The irony of an 'international faculty'

Reflections on the diversity and inclusion discourse in predominantly White institutions in the United States

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ABSTRACT

Using the autoethnographic case study method, this article examines how my positionality as a foreign-born faculty member intersects with the institutional rhetoric of diversity and inclusion present in many predominantly White institutions. My vignettes show that foreign-born faculty, although contributing to the representation of diversity numbers, are positioned as knowledge providers in the discussions about the 'global', the 'cultural' and sometimes the 'racial', thus, ironically reinforce the embedded White institutional culture. This article argues that foreign-born faculty members could make use of their cultural positions to unpack the classed and racial culture on campus and to cultivate students' anthropological sensibility. In other words, foreign-born faculty are in a unique position of recognising the limitations of the current diversity and inclusion rhetoric in predominantly White institutions (PWI), but also, they have the potential of decentring the White, middle-class cultural norms. This article concludes with some pedagogical implications.

KEYWORDS

autoethnography, diversity and inclusion, foreign-born faculty, predominantly White institutions, racialisation

Dear Prof. Wang,

I hope this email finds you well. I am taking a class on [*sic*] Anthropology this semester. I would like to interview you about your experience as a faculty of color in a predominantly white institution, as part of an assignment for my Anthropology class. Would you be willing to talk to me about your experience at Hamilton?

This was an email I received from Mel, a sophomore during my first semester of teaching.¹ Mel was also taking my 'Issues in Education' class, which unpacks the cultural foundation of US public K-12 education. As I had just left my PhD institution and moved to my first academic post, I took this email as a welcoming sign: 'She actually thought about me!' I secretly congratulated myself, gladly agreed to her request for an interview, and set aside a time to have a conversation with Mel. During that interview, Mel asked about my job search experiences, and whether I had 'thought about the cultural community support that a potential institution could provide' when I was searching for jobs. Initially taken aback by the question, I explained to her the competitive nature of job search in US academia and explained that 'cultural support' was not something I could afford to look for. Taking notes, Mel commented, 'Oh interesting', and shifted to questions about challenges that I had encountered working as a faculty member of colour. The interview lasted for about twenty minutes, wrapped up by Mel's question for 'additional comments' and her thank-yous.

Mel did not send me the research report she submitted to her instructor, so I never knew how she interpreted this conversation. Moreover, I left the interview feeling confused and unsettled. I had the sense that Mel had neither received the answers that she expected from me as a 'faculty of colour' nor did she understand the description I gave about my educational history and career path. What this conversation did make clear to me, however, was that the image of me in Mel's mind was definitively different from how I had thought she would see me as a member of the faculty or as a person. This interaction with Mel made me critically reflect on my own positionality in an elite, predominantly White institution (PWI).

Based on vignettes recorded from a year of teaching at a PWI, in this article, I unpack some confusing moments that I encountered as a first-generation, Chinese migrant academic. In particular, I examine how my positionality as a foreign-born faculty member intersects with the institutional rhetoric of diversity and inclusion present in many PWIs. I situate my experience within a growing critical body of literature that unpacks the increasingly widespread initiatives and discourses on diversity, equity, and inclusion in higher education (e.g., Ahmed 2006, 2012; Urciuoli 2009, 2018). Understanding the experience of foreign-born faculty vis-à-vis the diversity, equity, and inclusion discourse is helpful in uncovering the assumptions underlying such initiatives. My vignettes show that foreign-born faculty, although contributing to the representation of diversity numbers, are expected to shoulder the

task of knowledge provider about the ‘global’, the ‘ethnic’, and the ‘cultural’, rather than to provide social critique based on their disciplinary expertise. I argue that such a construction of foreign-born faculty ironically reinforces the embedded Whiteness in higher education institutions. However, teaching by foreign-born faculty can simultaneously facilitate critical discussions about the limitations of diversity and inclusion initiatives, particularly with regard to the essentialist identity categories, as part of the Western colonial legacy. I conclude this article with some implications for the research and pedagogy of foreign-born faculty.

Conceptual framework: A postcolonial view on racial formation

This article is informed by the theory of racial formation. In particular, it draws from Michael Omi and Howard Winant’s definition of racialisation as ‘the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice, or group’ (2014: 111) to interpret the working experience of foreign-born faculty of colour. Different from other theoretical approaches to race, such as critical race theory (see Ladson-Billings 1998) that treats race as reified categorisations, the concept of racialisation explores how race is defined, what meanings are attached to it, and how race itself is used to create and reproduce racism. Racialisation is a capacious framework because it goes beyond the black-versus-white binary that characterises much discussion about race relations in the United States (Hartigan 2015). It also highlights roles that social and discursive practices play in perpetuating ‘the oppressive power relations between populations presumed to be essentially different’ (Harrison 1995: 65).

