

Going Beyond the (Un)awakened Body: Arts-Based Collaborative Autoethnographic Inquiry of Korean Doctoral Students in the United States

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ABSTRACT

Three Korean female doctoral students studying at U.S. higher education institutions address our lived experiences in this paper. By drawing on Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Asian Critical Theory (AsianCrit), we reflected upon the feelings and experiences that we swallowed to survive. We used collaborative autoethnography with artistic methods, such as digital collage and poetry, to share how we have wrestled with feelings of shame when reckoning our embodied knowledge of race and racism. Using CRT and AsianCrit, we disrupted racial stereotypes regarding Asians and their invisibility in racial discourses. We end with suggestions for providing support to Asian international students exploring racialized discourse and positioning themselves as qualified professionals and political agents. In sharing our stories, we hope to illuminate lived experiences that have been neglected, misunderstood, silenced, and forgotten.

Keywords: Korean international doctoral students, Asian Critical Theory (AsianCrit), arts-based inquiry, collaborative autoethnography, Critical Race Theory (CRT)

This paper aims to speak out and take action against systemic racism by examining the feelings and experiences of three Korean female doctoral students

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in U.S. higher education institutions. Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the significant increase in anti-Asian incidents urged us to break our silence on systemic racism and prevent the “passing over into forgetting” of such events (Hong, 2020, p. 165).

The real stories of Asians’ racialized experiences in the United States have been silenced (Kim, 2020). Past studies have thoroughly examined the experience of international doctoral students in Western higher education institutions but have mainly reported on challenges that international students encounter: a language barrier (Adebayo & Allen, 2020; Anandavalli et al., 2021; Bui, 2021; Kim, 2020; Xu & Hu, 2020), cultural differences (Adebayo & Allen, 2020; Anandavalli et al., 2021; Bui, 2021), pressure to acculturate (Campbell, 2015; Koo, Baker, et al., 2021), a lack of social support (Koo, Nyunt, et al., 2021; Sullivan & Kashubeck-West, 2015), and psychological distress (Koo, Kim, et al., 2021; Li, 2016; Lin, 2021; Mitchell et al., 2017).

However, few studies underpin how race and racial discourse impact the lived experiences of international students (Buckner et al., 2021; Hernandez, 2021; Lee & Rice, 2007), especially students coming from Asia. Thus, there is a growing need to highlight Asian international students’ racialized experiences and how they interrogate and navigate racist discourse to (re)position themselves. We center our lived experiences to acknowledge how racism operates among Asian international students. Through our work, we show that international students are capable of responding to race-related issues. By focusing on the racialized experience of Korean female international doctoral students, this autoethnographic paper will make our experiences visible within racial discourse.

Racism against Asians is distinct from racism against other minoritized people of color (Li & Nicholson, 2021). However, the everyday discourse on Asians in the United States often describes a superior foreigner (Kim, 1999) because Asians are seen as an academically and financially successful ethnic group (Chang, 1993; Kim, 1998). The COVID-19 pandemic further complicated the racialized discourse against Asian international students (Koo, 2021b; Koo, Yao, et al., 2021). Not only has the disease been called a “Chinese virus,” but Asian international students are also often viewed as Other, which invokes the “colonial imagery of the Yellow Peril and the racist trope of the ‘perpetual foreigner’” (Susptsyna, 2021, p.57).

Our paper recounts how three South Korean female international doctoral students have wrestled with feelings of shame when reckoning their embodied knowledge of racism and race through an arts-based collaborative autoethnographic inquiry process. Reflections from this collaborative autoethnographic inquiry open up a dialogic space to unearth our shameful and thus buried feelings. Hong (2020) articulated shame as a political feeling that we bury to survive when we face social structures of domination and oppression. We feel shame when we are being dishonored and also when we see ourselves as unable to protect other beloved Asians from racism in everyday life. Our paper shows how we can use shame as a motivation for change to better ourselves, our community, and society.

