiences of Asian American Students, Including South Asian and Southeast Asian American Students

The "yellow peril", "perpetual foreigner", and "model minority" myths are prominent racial projects that function to simultaneously ostracize Asian Americans and valorize Blacks (Kim, 1999). Historically, Asian Americans are portrayed as "yellow perils" and "perpetual foreigners" due to their perceived threat to the American White nation (Guo, 2016; Lee S, 2006) and their perceived inability to assimilate to the dominant culture in the U.S., thus, perpetually foreign (Lee et al., 2020). On the other hand, the "model minority" myth paints a misleading image of Asian American students as *honorary whites* who are educationally, economically, and professionally successful and therefore not marginalized or affected by racism (Chang, 1993). Given the pervasive "model minority" myth, Asian American students' racialized experiences remain invisible (Chang, 1993; Museus & Kiang, 2009). The "model minority" myth serves as an insidious tool that not only "renders the oppression of Asian Americans invisible" (Chang, 1993, p. 1261), but is used to wedge Asians against Blacks to reinforce deficit thinking and legitimize the oppression of Blacks to uphold White supremacy and anti-Blackness (Chang, 1993; Poon et al., 2016).

"Yellow peril" and "model minority" are interconnected, representing a continuum where "model minorities" can shift to "yellow perils" and vice versa (Okihiro, 1994, cited in Lee, 2006). In other words, "'yellow peril' and 'model minority' are two sides of the same racist coin, and Whites possess the institutional power to flip it as needed" (Wu & Nguyen, 2022). The perpetual marginalized and conditional status of Asian Americans is evident throughout history. Due to the hostile political climate amid post-9/11 and the Muslim ban during the Trump presidency (Shams, 2020), the "model minority" stereotype quickly shifted to Islamophobia

when SAs are racially profiled as Muslims (Chan, 2017; Shams, 2020). The shift from "model minority" to "yellow peril" and "perpetual foreigner" stereotypes during the COVID-19 global pandemic is another compelling example that exemplifies "the perpetual marginalized and conditional status of Asian Americans" (Li & Nicholson, 2021, p. 2).

Despite perceived success as "model minorities," recent studies have shown that Asian American students experience various forms of racism which significantly shape their educational experiences (Li & Nicholson, 2021; Museus & Park, 2015; Museus & Kiang, 2009). For example, Museus and Park (2015) found that at various types of four-year institutions across the U.S., Asian American college students experienced different forms of racism, including "racial harassment, vicarious racism, racial isolation, pressure to racially segregate, pressure to racially assimilate, racial silencing, the perpetual foreigner myth, the model minority myth, and the inferior minority myth" (p. 551). Similarly, Palmer and Maramba (2015) revealed that at a Historically Black University, Asian American students experienced similar racial microaggressions (e.g., microinsults) from their peers compared to those at PWIs. According to both studies, vicarious racism negatively impacted Asian American students' sense of safety and belonging at their respective institutions (Museus & Park, 2015; Palmer & Maramba, 2015). As a result, Asian American students often intentionally seek out on-campus ethnic enclaves and off-campus community-based organizations for a sense of belongingness (Borromeo, 2018; Museus & Park, 2015).

Given the vast array of ethnicity, culture, country of origin, religion, gender, sexuality, and social class within the Asian American community, Asian American students' racialized experiences are not monolithic. SAA and SEAA students' racialized experiences both converge and diverge from their EAA counterparts (Shams, 2020). In conjunction with the

"model minority" stereotype is the "inferior minority" stereotype that many SAA and SEAA students experience (Borromeo, 2018; Museus & Park, 2015; Poolokasingham et al., 2014; Samuel, 2004). The "model minority" stereotype speaks to how Asian Americans achieve universal high academic achievement and success whereas the inferior minority stereotype pertains to cultural deficiency, high poverty rate, and delinquency that is closely associated with stereotypes about Black and Latinx students (Depouw, 2012; Museus & Kiang, 2009; Museus & Park, 2015; Nadal et al., 2010; Ong, 1996). The "inferior minority" stereotype closely ties into the refugee background of many SEAAs and reflects the ideological Blackening experienced by many SEAAs in the dominant narrative (Ong, 1996). In other words, the subordination of SEAAs within Asian Americans is largely affected by anti-Blackness, colorism, and classism (Borromeo, 2018).

Although there are limited studies on the racialized experiences of SAA students in the U.S., a growing body of research has been conducted on SAA students in the Canadian higher education context. For example, in both Samuel's (2004) study at a PWI and Poolokasingham et al.'s (2014) study at a research-intensive university, SA students experienced vicarious racism that included inferior minority, perpetual foreigner, and terrorist stereotypes, being tokenized as the cultural experts, and feeling silenced, excluded, segregated, and unwelcomed by White peers outside the classroom. In conjunction with the "inferior minority" stereotype, SA Canadian undergraduate students simultaneously experience the "model minority" stereotype and other racial microaggressions that are similar to those of Asian American students, including being ascribed as good at STEM-related subjects, being treated as invisible in class, and being lumped with other ethnic and racial groups despite distinct ethnicity, culture, and religion (Poolokasingham et al., 2014).

As another ethnic subgroup of Asian Americans, SEAA students also have their unique racialized experiences. Similar to many SAA students, research uncovered that SEAA students, such as Filipinx students, simultaneously experienced the polarizing "model minority" and "inferior minority" stereotypes (Borromeo, 2018; Museus & Park, 2015; Museus et al., 2013; Ngo & Lee, 2007). Some SEAA students at PWIs seek out AAPI studies as community spaces on campus (Wong, 2013), others rely on familial support and aspirations to resist the "inferior minority" stereotype (Borromeo, 2018). Even on campuses with a larger Asian student population, SEAA students often experience isolation and ostracization from social life when they are the only one or one of the few from their ethnic groups (Museus & Park, 2015). Additionally, many Filipinx graduate students reported a lack of resources, support, and mentoring, which stand in contrast to their positive experiences of building meaningful connections with fellow Filipinx Americans, including both students and faculty, on their respective campuses (Nadal et al., 2010).

In addition to experiences of racism, how Asian American students view themselves is another aspect of their racialized experiences. Wong's (2013) study at two public PWIs found that Chinese and Filipinx American undergraduate students felt that the Asian American label is imposed upon them and does not account for the diverse ethnicities, cultures, experiences, and perspectives within Asian America (Wong, 2013). In Nadal et al.'s (2010) study, Filipinx graduate students from various regions highlighted their distinctive Filipinx American identity and rejected the Asian American identity. Similarly, many SA students, such as Asian Indian students, were found to identify as SAAs as a distinctive racial identity instead of the pan-ethnic Asian American identity (Gnanadass, 2016). Conversely, at an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI) and a non-AANAPISI, SEAA

college students who took classes from Asian American studies or related courses, participated in ethnoracial student organizations and/or events demonstrated a heightened awareness of their ethnoracial identities compared to those who did not (Vang, 2021). Moreover, some Asian American students intentionally claim their Asian American identity that is rooted in political coalition across the pan-Asian American community to fight against discrimination and racism (Wong, 2013).

Asian American and Asian international students share some similar racialized experiences. For example, Yeo and colleagues (2019) highlighted the pervasiveness of White supremacy in racializing Asian American and Asian international students as a monolithic entity when Asian American students were mistakenly identified by White students as Asian international students. Asian American students either personally experienced racism or witnessed Asian international students experiencing xenophobia, mockery of English accent and Asian language and culture, and overt microassults (Yeo et al., 2019). Asian American students in the study also experienced ascribed intelligence ("model minority") and ascribed *un*intelligence ("perpetual foreigner") when they were perceived as Asian international students with limited English proficiency (Yeo et al., 2019). The dichotomous depiction of Asian American students as "model minority" and "perpetual foreigner" is also evident for Chinese international students who are portrayed as successful on one hand and deficient in English and academically and socially on the other in higher education news (e.g., the Chronicle of Higher Education) (Suspitsyna & Shalka, 2019).

As Asian international students are foreign-born, it is also noteworthy to look at foreign-born Asian American students' experiences. Comparing the experiences of foreign-born and U.S.-born Asian American college students, Yoo and Castro (2011) found that perceived racism

increased U.S.-born Asian American students' academic performance whereas hampered the academic performance of those who are foreign-born. The authors speculated that many U.S.-born Asian American students have a deeper understanding of the nuances of racism, especially microaggressions, and are more prepared to navigate racism in the U.S. Hence, their perceived racism may have served as a source of motivation for them to succeed academically (Yoo & Castro, 2011). This finding offers valuable insight on Asian international students who may share similar experiences as foreign-born Asian American students and are less prepared to identify, make sense of, and navigate experiences of racism in the U.S.

The unique racialized experiences of SAA and SEAA students may shed light on the experiences of SA and SEA international students. However, due to limited research on SA and SEA international students, it remains unclear whether they also experience similar forms of racism (e.g., model minority, inferior minority, perpetual foreigner, Islamophobia) as their SAA and SEAA counterparts. Although research has shown that many SAA and SEAA students identify with their distinctive racial identity rather than the pan-ethnic Asian American identity (Gnanadass, 2016; Nadal et al., 2010), more research is warranted that elucidates whether SA and SEA international students also view themselves through such a racial lens. Furthermore, additional research is necessary that explicates whether some Asian international students, like some of their Asian American counterparts, also leverage the pan-Asian racial identity to establish a political coalition to push back against racism and neo-racism. This leads me to the next subsection wherein I detail significant gaps in the literature and how my research addresses these gaps.

Gaps in Literature

The theme of international students and race has gained increased scholarly interest in

recent years and the topic has been examined from different angles. They include how international students learn about race (Fries-Britt et al., 2014; Mitchell et al., 2017), their experiences of racism and neo-racism (e.g., Cantwell & Lee, 2010; DiAngelo, 2006; Hanassab, 2006; Koo et al., 2021a; Lee & Rice, 2007; Nam et al., 2021; Okura, 2021; Yao et al., 2021), how international students' home countries' contexts shape their experiences and perceptions of race and racial identity and how their experiences of race and racial identity influence their educational experiences (Lewis, 2013; Yeo, 2020), as well as EA international students' racial stereotypes toward other racial groups and how these attitudes shape their relationships with U.S. peers (Lien, 2021; Ritter, 2015; Ritter, 2016). There is a growing criticality in literature that unravels the underlying power, privilege, and inequity that goes beyond the surface-level description of international students' experiences (Mittelmeier & Yang, 2022). For example, scholars have employed critical theories (e.g., CRT, EYES. neo-racism) to challenge the institutional, structural, and systemic racism (George Mwangi et al., 2018; Lewis, 2013; Yeo, 2020; Yao et al., 2019; Yao & George Mwangi, 2022; Zhou et al., 2005) that shape international students' racialized experiences.

Based on the review of relevant literature, it is evident that extant literature rarely goes beyond the categorization of international students and is at best disaggregated by race and nationality (Yao et al., 2019). As Heng (2019) described, researchers should explore international students' experiences as a diverse group instead of a singular and oversimplified "international student experience" (p. 2). Lee and colleagues (2019) contend that the label "international students" often refers to a student's citizenship and immigration status but does not account for the heterogeneity of this population, including diversity within the same racial group. Even within Asian international students, SA and SEA international students' perceptions

and experiences remain overlooked and understudied in extant literature. Ethnicity is a key identity, among various identities, that intersects with race to inform the unique and nuanced perceptions and experiences of ethnic subgroups of Asian international students. Merely focusing on EA international students not only masks the perceptions and experiences of SA and SEA international students but ignores the unique needs of SA and SEA international students at colleges and universities. Given so, research must move beyond racial aggregation and include other attributes in their analysis, such as ethnicity within the same racial group. Hence, an inter-ethnic approach that includes SA and SEA international students and compares and contrasts the perceptions and experiences of different ethnic subgroups is necessary to move towards a more well-rounded and holistic understanding of Asian international students' perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism.

Additionally, mainstream research often perceives international students as a static group and overlooks the processes and changes that they experience over time (Haugh, 2008). Although research found that many Asian international students view themselves through common social constructs from their home countries (i.e., nationality and ethnicity) instead of race (Lewis, 2013; Wang, 2010; Wang et al., 2020), Okura's (2020) longitudinal research suggested that after six months, heightened racial consciousness and a sense of racial identity emerged among some Chinese international students, particularly those who socialized more with U.S. peers. Additionally, research has shown that foreign-born SOC's awareness of race in the U.S. progresses from unexamined racial identity to moving towards racial identity examination in the U.S., to eventually integrative awareness (Fries-Britt et al., 2014). Moreover, how Asian international students make sense of their racist incidents by drawing from home countries' contexts (Chen, 2021) and many EA international students' distorted views of other

racial groups before migrating to the U.S. both imply how Asian international students' home countries' various contexts contribute to their perceptions and experiences in the U.S. (Ritter, 2015; 2016). Altogether, these findings suggest the necessity of further unpacking how Asian international students perceive and experience race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism from a longitudinal standpoint, particularly comparing pre-arrival and post-arrival in the U.S.

Considering many Asian international students' strong ascription to meritocracy and a color-evasive lens in viewing themselves and others that is detached from systems of power and oppression (Yeo, 2020), it is crucial to critically examine how Asian international students perceive and experience race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism from a critical perspective. A critical lens allows me to decipher how underlying systems of power, privilege, and oppression shape Asian international students' perceptions and experiences. By employing a critical lens, I seek to shift the focus from blaming international students for their deficiencies, expecting them to shoulder the burden of overcoming racism and neo-racism, and viewing their preconceived biases as merely individual choices, to uncovering and situating Asian international students' perceptions and experiences within the various structural and systemic "norms" in HWIs, the U.S., and their home countries. Furthermore, the racialization of the COVID-19 global pandemic, exacerbated anti-Asian racism, pervasive anti-Blackness, and uprising social justice movements (i.e., Black Lives Matter, Stop AAPI Hate) amid the pandemic (Koo et al., 2021a) presents an important context that calls upon researchers to explore and understand how the pandemic may have influenced Asian international students' perceptions and experiences during their stay in the U.S.

To address these gaps in current literature, my research seeks to document how Asian

international students perceive and experience race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism, both in terms of how they view themselves and others; compare and contrast the perceptions and experiences of EA, SA, and SEA international students; and illuminate the changes in their perceptions and experiences over the course of their time at an HWI that overlapped with the COVID-19 global pandemic. Situating at the crux of the "theoretical borderlands" (Abes, 2016, p. 2009) of constructivist and critical paradigms, my research will not only document Asian international students' perceptions and experiences, but also disrupt the institutional, structural, and systemic racism that shape Asian international students' perceptions and experiences within an HWI context. To do so, EYES theory (Yeo, 2020), coupled with neo-racism (Balibar, 2007; Hervik, 2013; Lee & Rice, 2007), offers me a critical theoretical lens in exploring and understanding Asian international students' perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism.

Conceptual Framework

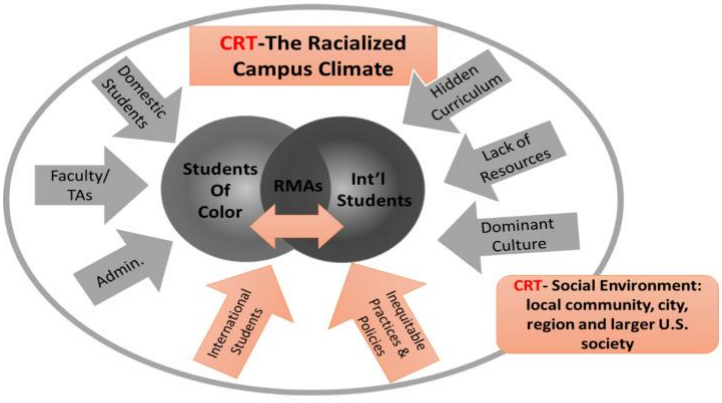
To examine Asian international students' perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism in an HWI over the course of their time in the U.S., I sensitized key concepts from two critical theoretical constructs, EYES theory (Yeo, 2020) and neo-racism (Balibar, 2007; Hervik, 2013; Lee & Rice, 2007), to inform data collection and analysis. EYES theory offered a valuable lens that looked at the racialized experiences and racial identity transition of international SOC, including Asian international students (Yeo, 2020); neo-racism helped to articulate the "cultural racism" (Balibar, 2007, p. 86) that Asian international students experienced that differed from Asian American students. In this section, I delineate EYES theory, followed by neo-racism and its utility in previous studies. Then, I illustrate how EYES theory, coupled with neo-racism, constituted a conceptual framework to guide my study.

EYES Theory

Grounded in CRT (Delgado et al., 2017; Ladson Billings & Tate, 1995), Yeo's (2020) EYES theory was established through empirical research that examined the racialized experiences and racial identity transition of international SOC at a PWI. The concept of EYES symbolizes the "eyes" through which international students "view" themselves and others, how these views change over time, and how these views shape their racial identity (Yeo, 2020). EYES theory includes three key tenets, (1) international SOC experience drastic transitions when integrating into PWIs, (2) international SOC's educational experiences and racial identity are shaped by the racialized campus climate and systemic racism, (3) international SOC's home countries' historical and sociocultural contexts influence their perceptions of race and racial identity transition in the U.S. The following diagram is a detailed illustration of the EYES theory and its key components.

Figure 1.

The Revised Conceptual Framework of EYES Theory



Note. SOC = Students of Color, RMAs= Racial microaggressions, Int'l Ss= International Students. In this paper, the racialized campus climates include macro and micro-environments, including domestic students (Not limited to White students), Staff/Administrators (Not limited to White staff), Professors and instructors (Not limited to White faculty members), hidden curriculum and pedagogy, educational system and policy and so on. But please keep in mind that racism and racial microaggressions can occur between marginalized groups, which the double-headed arrow indicate. The arrow, international students, indicates diverse contexts that international students bring to the U.S. campus.

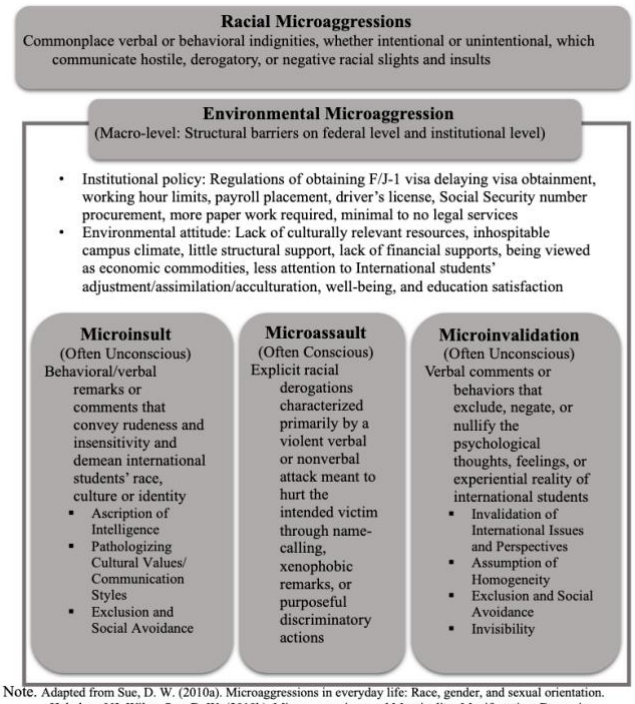
As shown in the diagram, the large oval consists of the social environment in the U.S.

society, including the historical, sociocultural, political, and regional environments (Yeo, 2020). The social environment is challenged through the lens of CRT. As a microcosm of the society, higher education, as shaped by the larger U.S. historical, political, sociocultural, and regional environments, reflect a racialized campus climate. Within the racialized campus climate are the dominant culture, a lack of resources, hidden curriculums, domestic students, faculty/instructors/Teaching Assistants, administrators/staff, as well as international students and inequitable practices and policies (Yeo, 2020). In the center of the campus environments are domestic SOC and international SOC. The overlap of the Venn diagram contains similar racial microaggressions (RMA) experienced by both domestic and international SOC. Due to different nationalities, citizenships, cultures, and languages, international SOC and domestic SOC's experiences of RMA also differ (see table below). The double-headed arrow between domestic and international SOC indicates that international SOC also hold biases and stereotypes toward domestic SOC that are both shaped by their home countries' contexts and are rooted in the "history of oppression and racism and social structure of power in the U.S." (Yeo, 2020, p. 178). Similarly, domestic SOC also hold biases and stereotypes towards international SOC. The racism and racial microaggressions between marginalized groups aggravate a racist campus climate (Yeo, 2020).

The shared and divergent experiences of RMAs by international and domestic SOC are detailed in the following table. The table is an adapted version of Sue's (2010) RMAs' framework that elucidates the different types of RMAs experienced by international SOC, including microinsults, microassaults, and microinvalidations, on both interpersonal and environmental levels.

Figure 2.

Categories of and Relationship among Racial Microaggressions Targeting International Students



Note. Adapted from Sue, D. W. (2010a). Microaggressions in everyday life: Race, gender, and sexual orientation. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley. Sue, D. W. (2010b). Microaggressions and Marginality: Manifestation, Dynamics, and Impact. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley

EYES theory is firmly grounded in CRT, particularly the tenets of race and racism as endemic and permanent in the U.S. society, the disruption of the dominant ideology, and the intersectionality of racism interlocking with other forms of subordination such as sexism, classism, heterosexism, homophobia, nationalism, and xenophobia (Crenshaw, 1990; Delgado et al., 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano, 1997). EYES theory differs from CRT in that it specifically speaks to the racialized experiences of international SOC in an H/PWI context (Yeo, 2020). EYES theory reflects an asset-based approach (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) that disrupts the deficit perspective that burdens international SOC with the responsibility of assimilation and acculturation and that detracts from institutional and systemic issues (Yeo, 2020). In doing so, EYES theory shifts the focus from blaming international SOC as deficient to the racialized experiences of international SOC within a racialized campus climate and systemic racism that

permeates the sociocultural, political, and historical spheres in the United States, an approach that counters the ahistorical and decontextualized analysis of international SOC (Yeo, 2020). Additionally, EYES theory highlights the fluidity of international SOC's experiences by underscoring that their experiences, worldviews, and attitudes may change over the course of their time in the U.S. (Yeo, 2020).

Despite its significant value in illuminating racialized experiences and racial identity transition of international SOC, EYES theory has not been widely applied in any other empirical research except Yeo's mixed-method study (2020) on international SOC's understanding of race, racial identity transition, and experiences of RMAs in the U.S. and Yeo et al.'s (2019) study on the mistaken identity and racial microaggressions of Asian international and Asian American students, both conducted at a large, public, research-oriented, and PWI in the Midwest. Yeo's (2020) study found that many Asian international college students (i.e., Chinese, South Korean, and Indian) strongly endorsed the myth of meritocracy and adopted a color-evasiveness lens in understanding their experiences of RMAs. Yeo et al.'s (2019) study uncovered that many Asian American students were mistakenly identified by White peers as Asian international students and experienced various forms of RMAs (i.e., model minority, perpetual foreigner, limited English proficiency, and denigration of Asian language and culture). Both studies suggest the utility of EYES theory in examining Asian international students' perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, and racism. Given so, more research that applies this relatively new theoretical framework and examines the utility of the framework is warranted.

Neo-Racism

EYES theory elucidates the racialized experiences and racial identity transition of

international SOC and speaks more to traditional forms of racism. “Cultural racism” (Balibar, 2007, p. 86), on the other hand, is a newer form of racism that many Asian international students experience. Rooted in White supremacy and anti-Blackness on a global scale (Suspitsyna, & Shalka, 2019), neo-racism helps to articulate the different forms of racism that Asian international students experience due to their different nationality, citizenship, culture, and language, including accents (Balibar, 2007), that differ from Asian American students. Neo-racism “explores structural racism in the context of immigration where race, culture, and nationality interact complexly to produce a hierarchy of social positions” (Cantwell & Lee, 2010, p. 497). Additionally, neo-racism is used to legitimize discrimination based on hierarchies of nationalities and its respective cultures (Lee & Opio, 2011; Hervik, 2013), with the purpose of “marginalizing and assimilating groups in a globalizing world” (Lee & Rice, 2007, p. 389). The intersectionality of Asian international students’ “racialized experiences are complicated by a foreign status that can also evoke xenophobia and nativism” (Yao et al., 2019). Furthermore, neo-racism could shed light on how different ethnic subgroups of Asian international students experience intra-ethnic discrimination, which helps to explain how anti-Blackness is implicated through neo-racism.

Multiple studies applied neo-racism in research on international students on the interpersonal and institutional levels and at different institutional and regional contexts (Lee & Rice, 2007; Koo et al., 2021a). As the first who employed neo-racism as the theoretical framework in examining international students’ experiences in U.S. higher education, Lee and Rice (2007) found that at a large public university in the Southwest, international SOC experienced neo-racism whereas their White counterparts did not. International students from East Asia, India, Latin America, and the Middle East experienced verbal insults, being ignored

and excluded, cultural discrimination, and direct confrontation whereas their White counterparts from Europe, Canada, and New Zealand did not experience discrimination based on their race or culture (Lee & Rice, 2007). Similarly, Lee and Opio (2011) used neo-racism as the theoretical framework and found that at various PWIs, Black-African international student-athletes experienced neo-racism whereas their White-African counterparts did not (Lee & Opio, 2011). Specifically, Black-African international student-athletes not only experienced discrimination based on their region of origin but also skin color whereas those who are White did not experience discrimination based on their region of origin until their accents were heard (Lee & Opio, 2011).

In addition, scholars have used neo-racism to zero into the experiences of Asian international students in various contexts. For example, analyzing the experiences and perceptions of racism by international SOC during the COVID-19 global pandemic, Koo et al. (2021a) highlighted the negative impact of neo-racism on these students at various 4-year universities. Using neo-racism and othering as the conceptual framework, Yao (2018) found that at a large public land-grant research institution in the Midwest, first-year Chinese international students' experiences of neo-racism negatively affected their interpersonal relationships with U.S. peers in the residence halls. Chinese international students' experiences of neo-racism were also evident at historically Black institutions, as described by Dos Santos (2019). Through the lens of neo-racism, Cantwell and Lee (2010) revealed the negative impact of neo-racist stereotypes on predominantly Asian international postdocs' work opportunities in the U.S. and the UK. In the South Korean context, Lee et al. (2017) employed neo-racism and neo-nationalism as the conceptual framework and found that at a large private research institution, Asian international students experienced greater unfair treatment than those from other regions

(i.e., Europe, North America, and others) (Lee et al., 2017). Aside from empirical research, Lee (2021) argues that neo-racism is also manifested at the federal policy level. Examples include the "Muslim travel ban", the elimination of the "duration of status" to limit students' study in the U.S., and the proposed deportation of international students should universities offer fully online classes amid the COVID-19 global pandemic (Lee, 2021). Neo-racism nicely complements EYES theory by articulating the "cultural racism" (Balibar, 2007, p. 86) that Asian international students experience; hence, I explicate why the integration of EYES theory and neo-racism is suitable for my study in the next subsection.

Integrating EYES Theory and Neo-Racism

EYES theory was particularly relevant for my study, considering its focus on the H/PWI context and the acknowledgment and centering of how the historical, political, sociocultural, and regional contexts in both Asian international students' home countries and the U.S. impact their perceptions and experiences of race and racial identity transition in the U.S. (Yeo, 2020). Additionally, EYES theory's grounding in CRT, an asset-based approach, the emphasis on the heterogeneity of international SOC, and its focus on the fluid experiences of international SOC at H/PWIs (Yeo, 2020) aligned seamlessly with the philosophical underpinnings and purpose of my study. Furthermore, the educational and campus environment and the social environment in the local community, region, and the U.S. society (Yeo, 2020) were integral parts of the *bounded system* for the multiple cases that I explored, which aligned with the multiple case study methodology for the study.

Neo-racism nicely complemented EYES theory by articulating the nuances and complexities of Asian international students' experiences and foregrounding the intersection of race, nationality, culture, language, and accents within the global hierarchy and power relations.

In other words, neo-racism complemented EYES theory by complicating the "different degrees of racial experiences and dissimilar racial microaggressions" (Yeo, 2020, p. 178), particularly "cultural racism" (Balibar, 2007, p. 86), experienced by Asian international students. Some may argue that neo-racism turns away from Asian international students' experiences of racism, especially considering many Asian international students may interpret their racist experiences as neo-racism due to their limited knowledge of U.S. history and exposure to racial issues (Mitchell et al. 2017). I argue that Asian international students' racialized experiences were complicated by their nationality, citizenship, culture, and language and their experiences of neo-racism uniquely illuminated how anti-Blackness was implicated through such experiences in addition to experiences of racism. Additionally, neo-racism provided me with the tool and language that extended beyond race and traditional forms of racism to delineate how Asian international students perceived and interpreted their experiences of racism and neo-racism that included both inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic discrimination. Thus, I integrated EYES theory and neo-racism into a conceptual framework that helped to understand how Asian international students perceived and described their experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism and how their perceptions and experiences changed over the course of their time in the United States.

Furthermore, as the self is intricately woven into the research process (Madison, 2005), EYES theory and neo-racism were also the "eyes" through which I understood the work. As I discuss in Chapter 3, as a participant-observer, I am a member of Asian international students, who I observed and examined. Because of this, the "I" was inseparable from the "we" in the work. The "eyes" through which I interpreted how Asian international students perceived and described their experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism were quintessentially the "eyes" that I used to understand my personal journey of racial identity after transitioning to

an HWI, how I viewed myself and others (including other Asians and racial groups), how these views have and continue to change over time, and my own experiences of racism and neo-racism. The "eyes" have and continue to become more clarified through my engagement in participant observation. Additionally, as described in EYES theory (Yeo, 2020), I saw the racialized campus climate as inseparable from the broader social environment in the U.S. The "eyes" through which I understood the work also consisted of my home country's historical, political, and sociocultural contexts, which I drew from to interpret what I observed.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed relevant literature related to emergent themes across extant literature on international students in U.S. higher education, including international student mobility and critiques of institutional recruitment efforts that commodify international students; academic and sociocultural acculturative challenges and buffers that mediate international students' acculturative stress, with the caveat that associated with the buffers (e.g., socialization with U.S. peers) are experiences of discrimination that hinder international students' sense of belonging. I offered a counter-narrative of the deficit conceptualization of international students, particularly those of Color and argued the necessity of moving the spotlight from blaming international SOC as deficient to disrupting inequitable institutional policies and practices. Additionally, I examined research on how Asian international students view themselves and others regarding race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism, and contextualized their experiences in the U.S. within the historical, political, and sociocultural contexts in their home countries. Given the inter-ethnic approach of my research, I intentionally took a step back and examined the broader transnational migration and emigration of SA and SEA international students to the U.S. as salient historical and socio-political contexts in South Asia and Southeast Asia.

Furthermore, I introduced literature on the racialized experiences of SAA and SEAA students to illuminate the experiences of SA and SEA international students. Based on the critical examination of literature, I highlighted the gaps in extant literature and elucidated how my research fills the gaps. Lastly, I described an integration of EYES theory and neo-racism that constituted a conceptual framework to help interpret Asian international students' perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism at an HWI. In the next chapter, I detail the methodology and methods that I employed for the study, my philosophical underpinnings, and researcher positionality.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) define qualitative researchers as those who "study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p. 3). Aside from rich, thick, and in-depth descriptions and interpretations of phenomena, qualitative research can also illuminate calls for social change and emancipation (Creswell, 2013). The philosophical perspectives and the nature of qualitative study aligned perfectly with the purpose and research questions of my study. Hence, I employed qualitative methodology, specifically multiple case study methodology, borrowing tools from ethnographic methods, to inform data collection and analysis.

