Insiders, Outsiders, and In-Between:
Asian Nonimmigrant Experience in the American Context of Intersectional Racism

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Abstract

The racism discussion in the United States has often overlooked the role of legal statuses and left Asian resident nonimmigrants unable to process their intersectional experience with racial discrimination in the American context. This lack of space plays out within public discussions, within one's subjectivity, and within the minority collective subjectivity. This paper demonstrates the invisibility of this space through examples of news reports and governmental policies during the 2020 pandemic and provides the language and framework for legal statuses as part of intersectional racism with reference to literature on the philosophy of race.

Introduction

According to the U.S. Census and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, in 2016, it was estimated that there were around 21 million Asian Americans and 1.4 million Asian nonimmigrants residing in the United States.[1] In other words, there was one Asian person with a nonimmigrant visa status for every 15 Asian Americans. While the COVID-19 pandemic has heightened anti-Asian discrimination globally, the discussion surrounding racism in the United States continues to overlook the role of nonimmigrant legal status in the experience of many Asian bodies.

This paper is inspired by my own experience as a Vietnamese citizen coming to the U.S. and reconciling with shifts in my identity as an international student, an Asian woman, and a foreigner. Having never needed to process my Asian identity in Vietnam, what does it mean for me to have to adopt the Asian identity in the United States? How does my experience with racial discrimination, intertwined with my nonimmigrant legal status, relate to the experience of the Asian American community? **I argue that Asian nonimmigrants cannot fully process racial discrimination in the American context without recognizing the legal status "nonimmigrant" as a part of intersectional racism.** The limited space for Asian nonimmigrants to process their experience with both racialization and legal status plays out in public discussions, through one's internal conflict, and within Asian communities.

Defining Asian, Asian nonimmigrant, and Intersectional Racism

The definition of "Asian" identities should be specified for the context of this argument.

[1] "2016: ACS 1-year Estimates Data Profiles," data.census.gov, accessed November 15, 2020, https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=ACSDP1Y2019.DP05%20United%20States&tid=.
Bryan Baker, "Nonimmigrants Residing in the United States: Fiscal Year 2016," U.S. Department of Homeland Security, March 2018, https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Nonimmigrant_Population%20Estimates_2016_0.pdf.

In general, "Asian" can be defined as people of Asian descent. However, I want to push this definition to be more specific regarding the context of anti-Asian racism. When bodies are racialized—ascribed a racial identity based on certain physical features like skin tone—the term "Asian" in this discussion adopts the meaning of "people who carry these physical traits that are associated with the Asian race and thus, subject them to the stigmatization from the dominant culture."[2]

For this argument, we can further classify Asian bodies per U.S. immigration policies and legal systems. Often in the xenophobic narrative, lawfulness is used to justify discrimination against undocumented immigrants. I want to counter this argument by using legal definitions in this paper to demonstrate that even foreign people with lawful entries still face discrimination based on their legal status. The immigrant classification generally means all foreign nationals who stay in the United States permanently; however, on the other hand, the nonimmigrant status is given to legal foreign nationals "who seek[s] temporary entry to the United States for a specific purpose."[3] The term "resident nonimmigrant" then refers to "foreign nationals who are legally admitted into the United States for specific, temporary purposes and whose classes of admission are associated with residency," which is the definition used by the Department of Homeland Security.[4] Asian temporary workers and students, for example, comprise the majority of this resident population.[5] For the purposes of

[2] This definition may exclude those who are of Asian descent but do not have physical features that are stigmatized as Asians. Using the term "Asian" regarding racial discrimination in the paper does not aim to discredit the struggle and heritage of this population.
[3] Bryan Baker, "Nonimmigrants Residing in the United States: Fiscal Year 2016," U.S. Department of Homeland Security, March 2018, https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Nonimmigrant_Population%20Estimates_2016_0.pdf.
[4] "Nonimmigrant Population Estimates," Department of Homeland Security, June 6, 2019, https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/population-estimates/NI.
[5] Baker, "Nonimmigrants Residing in the United States: Fiscal Year 2016." Out of 2,300,000 resident nonimmigrants in the United States in 2016, 61% have Asian citizenship. Among the classes of admission, temporary workers made up 48% and students made up 38% of the total resident nonimmigrant population. Within each class of admission, Asians comprised 55% of total temporary workers and 77% of total students.

this paper, I would like to use the term "Asian nonimmigrant" to mean this specific sub-population of nonimmigrants.