We not only highlight the challenges that we experienced but also position ourselves as active agents who can confront racism. We intentionally resist identifying ourselves as minoritized bodies who suffer from racial discrimination. Instead, we go beyond static mythical images of Asians as model minorities or perpetual foreigners. Through sharing our stories, we hope Asian international students can begin to create a conversation where even those with different experiences can find commonalities and build solidarity.

We first provide an overview of the theoretical concepts underpinning our study. Next, we present our methodological approach, autoethnography, using artistic methods. A digital collage and poems we jointly created are presented as findings. Our discussion analyzes our experiences, using Critical Race Theory and Asian Critical Theory to examine how racialized discourse impacts our daily lives and positions and to compare these findings to previous scholarship. We then conclude by suggesting practical and methodological implications. Sharing our stories gives voice to lived experiences that have been neglected, misunderstood, and silenced.

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

We use Critical Race Theory (CRT) to critically reflect on our daily lives. CRT, which initially stemmed from legal studies, has been widely used as a framework to theorize how systemic racial oppression shapes social institutions (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015). One of the key tenets of CRT that guided our reflections is the notion that racism is a normalized aspect of daily life in the United States (Delgado, 1995). CRT has been widely used as a theoretical framework to challenge “the dominant discourse on race and racism as it relates to education by examining how educational theory and practice are used to subordinate certain racial and ethnic groups” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 2). Under the umbrella of CRT, our inquiry is further grounded in Asian Critical Theory (AsianCrit).

AsianCrit problematizes the pervasive tendency of ahistoricism, color-blindness, white meritocracy, and the Black-White binary in studying people of color’s racialized experiences (Chang, 1993). Chang (1993) argued that “Asian American history and the Asian American experience are unique and different from the history and experiences of other disempowered groups” (p. 1241). Thus, racial oppression among different minority groups should be explored based on their cultural and historical contexts. Although Asians also suffer from racialized oppression, Asians in the United States context have often been overlooked as they are regarded as a group that does not experience racial discrimination (Iftikar & Museum, 2018). We employ AsianCrit as a lens to understand Asian international students’ racial marginalization in daily life. Following the AsianCrit perspective, we focus on two prejudicial myths: the model minority and the perpetual foreigner.

The model minority myth is defined as “a white supremacist racial project that strategically frames Asian Americans as a universally successful racial group to maintain systems that enact differential forms of violence on all communities of color” (Yi et al., 2020, p.551). Although the model minority myth may seem to

be positive, the myth actually “benefits the White elite in the U.S. racial hierarchy” (Poon et al., 2016, p.473) by “discrediting one racially minoritized group’s real struggles with racial barriers and discrimination through the valorization of oversimplified stereotypes of another racially minoritized group” (p.474). The core point is that the myth inevitably justifies blaming the victim and denies the existence of systematic racism against Asians.

The “sense of foreignness” (Chang, 1993, p.1258) is also at the core of Asian Americans’ experiences in the United States (Wu, 2002). Saito (1997) explained that “the construct of foreignness, based more on what is perceived as not-American than on the realities of another nationality or culture, conflates the national and the international” (p. 80). This racial construction is also invented to uphold white supremacy along with the model minority myth (Kim, 1999; Kim, 1998). Ng et al. (2007) described the perpetual foreigner myth as “Whites constructing Asian Americans as foreign and Other” through “the process of civic ostracism” (p.96). As a result, Asians develop internalized racism (Trieu & Lee, 2018) by seeing themselves as Others who are not eligible and qualified Americans. In this paper, we employ the AsianCrit perspective to discuss Korean female international students’ experiences as an intersection of race, primary language, and foreigner status, which generates a “disqualified image” (Jang, 2017, p. 561).

In the understanding of AsianCrit scholars, these two prejudicial myths are considered hegemonic racial devices that reinforce white supremacy in the United States (Chang, 1993; Museus & Iftikhar, 2014). Drawing upon CRT and AsianCrit, this study analyzes how our personal moments and feelings are shaped by the hegemonic racial discourse and connect our individual experiences to a larger context.