Multiple Case Study Methodology

Multiple case study methodology allowed me to gain a holistic and in-depth understanding of how Asian international students perceived and described their experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism at an HWI, how ethnic subgroups shared similar and/or different perceptions and experiences, as well as how their perceptions and experiences changed over the course of their time in the U.S. Specifically, my research question that asks how the perceptions and experiences of EA, SA, and SEA international students may vary, lent itself to a multiple case study approach with cross-case analysis (Stake, 2005). Multiple case study allowed me to compare and contrast multiple cases of EA, SA, and SEA international students and by doing so, captured rich, thick, and in-depth description and analysis of Asian international students' perceptions and experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Yin (2014) defines case study as an inquiry that, "investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 18). The blurred boundary between

phenomenon and context was not only consistent with the aim of my study but also aligned with the conceptual framework, which underscored the multiple contexts, including campus and social environments, wherein Asian international students were embedded (Yeo, 2020). Furthermore, coupling the multiple case study with constructivist and critical paradigms enabled me to attend to the phenomenon under study but move beyond "surface appearances" (Madison, 2012, p. 5) and disrupt the status quo and "unsettle both neutrality and taken-for-granted assumptions by bringing to light underlying and obscure operations of power and control." (Madison, 2012, p. 5).

Philosophical Underpinnings

Philosophical assumptions underlie the research process and guide the research design. The philosophical versatility of case study methodology (Harrison et al., 2017) allowed me to simultaneously employ constructivist and critical paradigms to examine Asian international students' perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism. From a constructivist standpoint, realities and knowledge are socially constructed (Glesne, 2016). Cases are selected and interpreted to yield a rich and thick description of the phenomenon under study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Moreover, the description illuminates readers' understanding of the topic, which forms another perspective of the case from the readers' end (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). Hence, my role as a researcher was to describe and interpret how Asian international students perceived and experienced race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism and unearthed the underlying meanings of events and activities (Crotty, 1998). Furthermore, I saw my participants and I as both the knower and the known, co-constructing meanings through interactions, conversations, and dialogues (Jones et al., 2013).

In addition to the constructivist paradigm, my study was also grounded in critical

paradigms. Critical paradigms believe that realities and knowledge are socially constructed, and more importantly, influenced by power relations within society (Crotty, 1998). Researchers who adopt such epistemology and ontology conduct research that is "simultaneously hermeneutic and emancipatory" (Thomas, 1993, p. 4). In other words, researchers not only bring to light the unheard stories and silenced voices from communities that are marginalized by systems of power and oppression (Madison, 2005; Thomas, 1993) but by doing so, critically examine how oppression is structured and perpetuated (Mertens, 2019). Furthermore, by moving beyond describing "what is" (Thomas, 1993, p. v), to "what could be" (p. v), critical researchers advance social justice and the emancipation of those at the margins of the society (Madison, 2005).

Constructivism emphasizes participants' experiences and subjectivity. Traditionally, constructivist approaches have not paid focused attention to power, oppression, or systems (e.g., race, gender, social class, etc.) whereas critical paradigms foreground systems of power and oppression that shape participants' experiences, particularly by problematizing how systems of oppression (e.g., racism, sexism, classism) subjugate marginalized communities (Abes, 2016; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Despite the tension between the two theoretical perspectives, I echo Abes's (2009) assertion of "theoretical borderlands" (p. 143) that highlights the incompleteness of one theoretical perspective and the strength of bringing multiple theoretical perspectives together in research. By merging two seemingly contradictory theoretical perspectives, I created new ways to interpret participants' perceptions and experiences (Abes, 2009). By partnering constructivism with critical approaches, I not only examined how Asian international students described their perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism but simultaneously critiqued how their meaning-making is shaped by institutional, structural, and systemic inequities. Furthermore, by juxtaposing multiple theoretical perspectives, I challenged

the traditional distinct boundaries of theoretical perspectives and advocate for an interdisciplinary approach to research (Abes, 2009).

Study Context

Given that case study is an in-depth description and analysis of a *bounded system* (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2005), it is important for me to address the specific context wherein the phenomenon is examined (Yin, 2014). In this subsection, I illustrate how space and time were both integral contexts that constituted the *bounded system* for the case. The research site was a large, public, Research-1, land-grant, flagship, and HWI. The racial demographics of undergraduate and graduate student enrollments combined was approximately 44% White, 10% Black, 18% Asian, 8% Hispanic, less than 1% American Indian/Alaska Native, less than 1% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 5% unknown, 5% Bi-/Multi-Racial, and 10% foreign[3]. I intentionally selected this institutional context given the myriad of challenges Asian international students navigated due to their racially minoritized status in an institution where its policies, practices, and traditions were designed by and for Whites (Allen et al., 1991). Additionally, the deeply rooted White supremacy, anti-Blackness, and ahistorical approach in the structures of HWIs (Dancy et al., 2018) empowered Asian international students to bring the "norms" (i.e., colorism, casteism, and anti-Blackness) from their home countries to HWIs and remained unknown of their preconceived "norms" during their studies, which reinforced the racial order and structural racism at their institutions.

Historically, Global University was established when slavery permeated the state, with

[3] The student racial demographics have been altered slightly to protect the anonymity of the institution under investigation. I argue that the catch-all category of "foreign" for all international students is problematic because it not only masks the tremendous diversity in races and ethnicities of international students, but it perpetuates ethnocentrism and color-evasiveness.

many founders of the institution as slave holders. It is without doubt that the building of the institution relied on forced slave labor. Global University was also founded when the state was racially segregated from after the Civil War. Additionally, it was not until the 1950s that the first Black undergraduate students got admitted at the Global University and the first group of Black students earned their master's degrees; and it was not until 1952 that the first Black graduate student was able to take all his courses on campus and receive a degree from the university. The permeating impact of segregation and the racist history of the institution is evident through the multiple anti-Black incidents that have taken place at the institution during recent years and the low Black freshmen enrollment at the institution for nearly three decades until 2019. These contexts altogether presented Global University as an important site to examine how Asian international students perceived and described their perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism amid the prevalent issues of race and racism on campus[4].

There was a large and diverse representation of international students at Global University. Historically, Global University welcomed its first international student in the 1800s, starkly contrasting the much later enrollment of the first Black student (1951) at the university. The overall international student enrollment went up with the passing of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (Cohn, 2015). Currently, out of over 40,000 total students, international students constituted approximately 10% of the study body, with the total number of international graduate students almost doubling that of international undergraduate students. Among the 134 countries where international students came from, the top three places of origin for international students were China (1530 students), India (1033 students), and South Korea (189 students), for both undergraduate and graduate students. Aside from these three countries, other Asian

[4] The source of institutional data is not cited here to protect the anonymity of the participants and the institution under investigation.

international students came from Taiwan (155 students), Vietnam (45 students), Bangladesh (59 students), Sri Lanka (42 students), Pakistan (30 students), Japan (31 students), Indonesia (23 students), Nepal (21 students), North Korea (less than 20 students), Malaysia (less than 20 students), Philippines (less than 20 students), Burma (less than 20 students), Thailand (less than 20 students), and Mongolia (less than 20 students).

Additionally, the institution was located in a suburban city in the Middle Atlantic region of the Eastern U.S. with a population of over 41 million. In the state where the institution was located, approximately 50% of all residents were White, 30% of them were Black, 10% of them were Latinx/Hispanic, and 6% of them were Asian. The immigrant/foreign-born population was approximately 15% of all residents. The suburban city was in a county with a population of approximately 970,000 and was the second-most populous county in the state. The county had a high percentage of Black residents (60%), followed by Hispanic/Latinx (19%), White (12%), and Asian (4%) individuals. The immigrant/foreign-born population in the county was approximately 22% of all residents. The suburban city bordered a large metropolitan city with a population of roughly 670,000 and a high Black (45%) and White (37%) population, followed by Hispanic/Latinx (11%) and Asian (4%). The immigrant/foreign-born population in the suburban city made up approximately 14% of all residents.

All participants were international students from some part of Asia at Global University. Participants from the same country/region (EA, SA, and SEA) also had some commonalities related to culture as tied into their country/region of origin. They also embodied other shared cultures and memberships outside of these cultures and memberships, such as their academic status (e.g., undergraduate, master's, doctoral), disciplines (STEM vs. non-STEM), gender, and duration in the U.S. In the subsequent section, I outline some of the features within the various

cultures and subcultures that Asian international students experienced at Global University (Park, 2013), based on my fieldnotes from participant observation.

In terms of the broader campus culture, the influence of racial diversity at Global University was visible at various spaces on campus, such as the classrooms, the student union, the dining halls, and at various campus-wide events. Like many other large public institutions, Global University hosted regular campus-wide events, including orientation, student organization fairs, mental health awareness week, homecoming, Greek life events, college sports, and other events that promoted cultural and language diversity. The focused promotion of diverse cultures, languages, and identities was reflected in the university newspaper and various campus-wide email announcements. Within the broader campus culture were academic disciplinary subcultures. For example, the distinctive subcultures of STEM vs. humanities and social sciences disciplines were reflected in the curriculum, photos, and posters displayed in the buildings. Global University not only had a designated Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) office that organized DEI programs and initiatives on a regular basis, but various departments and colleges also started to implement their own DEI programs and initiatives at the time when I conducted the study.

Aside from the broader campus culture, Asian international students who participated in different student organizations also experienced unique subcultures within these organizations. Most of the student organizations were based on shared interests (e.g., sports, advocacy, career development), religions, and/or racial/ethnic identities and cultures. Many Asian international students were also a part of an international student-led student organization created for international students at Global University. As the only student organization for international students on campus, the organization served as a platform for many international students to

connect with fellow international students through campus-wide social and cultural events hosted by the organization. In addition to the international student-led organization, there was also a newly formed international student committee where international student leaders served as advocates for international students, in partnership with the designated office (international student office) that supported international students at Global University.

The international student office not only offered a variety of resources related to visa and immigration, academic, career/employment, and funding, but also hosted programs that supported international students with English language learning, orientations for international students and scholars, training for orientation leaders, and other campus-wide social and cultural events. These events served as a space where international students connected with fellow international students and where domestic students learned about diverse cultures and languages from international students. At these social events, "Where are you from?" "Which program are you in?" and "When did you come to Global University?" were common icebreakers among international students and between international students and domestic students. The question of "Where are you from?" often came up with the underlying assumption that those who were present were international students who were not born and/or from the U.S. As such, this question took on a different meaning that invited fellow international students to share their national origin as points of connections with one another. On the other hand, international students, including Asian international students, may have been unaware of the danger of perpetuating the "perpetual foreigner" stereotype of Asians in the U.S. through this seemingly innocent question.

As the international student office mainly focused on the diverse cultures, languages, and

the foreign status of international students, actual attention to racial and ethnic identity was often overlooked. Given so, there was a lack of opportunities provided for international students to learn about and engage in dialogues around race and racism at Global University. Despite the one-off international student panel on race relations in the U.S. organized by the office, the ahistorical and colorblind lens in viewing and supporting international students was evident at Global University. The ahistorical and colorblind lens was also evident by the "foreign" label used to describe international students' racial identity in institutional research documents on student racial demographics.

In addition to space, time was another important element of the *bounded system* in the case study (Stake, 2005). The study was conducted in the aftermath of the COVID-19 global pandemic when many classes and campus events were conducted in a hybrid format and the elimination of mandatory face-mask requirements. The study was also conducted during a precarious time when anti-Asian racism was exacerbated, "yellow peril" and "perpetual foreigner" stereotypes reemerged (Li & Nicholson, 2021), and anti-Blackness persisted. There was also an uprising of social justice movements, including Black Lives Matter and Stop AAPI Hate, among others, particularly evident in the metropolitan city where Global University bordered. The study was also conducted during a time when Asian international students' awareness of racism, both overt and covert, was likely heightened as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic (Koo et al., 2021a). For my study, the unit of analysis was multiple cases of Asian international students, and the different ethnic subgroups of Asian international students (EA, SA, and SEA) were three case studies.

Participant Recruitment and Profiles

For this study, I used different sampling strategies to recruit participants, which

included purposeful sampling, criterion sampling, maximum variation, and snowball sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Jones et al., 2013; Mertens, 2019). To recruit participants, I reached out to various campus units and asked their help to include the recruitment blurb and poster in their listservs and on their social media platforms, including different academic departments (e.g., education, computer science, and business), international students office, honors colleges, graduate student office, and student organizations geared towards Asian international and Asian American students, particularly those with a focus on ethnicities. I also reached out to the registrar office and created a listserv that allowed me to send out the recruitment email to all international students on campus. As I used ethnographic methods, specifically participant observation as one of the data collection methods, I also recruited participants by handing out flyers at the various campus-wide events that I attended, as well as by posting and handing out flyers around campus (e.g., library, student union) (see Appendix A). Once I recruited the initial participants, I used snowball sampling (Mertens, 2019)—asking participants to help spread the word about the study among their peers and encouraging them to participate in the study. To encourage participation and recognize the time that participants spent in being a part of the study, I offered $30 Amazon e-Gift card to each participant per formal interview.

I used purposeful sampling and identified 14 information-rich participants, including five EA, six SA, and three SEA international students, that yielded in-depth insights on how Asian international students perceived and described their experiences related to race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism. One East Asian participant withdrew from the study during the second round of member checking, which I detail in the trustworthiness and limitations sections. Despite so, the final number of participants reached data saturation—particularly within each case of EA, SA, and SEA international students—and ensured the trustworthiness of the study (Saunders et

al., 2018). In order to qualify for the study, participants must have met three main criteria, including (1) undergraduate or graduate students who self-identify as Asian international students, (2) enrolled in the institution during the year 2018 and later, (3) enrolled in the institution for at least six to nine months, and (4) be at least 18 years of age or older at the time of the study. To determine eligibility, I invited participants to complete a demographic survey (see Appendix B) and reached out to the ones that were eligible to participate in the study.

The sampling criteria, coupled with maximum variation sampling strategy (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Jones et al., 2013; Patton, 2002) allowed me to recruit participants with diverse backgrounds within each case. Specifically, there were three undergraduate and three graduate EA international students, two undergraduate and four graduate SA international students, and three undergraduate SEA international students from different disciplines (including six non-STEM and nine STEM majors), nationalities (including China, Hong Kong, Portugal, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Philippines, and Malaysia), and genders (including nine female identified, six male identified, and one non-binary identified). Additionally, the sample also included students whose duration of stay in the U.S. ranged from one to seven years, all of whom have all experienced the pandemic during their time in the U.S. Detailed participant profiles are included in Appendix C.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data Collection

As a case study captures the complexity of a case (Stake, 1995), in-depth data was collected through multiple methods (Jones et al., 2013) and from multiple sources (Merriam, 1998). The different methods of data collection not only complemented each other in an interactive manner (Bowen, 2009) but also corroborated and converged to enhance the overall

trustworthiness of the study (Patton, 1990). Data was collected through (1) participant observation, including informal unstructured interviews and collection of artifacts, and (2) two rounds of in-person semi-structured interviews with each participant. I echo what Goldstein and Reiboldt (2004) describe as the iterative process of data collection—participant observation offers opportunities to collect artifacts and recruit participants, unstructured interviews and artifacts analysis during observation help generate new questions or refine existing questions for semi-structured interviews, and semi-structured interviews help focus participant observation or suggest additional sites to observe.

To understand the racialized campus climate, including micro- and macro-environments, and the social environment (Yeo, 2020), I observed how, at various campus and off-campus contexts, Asian international students interacted with other Asian ethnic groups, other racial groups, including international students and domestic students, faculty, instructors, and TAs, and administrators and staff, as well as the hidden curriculum, lack of resources, dominant culture, and inequitable policies and practices at the institution under investigation. Date collection from participant observation helped provide important contextual knowledge (as detailed in the "Study Context" section in this chapter) to help answer RQ1 and RQ2. Data collection from formal interviews illuminated how Asian international students viewed themselves and others (including other Asian ethnic groups and racial groups), how these views changed over time, and their perceptions and experiences of racism and neo-racism (Yeo, 2020; Balibar, 2007; Hervik, 2013; Lee & Rice, 2007), to answer RQ1.1 and RQ2. Data collection from formal interviews also helped to illuminate how different ethnic subgroups' perceptions and experiences varied, depending on their home countries' contexts and the hierarchy of

nationalities and respective cultures (Yeo, 2020; Balibar, 2007; Hervik, 2013; Lee & Rice, 2007), to answer RQ1.2.

As such, I became a participant-observer for a group of Asian international students on campus. As a participant-observer, I "deep hanged out" (Madison, 2005, p. 17) with the participants at multiple sites on campus. By fully immersing myself in the culture and experience of the participants, I was able to build rapport with each participant and gained an understanding of the historical, physical, and sociocultural context where they lived and studied. I narrowed down the observation sites based on recommendations and consent from the participants and consent from the organizers (including faculty, staff, and students) for me to enter the sites. Prior to each observation, I explained the purpose of observation and elicited verbal consent from the participants and those who were present on sites (e.g., students, faculty, staff, administrators, and local community members).

Throughout the Fall 2022 semester, I "hanged out" with each participant for two to four times, with each session lasting between 30-160 minutes. Overall, I conducted 51 participant observations in total. Given the hybrid model at Global University when the study was conducted, I conducted observations at both in-person and virtual sites, including classes (including the ones that the participants served as TAs), lab sessions, seminars, student club meetings and events, volunteer/service-learning, intramural sports, and informal hangouts, in the participants' programs, departments, colleges, on- and off-campus. Additionally, I observed campus-wide events organized by the international student office and the international student-led organization, which offered me the opportunity to recruit additional participants and understand the broader campus culture and climate. These sites represented a mosaic of campus, educational, and social environments, both on and off campus; thus, conducting observations at

these sites helped me understand the racialized campus climate and the social environment as discussed in EYES theory (Yeo, 2020). During participant observation, I relied on an observation protocol as the guidance (see Appendix D).

During participant observation, I also engaged in informal interviews with participants in an unstructured manner. Unstructured interviews are usually not guided by a predetermined set of questions and are heavily reliant on interactions with the participants to guide the conversations (Turner III, 2010). These informal conversational interviews helped me further understand and clarify the events that I observed, witnessed, and experienced during observation. As a participant-observer, I also collected artifacts, including event posters, social media posts, websites, physical and digital documents at the sites, and photos taken during fieldwork, that helped me "uncover meaning, develop understanding, and discover insights" (Merriam, 1998, p. 118) related to the historical, physical, and sociocultural contexts that the participants operated, which also allowed me to contextualize data from informal and formal interviews (Bowen, 2009). After each round of participant observation and informal interviews, I wrote daily fieldnotes to document my observations and reflections of the events observed, as well as analytic memos to note down my initial reactions and preliminary interpretations of the data collected throughout the study. These fieldnotes and analytic memos became part of the data corpus that will be analyzed throughout and at the end of the study.

In addition to participant observation, I invited participants to share their perceptions and experiences with me through two rounds of face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are usually guided by a predetermined set of questions, at the same time, allow the researcher flexibility and adaptability to change the sequence of the questions and/or ask follow-up questions for clarification, addition, or more details based on what the participants

share (Turner III, 2010). I engaged in what Madison (2005) calls a "dialogical performance" (p. 125) that allowed me to engage in dialogic exchanges with the participants for an extended time, in which participants were invited to ask me questions the same way as I posed questions to them during these interviews. Engaging in dialogic exchanges with the participants for an extended time allowed me to build rapport and gained an insider's perspective on how the participants perceive and experience race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism (Jones et al., 2013).

Prior to each round of interviews, I elicited each participant's consent to participate in the study through the completion of consent forms. Participants were informed of the option to withdraw from the study and particular questions at any time, as well as the confidentiality of the study using pseudonym names and altered or omitted information that may reveal their identities. The first-round interview mainly focused on building rapport with each participant and eliciting their general understanding of race and racialization, both in terms of how they viewed themselves and others, and how their perceptions and experiences of race and racialization have changed over time. I kicked off the first interviews with general questions about participants' overall experience at Global University, followed by a series of questions about their understanding of race and their perspectives of themselves and other racial groups both before they came to the U.S. and since they migrated to the U.S. (see Appendix E).

Building upon the first interview, I zeroed into each participant's experiences and perceptions of racism and neo-racism, including during the COVID-19 global pandemic, in the second interview. Apart from traditional interview questions, each participant were invited to bring one to three artifacts that exemplified their initial and ongoing experiences and perceptions of racism and neo-racism in the U.S. and to the second interview. The artifacts were not only used as probes to evoke participants' interpretations and emotions as related to their stories of

racism and neo-racism that may not have come out from informal and formal verbal interviews, they also provided a focus and scope of the interview (Stake, 2005) (see Appendix E). As these artifacts belonged to the participants, I did not take photos of, describe, or collect them for the purpose of this research. Rather, they were solely used to probe participants' stories, interpretations, and emotions that allowed me to dive deeper into participants' experiences and perceptions of racism and neo-racism. Both rounds of interviews lasted approximately 60-90 minutes and were audio-recorded using my personal laptop and transcribed using an external transcription service –Rev.com—that ensured confidentiality. After each interview, I wrote memos to practice reflexivity which also served as important building blocks for data analysis and identification of patterns and themes in the data analysis phase of the study.

The dialogic exchanges encompassed both formal interviews and informal interviews as a part of participant observation where I engaged in dialogues and conversations with the participants that represented a "reciprocal giving and receiving" (Madison, 2005, p. 9). I engaged in open conversations with the participants where we were able to "question, debate, and challenge one another" (Madison, 2005, p. 9) as related to our definitions, experiences, and perceptions of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism. During our conversations, I leaned toward the definitions of these terms in Chapter 1 as the foundation for my sharing. The emphasis on the lively and ongoing dialogic exchanges that were not timeless or stagnant (Madison, 2005) not only aligned with my research paradigms but also the argument that international students' perceptions are ever evolving and continue to change over time (Haugh, 2008; Heng, 2018b; Yeo, 2020).

Data Analysis

For the multiple case study, data analysis was conducted both within individual cases and

across multiple cases (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Jones et al., 2013). I analyzed multiple datasets that included participant observation fieldnotes, interview transcripts, and analytic memos, and drew on both inductive and deductive approaches for analysis. For individual cases, I started with open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and applied an inductive coding approach that identified and conceptualized patterns and themes that I identified from within and across multiple data sources (Saldaña, 2016). As part of the inductive coding process, I created a codebook. Examples of codes included "phenotypes," "ethnicity," "nationality," "not enough," "Asian," "label," and "culture" which made up the categories of "I'm Asian but it's just a label" and "Asian is so broad/not enough." Then the categories of "I'm Asian but it's just a label" and "Asian is so broad/not enough," "conflating race and ethnicity," "heightened ethnicity," "heightened nationality," and "I'm Asian and more…" which made up the theme of "perceptions of my own race." Following inductive coding, I employed a deductive coding approach by interpreting findings through the lens of my conceptual framework (Bowen, 2009) and by comparing themes from inductive coding with literature related to the topic (Saldaña, 2016). During this cycle of data analysis, I used EYES theory (Yeo, 2020) to interpreted how EA, SA, and SEA international students viewed themselves and others, as related to race, racialization, and racism, and how these perceptions and experiences have changed over time, particularly between their pre-arrival and post-arrival to the U.S. I also used neo-racism (Balibar, 2007; Hervik, 2013; Lee & Rice, 2007) to explicate Asian international students' perceptions and experiences of neo-racism, including intra-ethnic discrimination across ethnic subgroups of Asian international students. Additionally, I utilized EYES theory (Yeo, 2020) and neo-racism (Balibar, 2007; Hervik, 2013; Lee & Rice, 2007) to analyze how EA, SA, and SEA Asian international students' perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism

may have been shaped by both micro- and macro-contexts, including racialized campus climate, social environment in the U.S., and various contexts in Asian international students' home countries. As part of the deductive coding process, I added additional codes to the codebook. Examples of codes related to racism included "racial microaggression", "microassault," "microinsult," "microinvalidation," "environmental microaggression," that constituted the categories of "assault/harassment," stereotype," and "microaggression," that made up the themes of "experiences of racism at Global University" and "experiences of racism outside Global University." Examples of codes related to neo-racism included "accent," "immigration status," "citizenship," and "nationality" which constituted categories of "accent," "immigration status/citizenship," and "intraethnic racism" that made up the theme of "neo-racism at Global University."

Following within-case analysis, I conducted a thematic cross-case analysis by comparing common themes and differences across multiple cases of ethnic subgroups of Asian international students (Yin, 1981). I used EYES theory (Yeo, 2020) and neo-racism (Balibar, 2007; Hervik, 2013; Lee & Rice, 2007) to explain the similarities and differences between ethnic subgroups as related to their perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism, and how the similarities and differences may have been shaped by the different contexts in their home countries (Yeo, 2020) and the dynamics between different EA, SA, and SEA countries (Balibar, 2007; Hervik, 2013; Lee & Rice, 2007). Cross-case analysis not only enabled me to describe the similarities and differences across ethnic subgroups but also allowed me to integrate multiple data sources to tell "a story" across multiple cases of ethnic subgroups of Asian international students. For example, comparing the different perceptions of race across

EA, SA, and SEA participants, I identified a theme named " 'race doesn't exist' vs. race and racism are 'not uncommon' back home."

Altogether, within-case and cross-case analyses allowed me to make sense of how Asian international students perceived and described their experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism, how ethnic subgroups' perceptions and experiences converged and diverged, and how Asian international students' perceptions and experiences have changed over the course of their time in the U.S. Due to the large volume of data from multiple sources, I used DeDoose, a qualitative data analysis software, to assist with the data management and analysis process. The following diagram illustrates the data collection and analysis process during the Fall 2022 and Winter 2023 semesters.

Figure 3.

Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, I employed multiple strategies, including triangulation of data, member checking, memoing, and peer debriefing throughout the data collection and analysis process. Denzin (2012) asserts that "triangulation should be reframed as crystal refraction (many points of light) to extrapolate the meaning inherent in the data and thereby mitigating one's bias." (p. 927). By collecting data through multiple methods and from multiple sources, I ensured that evidence across sources of data was consistent (Mertens, 2019) and the interpretation of the case was triangulated. In other words, triangulating findings across

multiple data sources reduced the impact of potential biases that came from a single method or a single source (Patton, 2014). Data collection through multiple methods and sources also generated rich, thick, and in-depth descriptions of the cases, which enabled readers to determine the congruency between their situations and the context of my study for the findings to be transferable (Merriam, 1995).

In addition to triangulation, member checking was another vital technique that I employed to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. Guided by the ethics of conducting research, I conducted two rounds of member checking. First, I shared the interview transcripts with the participants and invited them to check for accuracy and provide clarification as needed. I then shared my interpretation and analysis of the data (chapters 4-6) with the participants and invited them to provide clarification for possible misinterpretations (Glesne, 2016). During the second round of member checking, two participants commented on their experiences and offered edits and clarification on their experiences and interpretations of racism. Additionally, another participant requested me to withdraw all her data from the study as she did not agree with my interpretations of her comments, which I viewed as arguably racialized and racist. Accordingly, data related to this participant was removed from the study. Furthermore, I saw my participants as collaborators, therefore, I also invited the participants to offer feedback on how they would like to see the data being disseminated and used to enhance practices and policies to better support Asian international students in U.S. colleges and universities during the second interview.

Memoing was another strategy that I employed to enhance the trustworthiness of the study. I kept a research journal and engaged in critical reflexivity through memoing throughout the data collection and analysis process. Madison (2005) names the reflexive process “turning

back on ourselves" (p. 14) which involves contemplating the purpose of research, issues of ethics, positionality, subjectivity, representation and interpretation of the community under study, and the impact we have on the community through our research process. Aside from practicing reflexivity throughout the research process, I used these memos to note down preliminary interpretations and analysis of the findings, as building blocks for ongoing data analysis. Lastly, I employed peer debriefing by inviting multiple peer debriefers who were either from the same discipline or were knowledgeable about qualitative research to offer comments on the plausibility of my interpretation of the findings, analysis, and conclusions (Mertens, 2019).

Limitations

As with all research studies, my research also has its own limitations. The sample size of SEA participants was relatively small compared with EA and SA international students in the study. The smaller sample size of SEA participants was likely due to the smaller number of SEA international students at the institution under investigation (which accounted for less than 4% of the total number of international students). It is also possible that SEA international students may not be interested in the study or were concerned about being identifiable in the study given the small number of SEA international students at the institution. As such, I was not able to include as many SEA students as I wanted, especially those who were graduate students.

Additionally, given that the majority of the participants were either undergraduate or doctoral students and there was only one masters student, the findings may not represent the experiences or perceptions of other masters students at the institution. Moreover, as my study only focused on undergraduate and graduate students as an aggregate as well as those from non-STEM and STEM majors, despite the different cultures of academic disciplines, I was not able to

capture the nuances in the experiences and perceptions of EA, SA, and SEA international students by the different academic statuses and disciplines.

Because the research was conducted at a large, public, Research-1, land-grant, flagship institution that is historically White, the findings may not reflect the perceptions and experiences of Asian international students at other institutional types, such as Minority Serving Institutions, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI), and Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISI), teaching-intensive institutions, community colleges, two-year colleges, liberal arts colleges, and private institutions. Because the institution under investigation was located within a suburban city, the findings may not reflect the perceptions and experiences of Asian international students who attend H/PWIs in urban or rural settings. To address this limitation, I used multiple sources of data to generate rich and thick descriptions of the cases so that readers can determine the transferability of the findings (Merriam, 1995) as well as replicate the study in a similar setting if desired (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982).

Another limitation of the study is the difficulties that I encountered in accessing some sites of observation, including classes, events, and gatherings due to discomfort from those who were present at the sites. As such, I was not able to understand some aspects of the racialized campus climate and the broader social contexts where the participants were embedded in, to help me further contextualize the data. Furthermore, I am cognizant that I was not able to access these sites due to my outsider positionality, which is an inevitable aspect of conducting qualitative research.

Moreover, although I invited participants to recall their prior experiences and

perceptions of race and racism retroactively, I may not have been able to fully capture the changes of participants' experiences and perceptions, especially when compared with longitudinal studies that followed participants over time in real time. Even so, although a multiple case study can be "holistic," especially when data was collected longitudinally, it was impossible for me to capture the entirety of each participant's lived experiences regardless of how much time is spent in the field (Bhattacharya, 2009). Rather, I was only able to capture "a frozen frame of collective moments" (Bhattacharya, 2009, p. 109) over the course of roughly one semester, which is a pitfall of the study.

Furthermore, given that my research was grounded in critical paradigms, I may have been perceived as imposing my "liberatory urges" (Bhattacharya, 2009, p. 110) onto the participants and yielded interpretations that were not recognized by the participants (Jones et al., 2013). This process required deep reflexivity throughout the research process and I did so through memoing. Even so, the research process involved negotiation of research outcomes and "reaching harmony" with the participants, which I engaged with through the member-checking process. As a researcher, I made sure that I made ethical decisions throughout the research process and negotiated between an accurate representation of the participants' lived experiences and their voices, and my interpretation guided by the conceptual framework and literature as well as my motivation to interrogate institutional, structural, and systemic inequalities in the field of higher education. As a result, I added the additional information from the two participants to chapters 4 and 5 as well as removed one participant's data from the study. However, the edits and comments from the participants and the loss of data due to the withdrawal of one participant all in some ways skewed the data, which is another limitation of the study.

