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Re-Examining Fries-Britt's *Learning Race in a U.S. Context* Emergent Framework Drawing on the Micro-Level Narratives of International Students in the US

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Abstract

Fries-Britt et al.'s (2014) Learning Race in a U.S. Context (LRUSC) emergent framework holds significant prominence in international student literature as the pioneering framework to theorize perceptions of race and responses to racialized experiences among college students of color born and raised outside of the US. This essay reviewed 11 peer-reviewed articles published after 2014 that delve into micro-level narratives regarding racial learning experiences among a diverse set of international students in the US. The aim was to assess the framework's relevance and suggest potential updates a decade after its publication. The findings show that the framework is still generally applicable but can benefit from incorporating the following revisions: 1) broadening the scope of racial encounters; 2) emphasizing the impacts of home country context; and 3) leaving the outcomes of racial learning open.

Keywords: international higher education, international students, race/ethnicity, racial identity, racial learning, racial perception, students of color, United States

摘要

Fries-Britt等2014年提出的"美国语境中的种族学习（Learning Race in a U.S. Context/LRUSC）"框架在国际学生研究中具有重要地位，这是第一个针对在美国以外出生和成长的有色人种大学生的种族认知和应对种族化经验进行理论化的框架。本文回顾了2014年后发表的11篇同行评议的文章，这些文章深入探讨了在美国留学的多元化国际学生群体中关于种族学习经历的微观叙事。本文的目的是评估该框架的相关性，并在其发表十年后提出潜在的更新建议。研究结果表明，该框架仍然具有广泛适用性，但可以通过以下修订进一步完善：1）扩大种族相遇（racial encounters）的所指范围；2）强调母国背景的影响；3）对种族学习的结果持开放态度。

关键词：国际高等教育，国际学生，种族/民族，种族身份认同，种族学习，有色人种学生，美国

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Introduction

According to the *Open Door Report* by the Institute of International Education (IIE) (2024), in the academic year 2023/2024, international students accounted for 5.9% of all students enrolled in U.S. higher education institutions, signifying a 6.6% increase from the past year. Despite stagnation and decline in the previous years due to anti-immigration policies and the COVID-19 pandemic, the number was bouncing back. International students are expected to maintain a significant presence at U.S. universities and colleges as internationalization has become a key element of the reform agenda in U.S. higher education (de Wit & Altbach, 2021).

IIE (2024) revealed that 88.8% of international students came from Asia, the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Africa, which meant the vast majority were non-white individuals who fell into the "people of color" category in the U.S. context. Compared to their White counterparts, international students of color are more likely to experience racism in the US (Dengg, 2022; Lee & Rice, 2007). Notably, there is an emergent but growing stream of literature focusing on these experiences with racism (Yao et al., 2019), especially at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and xenophobic sentiments (e.g., Koo et al., 2021; Mall & Payne, 2023).

However, relatively little research addresses how international students learn about race in the U.S. context and how their perceptions and identities of race evolve after they arrive in the country. As a multiracial, multiethnic country, the US bears a unique racial history shaped by European colonization, African enslavement, and successive waves of immigration. This history has given rise to a pervasive racial hierarchy, with Whites on top and all other populations "of color" beneath, whose legacy remains deeply entrenched in all aspects of American life (Bashi & McDaniel, 1997). The U.S. race logic, as well as the centrality of race in this country (Drummond & Orbe, 2010), are likely to be unfamiliar, if not confusing, to international students. Although several racial identity development models exist, such as Helms' (1995) People of Color Racial Identity model and Sue and Sue's (1999) Racial/Cultural Identity Development model, they predominantly concern native-born individuals raised under the U.S. race logic. In contrast, international students bring their understanding of race from their home countries and are therefore likely to find the U.S. logic incongruent with their own. As race is not understood and experienced uniformly across nations, there is a pressing need to transnationalize the theorization of race and racial identity development (Shome, 2010).

