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Identity-making and spatialization among Colby College's international students

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**Identity-making and spatialization among Colby College's
international students**

John Gabriel Goodchild Shamgochian

To Iz, for their kindness

Acknowledgments

My interlocutors,

Adrian

Arthur

Dinh

Eric

Mark

Max

Maya

Preeda

Ruth

Sage

Zoya

My advisor, Dr. Winifred Tate

My reader, Dr. Mary Beth Mills

The Colby faculty and staff who have given me guidance

My friends who have supported me

My anthropology student peers whose enthusiasm has motivated me to complete this project.

Abstract

This thesis presents the research that I have done for the award of Honors in Anthropology. The following text begins with a vignette that highlights identity-making and spatialization among international students in a moment of precarity and visibility. The “Introduction” records the development of my research from its initial topics to its current form, my methodology, my positionality, and the ethics of my research. Following this, in the chapter titled “Internationality,” I lay out the interwoven social, institutional, and political processes which shape the experiences of academic migrants. Because the purpose of this chapter is to fully contextualize my argument, it does not present a comprehensive account of all the processes that my interlocutors must navigate at Colby. In the final chapter, “Identity-making and spatialization,” I connect the processes which produce “need” for my interlocutors to the central topics of my research, identity-making and spatialization. I argue that my interlocutors navigate the pressures of governmentality and neoliberal multiculturalism by creating identities and space for themselves in complex and often contradictory ways.

Introduction

Vignette

In early July, following the height of the Black Lives Matter protests and amidst a surge of COVID-19 cases in many southern states, the Trump administration briefly floated the prospect of stripping international students studying in the United States of their visas if they were not taking any in-person classes during the fall semester (Miriam and Hartocollis 2020). For approximately a week, before the proposal was withdrawn, the precarity that it generated put a spotlight on international students through media attention and major lawsuits. It was a moment of unique visibility for international students. As a participant at one of the “Coffee Talks” hosted by Colby’s International Club observed, “people started talking about international students then and afterwards forgot again.”

In response to the proposed restrictions, two Colby rising seniors released a petition demanding that the College increase its support for international students. This petition was widely circulated among the College’s students through a Facebook group that was created for that purpose. However, the petition soon received pushback from international students, the majority of whom are now my interlocutors. They argued that Colby was indeed supporting them and questioned the legitimacy of the petition-makers as self-proclaimed international students. One of the commenters, Dinh told me that “I just couldn’t agree with it because they’ve [i.e. Colby] been doing such a great job that to make such crazy demands would be just stupid.” He went on to say that the petition-makers

... have American citizenships, though I think one of them has a green card.

They identify themselves as international students, even though legally they are not. ... I wrote a long rant, but the page was taken down a couple hours later. ...

They can identify themselves as whatever they want, but I had a massive problem with the petition because we are international students *by law*. ... And a number of international students strongly disagreed with it. (The italics are my own addition.)

Dinh's response to the Facebook petition, like the responses posted on the Facebook page, reflects international students' experiences and concerns as academic migrants, their legally-structured identity, and the establishment of community boundaries.

This vignette relates a moment that inspired my research and a moment that I have returned to countless times in the course of my research. It has become a measure of my progress: I am proud to say that I have taken my confusion about this moment and turned it into understanding. With this vignette as a starting point, my thesis focuses on how my interlocutors, who are senior international students at Colby, navigate the restrictions of the state and the pressures of the institution, governmentality and neoliberal multiculturalism, through identity-making and spatialization.

How I came to these topics

My thesis topic has seen significant changes since my research proposal at the beginning of the school year. When I was writing my proposal, I was interested in studying the responses of international students to current events, especially COVID-19 and Trump-era politics. Inspired by independent ethnographic research that I had done for Dr. David Strohl's course *Researching Cultural Diversity* (AY313) in 2018 (Shamgochian 2018), I initially posed the following questions for my Honors research: how have Colby's international student social groups changed and adapted to COVID-19 and current political discourses? How, if at all, have international students' perspectives about their institution, their host country, and their home countries been shifted? How has the pandemic and American politics affected international students' relationships with other international students, domestic students, Colby faculty, Waterville-area locals, and their own families? What factors (e.g., nationality, religion, race, language, financial status, and college policies) continue to bring international students together and construct an international student identity? What does internationality at Colby mean to international and domestic students now, and how has it changed since my 2018 research? However, during my research this year, I found that the questions that I asked my interlocutors about COVID-19 and Trump were actually not very generative and that my interviews tended toward other topics, primarily the social and legal challenges that international students navigate as a community.

At the same time, I became interested in the relationship between international students and their families back home, particularly any role reversals between the students and their parents. My inspiration was an interview that the Lunder Institute for

American Art hosted in the fall of 2020 with the artist and anthropologist Naeem Mohaiemen (Mohaiemen 2020). After the interview, I had the opportunity to ask Mohaiemen for advice about my research. Speaking from his own experience as a former international student in an American liberal arts college, Mohaiemen emphasized the “inversion of the care-taking role,” the idea that, depending on their national origin, international students in the United States might feel responsible for their family’s well-being. For illustration, he said that international students “need to find scientific information and tell [their parents] that this is the right mask to wear, and this is why washing fruit with vinegar doesn't work” (Mohaiemen 2020). The United States is typically perceived to be safer than many other countries, because of its wealth, infrastructure, and hegemonic force. Nonetheless, Mohaiemen observed, for roughly two months in the spring of 2020, during the height of the pandemic, mortality rates in the United States soared, and the inversion of the care-taking role was itself inverted; parents were calling to check in on their children abroad. This new direction which Mohaiemen suggested for my research proved equally unproductive. Many of my interlocutors gave short responses to questions about their family and no broader narratives developed.

Until nearly the time that I began writing my thesis draft, I was interested in how international students theorize home and make Colby into a home. My fieldnotes gave me a substantial amount of ethnographic material to discuss home-making and I had read a large bibliography of ethnographic works concerning the ways that people create home by bringing physical or imaginary spaces under control, through material objects, and through the formation of community. I planned to argue that my interlocutors

imagine multiple homes, Brun and Fábos' "triadic constellation of homes" (Brun and Fábos 2015), and that the distinction and balance between their homes had been troubled by the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused them to stay for extended periods in their family homes, at Colby, or elsewhere. Although this would have been a worthwhile study, I made the decision to forgo it because home-making and the constellation of homes did not strongly relate to my larger narrative about how international students navigate state and institutional power.

In the end, I narrowed down my research topic to examine the ways that my interlocutors' processes of identity-making and spatialization are informed by intersecting pressures of precarity, complexity, and visibility. This topic relates strongly to the emergent themes in my fieldnotes and fits my thesis within the corpus of U.S.-centered migration studies, a discipline that is especially concerned with the way that migrants, particularly Latin American migrants, experience political, social, and economic marginalization in the United States (Ong 1999). My research stands out in that it focuses on academic migrants.

There are a scanty number of ethnographic works about international students studying at U.S. colleges and universities. My interlocutors differ from most other subjects of anthropological, migration studies scholarship because international students tend to form friendships and community around shared context, rather than shared nationality, ethnicity, religion, etc., all of which are social bonds that are much more familiar in anthropological literature. International students relate to each other through their experiences at Colby and their collective difference from *domestic* students, those students who have lived for most of their life in the U.S. and/or have

secure U.S. legal statuses. There are some exceptions to this. For example, students from China constitute the largest national body among Colby's international students, and they often construct their friend groups around nationality. But, for the most part, the international student community is uniquely based on shared differences. For this reason, I believe that my research is an interesting and original contribution to the corpus of migration studies anthropology.

Methodology

This year, I have completed sixteen interviews with ten senior international Colby students (Adrian, Arthur, Dinh, Eric, Mark, Max, Maya, Preeda, Ruth, and Sage) and an additional interview with a recent alumna (Zoya). Of these students, I had interviewed five previously, during our sophomore year, about their experiences as international students within the international student community at Colby. Those interviews were for my final paper in AY313 (Shamgochian 2018).

All of my interlocutors are international students and friends of mine in the class of 2021, Colby's current senior class. I chose to interview senior students because they have the most experience with Colby and immigration. Furthermore, they are living in a moment of particular uncertainty, looking ahead to their lives after graduation. At the time of my interviews, the uncertain outcome of the presidential election made decisions about future plans all the more complicated and important for my interlocutors. As for why I selected personal friends as my interlocutors, it was primarily a fortuitous result of snowball sampling and partly a conscious choice. My preference for interviewing friends was motivated by a video interview with the anthropologist Irus Braverman that I watched at the beginning of the school year before I had begun my research (Braverman 2020). Braverman points out that it is especially necessary and more difficult to establish trust with participants during remote research (Braverman 2020). I believed that, by interviewing friends, there would already be some basis for familiarity during my remote interviews. Although I cannot be sure how much my prior relationships with my interlocutors helped the process of interviewing, each of my

interlocutors seemed happy to participate in my research and the interviews went smoothly.