Researcher Positionality

As Denzin and Lincoln (2011) beautifully illustrate, a qualitative researcher is a bricoleur, a maker of quilts, or, as in filmmaking, a person who assembles images into montages. As the primary instrument of qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2019), it is important for me to address my positionality in relation to the topic and the community under study. I describe the identities and experiences that I embody and more importantly, delineate how my identities and experiences shape the way that I approached the study and the lens through which I interpreted the data. I see myself as entering a complicated and messy space where I am "the 'Other' while conducting research on/with the 'Other'" (Bhattacharya, 2009, p. 108); hence, negotiating a dual and fluid positionality of both an insider and an outsider in relation to the study and the community under study—Asian international students in H/PWIs in the U.S. I occupy the position of an insider in terms of our shared identity as an international student and a temporary resident/settler in the U.S, as well as our race (Asian), ethnicity (Chinese), gender (cis-woman), sexual orientation (heterosexual), class (middle-class), ability (able-bodied), academic level (graduate, particularly doctoral), and discipline (higher education and/or student affairs). I am also an insider in relation to those who are the products of public K-16 education in their home countries or other regions before migrating to the U.S. for their graduate studies, as well as those who identify as English as Second Language Learners. On the other hand, I am an outsider in relation to Asian international students who come from other EA countries and SA and SEA international students. I am also an outsider in relation to many Asian international students who do not share the same identities with me and those who have different lived experiences from me, personally, academically, and professionally.

Growing up in a racially homogenous environment where I was the racial and

ethnic majority (Han), I had never critically examined my race and ethnicity and the privilege that came with being the racial and ethnic majority at home until I relocated to the U.S. for my doctoral studies where I am racially minoritized as Asian and *became* Asian through the racialization process. In my masters program in the U.S., my cohort members are predominantly White. Although there was always a sense of dissonance in me that noticed that I was different from my cohort members who are White and American, my knowledge of race and racial issues in the U.S. was very limited and my understanding of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism was superficial. At the time, I did not have the knowledge or language to pinpoint why I was feeling the way I was as one of the few SOC, English as Second Language learners, and international students in the program.

My doctoral studies have exposed me to the racist histories in the U.S. and introduced me to many seminal works from critical race scholars (i.e., Bell, 1980; Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Crenshaw, 1990; Delgado et al., 2017; Dumas, 2016; Ifitikar & Museus, 2018) that illuminate the endemic and permanence of race and racism in shaping how U.S. society functions (Bell, 1980; Delgado et al., 2017). These resources have offered me a new lens, language, and tools to (un)/(re)learn my racial incidents in the past. Engaging in collective dialogues with my sister scholars has also challenged me to unpack my own racialized experiences, challenge the privilege associated with my proximity to Whiteness, and make sense of what it means to be Asian in the U.S. context. These experiences have also propelled me to disrupt the color-evasive, monolithic, commodified, deficit, and static lens in rendering international SOC in extant literature and discourse.

My professional experience as a student affairs educator in a Sino-U.S. joint-venture

liberal arts institution in China exposed me to a form of transnational education where students are able to experience international education without crossing borders. This unique experience has not only helped me understand how power shapes the institutional policies and practices but also helped me see firsthand the (un)/(re)learning that happens to students outside of the classroom, particularly when students engage in meaningful dialogues with others who hold different identities, values, and lived experiences from them. It is through these meaningful dialogues that I realize the significant impact that student affairs educators make in fostering student learning and development. It is also through this professional experience that I became cognizant of how theories must be adaptively applied to practices that are congruent with different institutional and societal contexts.

The COVID-19 global pandemic has surfaced glaring racial disparities and multiple epidemics, including police brutality on Black lives and anti-Asian violence, during the last two years. Witnessing waves of protests and demonstrations ignited in response to the systemic racism in the U.S. and globally has prompted me to rethink how I can leverage my position and the power that comes with the position—as a researcher and higher education and student affairs educator—to serve as a "worthy witness" (Winn & Ubiles, 2011, p. 295) for Asian international students and to employ their counter-narratives to interrogate institutional, structural, and systemic racism within the field of higher education. Rather than "extracting data" (Bhattacharya, 2009, p. 111) and "cornering" participants to fulfill my "will to know" (p. 113), my motivation to conduct the research is grounded in my hope of diversifying the literature on Asian international students in U.S. higher education and advocating for equity-minded policies and practices that engage Asian international students in dialogues around race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism. By pairing constructivist and critical paradigms, in conjunction with a

conceptual framework that is grounded in CRT, I hope to interrogate the dominant narrative that obscures systems of power and oppression when examining Asian international students' experiences within scholarship and practice. Furthermore, it is my hope that my research can contribute to enhancing Asian international students' experiences in U.S. colleges and universities, fostering their sense of belonging on campus, cultivating their critical consciousness of their own racialized experiences and those of other racial groups, and disrupting institutional, structural, and systemic racism in the field of higher education.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I offered my rationale for employing qualitative methods, specifically multiple case study methodology, to inform the data collection and analysis process to answer the research questions. My research questions included: How do Asian international students perceive and describe their experiences of race, racialization, and of experiencing racism and neo-racism at a historically white institution? Specifically, how do Asian international students describe how they understand themselves and others regarding race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism? And how do sub-groups of Asian international students (EA, SA, and SEA) perceive and describe their perceptions and experiences related to race, racialization, racism and neo-racism? Additionally, in what ways do Asian international students' perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism change, if at all, over the course of their time in the U.S.? I introduced my philosophical perspectives that undergird the methodology. Within the methodology, I described the context wherein the study took place, including both space and time as an integral part of the *bounded system*. Additionally, I elucidated how I recruited participants, the different methods I used to collect and analyze data, the various strategies that I employed to ensure the trustworthiness of the study, and the

limitations of the study. I concluded the chapter with a reflection of my positionality as the researcher in relation to the community under study and the research topic.

Chapter 4: Perceptions and Experiences of Race

The purpose of the study is to explore and understand how Asian international students perceive and describe their experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism at an HWI. Specifically, I examined how ethnic subgroups of Asian international students, including East Asian (EA), South Asian (SA), and Southeast Asian (SEA) international students perceived and described their perceptions and experiences as related to race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism. My study asked two main research questions:

RQ1: How do Asian international students perceive and describe their experiences of race, racialization, and of experiencing racism and neo-racism at an HWI?

RQ1.1: How do Asian international students describe how they understand themselves and others regarding race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism?

RQ1.2: How do subgroups of Asian international students (EA, SA, and SEA) perceive and describe their perceptions and experiences related to race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism?

RQ2: In what ways do Asian international students' perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism change, if at all, over the course of their time in the United States?

Based on individual and cross-case analysis from data corpus that included fieldnotes, interview transcripts, and analytic memos, I identified seven themes from the data. In this chapter, I review the first five themes and provide in-depth descriptions of participants' perceptions and experiences. I first discuss themes as related to participants' perceptions of race and how their perceptions are informed by the various historical, political, and socio-cultural contexts in their home countries, particularly for SA and SEA participants. Next, I discuss

participants' perceptions of others regarding race, racialization, and racism, particularly SA and SEA participants' perceptions of Black people. In the subsequent theme, I detail participants' perceptions of their own race and racialization. In the final section of the chapter, I summarize the five themes.

"Race Doesn't Exist" vs. Race and Racism are "Not Uncommon" Back Home

Growing up in racially homogenous environments, many participants perceived race as a distant reality. Race was simply not a familiar social construct or one that was talked about or a part of many participants' lives in their home countries. It was not until the participants could "see" different racial groups and interact with them on a daily basis that race was pushed to the forefront of their minds. Growing up with people "who are all Asians," Kim did not feel a need to think about race back in her home country in Vietnam. Being immersed in a more racially diverse environment and interacting with people from different racial groups on a daily basis in her high school in the U.S. has made Kim become more aware of different races.

> Since coming to the U.S, it's just more...relevant and it's something I actually see on a day-to-day basis. So that kind of make more of an impact I guess… Um, I would say from high school just because like it was a public school and it was really, really crowded. Just um, a lot of... um...I would say like there's a lot of minorities um...and also like actually seeing them every day, taking classes with them.

Like Kim, Joy did not need to think about race in Nepal because "it's like there's no race, it doesn't exist" because "everyone was the same." After coming to the U.S., meeting people from different races and attending diversity workshops and dialogues about social justice as a Resident Assistant raised Joy's awareness of the presence of other racial groups, including their cultures. She said,

> So when I came to the U.S., I got to know okay, there's White, there's Black, there's Hispanic, Latino. Um...And over the years, I um...I got to know sort of the culture they have um...and um different festivals or different ... you know, for example, Christmas, what they do, Thanksgiving. I've been part of it. I, I've observed it with them. So I got to appreciate the things they do and their values...

Although China and Taiwan both have ethnic diversity, Sunny noted how race was not a common social construct in their home countries and how their transition to a racially diverse environment in the U.S., particularly having interactions with people from different races has helped them build up their own awareness of race. Sunny reflected,

> Like growing up in Taiwan, like people usually look pretty similar to me. So we didn't really have to think about that. Like I know that I'm the like ethnic majority my, my majority. Yeah. Cause we have indigenous, indigenous population in Taiwan. And I know like I know indigenous people and Han people and like of course we know like there are other races out there in the world cause like we watch TV and movies and stuff, right. But it's not that close to my, like it's not things I have to think about in my daily life. Yeah. And uh...when I came here to study for my masters, you encounter people from uh, like all over the world. So you see a lot more races.

Although Taiwan has ethnic diversity, Sunny noted how she was aware of the existence of race in her home country but it remained at the back of her mind at the time, due to her ethnic majority status in Taiwan. Transitioning to a racially diverse environment in the U.S., in tandem with having interactions with people from different racial groups have pushed race to the forefront of her mind.

Unlike the participants who indicated race as being a distant reality in their home

countries, several SA and SEA participants underscored their exposure to race and experience of race in their home countries, either personally or observed. These participants pointed out how they perceived race as a social construct created to divide people of different races and how their lived experience of casteism and colorism in their home countries has helped them understand the way race functions in the U.S. Sanjay, for example, highlighted that in Sri Lanka, "racism is a problem." He described how the caste system in Sri Lanka functioned similarly to how race did in the US, specifically how "some racists think they're superior. And because of that, they think they have power over other races…" He continued to elaborate,

> And it's like it was always from the beginning of like the humans, it's like tied to the human blood like. Even like if you think in Indians, even Lord Buddha, the area, time of Lord Buddha, the...there were like...society was divided into castes…And because of that like...there was like caste discrimination, so much. So...so if you think like the racism here, so I I think like um...it's...hmm...it's a bad thing, but it's like, it's really hard to get out of the that problem.

Related, Meher explained that even though in Bangladesh, "people have very different range of skin tones," there is only one race. Learning about her friend's experience of colorism in Bangladesh reinforced her belief that creating and naming different races would only exacerbate discrimination based on race (skin color), especially given that colorism already existed in Bangladesh. She said,

> Right now there is no classification. There was never. There was never. It's just um...people from different places also coming to that subcontinent and then that's why um people looks kind of um... like they're having different skin tones…It's like actually you all have the same race and ethnicity. It just because of your... probably genes.

> Probably some of your um ancestors, they come from a different part of Asia. That's why they might be slightly looking different from your other friends…and if it was just classified, there will be um...I think, a lot more problem arising… These things are really implicit, right? Um...even if there is no classification, there are some implicit like implied things. And if there was very explicit classifications, then I think like things will be more worse than things are right now.

In addition to observing race in their home countries, some SA and SEA international students personally experienced race and racism in their home countries, which shaped their perception of race and racism in the U.S. For example, Ali described "race issue" in Malaysia, a country with diverse ethnicities. Having been called the n-word in Malaysia, Ali claimed that racism was not "really something uncommon" in his home country.

> There's a lot of racism where that country has more than one race or more one more than one ethnic backgrounds, which is which can be really good, at the same time really bad, because if it's good, it creates more culture, more harmony, sorry, not more harmony, more culture, more diversity, which gives a good prosperity of the country. But at the same time, not all people would think that think the same way, and some people, sometimes my um… because I experienced those things myself, cause like yeah if you are degrading that <emphasis> person like, so you're Black. Like ok yeah, I'm Black, so what? I'm Brown, so what? So, yeah, it's more dividing than I than people think… It's it's getting worse and worse, which is really concerning for me.

During our conversation, Shawn introduced the "historical division of the caste" (Brahmins, Chhetris, Vaishya) in Nepal and described how it manifested in his life due to his unique upbringing as the "hybrid" of parents from two ethnicities–Madhesi and Newars.

> So I experienced both of them, and I saw how different one it is from the other, and how they can have a clash because they think so very differently. And they did clash, and it was not pleasant. And it's impossible to kind of reconcile the two groups. So they just decide to just stay on their own groups' bubbles because it's impossible to reconcile <laugh>. So that's the perspective I formed about groups and ethnicities and race and even gender, right. So...that's um...and I translated that to ethnicity and race in here as well.

This unique upbringing exposed Shawn to different races and the clashes between the two very early on in his life, which informed his perception of how race might function in the U.S.

"Seeing" Race but Feeling that "Race Doesn't Matter"

Despite "seeing" race after interactions with diverse racial groups, race remained somewhat of a distant reality for some participants in the U.S. Mk (Japan) shared similar sentiment regarding the belief that "race doesn't matter" when it came to interacting with others, making friends, and taking classes. Mk, for example, recognized race more nowadays but felt less that race influenced her life.

> The more and more I interact with diverse people, I feel like race doesn't matter, like less matter to me. It's just my friends, and I don't recognize they are... When I see them, you're African American, no, they have their name. So like I feel less, and I think about less and less about the race of them.

Same with Mk, Sai, a student from India, emphasized having both positive and negative interactions with people of different races. In other words, he felt that race did not affect his experience in the U.S.

> During my interactions, I've met people that are really nice. Then I've met arrogant people who don't like to talk to you and stuff like that. And yeah. I would never generalize them under any category. Just like I wouldn't generalize any other race. But yeah, that's basically it…when it comes to like White people, I mean I've had both in good and bad interactions, so I still think that it's still the same thing, you know. Some people are nice, some people aren't, basic thing…Same thing with African American people.

To Sanjay (Sri Lanka), race was simply a concept created to divide people, and he believed that everyone, regardless of their race, should be treated equally.

> Everyone has equal abilities, so everyone must be treated equally…So like...because of that, I I usually don't care about like races. What what a person looks like. I just I just want to know about the person, that's all, when I when I get to know a person…Races are just names, everyone is like students and like everyone should have equal opportunities, then those then those like...incidents of racial indiscrimination could... be avoided… Like it should be universal for everyone.

Different Values of White and Black

Despite the racially homogenous environment in their home countries, many participants learned about different racial groups through social media, films, music, and popular culture. Coming to the U.S. marked the development of awareness of different racial groups for these participants, especially through interactions with people from diverse racial backgrounds. Peering in from their home countries, participants noticed the different values assigned to different racial groups, with White as "beautiful" and "privileged" and Black as "disadvantaged," "injustice," and at the "bottom layer of the society," which have been acquired even before the

participants came to the U.S. Although the participants did not use specific terms like racialization or racialized to articulate their observations, it is evident that the participants were starting to develop their consciousness of the process of racialization over the course of their time in the U.S.

White = "Beautiful"

Several participants recalled being socialized into the White as "beauty standards" ideology growing up. Meher, for example, recalled playing with "fair-looking" dolls as a kid in Bangladesh:

> Probably at some point in our life, we always wanted to be look like that doll, like yeah, cause that looks so pretty. So I think um from childhood you get an idea of um pretty. Like if it looks like that, then it's pretty. Other than that, it's not.

Being praised for "how White I am" in Taiwan, Sunny explicated the insidious influence of popular culture that indoctrinates White as pretty ideology, which she was critical of since her masters program in the U.S. Learning and talking about race in her doctoral courses at Global University has equipped Sunny with the "language" and "tools" to critique such ideology. She stated,

> I didn't have the language or the framework to kind of unpack why it is people think of associate White with like pretty, beauty and whatever positive words they have…But I think, um...back then it's just like something I um, observe and acknowledge but I didn't really understand the mechanisms. Like I just guess the global mechanisms that is working underneath and now I have... like compared to the previous version of myself, I have more language and like tools I guess to help me understand that.

Mk also indicated being socialized as a kid to believe that "White people are beautiful"

and “blonde hair, blue eyes guys” are desirable in Japan. Having conversations with friends who were critical of this ideology helped Mk realize the White supremacist sentiment in Japan.

> I have a kind of larger eye and a large nose. In Japan, you’re asking me, “Are you a mix with the White people?” And I say no, “I’m pure Japanese.” And that’s like a common conversation. But I cannot say it now. And I learned that how it’s...how that word is not good...in terms discrimination…So, I try not to say it. But a lot of people say, and it’s kind of a compliment to say, “You look White or you look mixed with White.” And I...we have White supremacists kind of here in Japan too. I think it’s common in Asia too.

Aside from critically reflecting on the higher values assigned to White skin tone, some participants also noted their changing perceptions of White people after personal interactions with this racial group. Some indicated shifting their perceptions of White people from negative to positive, others noted the privilege that they felt White people hold based on their interactions and observations at Global University.

White =“Friendly”

Watching movies like American Pie and following social media platforms like Tik Tok in Malaysia shaped Ali’s initial views of White people as “racist” and party animals before coming to the U.S. But this perception quickly changed after Ali’s positive interactions with White peers at Global University. He shared,

> So I would say, like my stereotypes towards the White people really change a lot. Like they're not as bad as I thought. And they’re really friendly. It’s just, you have to be…wise or be aware on what kind of words you have to use when talking to them…Which kind of realize that. Cause like I do sometimes say a bit few words that might like send them in a really bad um…bad impression. And I felt that. And I did say, “Sorry, I just didn’t know

> everything like this." And they were okay with it. They're really they're really like professional, I guess, in a way, like wanting to be friends with people, like which is really which is really good.

Interestingly, Ali pointed out that the "friendly", "educated" and "professional" White people he met at Global University may not represent all White people in the U.S., particularly those from the Midwest who may still be "in their racist minds." In other words, the geographic location of Global University–adjacent to a metropolitan city in the Northeastern region– played a role in his experience with White people.

White = "Privilege"

Aside from some participants' changing perceptions of White people from negative to positive, several other participants highlighted the privilege that they felt White people hold in the U.S. Jay (Philippines), for example, described the "congregation" of White students on the Global University campus and the sense of dissonance he experienced, which contrasted the more inclusive environment he felt with Students of Color.

> I don't say like open secret, but like people like generally do like, kind of like make light of that. Like even like just like, you know, just generally like among like students of Color like will like be like, Oh wait, why do, why does that friend group all look the same? Like yeah. Cause like they kind of congregate together. Um...but yeah, I don't know. It's something that I've noted. Like, I don't know, it's really interesting like, cause it's like very exclusionary. But I don't really like know the exact reason why it feels that way, like it's a common observation, but like, again, like, I don't know why.

Jay continued,

> I think there is like kinda like a recurring joke where it's like, oh, if you're like privileged, like you kind of have like, I guess like an easy life. And part of that is like when, in regards to like race for example, like if you're a White American, like you, you'll have like a generally like, um, what's it called? Like you don't have to worry about stuff like, as like salient and as big as like race. And like you don't have to worry about like, oh, like, you know, it is my like, is how other people...as other people's perceptions of me like influenced by my race. They don't have to worry about that.

Jay delineated the White exclusionary spaces on a historically White campus as the "normalcy" and how Students of Color, like himself, may do the same thing but be perceived differently (negatively) by others due to their racially minoritized status.

Similarly, Jessie, a student from South Korea, recalled a statement from her criminology professor who introduced the disparity between White people and People of Color in the criminal justice system as an example of White privilege:

> The amounts of like drugs they possess among different races are like very similar. But the amount of arrests because of drug crimes are like very different like based on race. So that obviously says like, oh people of color are more, um, tend to get arrested because of drug crimes and obviously like white people are able to get away with it more than People of Color.

Adding onto Jessie's sharing, Shawn (Nepal) offered his viewpoint on the privilege that he felt that White people hold, especially White supremacists who carry their "pride" and "arrogance."

> I sense that they have kind of this pride that America kind of belongs to them, and... they're they can become White supremacists as well like judging from the events of...the

> President Trump and all of that, came that tenure, right? I was following a lot of those things from away as well… Yes, I think the White supremacists, if you can call them that? So <laugh> they can be really difficult to maybe make sense to, maybe if you try to talk to them and kind of share your perspective, they will always be arrogant about their own perspective, their own opinions, ideas.

Lynn (China) not only described the privilege that they felt White people hold but critiqued how White people "abuse" their privilege to engage in performative activism that feeds into the self-fulfilling prophecy.

> I keep using this as an example. They wanted to donate bottled waters to Ukraine…I'm like, "Great. Great. I, I love that for you. Absolutely. Buying from Ukrainian's small businesses when they're fleeing their homes is so <emphasis> helpful to their economy. It will absolutely change everything." I, I just don't think they read enough to it. And a lot of the social justice that are right now, led by white people, are extremely performative and only to make themselves feel better about themselves instead of caring about community.

In addition to understanding the values assigned to Whiteness as beautiful, friendly, and privileged, many SA and SEA participants talked about the different values assigned to being Black in the U.S. The SA and SEA participants started to develop their awareness of such a value system from learning that Black people were "somewhat disadvantaged," experiencing "injustice" and were at the "bottom layer of the society."

Black = "Somewhat disadvantaged"

Among all the participants, several SA and SEA participants detailed learning about

racism that Black people experience in the U.S. from various sources in their home countries. Over the course of their time in the U.S., some of them started to realize the unfair treatment of Black people that persisted till this day. They developed such consciousness through multiple channels, including observations and exchanges with Black colleagues, taking classes, and watching the news about police brutality towards Black people and the Black Lives Matter movement during the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Before coming to the U.S., Ventus (India), Sai (India), and Ali (Malaysia) all learned about the history of Black people in the U.S. from American history classes in high schools, including local and international high schools. Ali also detailed learning about the unfair treatment of Black people from watching movies and documentaries.

> Like I think one of them is the trials about a Black person who somehow has to be in one of the court cases, which is irrelevant to them…But he ended up being in that jury, being in that court, and he was treated unfairly. But yeah…There was a lot of things happening that I kind of like, before coming here…even before, but…all because of that, but it didn't really struck me to really read about it until those riots happened actually…Like I do I knew Black people were injust-were being…treated really poorly in the U.S., which I can…I already know about it.

Like Ali, Shawn (Nepal) also learned about U.S. history, including the abolition of the slavery system in the U.S. from various sources, including movies, TV shows, and music. As such, he "formed an image that…the Black people, they're looked at as a different way <emphasis> because of these historical reasons;" as such, Shawn associated Black people with "somewhat disadvantaged" and "always trying to fight their way into this American culture and trying to make themselves heard." He voiced,

> The song is about the issue that they face as a Black person…Like there's this nice, um I think Bob Marley or something, he just talks about Buffalo Soldiers, so...that's a very um song that came out from his heart, right? And what he felt about being a Black person. So...I can understand that perspective, just listening to that song.

Aside from learning about the disadvantages that Black people face in their home countries, several SA and SEA participants talked about broadening their perspective on the racism experienced by Black people over the course of their time in the U.S., through observations and conversations with Black colleagues at Global University.

Sanjay, a student from Sri Lanka, shared his observation of Black and Hispanic people as "cast out," including working blue-collar jobs, higher presence in public transportation, and the lack of Black students in his department. He stated,

> Okay, so...so one thing I noticed is um...like most of the hardworking jobs, even in the university, like yeah, working in cafeterias, like janitors, bus drivers, most of them are done by either Black people or the Hispanic people…So...so that is I think that's not a good thing. Yeah…So they're like stuck in that social layer…Like because like U.S. is a capitalistic country, it's hard to get out of that layer because like hmmm back in my country, you have free education. Because of that like anyone anyone with hardships, if you have if you do well in studies, you can get out of that layer and start like a good career and start a new life.

Sanjay then offered his interpretation of why Black people were "stuck in that social layer" by indicating the "correlation" between race and socioeconomic status, which he understood as contributing to the absence of Black students in many undergraduate STEM classes that he taught. He articulated,

> Yeah, because like if your parents have no money, then they they they cannot teach their...Then they cannot give good education to their children and they can cannot send send their students to college. Without a college degree, then you cannot get a good job. Then the cycle continues…Yeah. So I think like here the chance is really not less. Even like, yeah... even yeah, when you when you teach like even in the undergrad classes, if you if you see the percentage wise, you see it, right? Like there's really less Black students.

Black= "Injustice"

Apart from expanding knowledge of the disadvantages and unfair treatment that Black people experience, some SA and SEA participants also started to develop their awareness of the injustices that Black people encounter by taking classes and learning about police brutality towards Black people and the Black Lives Matter movement that ignited during the COVID-19 global pandemic. Kim (Vietnam), for example, iterated that seeing the Black Lives Matter movement and engaging in dialogues about "racism or violence that Black people face" at Global University, and seeking additional information from social media altogether helped her know more about racism that Black people face in the U.S. Along with Kim, Ali (Malaysia) and Sai (India) both took classes at Global University and learned more about the racial experiences of Black people. In the social issues course, Sai had the opportunity to talk to George Floyd's brother and learned about his foundation that advocates for police reform. Learning about the history of racism that Black people experience in the Black history course helped Ali get a better grasp of the forces behind the Black Lives Matter Movement. He shared,

> For like Black people, I wasn't really sure why until I see cause of, because of just one murder of this George Floyd guy…I don't really think the cause was reasonable enough

to cause a riot until I see how he was treated. And then there was like previous attempts on Black people who died because of police. And none of them were arrested or none of them were justified…Which I can understand now <emphasis>. And then I took history about Black people last semester, and I see how were they treated from the starting, they would come here until now. Now I see why the riots were like really, really big and I…understand why are they feeling that way.

Ali further articulated the drastically different experiences of Black people in the U.S. compared with those in his home country—Malaysia:

Just because Black is not really a bad thing in Malaysia. Like if you're Black, okay, you're Black. You don't really…there's still racism going on. But-You're…but it's not to the extent where you're, you have to be afraid going outside and meet up with the police or anything like that, you know. Like you don't really have to be afraid as compared to United States where you see police in the highway, you will be afraid hoping that they don't see you…And even even though you did wrong, they would just give you a ticket rather than shoving a gun towards your face.

Watching the news about the murder of George Floyd in Sri Lanka, Sanjay expressed his anger towards the police brutality of Black people. Knowing the "injustice" faced by Black people also encouraged Sanjay to learn more about the history of slavery and the ramification of it on Black people today.

I thought there was like a clear injustice happening to a person. And like I think like the authorities didn't take enough measures to just prevent those things. I think something like that happened again like in a couple of weeks. But for a Black American woman…So um...I mean, because of, because of that, hmm...yeah, I was just I was just

> looking into those stuff like more frequently. And...like so then I then I got to know about those like slave traders and stuff and like how those people were treating those slaves and like how how the racial injustice was like prepared for like more than 300, 400 years and it's still there. And like and like I thought, at least people should start doing something for that, at least now. Otherwise, it'll like it'll start the staying for more more a hundred years to come.

In a related vein, Shawn, a student from Nepal, initially thought Black people were historically disadvantaged and the situation has gotten better but his perception changed after seeing the shootings "directed towards the Black people," particularly in the Black neighborhood, and hearing stories from his Black colleagues about the unfair treatment they experienced at Global University. Shawn learned about the pervasive racism that Black people face as "a part of their lives" and the "pain and deep sense of injustice" that Black people experience on a daily basis. Shawn recalled a conversation with a Black Nigerian colleague in the department he worked at in Global University that was predominantly Black American, particularly noting the extra work that his Black Nigerian colleague was always assigned to do because of his foreign status. He reiterated the statement that his Nigerian colleague conveyed to him,

> And they want to bring people from outside and make them <emphasis> do the hard work. Like maybe bus driving, or maybe sweeping, or the hard works. They want to bring people from Nigeria or somewhere and make them do that kind of work. And then they put these people in certain communities where like they put this community of only Black people. And...they don't get any services in that communities, like no good school, no options for growth. And so so that they are suppressed from the system itself. So even

> their <emphasis> children, if they become American, even if they become American, they don't have proper resources and ways to rise up the hierarchy. So they're always suppressed by the system.

Upon hearing this, Shawn asked his Black Nigerian colleague about the possibility of living in White neighborhoods and restated the response from his colleague to me:

> No, it's not that easy. So there's always...it looks like it's the same. You can go and sit anywhere. It's just a single house. You buy it, you just stay, it's that simple, but it's not really like that. So this he said, that even this [city] area, this [redacted] County, it will have segments. Like neighborhoods where only Black people stay in, or only White people stay in. Maybe if you go north like you'll find only White people. So there are territories and divisions, all of this. And only that's where you can stay, basically, maybe buy a house.

Shawn not only highlighted the systemic racism that his Black colleagues experienced in the U.S., but also illuminated the double discrimination that his Black international colleague experienced due to his race and citizenship. After recalling his exchanges with his Black Nigerian colleague, Shawn expressed his concerns over facing similar issues as his colleague if he were to stay in the U.S. after completing his masters studies.

Although Jay was already aware of the anti-Blackness sentiment since his high school in the Philippines, he noted how he started to understand the function of anti-Blackness on a systemic level from watching how the Black Lives Matter movement unfolded:

> I guess like BLM gave like a new dimension of like, wait a minute. Like I don't think the police, like is a, is a trustable like institution. Like, I don't, cause like they wouldn't, like, first of all they're like one of the biggest like contributors to anti-Black hate, but also like,

they like, it's like I cause like, I don't know, it's very interesting cause like my older, like relatives here like, are like, Oh, if you, if you never, if you ever need something, go to policemen. And like me being younger, I'm like, I don't, I don't really know about that <laugh>. Yeah. So I, that's like my like view on it where it's like, um, I already knew about it, but like, it really like made me like see the institution of the police and like a completely like different light where it's like, oh, I can't trust it. Um, and generally like, it's like a very <emphasis> heavy handed like institution that just like does a lot of bad.

Among the SA and SEA participants, Shawn and Jay were the very few who perceived and articulated the racism that Black people experience as not only manifested on the interpersonal level but systemic level. Furthermore, Jay was the only one who explicitly named anti-Blackness when speaking about his understanding of Black people. In tandem with broadened and deepened understanding of the racism that Black people experience, some participants across three ethnic groups started to debunk the stereotypes of Black people that they have learned in their home countries.

Black = "Misjudged" and "bottom layer of the society"

Several participants articulated debunking and unlearning the many stereotypes of Black people that they were exposed to in their home countries. Elucidated by Sunny, a Taiwanese student, who has become more critical of the "single narrative" of different races, including Black people, over the years:

Like for example, like when I was little like watching TV in the living room in Taiwan. Like you kind of just absorb <emphasis> whatever is given to you. So you have this um... worldview that the movie gives you sort of. But now looking back you can kind of see

how that is a very specific narrative and where that is coming from and how that <emphasis> lens sees the world as not really like the only truth I guess.

Elaine (Hong Kong and Portugal) also shared her perception of the stereotypes of Black and African people in the media:

Um...But...yeah...but also it's just like how bias the media would portray them. Especially in the the one belt, one road thing. And even before that, African countries would always be associated with poverty. You're just gonna donate money to them, they need help, that kind of thing.

Another stereotype of Black people as portrayed in movies and TV shows, described by Meher (Bangladesh), was "becom[ing] aggressive without any reason." Having interacted with Black students as a TA in her classes over the years, Meher realized how problematic these stereotypes were.

I feel like in movies you know sometimes it feels that the Black peoples are more aggressive. Sometimes in the movies I think you could assume that. Um...I think um if you saw them in real life, it'll feel that might be like depends on our culture, the way we express our emotions. That's a very different- But like at the same time, a Black people can be like aggressive just because that's how he is or like he could be very submissive just because the way he is. It's it's very dependent probably on the person, not very dependent like how you define in the race.

Meher further explained how she started to understand why Black people "become agitated quickly"—the misjudgment that many Black people face and the racism they have experienced for a long time in a White dominant society. She elaborated,

> It's like um...from your childhood, if you face uh so many racial comments and um so many racism, then even if someone is not doing an act by racism, you'll feel like he's being racist to me… Probably someone else is having a bad day and say just he doesn't want to have a conversation with you right now…You might feel like he's been racist just because you were being mistreated for a long time.