In this regard, the framework of racialisation is particularly powerful in uncovering the colonality of existing identity categories available for transnational migrants. Howard Winant (1994) writes that to not have a clear sense of the United States equates to not having an identity. However, for transnational migrants who reside within and between different national/cultural narratives, race – understood and lived as a divisive outcome of European colonialism – can be a disorienting concept that fosters new kinds of subjectivity (Bardhan and Zhang 2017; Fanon 1963; Shirazi 2017). Transnational migrants’ subjectivity is a shifting location of contradictions that straddles multiple viewpoints, and it is impossible to define this form of subjectivity in binary and essentialist terms (Mohanty 2003). As such, focusing on the mechanism of racialisation allows scholars to attend to the

institutional logic in the making and remaking of categories, while highlighting the role of individual agency in the formation of such categories.

Foreign-born faculty as immigrants and faculty of colour

Currently, research on the lived experience of foreign-born faculty in the United States is limited. Much existing literature examines foreign-born faculty's productivity and effectiveness and finds that foreign-born faculty display stronger preferences for research and more extensive publication records than their US-born peers (e.g., Corley and Sahbarwal 2007; Kim et al. 2012; Mamiseishvili and Rosser 2010; Marvasti 2005; Webber 2012). However, despite this higher productivity, some studies show foreign-born faculty members are less satisfied with their jobs than their US-born counterparts (e.g., Lin et al. 2009; Mamiseishvili 2010).

In terms of foreign-born faculty's experience, existing research shows that these faculty often face problems and challenges in relation to their marked foreignness. Foreign-born faculty have to negotiate the difficult process of obtaining permanent residency in the United States (Collins 2008; Cruz et al. 2018). They often face difficulties in integrating into teaching on US campuses (Erickson and Rodriguez 1999; Gahungu 2011; Pande and Bettis 2016; Shenoy-Packer 2015). They also have limited access to networks that embody the social and cultural capital needed to progress in universities (Bhopal 2016; Trix and Psenka 2003). This includes a lack of social support from their colleagues (Skachkova 2007; Thomas and Johnson 2004) and difficulties in cultivating relationships with students (e.g., Collins 2008; Cruz et al. 2018).

Moreover, emphasising the foreignness of foreign-born faculty frames them in a deficit position. Dongbin Kim, Susan Twombly, and Lisa Wolf-Wendel evidence that most research treats international faculty as 'problems, especially with respect to language and teaching skills' (2011: 742). In turn, scholars problematise this deficit model that reinforces the privileged position as the norm. More recent research challenges this deficit model by unpacking the racial Otherness that foreign-born faculty embody. That is, foreign-born faculty are not only immigrants: working on university campuses where Whiteness is presumed as a given (e.g., Bhopal and Chapman 2019; Urciuoli 2018), non-White foreign-born faculty are marked as racial Others, subjected to marginalisation and racialisation.

A burgeoning line of research explores the intersection of racialisation and immigration of non-White foreign-born faculty. Highlighting the subjective

experience of foreign-born faculty, this research emphasises the political subjectivities emerging from their everyday experience and covers a range of the racial/ethnic/national backgrounds of foreign-born faculty. In a collaborative autoethnographic study, Kathy-Ann Hernandez, Faith Ngunjiri and Heewon Chang (2015) unpack how three foreign-born female faculty of colour position themselves and navigate advancement in US higher education. Existing on the margins of a predominantly White institution, Hernandez and her co-authors found themselves at odds with the dominant organisational culture: racialised as Asian, Black, and Latino, these authors also recounted the ways they quietly resisted racist stereotypes and discourses, while also reconfiguring their own gendered and racialised identities. In another autoethnographic collection of essays by African-born faculty (Hintzen and Rahier 2003), the authors unpack the ambivalence that African-born faculty experienced vis-à-vis their racial and cultural positions. On one hand, as African-born immigrants perceived as a racialised Other, they document the desire to engage in a politics of recognition that typifies American understandings of race. On the other hand, African-born faculty hesitate to fully engage in the structural politics of race. Rather, building on a national belonging to their countries of origin, they tactically engage in political struggles that challenge discourses of citizenship and belonging prescribed by the US state power (Dei 2018).