METHOD

Autoethnography is a qualitative research method in which researchers collect, analyze, and interpret autobiographical stories while recalling their own experiences or those of others (Ellis et al., 2011; Hughes, 2008). Collaborative autoethnography (CAE) allows researchers to use multiple perspectives to interrogate their lived experiences within the larger society (Chang et al., 2013; Lapadat, 2017; Winkler, 2018). We, three Korean female doctoral students, interrogate our experiences as foreign-born women at US higher education institutions using CAE methodologies. The three authors shared several common identities. We were all born in South Korea and speak Korean as our first language and English as our second. We came to the United States to pursue Ph.D. degrees in education. We have been in the United States for less than seven years, holding student visas. We have all worked with preservice teachers as graduate lecturers or field supervisors in the United States. We also have professional teaching experience in our home country.

We integrated the arts-based inquiry method to make our stories more visible. Arts are useful research tools to show how social inequities, especially racism, operate through our bodies, feelings, and daily experiences (Finley, 2008).

Artistic methods complement conventional CAE because arts allow researchers to engage in creative and explicit meaning-making processes (Leavy, 2020). The art-making process itself of collaboratively creating collages and poetry is used to express feelings of shame and racialized experiences. Furthermore, the process requires cultivating both space and time to attend to nuanced and affective experiences. Thus, the final product of the arts-based inquiry allows marginalized voices and experiences that are usually ignored in traditional research methods to be heard (Guyotte et al., 2018).

Our study was inspired by our reading of *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning* (Hong, 2020) and our subsequent discussion of it in a virtual book club amidst COVID-19 and Asian hate crime incidents. After the virtual book club, we decided to meet once a week to explore what it meant to be(come) an Asian living in the United States. Over 4 months we had weekly meetings for 2-3 hours each through Zoom. While engaging in dialogues and discussions, we shared personal memories, narratives, and written accounts, which are acknowledged as legitimate forms of field or research text (Chang et al., 2013). After each meeting, we made brief notes about salient issues we discussed in Google docs so we could revisit our conversations. We discovered that we shared experiences of feeling ashamed for being ignorant about racism while finding ourselves in a minority position in the United States.

As a form of arts-based inquiry, we chose to make a collaborative collage (see Figure 1) using visuals and texts because collage is an excellent medium to make people think and see things differently (Leavy, 2020). Each author brought images representing our internalized racial bias and instances of daily discrimination that provoke shameful feelings. We discussed the stories embedded in those images. Then, we worked together to create a visual collage by juxtaposing images with text using Adobe Spark.

Next, we collaboratively composed two poems to reflect on our experiences as international students in the U.S. academy. We decided to write poems because poetry can elicit emotional reactions from readers and honor marginalized voices (Nichols et al., 2014). In order to create poems, as Lahman et al. (2019) suggested, we first chose several images to represent our experiences and then brainstormed some words that could describe those images. Then, we selected some words to create the poems. Specifically, we focused on two themes that emerged from our conversation: feeling ashamed and the sense of foreignness.

We acknowledge concerns regarding “relational ethics” (Ellis, 2007), which is the ethical responsibility researchers have toward other people they include in their autoethnographic narratives. To address those concerns, we decided to share our stories as one character, using the singular “I,” to protect the confidentiality of not only authors but also the other people who are in our stories (Leavy, 2020; Winkler, 2018). Collapsing stories into a single narrative can reduce the potential risks associated with sharing personal stories (Cortes Santiago et al., 2017). Besides, the multivocality of CAE enhances the trustworthiness of autoethnography as well as remediating ethical concerns related to the singularity of autoethnography from an individual perspective (Hernandez et al., 2017; Lapadat, 2017). In this CAE, the three authors’ multiple perspectives and

experiences provide “a scholarly space to hold up mirrors to each other in communal self-interrogation” (Chang et al., 2013, p.26).