Like Meher, Sanjay, a student from Sri Lanka, offered his take on the stereotype of Black people committing crimes on the news. He first drew from the British colony in Sri Lanka to explicate how in the U.S., "the White people have had control over the Black people from the start, and (Black people) were not given a place in the society." He continued,

> So...because of that, they were always in like the bottom layer of the society. So they have to like, they have those bad experiences all around. And they tend to do bad things because of that… Sometimes they might not have a choice because you have to earn a living somehow… And like it's easy to find money by doing bad things. So like... if um...if if at the beginning, the people were…people were like...people are looking like this now and like in the modern society, then the things would have changed… So...yeah, so...yeah, so I think like um..the fault is not among Black people for most of the cases like...It's like the fault is coming from a generational fault.

From the extensive sharing around White and Black people and the values assigned to each racial group, it is evident that many participants perceived race through a White and Black dichotomous lens. Some of them did mention having a vague idea about the "Asian" or "yellow" category before coming to the U.S. However, many were not aware of the "of Color" or "Brown" racial category until they came to the U.S.

Race beyond White and Black

Over the course of their time in the U.S., many participants started to develop consciousness of different racial groups that were beyond the White and Black dichotomy. Some learned about a third category, usually referred to as "of Color" or "Brown" and articulated their newly formed understanding of Indigenous people and Hispanic/Latinx over the course of their time in the U.S. Some participants like Mk (Japan), Sanjay (Sri Lanka), and Shawn (Nepal) perceived Indigenous people as those "belonging to the past," "extinct," "small in number," and "living some secluded area," who also experience "suppression from the White colonist," a perception mainly developed from textbooks in their home countries. Over the course of their time in the U.S., these participants learned that Indigenous people were an important racial group living among us. Shawn, for example, recounted attending an inauguration ceremony of a newly built dining hall at Global University that changed his perception of Indigenous people:

> So the land kind of belongs to them historically, and we kind of have to include them. And they're nice people too. So and...they are like us. They aspire to have a goal in life. They aspire to have family, live life, be a part of America, like regular American citizens…I used to think they're pretty much isolated people, but no… No, there was this [Indigenous tribe in the state]... Let's see, I forgot the name. That dining hall. It's actually dedicated to the Indigenous people of this land, [state]. So this land belonged to them originally, so and even the name [Indigenous tribe in the state], it's the Native language of the [Indigenous tribe in the state] people.

Despite an enhanced understanding of Indigenous people as a significant racial group, Shawn and others' perceptions of Indigenous people remained somewhat superficial, focusing mainly on the distinctive cultures of this racial group. In addition to Indigenous people, some participants like Kim (Vietnam), Ali (Malaysia), Meher (Bangladesh), Mk (Japan), and Shawn

(Nepal) also started to realize that Hispanics are "a really major group" in the U.S. Ali underscored the strong presence of Hispanics in the metropolitan city adjacent to the Global University campus and the state where Global University is located. He then noted the close-knit community of Latinx people based on his observations:

> It's just…And also, they're like, and also I kind of things like, Latin people, they're more…they're more wanting to be in their own community, which is kind of, I can understand that, cause if I were in the same…ballpark as them, in the same boat as them, I will also do the same thing…But…it doesn't give me any bad expressions towards them.

Meher articulated her frustration with the language "barrier" that she experienced during interactions with Hispanic/Latinx people:

> But I feel like um...they also put up barrier. Like they don't wanna like... In [inaudible] we have the most common language is the English, right? Other than that, I wasn't been able to communicate with you. I don't know your language, you don't know my language…But if you don't talk me with that language, how would I be able to communicate with you <laugh>? I think they don't wanna communicate…

Despite developing awareness of Hispanic/Latinx as a racial group, many participants remained somewhat confused by who belonged to the Hispanic and Latinx groups and the difference between the two.

Relying on skin color to identify racial groups, Mk, a student from Japan, expressed her amazement when she learned that Hispanics also consisted of White people. Said Mk,

> And...I thought, so, my friend's from El Salvador, it's Hispanic but I thought she's White because I didn't know it. She...It will be controversial, but she has white skin. But back

> then, in California, I met like a lot of Brown color Hispanic people or White people saying, “We are from Mexico.” So like...that's the only thing I knew it. But she described as an Hispanic, even though the looking is similar to like white people, but yeah.

Shawn (Nepal) associated Hispanics with having Latin American origin, which is what Latinx actually refers to. He also specified that because of the large migration of Latinx people to America, they had become “Americanized,” hence, did not face any form of racism.

> They’re also pretty um...Well, I learned that they...they’re also mostly American Americanized, so like they don’t have much ties to the South American... you know history. So they’re almost all American now, so don’t really care that much, so maybe they have the least problems associated with racism um...because they have been kind of accepted into the um...demography kind of, and also they have a significant majority as well.

To Shawn, being in the numeric majority and being assimilated equates to seemingly positive experiences that are supposedly “free” from racism. Jay, a student from the Philippines, on the other hand, not only named the disadvantages that Hispanics experience, but started to challenge the monolithic lens in viewing this pan-ethnic group after learning about their political advocacy efforts:

> Especially cause like in the media, most of the experiences is like center how like Mexican Americans. But like I’ve had friends who were like El Salvador Americans and how like, um, like a lot of like the immigrants were pushed by like, a lot of them are like refugees and how like that impacted like their experience here. Um, but again, also like I’ve kind of had like gain, um, knowledge about like what they’re kind of like lobbying for, um, or like fighting for, um, and how like they are like, um, disadvantaged in

America. Cause like I generally had like knowledge, like okay, like they're in disadvantage in America, but I didn't really know the nuances of like okay, but why?

Although many participants started to develop their awareness of the values assigned to the White and Black racial groups even before coming to the U.S., very few had a clear understanding of other racial groups outside of these two prominent racial groups. Some started to build up their understanding of other racial groups such as Indigenous and Hispanic/Latinx people, but even so, their understanding remained limited and superficial. Aside from perceptions of others regarding race, racialization, and racism, many participants shared their perceptions of their own race.

Perception of My Own Race

During my conversations with the participants, most of them indicated their race as Asian. However, their perceptions and/or understanding of their race as Asian were somewhat on a spectrum. On one end was a sense of detachment from Asians as a racial identity; on the other end was an integration of their race as Asian that constituted a strong sense of self-identity. A sub-theme echoed by many participants was how broad the Asian term was and as such, could not adequately capture their lived experiences in the U.S. This may be one of the reasons why some participants perceived themselves through a lens of heightened ethnicity and nationality instead of race after coming to the U.S. As a result, these participants did not necessarily see themselves as being racialized as Asian in the U.S. with specific values assigned to them. Moreover, some participants noted their confusion around the difference between race and ethnicity and conflating the two concepts when it came to perceptions of themselves.

I'm Asian but it's just a label

Many participants started to recognize the Asian racial construct and accepted the

reality of being grouped and seen by others as Asian after coming to the U.S. But many remained distant from this racial identity when it came to their perceptions of themselves. Some participants considered race as merely a label that people used to "convey point of view to another" or "quickly deliver information to other people," particularly in the U.S. where racial constructs were widely used. Ventus (India), for example, shared how he saw race as a "labeling game," which he did not desire to be a part of:

> <long pause> In introspection, race doesn't come to me...It takes external effort to get like which race I am. Even if there's a question, it almost takes... There's almost a lag in answering the question…<long pause> Um...It's more of a labeling game, labeling game…Yeah. So it almost takes me time to realize, okay, that's the question it's asking, so what should I answer?

Like Ventus, Lynn, a student from China, not only considered the Asian racial label as a way for people to understand who they were but expressed their frustration around how labels oftentimes came with stereotypes that did not define who they were:

> I don't fit in with most of the Asian stereotypes. I don't want to listen to authority, which is probably not a good thing a lot of times. I am not as obedient as people will like me to be. I am woman. I am queer. I am Asian. I like being dominant. I like leading. I like not <emphasis> listening. I, I like to be the person that's honesty when people listen to me <emphasis> and I like to come up with things are outside of the box, which is what...most Asian people would not do. And then when you add in like different identities of being queer, of being... Well, I guess female, assigned female at birth. I, I, I lean towards more non-binary at this point because again, I feel like gender, race are all social constructs

enforced on people. And when you remove all of it, you are more free. And...But, if this is an easier way for people to understand who I am, then...fine, just label it.

Although Lynn accepted the reality of being grouped and labeled as Asian, they did not consider themself as fitting in the "typical" Asian stereotypes who are docile, obedient, and quiet. Perhaps Lynn intentionally distanced themself from the Asian racial label as a way to push back against being racialized into a monolithic group that did not seem to reflect their multiple identities and transnational experience.

Meher (Bangladesh) started to notice that Asians have "become a race" during the COVID-19 global pandemic when anti-Asian racism was at its peak and that she was a member of the Asian community. But to Meher, race was nothing more than phenotypes and labels that did not hold any value to her unless when and/or she was misjudged due to her race.

I don't know how a race defines anyone-apart from the color of your skin…But...um... if this is how it looks on the mirror, I don't really care, right? It's okay if someone is telling me an Asian just by seeing my skin color… As long as you are not staring or you are thinking I might misplace something just because I'm an Asian… But as long as you are just saying, "Okay fine, he's Asian, he's White," that's fine with me. Or he's European or something, she's from Bangladesh, that's fine with me.

Similar to Meher, Elaine, a student from Hong Kong and Portugal, perceived "Asian" as nothing more than a "demographic" term and "a box" that she needed to check in the census or surveys. Elaine jokingly said that she was "happy to exist there (in the Asian category)," at the same time, expressed concerns over people's possible assumptions about her based on her race:

But, it can be annoying when this is like the first lens that people will see you. It's like, "Oh that Asian-" yeah, that can be annoying but yeah, as far as the actual fact, <laugh>

> yes, I'm Asian, it's all right. Yeah. Oh, but yeah, it would be problematic if it was like, "Oh you are Asian, that's why <emphasis> blah-" that if you have to make that forceful causal relationship, then that would be problematic. Like you have a certain stereotype or something.

Because some participants perceived their race as nothing more than phenotypes and labels, a gap remained between how others grouped and perceived them and how they perceived themselves regarding race. Aside from perceiving race as simply labels and remarks, another theme that surfaced from my conversations with participants was the diversity within the Asian racial group.

Asian is so broad/not enough

Many participants brought up that "Asian" was too broad of a category that was simply not enough or adequate to represent the diverse cultures and experiences within the racial group. Participants like Ali (Malaysia), Elaine (Hong Kong and Portugal), Jay (Philippines), and Kim (Vietnam) voiced how Asian was often used as "one term" to "describe everyone <emphasis>" in Asia, despite the diverse countries, different types of Asian people, and cultures. Ali illustrated this point:

> But like Asian, it's too big to just presume in one category cause you have South Asia, you have Southeast Asia, you have East Asia, you have North Asia, you have like West Asia. And West Asia is not Western. There're like, Western Asia is basically Arabic basically Arabic people. And Arabic people is different from Chinese people, and Chinese people is different from Indian people...And Southeast Asia people are really different because in Southeast Asia we have like this multicultural multicultural um…assimilation where like Malaysia has Malay…So…like I would understand why

would you only put Asian because Asian is going to be a lot <emphasis> a lot things if you wanna cover it. But again, like it is okay just to put as Asian because that's how I identify myself here <emphasis>.

Noting the different backgrounds of ethnic groups and the various reasons of migrating to the U.S., Elaine said,

Well first it's like how does it feel as an Asian? It makes me feel very small. Cause as you said, like there's so <emphasis> many different groups and it also makes me feel kind of in incompetent, in a sense that I don't know that well how all these other groups that I am supposed to be related in a certain way, but I don't even know that well about them…That makes me feel kind of bad…And also you know like Vietnamese and maybe people from their Laos or like from Korea they have different, everyone <emphasis> have different backgrounds and reasons to come to U.S. in the first place for them.

Adding onto Elaine's statement, Jay noted the different cultures, political issues, and the disparities between ethnic groups within the Asian racial group and the limitation of Asian as an umbrella term that glosses over these differences:

I guess like when people say like Asian, like there is kind of like, um, people lose like site of like all these other like ethnicities and like the ethnic cultural diversity of Asia. And especially like, for example in political discourse, like, um, also losing like the nuances of like colorism and how like how specific ethnic groups like you come from. Like they will affect like how um, you interact with other people. Um, and again, like for example there's a stereotype, like Asians are like all rich, um, but then people tend to forget how like, um, certain groups in America, such as, for example, Laotian Americans

are like suffer from like systematic like discrimination. Um, so like Asians shouldn't really be understood as a monolithic group.

In a related vein, Kim delineated the varying experience of Asians based on different citizenship and immigration status. Specifically, Kim expressed her frustration over how the pervasive "privileged/model minority" stereotype often masked the "unique challenges that international students face" and the assumption that she held the "same level of privileges or resources" as those who were born in the U.S.

> As an Asian international student, my experience was different from Asian Americans <emphasis>, people who were Asian that born in the U.S.…Um...So I...I was like guess the information was interesting, but I was um, also thinking about how much it applies to me or...if I was like not raised in America and if I did not have like similar experiences as Asian Americans. Because I felt like when people talked about model minority myth, um...they kind of talked about Asians in general, but this kind of assumed that it's Asian Americans. So sometimes I kind of feel like do I belong to that group or not?

Kim was troubled by the fact that she was racialized as a "model minority" as her Asian American peers that overlooked the unique challenges she faced in the U.S. Both Jay and Kim alluded to the broader discourse of Asians as "model minorities" despite disparities between different subgroups within the racial group. In our conversations, both of them highlighted the problematic practice of grouping Asians with White students in diversity metrics in school districts and at Global university that perpetuate the "White adjacent" stereotype of Asians. Moreover, Jay noted how the "White establishment" often pitted Asians against Blacks and as such, created a sense of divide and animosity between the two groups, as evident through the 1992 Los Angeles Uprising. Also implicit in Jay's statement was an indication of the

racialization of Asians as "honorary Whites" that functions to perpetuate anti-Blackness, despite him not naming so. Using the *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard* case as an example, Kim noted the "historical disadvantages" that Black and Latinx people faced but was troubled by the practice of affirmative action that she perceived as dampening the admission rate of Asian students. As such, she contemplated how and if it was even possible to strike a balance between meritocracy and affirmative action that included different groups without "excluding people who did work hard and were deserving of that chance." Although Kim was aware of the inequalities that Black and Latinx students experienced, she continued to focus on the outcomes for Asians rather than challenging *how* the broader unequal system influenced the unequal outcomes.

Conflating race and ethnicity

For some participants, race and ethnicity were two confusing concepts that they had difficulty differentiating. As a result, they ended up conflating race and ethnicity and related cultures. For example, when asked if he thought of himself as having a race, Sanjay responded with "Sinhalese," a majority ethnicity in Sri Lanka as his race. Although Sai has never considered himself as having a race, he emphasized his ethnicity–Indian–that captured his perception of himself and others' perceptions of him, which has remained the same throughout his time in the U.S. He shared,

> I've always associated myself with ethnicity. Because that's what everybody else associates me with. Cause I mean, what is my race? You know, people usually when they look at me, they think you're Indian. And that automatically jumps to, um, ethnicity, you know? Race has never been an aspect in my opinion… I think, I mean, I think it's just always been part of me. I've just never expressed it or ever analyzed that situation. I just

> feel like it's always been there and I haven't done anything with it. I mean, hasn't really affected me specifically in any way in my life.

As Sai continued to explain, being an Indian had strong ties to religions and cultures, including food and traditional clothes. This perception of himself was heightened when Sai attended an Indian school in South Africa. Perhaps growing up in a "foreign" country where he was already in the minority pushed his Indian ethnic identity to the forefront, which did not change after he migrated to another "foreign" country–the United States.

Sunny (Taiwan) explicitly named her confusion between race and ethnicity because she always "experience[d] culture and race at the same time" and as such, found it difficult to differentiate the two. Talking and learning about race in her doctoral program has helped Sunny to conceptualize race and ethnicity, which she continued to explore.

> But when I, my, from my experience when I think of races, I always like associate with like different nationalities and different cultures, well not necessarily nationality, but definitely different cultures and...yeah, I guess it's just not like race as a standalone thing that you have to consider sort of. Yeah. Um...but this time around like people talk about race a lot more. Yeah. Maybe because of just like how the society has evolved or maybe it's because of the discipline I'm in right now. It's just people talk about this a lot more I guess. So that has uh...kind of pushed me to think a it more about just in terms of my own race and ethnicity and like what is the difference between race and ethnicity even. Yeah. I'm still figuring that out <laugh>. It's very confusing for me.

To Sunny, being able to learn and talk about race has enhanced her understanding of this social construct, but what may remain missing is the opportunity for her to learn and talk about race in relation to ethnicity and how the intersection of the two may have shaped her experience in the

U.S. Unlike the participants who conflated race with ethnicity, SEA participants illuminated their clear differences between the two.

Heightened ethnicity

Perhaps because Asian is too broad of a category, all three SEA participants illuminated perceiving themselves through the ethnicity lens. For example, Ali (Malaysia) and Jay (Philippines), and Kim (Vietnam) specified their ethnicities as "Malay," "Filipino," and "Vietnamese" when prompted about their perception of their race. For example, having always viewed Asian more as a "geographic term" than a racial identity, Jay elucidated his strong identity as a Filipino while acutely aware of the pan-ethnic Asian identity that many of his Asian American peers connected with.

> But I don't necessarily like identify with Asian as in like, you know, if someone were to ask me where, like I'm from ethnically, I would say I'm Filipino, Um, and the Philippines is in Asia. But here, um, I do think that like, um... like. I do personally like identify still as like, oh, I'm Filipino. Um, but like I do notice with like my friends who are like Asian American, um, they will like primarily identify as like this construction called like Asian first.

If given the choice, Ali said he would specify his ethnicity as Southeast Asian, due to the different culture he embodied as a Malaysian.

> But if you're talking about other Asians in general, I would say I'm Southeast Asian because they know Asian <emphasis> enough is not, Asian is not enough to just say that to say how I am different from you, different from you in culture wise, not in like color-wise or things like that. Just culture wise, cause we have different backgrounds even though we're Asians.

In a similar vein, Kim shared her stronger attachment to her ethnicity as a Vietnamese than her race:

> So I feel like it (Asian) describes kind of some aspects of my identity. But I wouldn't say like that's the only one thing I identify with. Um...And also...it's not just race but also ethnicity. So I feel like being a Vietnamese I get along with Vietnamese people just like more naturally. Um...And so I would say that Asian is kind of a term that kind describes my race but doesn't necessarily like something I strongly identify with.

From the SEA participants' sharing, it is evident that they could clearly differentiate between race and ethnicity and strongly identified with their ethnicity due to the unique cultures they embodied and/or a strong sense of pride in their cultures within the Asian community.

Heightened nationality

Aside from ethnicity, several participants noted how transitioning from being in the majority to a minority in the U.S. has heightened their national identity. For example, from being "surrounded by Nepali people" in his home country to becoming "an outsider" in the U.S., Shawn talked about how, although he had to identify with Asian or South Asian in the U.S., his nationality as a Nepali has heightened over the past year that he has been in the U.S.

> So....it it didn't change the fact that I was a Nepali and I will always be a Nepali, but it deepened that understanding that, okay, Nepal is here in the context of this whole world, and I come from this part of the world and this type of upbringing, and how that is so <emphasis> different from what things are along here. So…that way it just keeps growing deeper and deeper.

Ali also highlighted his heightened Malaysian national identity after transitioning from

being in the majority where he shared the same background and culture as everyone else to become a minority in the US where being a Malaysian became an "outstanding feature."

> Cause like if you're in if you're in your own country, you always feel the majority. You, everyone <emphasis> has the same background, everyone <emphasis> has the same culture. So that doesn't really make a difference if you're show showing it or not. But if you're in the United States, it doesn't have to be United States, anywhere else <emphasis> where you're not the majority essentially…That's how that's when you start to feel like, "Oh, this is who I actually, who I really am. This is the good flag that I'm carrying with."

In tandem with transitioning from being in the majority to the minority in the U.S., Jay's national identity as a Filipino has "strengthened to an extent" and "politicized to an extent" after interacting and learning from Filipino Americans over the past year. He described,

> I do think that like, um, my understanding Filipino identity has become like, um...I think it has to become like more politicized to an extent because like, um, a lot of like the Filipino American groups here have like a lot of like, they have like a political element to it specifically, like combating like, um, like for example, um, like Indigenous people's rights, um, and I guess like imperialism and also like now recently with like, um, the new administration and like political authoritarianism. So it kind of like complimented, I guess like my insider view being like someone who was in the Philippines for like 18 years and like race and that culture. Um, so it has like, to an extent like kinda like enriched my understanding of my own country, even though if that understanding comes from people who do not live in it, um, but still feel like a connection, um, through like their, like family heritage for example.

Instead of perceiving themselves through a racial lens, these participants focused on the transition they experienced from being in the majority in their home countries to the minority in the U.S. And rather than noticing their race through this transition, their nationality was pushed to the forefront as a remark that differentiated them from others.

I'm Asian and more…

Among all the participants, very few of them described not only perceiving themselves as Asian but also their strong attachment to this racial identity. Among them, some also perceived themselves through the lens of Asian that intersected with other identities such as nationality and citizenship. From being the "only one (Asian)" in a predominantly White environment to engaging in "dialogues" and "training" on social justice and inclusion as a Resident Assistant, Joy (Nepal) developed a "concept of being Asian" as an undergraduate student in the U.S. Later on, at Global University, interacting with fellow Asians from different countries and ethnicities helped Joy see the many similar "cultural aspects and traditions" among different Asian ethnic groups and the many differences from her white American friends. These experiences collectively shaped Joy's sense of belonging in being "a part of the Asian group."

> I guess when it comes to um...you know um...projecting yourself, you know identifying um...um...considering what's your identity, I do identify as um an Asian. It reflects in what I do, what I eat, what I wear. It's part of me…But I think um in um in everyday life in things I do, I, I reflect being Asian…One big thing, first thing I guess that really stood out to me that I'm different, is um...back home we have this sense of community. We're very um...you know um...active in the community. We look after each other, we celebrate together, we mourn together. Here, I came here and it just...it felt very...self-centered in a way. You don't know your next-door neighbor. Um so I really missed that part. And I

> think being Asian to me is um...means that um you know we're...we're more social and like to interact with our community members and have that sense of sharing and caring, you know.

Similar to Joy, Jessie (South Korea) also shared how her racial identity of an Asian became a "big part of my identity" that she "owned" since her predominantly White high school in the U.S. Like Joy, using the racial lens–Asian–to perceive herself occurred over time, rather than in "one day." This development in racial identity was facilitated by her theology classes in high school, exposure to different Asian cultures, and interactions with people from diverse racial backgrounds at Global University.

> Like I say, um, I, I like race wise, I am like Asian. Um, I'm like a hundred percent Korean. So yes, I say like I have a race. I would say that. And I am aware of like other races, um, like white, African American, like Indian, other like Islanders. I don't know all of it, but you know. And I think it, it is a big like part of identity for someone. It's um, I feel like you can, obviously you shouldn't like assume things based off of their race, but I feel like you can get a lot of information from their race and...like for me it is a big part would be like where I'm from and like who I am.

Aside from Joy and Jessie who identified strongly with being Asian in the US, other participants like Sunny (Taiwan), Mk (Japan), and Elaine (Hong Kong and Portugal) highlighted the intersection of their racial identity (Asian) and their other identities like nationality and citizenship that collectively defined who they are. Sunny, for example, stressed that being an Asian and being a Taiwanese are both integral parts of her identities, and after being in the US for three years or so, she now actually "thought of [her]self more like first <emphasis> as a Taiwanese, then as an Asian."

But, um, when I was in Taiwan growing up, I didn't really, like, we always have this like tensions and dynamics but I didn't really think much about it and I didn't really think of myself as a, like a Taiwanese. It was just like, yeah, I'm just a person. But that kind of developed during my time in the States cause I was exposed to people from so many different countries and they will ask about your country and like what it's like and things like that. And cause of the people I was around, like people are interested in international related things. So they'll always ask me about my <emphasis> experience growing up in Taiwan and how it's like, And...so that had kind of pushed me to think a bit more about who I am as a people born and raised in Taiwan.

Mk also noted that although she identified as Asian, her nationality as Japanese was pushed to the forefront in certain situations, particularly when she was misjudged as other Asian ethnic groups during her community college semester in California.

Yes, I think it's Asian, but...it depends. Like I have two different identities as an Asian and a Japanese, but...it depends on the situation. When I answer some demography question, that's an Asian. I put Asian, but it's kind of racism, when people talk to me, they say, Ni-hao. And I say, "Okay, not Ni-hao." I'm from Japan. At that time, I feel like I'm Japanese, and I don't want to categorize it as like...large Asian. It's kind of racism, it's not respectable.

Elaine delineated that her racial identity of Asian was inseparable from her European citizenship that simultaneously shaped her experience in the U.S.:

But...it's kind of interesting cause <pause and sigh> I don't know, cause like some...a lot of the times when you're like dealing with like the day-to-day race it's just so intertwined with like you know nationalities, citizenship or whatever…And...um...I actually have a

> Portuguese passport because of my dad-he's from Macau. And you know, so um...I would have like very interesting encounters, when especially when I go through customs or anything, people are like, "Oh you're like Portuguese, so you speak Portuguese?" I was like, "no, I can't even say one," I'm just kidding. <laugh>…So um...yeah, those are …or like the flipped side, if I tell other people that, or for whatever reason that they know that I have like a Portuguese passport and [their reaction would be like]… "oh!" <pause> and then like...So I'm just like, yeah, I guess I have to deal with that.

Although Elaine perceived herself as Asian, this racial identity did not fully capture or reflect her lived reality in the U.S., especially since she had to navigate different reactions from people who perceived her based on her nationality and citizenship. During the second-round of member checking, Elaine commented that people's confusion or amusement over her Portuguese passport was largely due to their lack of understanding of the colonial history in Macau. She also expressed her frustration and explained that these seemingly informal and innocuous chit-chats can often reinforce stereotypes related to a certain group. And due to the informal nature of these interactions, most people would laugh it off or go along with it without pushing back on the harmful comments.

Chapter Summary

The above themes shed light on how many participants did not have a clear understanding of race before coming to the U.S. due to the more racially homogenous environment in their home countries. It was not until their immersion in a more racially diverse environment, along with interactions with different racial groups, that many started to develop awareness of race as a widely used social construct in the U.S. Despite an enhanced an awareness of race, some participants distanced themselves from the concept that race was

relevant to lives, whether their own or others, stating that race did not affect their experiences in the U.S. In contrast, many SA and SEA participants did experience racialization and even racism in their home countries where casteism and colorism prevailed. These experiences shaped the SA and SEA participants' perceptions of how race functions in the U.S.

Although race was a distant reality in many of the participants' home countries (especially EA participants), many of them indicated an awareness of how Black versus White racial groups were treated and the different values that were assigned to each group before coming to the U.S. After coming to the U.S, aside from changing perceptions of these two prominent racial groups, some participants started to expand their understanding of race beyond the White and Black dichotomy by developing consciousness of the third category "of Color" and "Brown" that consisted of Indigenous and Hispanic/Latinx people.

Another theme that was frequently echoed by many participants was the perception of their own race as Asian. Some perceived Asian as nothing more than a label, one that was too broad to capture their diverse cultures and experiences. Some conflated race with ethnicity, with the general exception of SEA participants, who emphasized their heightened sense of ethnicity after coming to the U.S.; others noted a heightened sense of nationality after coming to the U.S. Among all participants in the study, a few participants articulated their strong racial identity as Asian, particularly one that intersected with their nationality and citizenship.

Chapter 5: Perceptions and Experiences of Racism and Neo-racism

Another important aspect of Asian international students' perceptions and experiences of race is their perceptions and experiences of racism and neo-racism. In this chapter, I unveil two themes related to participants' experiences and perceptions of racism and neo-racism and lack thereof at Global University, and how their perceptions of racism and neo-racism have changed over the course of their time in the U.S. First, I provide in-depth descriptions of participants' perceptions and experiences as related to racism. Next, I talk about participants' perceptions and experiences of neo-racism, followed by their changing perceptions of racist and neo-racist experiences over the course of their time in the U.S. In the final section of this chapter, I summarize the two themes.

Experiences of Racism, Neo-Racism, and Lack Thereof

On one hand, some participants indicated that they felt "free" from racism at Global University due to various reasons, such as a seemingly racially diverse and inclusive environment, not fitting into the typical Asian look, and online learning that served as a form of "shield" that somehow protected them from racism. On the other hand, several participants reported having various negative experiences, with some recalling racist incidents on-campus, and others indicating off-campus incidents. Some participants also recalled negative experiences related to accent, immigration status, and citizenship, as well as discrimination from fellow Asian international students, all took place on the Global University campus. Among the participants who reported experiences of racism and neo-racism, their perceptions of experiences of racism and neo-racism varied. Some explicitly named their experiences racism while others alluded to other factors such as gender, physical appearance, culture, and language as the causes of their negative experiences.

Perceptions of being "free" from racism

Several participants perceived that they did not experience racism at Global University because of the seemingly diverse racial makeup and the inclusive environment, including "respectful," "open-minded," "progressive," and "liberal" people. Sanjay, a student from Sri Lanka, for example, firmly stated that he has never experienced racism on campus, because of the high representation of EA and SA students and faculty in his department:

> No, because I don't think...I had any such instance because like usually...in our classes like um...everyone is like Asian students <laugh>, so it's common to be Asian, so it doesn't matter... that much.

Before transferring to Global University, Mk, a Japanese student, attended a community college in California where she experienced racist verbal assaults, especially at the start of the COVID-19 global pandemic. She compared her experience in California with that in Global University with her perception of the "very liberal" people. She even noted how she "forgot I'm an Asian, or I'm a Japanese, or I'm international student because no one treat me as like an outsider. Everyone thinks me as part of as usual…as normal."

Ali (Malaysia) described America as a "land of extremes" where people can be "extremely racist and also extremely not" and he has been "really fortunate" to be meeting people who were nice. He also alluded to a higher chance of meeting nice people on a college campus where people were more neutral and mature minded, especially at where he worked at Global University where diversity was promoted. He shared,

> So like for me, I don't really have any particular um… negative racism that I felt just because of my race… It's just like, no, most of the are just really curious. Cause like Malaysia's not really, Malaysian people, not really it's not really a thing for them I guess.

> Being introduced to like Southeast Asian except um…Thailand, Singapore, and Indonesia. Malaysia is not really, it's not really the big, not really one of the big names. So I can really understand why they're curious about it…and how they're not really exposed about it. But like the way they ask everything are all in a really respectful manner. So I don't really I don't really sense any uncomfortable situations with the questions.

It is likely that the combination of a seemingly diverse and inclusive environment at Global University and an office that valued diversity altogether made Ali unaware of how he may be racialized and experience racism. Aside from a seemingly diverse and inclusive environment, several SA and SEA participants detailed not fitting into the "typical" Asian look as another "shield" that somehow "protected" them from racism, particularly during the COVID-19 global pandemic when anti-Asian hate was exacerbated.

Sai (India) indicated, "I mean COVID started off in China and uh, since they're referring to... it's mostly Chinese and Korean and Japanese as East Asian. I don't...I guess, come under that group."

Meher (Bangladesh) noticed stares from people towards East Asians who wore masks at the start of the COVID-19 global pandemic, which she did not experience. She alluded, "Probably even though I'm an Asian, I'm not exactly looks like the people from China."