In comparison to Asian nonimmigrants as defined above, "Asian Americans" refers to Asian bodies who have the legal status of a U.S. citizen or permanent residency, whether they are immigrants or U.S.- born. The resources and representations that are associated with American citizenship are critical in the discussion about the discrepancies between legal statuses as part of intersectional racism.

This focus on Asian nonimmigrants in this paper does not aim to undermine the varying degrees of struggles faced by Asian Americans, Asian immigrants with and without legal statuses, or certain other classes of nonimmigrants who are less associated with residency, such as tourists and business travelers.[6] Rather, I would like to explore the racism discussion from the specific "in-between" position of the Asian resident nonimmigrant population: legally staying in the United States, undergoing Asian racialization and stigmatization, yet institutionally lacking the resources available to their American counterparts and socially lacking the space to process racial discrimination among Asian Americans. It is due to the temporary nature of nonimmigrant visa statuses that Asian nonimmigrants are often excluded in American social discussions. This paper aims to initiate a conversation about immigration statuses as part of intersectional racism and introduce frameworks and languages to be applied to larger immigrant and nonimmigrant populations with other racial and ethnic identities.

"Intersectional racism" is an idea introduced by Black feminist scholar Kimberlé

[6] I acknowledge that these statuses can be changed over time, adding complexity to the role of immigrant statuses in the discussion of racism and interaction between minority groups. For instance, one can move from a legal resident nonimmigrant status to either legal or undocumented immigrant status, although there are barriers associated with immigrant visas and U.S. citizenship applications such as high cost and bureaucratic processes. Moreover, while beyond the scope of this paper, it is worth noting that even though I do not have certain resources as an American citizen, my background as an international student may have prepared me to integrate into American society more easily than some Asian Americans who are limited by language and cultural barriers. In other words, legal status alone cannot fully include the intersectionality of the Asian experience.

Williams Crenshaw. It refers to the framework that describes how multiple aspects of one's social identity, such as class, gender, and sexuality, can combine to form one's complex experience with racial discrimination and privilege.[7] In her original article, Crenshaw proposes that Black women experience a mode of oppression that cannot be characterized by racism or sexism alone, but is instead connected to an intersection of both power systems.[8] Similarly, this paper argues for legal status as part of intersectional racism. This does not mean that racist perception differentiates between legal statuses; rather, there is a difference in discrimination associated with legal status that contributes to the complexity of racism experienced by Asian resident nonimmigrants.

Language and the Space of Discrimination

The history of colonization, slavery, and immigration has made the United States home to various racial, cultural, and social identities. At the same time, the heterogeneity of its population has also been met with a counteracting force to maintain the dominant homogeneous culture that is the white/Anglo American, giving rise to discussions about racism in the country. These discussions have since become the framework to describe a person's experience with discrimination against certain races or origins, and consequently, provided them with the tools to fight the same modes of oppression. Asian nonimmigrants experience both anti-Asian racial discrimination in the U.S. and the limitations imposed on them by the immigration system; combined, they create a complex mode of discrimination against Asian nonimmigrant people. When the media and public discussions continue to view anti-Asian as an American-only

[7] Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," University of Chicago Legal Forum 1989 no. 1 (1989): 140.
[8] Ibid.

problem, the necessary language and space to fully understand their racialization will not be available to Asian nonimmigrants to discuss their experience as Asian bodies.

First, despite being perceived as Asian and subjected to anti-Asian treatment, Asian nonimmigrants are often overlooked and excluded from discussions about racism in the U.S. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in heightened anti-Asian sentiment in the United States as President Trump dubbed the disease the "Chinese Virus" and "kung-flu," posing many dangers to many Asian-owned businesses, Asian-owned properties, and especially Asian bodies.[9] Nonetheless, news coverage regarding the issue, such as the CBS News article "2,120 Hate Incidents against Asian Americans reported during coronavirus pandemic" by Erin Donaghue provided little to no representation of Asian people who were staying in the U.S. for their education or jobs and were experiencing the same risks as their American citizen counterparts.[10] Similarly, the Stop AAPI (Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders) Hate Report—a self-reporting tool that serves as "the leading aggregator of anti-Asian hate incidents" and thus a widely-used source for news reporting on such issues—also subsumes any experience with anti-Asian racism as those of Asian Americans.[11] Asian nonimmigrants also face the same discrimination as Asian Americans, yet this population was deemed invisible and unable to talk about their experience with racial discrimination neither through public news reports nor self-report.