The changing political subjectivities are recorded in foreign-born faculty's pedagogical experience. Honing in the experience of Asian-foreign born faculty, Qiang Cheng, Jian Wang and Shaoan Zhang (2013) detail the micro-aggressions targeted at Asian faculty born outside the United States and explore how they creatively make use of their cultural and linguistic background to create counter-hegemonic moments within classrooms. Similarly, Yea-Wen Chen's (2014) autoethnographic case study documents the struggles she encountered in addressing topics such as racism and xenophobia as a non-White foreign-born faculty member and the way her Asianness and foreignness inform her course materials and her approach to discussions of issues such as social justice and equality in her classes.

In sum, existing research has begun to explore the political subjectivities of non-White foreign-born faculty in predominantly White institutions. Prioritising the agency of foreign-born faculty of colour, this line of research attends to the voices of these faculty in relation to the predominantly White organisational structure. However, very few studies have unpacked how their experience intersects with higher education's institutional emphasis on diversity and inclusion. With the rising criticism of PWIs failing to hire

and retain racially and culturally diverse faculty (Watanabe 2018) and the documented benefits of culturally diverse faculty on campus (Jayakumar et al. 2009; Umbach 2006), non-White foreign-born faculty are discursively welcomed and intentionally recruited to higher education institutions. This article unpacks the following two questions: How do foreign-born faculty of colour experience and interpret this diversity mandate? More importantly, how does this diversity mandate impact the work of foreign-born faculty of colour?

Autoethnographic case study

To illuminate the embodied negotiations of foreign-born faculty vis-à-vis the diversity discourse, I employ a case study approach featuring ethnographically informed critical reflections that privilege self-narratives and analyse them as cultural texts. The goal is to interpret autobiographical data to gain a cultural understanding of connectivity between self and others (Chang 2008; Reed-Danahay 2009). The autoethnographic method allows me to critically reflect on how I come to know, experience, and/or become aware of my selfhood in working in a PWI, while at the same time, illuminate the broader institutional culture in which I am situated. This approach has been widely used in exploring the lived experience of foreign-born faculty (e.g., Hernandez et al. 2015; Hintzen and Rahier 2003; Ikeda 2017) and is constructive in recognising the structures of political economy 'in the ritualised and quotidian, the deeply personal, and even the mundane experiences of working in the academy' (Meneley and Young 2005: 9).

This article emanates directly from my work as a faculty member in a predominantly White institution. In 2019–2020, I kept weekly journals about how my perceived cultural and racial identities intersect with my work as a foreign-born faculty member of colour in a PWI in the United States. Due to my scholarly interests in the politics of diversity discourse, I have been keen in observing how faculty of colour are framed into campus-wide discussions about diversity and inclusion. Working in a residential liberal arts college that encourages close faculty-student relationships, I also have had ample opportunities to interact with students within and outside my classes about my experience and their lives. Such close interactions with students provided opportunities to understand how diversity – and my presence on campus – is interpreted and practiced. As a result, I have garnered a wealth of materials on the discussions about diversity, and how my teaching and research are

perceived by students and colleagues. I have selected key events that reveal the politics of the diversity discourse in relation to my own experience.

Foreign-born faculty as 'diverse individuals' in a PWI

To contextualise the following vignettes, I should first describe my cultural/institutional identifications. I am a native of China, and I completed my undergraduate degree in English language and literature in China. I first came to the United States in 2010 to pursue a master's degree, then moved on to study for a doctoral degree in anthropology of education. Upon completing my doctoral studies, I worked as a postdoctoral researcher on projects on race and education in the American South. My ten years of sojourn in the United States is best characterised by border-crossing: I cross geographical boundaries between China and the United States, between an institution situated in a post-Jim Crow southern state and an elite liberal arts college in the northeast region, as well as between a progressive campus culture and conservative neighbourhoods surrounding the different campuses I have worked in.

The interstitial position also characterises my work in my current institution. Hired as an anthropologist of education, my academic home is the Department of Anthropology, and I am the only full-time faculty in the Education Studies programme. I teach two required Education Studies courses that introduce students to how education is shaped by the cultural, social and historical contexts of American society and analyse these materials with a social justice orientation. Structural inequality and inequity are topics that frame much of in-class discussions. In my other courses, I teach about globalisation, race and racialisation, and education using theories from the discipline of anthropology. My disciplinary lens is anthropology, and in my courses, one of the most important ethnographic objects is education in the United States. The following vignettes unpack moments that reveal the dilemma of a foreign-born faculty member vis-à-vis the institutional goal of diversity and inclusion.