FINDINGS

In the findings, we present our shared feelings of shame through the digital collage and poems that we collaboratively created. Through these works, we tried to understand and share our emotions and experiences related to racism and racial discourse. First, we discussed our shared experience of feeling ashamed and ignorant about race and racism by drawing on the model minority myth. Second, we discussed our shared experience of encountering a powerless and disqualified image of ourselves by utilizing the perpetual foreigner myth. We share our stories as one character to share collective memories, using the singular “I,” as explained in the method.

Trapped in Racialized Discourse: Becoming Asian in the United States

In the digital collage (Figure 1), the airplane represents the “fantasy” of the American dream before coming to the United States. I thought that America was a wonderland that established equity among diverse people through multicultural education. I believed America was a fair country where all people were respected regardless of where they came from - that was what I thought on the airplane to the United States. Back in Korea, I was a part of the main stream culture. I could be ignorant of racial categories that were directly related to skin color. Once I arrived in the United States, it was difficult to accept the fact that I was inevitably categorized as an Asian female and to understand what it really meant.



Figure 1: Trapped in Racialized Discourse

However, it did not take a long time to figure out what it meant to become an Asian female in the United States. The Asian girl at the center of Figure 1 came from the cover of a *TIME* magazine on August 31, 1989, titled “Those Asian-American Whiz Kids.” The image hinted at how Asians were perceived in mainstream society. As a graduate student studying education, I saw this whiz kid as the image that allowed the mainstream cultural group of people to accept my presence here in the United States - as a *polite, hardworking, and clever child* (Hong, 2020; Zhang, 2010).

One day I was at a national conference’s presidential address. The presenter introduced literacy research as white property, but also discussed how the literacy organization had made progress toward equity and how some scholars used their research to build an equitable flow of knowledge. It was quite an impressive speech and helped me to see the systemic inequity in education and academia as well as to consider how I could leverage my research to deconstruct the dominant discourse. After the speech, I had a casual conversation at dinner with some professors. One White female professor asked me what I thought about the presidential address. While I was organizing my thoughts to respond to her question, she said, “So we, White people, are always bad.” She said, “What do you think? Do you really think like her [the presenter of the conference]?” she asked somewhat naively. “Well...” I could not say anything. Her words struck me as a racist microaggression, but I just smiled timidly. Not just because of the power dynamics but because I did not want to make our conversation uncomfortable because of the racial issue. Then, I was silent and silenced.

As a response to her question, I indeed passively complied with my racial position as Asian, a race positioned beneath White people yet above Black people by being silent. I felt something was wrong but could not confront the White female professor because I just did not want to argue with her and hurt her feelings. Was it because she was a professor and I was a student? That incident lingered in my head for a long time. When I reflected on the conversation, I kept feeling powerless. The feeling of shame for not answering the question (or choosing not to answer the question) kept coming back to me, and I said to myself, “You are so stupid. You could have said something to her.” She might have thought that I did not know anything about racism because I smiled silently at her implicitly racist comments about the scholars and their work. It seemed that I was “safe” enough for her to blatantly reveal her whiteness (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

Powerless and Disqualified Image of Ourselves

The first poem is 수오지심(羞惡之心) [su-o-ji-sim], which means a *feeling of shame about one’s inability to fight against injustice*. It represents my feelings about witnessing daily racism and recognizing my limited response-ability. In my second year of teaching preservice teachers, I met Esther. She was my first Korean-American student, and I was also her first Korean teacher ever. Esther’s report on microaggressions in her field placement and the incidents themselves evoked my emotion. Hearing about her experience was when I started to think

seriously about “everyday racism” (Essed, 2008) against Asians. Esther critiqued the fact that she was treated unfairly and placed in a white-dominant field school with only White peers. Her comment has haunted me until now. I still feel shame that I could not help her in any other way than just being a good listener and reporting to my supervisor.