Fries-Britt et al. (2014) pioneered the development of a framework designed to capture how foreign-born students of color perceive race and respond to racialized experiences in the US. (They used "foreign-born students" to reflect the fact that all participants were born and raised abroad, instead of "international students" because of the participants' various citizenship statuses.) To date, this *Learning Race in a U.S. Context* (*LRUSC*) emergent framework has garnered over two hundred citations across disciplines. In the wake of this publication, several empirical studies have emerged to explore the racial learning of international students amidst the worsening racial climate in the US (Horowitz et al., 2019) and heightened discussions on diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice on campuses (Buckner et al., 2021). The question is whether the LRUSC framework, developed based on data collected from international students of a single race pursuing a single major over ten years ago, still effectively captures the racial learning experiences of the diverse international student population today.

This essay seeks to address this question by examining literature produced since the release of the LRUSC framework (i.e., since 2014) that addresses the racial learning experiences of international students of color in the US. The focus is on qualitative studies that draw from micro-level narratives of international students hailing from diverse countries of origin studying various majors at higher education institutions across geographic regions in the US. In doing so, the essay strives to assess the framework's relevance and propose potential updates a decade after its publication.

The LRUSC Emergent Framework

Fries-Britt et al.'s (2014) LRUSC framework was derived from data collected from 15 undergraduate and graduate physics students from Black-majority countries in Africa and the Caribbean attending a variety of U.S. higher education

institutions. Through a combination of focus groups and interviews, Fries-Britt et al. (2014) discovered that the students held distinct and nuanced perceptions of race that existing U.S.-based racial identity development models could not fully explain. According to **Figure 1**, Fries-Britt et al. (2014) divided the learning of race in the U.S. context into three categories and proposed that students move from one category to the next through racial encounters (REs) in the US, though not necessarily in a linear fashion. While the "U.S. Context" circle signifies the context for racial learning, it intersects with the "Home Country Context" circle, showing that students begin their racial learning in the US with preconceived racial understandings from their home countries.

Category 1

These preconceived racial understandings, on the one hand, can distance students from their U.S.-born minority peers, whose racial struggles make little sense to them. On the other hand, they may also act as a buffer, allowing students to initially avoid examining their racial-ethnic identities in the U.S. context or addressing any REs. Even when faced with severe racism, students may first turn to their own national and cultural context for understanding, dismissing these incidents as distractions from their academic pursuits—their primary reason for coming to the US.

Category 2

Over time, the frequency and severity of REs lead students to realize that they can no longer ignore their racial minority identities or the broader racial context of the US. Although reluctant, some begin to pay greater attention to race, particularly how their minority statuses are situated within the U.S. racial context, as they find race increasingly salient. Many also use REs as motivations for academic success, reinforcing their purpose of coming to the US to pursue academic endeavors.

Category 3

The last category mirrors the outcome of traditional racial identity development models (e.g., Helms, 1995; Sue & Sue, 1999) designed for individuals born and raised in the US, stating that students achieve integrative awareness when they not only gain a confident understanding of their racial-ethnic identities in the U.S. context but also commit to ending racism and racial injustice.

Figure 1.

Learning Race in a U.S. Context (LRUSC) Emergent Framework in Fries-Britt et al. (2014)