Why can one not subsume the experience of Asian nonimmigrants under those of Asian Americans? This is because Asian nonimmigrants, on a daily basis, have to navigate the limitations of their legal status that place them secondary to American citizens. For instance,

[9] Deb Riechmann and Terry Tang, "Trump Dubs COVID-19 'Chinese Virus' Despite Hate Crime Risks." U.S. News, March 18, 2020, https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2020-03-18/trump-dubs-covid-19-chinese-virus-despite-hate-crime-risks.
[10] Erin Donaghue, "2,120 Hate Incidents against Asian Americans Reported during Coronavirus Pandemic," CBS News, July 2, 2020, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/anti-asian-american-hate-incidents-up-racism/.
[11] "About," STOP AAPI HATE - ABOUT, 2020, https://stopaapihate.org/about/.

international students under the F-1 visa do not have as many opportunities to legally finance their education and accommodations in the United States compared to their American peers. Despite contributing about $38.7 billion and providing approximately 416,000 jobs to the U.S. economy during the 2019–2020 academic year alone, international students do not have access to financial support from the federal and state government, which comprises 63% of all financial aid for undergraduate students in 2020 and is available to almost exclusively U.S. citizens.[12] F-1 visa holders are also not allowed to have off-campus jobs; instead, they can only work on-campus jobs, many of which are only offered to students with federal work study and have a 20-hour work week limit. Practical training for internship and employment post-graduation like Optional Practical Training (OPT) and Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is available only if the student applies to jobs directly relevant to their major, limiting their opportunity to experience different career fields. Additionally, the bureaucratic process of sponsoring international students for temporary employment visas deters many companies from providing these students with job opportunities. A study from the National Association of Colleges and Employers shows that only 30.4% of employer respondents intend to hire international students in 2020 (National Association of Colleges and Employers 2020). While these policies may have been put in place to avoid abusing the student visa, restricting a student's ability to afford to live in the country and to learn beyond the classroom only discriminates against international students and perpetrates the nonimmigrant position as secondary to U.S. citizens.

As discussed above, Asian nonimmigrants have to navigate living in the U.S. as both

[12] Jason Baumgartner, "NAFSA International Student Economic Value Tool," NAFSA International Student Economic Value Tool, November 2020, https://www.nafsa.org/policy-and-advocacy/policy-resources/nafsa-international-student economic-value-tool-v2. Jennifer Ma, Matea Pender, and CJ Libassi, "Trends in College Pricing and Student Aid 2020," CollegeBoard, 2020, https://research.collegeboard.org/pdf/trends-college-pricing-student-aid-2020.pdf.
Out of 183.8 billion US dollars of financial aid for undergraduate students for 2019-2020, only 37% are non-government, private and institutional grants and yet, a majority is not targeted towards international students.

Asian bodies and nonimmigrants. In combination, the two identities create a specific mode of discrimination that could be described as "intersectional," as illustrated by the international student ban. On July 6, 2020, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) released an announcement about the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) modifications regarding F-1 students staying in the United States during the Fall 2020 semester. Chief among these modifications was the ruling that students whose school operates fully online would not allowed to enter nor stay in the United States. That is, if a school decided to move to a fully online format to protect student and staff safety during the pandemic, international students currently in the United States would have to either transfer to another school with in-person classes, return to their home country, or face the possibility of deportation.[13] ICE and SEVP claimed that these changes were enacted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, but it is evident that the safety of international students was not valued in this decision-making process. Specifically, the guidance required international students to either attend in-person classes and increase their risk of contracting COVID, or to return home and put themselves (and their countries) at high-risk for COVID by traveling internationally. While such policies may not appear motivated by racial discrimination, the majority of international students are Asian students who have already been affected by increased anti-Asian racism in the United States since the start of the pandemic.[14] The announcement is consistent with the racist narrative in the U.S. that blames the pandemic on Asian bodies and foreign bodies. Nonetheless, this interaction between nonimmigrant and Asian identities was never recognized in public spaces and discussions that are designed exclusively for Asian Americans. Asian nonimmigrants are institutionally placed secondary to Asian Americans,