Vignette 1: Becoming an 'expert' about 'global' and 'ethnic' knowledge

The first time I reflected on my positionality was through an interaction with Jonathan, a junior majoring in Asian Studies. A constant visitor to my

office hours, at the beginning of Fall 2019, he came to me and introduced his roommate to me. As the roommate was not in any of my classes nor majoring in Anthropology or Education Studies, I was a bit confused about this introduction. However, I knew that in small liberal arts colleges, familiarising myself with the campus student culture would be key to the success of my work, and so I sat down and chatted with both Jonathan and his roommate. As the conversation went on, I learned that the roommate was about to start a Chinese language class that Fall, learning Mandarin. 'Perhaps he could practice some Mandarin with you this semester!' Jonathan said to me, gesturing toward his roommate. At that point, I nodded. After all, Mandarin is my first language and speaking some Mandarin with students was not a daunting task at all.

Later in the conversation, the two students invited me to an East Asian cultural event organised by the East Asian Studies programme. Another professor had also invited me to the event. As I walked to the event venue, I saw students standing in line for food ordered from a nearby Chinese restaurant, two students (one Asian-looking, one White) who had dressed up in costumes of ancient Chinese warriors, and a few break-out tables where most of the event activity took place. Students were doing origami, painting lanterns, and making kites with one another. I spent some thirty more minutes at the event, feeling perplexed. I wondered why I had been invited by multiple people – I did not feel that I had much to contribute.

The next day, I bumped into the professor who had invited me to this event. After expressing gratitude for me showing up at the event, she asked if I had any suggestions, since this was the first time that they had organised a cultural celebration as such. I told her my honest opinion: that some of the student activities were in effect essentialising East Asian cultures to exotic things in the past. My point was that the artefacts that the event presented were a flattened version of the various cultural traditions of East Asia, and that the next event could consider the symbolic significance of these artefacts among people living in East Asia. She nodded, and followed up with another question, 'Could you tell me what do you call the lights [that] hang in front of house gates during Spring Festivals?' I answered her question, explaining the idea of brightness at night, ghosts, and Spring Festival celebrations. However, she commented on the beauty of lanterns and did not respond to the rest of my comments.

This series of interactions with the students, and with the faculty member illustrate the perceived identification to which I am assigned at a

predominantly White institution. I am a professor of Chinese descent. I ‘contribute’ to the diversity of student lives and classes by the ‘ethnic’, ‘cultural’, and ‘global’ knowledge that I bring to the table. As a foreign-born faculty member of colour, I become a ‘diverse individual’ (Iverson 2008), a person that is perceived to be an expert of the Other’s culture.

In analysing the diversity discourse of private liberal arts institutions, anthropologist Bonnie Urciuoli (2018) remarks that under the diversity mandate, students of colour are resources for institutions to represent their progressive culture, whereas the unmarked, White students are supposed to be benefiting from a diverse student body. Similarly, Susan Iverson argues that the discourse of ‘diversity’ is heavily influenced by the marketplace discourse on higher education, which imagines human beings of non-White backgrounds as ‘objects possessing (economic) value that will contribute to the institution’s ability to maintain or gain a competitive edge and achieve prominence in the academic marketplace’ (2008: 185). Many interactions I have had with students and colleagues, who genuinely value my presence in their college careers and/or campus events, can be explained by this particular marketised understanding of diversity. Students had already seen me as a faculty member of colour, from whom they acquire information about my cultural, ethnic and racial backgrounds so that they become more culturally literate and well-versed.

As such, I have been assigned to existing identity categories from the lens of the White majority as foreign and ethnic. These identities also dictate the kind of expertise that I should process and provide to students. I am a foreign-born faculty member, so I should be teaching about ‘global’ subjects (read: I have no expertise or say on materials about the United States unless it is related to my nationality); I am also racialised to become an Asian faculty member, so I should be teaching about subjects that are related to Asian groups, such as anti-Asian racism. Furthermore, I am not expected to say too much about other minority groups whose identities are different from mine, as that is reserved for other minoritised faculty who teach about their own minoritised groups. That is why I am expected to participate in East Asian cultural celebration events and comment on the use of lanterns in celebratory events during Chinese New Year, and my comments on the essentialisation of ‘culture’ on those events are less valued. This is also why Mel expected me to comment on whether I ‘seek [had sought] cultural/ethnic support’ when I was in the job search process, and why I am asked to speak at Asia-related events. The moment I entered a PWI as a foreign-

born faculty member of colour, my otherwise complex, multidimensional and rich humanity became completely reduced to a simple, one-dimensional and impoverished identity. I am first and foremost a scholar born and raised in China (and Asia); an anthropologist of education is only a secondary identity.