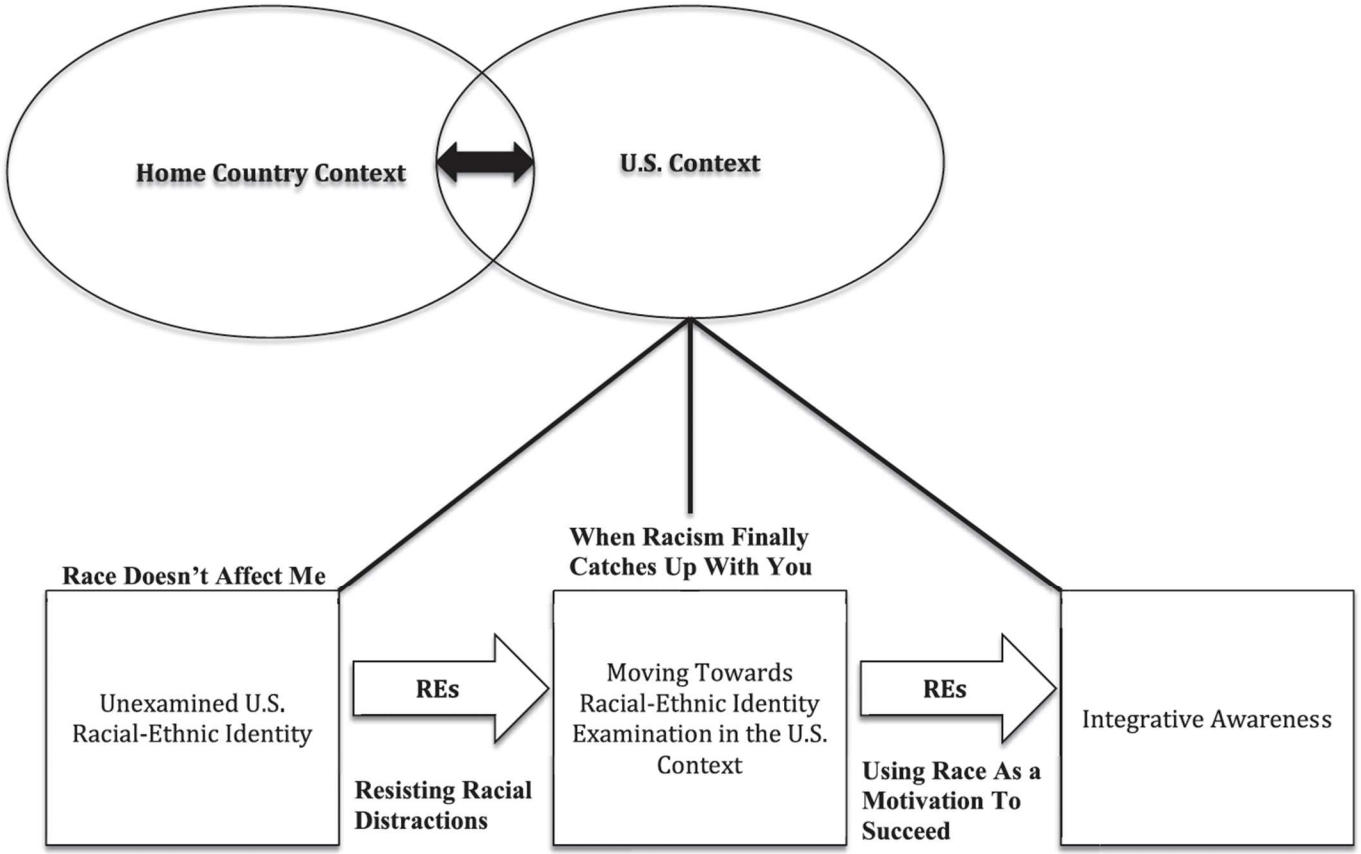

Table 1.

Information on Fries-Britt et al. (2014) and the Literature Reviewed

LRUSC	Participants	Participants' Origins	Research Focus
(Fries-Britt et al., 2014)	15 Black undergraduate and graduate students in physics at various universities	Africa and the Caribbean (including Nigeria, Trinidad and Tobago, Senegal, and Haiti)	"How do foreign-born students of color perceive and respond to racialized experiences and their racial minority status in the United States?" (p. 1)
Articles Reviewed	Participants	Participants' Origins	Research Focus with Respect to the LRUSC Framework
(Ritter, 2016)	47 undergraduate and graduate students at the	East Asia	"This study focuses on Chinese, South Korean, and Japanese international students' perceptions of race." (p. 370)