[13] "SEVP Modifies Temporary Exemptions for Nonimmigrant Students Taking Online Courses during Fall 2020 Semester," ICE, July 6, 2020, https://www.ice.gov/news/releases/sevp-modifies-temporary-exemptions-nonimmigrant-students-taking-online-courses-during.
[14] Baker, "Nonimmigrants Residing in the United States: Fiscal Year 2016."

even though both populations are racially stigmatized. As a result, Asian nonimmigrants, residing at the intersection of both modes of discrimination, lack the critical space to process their unique in-between experiences.[15]

Identities, Racialization, and the False Dichotomy of Authenticity

The lack of space to navigate one's identity also plays out psychologically within the Asian nonimmigrant individual, preventing them from developing a sense of an authentic self. I propose following Emily S. Lee's argument in her article "The Ambiguous Practices of the Inauthentic Asian American Woman" about the perception of the model minority myth, which traps Asian American women in dichotomous inauthenticity regarding class and culture. Lee's framework is helpful for describing how the "in-between" position of Asian nonimmigrants puts them in a false dichotomy of identity and creates an internal conflict that prevents them from processing their racialization.

First, the relationship between self and group identity gives rise to authenticity—one's identification with their "self," their actions, and their perceptions. This is true for both the Asian American women in Lee's discussion and the Asian nonimmigrants in this paper. Specifically, one's identity and sense of authenticity, instead of being static, actually relies on constant negotiation with others' identities and the group identity. The member can then exercise their agency to achieve their authenticity by participating in the development of the

[15] One time, I was walking out of my campus' library when I overheard a group of white female students talking to each other. One of them complained that she no longer enjoyed working in the library because "there were too many international students." I realized that she could not perceive people's legal statuses (as an international student myself, I have been told that people could not tell from my English accent), but that she meant the groups of Asian students openly talking in their native language, which were the majority of people in the library at that time. The association between the two identities, Asian and foreign, is real and the interactions between their respective modes of discrimination characterize the Asian nonimmigrants' experiences, which are not often openly discussed.

group identity.[16] However, in minority groups such as the Asian community, this agency is taken away. Instead, the group's identity is overdefined by the external, dominant culture and its members' identities are reduced to being indistinguishable from the group's identity (Lee 2014, 149). In other words, one's sense of authenticity is dependent on the overdetermination of their minority group.

In Lee's paper, this argument was used to demonstrate how the model minority myth traps Asian American women in a false dichotomy where they can never be authentic. The "model minority myth" is the misinformed notion that "lifestyle patterns and cultural values of some racial minority group (Asian) are more conducive to successful integration into the mainstream U.S. economy than those of other groups (African Americans and Latinos)."[17] Employingthis perception from the dominant society, Asian Americans are associated with easy economic and social advancement. In reality, such advancement often requires one to assimilate into the dominant white/Anglo culture and away from their own minority culture. Since there is no separation between a minority group identity and its member's identity, the internalized cultural and class depictions of the Asian minority group identity trap Asian American women in dichotomous inauthenticity. They can either choose not to assimilate into the dominant culture—live in poverty, stay true culturally—but still be considered inauthentic by the model minority's class criterion, or they can assimilate, satisfy the model minority myth, while inauthentically representing their culture (Lee 2014, 153-154).

How authenticity arises from individual and group identities, as well as how the external perceptions of a minority group can render its members dichotomously inauthentic, can be

[16] Emily S. Lee, "The Ambiguous Practices of the Inauthentic Asian American Woman," *Hypatia* 29, no. 1 (January 1, 2014): 148. https://doi.org/10.1111/hypa.12070.
[17] Maxine Baca Zinn, Bonnie Thornton Dill, and Karen J Hossfeld, "Hiring Immigrant Women: Silicon Valley's 'Simple Formula,'" in *Women of Color in U.S. Society* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1994), 65-93, 70.

applied to describe the "in-between" space the Asian nonimmigrant population occupies. For Asian nonimmigrants coming from predominantly Asian countries, the Asian identity is not inherent but instead obtained through the process of migration to a more racially heterogeneous community such as the United States.[18] These bodies become racialized from their experience with racism in the American context, and the Asian identity arises as part of their authenticity. This shift in one's racial relations with others puts Asian nonimmigrants in an "in-between" position, where they might struggle to reconcile their contradicting racial identity as the dominant group in one setting but a minority group in another.