Similarly, Ali (Malaysia) noted that "people don't really correlate me with Asian" and said,

> But people don't really see me as an Asian, just because of my complexity…And also in a way, I don't know, my face built, people say I'm more of a Hispanic rather than more Asian. So…I don't know if I'm fortunate enough or just, I don't know. It's just…it's just

> my build doesn't look like Asian as much. I look more Hispanic, which is kind of…sad <laugh> just because I wanna see myself, I identify myself as an Asian. But yeah, sometimes you got away with certain good things because how people see you, which is…which can be positive and also negative at the same time.

Besides not fitting into the "typical" Asian look as a form of "protection," some participants also illuminated social distancing and online learning as another factor that somehow "protected" them from experiencing racism at Global University, particularly during the COVID-19 global pandemic. Sanjay and Sai, from Sri Lanka and India, both noted the limited social interactions as a result of online learning, which they perceived as lessening the opportunity for anti-Asian racism to happen. Also iterated by Jessie, a South Korean student,

> Um...yeah… Like it does help that you're not in public. Like when, you know Asian people are getting attacked, but that's just like sad that you have to do that in order to be safe, you know. Like, you shouldn't have to like hide in your house because you think you're gonna get attacked just because of your race.

Contrasting these participants who indicated their experience of supposedly being "free" from racism on campus, other participants delineated various incidents of racism at Global University, which I detail in the next subsection.

Racism at Global University

Several participants shared that during their time at Global University, they either personally experienced or witnessed different types of racism, including assault/harassment, stereotypes, and microaggression. Among the participants, some explicitly named their experiences as racism, while others attributed to race and "other things" such as culture, language, and physical appearance as the causes of their negative experiences on campus.

Assault/harassment. One form of racism that some participants experienced was verbal assault and harassment, including both personally experienced and observed. Learning about his cousin on the edge of being run over by a car once, Ventus (India) recalled an "almost similar experience" that he encountered on the Global University campus.

> I was crossing the street on campus and I didn't start but the person just ran through…I think they saw me because there's always the stop sign…I was crossing through the pedestrian crossing only so I think they saw me, but they really ran through. I was few steps back. I thought they were in hurry, but I can't say exactly… These kind of instances happen, no matter the place or anything, things happen…Yeah. The place where I'm from, it's always said when you're on road, think that everyone is blind.

Ventus alluded to "discrimination" that may or may not be based on race as his interpretation of the incident. He further elaborated that anything could happen "if it's your bad day," indicating that it was nobody's fault that incidents like this happened, and the only thing that he could do is to remain cautious when incidents do happen in the future.

As the officiate for intramural sports, Ventus recalled an incident he saw during a game on the pitch. He described an incident of an Indian international student in an all-Indian student team who got injured when playing against an all-White student team. At first, Ventus interpreted the incident as an example of racism but then somewhat backtracked and alluded to the game being heated too quickly and said, "It's not like if you play a game and you are like a hundred percent safe."

> First day and I think the match got heated up and someone injured, not just injured, they almost fractured their ankle. So it was like totally ripped. They had to go to hospital and had surgery…Yeah. Even the clinician was telling us that this is the first time they have

> seen this in few years since they are being employed…It was almost sounding like it was due to racism… It happened literally right next to me, to the person but I don't exactly know. It was as the gameplay was going. I think it was heated up, but some things can't be made sure…It makes it a heavy heated game.

Although it is possible that what Ventus witnessed was racial discrimination, he hesitated in naming it racism. Like his interpretation of his own incident, he alluded to other causes—common injuries in intramural sports—as the cause of the incident.

Like Ventus, Ali, a Malaysian student, also served as an officiate for intramural sports and one time, he witnessed a Black student's experience of being verbally assaulted by a White student player during a game.

> They were like playing against each other and they kind of like got heated for a moment…And I don't really remember what he says, but the white person really was talking in a really racist way towards the Black person. And…yeah, I think it was heated because they were like fighting for a ball and things got out of control from there. But yeah. He did say like some racist slur, I don't know like really racist comments or anything. I don't really remember particularly.

Ali interpreted this incident as racism because the White student did not know the Black student. Interestingly, Ali noted that if racial slurs were used between friends, they were more likely innocuous jokes. He elaborated,

> Like if my cousins talk to me with the n-word, I would I would not take it personally because I also say to the same thing to them, cause like for me like the words, like the degrading words, it depends fully on the context. If you are talking to a stranger, then you're degrading that person. But if talking to a friend, then it's different, because some

> people just take it personally really much, which I really find really find it amusing for Americans, cause Americans are really sensitive people as compared to Malaysians.

It is likely that having experienced racial slurs as a form of joking among friends in his home country has shaped Ali's interpretation of the reactions from his American friends towards racial slurs. Ali may have been less aware of how serious the n-word was, the history associated with this word in the U.S. context, and the tremendous harm it had on Black folks in the U.S. As such, he may have instead dismissed the reactions from his American peers as being too sensitive, rather than connecting the dots between the racial slur and White supremacy/racism on the systemic level.

Mk (Japan) recalled being harassed by a Black male graduate student in a STEM department who kept harassing her with text messages and phone calls, and even threatened to use his power (because of his high position in a company) and mutual connections in the department to fire TAs or faculty on campus if Mk kept dismissing him. As such, Mk kept this a secret until she received more harassing messages from the same person on LinkedIn, where he continued to bully Mk. Mk finally talked to her friend who helped her report the incident to Global University. Reflecting on the traumatic experience, Mk said,

> That experience gave me...the sense to alert. And yeah, how to, I should not judge people, but how...who to avoid to be in a relationship like that… I'm more...like I have...I don't think any Black people are like that, but more someone is in high position, and...proud of being rich and those, I hate those people after that.

After Mk found out that other victims were all Asian women, she named the incident as a form of racism. However, towards the end of our conversation, she started to point to culture as the cause of it all. She contemplated,

> I don't know. It's a culture thing...Asian girl tend to be more quiet than other part of Asia, or maybe not Muslim woman. They have different problem, I mean like about the gender equality, but Asian girls...are easy target for some people.

Mk named gender inequality for Muslim women as a problem but did not perceive her experience as sexism. Instead, Mk focused on Asian women's supposed quiet and docile natures as the root cause, rather than critiquing *why* they were perceived as such. By alluding to Asian culture instead of the intersectionality of racism and sexism, Mk de-emphasized the intersection of her race and gender in shaping her experience.

Although Jessie (South Korea) did not personally experience assault or harassment on campus, she relayed an incident that happened to one of her classmates—a Black woman—in an all-White student dorm.

> And she said every time, um, well <sigh> it started out as like sometimes she would like hear people making like monkey noises outside of her door. And she just thought it was like, oh they're probably just doing something like I'm overthinking. But it became like a constant like thing, like whenever people like would walk by her door or something like that…And we were all like, you need go talk to your RA. Or like something if it's, if it happened once, maybe they were like doing something else, but if it's like constantly happening, it's not like a coincidence anymore. So I guess that was a bad example, um, of racism that like here, that's probably like the worst one I heard here.

Jessie clearly indicated that the Black woman's experience was racist and also described how she encouraged the Black woman to report the incident to an RA or residence hall manager and move out of a dorm that was not friendly to Students of Color.

Stereotypes. Aside from assault and harassment, some participants also mentioned

experiencing stereotypes as another form of racism. Lynn recalled their experience of being assumed to be "good at math" and burdened with checking everyone's homework in an accounting group project that consisted of "a White woman, a Black guy, and a Brown guy."

> When we got into the group and then they were just like, "Yo, you took calculus, right?" And I was like... "Yes, yes but you probably never heard of the calculus I took. So good luck trying to understand." …We only submit one copy and everybody in the group will get that same grade. So, I feel like that comment was like, "Oh, so you are in this group, so I guess you will do everything for us and see if we are doing it right. And then that way, no matter what, because you care so much about my grade, your grade, my grade will also look good."

Lynn continued,

> They just hit you up on GroupMe and they're like, "Hey, can I see your work for this problem?"…Like I spoke, what, twice in my accounting group chat. And then the day before one of the homework was due, I had two people DM me was like, "Hey, I'm really stuck with this problem. Can you just help me with that?" I really want to know why me. Like I never answer the problem in the group chat. There is this one person that keeps answering everybody's problem. He is on fire <laugh>…Did you bother everybody or did you just bother me? I want to know that. Or they just think I'm active? It could be a lot of things, but it's just something to think about and it made me curious kind of.

Lynn admitted that although they were indeed good at math, they also loved arts and humanities. As such, being pigeonholed into STEM-related subjects as the only thing that they were good at annoyed them. Interestingly, Lynn did not explicitly name their experience in the accounting

course as racism; instead, they alluded to “it could be a lot of things,” without specifying what the many things entailed.

Kim, a Vietnamese student, on the other hand, found it problematic to “feed into stereotypes” of Asians as good at math, despite it being an innocuous joke from fellow Asians.

> Maybe like sometimes like when other Asians like make jokes about... or the stereotypes about Asians being good at math…And like, oh, the Asians so... It’s...not surprising that we are considering medical school. I just thought <laugh> like it was not really necessary to... I don’t know, reinforce stereotypes by yourself. And it was like surprising to be from Asians, and not like Whites, or different groups…I think like maybe a bit for both. They’re just kind of joking. But I don’t know. <laugh>…I think...I think like maybe not proud, but they are just like, “Oh, it is what it is.” It’s like the..I think it’s like unnecessary because it's like...not positive to feed into the stereotypes of all Asians being the same. Um...yeah. Cause again, just reduces everyone into a box. And that kind of made... I guess like discrimination. It kind of contributes to that um, with you know the Harvard case and everything. And I feel like, um...yeah, it doesn’t really help that if you’re kind of like feeding into stereotypes.

Kim clearly indicated the problems with the stereotype of “Asians as good at math” as limiting and described it as a “minor” incident of racism. In addition to stereotypes, some participants also experienced racism in the form of microaggression.

Microaggression. In addition to stereotypes, some participants also experienced microaggression as another form of racism. Noting the racially and culturally diverse environment at Global University, Jessie, a South Korean student, shared her only “bad experience” at Global University during interaction with a White student and a non-Asian

Student of Color. She first witnessed her Korean American friend being asked a weird question and then experienced it herself.

> But then I had another person ask me <emphasis> the same thing, but what kind of Asian are you? So I'm like, okay, do people really go around like asking people that? And it made me wonder like, is it just towards like Asian people? Cause I've never heard someone say like, what kind of white are you? What kind of like, you don't usually say that. You just say like, where are you from? Or like, you know, so that would just weird. I know they didn't mean to be offensive, but...it's just not worded properly <laugh>.

Jessie admitted that racism still took place on a college campus that was more diverse and inclusive than her predominantly white and conservative middle and high schools in the U.S. To Jessie, the question posed by her peers stemmed from their curiosity about her country of origin and a sense of ignorance and simply "don't know." However, Jessie did not pinpoint the question as offensive in nature.

During my conversation with Jay, a Filipino student, he recalled a number of incidents of racism over the one year that he has been at Global University. He first described his feeling of invalidation in his classes where the discussions were often framed as "a debate" about Asians and other People of Colors' experiences, rather than centering on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color groups' voices and lived experiences. Jay considered such experiences racism. He said,

> For example, they discuss like issues of affecting like Asian Americans. Like they frame it in a way that's like com combative, combative. Like, um, it's a, they frame it and like, Oh, is this real? Like, is there like discrimination against Asian Americans? Instead of like, like assuming that like, oh yeah, there is...like instead of discussing the issues at

> hand, it's more so like, Oh, do these issues exist? Which is like, kind of like, that might not be like the intended like effect or approach, but it like often feels that way.

Jay perceived the experience of "debating for your existence or the validity of your view" in classroom discussions as "taxing" and "mentally exhausting," then talked about framing these discussions as an opportunity to exchange ideas rather than "a zero-sum game." Jay continued to reflect on his classroom experience by connecting the dots between his experience with the "White dominant" culture at Global University.

> It's, I think it's just generally like, no, this being like, uh, like PWI. Um, and what's really interesting is that people are like aware that it's a PWI and there are like people who like make light of it. Like People of Color who will like... like they kind of like accepted like, okay, like this being a PWI like and we are gonna have like a certain like, type of experience here.

Another negative experience that Jay recalled is getting complimented by peers about his "English so good," after he told them he was from the Philippines. He stated,

> Like, whoa. Like what does that mean? So...yeah. Like it's kind of like an othering to an extent. Um, it's, or it's very interesting cuz like they have like this like preconception of like what an international student is and it's like when it's broken, um, like they like, they have to like wrap their head around like that fact, which is very interesting to me.

Jay perceived these "compliments" as a sign of microaggression towards him as an international student who was assumed to have limited English proficiency and/or speak with accents.

As a Taiwanese, Sunny not only heard about fellow Taiwanese being mistaken as Thai but was greeted with "Sawadika" ("Hello" in Thai) once during her master's studies in the U.S. Although Sunny did not encounter similar experiences "as often" as before, she recalled an

"interesting experience" at Global University, during her interactions with a Black American classmate in class.

> So we were like grouped into one group to talk about the article and stuff…and then kind of derailed a little bit into like, just chatting in general. So he was like, I, I don't remember how it happened, but I think I mentioned something about like, I'm not from here. And then he was like, Oh, where are you from? I was, I said like, Taiwan. And he, um, immediately told me, Oh I've been to um, I think it was Vietnam or something. And like, cause it happened very quickly. I didn't even recognize he was thinking about Thailand. I was like, oh, okay. And then there's another person who's been to Taiwan who is in the same group as us, was like, oh, Taiwan is different from Thailand. That's where I, um, rec, um, realized that he mistook us from Thailand.

Instead of feeling offended and hurt, Sunny considered this a "funny" experience because it was a "typical textbook example" of people's confusion about two different Asian countries and ethnicities. Sunny also interpreted this experience as "understandable" for multiple reasons–the similar sounding names of the two countries, Thailand as more well-known internationally, and people conflating different Asian "looks" due to a lack of understanding. Although Sunny did not associate any negative feelings with this incident, she acutely remembered it as an experience of racism.

When I asked Elaine (Hong Kong and Portugal) about her experience of racism at Global University, she described her negative interactions with staff from the registrar and called them "racist." Although her Chinese name contains three characters, with two of them constituting her first name and one as her last name, the registrar office inputted her name as first, middle, and last name in the system. As a result, her name on the student ID, email, and the university

learning management system did not actually reflect her real name. Furious about the mess-up from the registrar office and their unwillingness to fix the issue for her, she said,

> And so when I log in [to the university learning management system], I just see [half of my first name] and I was like [staring hard that my eyeballs are almost falling off]...Yeah. and some of the professors, like, they would just like see that and so they would call me [half of my first name]. And I, at first like I just didn't know that they were actually calling me <laugh>…yeah. I was like, huh?!...Yeah. Yeah. I'm like forever [half of my name] there, but I'm just like, that person actually does not exist. At least that's not me… It's, yeah, sometimes when I'm like having a bad mood in general and then when I hear this joke, I'm just like, snap…But also it sounds weird. [Being called with only half of my first name] just sounds weird.

Elaine interpreted the incident as a result of "a mix of everything:"

> I would say...rather than, um... discrimination, at least...at first, I would say perhaps it's like a lack of awareness. Like they don't know that like in some cultures or whatever, like people would put their first names like this…But again <emphasis>, like now we tell, we tell you like, this can happen and then <emphasis> you refuse to take action, then that is another thing.

Elaine then pointed out that the incident could be interpreted as a form of racism based on "power dynamics" rather than different races, indicating her awareness of how racism may not only function on the interpersonal level but the systemic level. Said Elaine,

> So if it's just like a couple of cases like every year or something, like they might not bother to have a better system, which is true, but it's just like the, the way how they respond us, like respond to us. Like, no <affirmative>, this is just how this, the system

> works. Like you should just like forget it. It's like what? And so yeah. I'm not so, so I think it's like an implied layer of racism in a sense that is more about the power dynamics than the actual race.

During the second-round of member checking, Elaine expanded that the incident of having the "wrong name" in the university system and being addressed by the "wrong name" was not an isolated incident. She shared that her several other friends also had the same issues, and one of her friends not only encountered it at Global University but during her insurance and driver's license applications. As such, she explained how these incidents were all examples of systematic discrimination.

Like Elaine, Joy (Nepal) also started to recall her experience of racism at Global University but when she was reflecting on her experience, she started to allude to other factors, such as language, physical appearance, and different cultures and upbringings as the causes of her negative experience in her department. As the only one if not very few Asian woman in a predominantly White male bioengineering environment, Joy articulated her sense of isolation and marginalization through various negative interactions with her peers in her classes and lab. Her peers' comments like "Oh really? You're doing PhD?" heightened her imposter syndrome. Joy interpreted these comments based on a "mixture of things," such as her race, culture, language, and physical appearance (of being small). She then relayed a negative experience she had in a class GroupMe that was predominantly white, with her as the only Student of Color and Asian:

> And we'd be talking and then I would say something and I felt unheard, unnoticed, you know. And...maybe it's the culture that I was raised with and the culture they are raised with, it's different. Um and...they consider the differences as...I don't know, the...they see

me as alien, you know, that I'm different um...and rather than being welcoming, they're sort of like uh...constraining, you know. Yeah, I felt that. And I tried <emphasis>, I tried to fit in. I tried to be relatable and um...um...get into it, but after a while, you know, you just give up. And I thought maybe this is not for me. Maybe I should just find another group. Um...And uh...yeah, now I don't really get involved in that group of friends. Um...you know, I...after a while, I told myself maybe it's not worth it. Um...maybe it's not for it's not for me. Sort of...I, I was thinking I was thinking before the meeting you know, yeah. And it's sad in still in...in the university setting. Yeah… Yeah, I guess a lot of it also has to do with, I briefly does, the culture, in cultural differences. Like they grew up some way and I grew up totally different way. So the things they watched, the things they listened to, like the activities they did, I didn't growing up.

Although Joy first recalled the experience as an example of racism, she alluded to race that intersected with other things like culture and language as the causes and eventually landed on "cultural differences" as the reason behind her sense of exclusion from her White American peers.

Racism outside Global University

Although I asked the participants about their experiences of racism on campus, many brought up off-campus racist incidents, whether personally experienced or observed, during our conversations. Different from my perception of a clear boundary between on- and off-campus, these participants may have considered the boundary between on- and off-campus as blurred. As such, their recollection of racist incidents often consisted of those that took place in both spaces. Similarly to several participants' downplaying their experiences of racism on campus, these participants attributed off-campus racist incidents to perpetrators' malicious intent rather than

race. Interestingly, when I prompted the participants to share resources or support that Global University could offer to help them navigate racial dynamics, many of them suggested more resources and support on housing, financial, and career development and very few touched upon race-related support. Some of them shared that they would return to their home countries after completing their studies, hence, they did not see the need to stay in the U.S. racial climate or learn about racial issues in the U.S. It is likely that these participants prioritized other adjustment-related needs that they perceived as directly impacting their academic success and persistence but did not perceive race as doing so.

Harassment. Like participants who experienced harassment on campus, some participants also noted experiencing harassment off campus. Walking down the street near campus on a Friday night, Lynn and a group of Asian American friends were on their way to a concert. A car drove by and shouted "ching-chong". While recalling the incident, Lynn told me that their Asian American friends reacted with "a lot of fuck yous. <laugh>" and "middle finger" without even turning around. Lynn added, "they almost said it in like a…like a defeated joking manner" and "almost like a muscle memory" because encounters like this must be "so common" in the US. Lynn showed me a picture of their outfit with "bunch of fun cutouts" and described their outfit as "not as modest as society would like." Lynn offered their interpretation of the incident,

> And since the comment was targeted to not just me, but like people that I was also walking with, um...that was giving a lot more catcalling than...anything else….Now that I think of it, it has happened more times when I was when I was with other people. I thought that was more of like, now that I think of it, I think it's more catcalling rather than...racism? Like people are drunk, people are stupid, and...people are egotistic, so they

> don't think about the impact their words are capable of making. Especially, I can't see their face, they can't see my face. The anonymity of it allows people to do so much more than they are able.

Lynn added,

> I also think it's the stereotype that Asian women are easy….It's like, my god, all Chinese women are so obedient, they cook, they clean, and they're like this little submissive bunny and that you can just manipulate. And if, well, I think, you've already known me well enough, if anything, I'm not that.

Despite a clear indication of a racial slur towards Asians in the U.S., Lynn alluded to "catcalling" that was based on gender instead of race as the cause of the incident. As such, they perceived their race and gender identities as disjointed rather than recognizing the intersectionality of racism and sexism that simultaneously shaped their experience.

Sanjay (Sri Lanka) had a negative interaction when he was having dinner with his brother and his brother's friend (a white woman) in a Mexican restaurant after his arrival in the U.S. Sanjay remembered being harassed by a drunk White veteran at the restaurant.

> Some drunk drunk White guy came and he was like sitting with us…Like he was like mean to us…Yeah like he was...he was like um...We didn't feel comfortable. Like he was sitting us and doing it like... He was like keeping like his hand in us. <laugh> He he was like um...yeah, looking down on us and he was saying, "Who are you?" And stuff like that stuff…He was just asking asking our names and just like ignoring her, like...like...He said like, "Oh, what's your name? Oh okay. Oh, okay." He just like ignored that.

Sanjay told me that he still experienced "worry in my body" and "anger about that person" every time he recalled the incident. Although the incident was an example of racial harassment, Sanjay

alluded to multiple other reasons, such as “maybe because he’s drunk,” “he may be have a problem,” “because he was not in his right mind,” “maybe he was actually curious about us, but he was like curious in the frightening way <laugh>,” and “maybe it could be because we were males” to make sense of this experience. At the same time, Sanjay mentioned “maybe he (the White guy) thought he had some like superior supremacy,” which helped him understand what it meant to be a “minority” and “disadvantaged” in the U.S. for the first time.

Microaggression. During our conversations, some participants shared experiences of microaggression that they either personally experienced or learned. Some of them did not perceive their own negative experiences as racism and alluded to gender, age, physical appearance, a lack of awareness, and individual personality as the reasons behind their negative experiences. One exception is a participant who did consider race as one of the factors that contributed to her negative experience but hesitated in naming her experience as racism. On the other hand, some participants named their friends’ experiences of racism and attributed to language and skin color as the causes of these incidents.

Ali (Malaysia) noted others’ assumption of him as a Hispanic on several occasions due to his different “complexity” that does not reflect the “typical” Asian look. He did not interpret peoples’ assumptions as racism or indicated any negative feelings towards it.

> I don’t really see that as a bothersome cause Malaysia is not really huge and people don’t really know about Malaysia. So the way that I say, “I’m from Malaysia,” would like instantly say them, “Okay, so this guy is not Hispanic.” Probably the next guy who has the same complexity or has the same background might be also Malaysian. So probably from there I would educate them...So informally knowing, informally letting them know that I’m not Hispanic but Malaysian <emphasis> is a way for me to like, “Okay, there’s

more countries that you need to learn, like Malaysia should be one of them because you've met a Malaysian, you might as well just learn about it." …So yeah, that's how I felt that's how I felt like it, honestly.

To Ali, people's assumption was justifiable given their lack of knowledge and awareness of his home country. Moreover, because no one has been "racist enough to say 'Oh, I'm Asian, but you're Brown. Like how's that work?'", in other words, demonstrated explicit racism towards him, his experience did not fit into the definition of racism.

Related to the topic of racist comments, Elaine recalled a time when she received a "racist" comment when waiting for the metro with her partner at the metro station near Global University. Elaine saw a group of "very <emphasis> drunk" Black men who commented on her and her partner, "oh cute couple" and "Oh, like a White boy with a Chinese girl." Although Elaine started to sense the situation as "so <emphasis> intimidating" and "so scary," her partner insisted on staying at the end of the platform. She remembered,

> But from that, I think the reason why I brought this up before [when we were] talking about like the impression of like Black people but also just like how this experience can also be a gender thing too. But also like how...not sensitive my boyfriend can be. Cause obviously, like, I would assume that maybe he as a guy, [thinks himself to] be more powerful. He has more strength [and can handle better when], more stuff when stuff actually happens, but that that's not how I see it, right? And <laugh>, so it's just like this very different understanding [of racial interaction] or like the risk perception. Um...yeah, that really struck me. I I bet like if I bring this same story to my boyfriend now, he probably can't even recall this episode.

Despite naming the comment as "racist" first, Elaine alluded to gender and the different "risk perception" between men and women as the cause. This incident also made her aware of racism within non-White groups, a topic that she felt was not often talked about compared with racism from White people to non-White folks. However, during the second round member checking, Elaine clarified that she perceived the incident due to the intersection of her gender and race, particularly her concern over her safety as an Asian woman in an all-male group. However, she was unsure whether race and gender played a bigger role in the situation, especially considering how both White and Black men may interpret the situation differently from her.

Apart from participants who had negative experiences off campus, Shawn (Nepal) and Mk (Japan) also learned about their friends' racist incidents. Mk witnessed her Indian female housemates' hostile experiences with their host dad, a White guy, in a homestay near the Global University campus. She called the host dad "very racist" and illustrated,

> And when two Indian girls arrived the house for the first time, he asked their name and they introduced themselves. And after he heard their name, he just said, "Okay, your name is too difficult to pronounce. You should have English name." And that was very, okay, you shouldn't say that…and the other girl from Vietnam move in. But, she's like, she can speak (English) perfectly. So he didn't say anything toward her, like he attack against the girls from India. And I just kept ignoring him. So I didn't have anything.

Although Mk called the host dad a racist, she attributed his rude remarks to language and culture. As Mk explained, names were part of language and "language is belong to culture," instead of race.

Like Mk, Shawn learned that his Indian friend had negative interactions with a White police officer when he first arrived in the state where Global University is located. Noted Shawn,

> So basically, one of my friends, he told me told me that when he came here first day in America, he didn't know where to go, what to do, and how to take the cab or the Uber, and he was basically lost and trying to find a way to get to his housing...on campus so...And then he didn't have any idea, so he went to a cop, so thinking that, "Okay, the cop will help me anyways, because it's their job to help me," but then the cop was like, "Oh no, I don't talk to Brown people, just go away."…So...I was shocked like that <emphasis> as well. "Oh... this happens here among us. Wow, that's really extreme."...And and...from that day, I thought, "Okay, Indian people also face this Brown <emphasis> thing, racism because they look different." And I don't know what is the reason for this racism. Maybe because they're just outside people, right, they're not American, so maybe that's why, I I don't know. I'm still trying to figure out what is the cause and how to make sense of that, but nevertheless, they do face this sort of racism

Shawn was surprised to learn that his Indian friends also experienced racism and started to build up his understanding of the racial categorization of Indians as "Brown" in the U.S. He interpreted his Indian friend's racist incident as a result of their darker skin color. He also noticed that his Indian peers tended to congregate into "a collective herd" and separate themselves from white people and perceived it as "their way of dealing with it (racism)."

Neo-racism at Global University

Besides traditional forms of racism, several participants shared their experiences of neo-racism at Global University pertaining to their accent, language, and a sense of exclusion due to their immigration status and citizenship. Contrasting many participants' recollections of racism that took place both on- and off-campus, these participants only recalled neo-racist incidents as occurring specifically at Global University.

Accent. One theme that was echoed by some participants was the experience of neo-racism related to accent. Despite having similar experiences, these participants interpreted them from different angles. Some considered it an opportunity to improve their English, while others understood these experiences as a form of racism based on culture and race. Meher, a Bangladeshi student who served as a TA for undergraduate STEM classes, had students who not only "expected" her to have an accent but also commented about her accent, such as "I'm not understanding what you are saying." Or "You have an accent." Instead of perceiving these comments as negative, Meher felt like it was "natural" for anyone to have an accent and it was also necessary for her to change the way she says things as part of "adjusting in another culture" in the U.S.

> I think like if someone is feeling like you have a accent, you probably might just have. Like I personally don't feel like if someone is feeling you have accent, that's a problem, cause every group of people could have accent. Um...As long as they're not treating you unfairly based on that, I think that's fine.

It is clear that Meher did not perceive her students' comments as negative, neither did she perceive the students' comments as neo-racism. Rather, Meher considered these comments as a form of "feedback" and an opportunity for her to improve herself given that English was not her first language.

Sharing a similar experience as Meher, Joy (Nepal) offered a different interpretation of her experience of neo-racism as related to accent. Joy recalled people's indirect comments on her English in both social and professional settings at Global University.

> Once in a while, somebody would keep saying "What?" "What?" "What?" You know multiple times, and that makes you feel...you know feel... irritated, irritating, and

> um...and it, it um...dampens your confidence too, you know. It makes you think, "Oh, maybe I'm doing something wrong"...Yeah, and I think over the...years um...yeah, consciously or unconsciously, I've tried to sort of um...sort of uh...fit in with my accent and uh...accent and all.

Joy not only interpreted these comments as negative but also perceived them as a form of racism based on both "cultural differences" and "race." It is possible that attending training and dialogues on identity and social justice as a Resident Assistant during her undergraduate studies has helped build up Joy's awareness of her experience of racism.

Immigration status/citizenship. Another sub-theme that came up during my conversations with participants was unfair treatment due to immigration status and/or citizenship. Joy (Nepal) expressed her frustration about the unreasonable immigration policy that intended to force international students out of the country if they took all online classes at the start of the COVID-19 global pandemic. Along with Joy, Elaine (Hong Kong and Portugal) highlighted her negative interactions with the staff at the international student office when she inquired about the resolution to the policy:

> And also please put it in the record, but like our, [international student office] is not helpful at all. It's like, hello? Like, I have this question and like, can you give me some advice? And they're like, I have...I don't know what you're talking about. It's like you are supposed to know like, this is your job, this is what you [are getting] paid for and you, you are telling me that you don't know…And so, um...it's not, it's not just me like a couple of my friends too. And like our experience with the [international student office] is extremely <emphasis> frustrating. It's not helpful at all. And so, um...yeah…I think we were also asking something slightly <emphasis> more specific to Hong Kong's situation,

> but then they're really just like, I don't know. But also I understand because they're trying to like, what, give a, how do you call it? Like... just a safety net, you know?...That kind of thing. Like…Just to protect themselves. Like I understand, but this is really not helpful [to students since they are the only place international students can turn to].

Shawn (Nepal) also shared his negative exchanges at several career fairs at Global University. At these career fairs, about half of the company stalls were noted as for U.S. citizens only. Interested in learning more about the companies and opportunities, Shawn stopped by to chat with the representatives at these stalls but was put off by the response from the White representatives. He described,

> And you have a good conversation for a few seconds, like, "Okay. What is your background? And what is your major? Why are you interested in this role?" And it goes well. But they immediately bring up that question whether you are from the U.S. or not. And once you mention that, they they immediately lose interest and kind of, um...maybe they just try to push you out. Like, "Oh, I don't think you're a very good fit for this. Maybe try on a different organization or something." It's a rule, I know, that U.S. companies, they will have to comply with the rules of only hiring U.S. citizens. That's fine. But I feel like, just for the information sake, you you should at least um be obliged to have a conversation...about the prospects at least, instead of just shutting off...immediately.

Shawn attributed his negative experience to individual prejudice and bias towards those who were not U.S. citizens or White. As such, he interpreted the causes of his negative exchanges because of his non-U.S. citizenship, nationality, and race. Shawn noted that he would have been treated differently if he were a U.S. citizen or a White person despite citizenship. He also

elucidated how the exchanges would have turned out differently if the representatives were Black:

> Usually I've had positive experiences with, when there is a Black people in the same (situation), if you keep a Black person in the same situation, same everything, they're like...the conversation goes very differently for some reason. And then maybe they feel like we also belong to that sort of racial group. We deal with similar situations. And the conversation is guided by that common shared problem.