	University of California (UC), Los Angeles	(Including China (23), Japan (13), South Korea (8), Hong Kong (2), and Taiwan (1))	
(Bardhan & Zhang, 2017)	22 students at a midwestern university	The global South (Including Chad, Grenada, Ghana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, China, India, Togo, Saudi Arabia, the Republic of Benin, Pakistan, and Taiwan)	"In what ways do international students from the global South in the United States communicate race, in relation to identity, as they transition for the first time into a White settler society environment?" (p. 292)
(Mitchell et al., 2017)	17 undergraduate and graduate students at a midwestern university	Varied (Including Bangladesh, Brazil, China (2), India, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, Nigeria, Oman, Russia, South Korea (2), Taiwan, Vietnam (2), and Zimbabwe)	"In what ways, if any, do international students learn about the U.S. concepts of race and racism when studying in the United States? In what ways, if any, does learning about the U.S. concepts of race and racism influence the college experiences of international students studying in the United States?" (p. 2)
(Okura, 2019)	15 new graduate students in New York City	China	"This paper aims to examine the process of racialization in the U.S." (p. 148)
(Jiang, 2021)	15 undergraduates at a midwestern university	China, particularly the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone	"I investigate the ways in which race and racialization shape academic and social spaces as well as educational experiences in an era of globalization of higher education." (p. 32–33)
(Feraud-King & Mwangi, 2022)	8 Black undergraduate and graduate cisgender men at various predominately White institutions	Africa and the Caribbean (Including Ethiopia (2), Malawi, Jamaica, Senegal, Ghana, and Rwanda)	"(1) How have foreign-born Black cisgender men collegians' social identities influenced initial perceptions of race/racism in the US? (2) How do their campus experiences facilitate understanding of race, racism, and gendered racism?" (p. 2)
(Yu, 2022)	21 undergraduate students at a UC university	China	"How do Chinese international students think about race and racism before and after arrival in the US?" (p. 2)
(Ham, 2023)	37 undergraduate students at a midwestern university	China (22) and South Korea (15)	"This article examines how East Asian international undergraduate students understand and respond to race and racism." (p. 2)
(Yao et al., 2023)	19 undergraduates at a midwestern university	Central Africa (10), South Asia (4), East Asia (2), South America (2), and Canada (1)	"What are international students of Color's experiences with race and racialization at a PWI? How have the collegiate experiences of international students of Color been shaped by the global politics of race and racism?" (p. 80)
(Yao et al., 2024)	21 undergraduate and graduate students at a southern university	South Asia (8), East Asia (6), West Africa (3), South America (3), and Eastern Europe (1)	"How did international students make sense of racial conflict in the United States during the year 2020?" (p. 2)
(Yu, 2024)	21 undergraduate students at a UC university	China	"How do Chinese students perceive U.S. racial justice movements in pursuit of social and racial equality?" (p. 1)

Literature Review

Literature for this review comprises peer-reviewed journal articles produced since the LRUSC framework's publication (i.e., since 2014). First, I retrieved peer-reviewed journal articles citing Fries-Britt et al. (2014). Subsequently, I supplemented the results with a systematic literature search in two bibliographic databases, Google Scholar and Education Resource Information Center (ERIC). The search combined the terms "international students" and "international students of color" with keywords including "racial learning," "racial perception," "racial identity," and "racial sensemaking." I then removed articles related to international students in non-U.S. countries and institutional discourses on international students and race, as these topics are less relevant to the LRUSC framework. I also removed articles focusing solely on international students' experiences with racism and racial discrimination as this stream of literature primarily attends to the context of these racist encounters and the challenges students face as a result, rather than the evolvement of their perceptions or identities of race through the experiences (e.g., Koo et al., 2021; Lee & Rice, 2007; Mall & Payne, 2023). This process yielded a total of 11 articles for review, as presented in **Table 1**. Notably, all of these studies are qualitative, drawing from micro-level narratives of international students from diverse countries of origin in different fields of study. Except for Mitchell et al. (2017), whose participants included White international students, the remaining studies focused exclusively on international students of color. The following sections analyze these articles with respect to the LRUSC framework.

Category 1: Unexamined U.S. Racial-Ethnic Identity

Literature generally confirms that international students of color initially hold unexamined racial-ethnic identities in the U.S. context (Bardhan & Zhang, 2017; Mitchell et al., 2017). As they can tend to their home countries' racial context for understanding, many are inclined to ignore examining U.S. racial issues or their racial-ethnic identities in the U.S. context (Okura, 2019; Yu, 2024). This is particularly apparent in populations that did not have the opportunity to move physically to the US during the pandemic (Yu, 2022).