This position is different from that of Asian Americans who grow up in Asian-dominant communities in the U.S. in that Asian as a social determinant exists in the latter community and not the former. In other words, since being Asian is considered a divergence from the dominant white culture in the U.S., Asian communities in the country face issues such as lack of representation in education and media, lack of funding, and lack of economic opportunities. One who grows up as Asian American may therefore become aware of its limitations in the bigger political structure, while Asian nonimmigrants growing up in Asian countries may be aware of other races, but not of race as a social determinant.

As a result, the racialization of Asian nonimmigrants creates a sense of self that is fragmented between one's identity in their native country and their internalized experience of racial discrimination in the United States.[19] It is important to note that these contradictions play out psychologically within oneself rather than in social spaces. Concurrently, they might

[18] This identification does not include Asian bodies who were born and raised in a racially heterogenous communities before moving to the U.S. Despite being beyond the scope of this paper, such a shift, to which I could not speak for, would further demonstrate one's complex relationship with race outside of being an American problem.
[19] Mariana Ortega, "Multiplicity, Inbetweeness, and the Question of Assimilation," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 46, no. S1 (2008): 65-80, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2041-6962.2008.tb00154.x.

develop the need for a community that shares their racial experiences to make sense of this sudden identity shift. Now as a member of a minority group, they might develop the need to align their experience with the experience of the Asian American community to define their authentic self.

Ann Ferguson, philosopher and professor of feminist theory, goes one step further and claims that when similarly discriminated against, identification with the minority group experience should not only be a circumstantial result of moving between cultures, but also a political duty.[20] Specifically, Ferguson applies Tommie Shelby's "thin conception of blackness"[21] to argue for the responsibility of solidarity with those who are similarly discriminated against by their observable characteristics or their ancestry.[22] This "thin conception" of race is defined not by how an individual perceives themselves racially, but by how they are perceived by others and treated accordingly. Following Shelby's argument, Ferguson argues that the thin identity provides one with insights into the racist structures and with a pragmatic position to lead the struggle against racism, and as a result, she has a special responsibility to solidarity with those who are discriminated likewise.[23] According to Ferguson, I, a nonimmigrant, have the obligation to identify in solidarity with Asian Americans because of my experience with anti-Asian racism in the U.S., despite not being an American nor ever having actively adopted an Asian identity in Vietnam.

As discussed above, the lack of public space to discuss anti-Asian racism from a nonimmigrant perspective, the need for community to process one's racial experiences, and the

[20] Ann Ferguson, "Multiplicitous Subjectivity and the Problem of Assimilation," *The Southern journal of philosophy* 46, no. S1 (2008): 85.
[21] Tommie Shelby, *We who are dark: The philosophical foundations of black solidarity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 208-209.
[22] Ferguson, "Multiplicitous Subjectivity," 85.
[23] Ferguson, "Multiplicitous Subjectivity," 86.

responsibility to identify with those who are similarly discriminated against all tie Asian nonimmigrants to the Asian American community. Not only is anti-Asian racism in the United States portrayed as an exclusively American problem, but nonimmigrants are positioned as secondary compared to American citizens—such an association renders the Asian nonimmigrant dichotomously inauthentic.