Poem 1: 수오지심(羞惡之心) [su-o-ji-sim]

Esther was my preservice student
a second-generation Asian American.
She reached out to me and asked for help.

Esther: I feel like I was *singled out* in my field placement.
I am the only person of color in my school.
This makes me feel uncomfortable.

When entering the school building,
I was asked to show my I.D. card,
but not White peers.

Also, my mentor...
makes less eye contact with me,
but not with White peers.
I feel like I am invisible in space.

But,
I don't want to cause any trouble. I want to keep staying in this placement.

Me: I am sorry.
That would be tough.
I will discuss it with my instructor.

I was mad. I was ashamed.
My response-ability was only showing empathy.
Empathy was not enough.
I wanted to protect her.

But,
I could not reach out to the placement officer.
I could not reach out to the mentor
to fix the problem.

I didn't want to cause any trouble.
I wanted her to keep staying in this placement.
I was afraid my actions would harm her.

My response-ability could not protect her.
Was it enough? Was it enough? Was it enough?

The first poem highlights my experience of not speaking out against racism and not being able to protect my fellow Asian. That was when I was not sure that I was qualified to take more action to deal with the incident. What else could I do to protect her? Was it not my responsibility to actively raise my voice? What was my role as an Asian female teacher educator? I just followed the university's protocol. I felt that "the rules are the way they [the institutions] are, and we cannot change them" (Kim, 2020, p. 502). I could not go beyond the rules. I questioned myself. What should I have done to protect her? Am I even qualified to raise my voice against racism?

I often hesitated to take action and speak out because of the "sense of foreignness" (Chang, 1993). My sense of foreignness resulted in my silence against everyday racism. Besides, ever since I came to the United States, I had witnessed racism not only in my daily life but also in the larger society. I saw the Black Lives Matter and the Stop Asian Hate movements. They were social movements that raised the voices of racially minoritized groups. "People of color" was a group where I (should) belong because I was identified as Asian. But there was always an inner resistance to agree with the protestors because I didn't belong here. I was not an American citizen. I was a foreigner, an alien resident. So, I tried to push that news away by drawing a line. That became the rationale to justify my reluctance to work for social justice. I was ashamed of being silenced.

Poem 2: Belittling "i"

an international doctoral student in the United States.
i will and need to prove my professionalism.

In the course evaluation, one student wrote

"English is her second language, makes for a tough class, as she often mispronounces words & cannot say other words."

Did my mother tongue make things difficult for you?

Swallow, swallow, swallow my pain, sorrow, shame on my tongue, my Korean tongue, my English tongue, my knowledge, my experiences, my feelings.

My broken English made me look non-professional.

My broken English made me into an image of students who is still learning.

i am a doctoral student who wishes to stay in academia.

i try to prove my intellectual knowledge and professionalism.

i need to show they are not FAKE.

i practice writing professional English. But,

Dang, i just became an elementary kid from a kindergartener.

i am a doctoral student who always needs editors, English native speakers.

Ms. so and so. Then i *willingly* give up my learnings from my motherland
How to teach
How to learn
How to be an expert.

i should adopt as quickly as i can what others *normally* do in this space ... but what is normal?

“Use sandwich strategy when you provide feedback to students.”

“Acknowledge an individual’s insight instead of summarizing the contents.”

“Use academic English, without any grammatical errors.”

Erasing all my figures rooted in the motherland.

No more i exist before i left my home.

Only i am who eager to be a *normal* American.

i was a doctoral student who wished to stay in academia.

i tried to prove my intellectual knowledge and professionalism.

I need to show they were not FAKE. But I also need to (RE)MEMBER they are not fake.

I want to be an active agent

who is a developing scholar with an accent

who brings diversity and inclusion in the institution

who brings a unique voice and perspective in academia.