Lack of Understanding of the U.S. Racial Context

A prevalent theme across the literature is participants' lack of understanding of race in the U.S. context. For example, all 22 participants in Bardhan and Zhang (2017), hailing from various countries in the global South, found it challenging to grasp the centrality of race in the US, emphasizing that race had never been a lived reality for them in their home countries. Among the 17 participants in Mitchell et al. (2017), nearly half struggled to define race, reflecting their unexamined racial-ethnic identities in the U.S. context.

Concerning awareness of the broader sociohistorical racial context of the US, Yao et al. (2024) observed that some participants' uncertainty about whether the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement was racially exclusionary stemmed from their limited grasp of the historical foundations of racism in the US. The authors emphasized that the participants, coming from relatively racially homogenous countries, did not have to contend with the pervasiveness of anti-Blackness in their home countries and did not expect to encounter such sentiments in the US.

Reliance on the Home Country Racial Context

Studies focusing on Chinese international students highlighted participants' initial tendency to associate race with Chinese nationality or China's ethnic groups, indicating their reliance on China's racial-ethnic context (Okura, 2019; Yu, 2022, 2024). During the initial interviews with participants who had recently arrived in the US, Okura (2019) discovered that despite their awareness of U.S.-constructed racial categories, none of the participants found the pan-national racial status of Asians meaningful. Instead, they regarded the nationality paradigm as the most salient conceptualization of race and emphasized national differences. Yu's (2022) interviews with a participant who spent the first year of her U.S. higher education in China due to the pandemic provided another example. The participant stated that she would avoid discussing

racial issues for fear of offending others once she moved to the US. She also expressed a preference to "stay in the ethnic Chinese circle" and did not "have the expectations to make friends with Americans." These responses demonstrated that her strategy of positioning herself outside the U.S. racial system was rooted in her understanding of race through nationality and ethnicity, influenced by China's racial-ethnic context and state ideology.

In another article featuring the same set of 21 participants, Yu (2024) delved deeper into how participants' prior socialization in China shaped their knowledge of race. This socialization pertained to China's broader racial-ethnic context and students' ethnic and social positions within China. As members of the Han ethnic majority, they had benefited from state policies that supported the dominant Han culture, and their privileged social class had shielded them from experiencing discrimination within China. Moreover, social movements were often discouraged, if not suppressed, under China's authoritarian government. Consequently, China's racial-ethnic context, along with students' socialization within that context, continued to influence how they perceived race, racism, and racial justice movements when they were in the US.

Racial Encounters (REs)

According to the LRUSC framework, when students initially have REs, which, were all encounters with racism in Fries-Britt et al. (2014), they continue turning to their home countries' racial context, seeing these encounters as distractions and are unlikely to respond. The literature suggests that REs can also encompass various means of acquiring racial knowledge (Ham, 2023; Mitchell et al., 2017; Ritter, 2016; Yao et al., 2024; Yu, 2024), and the reasoning behind the lack of response is more complex (Ham, 2023; Jiang, 2021; Yao et al., 2024; Yu, 2022).

REs Beyond Racist Encounters

Mitchell et al. (2017) broadened the notion of REs to include means of racial knowledge acquisition in the personal and public spheres. Regarding REs in the personal sphere, while racist encounters remained significant themes, Mitchell et al. (2017) detailed how participants learned about race in the U.S. context through media, personal relationships, and formal education. Participants who acquired racial knowledge directly through formal coursework exhibited a more advanced and complex understanding of racial issues in the US. Conversely, those who relied on indirect means such as media and personal relationships reported negative stereotypes toward certain minorities. The effects of learning about race through coursework and interpersonal relations, however, were contested. Like Mitchell et al. (2017), Ritter (2016) found that the East Asian participants who took diversity coursework tended to challenge the racial stereotypes they acquired from their home countries. On the contrary, the East Asian students in Ham (2023) regarded what they learned in the Ethnic Studies class as confirming the hierarchy of race and therefore of little use. Additionally, although Mitchell et al. (2017) cautioned that learning about race through personal relationships might foster racial prejudices, Ritter (2016) emphasized the benefits of building personal relationships through living with roommates of different races on campus, which could prompt reflections on long-held racial stereotypes.