The sixteen interviews that I conducted for this thesis lasted between forty minutes and an hour and fifteen minutes, with fifty minutes being the approximate average. My initial intention was to interview all of my interlocutors remotely, but, as soon as I started reaching out to people for interviews, I got several requests to meet in person. A total of nine interviews were in-person, six were via video call, and one was via email due to time zone differences. The initial interviews adhered to a list of questions, but, as I continued in my research and developed additional questions, I noticed that the interviews became more loosely structured and more free-flowing. This shift was thanks to my own growing confidence in conducting interviews. Nevertheless, even in my latest interviews, there were some questions that I still chose to ask since they were particularly productive. For example, the question “what does internationality mean to you?” is the context for many of the quotes which appear in this thesis. I typed my fieldnotes during each interview, apart from a couple of remote interviews which I recorded with my interlocutor’s permission and transcribed afterward. I made a diligent effort to quote my interlocutors word-for-word in my fieldnotes so that each of their narratives can appear in my thesis as it was said by them.

The interviews from 2018 were shorter, approximately half an hour each, and more rigidly structured. Many of the questions that I asked during those interviews were only somewhat relevant to my current research, and, in my fieldnotes, I summarized my interlocutors’ responses, rather than quoting them. I reference the 2018 interviews infrequently and carefully in this thesis, recognizing that the differences in methodology

and the time that has elapsed since sophomore year might have changed my interlocutors' views or the ways that they express them.

I did minimal participant observation during the course of my research, largely because of concerns about coronavirus safety. Thanks to a generous invitation from my interlocutor Maya, I did have the opportunity to participate in the Coffee Talk events, a pair of hour-long, community discussions hosted by I-Club and led by Masi Ngidi-Brown, the new Director of International Student Programs. Both of these events were well attended by international students, including multiple of my interlocutors. I made fieldnotes at both Coffee Talks and actively took part in the conversations. I-Club, which is formally known as "International Club," is one of the largest Colby student clubs on campus. Besides the two Coffee Talks, I did not take part in any of the club's other events this school year, although I kept abreast of the club's goings-on throughout the school year through the weekly club emails and conversations with my interlocutors. I had hoped to attend additional organized and discussion-based I-Club events, like the Coffee Talks, but no more were scheduled.

Ethics

Regarding the ethics of my research, I need to acknowledge my privilege at Colby and in the United States. I am a white man and a U.S. citizen conducting research with a group of people who have a more vulnerable legal status in the United States. I have been friends with all of my interlocutors since my first year at Colby. These relationships were organic and it was pure chance that the majority of my first-year friends were international students. I met some in my dining hall, some in the athletic center, some through participation in clubs, and I met other international students through these connections. Because of my international friends, I became involved in I-Club during my sophomore year, when, among other things, I participated in the club's annual weekend retreat and performed at their International Extravaganza talent show. More friendships were born out of these activities. I have never tried to cultivate my relationships for the sake of my research; instead, they are a context and inspiration. I write this thesis to make the unique needs of my friends visible to the institution and the College community. I do not have solutions to the challenges that international students face, and I hesitate to offer suggestions — I believe that that leadership belongs to Colby's international students, not to any domestic student.

My interlocutors are my peers as fellow students and, officially, are of equal status within the structure of the institution, but they experience marginalization in the U.S. and at Colby in ways that I do not. My group of interlocutors is composed of men and women. They come from different nations in the global north and the global south; they have different religious backgrounds; they speak different languages; they are of different ethnicities; they are racialized differently; and they have different cultural

backgrounds. The majority are from Asia or are ethnically Asian, so they are especially vulnerable and visible in the midst of the heightened anti-Asian racism that COVID-19 has sparked. The rest are white or Latino/a. There are power dynamics between my interlocutors and me, so I have been careful to tread lightly in my research, avoiding conversations that would make my interlocutors uncomfortable and skipping ethnographically interesting events to give space for internationality.

My approach to researching and writing this thesis has been very influenced by Lila Abu-Lughod's classic paper "Writing Against Culture" (1991). Abu-Lughod promotes ethnographies of the particular as a methodological resistance to generalization, which she describes as "a detached language of power" (Abu-Lughod 1991, 148). She writes that "it becomes difficult to think that the term 'Bedouin culture' [which is a generalization] makes sense when one tries to piece together and convey what life is like for one old Bedouin matriarch" (Abu-Lughod 1991, 152). I have purposefully limited the number of my interlocutors and kept my research focus narrow. Furthermore, it has been my priority to give space in my thesis for multiple and sometimes contradictory voices, for the polyvocality which Abu-Lughod has called "decolonization on the level of the text" (Abu-Lughod 1991, 141). My role is to link my interlocutors' narratives together, to contextualize their narratives within othering and marginalizing processes, and to situate their narratives within the thesis' themes of identity-making and spatialization.

With the inclusion of several expansive narratives as the backbone of my thesis, my method resonates with Rose-Redwood and Rose-Redwood's internationalist perspective, which "views the noninstitutional social networks established among international students as a key aspect of social capital formation that extends beyond

the confines of the educational institution itself” (Rose-Redwood and Rose-Redwood 2019, 19). This is the same as Bilecen’s transnational lens (Bilecen 2014, 16). The internationalist perspective exists in opposition to the institutionalist lens, which homogenizes and generalizes international students (Rose-Redwood and Rose-Redwood 2019). Although this concept is more common in sociology and education studies, I introduce it here to set myself in correspondence with the relevant research of those disciplines about international students.

This thesis examines from a particular positionality the particular experiences of particular international students in a particular class year at Colby. James Clifford argues that it is best to write and acknowledge ethnographies as inherently partial modes of knowledge (Clifford 1986). All traditional ethnographies are systems, or economies, of truth governed by power and history. Clifford writes,

‘Cultures’ do not hold still for their portraits. Attempts to make them do so always involves simplification and exclusion, selection of a temporal focus, the construction of a particular self-other relationship, and the imposition or negotiation of a power relationship (Clifford 1986, 10).

This thesis does not contain everything there is to know about Colby’s international students, merely the topics that I have chosen to discuss and make visible. My findings are circumscribed in unknowability, which Dr. Catherine Besteman defines as “those things that are never fully understood, feelings that remain untranslatable, the incommensurabilities encountered in fieldwork” (Besteman 2020, 282). There is knowledge that flitted at the corner of my gaze but never assumed a form, knowledge

that I could not understand or access, and knowledge that I chose to remain ignorant about when ethical or personal discomfort guided me away.

While this thesis centers my interlocutors' narratives, those narratives are conditioned by me. They are responses to questions that I asked, and they are responses spoken to me. I am satisfied with the way that I approached interviewing and I am confident that my questions generated sincere conversations between me and my interlocutors. Nevertheless, if my positionality were different, then I would have asked different questions or emphasized different aspects of the same questions, and accordingly, my interlocutors' narratives would be at least somewhat different. If my positionality were different, my interlocutors would have spoken to me differently and shared different knowledges.

There are two topics in particular that my positionality affected significantly: race and financial status. I found that, in the course of my research, both conversations about race and financial status made me uncomfortable. I found some of my interlocutors' opinions about race to be problematic. It is not my place as a white person working with predominantly non-white interlocutors to impose a particular narrative about race and racialization. Yet, it is wrong for me to let some of my interlocutors' inaccurate and harmful narratives about race go unchallenged. I have chosen to navigate this dilemma by limiting my discussion of race and racialization to the essential information — already more than I am comfortable with — about how and why international students refuse to be racialized. I have left the rest to unknowability. This decision has partially limited my argument about spatialization, which has a racialized aspect. Unknowability and the self-imposed limitations of my thesis mean that there is

plenty of opportunity for future research about how international students theorize race and racialization. I believe it would be more appropriate for a non-white ethnographer to conduct this research. At the same time, some of what my interlocutors told me, they might not tell a non-white ethnographer; some of what they would tell a non-white ethnographer, they might not tell me. Thus, there is some amount of knowledge here that will remain unknowable, regardless of the positionality of the researcher.

When I began to discuss race with my interlocutors, several of them brought up financial status and told me that the majority of Colby's international students were not low-income. I can neither confirm nor deny the validity of this claim and neither will I speculate about the average financial status of Colby's international students and the financial status of my individual interlocutors. None of my interlocutors ever mentioned their monetary circumstances and I never asked. The possibility alone that many of them might have middle- or upper-class backgrounds was enough to steer me away from further conversations about financial status. Although I made this decision unconsciously in response to a feeling of discomfort, I do not regret it. As a low-income student at Colby, I am constantly reminded of my financial status and how wealth has substantially advantaged so many of my peers academically, professionally, and socially while disadvantaging me and other low-income students. I find it painful and frustrating to hear narratives about wealth. This thesis is important because it makes visible the social, institutional, and political processes that Colby's international students must navigate, but it is also a personal project, something for me to return to daily, something for me to reflect on with playfulness and creativity, something for me to enjoy. I do not want financial status to be a topic in this thesis. I acknowledge it when it

appears in my interlocutors' narratives, but I do not make it a focus of my research. This is a fact of my thesis, not a flaw. However, by not researching about financial statuses, I put some limitations on what I can and cannot argue. For example, although this thesis is about precarity, I do not discuss the financial precarity that some of my interlocutors might face, nor do I examine the way that financial resources might cushion some of my interlocutors when they are faced with structural precarity.