Resulting from this discourse of diversity, then, is a reinforcement of the Whiteness that is already pervasive in a PWI. Ironically, the existence of the 'diverse' faculty not only reinforces the Whiteness of the campus culture, but the diversity discourse also creates a racialised academic division of labour, where foreign-born faculty conduct research and teach about the 'foreign', the 'ethnic', and the 'global'.² Reflecting on the peculiar existential condition of being black as an African immigrant in US academia, Olúfẹmí Táíwò summarises such experience as an 'unwarranted and unbearable burden' (2013: 35) in that he himself, as a Black immigrant, is forever confined to his skin colour. From the institution's perspective, recruiting 'diverse individuals' and emphasising their cultural backgrounds is important because it fits the structurally available slots in modern institutions that are themselves assumed to be acultural (Gershon and Taylor 2008).³ Racialised subjects are reduced to a small range of roles, characterised by their simple subject positions, in opposition to the complexity and heterogeneity of White subject positions. In turn, the existence of foreign-born faculty of colour reinforces the institutional Whiteness and the innate coloniality in the academy.

Vignette 2: The inability of 'doing critique'

Recognising how, discursively, my existence was inadvertently contributing to institutional Whiteness, I decided to centre Whiteness in my teaching practices. Having been educated in China from elementary school to university, I also understood the pedagogical orientation in US classrooms as culturally different. Simply put, Chinese classrooms are more or less teacher-centred, while in US classrooms (and particularly in a small liberal arts institution), teachers are expected to deliver the content materials in a student-centred way. In many international student orientations, a common introduction to the culture of the US classroom stresses the importance of students' contributions. It is also widely accepted that the best classroom instructional practices are those that could encourage students to relate their experience to the content material. In my classes about education, I am encouraged to engage with students' experiences with education, and students are generally eager to do so as well. 'Talking about elitism and Whiteness should not

be hard then', I told myself. Assigning an ethnography about the making of elitist habitus via private boarding schools, I expected that students would share their personal experiences alongside the critique.

However, what I experienced in that session was perhaps the most awkward, stilted class in my (nonetheless short) teaching career. Simply put, the 75-minute class session was dead silent. What had ordinarily been an animated class refused to unpack the practice of elitism, let alone discuss their own educational experiences in relation to such practice. Although in pre-class discussion postings, many students had written about their experiences with elitism in high school and the university, they did not talk about these experiences in the classroom discussion at all. Those few who were willing to speak up were quick to jump to the conclusion of social reproduction and focused on critiquing how higher education institutions in general reproduce class inequality. However, my attempts to ask them to position themselves within such institutions did not yield much discussion. A few spoke at length about their experiences, only to point out how Hamilton College and/or their own high schools (which are similar to the institution studied in the reading material) were rather different from the descriptions of elitism in the reading material. As I have worked with students in similar institutions and have witnessed first-hand the making of elitism via everyday interactions, I shared my experiences and my critiques. Students looked at me silently, anxiously waiting for the class to pass so that they could escape from the silent room.

Later, when I had a chance to talk to students outside of regular class sessions, I asked them about the (lack of) discussion on elitism and Whiteness. To my surprise, one student, who had been silent during the entire session, explained the main idea about elitism exactly as the author of the reading material had noted: 'It's not like we couldn't see ourselves in this book . . .' he joked. Other students' reflection papers also showed a similar level of comprehension. Yet they questioned if there was anything 'new' to learn from this ethnography. A student wondered whether 'such educational practices [that gave rise to the elitist habitus] are all "bad"'. Simply put, not only were students unable to, or comfortable about, directly articulating how they themselves, too, occupy a position in the very system they were keen to critique, but they also did not engage with my analysis on the elitist student culture of the liberal arts college in their reflections.