Related to feelings of exclusion due to immigration status and citizenship, Joy (Nepal) illustrated her feeling of exclusion whenever she received department emails about scholarship opportunities. With many of these opportunities for U.S. citizens only, Joy expressed her frustration with such requirements:

> I, I've tried to apply to so many scholarships and you know opportunities and they say only US citizens, you know, and that has really hammered it in my head that I don't belong here. I'm an alien, you know. I think that is something that they need to improve. Either don't let us come here, but if you do, at least let us have equal opportunities, you know. Let us um...let us learn, let us work, you know. That also I think had a big role in sort of tagging, hammering it in my head that I'm Asian. I'm not um...I'm not the privileged one here. I had to lose a lot of opportunity just because I'm Asian and I'm not a citizen.

Joy noted that she has developed this feeling since she was an undergraduate student in the U.S. and continued to experience a sense of exclusion due to her race as Asian and her non-U.S. citizenship that exacerbated her imposter syndrome as a doctoral student at Global University.

Intraethnic racism. In addition to experiencing neo-racism from other racial groups,

Ventus, a student from India, and Shawn, a student from Nepal as two SA participants also detailed their experiences of intraethnic racism at Global University, where they were ostracized by fellow Asian international students. Ventus recalled a series of negative experiences with his Japanese roommate who bad-mouthed him in Japanese, knowing that Ventus was able to pick up on what he was saying.

> I had grasped basics of Japanese, so I knew what was he talking about…Like when he talked about to his friends on computer, so it's not exactly that I grasp a hundred percent of it, but I can grasp little bit of it, like what she's talking about, what's happening, those kind of things almost. So despite his knowing I knew, he was badmouthing me.

Slightly different from Ventus's experience, Shawn told me that he had several encounters with his Indian classmates and felt being looked down upon as a Nepali.

> The people there also like whenever you tell them you're from Nepal, they're immediately like, "Oh, Nepal. So this guy from Nepal, he knows nothing, or... from a smaller country. He's not seen anything in the world." So they immediately try to ostracize you-Because I got nothing to offer, that's what they feel like… So...that happens a lot...just because I'm from Nepal.

Shawn shared a specific exchange he had where his Indian classmate directly degraded his home country,

> So Nepal is kind of smaller and it's kind of...under the radar. We don't really have anything to show for. So the one thing we did have, I already mentioned to him, the Gurkhas <laugh>. Okay. And then he's like, "Okay, Nepal. Actually Nepal is nothing different than India. Nepal should actually be <emphasis> a part of India. And we should

> just annex these things together and it would be nice." He was like. And it just kind of went like that after that.

He continued,

> But other people, I can sense that they feel the same way about Nepal. Like, "A small country, inferior. We should...try to dominate them, and maybe try to suppress them, and just finish off Nepal entirely because it's a small country."…Yeah, because we're neighbors and we have a lot of history as well. And yeah, I think that's how they have been raised.

Shawn noted that his Indian classmates' comments were a sign of "ignorance" and unwillingness to learn about sovereign countries. Ventus and Shawn's negative experiences with fellow Asian international students indicate a hierarchy of nationalities within the Asian region, which was a form of neo-racism. However, neither of them indicated so. During the second round of member checking, Ventus reiterated that his experience had nothing to do with racism or discrimination because his roommate perceived everyone who was not Japanese as American, hence, he was not discriminated against due to his nationality.

Enhanced Understanding of Racism and Neo-racism

In addition to retelling experiences of racism and neo-racism, many participants recalled past experiences of racism before coming to Global University or when they first came to Global University and iterated their changing understandings and perceptions of these incidents. For some participants, their changing perceptions were compelled by the anti-Asian racism during the COVID-19 global pandemic; others started to recognize, identify, and even challenge their past racial incidents due to opportunities to learn and talk about race and racism at Global University.

When Jessie first came to the U.S. in junior high, she lived with a host family who she called "racist" during our conversation. Jessie recalled a series of racist incidents that she experienced, including the host family commenting on the food that her mom sent her from South Korea as smelling and looking weird, the host family's son gagging at her food and making fun of her Korean, and her host mom comparing Black people to gorillas. Jessie used to think her host family's behaviors were "normal" because "I thought that's just how they are." Now immersed in a racially and culturally diverse environment, coupled with learning and talking about race and racism in her criminology classes at Global University, Jessie started to recognize and name these past experiences as racism. Recalling a viral TikTok video she watched recently, Jessie further elaborated on how she became aware of the different forms of racism over the years.

> There was a couple getting married and the woman was Asian. And I think she was Chinese. Um, she said, and the husband's family like, put some like dancing, like Chinese dancing into wedding without asking her… First of all, like there are people who should know you pretty well, but I feel like if they just put that um, in it, I would be like, okay, you're kind of assuming, although yeah, you know, like my race and maybe it's part of my culture, but you should have asked me to make sure it was actually like part of my culture…I mean, I guess like the best thing we can do is try to like spread awareness outside of like the traditional like racism. Like what people think is racism. But there are like so many other ways that um, you can offend people without knowing, I guess.

Like Jessie, Sunny, a Taiwanese student, also had the opportunity to learn and talk about race and racism in her graduate classes at Global University, which helped her reflect on her negative interactions with her landlord during her master's studies in Boston. Sunny remembered

a few incidents that she experienced with her White "liberal" female landlord. One took place during her tenet interview, where the landlord commented, "I like renting my apartment to Asian female students because they're very clean and very quiet." This comment left Sunny feeling uncomfortable and confused. Another time occurred when Sunny was cooking fried rice and her landlord commented, "This looks like dog food." Once again, Sunny was confused and shocked but did not know how to respond at the time. When retelling these incidents, Sunny explained how she used to perceive these are just "careless" comments due to the landlord's personality, but now she was able to "contextualize" them and pinpoint the cause:

> But looking back at it...um...I don't feel hurt or offended. <long pause> I kind of felt sorry that she...see the world that way, if that makes sense…Um...<long pause> I think it's...more from a lack of understanding...either of race or culture. Yeah. A lot of her understanding of my race are my culture are from her interactions. And I would say, I would assume like limited interactions, but people from like racial backgrounds or cultural backgrounds that are similar to mine.

Along with Jessie and Sunny, Elaine's (Hong Kong and Portugal) doctoral classes introduced her to key concepts to identify and name her experience of racial stereotypes during her undergraduate studies in Boston. Elaine recalled being stereotyped as good at math by her Peruvian American friends when paying tips after their meals:

> (They were) like, "I thought your math is good." I was like, yeah, my math is good, but we don't do tips like this (back home in Hong Kong). So yeah, so that that exists…So academically speaking, this would also be like the recycling of the racial script. Cause you know all those narratives and stuff, no matter who it is, you can still use it and keep imposing through different people and keep seeing people in a certain way…I was just

like, eh <shrugging her shoulder> I mean my math is good, I just cannot deal with this thing <laugh>.

Although Elaine noted that her experience could be interpreted and labeled as "racial script," she considered it nothing more than an innocuous joke because "It's just the jargon. But yes, I can see how it would be helpful if I, I really have like a problematic and traumatic experience, then yeah, that would be helpful." To Elaine, growing up in Hong Kong without experiencing racial trauma made it easier for her to shrug off a racist joke, especially when they came from her close friends. During the second-round member checking, Elaine commented that racial stereotypes and power dynamics can certainly be reinforced if we did not challenge them. However, she felt the tension between challenging these stereotypes to disrupt racism on one hand, yet on the other hand, she felt like if she called out these racist comments every time, especially during interactions with friends on a regular basis, she may be perceived as being "too sensitive," "too serious," or "not cool enough to take a joke." She also commented that in a colorblind society where racism is ubiquitous and pernicious, she needed coping mechanisms to protect herself, including pushing back on the situation, as well as laughing it off and distancing herself, even if doing the later two fed into the racial script.

Aside from learning and talking about race and racism in classes, some participants like Mk also changed their perceptions of past racial incidents as compelled by the anti-Asian hate during the COVID-19 global pandemic. Mk reflected on how watching the news about anti-Asian hate during the COVID-19 global pandemic provided an opportunity for her to rethink her past racial incidents in California.

I didn't care about someone asking me as a Chinese, or a Korean…But when I'm asked about that question right now, I feel uncomfortable. Or just like, why do you ask me that

> <emphasis>? I was like, don't expect me...expect me to again…After the pandemic happened, and we are all categorized as Asian. And that that labeling is kind of ignoring the culture that each country has. And, that makes me feel...like, or from China, kind of a question is very... based on racism, or they're just ignoring the culture.

Back then, Mk perceived people greeting her with "Ni-hao" ("Hello" in Chinese) as a sign of ignorance–conflating different Asian ethnic groups due to similar phenotypes. Learning about the anti-Asian hate exacerbated during the COVID-19 global pandemic has not only helped Mk to recognize her past incidents as a form of racism but also to unravel the underlying meaning of these comments–assuming Asians as a homogenous group despite the distinctive cultures of different countries of origin.

Recalling and reflecting on past negative experiences has also helped Jay (Philippines) make sense of an incident that occurred during his freshmen year. In his freshmen year, Jay had a group of friends who were predominantly White and he felt being subtly "pushed out" of the friend group over time. Jay did not interpret this experience as racism at first; rather, he alluded to different cultures, interests, and upbringings as the causes of his sense of exclusion. As our conversation progressed, Jay started to question whether the self-segregation of White students was "intentional or subtle" and realized that both he and his Asian American friend who shared similar interests and upbringing as his White American peers also "drifted away" from the group over time. Jay continued,

> I don't know if it was like directed to me, like if it was like totally racist, but like, I do, like, there was like another Asian guy there. But he was American. But um, it's really interesting cause it's just like looking like, cause we do <laugh>, we still follow each other like whatnot. But like, um, like, but just like looking through like what they post

> and whatnot, like it's, he kind of drifted away too. So like that makes me like wonder if it is a race thing. Like at first I was like, okay, maybe it's just, just like a cultural thing. Um, cause like, you know, they kind of grew up in like, same, similar like environment, suburban environment. They receive the same kinda like cultural input, but then like thinking back on like, wait, but why is he not in that group anymore?

Recognizing that he was not the only Student of Color who got pushed out of the predominantly White friend group, Jay noted how "racism isn't like super in your face," but "it's like lowkey so it's very like toned down." Perhaps only perceiving racism as explicit before coming to the U.S., Jay was not able to perceive or articulate his experience of microaggression as a form of racism, especially given that he experienced this during his first semester at Global University. After learning more about race and racism in the U.S. and hanging out with his Students of Color and minority friends, Jay started to develop more awareness of his earlier negative experience at Global University as a form of racism.

In addition to racism, some participants like Sunny (Taiwan) also explicated her changing perception of neo-racism over the course of her time in the U.S. For instance, when I asked Sunny if she ever felt unfairly treated or uncomfortable due to language and accent, she remembered vaguely having negative interactions with a White woman in her class during her master's program in Boston. Working on a shared google doc for their group report, Sunny recalled,

> But I remember that during that time I had this impression that she would, um, add it and change my writings a lot more than she did to other people's…Yeah. And like without, um, well if we were, I understand that we were working together, sometimes you don't need to ask the, the other person all <emphasis> the time before you add in and stuff, but

> I had this impression that...she would just like change my writings. Like to the point that she, that's her writing, not mine, without asking me first…she's a former teacher. So when talking to her, I always felt like I'm a student, sort of, like...and the teacher is pretty condescending.

Back then, Sunny felt a sense of exclusion due to the unfamiliar environment in the school, which was exacerbated by the series of negative interactions with the White woman. As such, Sunny attributed her negative experience to the unfamiliar environment first, then alluded to other factors, such as "she didn't really know me" and "she had these assumptions about me (as an international student)." As our conversation progressed, Sunny perceived her experience as a result of "a mixture of a lot of different components."

> I didn't even process the issue around race I think during that time. For me was just like different cultures and stuff…<very long pause> I think it definitely has something to do with race...but also...like...U.S.-centric or Western-centric worldview…And...that like definitely related to race but not equal to race.

It is clear that recalling, retelling, and reflecting on her negative interactions with the White woman has already helped Sunny to make sense of her past racial incidents, particularly through the lens of race, language, and culture.

Chapter Summary

The above themes shed light on the various perceptions of racism and neo-racism among the participants in the study. Some expressed their perceptions of being "free" from racism due to the seemingly racially diverse, inclusive, and liberal environment at Global University, as well as online learning that they perceived as lessening the possibilities of experiencing racism firsthand. Some SA and SEA participants also mentioned another form of

"protection"—not fitting into the typical Asian look—as a "shield" that somehow "protected" them from racism, particularly during the COVID-19 global pandemic when anti-Asian racism was exacerbated. Despite the supposed racially diverse and inclusive environment at Global University, several participants described experiences of racism, both personally experienced and observed, in forms of assault, harassment, stereotypes, and microaggression, and neo-racism based on language, accent, immigration status, citizenship, and hierarchy of nationality within the Asian region.

Among these participants, some of them explicitly named their experiences as racism, with the very few even connecting their experience of racism on the interpersonal level to institutional and systemic racism. Some participants initially named their experience as racism but backtracked to many other factors such as culture, language, physical appearance, gender, age, skin color, a lack of awareness, and individual personality and behavior, as the causes of their negative experiences. Some participants also noted various interpretations of their neo-racist experience at Global University, including internalizing neo-racism, as well as neo-racism based on race, culture, immigration status, and citizenship.

Given that many participants came to the U.S. before they came to Global University, some of them indicated enhanced understandings of racism and neo-racism over the course of their time in the U.S., particularly facilitated by the exacerbated anti-Asian racism during the COVID-19 global pandemic and opportunities to learn and talk about race and racism at Global University. It is likely that these participants' enhanced understandings were also facilitated by the design of the study, where they were invited to bring artifacts that represented their experiences of racism and neo-racism to the interviews, the "dialogic performance" (Madison, 2015) nature of the interviews that offered a safe space for these participants to recall, retell, and

reflect on their experiences of racism and neo-racism, and the two rounds of member checking process that challenged many participants to think deeper about their experiences and perceptions of racism and neo-racism in the U.S.

Chapter 6: Discussion

To recap, I examined the following questions in my study:

RQ1: How do Asian international students perceive and describe their experiences of race, racialization, and of experiencing racism and neo-racism at an HWI?

RQ1.1: How do Asian international students describe how they understand themselves and others regarding race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism?

RQ1.2: How do subgroups of Asian international students (EA, SA, and SEA) perceive and describe their perceptions and experiences related to race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism?

RQ2: In what ways do Asian international students' perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism change, if at all, over the course of their time in the United States?

Following the key findings that I synthesized in Chapter 4 and 5, it is important for me to begin this chapter with a reiteration of my positionality that I detailed in Chapter 3, because the reflexivity that I engaged with throughout the research process was an integral part of the "eyes" that I used to collect and analyze the data. My interest in this dissertation topic includes my own transnational lived experience, the opportunities I have had to learn and talk about race and engage with CRT scholars' work during my doctoral program, and witnessing the anti-Asian and anti-Black racism exacerbated by the COVID-19 global pandemic. In other words, my "personal history" and the "knowledge [I] have accumulated up to this point" (Madison, 2015, p. 19) have fueled my interest and curiosity about Asian international students' perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism, particularly at an HWI in the U.S.

I started off the research process thinking that my shared identities and experiences as a

Chinese international student in the U.S. would help me approach this study as an insider, which would help me understand participants' perceptions and experiences. However, I found myself positioned as both an insider and an outsider throughout the research process, due to the many different identities that I embody that sometimes did not overlap with participants (e.g., ethnic, nationality, culture, language, disciplines, academic status, and ways of knowing and being). As such, I am mindful of my insider-outsider positionality, which served as the primary lens through which I approached the study, collected and analyzed the data, and interpreted the data corpus. Coupled with my positionality are the critical theories that I used to interpret the data corpus, specifically, the integration of EYES theory (Yeo, 2020) and neo-racism (Balibar, 2007; Hervik, 2013; Lee & Rice, 2007). The intersection of my positionality, conceptual framework, and worldviews have also informed the way that I analyze and problematize participants' perceptions in this chapter.

In this chapter, I unpack findings by connecting them to the conceptual framework and previous literature. First, I outline participants' perceptions of race, including how their general understanding of race as a concept changed from pre-arrival to post-arrival to the U.S. Next, I synthesize participants' perceptions of others and how these perceptions informed their perceptions of themselves in terms of their own racial identity. Finally, I unpack how participants' perceptions of their racialization led to their perceptions of racism and neo-racism against themselves and others, including how these perceptions shifted over time, and conclude the chapter with my argument of the dual positionality of Asian international students, both in terms of being targeted for racism and neo-racism and actively participating in perpetuating the racial hierarchy, White dominance, and anti-Blackness.

Perceptions of Race As White and Black

Consistent with EYES theory and prior studies (Fries-Britt et al., 2014; Yeo, 2020) that highlighted the impact of international SOC's home countries on their racial identity transition, many participants' perceptions of race were shaped by their home countries' various contexts. Some participants from more racially homogenous countries (e.g., China, Korea) perceived race as an unfamiliar concept and distant reality before coming to the U.S., as reflected in many other studies (Aggarwal & Çiftçi, 2020; Bardhan & Zhang, 2017; Gerlach, 2015; Mitchell et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2020). For these participants, the U.S. was a more racially diverse environment where they were able to interact with people from more diverse racial backgrounds, which helped these participants establish an initial understanding of race during their time in the U.S., as they had not had to establish this understanding in their more racially homogenous home countries. SA and SEA participants from more racially diverse countries (e.g., Nepal, Malaysia), on the other hand, described race as "not uncommon" in their home countries as they had either personal or observed experiences of discrimination based on caste and skin color, which shaped their understanding of how race functions in the U.S. to divide people and mark the superiority of White dominance (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Regardless of whether race was a familiar concept or not in their home countries, many participants were aware of the Black and White binary and ascribed meanings to each group (Omi & Winant, 2014) before coming to the U.S., with Black associated with lower values and White as beautiful. Specifically, several SA and SEA participants articulated their prior knowledge of the unfair treatment that Black people faced from a historical standpoint. The ascribed meanings to the Black and White racial categories align with Ritter's (2015; 2016) and Lien's studies (2021) where EA international students harbored the White at the zenith and Black at the bottom racial hierarchy. These participants' prior knowledge of the racial order indicates

the powerful transnational racialization process (Kim, 2008) where U.S. racial order was exported to Asia (Okura, 2021). In other words, the "transnational racial projects" in many Asian countries and regions, including (neo)colonialism, political intervention, militarism, and economic coercion and cultural imperialism that reflect a "world system of White supremacy" (Christian, 2019) have shaped many participants' perceptions of Whiteness at the top racial order before coming to the U.S. (Yeo, 2020).

Some participants' perception of White at the top racial order was cemented after transitioning to a post-racial era in the U.S. and an HWI where a racialized campus climate was obscured and invisible (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Yeo, 2020). Troublingly, the acquiescence to the White at the top racial order has led some participants to seek to position themselves in proximity to Whiteness and benefit from the peripheral privilege granted by their temporary membership to Whiteness (Liu & Liu, forthcoming; Liu, 2017). As such, many participants may be unaware of how leaning into their proximity to Whiteness perpetuates the "honorary White" stereotype of Asians and the "racial triangle" (Kim, 2008, p. 15) where the racialization of Asians functions to reinforce White dominance and anti-Blackness (Poon et al., 2016). Watching the anti-Asian violence on social media and the news during the COVID-19 global pandemic in their home countries, some participants perceived White people in a negative light (racist) before coming to the U.S. However, transitioning to a seemingly racially diverse and inclusive environment and having positive interactions with "liberal," "friendly," and "educated" White people at an HWI swayed some participants' perceptions of White people from negative to positive, contrasting previous literature that highlighted Asian international students' changing perception of White people from friendly to hostile after negative interactions with White people,

which was intensified during the COVID-19 global pandemic (Nam et al., 2021; Sato & Hodge, 2009; Sato & Hodge, 2016; Yao, 2021).

Some participants started to challenge the White at the top ideology by naming the privilege that White people hold and the "White supremacist" sentiment in their home countries, especially after having negative interactions with White people or learning and talking about race after coming to the U.S. Indeed, naming the privilege that White people hold is an incremental step of disrupting White supremacy, yet these participants remained focusing on White supremacy on the individual level rather than understanding how White supremacy also operates on the systemic level, correlating with previous findings that unraveled Asian international students' perceived disconnect between race and systems of power and oppression (Wang et al., 2020; Yeo, 2020). The exception was one SEA participant, Jay (Philippines), who made the connection between White privilege on the individual level and the "normalcy" of self-segregation of White students on campus as a signifier of the invisible White dominant culture at an HWI (Yeo, 2020). This exemplified the possibility for participants to understand the manifestation of Whiteness beyond an individual level. And by unraveling the neutrality and invisible nature of Whiteness on an institutional level, participants may start to disrupt the power and privilege of White dominance systematically (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Painter, 2020).

Although some SA and SEA participants were aware of the historical disadvantages that Black people faced before coming to the U.S., their understanding of the assigned meanings to the Black racial group expanded to "misjudged," "injustice," and "at the bottom layer of the society" after coming to the U.S. Learning about the Black Lives Matter movements and Black history raised some SA and SEA participants' awareness of how Black people continue to face racism till this day, as informed by history–indicating the permanent and endemic nature of

racism in the U.S. (Delgado et al., 2017). These participants' perceptions of Black people all indicated the pervasiveness of anti-Blackness. However, only one participant, Jay (Filipino), named anti-Blackness in his home country and suggested an enhanced understanding of the function of anti-Blackness in the U.S. as influenced by the Black Lives Matter movement.

Existing in tandem with a better awareness of the pervasive racism that Black people experienced was some SA and SEA participants' sense of empathy towards Black people. This finding reinforces prior research demonstrating Asian American students' empathy toward Black students and international SOC's, specifically Chinese, Taiwanese, Indian, and Pakistani international students', increased empathy toward other racially minoritized groups (Bardhan & Zhang, 2017; Lien, 2021; McGee et al., 2017). In particular, some SA participants like Shawn (Nepal) elucidated the shared problems that Asian and Black people experience in the U.S. due to belonging to "that" racial group–meaning non-White and thus disadvantaged. Despite the good intention behind such statement, what was missing from Shawn's interpretation was an acknowledgement of the differential racialization of different racial groups (Wong & Ramakrishnan, 2021), specifically the unique positioning of Asians within structural anti-Blackness that "prefers" Asian international students over Black students in selective immigration policies during the anti-Asian exclusion era (Hsu, 2015).

Race beyond Black and White

Transitioning to a more racially diverse environment in the U.S. compelled many participants to become more conscious regarding race, including the assigned meanings to the Black and White racial groups. However, their understanding of race and different racial groups remained biological and phenotypic and colorblind (Bonilla-Silva, 2021). In other words, they struggled to understand race as socially constructed and how different groups are racial*ized*–a

sociohistorical and ideological process wherein human groups are categorized with their differences naturalized and reinforced by institutional powers that create stratification and inequality (Baber, 2010; Delgado et al., 2017; Omi & Winant, 2015). Immersed in a community, city, and region–as part of the social environments near campus (Yeo, 2020) –with a strong presence of Hispanic/Latinx communities –challenged several participants to perceive race beyond the Black and White binary to a more nuanced one that included Hispanic/Latinx as another racial category. However, as these participants perceived race as biological and phenotypic—consistent with previous literature on Chinese, Taiwanese, South Korean, and Indian international students' perception of race (Okura, 2020; Wang et al., 2020; Yu, 2022; Yeo, 2020)—they had a difficult time reconciling how the Hispanic/Latinx category also consisted of light-skinned people.

Expanding previous studies on EA international students' negative perception of Hispanic/Latinx people (Johnson et al., 2018; Ritter, 2015; 2016), my study illuminates some participants' perceptions of Hispanic/Latinx people that reflected colorblind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2021). For example, some participants described Hispanics as "wanting to be in their own community," aligning with a "naturalization" frame of colorblind racism that sought to justify that it was "natural" for Hispanics to self segregate based on the tendency to "gravitate towards likeness" (Bonilla-Silva, 2021, p. 28). Another example of using colorblind lens in viewing this racial group is some participants' assumption of Hispanic/Latinx people as "Americanized," in other words, assimilated and successful, reflecting "minimization of racism" that downplayed the impact of race and racism on Hispanic/Latinx communities' experiences—a frame of colorblind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2021, p. 28). These participants' perception of Hispanic/Latinx people as successful also stemmed from their perception of the numeric representation of Hispanic/Latinx

people near campus; hence, their perceptions of Hispanic/Latinx people's experiences of being "free" from racism. However, what these participants were unaware of was that numeric representations and even a "critical mass" do not always equate to positive experiences (Park & Liu, 2014). One exception was a SEA participant, Jay (Philippines), who not only acknowledged the disadvantages that Hispanics faced but also highlighted the nuanced experiences of ethnic subgroups within this racial group that he learned about after coming to the U.S. Yet, what remained somewhat unclear from his statement was the racial position of Hispanics/Latinxs within the "tri-racial system" with Whites at the top, honorary Whites (including light-skinned Latinx) in the middle, and collective Blacks (including dark-skinned Latinx) at the bottom of the hierarchy (Bonilla-Silva, 2003, p. 278).

Aside from learning about Hispanic/Latinx as another racial category, very few participants noted Indigenous people/Native Americans as another racial category that was beyond Black and White. Among those who did mention this racial group in our conversations, many of them learned about Indigenous people from textbooks in their home countries, specifically the oppression that Indigenous people experienced due to colonization from the Europeans. These participants formed a better understanding of Indigenous people through learning about their distinctive cultures after coming to the U.S. However, their focus on the distinctive culture of Indigenous people instead of their race or racialization may be a predisposition to colorblind racism.

Transitioning to a more racially diverse environment in the U.S. also compelled many participants to reflect on their own race as Asian as another racial category that was beyond the Black and White binary. Although almost all participants were able to name an identity when asked what their race was, the racial identity that they named, as well as the meaning of their

racial identity, varied. Although most of them identified as Asian, how meaningful this racial identity was to the participants varied. Some participants conflated race and ethnicity, some participants who identified as Asian also highlighted their nationalities or ethnicities as salient, and some participants perceived the Asian racial identity as an integral part of their identities. Interestingly, all the participants who considered their racial identity as a meaningful self-identity were all women. This compelling finding could be explained by two things: First, these participants have stayed in the U.S. for at least three years. However, it is worth noting that other participants, regardless of their gender, who have also stayed in the U.S. for similar durations (like Lynn from China, EA and Meher from Bangladesh, SA) did not strongly ascribe to this racial identity. Second, these participants have had opportunities to not only interact with diverse racial groups but had opportunities to learn and/or talk about DEI-related topics, including learning about other Asian ethnic subgroups' cultures, engaging in diversity and social justice workshops and dialogues, as well as theology classes, and having informal conversations with domestic students, which participants like Lynn and Meher did not have. This finding aligns with Yu's (2022) and Okura's (2021) studies that documented Chinese international students' transition from a nationality-based to racially- and phenotype-based self-identity after staying in the U.S. According to Okura (2021), this transition was facilitated by opportunities to interact with diverse racial groups that built up participants' experiential knowledge on race. In my study, among the participants who perceived their racial identity as salient, some of them also indicated that their race in conjunction with other social identities such as citizenship and nationality simultaneously shaped their experiences, alluding to an intersectional lens in viewing themselves. This finding enriches the existing literature on Asian international students and their perceptions of their race and racial identity (Okura, 2021; Yu, 2022; Yeo, 2020).

On the other hand, other participants recognized their race as Asian but did not consider race as meaningful to their self-identity, indicating a denial of the Asianization process where individuals *become* Asian and are racialized as "perpetual foreigners, threatening yellow perils, model and deviant minorities, and sexually deviant emasculated men and hypersexualized women." (Iftikar & Museus, 2018, p. 940). In contrast, many of these participants ascribed meanings to their ethnicity and nationality and relied on ethnicity and nationality as the primary lens in viewing themselves, rather than their race, which is consistent with prior findings on Asian international students' perceptions of their racial identity (Lewis, 2013; Wang, 2010; Wang et al., 2020). For some participants, transitioning from being in the numeric majority to a minority in the U.S. pushed their nationality and ethnicity to the forefront of how they identified. It is possible that these participants used nationality and ethnicity as the primary lens to view themselves to push back against being racialized as Asian and the associated racial downgrading (Bardhan & Zhang, 2017; Zhang, 2015). It is also possible that these participants wanted to preserve their nationality and ethnicity that may be overlooked when they were lumped with others in the pan-ethnic Asian racial category in the U.S.

Some participants also indicated a conflation of race and ethnicity, matching findings from Mitchell et al.'s (2017) study in which Asian international students used race as a synonym for nationality or ethnicity. Given that in these participants' home countries, ethnicity is a more prominent marker and indicator of social stratification (Okura, 2021), participants may be relying on ethnicity as a more familiar social construct and a convenient tool to make sense of their race (Yeo, 2020). Specifically, SEA participants identified as Asian but highlighted their ethnicities, consistent with prior findings of SEAA youth's saliency of their ethnicity (Uy, 2018). This heightened ethnicity was due to their perception of the distinctive SEA cultures and the disparate

experiences and outcomes between ethnic subgroups within the Asian racial category (Jin, 2021; Ngo & Lee, 2007), emphasizing the "limitations" of Asian as a racial category that was simply too broad to account for the diverse regions, cultures, and experiences within the racial group. The emphasis on the purported inadequacy of the label suggests these participants either did not understand or ascribe meanings to the pan-ethnic political term of "Asian American." Specifically, "Asian American" was coined by UC Berkely student activists Yuji Ichioka and Emma Gee to reject the derogatory term "Oriental" that was previously used to describe Asian people (NCAAT, 2023) and "Asian American" functions as a political and racial identifier to galvanize Asian people from various ethnicities to combat the historical exclusion of Asians in the U.S., assimilation, and the model minority racist trope (Philip, 2014; Park, 2008; Zhou, 2021).

Moreover, some participants argued that race was "nothing more than a remark" or a "label" that people used to "convey information," particularly in the U.S. context where race is ubiquitous. Yet, these participants articulated that race did not affect their lives, dismissing race and the racialization process altogether. Moreover, some participants reported similar personalities and shared interests or habits as important points of connections with others when they made friends instead of their race. However, these participants expressed concerns about how labels—in other words, racial groups—were often associated with stereotypes which may impact how others perceive and treat them. These participants started to sense the connection between racial groups and associated stereotypes. Yet, they struggled to articulate how stereotyping is fundamentally entrenched in racism (Christian, 2019). Although many participants did not necessarily see the meanings ascribed to their own race and racialization, they started to develop consciousness regarding the racialization process by understanding the

assigned meanings to the Black and White racial groups, as described in the previous section. Given that several participants used the nationality and ethnicity lens in viewing themselves and dismissed their race as part of their identities, this perception may contribute to their minimization of racism against themselves, which I unpack in the next section.

Minimizing Racism and a Colorblind View of Racism Toward Oneself

Despite a racialized campus climate at an HWI (Yeo, 2020), as informed by perceptions of themselves as not racialized beings, many participants minimized their own experiences of racism–a frame of colorblind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2021). Several participants indicated perceptions of being "free" from racism for various reasons, a sentiment also shared by some Asian American STEM college students in another study (Zheng et al., forthcoming). Several participants noted the seemingly diverse, inclusive, and integrative environment at the HWI with "progressive," "respectful," and "liberal" people who are also "educated" and "mature" on a college campus. These participants' perception of diversity at its face value is consistent with prior literature on Asian American students' perception of diversity and inclusion where they were the numeric majority on their campus (Chan, 2019). The sentiment of being "free" from racism was in particular heightened for some participants when they compared their perceived positive experiences with the anti-Asian violence that they either personally experienced (all in explicit forms such as microassaults [Yeo, 2020]) or observed from social media and the news at the start of the COVID-19 global pandemic. Moreover, some participants also noted the representation of EA and SA students and faculty in their STEM department and the nature of their discipline, such as education–being somewhat "more inclusive" than other disciplines–as other factors that contributed to their perceived positive experiences on campus. These

seemingly inclusive environments may have obscured the racialized campus climate at an HWI where White dominant culture and hidden curriculum were already invisible (Yeo, 2020).