In regard to the privacy of my interlocutors, I have made the decision to use pseudonyms for all students. Since many international students can be identified by their country of origin, I checked with each of my interlocutors about how they would prefer those details to be obscured. Typically, this meant referring to their nationality by broader geographic region. For example, instead of "Chinese student," I might say, "East Asian student." When even a regional generalization was still too specific, one of my interlocutors asked me to refer to them by their race. As for the faculty and staff whom I have met with, I have refrained from identifying them by name, recognizing that some of what they told me might endanger their standing with the College. However, for faculty, I have generally chosen to include the names of their departments so that it is clear what sorts of authority they each bring to my research. Unfortunately, in the case of one staff member who plays a singular role in my thesis and in the College, it is unavoidable that I identify them by name.

The following text is the product of a school year's worth of collaboration — collaboration with my interlocutors, professors, College staff, fellow students, and, of course, my advisor Dr. Winifred Tate and my reader Dr. Mary Beth Mills. I feel

tremendously grateful for all of their guidance and support. Therefore, I ask that you read this thesis as the writing of an individual but the work of a community.

Chapter One

Internationality at the global and institutional level

In the following chapter, I analyze the context of international students' legal and social circumstances at Colby. My approach to this topic is spatial. I begin with global macroprocesses and gradually hone my focus to the level of the academic institution and the Colby community.

Internationality

In this thesis, I argue that, while my interlocutors' particular national identities can often be obscured, their internationality — their identity as not-belonging to the United States — cannot be. They are racialized, commodified, othered, and marginalized as international students by the college community, by the institution, and by the state. Their precarious and temporary legal status as international students is an inescapable fact of life during their time in the US.

I have chosen the somewhat unconventional terms *internationality* rather than *transnationality*, *international* rather than *transnational*, because international students refer to themselves as *international* and to their condition as *internationality*. By using internationality, I am not overlooking the subtleties of transnationality, a word that is more familiar to anthropologists. Aihwa Ong has done an excellent job capturing the multiple meanings entailed by transnationality:

Trans denotes both moving through space or across lines, as well as changing the nature of something. Besides suggesting new relations between nation-states and capital, transnationality also alludes to the *transversal*, the *transactional*, the *translational*, and the *transgressive* aspects of contemporary behavior and imagination that are incited, enabled, and regulated by the changing logics of states and capitalism (Ong 1999, 4).

Ong's transnationality refers to "the cultural specificities of global processes," and in particular the legally and socially-structured movement of people across national borders (Ong 1999, 4). In relation to transnationality, *intemationality* implies being

between nations; my interlocutors and my research are not as concerned with the crossing of national borders, with transnationality, as we are with being between borders, ambiguously situated in a site of legal and social complexity and precarity. Internationality also implies duration — one is international for a temporary *interval*. Internationality is a temporal experience that is limited by graduation or by the expiration of legal statuses.

The other aspect of the term *internationality* is nationality. Benedict Anderson has pointed out that most members of a nation will never meet most others, yet they share the belief in their collective communion (Anderson 2016). His conclusion from this phenomenon is that a nation is an imaginary rather than a reality. A nation, Anderson writes, is “an imagined political community — and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (Anderson 2016, 6). Human movement in the era of globalization challenges the presumed sameness of national communities and the geographical boundaries of nations. Increased migration has also been a cause of the worsening pandemic of nationalist ideologies.

International students are products and actors in the era of globalization, an era which has occasioned a radical increase in human movement, both migration and travel. My interlocutor Preeda spoke positively about globalization: “globalization is growing very quickly and we want to put a lot of different people in the world together. ... I mean, the idea of just having a particular group of people studying at an institution is outdated now.” Preeda’s remark suggests that her presence as an international student on campus can be attributed to globalization. At the same time, the use of the word “we” implies her own agency in the process. Internationality is a circumstance of

globalization. I understand globalization to be a web of imperialistic neoliberal macroprocesses that increase international mobility while maintaining social hierarchies and hierarchies of states and currencies (Thomas and Clarke 2013; Graeber 2010). Globalization has created more opportunities to study internationally for young people who after graduation, according to Philip Altbach, often “return home imbued with the norms and values of the host country” (Altbach 1989, 125).

Across the world, the flow of individuals, families, and communities has obfuscated, threatened, and changed old forms of group identity. Arjun Appadurai has coined the word *ethnoscapes* to describe these new landscapes of social, spatial, and cultural formations of group identity within which “groups are no longer tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious, or culturally homogenous” (Appadurai 1991, 191; Vlasta 2016). Appadurai observes that globalization and the simultaneous emergence of mass media have sparked in the imagination of countless people worldwide the possibility of living elsewhere. Imagination is a vital force in the process of deterritorialization. Appadurai writes that “fantasy is now a social practice; it enters, in a host of ways, into the fabrication of social lives for many people in many societies” (Appadurai 1991, 198). At the level of the individual, globalization is a process that is driven by the imagination of possible lives elsewhere.

For many international students, the United States and U.S. universities and colleges are imaginaries born of global ethnoscapes’ fantasies. Drawing from Appadurai, Vanessa Fong’s ethnography of college-age Chinese only-children reflects on the pursuit of “developed world” citizenship through study abroad (Fong 2011). Fong frames the developed world as an imagined community of successful, educated, and

mobile people; as a promise of “freedom from restrictions imposed by the developed world on the developing world” (Fong 2011, 142). Indeed, for her research participants, an internally coherent developed world was such a vital and present concept that they often drew no distinctions between different developed world countries. The realization of the unreality of these imaginaries left many of Fong’s interlocutors dissatisfied, although other interlocutors, even after returning home, thought of their host countries as “paradise” (Fong 2011).

The process of academic migration

The process of coming to the United States and becoming an international student is structured by certain legal statuses. For the large majority of international students, including all of my interlocutors, with the only exceptions being Canadian and Bermudian citizens, an F-1 student visa is required for entry into the United States before they can begin their coursework (Travel.State.Gov, "Student Visa"). To procure an F-1 visa, applicants must schedule an interview with a consular officer at the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. During their visa interview, students are expected to present a valid passport, a Nonimmigrant Visa Application form, a Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1) Student Status-For Academic and Language Students, Form I-20, and an application fee of \$160 USD (Travel.State.Gov, "Student Visa"). If the application is accepted, then students are given a certain number of months during which they can enter the United States repeatedly. The exact number of months permitted is according to the student's country of citizenship.

After receiving their F-1 visa, international students are faced with the matter of travel to the United States. For many, this can require multiple flights and multiple days of travel. When they finally arrive at U.S. airports, students are often questioned by Customs and Border Patrol Officers. During our October 2020 interview, Adrian related to me his most recent entry into the country: "As I was entering customs this time in August, I had a hoodie that said San Francisco on it. The Customs Officer slipped in this casual remark, 'San Francisco? Did you ever work there?' That was him trying to catch me because I'm not allowed to work." Both in transit and upon arrival at Colby's campus, the F-1 visa makes international students visible to the power of the state and

subject to policing. Furthermore, the visa and its associated restrictions are an unremitting reminder to international students of their internationality and of the temporality of their residency in the United States. To quote Adrian again, the “expectation of F-1 visa students is that you are only coming here to study and that the plan is to go back home after.” Even before arriving at Colby, international students are forced to recognize that the duration of their stay is temporally-bound.

International students’ journeys to Colby are challenging to say the least, yet it has become even more difficult in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has been the occasion or the pretext for the United States and other countries worldwide to establish an unprecedented set of travel restrictions. The precarity of this moment has kept many international students in the U.S. over summer and winter breaks for fear of returning home only to be trapped by new travel restrictions. Other students, however, had extended stays at home, either choosing to study remotely or being unable to navigate the heightened barriers and dangers of travel. One such student, Muhammad Ussaid Mustajab, who is an incoming first-year, published a poem in the November 3, 2020 issue of the student-run magazine *Outside Colby*. Mustajab’s poem, titled “Lament of an International Student,” addresses his frustration about an unresolved embassy delay that has postponed the issuing of his visa and his fears about entering the campus community later than the majority of his class. The poem begins “My siren sings the embassy’s song / The wait stretches, unbearably long / Another delay, another platitude / But when will I finally cross the latitudes?” and it ends “I am an international student / With the restrictions making me scream!” (Mustajab 2020, 15). Masi Ngidi-Brown used “Lament of an International Student” to begin the first Coffee

Talk meeting, remarking that the poem brought him to “a place of discomfort” and echoing the words, “restrictions make me scream.”