This vignette directly relates to the politics of authenticity in the pedagogical practice of diversity and inclusion. Scholars writing about diversity

have pointed out that on many occasions, when marginalisation and power dynamics are explicitly discussed, students and educators tend to look for authentic stories from those in the marginalised groups (Srivastava and Francis 2006). This is largely influenced by a liberal educational model that aims to raise consciousness about power imbalances and reduce prejudice via individual storytelling. Coupled with the tenet of a student-centred classroom, individuals from minoritised backgrounds are encouraged to share their stories. Minoritised faculty are encouraged to do the same. A tenet of this model prioritises the idea of 'personal and political', and within a classroom setting, the use of personal experience is prioritised as a starting point for creating new (and largely oppositional) knowledge. Popular in feminist and critical pedagogies, this approach has informed much discussion on diversity and inclusion in US colleges and universities.

Yet the silence in the discussion about being White and elite in my classroom shows this pedagogical approach's epistemological limitation, particularly for those who reside in the category of the Other. To start, foreign-born faculty are tasked with realigning their pedagogical orientation to the culture of a US educational institution. In doing so, they are tasked unconsciously with thinking about their positionality and their experiences in relation to the identity categories available to them in the United States, which in my case, are Asian, Chinese and foreign. What flows from these identity categories is the mandate of providing information about foreign-born faculty's own cultural/ethnic/national groups. Yet such categories are products of the modern/global imaginary, a particular way of imagining and categorising difference rooted in Western European colonial expansion into the world (Stein 2019). This imaginary also informs a particular definition of 'culture', as discrete bounded spaces that are separate from material life, the very meaning of 'culture' upon which Whiteness and the rhetoric of 'diversity and inclusion' in educational institutions are founded (e.g., Castagno 2014; Frankenberg 1993).

Framed within this global imaginary, voices of the foreign-born faculty of colour are then confined to telling simplified stories in the search for simplified solutions for diversity and inclusion, rather than to interrogate the very foundation that prioritises such simplified stories and solutions. More often than not, such information is then to be interpreted via moralised framings about the Other construed by the majority (Stein 2019).⁴ This also gives rise to an 'ethos of vulnerability' (Brunila and Rossi 2018) that confines the minoritised Other as subjects waiting to be saved by the majority. In

this process, the Other's ability to engage social critique is erased due to this perceived Otherness and their ostensible contribution to the diversity of intellectual life. The very inability to foster discussions about elitism and whiteness from the perspective of a non-White, foreign-born person shows that the opportunity to voice critiques about the 'majority' is differentially distributed: the Other is not allowed to analyse the majority and critique the power differential that gives rise to the binary distinction between the Other and the majority, even while the Other has first-hand, 'authentic' experiences about the majority. In my classroom, I was not given room to interrogate the whiteness and elitism imbued in students' everyday classroom experience.

The erasure of the analytical ability of the Other is observed in critical reflections on the nature of knowledge production in the United States. Commenting on the 'prejudiced (racist, ethnocentric, and parochial) nature' of the US academy, Francis Hsu (1973) once remarked that the US academy produces works about Other cultures by the Other but does not engage with theoretical implications of the work of the Other. Archie Mafeje (1998) reports that anthropologists whose geographical expertise is the Western African context tend to assign black African anthropologists to the role of key informants. More generally, Ira Bashkow (2018) remarks that Americans often speak confidently about immigrant issues on the basis of one or another stereotype, yet rarely listen to how the immigrants comment on the lives and cultures of the United States. As such, in an educational environment that encourages the sharing of personal experiences for diversity and inclusion, informed social critiques about the United States by foreign-born faculty of colour are deemphasised, or even erased, even if these critiques are something that the foreign-born faculty has first-hand experience with.

As a result, the foreign-born faculty become a knowledge provider in the construction of a diverse campus intellectual life. If they teach a subject other than their native tongues, the authority of the foreign-born faculty is questioned (also see Kubota 2002). Students tend to accept minoritised faculty who teach courses related to their gender or minority identities (Akindes 2002; Alberts 2008; Luthra 2002). What is left uninterrogated, however, is the unequal power dynamic between the perceived Other and the 'norm', which ostensibly should have been part of the goal of fostering diversity and inclusion. Foreign-born faculty members are positioned as perpetually foreign, and the voices and research of foreign-born faculty are confined within their own national origins. They contribute to students' educational experience by enriching this experience with information.

Vignette 3: The pedagogical (im)possibility of critique

On one occasion, however, I did manage to encourage a good discussion using my (foreign) personal experience. In a class on the marginalisation of special education children in the United States, students naturally started to share their first-hand experiences about special education. As the discussion became more and more heated, it was about to derail from the reading material, which illustrates how 'learning disability' as a category is manufactured through everyday interaction within a classroom. Knowing that the discussion would soon become a sharing session on special education that was not centred on the reading material, I decided to join the conversation. Sharing my educational history and stories about children with special needs in China, I pretended to students that I knew nothing about this topic in the United States. I then asked them to work in small groups and come up with a 'memo' to explain the processes and terminologies involved with special education to a first-generation Asian parent who does not know much about the educational landscape in the United States. Their task was to describe for me, in detail, how 'special education' works from their insider's perspective.