Before coming to the United States, I was brought up in Vietnam unaware of my racial identity; despite acknowledging it as a problem, I had always viewed racism as a distant global issue. The shock that came with moving to the U.S. extended beyond the change in external environment and into my internal perception as I struggled to navigate my old and new identities. On one hand, I was constantly reminded of my position as an international student and my origin as a Vietnamese. My name and accent became objects of judgment. I have come to accept that there are many educational opportunities unavailable to me, regardless of my abilities and effort, due to my nonimmigrant status.[24] More often than not, jobs, research positions, and scholarships are only open for U.S. citizens and permanent residents. On the other hand, as an Asian body, I have experienced anti-Asian racism firsthand, as well as the struggle to fight against it in the United States. Especially during the pandemic, I have felt the fear of being the next victim of a hate crime when I am in public. Yet, I also learned that the fight against anti-Asian racism does not acknowledge other foreign nationals in the United States. The Asian community here is founded upon the experience of immigrants and U.S.-born citizens who call the country their permanent home. It feels as if my identity as a Vietnamese international student is simultaneously reminded and ignored.

Within this framework, I can choose to identify with the American experience and be

[24] In one instance, I had an employer refuse to talk to me at the career fair before looking at my resume because "We do not hire international students."

authentic to my racial experience but inauthentic to my country of origin. Alternatively, I can be authentic to my experience as a nonimmigrant in the United States and hold on to my identity as Vietnamese, but not have the means to be Asian nor talk about the Asian experience in the American context. What does it mean to have to choose between my identities as a nonimmigrant and as an Asian body to discuss discrimination in the U.S.? While my experience is not representative of all Asian nonimmigrant experiences, both options introduce conflict in developing a sense of authenticity within the Asian nonimmigrant population. Regarding this narrative of discrimination in the United States, I cannot be authentic to my experience as a Vietnamese nonimmigrant nor an Asian body. I am both an outsider to the United States and an insider to its racism.

The Resistant Perceivers and the Culturally Homeless

In previous sections, I have discussed how Asian nonimmigrants are unable to process their anti-Asian experiences in the public space and personal psychological space. In this section, I explore the lack of space for Asian nonimmigrants even within the Asian community in the United States. In particular, I am interested in understanding the interaction between Asian Americans and Asian nonimmigrants in the struggle against racism through concepts developed by María Lugones. In "Boomerang Perception and the Colonizing Gaze: Ginger Reflections on Horizontal Hostility," Lugones sets out to analyze the mechanism by which members of a minority group uphold the boundaries of their community legitimacy and exclude others. In addition, the author questions how the expansion of these boundaries affects the struggle against oppression.

To visualize the dynamics within racial resistance, Lugones proposes the concept of

two subpopulations making up a racial minority group: a "core" people of color who make up the group identity and are "[s]olidly tied to a group of one's ethnicity and race by blood and culture and shared history and traditions" and "the culturally homeless" whose complex identity does not fit easily into the former group.[25] In the application of this paper, Asian Americans would fit the description of the core people of color, having a shared American cultural savviness and immigrant family history. Consequently, Asian nonimmigrants would be the culturally homeless whose nonimmigrant experiences complicate the Asian experience in the U.S.

In the same argument, Lugones also explains the mechanism of racism both groups have to suffer via the idea of the racist perception: the white dominant oppressor as the racist perceiver and the person of color as the object of racist perception. In other words, racist perceptions are imposed upon people of color by the dominant white culture to justify and maintain white superiority. Within this dynamic, the objects of the racist perception are dependent on the perceivers while the perceivers are separated from their objects.[26] This is consistent with Lee's argument in the previous section about the minority group identity being overdetermined by the external dominant group and their members' agency to define themselves being taken away. To escape such limitations on their subjectivity, the need for the development of an alternative resistant perception is apparent for survival.[27] It is important to point out that since both groups are similarly racially stigmatized, Lugones would argue that this resistant perception is not only important to Asian Americans but to Asian nonimmigrants as well.

[25] Maria Lugones, "CHAPTER SEVEN - Boomerang Perception and the Colonizing Gaze: Ginger Reflections on Horizontal Hostility," in *Pilgrimages / Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition against Multiple Oppressions* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 120–30.
[26] Lugones, "Boomerang Perception," 125.
Elizabeth Spelman, *Inessential Woman* (Boston: Beacon, 1998), 12.
[27] Lugones, "Boomerang Perception," 126.