Aiwa Ong shows how migration and migrants are configured by systems of governmentality (Ong 1999). “Michel Foucault's notion of governmentality,” Ong writes, “maintains that regimes of truth and power produce disciplinary effects that condition our sense of self and our everyday practices” (Ong 1999, 6). In the words of Foucault himself, governmentality is “The ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security” (Foucault 2006, 142). This disparate and often disordered ensemble, then, manages the transnational flow of populations and capital (Ong 1999; Perry and Maurer 2003). Furthermore, it conditions people “so that they themselves contribute, not necessarily consciously, to a government’s model of social order” (Shore and Wright 2003, 6). I can provide no better explanation of the way that the complex, bureaucratic practices of governmentality are felt by my interlocutors than the following words from Mark:

I think it’s easier for us international students to think of the US as a government rather than a country. The US is a set of laws that determine where we exist, how long we can exist for, where we can move. So, the US really just becomes like the bureaucratic monster which has a lot of say in our lives. And it doesn’t really look like a country, or a person, it looks like a vile machine.

Governmentality manages the movements of people across borders, dictating where, for how long, with what opportunities, and with what supports migrants can live in particular places. Stacia E. Zabusky describes transnational processes of migration as “widening gyres” around a constantly mutating center that is formed by the diffuse flow of neoliberal markets. She writes, “No one is in control of this ongoing 'gyration,' this making and unmaking of centers — people stumble through these gyres, improvising some place to stand for a moment, a place where they try to get something done” (Zabusky 2002, 113). However, even in the face of the significant uncertainty that is produced by governmentality, many of my interlocutors indicated that they feel in control of their lives. For some, this was because they had already secured a job or received graduate school acceptance letters. For others, who were less sure about their post-graduation plans, their language suggested that they have confidence in their mobility. For example, Adrian told me,

After Colby, I am going to try to find a job here in the US, also keeping the option open for Europe. This winter I got my Romanian passport [and EU citizenship]. I almost have trouble believing it's true, that I can travel and work and live within Europe.

Eric said,

In terms of what I'm going to do: if Trump becomes president again for the next three years or something, my current plan is to work in the US for three years and then pursue options elsewhere. US wages are really really good, being a

college-educated person working in a white-collar job you earn so much more than other countries, even if it's different for blue-collar jobs.

And as for Maya,

plans are a job and figuring out what I want to do in grad school (either here or Europe, or maybe England). ... I don't want to go home yet. I definitely want to stay in the northern hemisphere ... and we'll see where life and immigration takes me.

These quotes reflect international students' agency in a neoliberal world order. They are the pattern of Ong's "flexible citizens," people who are able to navigate with transnational mobility and flexibility the dynamics of the widening gyres of the neoliberal market (Ong 1999, 6). In Ong's own words, "Flexible citizenship' refers to the cultural logics of capitalist accumulation, travel, and displacement that induce subjects to respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions" (Ong 1999, 6). Colby's international students have experience with international travel — many have lived in multiple countries before coming to Colby — and experience navigating different cultures, social hierarchies, and political powers.

The history of international students at Colby

Colby is an especially attractive college for international students. In 2019, out of the 13,584 applications which the College received, 4,401 (32 percent) were international applications (Davis United World College Scholars Program, “Pilot Schools Reflect on 20 Years: Colby College”). While applications to Colby have increased across the board, the number of international applications has especially grown. In 2009, international students accounted for just 16 percent of 4,520 applicants (Davis United World College Scholars Program, “Pilot Schools Reflect on 20 Years: Colby College”). Adrian explained to me that this is partly because of funding from the Davis United World College Scholars Program. Although the program now includes almost one-hundred, top-tier colleges and universities in the United States, Colby stands out as one of five pilot institutions (Davis United World College Scholars Program, “Pilot Schools Reflect on 20 Years: Colby College”). The Davis UWC Scholar Program provides need-based scholarships to students who graduated from United World College (UWC) programs before matriculating to Colby — the UWC is an international organization that consists of eighteen International Baccalaureate schools and colleges across four continents (UWC, “What Is UWC?”). Although this scholarship is not available to the majority of Colby’s international students, its impact has been great. According to College, “Our partnership with the Davis UWC Scholars Program remains critical to Colby as we continue to expand our reach to a broad global audience and develop a more culturally diverse student body” (Davis United World College Scholars Program, “Pilot Schools Reflect on 20 Years: Colby College”).

In the fall of 2018, with the help of my interlocutors Zoya and Mark, the College's Special Collections created the International Archive. The Archive contains a multitude of photos and objects collected by Sue McDougal during her employment as Director of International Student Programs, as well as interviews with alumni, visiting language assistants, and graduating international seniors. Among the Archive's materials is a folder of mid-twentieth century newspaper clippings about Colby's international students. A large percentage of these articles report on international students' being called on to give talks about their home countries at Waterville-area institutions and societies. The newspaper clippings include titles such as: "Colby Student Describes Life in Prison Camp at Rotary Club Session" (April 26, 1955), "Colby Student Tells of School System in Greece" (February 11, 1954), "Rotarians Hear Colby Student from Japan" (October 9, 1956), and "Four Foreign Students Speak at Rotary Club" (March 17, 1964). One undated article in the International Archive, "China Needs Trained Men, Says Students: Two Chinese Students At Colby Training to Aid Country," reports that

In spite of the fact that they have classmates at New York University and there are many Chinese students at Princeton, the Li's chose Colby as the college where they could learn the most representative type of Americanism.

In the way that each of these mid-20th century articles reflects an Orientalist mindset about international students, it is apparent that the College administration and the Colby community fetishized international students' Otherness. The quoted clipping presents a particularly striking instance of othering. These two Colby students from China were not considered "classmates" of the American students at Colby but were lumped together with Chinese students studying elsewhere in the United States.

Today, international students are supposed to “fit” into the Colby community. The official description of I-Club reads, “We aim to celebrate our differences as international students—through events like International Extravaganza and [International] Food Festival—while helping each other to understand how we fit as part of the larger Colby community” (Life at Colby, “Clubs and Organizations”). Likewise, in an email that Colby’s president, David A. Greene, sent to the student body on July 9th, 2020, he wrote that “each and every one of [*our* international students] is a deeply valued member of our community, and their presence enhances the College’s intellectual and social vibrancy” (Greene 2020) (The italics are my own addition.) And according to the front-page article from a recent issue of *The Colby Echo*, which is a student-run weekly paper, “The international students at Colby bring a diversity of culture and viewpoints to American classrooms and greatly enrich the learning experience for all students” (Huo 2020, 1). Colby, as a neoliberal institution, currently evaluates international students not as curiosities for Orientalist consumption, but as commodities whose presence within the community increases cultural diversity, as well as racial diversity, and seemingly engenders global learning experiences.

Cosmopolitanism

While the author of the article “China Needs Trained Men, Says Students: Two Chinese Students At Colby Training to Aid Country” assumed that international students had come to Colby to learn “Americanism,” this narrative has been entirely reversed in recent decades. Instead of learning from Americans about “Americanism,” international students are imagined to be teaching the Colby community something about being flexible, global citizens, about being cosmopolitan. Cosmopolitanism is a form of cultural capital. The people who have it, cosmopolitan elites, are thought to be better prepared to navigate and profit in a globalized world. Cosmopolitanism is “an awareness of the current global sociocultural condition; a mode of orientation to the world; and a set of competencies” (Howard and Maxwell [in press], 4). According to a Colby professor that I met with, the College creates cosmopolitan subjects through its curriculum, travel opportunities, and cultural diversity. Flexibility and mobility are critical aspects of cosmopolitanism, and, therefore, it is a status that is not equally available to all people. Those who are privileged by certain geographic, social, and financial resources often have an easier path to cosmopolitan status than those who are not. For example, to become cosmopolitan at Colby, students must be able to afford the College’s high tuition and housing costs or qualify for financial aid.

The current operations of colleges and universities conform to the economic model of neoliberalism. In the words of the late David Graeber, the fundamental project of neoliberalism is to “subject every aspect of life to the logic of the market” (Graeber 2010, 133). In this formula, all students are reduced to profits. When I brought up the topic of neoliberalism with a professor in Colby’s Anthropology Department, they told

me that, “Neoliberalism sells the brand, not the actual product.” Colby sells itself as “a global institution with a global education and access to the global elite.” The financial incentive to create cosmopolitan elites structures the College’s valuation of international students, whose demonstrated mobility is central to the idea of the global elite and whose membership within the student body is strongly equated with cultural diversity.

Cultural diversity becomes an attractive component of the College’s advertising. Colby’s Academics website, in the section titled “The Academic Experience,” promises prospective students a truly cosmopolitan education: “At Colby you’ll be a resident of Maine, but a citizen of the world. An international student body makes campus a global gathering place Through cultural immersion, you’ll learn how to navigate a world with rapidly shifting boundaries” (Academics, “The Academic Experience”). It is telling that the page about international students on the College’s website seems more like a description of a cosmopolitan education than a description of the community of international students on campus:

At Colby, students from around the world enhance their understanding of human difference by studying global issues. Half of our majors have an international component, and each student must fulfill international diversity and foreign language requirements. They learn from others by engaging in lively classroom and dinnertime discussions with their peers and by immersing themselves in other cultures by studying abroad (Life at Colby, "International Students").