Later in that class, the small groups shared their descriptions about the process of special education. As students talked about the process of becoming a 'special education child' and the criteria used in categorising students, I guided them to think about the larger forces that shape the system as a whole. In this process, I deliberately invoked my 'foreignness' and commented on the process as if I were a first-generation migrant parent. With this scaffolding, students were able to discern the forces that shaped the way special education is organised in the United States, including those of individualism and competition. They started to defamiliarise the US special education system as a whole. Walking out from this class session, I was satisfied that the concept of deconstruction was delivered to students in a creative way, yet I also wondered if I had unconsciously reinforced my foreign and racialised identities and appropriated them for the purpose of delivering content knowledge that is not available elsewhere in the educational institution.

Two lessons can be drawn from this vignette. Firstly, being allotted to the position of a 'diverse individual', I unconsciously performed my foreign identity in my classrooms. Existing accounts of transnational migrants in the US academy show that foreign-born faculty are often forced to reconfigure their self-identification in relation to existing racial/cultural categories (Bardhan

and Zhang 2017; Hernandez et al. 2015). Similarly, in the above vignette, I took on the position of a knowledge provider who is capable of and responsible for providing foreign, unfamiliar knowledge to students. Although the foreign-born faculty can discern the arbitrary nature of category-making of modern institutions, they often rework their selves in order to co-exist with identity categories available to them.

More importantly, the ‘diverse individual’ identity that I had performed for my class contributed to a successful discussion of the neoliberal logic of category-making in special education in the United States. My ‘foreignness’ and my ‘diverse’ perspective had become a therapeutic touch, for students to deconstruct the forces of neoliberalism and racism embedded in the educational institutions in which they are a part. While this pedagogical move finds its root in the methodology of defamiliarisation within the discipline of anthropology (see Miner 1956), in a university setting, my self-Othering move became a prerequisite for me, as a foreign-born faculty member, to be able to engage in an idea of conducting social critiques about topics and places that are not ‘native’ to my Othered identities. In other words, the ‘diverse individual’ – the foreign-born faculty member – performs their perceived Otherness in order to be allowed to be critical and to force the non-foreign majority to see that they themselves, too, are cultured beings entangled in forces that result in the dispossession and oppression of the Other.

Perhaps herein lies the pedagogical possibility of disruption on the part of foreign-born faculty members of colour. That is, situated in an Othered and racialised position, foreign-born faculty are able to discern the embedded arbitrariness of category-making within the everyday, taken-for-granted discourses about diversity and inclusion, and to foster critical conversations about these topics. Working within higher educational institutions in which greater awareness, representation, and intercultural understanding take centre stage in the discourse of diversity (Stein 2019), foreign-born faculty of colour and their uncomfortable experiences with existing categories could uncover the limitations within this discourse. Elsewhere, Hernandez, Ngunjiri, and Chang document how foreign-born faculty need to be ‘able to leverage their outsider/within positionality in organisations’ to choose to ‘view their marginal positions in organisations as a place for advocacy and direct action’ (2015: 544). Similarly, within classrooms, foreign-born faculty of colour could speak about their experience not as a representation of ‘global’ or ‘ethnic’ knowledge, but rather as a tool to deconstruct the taken-for-granted institutional cultural practices in order to educate their

privileged students. Foreign-born faculty of colour can work to decentre and interrupt Eurocentric knowledge, meanings, and hierarchies via their teaching and research about America.

Within my classrooms, I centre my perceived foreignness and process of racialisation to critique the Eurocentric, white-centred discourses on diversity and inclusion present in higher educational institutions. I teach about W. E. B. Du Bois's notion of double-consciousness and Frantz Fanon's work on the colonality of race to unsettle the meanings of racial categories, critical pedagogy and progressive social change per se. I do not claim that these conversations are comfortable or easy; nor do I see these conversations as complete successes. What I argue, however, is that the classrooms of foreign-born faculty of colour can become an emergent space to disrupt essentialist notions of identity and to develop counternarratives and knowledge-making that are not otherwise possible in 'mainstream' educational spaces.