Regarding REs in the public sphere, Yao et al. (2024) and Yu (2024) focused on participants' perceptions of racial conflicts and racial justice movements during the resurgence of the BLM movements in 2020. While none of the participants in Yao et al. (2024) participated in the movements, these events served as critical REs for them, leading to a heightened awareness of racism in the US when witnessed through news coverage.

Refrained From Reacting to Initial REs for More Complex Reasons

According to the LRUSC framework, since students can keep turning to their home countries' racial context for understanding, they often do not react to REs initially. When REs occurred in the public sphere, as observed by Yao et al. (2024), participants took their legal status into consideration and attributed their non-participation to the protection of their fragile international student status.

For the Chinese participants in Jiang (2021) and Yu (2022) and the East Asian participants in Ham (2023), their reluctance to react to REs in the personal sphere was rooted in the influence of the Whiteness racial ideology of the US. Participants in Ham (2023) and Jiang (2021) acknowledged spatial segregation between domestic and Chinese international students on campus but perceived domestic students' indifference toward the Chinese as natural. One participant in Jiang (2021) claimed, "[because] there are TOO many Chinese students." This remark highlighted her internalization of the Whiteness ideology, which contributed to the racialization of students of color, a group to which she belonged. The two online students in Yu (2022) demonstrated that internalizing the Whiteness ideology could occur even before experiencing real-life REs in the US. Both believed they would face discrimination in the US simply by being Asian and Chinese. In short, participants in Ham (2023), Jiang (2021), and Yu (2022) chose not to challenge dominant racial narratives not because they turned to the racial context of their home countries but because they accepted the U.S.-informed global hierarchy of race as a social fact, even before some had set foot in the US.

Seeing Initial REs Not Just as Distractions But As Results of Their Problems

The Chinese participants in Jiang (2021) echoed the "REs as distractions" rationale employed by students in Fries-Britt et al. (2014). Carrying high familial expectations, these participants often chose not to make a big deal out of their encounters with racism. For example, one participant expressed discomfort about an overt racist encounter but decided to let it go, focusing instead on more important priorities like academic pursuits. Additionally, while many participants felt annoyed by the escalating xenophobic narratives during the US-China trade war, they perceived it not as particularly troubling but as a necessary challenge to endure in exchange for a U.S. education.

In addition to regarding REs as distractions and brushing them away, participants in Ham (2023), Jiang (2021), and Yu (2022) sometimes found problems in themselves in response to REs. Participants in Ham (2023) and Jiang (2021) attributed the marginalization of international students to factors such as their insufficient English skills, introverted personalities, and cultural differences. When experiencing microaggressions in class and campus employment, two participants in Yu (2022) initially responded with self-blaming without realizing they were being discriminated against. Due to their limited understanding of the racial context in the US, it was challenging for the students to recognize racism as a structural issue, leading them to shoulder the burden of integration on campus (Jiang, 2021).

Category 2: Importance of Experiential REs

Okura (2019), Yao et al. (2023), and Yu (2022) underscored the importance of experiential REs in transitioning participants from an unexamined U.S. racial-ethnic identity (Category 1) to a stage of racial-ethnic identity examination in the U.S. context (Category 2). The longitudinal design of Okura (2019) and Yao et al. (2023) enabled them to highlight this importance by comparing interviews from different time points. Despite being well aware of their racialized status as "Asian" before moving to the US, the Chinese participants in Okura (2019) only began examining their racial identities in the U.S. context after experiencing racialization firsthand in the country. Okura (2019) attributed significant shifts in understanding of race between the two interviews to participants' extensive exposure to U.S. society, particularly meaningful interactions and friendships with Americans. The importance of experiential REs was also evident in the different racial ideologies between respondents based in China and the US in Yu (2022). While the online students in China viewed race as a nationality-based identity, those studying on campus in the US understood it as a phenotype-based imposed category, a perception shaped by their experiential REs and more closely aligned with how race is perceived in the U.S. context.