Likewise, the *Admissions Viewbook* which is published by the College states that “Colby students hail from more than 45 states and 65 nations” (Colby College, *Admissions*

Viewbook). When I asked my interlocutor Maya how she understood her place within the College's system of diversity, she replied:

It's definitely a numbers game. I think I got in just by sheer luck — that year, they needed someone from Southern Africa. I don't think Colby values me, it's just numbers. But they do a good job supporting international students, not moral support but monetary support. ... They also do this thing to double count nationalities. ... They count me as two countries, and technically I am a national of two countries.

As Maya's narrative reflects, the College carefully manages its cultural diversity to be most marketable. The more nationalities that constitute the campus community, the more cosmopolitan the learning experience is thought to be. However, nationalities are not represented in equal numbers. The College is interested in maintaining its image as an institution for domestic students. This is done through admissions — a substantial majority of Colby students are permanent U.S. legal statuses — and through processes of neoliberal multiculturalism.

Neoliberal multiculturalism

Neoliberal multiculturalism maintains cultural hierarchies in the context of globalization, reifying diversity while simultaneously othering and marginalizing the people who make a community diverse. Drawing examples of neoliberal multiculturalism from three sites of Central American research, Charles Hale shows how neoliberal multiculturalism serves to suppress marginalized groups through the following three effects: "extending the grid of intelligibility, defining legitimate (and undeserving) subjects of rights, and remaking racial hierarchy" (Hale 2005, 13). Although these effects might at first seem removed from American colleges and universities, Nancy Abelmann, in her book *The Intimate University*, gives an example of the ways that neoliberal multiculturalism plays out at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (Abelmann 2009). With a particular focus on racial dynamics affecting Korean American university students, Abelmann explores the tension between the 'life of particularities' (i.e., family, race, and community) and the liberal, institutional ideals of growth and the experience of diversity (Abelmann 2009). She writes that

Today's liberal embrace of universal humanity is steeped in an almost counterintuitive way in the celebration of diversity (of precisely family, race, and community, that is, multiculturalism)! In other words, to be fully human, a person must have experience and comfort with difference (Abelmann 2009, 2).

Not meeting this cultural and institutional expectation resulted in self-conscious feelings of failure among some of Abelmann's interlocutors (Abelmann 2009). The pressures of neoliberal multiculturalism also resulted in intraethnic othering by which Korean

American students disassociated from their ethnicity, a perceived impediment to the realization of university imaginaries (Abelmann 2009).

Colleges and universities visibly strive to support international students through organizational frameworks which alienate them and deprive them of space. Even I-Club hosts events that seem to other international students in the manner of neoliberal multiculturalism. During the second Coffee Talk, an unplanned, heated conversation began about the annual and much celebrated International Extravaganza, a talent show that celebrates the international student body's many cultures. According to one Coffee Talk participant, "International Extravaganza is a token of Colby's diversity." Another participant said at a later point in the conversation that "International Extravaganza is a 'cultural showcase.' ... The dominant culture will look at it and say, 'that's exotic.'" This was challenged by someone else, who said, "I like putting on my national culture, wearing something that screams my nationality. ... I don't want to think about dominant culture. ... I can represent only my experience." Considering this debate, it becomes clear that neoliberal multiculturalism exerts multiple pressures on international students and that these pressures entail multiple, contradictory forms of refusal from international students. On the one hand, they refuse to be reduced to a show of the College's cultural diversity and, on the other, they refuse to obscure or disassociate from their cultural identity in order to "fit" in with or pass as domestic students.

Racialization

Neoliberal multiculturalism shapes the way that international students are racialized on campus. During my first interview with Eric, he shared a question which he had asked an international student friend: “why does SOBLU have a club room, but we don’t have a club room at the Pugh Center?” His friend had replied, “if you’re Spanish or Black, it’s easy to define you by your race but being international isn’t a race.” This question and its answer represent an interesting ethnographic moment that captures multiple ideas about race and internationality at Colby. At its surface, the comment suggests that the College gives more support to certain racialized statuses. This observation agrees with Virginia R. Dominguez’s claim that American educational institutions tend to think about diversity particularly in terms of race. She writes that “Other classifiers — self-ascribed or operative elsewhere, such as caste, religion, class, nationhood, or nationality — are subordinated to a relentless U.S. ideology of race” (Dominguez 1994, 337). In its efforts to confront historical patterns of exclusion, “the U.S. scholarly community imagines itself and institutionalizes itself in consequentially constitutive ways often at odds with its own widespread inclusive politics of equality and diversity” (Dominguez 1994, 334). These neoliberal multicultural efforts are racializing practices because the scholarly community invokes diversity without challenging “the naturalized system of social classification on which the society's system of inequality is based” (Dominguez 1994, 334).

If Colby considers race the governing category and, in so doing, upholds racializing practices, then in what ways do international students experience and theorize racialization on campus? According to Eric’s friend, it is easy to define certain

people by their race. But, to put it bluntly, they are wrong — race is not “easy.” Instead, race depends on a long-term intersubjective process of racialization. Jemima Pierre defines racialization as “the complex set of historical and sociopolitical processes of attributing superior or inferior status based on the presumption of biological difference” (Pierre 2020, S220). Likewise, Dominguez writes that “Racialization takes place when differences between human beings are simplified and transformed into Difference, overvaluing particular bodily differences by imbuing them with lasting meaning of social, political, cultural, economic, even psychological significance. Racialization is produced and reproduced through ideological, institutional, interactive, and linguistic practices that support a particular construction of Difference” (Dominguez 1994, 334). The claim “if you’re Spanish or Black, it’s easy to define you by your race” supports this simplified view of difference. At the same time, the latter half of the answer — “being international isn’t a race” — pushes back against the racial ideology which creates difference between people.

In fact, multiple of my interlocutors have distinguished international students from the historically-constructed, racialized category of people of color. Zoya, a recent Colby graduate, told me:

A person of color is what I would identify as someone who is American or a permanent resident, who is of a different ethnicity, who is technically just not white and by ‘not white,’ I also mean like not Eastern European. ... And international students are typically people who immigrate with that F-1 visa. ... Um, so the reason I make a distinction is because persons of color are more likelier than international students to be on scholarship, are more likelier than

them to have really experienced class disparity often, and have their own struggles. ... And some international students do have incredible mobility and it's sort of hard to then sort of conflate the two categories in ways that dismiss struggles on either end.

Zoya identifies international students' internationality and mobility, their flexible citizenship, as important differences between international students and students of color. She problematically assumes that students of color often have lower-income backgrounds. I do not have statistics about the financial statuses of students of color and international students at Colby and I do not wish to speculate, but what is most important within the scope of this thesis is Zoya's perspective rather than the accuracy of her claims.

Maya, on the other hand, explained to me that the distinction between international students and students of color was based on the latter's prior experiences with racism:

So, I think that we tend to be grouped together with people of color, but, for one, not every international are people of color. There are some Caucasians, like [Adrian]. In the international community, there is a lot of talk that white people do this and that, but we mostly mean American white people. A lot of internationals like me have never been forced to think about their race and so when they come here and they get bunched with this 'people of color' group, which in America are the minority and have many prejudices against them. ... You shift from being the

majority to the minority. So, I guess it's important to make the distinction of being international, which just means to have a different passport.

When I prompted Adrian, an Eastern European student, with the observation that “I have heard people make the distinction between being a person of color and being an international student,” he responded:

Those [i.e., students of color and international students] are, for sure, very different things, even though we get sort of bunched together in the Pugh. I feel like these are just such different groups, we come from completely different cultures. Even though the difference among us may be greater than with [the individual differences between international students and] domestic students, we come here as a group and learn to take the same space here in the society and I think that we are very tightly knit as a group. And I think that students of color have a very different thing going on, and this is actually something that came up during one of the coffee hour meetings.

Adrian justifies the distinction between international students and students of color by comparing it to the uncontested distinction between international students and students with permanent U.S. legal statuses. Zoya, Maya, and Adrian's differing explanations reflect the “grid of intelligibility,” the complexity of neoliberal multiculturalism, that generates conflicting perspectives about race, effectively upholding racialized hierarchies (Hale 2005).

My interlocutors do not identify with the explicitly racialized category of people of color because the category has powerful socio-economic meanings. They are

uncomfortable with the social and economic marginalization that is equated with being racialized. The refusal to be racialized as people of color is an attempt to avoid or dismiss the reality of the racism, white supremacy, and marginalization that many international students encounter in the United States. At the same time, the term 'international student' carries a racial valence. Deborah A. Thomas and M. Kamari Clarke argue that "new patterns of inclusion, exclusion, and inequality are implicitly conceptualized in racial terms, even when the language of race is not mobilized" (Thomas and Clarke 2013, 307). Regardless of whether they identify as people of color, many international students are racialized, and becoming a racialized minority is an experience that many international students must navigate when they come to America. Furthermore, as suggested by Maya's comment — "In the international community there is a lot of talk that white people do this and that, but we mostly mean American white people" —, international students imagine themselves as non-white in relation to white domestic students.