In conclusion: From 'diversity and inclusion' to 'decentering Whiteness'

This article is written as an autoethnographic reflection on my first-year teaching experience in an elite predominantly White institution. I recognise that my reflection only speaks to one person's experience, and I do not claim this as representative of all foreign-born faculty of colour. Yet my experience raises larger concerns about the discourse of diversity in higher education institutions in general. Building on the existing scholarship that documents the racism that foreign-born faculty encounter (e.g., Bhopal 2016; Bhopal and Chapman 2019), this article draws attention to the paradoxical and ironic positionalities that the rhetoric of diversity and inclusion allots to foreign-born faculty and unpacks how such rhetoric has impacted the self and work of foreign-born faculty. These initiatives reinforce institutional whiteness and produce specific categories that foreign-born faculty of colour are expected to fit into. As a result, it erases the ability of the foreign-born faculty to engage in critique within classrooms.

Certainly, the argument presented here does not deny the importance of diversity and inclusion initiatives as a whole. In fact, foreign-born faculty of colour are integral in higher education institutions, particularly in an age of global interconnectedness and political antagonism. For international students and students of colour alike, having foreign-born faculty of colour can render the college experience less intimidating, as foreign-born faculty

of colour are people that they could relate to within and outside of classrooms. Since colleges and universities are responsible for educating students under a global framework, foreign-born faculty certainly contribute to this educational goal. Nor do I argue that the task of decentring Whiteness on campus should fall on the shoulders of the non-white, non-native Other. I do not blame the faculty and students who had generously invited me into their personal and professional lives. What this article shows is that, beyond recruiting and retaining foreign-born faculty for the purpose of diversity and inclusion, the larger challenge is to think about why cultural differences brought by foreign-born faculty of colour enrich students' learning in a globalised world. In this regard, it is important to conceptualise the experiences of foreign-born faculty as processes of becoming and their meaning-making processes as opportunities for epistemological possibility that unfold within existing hierarchies of difference. The experiences of foreign-born faculty of colour in educational settings provide a promising window to understand how educational practices and spaces are implicated in articulating new formations of Otherness.

I end this article with two practical implications. In terms of pedagogy, this article problematises the effectiveness of liberal education pedagogy and argues that overemphasising the individual experience runs the risk of defeating the purpose of diversity and inclusion. In addition to sharing personal stories, it is important to guide students to interrogate the larger forces that produce the culturally particular existing categories (such as 'immigrants', 'people of colour') and to bring students' attention to concepts such as whiteness, neoliberalism and colonialism, which are critically integral to the production of the diversity and inclusion mandate. While these conversations can be awkward and difficult, it is through these moments that classrooms are transformed into spaces of political potentialities. In other words, in addition to broadening students' horizons with knowledge about the Other, the Other can lead the discussion to discern the cultural particularity of taken-for-granted norms.

In terms of policy and practice, this article pushes higher education administrators to critically deepen the discussion of existing diversity and inclusion initiatives. While higher education institutions are becoming increasingly cognizant of the value of cultural differences, administrators could push the conversation further, examining how diversity impacts the work and research of faculty of colour. It is high time to foster campus-wide discussions on the very meaning of 'diversity and inclusion' with those who are marked

as culturally diverse, so as to foster brave and honest conversations on the limitations of existing practices. To address such limitations is not a comfortable task; however, it is precisely such uncertain and insecure moments that potentiate ways to do things differently, think about things differently, and ultimately, learn to *be* differently. In this way, predominantly White institutions can build an institutional climate that contributes to higher education's progressive mission.

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Notes

1. All names are pseudonyms.
2. According to Caroline Turner, Juan Carlos González, and J. Luke Wood (2008), when minoritised ethnic colleagues speak about their own racial/cultural communities, White faculty perceive this kind of research as less rigorous forms of scholarship.
3. Analysing the birth of interdisciplinary fields that centre the voices of minoritised people in US academia, Roderick Ferguson (2012) argues that these fields were heralded as a way of the desire of the non-conformists without challenging the foundation of the university academy, which is based on Whiteness. Similarly, Rinaldo Walcott writes that rhetorics and policies of diversity work to 'calm white fears of a transformation that they believe would harm them' (2019: 400).
4. Writing about internationalisation in higher education institutions, Stein argues that the current literature on internationalisation contains '3 V': victims, (i.e., those defined by their marginalisation); villains (i.e., those defined by the harm they cause); and victors (i.e., those defined by their heroic resistance to oppression and their fight for greater equity) (Stein 2019: 6).

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