Notably, while the LRUSC framework suggests that students reaching Category 2 and engaging in racial-ethnic identity examination in the U.S. context would use future REs as motivation for academic success, this theme is not explicitly featured in the reviewed articles.

Impacts of the Home Country Context

As depicted in **Figure 1**, students' racial learning occurs in the U.S. context and is represented by a solid line leading to three categories. The home country context intersects with the U.S. context but does not directly connect to any of the categories, indicating that the framework considers the home country context as a background influence of students' racial learning. However, the literature suggests that students' home country context can exert a much more significant impact on their racial learning in the US, to the extent that racial ideologies from their home countries can be employed to racialize other minorities on campuses (Jiang, 2021; Ritter, 2016).

Jiang (2021) and Ritter (2016) revealed that international students may bring racial stereotypes from their home countries to American campuses. The Chinese participants in Jiang (2021), all identified with the majority Han ethnic group, applied China's Han-dominated ideology and racial discourses to racialize Asian American and African American communities in town. Mainstream Chinese discourse about the world order led many participants to see Asian Americans and African Americans as "un-American." The Hmong, the largest Southeastern Asian group in town, were viewed unfavorably, likely linked to their marginalization in China as an ethnic minority. Similarly, the East Asian participants in Ritter (2016) acknowledged their hierarchical views on race before coming to the country. Many reported negative attitudes toward African Americans and Southeast Asians due to prior influence from media, family/friends, and historical precedents. Ritter (2016) expressed concern about these long-held racial stereotypes among East Asian students as they could be detrimental to the university's efforts to create a racially tolerant campus.

Is Category 3 Necessarily Integrative Awareness?

Only one participant in Fries-Britt et al. (2014) reached integrative awareness, a category mirroring the outcome of traditional racial identity development models in which students understand their racial-ethnic identities in the U.S. context with confidence and commit to ending racial injustice. The authors claimed that foreign-born students of color were, in fact, unlikely to achieve this outcome due to their different racial experiences in their home countries. Feraud-King and Mwangi (2022) stands out as the sole reviewed study where a few participants demonstrated integrative awareness. For instance, one participant embraced his Black identity by educating himself on contemporary African American struggles and working with African American youth in school. The rest of the literature, on the other hand, suggests several alternative outcomes (Bardhan & Zhang, 2017; Jiang, 2021; Yu, 2022, 2024).

Continued Resistance to Race in the U.S. Context

Bardhan and Zhang (2017), Feraud-King and Mwangi (2022), Jiang (2021), and Yu (2022, 2024) all suggested that students may keep resisting embracing racial identities in the U.S. context but for different reasons. Participants in Bardhan and Zhang (2017) experienced a split sense of selfhood as they navigated their "old" national and ethnic identities alongside their experiences with race in the US. To reconcile this tension, they stressed pride in their "old" identities not coded through race and resisted using U.S.-centric race labels when describing themselves. Taking a post/decolonial perspective, the authors interpreted this resistance as a "transnational interruption within the commonsense thinking about race in the U.S. national imaginary" (p. 300-301).

Some participants in Feraud-King and Mwangi (2022), Jiang (2021), and Yu (2022, 2024) continued to avoid examining their racial identities in the U.S. context even after years in the US. Their reasoning was based on the expectation of leaving the US after graduation, with many intending to return to their home countries. A few participants in Yu (2024) also considered moving to other countries for work and/or further education in the hope of escaping racism. Therefore, the belief that their lives in the US were transient rather than permanent kept them aloof from examining their racial identities in the U.S. context, let alone engaging in activist activities.

Toward Self-Reflexivity and Intercultural Empathy

Participants in Bardhan and Zhang (2017) expressed that their experiences of "becoming" racially minoritized in the US had revealed to them the arbitrary nature of racial differences. Additionally, for some of them, the accompanying loss of privilege along the race vector had evoked self-reflexivity and intercultural empathy toward marginalized and oppressed groups regardless of context, including co-nationals and other minoritized groups in the US. Bardhan and Zhang (2017) called this possibility "hopeful" as it could open the potential for creative coalitions in social justice work.