As an international student, I struggled to learn the appropriate ways to become a professional here in U.S. academia. The self-assimilating process engendered mixed feelings, such as frustration, anger, anxiety, and humility. English language proficiency is considered the core criterion to evaluate one’s professionalism (Zheng & Samuel, 2017). My broken English often caused others to belittle my professional knowledge and expertise (Lin, 2021). There was a conflicted awareness of the desire to fit the mainstream image of a professional while feeling incapable of meeting the standard. Thus, I intentionally chose to use a lowercase “i” because speaking English made me feel tiny, incapable, and therefore only able to talk through an editor.

However, I argue that this monolingual, monocultural, and deficit perspective is problematic (Gutiérrez et al., 2009). By drawing on CRT, I can view myself as a qualified teacher educator who can speak more than two languages and bring diversity to academia. As teacher educators, our job is “to educate our preservice teachers to understand the dynamics of multiple cultural and linguistic diversities in educational contexts, preparing them to teach students with diverse racial and cultural backgrounds” (Jang, 2017, p.571). I believe that non-standardized

English does not interfere with my ability to teach and bring my cultural capital and knowledge to education.

In the next section, we will share our own interpretations of the findings, by drawing on two theoretical concepts, the model minority myth and the perpetual foreigner myth, and connecting the findings to the literature.

DISCUSSION

Our study examines how Korean female international students respond to and navigate racist narratives, employing CRT and AsianCrit theoretical frameworks. The theoretical concepts of the model minority and perpetual foreigner and the arts-based collaborative autoethnographic approach allow us to interrogate our racialized experiences and the systems of oppression that create our shared shame.

This study shows that we inadvertently secure whiteness when silent and ignorant of racial issues. By drawing on CRT and AsianCrit, we acknowledged that our silence about racism in our daily lives was in compliance with the model minority stereotype, thereby legitimizing racism. Iftikar and Museus (2018) stated that “the model minority stereotype suggests that Asian Americans are universally successful and do not face racial challenges” (p.937). Asians are often positioned as if they are not minorities but rather the same as privileged Whites (Kim, 1998). Unfortunately, this model minority myth is being used to defend whiteness by differentiating Asians from other racially minoritized groups, weakening our alliance in disrupting the racial hierarchy (Poon et al., 2016). Our findings indicate that our daily silence toward racism can cooperate in justifying discrimination. Racism is how individuals are socially positioned in a power structure, and it is historically embedded in our everyday lives (Delgado & Stefanic, 2020). We feel shame because we are trapped in the mythical racialized discourse, and thus our silence contributes to racism.

Both poems portray our shameful memories of (in)voluntarily complying with the perpetual foreigner myth, resulting in us devaluing ourselves as powerless and unqualified. We found that our sense of foreignness positioned us as outsiders whose voices were not heard and who had difficulty negotiating standards or given institution rules. In accordance with our findings, previous studies have demonstrated that international students’ (non)belonging stemming from non-citizenship status made it hard for them to protect their rights (Tran & Hoang, 2020). As in Kim’s (2020) story of her experience as a Korean international scholar, we doubted our ability to raise our voices to change institutionalized regulations or the unfair treatment of Asian students.

Moreover, our professional competencies were often overlooked due to language barriers. This is similar to M. Li (2016), and Sterzuk (2015), who found that international students often encounter disconnected feelings in a monolingual English-centric environment. The stigmatized “language learner marker” (p. 58) contributes to a disqualified image of international students of color in U.S. higher education because of native-speaker norms of English that focus on the notion of correctness (Cortes Santiago et al., 2017). Hence, we constructed our self-images as foreigners under the notion of correctness and standard English. Shuck (2006)

said that “language and race are closely linked as a means of distinguishing Self from Other” (p. 259). As our language was layered with our racial identity, we inevitably positioned ourselves as outsiders who were ignorant of the dominant U.S. cultural norms. However, we repositioned ourselves through our collaborative work as experts who can bring “dynamics of multiple cultural and linguistic diversities in educational contexts” (Jang, 2017, p.571).