Robin Sheriff shows that African Brazilians, although they believe that "If you do not pass for white, you are black," often prefer intermediate race-color terms rather than identify as black — in Brazil, black is a denigrated and oppressed category (Sheriff 2008, 88). Sheriff argues that her interlocutors deploy the pragmatic function of speech to navigate the contradictions of dominant racial ideologies. Pragmatic speech is an indirect, double-voiced mode that often marks a particular type of relationship between speakers. Sheriff suggests that her interlocutors' "pragmatic discourse, which insists that all people of color be referred to with an ambiguous and intermediate term, stretches toward a democratic leveling of color distinctions" (Sheriff 2008, 105). In a

sense, then, the pragmatic speech of Sheriff's interlocutors is a form of ideological resistance to the cultural hierarchies of race and color. The concept of pragmatic speech is applicable to international students' ambivalent language about racialization. By identifying themselves with a separate category that does not fit into the American racial structure, international students endeavor to remove themselves from the marginalization which they associate with people of color in the United States and create a category that is better suited for their unique needs as temporary migrants.

Chapter Two

Identity-making and spatialization

The neoliberal macroprocesses that I describe in the previous chapter operate through a nexus of the power of the state and of the institution. They inscribe international students at Colby with internationality, a racialized category that symbolizes cosmopolitan diversity. Governmentality and neoliberal multiculturalism, in particular, structure the ways in which my interlocutors make community-space and identity on campus. Furthermore, for my interlocutors, community-space and identity are closely linked — often inseparable — concepts. The complex entanglement of identity and space is exemplified by the vignette which I presented in the introduction of this thesis. Recall that two Colby seniors, calling themselves international students, posted a petition on Facebook to demand that Colby step up its support for international students during the uncertainty of COVID-related travel bans and proposed U.S. anti-immigrant policies. In response, a number of senior international students, including several of my interlocutors, challenged the petition-makers on their claims to internationality and their right to make petitions in the name of international students. This moment of tension was framed around international students' legally-structured identities and a special sense of community-space with which international students imagine themselves in relation to the larger campus community. The following chapter addresses, first, identity-making and, second, spatialization as processes by which my interlocutors mediate and situate themselves within the precarity and complexity of the neoliberal pressures of the state and the institution.

Precarity and complexity

My interlocutors experience governmentality in the form of precarity. Precarity is an ever-present aspect of the neoliberal global order — in the words of Anna Tsing, “precarity is the condition of our time” (Tsing 2015, 20). Precarity plays out in countless ways, shaping the lives of countless people wherever neoliberal capitalism reaches.

Tsing writes,

Precarity is the condition of being vulnerable to others. Unpredictable encounters transform us; we are not in control, even of ourselves. Unable to rely on a stable structure of community, we are thrown into shifting assemblages, which remake us as well as our others. We can't rely on the status quo; everything is in flux, including our ability to survive (Tsing 2015, 20).

My use of precarity refers not to economic precarity, but to the structural precarity that international students face during their time in the United States. As I illustrate in this chapter, one form of precarity that international students must navigate is the work regulations (i.e., work restrictions and the associated set of work authorizations mapping onto work restrictions) that limit job opportunities or result in the loss of employment. My interlocutors experience and theorize precarity in terms of work regulations. Work regulations make visible to international students their own vulnerability to the state. Through work regulations, my interlocutors feel and fear the indeterminacy of bureaucratic governmentality. Work regulations are certainly not the only form of precarity which my interlocutors have dealt with during their time at Colby, but the precarity of work regulations was a central narrative throughout my interviews

with senior international students. They had all navigated regulations and they had all suffered from regulations or seen their friends suffer. Furthermore, the majority of my interlocutors see the same work regulations shaping their employment and movements after graduating from Colby this May.

Current work regulations are a facet of neoliberal globalization. Sarah Horton has observed that in the United States, as well as in Canada and the European Union, there has been a proliferation of new forms of temporary legal status, a trend which she identifies as a manifestation of global apartheid (Horton 2020). According to Horton's definition of global apartheid, it is a "system of heightened immigration restrictions in more prosperous nations that increasingly deny foreigners the stability of permanent legal status in the receiving country" (Horton 2020, 1-2). Likewise, Nandita Sharma argues that many of the legal distinctions structured around race have been replaced by legal distinctions structured around citizenship, a process which has produced an "efficient, flexible, and globally competitive workforce" from increasingly vulnerable, foreign workers (Sharma 2007, 80; Horton 2020). The temporary legal statuses imposed on international migrants maintain internal social hierarchies, make migrants visible to state power, and are part of a larger neoliberal project to maximize state power globally. Working within these systems, the precarity of work regulations uphold state and social power.

As "nonimmigrant" students carrying F-1 visas, international students have two legal avenues for paid employment outside of their institution: Optional Practical Training (OPT) and Curricular Practical Training (CPT) (Bustamante 2020). Both of these programs authorize students to do work for a certain duration of months in a field

related to their academic studies, each offering advantages and disadvantages. At Colby, international students are eligible for OPT, although some of my interlocutors seem optimistic that the College will soon transition to CPT, which is organized by the institution and tends to be more efficient in processing applications. OPT, on the other hand, is organized by the government and is notoriously inefficient. While CPT work authorization is only available to students while they are enrolled in a U.S. university or college, OPT extends past graduation, allowing recent international student graduates to gain work experience in the United States. As my interlocutor Max explained it, “OPT is just a number of months which you are allowed to work in the U.S., usually twelve. For STEM you get two extra years, and whenever you get an internship, you take time out of that.” As with college, employment through OPT is temporary. Once the twelve months or the three years of work that OPT permits are elapsed, people are forced to decide whether they want to return home, to immigrate elsewhere, or to seek out permanent residency in the United States. In regard to this final option, Max told me that “Pretty much all internationals who stay in the U.S. to get Green Cards or citizenships went down that path through OPT.” OPT work is seen as an especially good route to less precarious legal statuses, but it is also a form of precarity in and of itself.

OPT is precarious because of the inefficiency and arbitrariness of the bureaucratic state system. During their time at Colby, many of my interlocutors’ short-term plans and career goals had been hampered by unforeseeable outcomes of the OPT application process. Particularly memorable to my interlocutors were the feelings of frustration and disappointment that resulted from the 2019 summer employment applications. As Adrian explained it to me, “In 2019, they delayed a lot of work

authorizations so that a lot of people lost their jobs. When you see your peers, ... people who I look up to, who are farther ahead than me, and see that the system fails to do their part of the job They weren't the ones to make the mistake, but they were the only ones to take the hit. It is you, the one vulnerable individual who has to deal with it.” In Adrian’s account, OPT becomes almost a metaphor for precarity and a means of thinking about the legal statuses that make international students “vulnerable individuals.”

Along with frustration and disappointment, the language which my interlocutors use about OPT suggests fear and anxiety. Regarding his personal difficulties with OPT in 2019, Max said: “The summer of 2019 was ass. ... The reason why I am even more stressed about it, and I don’t know if that classifies as some light PTSD, but that’s pretty much what it is.” During our interview, unprompted by me, Eric retold Max’s harrowing experience, concluding with the simple observation that “The process of obtaining the OPT is a nightmare.” Both Adrian and Max, although they had had somewhat better luck with the OPT program than Max, were familiar with the OPT narratives of their international student friends and were well aware of the ways that an apparently arbitrary, bureaucratic system could have forced them to give up promising job opportunities. With the significant majority of my interlocutors planning to remain in the United States after graduation through OPT, the arbitrariness of the application process is a continuing threat to each of them. Sarah Horton has referred to arbitrariness as “a principal attribute of state power” (Horton 2020, 11). Governmental arbitrariness is the result of a particular configuration of state authority and the discretionary power of bureaucracy. Horton writes,

On the one hand, the state has largely unquestioned authority over immigration policies; in the United States, for example, the doctrine of plenary power places control over the disposition of noncitizens residing in the nation and those entering from abroad squarely in the hands of the executive branch and Congress. This allows the state to suddenly expel foreigners in the name of national security, to ban the entry of particular nationalities, and to exclude at whim those previously included in the national body. On the other hand, 'the state' is not a single entity; it is made up of myriad bureaucrats who differ in their interpretation and enactment of 'state' policies across bureaucracies and localities; the discretionary power of these individuals to enact state policy only exacerbates the state's arbitrariness (Horton 2020, 11-12).

My interlocutors feel the precarity of OPT through its arbitrary and highly consequential application process. Applying for OPT work authorization, international students encounter and are conditioned by governmentality.

OPT is also precarious because of its complexity, which makes navigating the work authorization a difficult and uncertain process for my interlocutors. Adrian gave me a particularly good analogy about the OPT program's complexity. He told me about a time that Sue McDougal organized a workshop with the College's lawyer about OPT. He said, "I expected that they would help us with the OPT system; but it was mostly the lawyers taking questions from us and answering either 'I don't know' or 'perhaps.' ... The college tries to give us information that we need to navigate this environment. All we learned was that it's really hard to stay here." With this narrative, Adrian did not mean to highlight any lack of care on the part of Sue McDougal or any incompetence on the part

of the College's lawyer. OPT is simply so complicated that even Colby's staff, who are employed and trained to support students, cannot fully guide them through the program. When practically no one can understand the workings of a governmental system, the authority of the state is total and indisputable. Indeed, according to Horton, "the very opacity of the state and its inscrutability to those it governs helps uphold its power" (Horton 2020, 11-12). The complexity of OPT, then, is a method of state control, one which sets international students on unequal terms with domestic students in the competitive job markets which universities and colleges prepare and specialize students to enter.