However, since the resistant perception is a reaction to the original racist perception, its meanings often fail to consider more marginalized groups within communities of color, such as LGBTQ+ people of color or disabled people of color. This is because such meanings are easier to uphold.[28] As such, the core people of color (those who may not be marginalized based on other identities) have, in a way, presupposed the dichotomy of racist versus resistant perception, upheld the inflexible boundaries of their community, and excluded the diverging, complex experiences of the cultural homeless in the process. Not only does this cause conflicts among people of color, but it also takes away the subjectivity of those who do not belong or have a perception of their own. Lugones would claim that it is the internalization of racism that makes core people of color, such as Asian Americans, see the others, such as Asian nonimmigrants, with the perception of the oppressor.[29] Specifically, Asian nonimmigrants are perceived as dependent on but separated from Asian Americans, leaving nonimmigrants invisible and unable to develop an alternate resistant perception to the racist/colonial gaze. Lugones's framework explains how the position of a nonimmigrant prevents one from developing their subjectivity within a racial minority group because of the discrimination perpetrated by Asian Americans from internalized racism–the conscious or subconscious acceptance of the racial hierarchy that places them inferior to white/Anglo Americans.

One might then question whether this exclusion is the correct strategy to resist racial discrimination in the United States and what role Asian nonimmigrants play in this resistance. Lugones believes that the inclusion of the "culturally homeless" into the minority social and resistant circle would not only maintain the resistant perception but also expand it to form a

[28] Lugones, "Boomerang Perception," 126.
[29] Lugones, "Boomerang Perception," 127.

larger, more complex perception that avoids fragmentation.[30] In other words, including the diversity of nonimmigrant and immigrant experiences in the Asian struggle in the United States would allow for the recognition of other intersectional identities within the Asian subjectivity as well as the development of individual and group authenticity. Recalling Lee's argument about the participation of members' identities in resisting the overdetermination of the group identity, an inclusive Asian community would be able to redefine itself from the racist/colonial perception with the resistant perception that is "more open to and knowledgeable in other resistant logics, and benefit from the complex exchanges" .[31] Through this idea, I can actively participate in the Asian resistance struggle in the U.S. by contributing my Asian nonimmigrant/international student perspective that enriches the collective understanding of different modes of discrimination. As we each claim the space to be our fully authentic Asian selves with all of our intersectional identities, we can create a complex collective Asian subjectivity that is liberated from the racist external perception.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued that Asian nonimmigrants have little space and language to process their experience with discrimination and to develop their authentic subjectivity in the discussion about racism in the United States. This lack of space plays out externally in public discussion, internally in the development of one's authenticity, and through the exclusion from Asian subjectivity. First, the interconnection of Asian and nonimmigrant identities is not publicly recognized, as demonstrated by media representations of anti-Asian sentiment and legal restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Second, the association of Asian nonimmigrants

[30] Lugones, "Boomerang Perception," 128.
[31] Lugones, "Boomerang Perception," 129.

with the Asian American experience traps them dichotomously inauthentic through Emily S. Lee's framework. Third, María Lugones's framework illustrates the way in which Asian nonimmigrants are put under oppressive perceptions by Asian Americans due to the latter's internalization of racism. In this paper, legal classifications per the American immigration systems demonstrate that discrimination exists among lawful bodies. From here, it is crucial to acknowledge the role of legal status as part of the intersectionality in the Asian struggle to fight racism. The paper aims to provide the space and language to describe the Asian nonimmigrant experience. While there has been past exploration of the complex relationship between racial identity and international students in higher education research,[32] the language provided in my argument introduces a broader outlook that is more inclusive to immigrant and nonimmigrant status within discourses about stigmatization against racial and ethnic minority groups in the United States.

[32] Sharon Fries-Britt, Chrystal A. George Mwangi, and Alicia M. Peralta, "Learning Race in a U.S. Context: An Emergent Framework on the Perceptions of Race among Foreign Born Students of Color.," *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education* 7, no. 1 (2014): pp. 1-13, https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035636 Nilanjana Bardhan and Bin Zhang, "A Post/Decolonial View of Race and Identity Through the Narratives of U.S. International Students from the Global South," *Communication Quarterly* 65, no. 3 (2016): pp. 285- 306, https://doi.org/10.1080/01463373.2016.1237981; Jenny J. Lee and Charles Rice, "Welcome to America? International Student Perceptions of Discrimination," *Higher Education* 53, no. 3 (2007): pp. 381-409, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-005-4508-3.

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