Discussion

Literature in the past decade drawing from micro-level narratives of international students of color shows that the LRUSC framework is still generally applicable to the understanding of racial learning experiences of international students of color in the US. It effectively illustrates how many students lack knowledge of race in the U.S. context and how REs can shift them to racial-ethnic identity examination. Nonetheless, the literature also reveals that the framework may overlook the multiplicity of what REs could imply and the complexities of students' reasoning and reactions when REs take place. Therefore, the framework can benefit from incorporating the following revisions:

1) Broadening the Scope of REs

Literature shows that REs encompass not only racist encounters but also various means of racial knowledge acquisition. In addition to acquiring racial knowledge in the personal sphere, such as through media, personal relationships, and formal coursework, numerous racial justice movements since 2020 have offered opportunities to learn about race in the U.S. context in the public sphere.

It is essential to acknowledge that not all forms of racial knowledge acquisition led international students of color to racial-ethnic identity examination. While many of the reviewed articles advocated for U.S. higher education institutions to formalize international students' racial learning through coursework, Ham (2023) contested whether the pedagogy of current Ethnic Studies courses supported international students' racial learning. Additionally, while experiential REs could be pivotal in prompting students toward racial-ethnic identity examination, personal interactions could also reinforce racial prejudices. Moreover, observing racial justice movements without the adequate historical context provided might leave international students bewildered, or even shocked (Ma, 2020; Yao et al., 2024). Further research can continue exploring how different REs influence students' racial learning and how educators can better equip students with resources when REs occur.

2) Emphasizing the Impacts of the Home Country Context

While the LRUSC framework focuses on how the U.S. context fosters the racial learning of international students of color, the literature suggests that equal attention should be given to their home country context rather than treating it as a mere background influence. Incorporating a transnational lens, which Bardhan and Zhang (2017), Jiang (2021), and Yu (2022, 2024) already did, into the framework would enable scholars to examine "locality of settlement as well as place of origin and the global forces shaping both locations" (Schiller & Levitt, 2016, p. 15). Hence, a revised LRUSC framework taken from a transnational lens can elucidate how the home country context and the spread of Whiteness ideology influence students' racial learning in the US.

3) Leaving the Outcomes of Racial Learning Open

Both the reviewed literature and Fries-Britt et al. (2014) indicate that most international students of color are unlikely to attain integrative awareness in their racial learning. Interestingly, participants of Feraud-King and Mwangi (2022), the only reviewed study presenting evidence of such an outcome, share similar countries of origin and racial-ethnic backgrounds as those in Fries-Britt et al. (2014). This raises questions regarding the extent to which the achievement of

racial learning outcomes depends on students' prior experiences in their home countries. It also underscores the importance of adopting a transnational lens to understand the racial learning of international students of color in the U.S. context.

Moreover, the literature illustrates how international students' intentions regarding staying versus returning influence their racial learning. Contrary to popular belief, studying in the US does not necessarily serve as a springboard to immigration, with most international students returning to their home countries after graduation (Beine et al., 2023). If their racial-ethnic identities in the U.S. are perceived as temporary, why invest energy in the examination, especially since many come to the country with academic priorities? While we, as educators, would hope international students to develop "intercultural empathy for those who are marginalized in any context" (Bardhan & Zhang, 2017, p. 302) through higher education in the US, international higher education remains largely a neoliberal project (Scott, 2016) and studying abroad a "capital work" (Wang, 2020). Therefore, instead of designating a single outcome, the LRUSC framework should leave the ultimate outcomes of racial learning open, recognizing that international students of color may achieve very different outcomes based on their prior experiences and future plans.

Conclusion

Revisiting the LRUSC framework a decade later with micro-level literature, this essay responds to Fries-Britt et al.'s (2014) call for greater theoretical work on racial-ethnic identity development for international students of color. Indeed, as Bardhan and Zhang (2017) suggested, researchers should keep theorizing race to dismantle colonial ideologies and progress toward a more transnational vision. The essay also provokes reflections on how international students, who do not take the U.S. race logic for granted and bring fresh perspectives with them, could potentially inform the learning and re-learning of race among domestic students, especially amidst the troubling racial tensions in the country.

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