As my interlocutors are well aware, the entire educational immigration program is mired in precarity which arises from complexity. Adrian, for example, told me that "we have to pay taxes and the tax forms are very confusing." Visas are another area of precarity. President David A. Greene acknowledged the complexity of visa policies in his July 9th email to the campus community. Referring to the proposed visa restrictions of July 2020, Greene wrote,

We [the College administration] believe that the ICE order is bad public policy in its intent and in its implementation. In fact, the policy as written is confusing, and subsequent attempts at clarifications from ICE have directly contradicted the original directive. We want to be able to give our students clear advice on these important issues but, like our colleagues across the country, we still have many unanswered questions about the directive and its enforcement (Greene 2020).

Greene labels the visa policy as confusing and mentions that communications from the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement provided contradictory information. The July 2020 visa restrictions posed a substantial threat to the education of many international students, especially first-year students. The inscrutability of the state's policy and apparatus bolstered the precarity that the situation generated for these international students. However, even when talking about the legal distinctions between the Facebook petition-makers and international students, my interlocutors emphasized work regulations rather than their visa status as proof of their legal distinctions. Visa restrictions and taxes did not inspire the same amount of conversation and the same feelings that work regulations did in the course of my interviews: OPT is the ultimate site of precarity for my interlocutors.

The state-structured precarity of work regulations is a major example of *need*, a noun and verb which my interlocutors use frequently to theorize institutional support. Need marks what my interlocutors expect from the College. If Colby did not provide support for certain needs, many international students would be hard-pressed to navigate the complexity and precarity of studying in the United States. When I asked Adrian, "How well has Colby supported you as an international student?", he replied:

I'm pretty sure that it's supported me a lot more than failed. I think in some ways it's hard to fit into the culture with other students, for example, athletes. ... But in terms of the ways that Colby has supported me, financially is of course the clearest and most obvious way. But Colby has some good programs for international students and they have some good supports through Davis

Connects. There's an adviser at Davis Connects who specializes in the *needs* of international students both legal and otherwise. Colby is better equipped to handle the *needs* of international students than some of the other schools. So, yeah, I have been pretty happy with the way that when we went into lockdown, they kept in touch with us. I know that some people had bad experiences, so I am not trying to talk for everyone, but I was personally pretty happy with everything. (The italics are my own addition.)

Need means many things: it is financial aid, legal guidance, and general assistance. Need can be as simple as a drive to or from the Portland airport. As to whether Colby meets international students' needs, Adrian suggested that institutional support was substantial, yet far from satisfactory. International students who are studying remotely during COVID faced another set of needs. In the following extended narratives, Mark recounts his harrowing experiences with remote study in the fall of 2020.

In the summer, there was a google form sent to students asking about how you are doing schooling and I said remotely. And the last few questions were about access to reliable connection, internet connection, and a laptop. I actually do have access to a reliable internet connection and a laptop, or so I thought. And this was back then when I was not here, I was in [the capital] with my relatives and so I thought I was relatively good to go, all set, not too much of a struggle, but then I got here and I realized that the internet was kind of trashy. Because right now there's a difference when only I am using my computer for online classes, but like my two siblings are too and my mom is working too. So, at first, the internet was frustrating, and, like, I don't know. So, I sent an email to my

academic dean — no, to my class dean — saying, ‘hi, so I remember you sent this email in the summer asking people like if they had access to these things and I wanted to ask you if you have any way to support me with them because it has been very frustrating.’ So, like I dropped a class because my Wi-Fi was too shit to handle Zoom and R running. So, like I was very straightforward in my email. I was like ‘I had to drop a class and that was not good, and in my classes, I often have to, like, shut my camera down to like hear people and to not like cut off. Every once in a while, I would kind of like disconnect and then reconnect, so it’s been frustrating. And Colby has a fair amount of remote social events, but I don’t want to participate because of the sheer frustration of connecting and disconnecting, and hearing and not seeing people. So, I was, like, really honest, I was like so I want to enjoy my academic and social Colby experience a little more and I would be able to if you would help me with internet and like they left me unseen for fourteen days. Like they didn’t get back to me or anything. Like my dean responded, ‘oh umm let me see,’ and then, like, she ghosted. So by then I was like, ‘alright, Colby doesn't give two fucks about me’ and then there was this very eventful week where on Sunday my laptop broke and it was really hard to get it repaired here in my city because, first, we had a very strict lockdown back then; and second going out was like a disgrace ‘cause it was like exposing yourself to get COVID and all your family and all that jazz; third, because two days after that happened, my knee just gave in. It was like a thing where on Monday my knee was hurting a lot and on Thursday, I was having surgery. So, I sent an email to my academic advisors, both some people I know

more on a personal level. One of my academic advisors I had taken a class with. The other advisor I had taken multiple classes with, I had done research for her people. So, they were people that I trusted and who cared about my well-being, can you help me tell my professors that I will not do too well. ... Both my academic advisors got very proactive: 'we're telling Colby to help you.' In one day, they emailed Barbara Moore, all my professors, and my class dean ... and in one day Colby made a deposit in my bank account to improve my Wi-Fi and mailed a laptop which arrived two weeks later, which is what I am using right now. I was like, 'wow! You guys can do this. You just didn't care enough to do it at first, you know?' It was really fast. I was amazed at how quickly they sorted it out after my academic advisors intervened. In some sense I am happy. Colby has done everything to meet my *needs*, but on the other hand, I was disappointed because I had asked for help before, and they left me unread. Mixed feelings. (The italics are my own addition.)

Like Adrian, Mark has a mixed review of the College's support for international students studying remotely. His narrative indicates a number of relevant things: the institutional bureaucracy at work in supporting international students, the unreliability of the College's support, the potential generosity of the support, and the way that the support is framed in terms of care. My interlocutors' feelings about Colby are complicated and sometimes contradictory. However, it is clear that Colby's support is not a solution to the precarity of state restrictions. In fact, it is often more of the same: more forms to fill out, more people to email, more bureaucracy.

Why, then, did international students band together to defend Colby when the petition-makers called for more institutional support for the international students who were faced with potential visa restrictions? All of the interlocutors with whom I discussed the petition indicated that they disagreed with its agenda, even though it was expressly designed to help them. Among them, Dinh was especially opinionated about the petition-makers claims:

There's this group of students who were trying to get this thing to go through, demanding this stuff from Colby. I just couldn't agree with it because they've been doing such a great job that to make such crazy demands would be just stupid.

Dinh did not specify what was stupid about asking for more support from an institution with a one-billion-dollar endowment. Defending Colby is out-of-character for most of my interlocutors. After two-thirds of a year of research, my conclusion is that international students challenged the petition because of its creators rather than its content. The negative response was not simply about the quality or quantity of the College's support. The issue was that the petition-makers, as students with more secure U.S. legal statuses, were claiming to have the same needs and to experience the same precarity as international students with F-1 visas. To quote Dinh again:

I know that there are some students here who are U.S. citizens but they have lived elsewhere in the world for their entire life [and have foreign citizenships as well]. But legally I have to have a visa to be in the U.S., which actually comes with a lot of restrictions and regulations which I have to understand and follow. ...

They [the petition-makers] have American citizenships, though I think one of them has a Green Card. They identify themselves as international students, even though legally they are not. The U.S. government tried to pass this bill saying that you are not qualified for a U.S. visa if you are not taking classes in person. And they [the students] were basically trying to get Colby to change their rules so that international incoming freshmen could get a visa. ... I wrote a long rant, but the page was taken down a couple hours later. ... They can identify themselves as whatever they want, but I had a massive problem with the petition because we are international students by law. ... And a number of international students strongly disagreed with it.

Posting on the petition's Facebook page, international students staked out the boundaries of internationality as a legal status — if not strictly Colby's international student community, which is more porous — and refused membership to fellow students. The refusal of membership is a central topic in Audra Simpson's ethnography *Mohawk Interruptus*. Simpson's work with the Mohawk of Kahnawà:ke, a First Nation reservation, explores refusal as "a political alternative to 'recognition,' the much sought-after and presumed 'good' of multicultural politics" (Simpson 2014, 11). She writes that refusal "raises the question of legitimacy for those who are usually in the position of recognizing: What is their authority to do so? Where does it come from? Who are they to do so?" (Simpson 2014, 11). At Colby, the petition-makers, students with U.S. citizenships or Green Cards, were comfortable claiming the identity of international students without acknowledging the unique needs of F-1 visa international students. In

light of Simpsons' theory, the refusal of internationality to certain students then becomes a form of resistance to the College's neoliberal multicultural social hierarchies.