Implications

This collaborative autoethnographic study has implications for understanding the racialized experience of Korean female international students in U.S. higher education. Our work advances the understanding of how the U.S. racial hierarchy involves and impacts Asian international students. Few studies on international students have addressed race-related issues (Hernandez, 2021). However, our stories show that racism is not an issue bounded by citizenship or nationality. Asian international students are subjected to racism every day (Koo, 2021a; Koo, 2021b). Racism should therefore be treated as our issue regardless of citizenship.

We found that Asian international students need support to understand and navigate racialized discourse and position themselves as qualified professionals and political agents. Through support from institutions, mentors, and peers, they can realize that monolingual, monocultural, and deficit perspectives are problematic (Gutiérrez et al., 2009). Also, Asian international students need more opportunities to debunk what it means to become Asian in the United States. They must critically examine their position as political agents and professionals who can speak multiple languages and contribute significant cultural capital and diversity to society.

In addition, this research contributes to the growing need for non-traditional methods of inquiry (Leavy, 2020). Digital collages and poems allowed us to share and examine our feelings of shame concerning the racism we experienced. Using this non-traditional method, we could capture ambiguously racialized moments in the everyday life of an Asian international student in the United States. We believe that the stories presented in this study can inspire more scholars to use arts-based autoethnography as a way to reveal silenced feelings generated by social inequity in daily life (Finley, 2008).

This study has limited scope and generalizability as do all qualitative research studies. As a response to previous research investigating unique experiences of individuals from a specific country or culture (Koo, Kim, et al., 2021), this study mainly focuses on the experiences of three Korean female international doctoral students in U.S. higher education institutions located in different states. Another potential concern is the unintentional disclosure of personal details and observations of others. While we carefully advocate “relational ethics” (Ellis, 2007) by employing multiple perspectives and arts, we could not receive consent from all the people we met in the past. Furthermore, this study may include researchers’ unconscious bias in interpreting others’ words (Lapadat, 2017).

Nevertheless, we argue that it is important to create spaces for sharing our stories and building solidarity. In sharing our racialized experience, we open a

dialogue about biases and unfair treatment of marginalized racial groups. Our work encourages people to question pervasive myths about Asians in general and Korean international students in particular. We also invite readers to interrogate how systematic oppression operates in their daily lives. International students' invisibility in the discourse of race-related issues should be acknowledged and understood in the context of systemic oppression. Ignorance or silence toward racism should not be regarded as an individual's responsibility.

CONCLUSION

Using Critical Race Theory and AsianCrit, this arts-based collaborative autoethnography enables us to critically reflect upon the feelings and experiences we have swallowed to survive in U.S. higher education. Through a reflection on shameful memories, this paper describes how international students experience and witness racism on a daily basis.

Previous literature has shown that international students of color in higher education experience racial stereotypes and layered challenges “based on [their] English abilities as a second language, their different cultural backgrounds, their disparities in appearance” (Lin, 2021, p. 646). CRT and AsianCrit taught us that racism shapes the lives of Asians; the “U.S. racial hierarchy” (Poon et al., 2016, p.473) guides what it means to become Asian in the United States. We realized that we unconsciously employed racial stereotypes of Asians – the model minority and the perpetual foreigner – to locate ourselves in this white-dominant society. CRT and AsianCrit further taught us that we need to think critically about our position as Asians in order not to secure whiteness.

Lastly, we would like to end our paper by sharing our ongoing process to awaken our ignorance and resist internalized racism based on this collaborative autoethnography. We are currently designing the website *Asian International Students' Guide to Surviving in Academia Without Losing Yourself*. We believe that, because we are community members of a global society where racialized discourse is hovering, it is our responsibility to deeply ponder racism through this virtual space. On the website, we will provide spaces where we continuously interrogate and reflect on our (un)awareness of racism and its destructive impact on our self-image. Through this space, we hope to build a supportive community to share how international students can successfully employ the assets they bring from their heritage.

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