Additionally, some participants perceived themselves as being "free" from racism due to different "protections" that somehow shielded them from experiencing racism. One is social distancing and online learning because of the quarantine order during the global pandemic. This finding is consistent with Koo et al.'s (2021a) study that illuminated the perception of many Chinese, South Korean, and Indian international students that they were more protected from racism and neo-racism during the quarantine orders of the COVID-19 global pandemic. Additionally, some SA and SEA participants perceived themselves as being somehow "protected" from racism due to not fitting in the typical (East) Asian look. As described in the previous section that many participants perceived race as consisting of biological and phenotypic markers, instead of being socially and ideologically constructed. Not having the same biological and phenotypic markers as East Asians somehow made some SA and SEA participants feel more shielded from certain forms and consequences of racialization and racism.

Given the racialized campus climate at an HWI and the endemic and pervasive racism in the social environment in the U.S. (Yeo, 2020), it is not surprising that many participants did experience various forms of racism, both on and off campus. Similar to what has been documented in prior studies with various forms of racism both on- and off-campus (Bonazzo & Wong, 2007; Cantwell & Lee, 2010; Bardhan & Zhang, 2017; DiAngelo, 2006; Houshmand et al., 2014; Kondo, 2016; Slaten et al., 2016; Sato & Hodge 2016; Wang, 2010; Yeo et al., 2019; Yeo; 2020; Zhou et al., 2005), their experiences of racism included microassaults (e.g., racial slurs), racial stereotypes (e.g., model minority), racial microaggressions, microinsults, and microinvalidation. Interestingly, despite being asked about their experiences on campus, many

participants recalled experiences of racism from both on and off campus as well as those from their prior experiences in the U.S. Despite experiences of racism, many participants minimized racism against themselves: some of them outright denied their negative experiences as racism; some of them alluded to race as a possible cause of their negative experiences, yet downplayed racism. Very rarely did any participants connect racism on the interpersonal level to racism on the structural and systemic level.

For example, some participants attributed their experiences of racism to the perpetrators' personal characteristics, including their behaviors, personality, curiosity, and a lack of awareness (Bonazzo & Wong, 2007; Chen, 2021; Jiang, 2021; Yeo, 2020). For example, Mk (Japan, EA) felt that a Black male graduate student abused his power as a highly ranked professional, targeting her for verbal harassment. However, she did not attribute the situation to how her race and gender were perceived by the perpetrator. Related, Sanjay (Sri Lanka, SA) was harassed by a White veteran–a microassault (Yeo, 2020)—and explained the incident was due to perpetrator being under the influence and having a sense of superiority over others.

Even when participants explicitly named their experiences as racism, they were more likely to attribute them to ignorance rather than racism, and downplayed the role of race. For example, Sunny (Taiwan, EA) used to brush off her landlord's racist comments, which took the form of microinsults and microinvalidations (Yeo, 2020). While Sunny started to question the intentions behind some of the comments, she ultimately attributed them to her landlord's cultural ignorance and racial insensitivity. Similarly, Jessie (South Korea, EA) experienced racial microaggressions although her campus was seemingly racially diverse and supposedly inclusive. Unaware that some of her interactions with others on campus were in fact microaggressions, she explained that they were the result of people's ignorance. She believed that people were simply

curious about her country of origin when they posed the question of "what type of Asian are you," rather than how Asians are racialized as "perpetual foreigners" (Iftikar & Museus, 2018; Yi et al., 2020).

Additionally, some participants alluded to their own identities, including skin color, international student status, culture, and gender as the cause of their negative experiences, instead of race. For example, Shawn (Nepal, SA) and Mk (Japan, EA) recalled learning about SA international students' experiences of racism during interactions with the police officer and the White host dad near campus–in the form of microassault, microinsult, and racist nativism (Yeo, 2020)—and described the incidents "racist" or "racism." However, when asked about what they thought the racism was based on, they suggested skin color, international student status, language, or culture as possible causes of these incidents. Additionally, Mk (Japan, EA) and Joy (Nepal, SA) attributed their experiences of racism to cultural differences and offered different interpretations of what culture entailed. For Mk, it was the seemingly quiet and docile "culture" of Asian women that contributed to her being an easy target for harassment; however, she did not problematize *how* and *why* Asian women are racialized and sexualized as docile, obedient, and quiet (Cho, 1997). For Joy, cultural differences–a singular and isolated factor–seemed to be an easier explanation for her sense of alienation as one of the few or only Asian woman in a predominantly White male STEM department. At the same time, she highlighted the multiple minoritized identities that she held–Asian, international, physical appearance of being small, and different cultures and upbringings—as to why she felt a sense of alienation in her department. Joy's accentuation of her multiple minoritized identities was an indication of her beginning consciousness regarding how related inter-reliant systems of oppression shaped her experience (Crenshaw, 1990; Harris & Patton, 2019).

Additionally, some participants alluded to gender as the key contributing factor in race-related incidents. For example, Lynn (China, EA) described being called a racial slur–a form of microassault (Yeo, 2020)—as "catcalling," suggesting discrimination based on gender rather than recognizing how intersectionality in terms of racism and sexism concurrently shaped their experience (Crenshaw, 1990; Ifitikar & Museus, 2018). Slightly different from Lynn, interpreting her experience of being targeted by racist remarks from a group of Black men and her White partner's dismissive attitude, Elaine (Hong Kong and Portugal, EA) alluded to the intersection of her race and gender as an Asian woman to elucidate the different perceptions of risk between her and her White partner as well as the group of Black men. However, she expressed a sense of tension that she experienced due to feeling the need to pinpoint whether her race or gender played a bigger role in the incident. In fact, the nature of the racist comment reflected a history of sexual domination, exploitation, and commodification of Asian women (Cho, 1997; Uchida, 1998). Yet, Elaine did not explicitly contextualize the racist remarks within the history of gendered racialization of Asian women in the U.S. As shown by Lynn and Elaine's interpretations, the tendency to treat their identities as "isolated and mutually exclusive" (Harris & Patton, 2019, p. 347) matches findings from prior studies on Asian American women's portrayal of their identities as disjointed (Castro & Collins, 2021; Park, 2008; Zheng et al., forthcoming).

Interestingly, Mk, Elaine, and Joy all had different opportunities to learn and talk about race and other diversity/social justice related topics over the course of their time in the U.S. Still, they remained at different points of understanding in terms of recognizing intersectionality, perhaps because the concept is a much more complex process than simply racism on its own. For Mk and Joy, another factor that may have contributed to their overlooking of intersectionality

was their perception of race as biological and phenotypic instead of socially, ideologically, and historically constructed. The phenotype-based perception of race may have strayed these participants away from seeing themselves as being racialized or experiencing racism, let alone interpreting their experiences as being influenced by intersectionality as a result of both racism and sexism. As an exception, Elaine did describe race as a social construct and the U.S. society as racialized. As such, she was the only participant who alluded to the interaction of her race and gender in shaping her experience, despite not using intersectionality to name her experience of racism and sexism.

Consequently, many participants completely dismissed race as a factor that could affect their lives and in doing so, adopted an "anything but race" (Bonilla-Silva, 2002, p. 52) mentality–a typical frame of colorblind racism. Such colorblind ideology is detached from the sociohistorical contexts and systems of power and oppression in the U.S. (Yeo, 2020). It is likely that the invisible nature of the dominant culture and hidden curriculum at an HWI (Yeo, 2020) contributed to many of these participants' colorblind lens in viewing racism against them. Specifically, the dominant culture and hidden curriculum at an HWI reflected frames of colorblind racism by openly promoting diverse cultures and languages of various groups, without naming or centering international students' race or racial identity.

Furthermore, some participants tiptoed around race as a possible factor in their negative experiences. However, they very rarely connected their interpersonal experiences of racism to racism on the structural and systemic levels (Yeo, 2020; Wang et al., 2020). For example, Kim (Vietnam, SEA) explained the stereotype of Asians being good at math as a "minor" form of racism that perpetuates the "model minority" myth despite it being used as a joke amongst her Asian friends. Similarly, Kim also grappled with the tension between seeing affirmative action as

justified given the "historical disadvantages" of Black and Latinx students and whether meritocracy should recognize Asian students based on hard work, almost suggesting that Asians were excluded and unfairly treated (Jiang, 2021; Lewis, 2013; Lien, 2021; Yeo, 2020). Yet, what Kim did not point out was that "equal opportunity is not equal if the groups in competition do not have similar foundations (e.g., levels of income, education, etc.) and if some groups still suffer from discrimination" (Bonilla-Silva, 2003, p. 283). In other words, Kim focused on the consequence of the "model minority" myth as damping Asian students' chances of being admitted to colleges–referring to the Harvard case–instead of challenging how the model minority stereotype was created in tandem with the "cultural poverty" narrative of Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students (Chan, 2019) to uphold White supremacy and anti-Blackness (Au, 2022; Poon et al., 2016). The focus on Asian students' outcomes alone also reflected a strong endorsement of the myth of meritocracy and promotion of supposedly egalitarian values (Dovidio et al., 2017) that perpetuate the neoliberal project (Chen & Buell, 2017). Kim's strong endorsement of the purported meritocracy reflected an "abstract liberalism" mentality that justified race-related issues through the lens of political liberalism (e.g., equal opportunity)—a frame of colorblind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2021). This finding reinforces previous studies that documented Asian/Asian American students' strong ascription to the myth of meritocracy (Lien, 2021; Kim, 2022; Yeo, 2020).

Conversely, Elaine (Hong Kong and Portugal, EA) recognized the stereotype of Asians as good at math as a form of "racial script" yet still considered it an innocuous joke used amongst friends (Cabrera, 2014). She reflected on her different upbringing as unaffected by racial trauma to justify why this stereotype did not necessarily impact her personally. As Elaine pointed out in the second round member checking, her seemingly complacent to these racist jokes was actually

a coping mechanism that she employed to protect herself. Interestingly, Elaine expressed the tension that she grappled with between pushing back on racism and experiencing racial battle fatigue that could directly dampen her mental health and success as an international student. Although confronting racist jokes does not mitigate pervasive racial inequality, brushing it off can in turn perpetuate the model minority myth that functions to uphold Whiteness. However, at that one incident, Elaine made the intentional choice not to push back on a racist joking despite the risk of upholding systemic racism, especially given her perception of a racist system cannot be changed overnight.

Additionally, Jay (Philippines, SEA) named his experience of having to justify Asian American issues in classroom discussions–a form of microinvalidation (Yeo, 2020)–as racism. Contrasting other participants, Jay connected his experience to the broader "White dominant culture"—as part of the racialized campus climate at an HWI (Yeo, 2020). By doing so, he started to unmask the invisible White cultural norms as an incremental step towards disrupting White dominance. Moreover, consistent with several scholars' arguments of the fluidity of international students' experiences and perceptions of race over time (Fries-Britt et al, 2014; Yeo, 2020), Jay shifted his perception of exclusion from his White friend groups during his first year in college–a form of microinvalidation (Yeo, 2020)—from marginalization due to "cultural differences" and "different upbringings" to interpreting it as a more indirect "now you see it, now you don't" (Bonilla-Silva, 2003, p. 275) style of racism as a sophomore student. The changing perspective is an indicative of his enhanced awareness of various forms of racism that are more subtle over the course of his time in the U.S.

Experiences and Perceptions of Neo-racism

In addition to experiences of traditional forms of racism, several participants described

experiences of neo-racism based on accent, immigration status, citizenship, consistent with findings from previous studies that documented international students' experiences of neo-racism based on language, accent, immigration status, and nationality (Lee & Rice, 2007; Lee & Opio, 2011; Cantwell & Lee, 2010; Bonazzo & Wong, 2007; Kondo, 2016; Kwon et al., 2019; Koo et al., 2021b; Sato & Hodge, 2009; Houshmand et al., 2014; Yeo et al., 2019). Interestingly, participants' experiences of neo-racism all took place on campus, as opposed to forms of racism that participants described both on- and off-campus in the previous section. Neo-racism, or cultural racism, is discrimination based on nationalities, citizenships, cultures, and languages, and accents rooted in racial hierarchy that intersects with hierarchies of nationalities and its respective cultures and languages including accents (Balibar, 2007; Cantwell & Lee, 2010; Hervik, 2013; Lee & Rice, 2007). Given that neo-racism is a fairly new concept to many participants, they did not use the term to name their experiences; however, participants seemed to have an easier time pinpointing accent, immigration status, and citizenship, as the causes of their negative experiences.

Regarding immigration status and citizenship, some participants noted being unfairly treated due to hostile immigration policies on the federal level and the institutional level (Lee, 2021), including a lack of scholarship and job opportunities available for non-U.S. citizens. Some participants named race, immigration status, and citizenship to explain their experiences, suggesting an intersectional lens in making sense of their experiences. It is likely that the participants' immigration status and non-U.S. citizenship remained at the forefront of their minds in the U.S., given that these identities marked their inferior status compared with domestic students, including domestic SOC who were perceived by the participants as more "privileged" in accessing opportunities.

Aside from immigration status and citizenship, some participants experienced neo-racism based on language and accent, and provided varied interpretations of neo-racism against them. This is consistent with prior findings that unmasked Asian and African international students' experiences of neo-racism based on language and accent (Dos Santos, 2019; Lee & Opio, 2011; Yao et al., 2018). For example, Meher (Bangladesh, SA) did not perceive her students' comment about her accent as racist or negative; rather, she considered it an opportunity to improve her English and adjust herself to the new culture. This reflects a frame of internalized racism—consciously or subconsciously accepting or partially accepting the racial stereotypes and biases of one's racial/ethnic group that invalidates oneself while perpetuating the dominant culture (Gupta et al., 2011). This matches previous findings on many East Asian international students' internalized racism related to inadequate English proficiency (Kondo, 2016; Yeo, 2020; Yu, 2021c; Zhang, 2015). Given the dominant culture and hidden curriculum at an HWI where Euro-centric/American "standard" English is the "norm" (Yeo, 2020), Meher may have considered her accent that did not fit into this "norm" as inferior, hence, needed to be "fixed." In contrast, Joy (Nepal, SA) not only recognized people's indirect comments on her accent as racism, but named it racism based on race, accent, and cultural difference. Moreover, given that international students' experiences, worldviews, and attitudes may change over the course of their time in the U.S. (Yeo, 2020) My study affirms previous findings that illuminated international students' changing experiences and perceptions (Fries-Britt et al., 2014; Haugh, 2008; Heng, 2018b; Yeo; 2020) and counters the dominant narrative of international students as static. For example, although Sunny (Taiwan, EA) used to interpret her experience of neo-racism as a result of language and cultural difference during her master's program in U.S.–a reflection of colorblind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2003) –learning and talking about race and racism in her doctoral courses

have facilitated her to shift from a colorblind view to perceiving her past experience of neo-racism as discrimination based on race and the dominance of U.S./Western-centric epistemology.

Contributing to existing conversations about neo-racism among students in East Asia (Lee et al., 2017), my study also shows that some SA participants experienced intra-ethnic racism from fellow Asian international students as another form of neo-racism. Like many SAA students who experience intra-ethnic discrimination (McGee et al., 2016), two SA participants described experiences of being ostracized and degraded by EA and SA international students, and one of them suggested the superiority of certain Asian countries as the cause of these incidents. However, they did not name their experiences as neo-racism or any form of discrimination. The hierarchy of different nationalities within Asia is rooted in the history and sociopolitical relationships between different Asian countries. This compelling finding also illuminates how anti-Blackness is implicated. As such, naming and challenging this hierarchy could be one entry point for these participants to disrupt White supremacy and anti-Blackness, starting within the Asian region.

Colorblind View of Racism Toward Others

As shown in the previous sections, most participants struggled with recognizing and naming racism, as well as attributing their experiences of racism to race and racialization. Additionally, these participants had a hard time interpreting racism in covert and subtle forms. Because many participants perceived racism in overt forms, they struggled to understand anti-Blackness in more covert and subtle forms. As such, despite some participants' good intentions of not wanting to reproduce stereotypes of Black people after coming to the U.S., they ended up reinforcing anti-Blackness by portraying Black people as the "problems" (Dumas & ross, 2016). As a result, they did not conceive how structural and systemic racism as the root cause of the

stereotypes. For example, explaining her observation of stereotypes of Black people, Meher (Bangladesh, SA) expressed the stereotype that Black people got "agitated quickly," and attributed it to the perception that Black people were oversensitive to comments that were not actually racist. Underlying Meher's interpretation was the assumption that Black people had a tendency to "make situations racial that are not" (Bonilla-Silva, 2021, p. 45), instead of recognizing racism, racial microaggressions, and existence in a highly racialized society as the root causes of the issue. Furthermore, these participants seemed to hold a deterministic attitude towards racism, perceiving it as an aggregation of negative views of Black people rather than understanding racism as systems of oppression that marginalize Black people (Leonardo, 2002; Yeo, 2020). As such, these participants may perceive eliminating stereotypes as a piecemeal solution to resolving the racism "problem" and lose the drive to challenge racist structures and systems.

In general, many participants really struggled with articulating the racialization of Black people and understanding the nuances and subtlety of racism because they viewed such issue through simplistic explanation like the perpetrator's malicious intent. Despite some SA and SEA participants' prior knowledge of race and awareness of the subjugation of Black people before coming to the U.S., they had a difficult time articulating *how* and *why* Black individuals experienced racialization and racism, and how such dynamics worked to uphold Whiteness and anti-Blackness in the U.S. context (Basile & Black, 2019). As such, many participants mostly recognized the racism against Black people in overt forms, especially in the forms of police brutality and microassaults (e.g., racial slurs). For example, Meher (Bangladesh, SA) argued that naming and categorizing people by race would only exacerbate discrimination based on colorism that was implicit. Undergirding her statement was the assumption that colorism that was

supposedly more implicit was not "as bad as" explicit racism, without understanding that anti-Blackness is implicated through colorism (Bora, 2019; Christian, 2019) and that anti-Blackness manifests in both explicit and implicit forms. Even though Sanjay (Sri Lanka, SA) recognized the racialization of Black people–in terms of being positioned in the bottom layer of society–he articulated capitalism as the root cause, especially compared with his home country Sri Lanka, instead of naming race and racial capitalism as a potential driving force (Melamed, 2015).

Although Ali (Malaysia, SEA) perceived racial slurs from a White student to a Black student (between strangers) as racist, he considered using the n-word between friends as innocuous joking (Cabrera, 2014), particularly given that his friends casually used them in his home country Malaysia. To Ali, the impact of racial slurs differed depending on the intent behind them. In other words, Ali thought that it was acceptable to use racial slurs as an innocuous joke without realizing the history of the n-word in "discursively strip[ing] Black people of their humanity" (Kendi, 2016, cited in Cabrera, 2021) and the power of linguistic violence against Black people (Fogle, 2013, cited in Cabrera, 2021), regardless of intent. Global White supremacy, coupled with the racialized campus climate at an HWI enabled Ali to reinforce anti-Blackness as part of the "norm" in his home country in the U.S. (Yeo, 2020) without being aware of doing so. Two participants, Shawn (Nepal, SA) and Jay (Philippines, SEA), went one step further than recognizing anti-Blackness on the individual level and indicated anti-Blackness by naming the racial segregation and limited resources in Black neighborhoods and police force as a manifestation of institutional racism, which reflects their initial awareness of anti-Blackness on the systemic level. Among all the participants, Jay was the only one who not only talked about anti-Blackness but also named it. It is possible that other participants started to develop their awareness of anti-Blackness but did not have the language or

tool to unpack what it means, particularly how anti-Blackness manifests on the structural and systems levels.

Chapter Summary

It is evident that many participants' various home countries' contexts shaped their perceptions of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism, including the different meanings assigned to the Black and White racial groups. Transitioning to a more racially diverse environment in the U.S. not only compelled many participants to reflect on these assigned values that they acquired in their home countries but also started to see race beyond the Black and White binary, including their own race as Asian in the U.S. context. However, many participants struggled to grasp the meanings of their racial identity and racial positioning within the Black and White dichotomy. Their perceptions of race as biological and phenotypic also steered them away from understanding race as socially constructed, ideologically based, and historically rooted, with different meanings assigned to racial groups that were reinforced by institutional powers to perpetuate social inequality (Baber, 2010; Omi & Winant, 2015). As such, the participants did not perceive themselves and others as racialized or experiencing racism, especially racism in covert and subtle forms. Participants' views of themselves and others reflected color-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2003).

The aforementioned sections all point to the argument that Asian international students' perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism are not one-sided. In other words, Asian international students are not just victims of racism and neo-racism, they also actively participated in the perpetuation of racial hierarchy, White dominance, and anti-Blackness during their sojourn in the U.S. Hence, I utilized a critical perspective to name and problematize participants' perceptions of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism, particularly

those that were colorblind and upholding Whiteness and anti-Blackness. However, I did so without the intention to perpetuate the deficit lens of Asian international students or blaming Asian international students for not knowing. Rather, I echo Yeo's (2020) argument of the dominant culture in many U.S. higher education institutions, particularly HWIs and PWIs, that continue to dismiss race and racism and uphold Whiteness and anti-Blackness by not providing adequate resources or opportunities to help Asian international students understand race and racism, especially given that many of them have already experienced transnational racialization (Kim, 2008) and reinforce the "norms" (e.g., racial hierarchy, colorism, ethnocentrism, and anti-Blackness) of their home countries in the U.S. Such a dominant culture (Yeo, 2020), coupled with the selective migration history (Hsu, 2015) and the colorblind racism in a post-racial era in the U.S. (Bonilla-Silva, 2003), has enabled many Asian international students to remain unaware of how race and racialization function to reify White supremacy and anti-Blackness.

I also recognize that some Asian international students may already know about the supposed superiority of Whiteness and inferiority of Blackness in the U.S. and global context. In this framing, Asians are positioned in the middle of the "racial triangle" (Kim, 2008, p. 15; Kim, 2022; Shin, 2012) but hold onto the temporary protection gained from their proximity to Whiteness (Liu & Liu, forthcoming), intentionally converging interests with Whites to benefit from Whiteness and its embodied power (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). By doing so, they reproduce the "tri-racial system" –a racial hierarchy with Whites (including White and some White presenting or highly assimilated individuals) at the top, "honorary Whites" (including some light-skinned Latinx, as well as EA and SA individuals) in the middle, and "collective Blacks" (including Black, dark-skinned Latinx, SA people, and reservation-bond Native Americans) at the bottom (Bonilla-Silva, 2003, p. 278; Bonilla-Silva, 2004). Based on these arguments, I now turn to

implications for practices, policies, and future research for higher education institutions to consider in the next chapter.

Chapter 7: Implications and Conclusion

By exploring perceptions of and experiences with race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism among South, Southeast, and East Asian international students at an HWI, I found that many Asian international students minimized the racialization experienced by themselves and others, adopted a colorblind lens in viewing racism, and more recognition of neo-racism against them as related to accent, immigration status, and citizenship, including intraethnic racism among Asian international students. While many Asian international students are vulnerable to racist and neo-racist incidents, they also reinforce the racial hierarchy, White supremacy, and anti-Blackness, as enabled by the institutional, structural, and systemic racism that they were embedded in, both in the U.S. and in their home countries. Indeed, many Asian international students experienced drastic transitions when they migrated from their home countries to the U.S. with more racial diversity and an HWI where a racialized campus climate prevailed. Specifically, many Asian international students' perceptions of race and racism shifted between pre- and post-arrival to the U.S. and over the course of their time in the U.S. Additionally, my study illuminated that EA, SA, and SEA international students held divergent perceptions of their racial identity and those of other racial groups, as shaped by their home countries' contexts. This group of Asian international students' experiences and perceptions of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism provide important lessons for U.S. higher education institutions and scholars to consider.

Using the findings and discussion from Chapters 4-6, in this chapter, I offer implications for practice that employ a "humanizing approach" (Yao, 2022) of working with Asian international students and directions for future research through an equity-driven lens (George Mwangi & Yao, 2020). First, I describe the implications for practices and policies at higher

education institutions. Next, I detail directions for future research. Lastly, I offer concluding remarks for the dissertation.

Implications for Practice

The compelling findings from the study point to the importance and necessity of U.S. higher education institutions to engage Asian international students in conversations around race and racism during their sojourn in the U.S. Despite the U.S. attracting talents around the world since 1949/1950 (Statistics & Data, 2022), many institutions continue to recruit and enroll Asian international students as "cash cows" and "diversity tokens" (Catiello-Gutierrez, 2022) to fulfill the economic and cultural diversity needs of the institutions, without providing opportunities, resources, or support for Asian international students to talk and learn about race, or addressing many Asian international students' colorblind racism towards themselves and others. The lack of opportunities and resources for Asian international students to engage with the topic of race indicates that many institutions remain complicit in reinforcing the racialized campus climate at H/PWIs, as well as White dominance and anti-Blackness on the structural and systemic levels.

Hence, I call upon institutions to employ an equity-driven lens (George Mwangi & Yao, 2020) by taking away the onus put onto Asian international students to (un/re)learn about race on their own and to take up the responsibility to facilitate the development of Asian international students' consciousness regarding race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism in the U.S. A first step institutions can take is to directly address race and racism early on in Asian international students' educational careers by including conversations around race in the international student orientation that all international students are encouraged to attend. Instead of focusing on introducing Asian international students to the "American culture" or "navigating cultural differences" in the orientation session, institutions, specifically international student offices and

centers, should rethink the purpose and design of the session to engage Asian and other international students in learning and talking about race in the U.S. context.

Given that many participants in the study are at different points and depths of understanding of race and racism, it is clear that simply providing a one-time orientation session or taking a "catch-all" approach in engaging all Asian international students with the topic of race and racism is inadequate. Hence, I encourage various campus units (e.g., student affairs office, DEI office, multicultural center, international students office/centers, counseling center, and academic programs, departments, and colleges) to join forces in providing different "entry points" and a myriad of ways for Asian international students to learn and talk about race and racism, both curricular and co-curricular programs and initiatives. Understanding that many Asian international students' experiences of racism are not bounded by campus, educators can also collaborate and partner with community organizations in providing these learning opportunities throughout the academic year.

As part of these programs and initiatives, Asian international students can learn about the definitions of concepts like race, racialization, racism, neo-racism, and DEI, ask questions about these concepts, and start to make sense of them with their identities and lived experiences. As my study shows that participants' perceptions and experiences may differ by ethnicity and are shaped by their home countries' contexts, it is clear that Asian international students are not a homogenous group and are not "blank slates." As such, when designing and implementing these programs and initiatives, institutions should recognize the diverse experiences and perceptions of ethnic subgroups among Asian international students and account for the various contexts of their home countries, including colorism, casteism, ethnocentrism, and anti-Blackness. It is also important to address the topic of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism within a global

context, especially given the alarming finding of intraethnic racism among Asian international students.

Moreover, learning about the sociohistorical context of the Asianization process and the Asian racial label can facilitate Asian international students in exploring their racial identity in the U.S. as well as the intersections of their racial identity and other social identities (e.g., gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, immigration status, religion, and ability, etc.). An enhanced understanding of their racial identity, especially one that is grounded in political power, may propel some Asian international students to leverage their pan-ethnic racial identity as anti-racist discourses to address racial inequality with Asian American peers as a collective force. Through these programs and initiatives, Asian international students may be equipped with more language and tools to name and interpret racism and neo-racism against themselves and others, make the connections between racism on the interpersonal level and structural and systemic racism, and start to challenge systemic racism in the U.S. and in their home countries.

Additionally, educators should be cognizant of the various developmental levels of Asian international students as race, racialization, and racism are all abstract and complex concepts to grasp. As such, educators should provide adequate scaffolding to facilitate Asian international students in (un/re)learning, digesting, and unpacking information, and at the same time, engage Asian international students in conversations about race and racism that move beyond superficial levels. Furthermore, engaging with topics of race and racism can be emotionally draining and even traumatic. Given so, coupled with opportunities for Asian international students to learn and talk about race should be culturally relevant counseling services and resources. This way, Asian international students will feel emotionally and psychologically supported through the sense-making and navigation process of their racialized experiences.

In addition to programs and initiatives on the institutional levels, interventions can also be implemented on the individual and interpersonal level. It is important for educators, including faculty, staff, and administrators, to learn more about Asian international students' experiences and perceptions of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism, as a part of their DEI training or resources. This is particularly relevant for staff and administrators in the international student offices and centers who directly work with and advise Asian and other international students on their campuses. With a better understanding of Asian international students' experiences and perceptions, educators may be more prepared to engage in one-on-one dialogues with Asian international students and address some of their questions about racial dynamics in the U.S. Doing so also creates an institutional culture where conversations around race and racism are normalized.

Although I offer these ideas for programs and initiatives, I caution institutions from feeling the need to "educate" Asian international students in a way that perpetuates the "benevolent" and "charity" narrative in higher education (Ford & Cate, 2020, p. 1207; Stein & de Andreotti, 2016, p. 226). Despite the importance of learning and talking about race, institutions should be aware that many Asian international students may put race and racism at the backburner due to the multiple challenges that they are already navigating in a foreign country, buttressed by the pervasive colorblind racism in higher education institutions and the U.S. society writ-large. Additionally, institutions should recognize that Asian international students also embody a sense of agency in deciding whether, how, and when to engage in dialogues around race and racism. Given so, institutions can consider eliciting Asian international students' feedback on what type of opportunities, resources, and support they need as related to race and racism, instead of holding all the power in the decision-making process.

Furthermore, educators and institutions should understand that Asian international students' relationship to the U.S.—whether they intend to stay in the U.S. or not post-graduation—influences their level of commitment to understanding racial issues in the U.S. Some Asian international students who seek to return to their home countries or migrating to other countries may not see the need to engage in the U.S. racial climate; consequently, prioritize other adjustment barriers (e.g., housing, financial, employment) that they perceive as directly impacting their persistence and success. These students' lack of commitment to understanding U.S. racial climate may be an unintentional form of complicity toward racism that secures their social mobility at the expense of protecting Whiteness and reinforcing the myth of meritocracy. Hence, it is important for educators and institutions to plan programs that challenge Asian international students' assumptions around racial climate and develop their racial consciousness and racial literacy regardless of their current or future relationship to the U.S. For example, educators can engage Asian international students in writing "critical learning journals" that encourage them to reflect on the impact of race on their own lived experiences. Educators can also use dialogues to prompt Asian international students to rethink their assumptions around race and racism (e.g., racism is a phenomenon in the past) (Thurber et al., 2019).

As many domestic students may also exacerbate a racialized campus climate at HWIs, as my study illuminates, it is also important for institutions to provide opportunities for the campus community to learn and talk about race and racism, including students, faculty, staff, and administrators. One approach is to offer intergroup dialogues (see the Intergroup Dialogue Project at Cornell University as an example) to different populations on campus and integrate race and racism as one of key topics. Another approach is for faculty and TAs to integrate race and racism, particularly CRT and other critical theories, in the curricula. I encourage faculty and

TAs to take a participatory approach that elicits and incorporates student feedback in the curricula (re)design process. Moreover, I encourage faculty and TAs to move beyond focusing on the *what*–in this case–race and racism, and rethink the *how*–in terms of their teaching pedagogy and strategies–in engaging students with the topic of race and racism. Given the rising number of international graduate teaching assistants (IGTAs) and the integral role that they play in many STEM classes, I also recommend programs, departments, and colleges to provide specialized training for IGTAs regarding race relations and racial dynamics in the U.S. (Lue et al., forthcoming). This way, IGTAs are equipped with the language and tools to discuss and address race and racism with their students. Additionally, institutions can provide curricular engagement opportunities for students to learn and talk about race through General Education courses. The requirement for students to take race-related General Education courses that address inequality and race specifically should apply to everyone regardless of their major or discipline.

Finally, institutions, particularly H/PWIs, must hold themselves accountable by identifying and disrupting the ahistorical and colorblind ideology that undergirds many of their practices, policies, traditions, and cultures, and establish accountability metrics that hold themselves responsible for educating equity-minded global talents. I urge institutions to shift the discourse of international students as cultural and diversity tokens (Buckner et al., 2020) to individuals with racial identities who experience various forms of racism and neo-racism. Institutions can do so by rethinking how their DEI programs and initiatives that have historically focused on domestic students (Yao et al., 2019) can intentionally include international students as racialized beings and active agents who have a say in these programs and initiatives (Buckner et al., 2022). Moreover, institutions can re-operationalize DEI in their mission statements, websites, and marketing materials, with the recognition of the racialized realities of Asian and

other international students. Recognition of international students' racialized realities also includes explicitly indicating international students' race/racial identity in institutional research on student demographics. From an organizational perspective, I also encourage institutional leaders to rethink the purpose and function of international student offices and centers that have historically focused on practical matters (specifically immigration-related) and cultural celebrations that are decoupled from the DEI office and their initiatives (Buckner et al., 2022). All of the aforementioned suggestions for practice will ultimately enhance Asian international students' experiences and well-being and a sense of belonging at their institutions, and more importantly, a step forward in deconstructing the racialized climate at P/HWIs.

Directions for Future Research

In addition to implications for practice, I offer directions for future research in this section. Although several participants alluded to anti-Blackness, only one participant explicitly named it in the study. Hence, future research can further examine Asian international students' perceptions of anti-Blackness and unpack how their awareness of anti-Blackness—whether they name anti-Blackness or not—shapes their understanding of race. Additionally, given the relatively small sample size of SEA participants in the study, future research can intentionally recruit SEA international students, particularly on campuses with a larger representation of SEA international students, and explore their experiences and perceptions of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism. I encourage scholars to account for the unique historical, political, and sociocultural contexts in SEA international students' home countries and examine how these contexts may shape the participants' perceptions and experiences. The inclusion of more SEA international students in future research will provide rich insights into the unique perceptions and experiences of this ethnic group within Asian international students and

important implications for practice that help educators to better support SEA international students at their institutions.

As my study focused on EA, SA, and SEA international students, despite receiving interest from multiple international students from Central Asia during the participant recruitment process, I was not able to include them in the study. The responses from Central Asian international students perhaps indicate their identification as Asian international students and interest in being a part of a research study that examines Asian international students and race in the U.S. There are very limited if at all, studies that explore Central Asian international students' racialized experiences in the extant literature; hence, future research can include or focus on this particular subgroup in their studies and examine their perceptions and experiences of race and racism based on the different historical, political, and sociocultural contexts in their home countries.

Considering my study did not explore the nuances between undergraduate and graduate students, nor STEM vs. non-STEM disciplines, it is worth exploring these subgroups' experiences and perceptions and how their perceptions and experiences may have been influenced by their various academic and disciplinary cultures and contexts in future research. For example, as Asian international students may be represented, or even numerically overrepresented in some STEM majors, as highlighted by one participant in the study, future research can start to understand how Asian international students make sense of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism within the STEM discipline, including disaggregating data by ethnicity.

Moreover, there is a bounded system of this multiple case study (Merriam, 2009; Stake,

2005)–both in terms of space and time. Given the unique spatial and time contexts, the findings of my study may not be generalizable to other contexts. As such, I encourage scholars to examine how Asian international students perceive and describe experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism in other institutional contexts (e.g., HBCU, HSI, and AANAPISI, community colleges, liberal arts institutions, teaching-intensive institutions, and private institutions), particularly at AANAPSI where Asian international students are in the numerical majority. As participants' experiences of racism were not bounded by their campuses in my study, future research can also examine Asian international students' perceptions and experiences in other county and state contexts, including in rural areas and states with a harsher political climate.

In addition to examining the experiences and perceptions of Asian international students, it is also important for scholars to examine other racial groups within the international SOC population. I propose this direction for future research given that previous studies documented divergent experiences among international students from predominantly non-White regions, with more international students from the Middle East and Africa experiencing more discrimination than international students from Asia, the Americas, and Oceania (Hanassab, 2006). My suggestion also stems from the reality of differential racialization of different racially minoritized groups (Delgado et al., 2017; Iftikar & Museus, 2018; Wong & Ramakrishnan, 2021), hence, the need to examine other racially minoritized international students, including Black, Latinx, Middle East, and multi-racial students and their experiences and perceptions of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism. Given that higher education institutions continue to perceive international students through a monolithic lens (Krsmanovic, 2021), future research should continue to disaggregate each racial group by ethnicities and countries of origin if

possible, and by doing so, disrupt the dominant narrative that dehumanizes international students as deficient, monolithic, and static (Abdullah et al., 2014; Rhee & Sagaria 2004; Yao & Viggiano, 2019).

In terms of theoretical foundations for future research, my study demonstrated the utility of EYES theory in interpreting Asian international students' perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, and racism. Specifically, EYES theory allowed me to name how Asian international students perceived themselves and others, how their perceptions changed over time, and how their perceptions were shaped by the historical and sociocultural contexts in their home countries (Yeo, 2020). The praxis of EYES theory also enabled me to describe the various forms of racism that Asian international students experienced, how Asian international students' experiences and perceptions of race were shaped by the racialized campus climate and systemic racism, and how their perceptions exacerbated a racialized campus climate (Yeo, 2020). Hence, I encourage future research to continue utilizing EYES theory as a theoretical framework and contribute to the development of this theory in the field of higher education. Moreover, given the compelling finding of Asian international women and a non-binary participant's experiences of intersectionality as related to racism and sexism, scholars can employ intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1990) as a theoretical framework to unpack international SOC's experiences of intersectionality, as a critical step to address inequities in the field of higher education (Museus & Griffin, 2011). Additionally, the integration of EYES theory and neo-racism offered a useful lens to understand Asian international students' experiences and perceptions of race and racism, indicating a need for scholars to consider integrating different critical theories (e.g., racist nativism, colorblind racism, intersectionality, and subfields of CRT, such as AsianCrit,

BlackCrit, LatCrit, and TribalCrit) to examine international SOC's racialized experiences in future research.

My study also has several methodological implications for future research. My study demonstrated the possibility of using ethnographic methods to document Asian international students' experiences and perceptions, which also offered a space of reflection and healing for participants. Many participants expressed gratitude for having a space and opportunity to talk about race and their experiences of racism and neo-racism in the study. As such, future research can continue adopting ethnographic methods, including using focus groups for participants to engage in reflection and healing in community with one another. Understanding that Asian international students are likely at different points of understanding of race and racism, researchers can use focus groups to help these students develop racial knowledge and literacy through engaging in dialogues with fellow Asian international students who may have a better grasp on the topic. Although my study captured a glimpse of participants' changing experiences and perceptions over the course of their time in the U.S. through participants' retroactive sharing, I echo Fries-Britt et al. (2014) and Mitchell et al. (2017)'s recommendations and encourage future research to examine international SOC's shifting perceptions and experiences by conducting longitudinal research over the course of their time in the U.S. (e.g., from when participants first enrolled at the institution to when they have studied at the institution for over a semester/year).

Furthermore, researchers who are interested in problematizing Asian international students' perceptions of race and racism can rethink the purpose and process of conducting member checking in future research. Given that some participants may counter researchers' critical lens in interpreting their experiences and perceptions of race and racism, researchers can

consider incorporating a supplemental follow-up interview or focus group after sharing their interpretations and analysis with the participants. Doing so offers the researcher another opportunity to engage in conversations with the participants and challenge them to reflect deeper on their experiences and perceptions of race, racism, and neo-racism.

To my surprise, some of the participants in my study expressed great interest in the topic and the methodology; some even indicated an interest to collaborate on future research projects with me on the topic of Asian international students and race. Considering such interest, scholars can employ a Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology (Kemmis et al., 2014) and intentionally recruit and include international SOC as co-researchers and invite them to take the lead in framing the research questions, design, methods, analysis, and implications of the research that directly impact their lives. Engaging international SOC in the research process is a powerful way to facilitate the development of their consciousness regarding racial equity and justice and an invaluable opportunity for them to challenge White dominance and systemic racism through research.

Moreover, I am cognizant of the protection that was inherently provided to the institution under investigation and the perpetuation of power that the institution held when the institutional name was masked in the study, as guided by the IRB process. Hence, I encourage scholars who are interested in using research as advocacy and activism to partner with higher education institutions and organizations to identify inequitable practices, policies, and traditions and propose concrete solutions to transform the racialized climate in these organizations. Doing so is a powerful way to hold organizations accountable for implementing more racially equitable practices and policies and disrupting the status quo in the field of higher education.

Lastly, research cannot and should not be conducted in a silo, especially given the

interconnected world that we live in today. As such, I urge scholars to conduct research in community and partnership with one another, particularly with colleagues in the Global South. I encourage scholars to collaborate on research projects that examine international SOC's racialized experiences by centering non-U.S./Western-centric praxis and worldviews. By doing so, promote a decolonizing approach to knowledge production and a disruption of academic imperialism. My advocacy for this research approach is not only grounded in my own belief of the purpose and meaning of research but also the reality of the pervasive, permanent, and malleable nature of White supremacy and anti-Blackness that operate on a global scale, calling upon us to tackle it from a global standpoint (Blanco et al., 2020).

Conclusion

This study contributes to the field of higher education in a myriad of ways. First, although the COVID-19 global pandemic is almost over, the pandemic of racism is still pervasive and pernicious, if not more serious than ever. As such, my study was conducted in a timely manner that captured Asian international students' experiences and perceptions of race and racism during a precarious time, diversifying the growing body of literature on international students and race and the paradigm of racial inequality from a transnational vantage point. Second, by taking an inter-ethnic approach and accounting for the trajectory of participants' experiences and perceptions over the course of their time in the U.S., my study captured the nuanced experiences, perceptions, and voices of EA, SA, and SEA international students that offered important implications for educators, higher education institutions, policymakers, and scholars. These participants' experiences and perceptions also add nuances to the conversation on contemporary Asian America and racial dynamics. Third, my study validated the utility of EYES theory that intersects with neo-racism as a conceptual framework. In particular, my study

detailed the different contexts of East Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia that shaped Asian international students' perceptions in the U.S., the changing perceptions from pre-arrival to post-arrival in an HWI and the U.S., and the strong force of global White supremacy and anti-Blackness that reinforced Asian international students' colorblind racism that perpetuated a racialized campus climate at an HWI and structural and systemic racism. Fourth, my study broadened the methodological approach of conducting research with and for Asian international students by showing how ethnographic methods can be used as a methodological approach, and more importantly, an approach that offered a space of reflection and healing for this group of students. Lastly, by taking a critical perspective and drawing from critical theories, my study not only disrupted the dehumanized narratives of Asian international students as commodities, deficient, monolithic, and static (Yao & George Mwangi, 2022) but by connecting Asian international students' experiences and perceptions to systems of power and oppression, dismantles White supremacy and anti-Blackness on the systemic level.

With the enrollment of new international students returning to pre-pandemic levels and the lifting of pandemic travel bans (IIE, 2022), many institutions are welcoming both new and returning international students to their campuses. Despite a continuous drop of international students from China (Knox, 2022), the top three countries of origin of international students are China, India, and South Korea (IIE, 2022). In particular, the enrollment of international students from India increased by 19% in 2021/22 (Knox, 2022) and the number of graduate students from India surpassed China for the first time in 2021 (Fischer, 2022). Given the changing international student body, it is critical for institutions to move beyond treating Asian international students as a monolith entity and understand how ethnic subgroups of Asian international students perceive and describe their experiences of race and racism and offer support and resources based on their

needs. Helping Asian international students with navigating racial dynamics in the U.S. will ultimately enhance their educational experiences and overall well-being.

As a microcosm of society (Museus & Truong, 2013), higher education plays a potent role in preparing the next generation of equity-minded global citizens and addressing racial equity and justice in society, especially during the chaos of "anti-woke" and "anti-CRT" political propaganda. However, the troubling findings of Asian international students' experiences and perceptions of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism in an HWI once again signify that higher education institutions, particularly P/HWIs, still have a long way to go. Given the substantial number of Asian international students in U.S., it is imperative for institutions to understand these students' perceptions and experiences of race and racism, in order to deconstruct the broader system of White supremacy and anti-Blackness and reimagine a more racially equitable society. Moreover, higher education must counter the ahistorical and colorblind perceptions of Asian international students by including this group of students' stories and voices in the broader DEI discourse.

For many Asian international students, transitioning to the U.S. and experiencing race, racialization, and racism may be the very first time that they have experienced a sense of otherness (Young, 2017; Zhang, 2015). Consequently, many Asian international students may not feel prepared to confront or unpack these experiences on their own. Without adequate support or resources from institutions, Asian international students may be left on their own with the burden of navigating their racialized experiences. Hence, it is imperative for educators to form a better understanding of Asian international students' experiences and perceptions of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism, in order to assist these students with navigating racial dynamics in the U.S.

Without adequate support and resources to navigate racial dynamics in the U.S., many Asian international students may and continue to suffer from racist and neo-racist incidents and reinforce existing racial inequities. Indeed, my dissertation illuminates that Asian international students are not just victims of racialization and racism, but actively participate in reinforcing the racial order, as impacted by the "norms" (e.g., colorism, casteism, ethnocentrism, and anti-Blackness) in their home countries and reified by selective immigration policies (Hsu, 2015), racialized campus climate at an HWI, and systemic racism (Yeo, 2020). Some Asian international students may return to their home countries post-graduation and carry the "norms" that reinforce inequitable power relations on the global level; others may stay in the U.S. to seek future opportunities (e.g., joining the workforce, pursuing further education), and reinforce the systemic racism that is pervasive in the U.S. Given the trajectory of many Asian international students in becoming Asian immigrants, their transnational stories and voices not only reveal a new way to understand power inequities and new possibilities to resist racial inequity and advance social justice, but also illuminate the future of contemporary Asian America in the U.S.

Appendices

Appendix A: Recruitment Email

Hello!

My name is Jia Zheng and I'm a doctoral candidate in the [redacted] program at Global University. I'm inviting you to participate in my dissertation study on the perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism in the United States, as I believe you may be eligible and have important insights to offer on this topic.

To participate in the study, you must be (1) an undergraduate or graduate student who self-identifies as an international student from Asia; (2) enrolled at Global University during the year 2018 and later; (3) enrolled at Global University for at least 6-9 months; and (4) are of 18 years or older at the time of the study.

To determine eligibility, you'll be invited to complete a brief eligibility survey (5-10 minutes) first. For those who are not eligible, your data will be deleted immediately and will not be used for research. If you meet the eligibility, you'll receive information regarding the next steps of the study, incl:

- In phase I, I'll join you in 3-4 events, gatherings, workshops, seminars, informal hangouts, and/or classes, on-campus and/or off campus and conduct observation of these events during Fall 2022 semester. As a part of observation, I'd also like to engage in informal interviews/dialogues with you. **The expected time commitment for the observations is around 60-90 minutes per observation.**
- In phase II, I'll conduct two-rounds of one-one-on in-person interviews with you regarding your perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism during Fall 2022, Winter 2023, or Spring 2023 semesters. **Each interview will last between 60-90 minutes**, will be conducted at a mutually agreeable time and in a mutually agreeable place on campus, and will be optionally audio-recorded upon your consent. **You'll receive a $30 e-gift card via email within 24 hours upon completing each interview.**

If you are interested in participating in this study, please complete the eligibility survey. Upon confirming your interest in participation and eligibility, I'll send you additional information on the study, including study purpose, procedures, potential risks and discomfort, confidentiality, and eliciting your informed consent to participate in the study. I'm happy to answer any questions and/or concerns you may have before you make the final decision to participate in the study. For any questions and/or concerns regarding the study, please contact me at [redacted] or my dissertation chair Dr. Julie J. Park [redacted].

Appendix B: Eligibility Survey

Thank you for your interest in participating in the study on Asian international students' perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism. To determine if you are eligible for the study, please answer the following questions about you and your background.

- First and Last Name:
- Email:
- Age:
- Gender:
- Race:
- Ethnicity:
- Major:
- Class Standing: Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior, Graduate (Master's, Doctoral), Other (Please Specify): _____
- When did you enroll at Global University?
- Have you enrolled at Global University for at least 6-9 months? Yes, No
- Are you an international student at the Global University? Yes, No
- Are you willing to have me join 3-4 events, gatherings, workshops, seminars, and/or classes in your programs, departments, colleges, on-campus and/or off campus and conduct observation of these events during Fall 2022 semester? Yes, No
- Are you willing to participate in two-rounds of one-one-on in-person interviews regarding your perceptions and experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism during Winter and Spring 2023 semesters? Yes, No
- If selected for the study, you have the option to choose a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality. If you have a pseudonym in mind, please indicate here: _____.
- Please indicate any questions/concerns you may have about the study: _____.

Appendix C: Participant Profiles

Name	Gender	Ethnicity	Nationality	Academic Status	Major	Discipline	Enrollment at Global University	Total Years in the U.S.
Mk	Female	Japanese	Japan	Senior	Geographical Sciences	STEM	Fall 2021	3
Sunny	Female	Taiwanese	Taiwan	Doctoral	Education	non-STEM	Fall 2021	3
Lynn	Non-binary	Chinese	China	Sophomore	Criminology and Criminal Justice & Business and Management	non-STEM	Spring 2021	3
Elaine	Female	Chinese	Hong Kong, Portugal	Doctoral	Education	non-STEM	Fall 2019	3
Jessie	Female	Korean	Korea	Sophomore	Criminology and Criminal Justice	non-STEM	Fall 2021	7
Joy	Female	Nepali	Nepal	Doctoral	Bioengineering	STEM	Fall 2021	5
Sai	Male	Indian	India	Sophomore	Computer Science	STEM	Fall 2021	2
Meher	Female	Bangladeshi	Bangladesh	Doctoral	Electrical Engineering	STEM	Fall 2018	4
Sanjay	Male	Sinhalese	Sri Lanka	Doctoral	Electrical and Computer Engineering	STEM	Fall 2021	1
Ventus	Male	Hindu and Indian	India	Sophomore	Computer Science and Neuroscience	STEM	Fall 2021	1
Shawn	Male	Nepali	Nepal	Master's	Robotics	STEM	Spring 2021	1 ½
Kim	Female	Vietnamese	Vietnam	Junior	Neuroscience	STEM	Fall 2019	4
Jay	Male	Filipino	Philippines	Sophomore	Psychology	non-STEM	Fall 2021	1
Ali	Male	Malay	Malaysia	Sophomore	Computer Science	STEM	Fall 2020 (online)/Spring 2021 (in-person)	2

Appendix D: Observation Protocol

Date/Time:
Duration of Observation:
Location:
Event Name (if applicable):
Event Organizer (if applicable):
Number of Participants:

Observation Guide	**Observation**	**Interpretation**
Who are (not) in these spaces?		
How do they interact with one another (including EA, SA, and EA international students, other international students, domestic students, faculty/instructor/TA, administrator, and staff)?		
How do they interact with me?		
What do I (not) observe, experience, and learn (including hidden curriculum, lack of resources, dominant culture, and inequitable policies and practices)?		

Mapping out physical spaces (by sketching):

Reflections (after observation):

- What intrigued me?
- What surprised me?
- What disturbed me?
- What questions do I have?
- What did I do that worked well?
- What would I do differently next time?

Appendix E: Interview Protocols

First-Round Interview

Background:
Hello! My name is Jia Zheng (she/her) and I'm a fourth-year doctoral candidate in the [redacted] Program at Global University. I'm an international student from China. I'm interested in exploring how Asian international students perceive and describe their experiences of race, racialization, racism, and neo-racism at a Historically White Institution in the United States and this interest has motivated me to conduct this dissertation research on this topic. I hope the findings of the study will contribute to an enhanced understanding of Asian international students among educators and higher education institutions who may be able to better support these students on college campuses.

I'm grateful for your interest and willingness to share your stories with me today. There will be two interviews/dialogues in total, and each will last between 60-90 minutes. Today's dialogue will focus on your perceptions and experiences of race and racialization, and the second dialogue will focus on your perceptions and experiences of racism and neo-racism (cultural racism based on hierarchy of nationalities and respective cultures).

Today's dialogue consists of four parts. We'll start off with some demographic questions. Following the demographic questions, I'll ask some general questions about your experience at Global University, including during the pandemic. In the third part, I'll ask about your view of yourself in terms of race and racialization. And lastly, I'll ask about your view of others in terms of race and racialization.

I have a list of 11 questions prepared, and I may shift the sequence of the questions and/or ask follow-up questions based on your sharing. I'd like this to be more of a two-way dialogue rather than an interview where I'm the interviewer and you're the interviewee. With this said, you're more than welcome to ask for my take on any of the questions, challenge my perspectives, and/or ask for clarification or definition of any terms. Also, there's no right or wrong answers. I'm interested in how YOU make sense of these questions.

A couple of more logistics:

- You're welcome to take a break (bio break or just step away from sharing) anytime during the dialogue.
- I'll be taking notes during our dialogue, and I'd also like to audio record our conversation on my phone to help with transcribing later. Could I get your permission to record our exchange?
- To ensure confidentiality, I'm going to mask your identity by asking you to choose a pseudonym for the study. You can either let me know now or email me your pseudonym after today's interview.
- As mentioned in the consent form, your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may stop participating at any time or withdraw from answering any questions. If you decide not to participate in this study, stop participating at any time, or

withdraw from answering any questions, you will still receive a $30 e-gift card as the incentive/compensation.

Any questions and/or concerns before we start? [hit recording]

Interview Questions:

Demographic Questions

I'd love to get to know you a little bit first. You provided some information about yourself in the eligibility survey. Could you share with me a little bit more about yourself? Such as where you call home, nationality, where you completed previous education prior to your enrollment at Global University, and anything else that you'd like to share?

General Questions

1. Could you tell me about how you came to be a student at Global University?
2. Could you tell me about your overall experience at Global University?
    1. What positive experiences have you had at your university?
    2. What challenges have you had at your university?
    3. How have you been navigating these challenges?
3. The COVID-19 global pandemic has presented additional challenges to many students, including international students.
    1. What additional challenges did you have to navigate during the pandemic?
    2. What type of support, resources, and/or services have you received from Global University during the pandemic?

Race-View of Oneself

4. Do you think of yourself as having a race?
    1. If yes, what race do you identify with?
        1. If the participant identifies as Asian, follow up: How did you come to think of yourself as Asian? Can you describe the first time that you realized your race as Asian? What does it mean to you, to consider yourself Asian? Have you always thought of yourself as Asian? If so, what experiences may have shaped your identity as Asian? If not, could you recall a time, situation, setting or context where you experienced the transition to identifying as Asian?
        2. If the participant identifies as other races, follow up: How did you come to think of yourself as [racial identity]? Can you describe the first time that you realized your race? What does it mean to you, to consider yourself [racial identity]? Have you always thought of yourself as [racial identity]? If so, what experiences may have shaped your identity as [racial identity]? If not, could you recall a time, situation, setting or context where you experienced the transition to identifying as [racial identity]?

2. If not, could you share with me what race means to you, if it means anything at all? What are the identities that are the most salient/important to you? Has your understanding of your identities changed over the years, especially comparing before and after arrival in the U.S.? How so?

5. Do you feel like the racial label of "Asian" was imposed upon you after you came to the U.S.? If so, how so? If not, why not?

Race-View of Others

6. Can you describe the first time that you realized and/or learned about race?
7. Can you describe the first time that you realized and/or learned about different racial groups?
8. What racial groups were you aware of before you came to the U.S.?
9. What racial groups are you aware of since you've come to the U.S.?
8. What have you heard, realized, or learned about different racial groups (including different ethnic groups within Asia) before you came to the U.S.?
9. Do these ideas align with or differ from your experience in the U.S.? How so?
10. Has your understanding of different racial groups (including different ethnic groups within Asia) changed since you've come to the U.S.? How so?
11. Has your understanding of race changed since you've come to the U.S.? How so?

Closing:

We've reached the end of the dialogue for today. Before we wrap up, are there anything else that you'd like me to know or things that you'd like to add, expand, or clarify? How do you feel about the interview? Do you have any questions and/or concerns?

[pause and take notes if applicable; stop recording]

Thank you so much for your time and for sharing your stories with me today! As I invited you to talk about your perceptions and experiences of race in today's dialogue, I recognize that you may have experienced feelings of discomfort as a result of recalling and retelling. If there's any resources (e.g., counseling center) that I can share that could be helpful, please let me know. To ensure accuracy of your stories, I'll email you a copy of today's transcript and will invite you to clarify, elaborate, and/or add any points if needed. As incentive/compensation of your participation in today's dialogue, you'll receive an email notification with information on how to redeem the $30 e-gift card within 24 hours.

For our next dialogue, I'd like to invite you to bring 1-3 artifact(s) that represent your initial and ongoing experiences of racism and neo-racism, or those that represent a time, situation, context, or setting when you felt discriminated against, unfairly treated, or uncomfortable in the U.S. Artifact(s) can be any objects. In our next dialogue, I'll invite you to share a little bit about the artifact(s) and ask you some questions related to them. I can email some example questions related to the artifact(s) to help you prepare for our next dialogue if that's helpful. To schedule our next interview, please feel free to let me know your availability now or via email later. Any other questions and/or concerns that you may have for me?

Second-Round Interview

Background:
Thank you for your interest and willingness to continue our dialogue today. During our last dialogue, we talked about your general experience at Global University, including during the pandemic, your view of yourself in terms of race and racialization, and your view of others in terms of race and racialization. Like our last dialogue, today's dialogue will last between 60-90 minutes.

Today's dialogue consists of four parts. We'll start off with some questions related to the artifact(s) that you brought today. Next, I'll ask some questions about your perceptions and experiences of racism and neo-racism (cultural racism based on hierarchy of nationalities and respective cultures). In the third part of the interview, I'll ask about your perceptions of the recent racial events. And lastly, I'll ask questions about your perceptions and experiences of racism and neo-racism during the pandemic.

I have a list of 24 questions prepared, and I may shift the sequence of the questions and/or ask follow-up questions based on your sharing. Like last time, I'd like this to be more of a two-way dialogue rather than an interview where I'm the interviewer and you're the interviewee. With this said, you're more than welcome to ask for my take on any of the questions, challenge my perspectives, and/or ask for clarification or definition of any terms. Also, there's no right or wrong answers. I'm interested in how YOU make sense of these questions.

To reiterate a couple of logistics:

- You're welcome to take a break (bio break or just step away from sharing) anytime during the dialogue.
- I'll be taking notes during our dialogue, and I'd also like to audio record our conversation on my phone to help with transcribing later. Could I get your permission to record our exchange?
- As mentioned in the consent form, your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may stop participating at any time or withdraw from answering any questions. If you decide not to participate in this study, stop participating at any time, or withdraw from answering any questions, you will still receive a $30 e-gift card as the incentive/compensation.

Any questions and/or concerns before we start? [hit recording]

Interview Questions:

Artifact(s)

1. Could you tell me about the artifact(s) that you brought today?
2. What's the history of this artifact(s)?
3. What three words or phrases would you use to describe this artifact(s)?
4. How does the artifact(s) relate to your understanding and experience of racism or neo-racism?

Racism and Neo-Racism

5. Could you describe a time, situation, context, or setting when you felt discriminated against, unfairly treated, or uncomfortable in the U.S. (including on the Global University campus or other places)?
6. What identities do you think the discrimination, unfair treatment, or discomfort was based on (i.e., race, ethnicity, nationality, culture, language, religion, or something else)? How so? How did you respond to the situation at the time? How did that experience make you feel?
7. Could you describe a time, situation, context, or setting when you felt discriminated against, unfairly treated, or uncomfortable because of your race (including on the Global University campus or other places)? How did you respond to the situation at the time? How did that experience make you feel?
8. Could you describe a time, situation, context, or setting when you were discriminated against, unfairly treated, or uncomfortable during interactions with other Asians (including on the Global University campus or other places)? How did you respond to the situation at the time? How did that experience make you feel?
9. Could you describe a time, situation, context, or setting when you witnessed others being discriminated against or unfairly treated in the U.S. (including on the Global University campus or other places)?
10. What identities do you think the discrimination or unfair treatment was based on (i.e., race, ethnicity, nationality, culture, language, religion, or something else)? How so? How did you respond at the time? How did that experience make you feel?

Racial Events During the Pandemic

11. What aspects of your life or your perspectives of life have been strongly influenced by the COVID-19 global pandemic?
12. As we know, anti-Asian racism and hate crimes were exacerbated in the U.S. during the pandemic. How do you perceive the anti-Asian racism and hate crimes? How do you interpret anti-Asian racism and hate crimes?
13. You may also know about the anti-Black racism and police brutality on Black lives in the U.S. (e.g., the murdering of George Floyd by a police officer in 2020). How do you perceive the anti-Black racism and violence on Black lives? How do you interpret anti-Black racism and violence on Black lives?
14. During the COVID-19 global pandemic, there were multiple protests and demonstrations happening around the country and the world, such as BLM, Stop AAPI Hate, etc. What's your take on these events? What are your thoughts and feelings on these events?

Racism and Neo-racism During the Pandemic

15. During the pandemic, did you personally encounter any discrimination, unfair treatment, or feelings of discomfort? What happened?
16. What identities do you think the discrimination, unfair treatment or discomfort was based on (i.e., race, ethnicity, nationality, culture, language, religion, or something else)?

17. Did you encounter more, less, similar, or different types of discrimination, unfair treatment or feelings of discomfort during the pandemic? How so?
18. During the pandemic, did you witness others encountering any discrimination, unfair treatment or feelings of discomfort? What happened?
19. What identities do you think the discrimination, unfair treatment or discomfort was based on (i.e., race, ethnicity, nationality, culture, language, religion, or something else)?
20. What type of support and/or resources have you received to navigate these experiences, if any?
21. What type of support and/or resources have you received from Global University to navigate these experiences, if any?
22. How can Global University better support Asian international students with navigating experiences of discrimination, unfair treatment, or feelings of discomfort, specifically related to race and the many recent events that have taken place in the U.S.?
23. How would you like to see the findings from this research being disseminated/shared to better understand and support Asian international students in U.S. colleges and universities?

Closing:
We've reached the end of the dialogue for today. Before we wrap up, are there anything else that you'd like me to know or things that you'd like to add, expand, or clarify? How do you feel about the interview? Do you have any questions and/or concerns?

[pause and take notes if applicable; stop recording]

Thank you so much for your time and for sharing your stories with me today! As I invited you to talk about your perceptions and experiences of racism and neo-racism in today's dialogue, I recognize that you may have experienced feelings of discomfort as a result of recalling and retelling. If there's any resources (e.g., counseling center) that I can share that could be helpful, please let me know. Like last time, to ensure accuracy of your stories, I'll email you a copy of today's transcript and will invite you to clarify, elaborate, and/or add any points if needed. As incentive/compensation of your participation in today's dialogue, you'll receive an email notification with information on how to redeem the $30 e-gift card within 24 hours.

Regarding the next steps: In addition to providing clarification, elaboration, and/or addition to today's transcript, I'll also share my interpretations of your stories and the final report with you during the beginning and mid-point of Spring 2023. Any other questions and/or concerns that you may have for me? Thank you so much again for your time and sharing!!

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