Identity-making

Identity is a carefully thought-out topic for international students. At the first Coffee Talk, for example, Masi said that “being international is a constant renegotiation of identity.” My interlocutors consider their identities as international students to be legally-structured. The precarity and complexity of governmentality uphold and generate the legal structure of identity which most of my interlocutors have articulated. When I asked Adrian what internationality meant to him, he replied:

First of all, it means legal status. ... Legal status means that we are vulnerable to ... [he leaves the sentence unfinished]. ... Recently it didn't surface that much that the politics could really negatively impact international students. But there are other issues that have been more long-term, that have always been there, about the whole U.S. immigration system. There is an overwhelming amount of regulation around us being allowed to work.

Adrian's comment about politics refers to the F-1 visa restrictions which the Trump administration proposed in the summer of 2020 and to the closure of borders in response to the rapid spread of COVID-19, processes which together produced increased precarity for international students. While the legally-structured aspect of international students' identity might be a product of the chaotic events of the last year, Adrian notes that other forms of precarity were present well before the coronavirus pandemic — for instance, the disastrous delays in the OPT application process happened in the spring of 2019. Although the forms of governmentality and the sites of

precarity might change year to year, the state continues to configure international students' identities.

Self-identifying along legal lines can be interpreted as a product of Foucauldian subjectification. *Subjectification* refers to the way a human being turns themselves into a subject through operations of self-understanding on body, soul, thought, and conduct, mediated by an external authority (Rabinow 1984). In the case of international students, one such external authority is the state. Sarah Horton uses the concept of bureaucratic inscription to refer to "the social and material dynamics through which migrants are inscribed into official bureaucratic systems at various scales of government" (Horton 2020, 3). The bureaucratic inscriptions that inscribe Colby's international students into bureaucratic systems include F-1 visas and OPT. One fundamental — and highly relevant — issue which *Paper Trails* addresses is the conflict between individual migrants' narratives of identity and state identification. Horton engages with Foucauldian theory to discuss the role of the state in shaping migrants' subjectivity and sense of self. She writes, "As instantiations of state power, documents and bureaucratic requirements may be viewed as biopolitical technologies that help transform migrants into particular kinds of subjects" (Horton 2020, 13).

Cris Shore and Susan Wright's discussion of governance sheds light on the way that governmentality subjectifies international students. They use 'governance' to refer to the processes

by which policies not only impose conditions, as if from 'outside' or 'above,' but influence people's indigenous norms of conduct so that they themselves

contribute, not necessarily consciously, to a government's model of social order. ... Governance is understood as a type of power which both acts on and through the agency and subjectivity of individuals as ethically free and rational subjects (Shore and Wright 2003, 6).

Shore and Wright give the example of the British subjects who responded to Margaret Thatcher's ideology of enterprise by becoming "responsible, independent citizens" (Shore and Wright 2003, 6). Governance fits people into categories that best suit the state, categories that the state can manage easily. International students are certainly such a category. By pushing back against the petition-makers to assert their legally-structured identity, international students defended the institution and, in some sense, the state. By resisting the social hierarchies which allowed the petition-makers to claim to be international, they upheld the boundary between international students and non-international students that has allowed the former to be marginalized on campus and in national public discourse. The efficacy of governance and neoliberal multiculturalism is their shared ability to hide themselves within peoples' agency and agendas, even agendas that appear to resist governance and neoliberal multiculturalism.

Of course, F-1 visas, OPT, and other legal statuses are not solely responsible for shaping international students' conceptualizations of internationality. Besides legally-structured identity, a frequent answer to the question "what does internationality mean to you?" was that internationality entailed primarily living outside of the United States and being unfamiliar with U.S. culture. Where outside of the U.S. international students live and what their prior experiences with U.S. culture are varied widely, as did their abilities to navigate the United States' stratified social structure. My interlocutors'

identities as international students at Colby are unique and individual. For instance, when I asked Eric what internationality meant to him, he explained that his identity as an international student is deeply influenced by his experiences as an Asian growing up in a predominantly white country:

On paper, being an international student would be defined as just not being a resident of the U.S. ... But it's not as simple as that ... because there are kids who haven't gotten U.S. citizenships or even permanent residency who have gone to prep schools and when they get to Colby they fit in immediately at Colby. And there are also some kids who have U.S. citizenship but choose to hang out with international students more than U.S. students. For me, I have never been to prep school or been a U.S. citizen. ... And when I came to Colby the first thing that drew me to other international students was international orientation. ...

That's not to say that that's the case for everyone. For me, I grew up in a Western country which is more similar to the U.S. than other countries, like Vietnam for instance. One difference that I have is that I am not white. I am [East Asian country - Western country], so that makes me personally feel like I belong to two distinct cultural identities. I spoke [East Asian language] at home and the culture is still a very strong part of my identity. And the second [reason] is that I grew up in a Western country and therefore was exposed to some of the Western ideals and pop culture and stuff like that. So, to sum up, internationality on paper is citizenship and legal status, but in practice, it is influenced by citizenship and cultural identity. I'm pretty sure that non-white people who have grown up in a different host culture, they have experienced that dissonance that I have — that

type of dissonance at home where at home you are a different identity than you are at school. For a while in my sophomore and junior year, I really didn't like being [my ethnicity] and I tried to blend in, but then it kind of dawned on me. And I've had this conversation with other Asian American kids, which is why I think my experience isn't too different than Asian American kids. We share so much of the same culture growing up. Coming to terms with being bicultural is a big part of my identity.

Eric highlights the way that nationality and ethnicity shape his identity as an international student. For Eric, the coming together of nationality and ethnicity at Colby makes him feel like he has two cultural identities, with the former more important at school and the latter more important at home. Maya also spoke to the variability of students' experiences with internationality when I asked her the same interview question:

I think that, at least for me, ... it's [i.e., internationality] a set of perspectives and experiences that we share that is not necessarily that between ourselves — it's different enough — but to the larger community it's harder to explain.

Maya is the only interlocutor who did not talk about student visas when I asked her about internationality. Instead, she replied that internationality is "a set of perspectives and experiences." According to Maya, while international students might have different perspectives or experiences among each other, internationality is built around a common difference from domestic students. Both Eric and Maya's narratives complicate

the precise, legal structure of internationality and give some space for the petition-makers' claims to internationality.

Identity was a core focus of my AY313 final paper, "Internationality at Colby College." In my 2018 course paper, I argued that international students strategically obscure their cultural backgrounds in the construction of an international student community (Shamgochian 2018). When I interviewed Zoya for that project, I asked the question, "what role do you think diversity takes in the formation of this international identity?" She responded,

It [i.e., conversations between international students] doesn't count as speaking among differences ... We hide differences between each other ... I think contrast between Americans is a big part [in forming the international identity] ... We use the metric system and they don't — that's something that unites [all international students]. ... You erase differences, you participate in a mainstream internationalism. ... It's a facade.

Mark gave a very similar answer: "we subordinate our differences to have a communal identity that is non-American. We rant about Fahrenheit versus Celsius." These quotes indicate two important aspects of the international student community at Colby. Firstly, international students marginalize their national identities to join Colby's community of international students, an imagined community that Zoya called a "facade." Susan Bibler Coutin has shown how a particular form of subjectification elides the differences of recently naturalized citizens in the imagined community of the United States (Coutin 2006). She writes, "Naturalization ceremonies celebrate the creation and incorporation

of new citizen-subjects, but these subjects are created by (ritually) erasing histories and rendering difference generic” (Coutin 2006, 312). International students’ community-making might be partly an outcome of the same pressures of governmentality, but I was not able to come to a satisfactory conclusion in this regard. It is certainly the case that international students are more manageable to the state and institution when they are a homogenous group with homogenous needs.

Secondly, it was apparent in my 2018 research as well as my current research that international students build their community through a discourse that emphasizes shared differences from domestic students. When I interviewed Adrian this spring, he told me,

Even though the difference among us may be greater than with [the individual differences between international students and] domestic students, we come here as a group and learn to take the same space here in the society and I think that we are very tightly knit as a group.

Even when the cultural differences between individual international students might be huge, the significance of those differences is not as great as the significance of the differences between international students and domestic students. I asked Adrian to specify some of the differences between international students and domestic students. He replied:

Like, more and more, I see that people have a different time. They have a different experience looking for jobs, different experience with cultural backgrounds — certain things they can make a reference to.

Differences are not only cultural but also based on the particular precarious regulations, such as OPT, that international students must navigate during their time at Colby. Through these differences, international students imagine and construct themselves in relation to domestic students. As Mark said, Colby's international students have a "communal identity that is non-American."

The dichotomous categorization of domestic and international students is institutionally-structured. Maya told me that "There are not much resources allocated for bridging the gap between us and American students, but there are resources to get us through the four years." The College provides international students with separate first-year orientations, separate institutional support systems, and separate spaces on campus. International students are not promised the same financial aid as the domestic students who have equivalent economic backgrounds, they are underrepresented on the College's social media and in student government, and they predominantly major in STEM courses. Some of these circumstances are clearly more harmful to international students (e.g., the financial aid policy) than others. For example, all of my interlocutors traced the formation of their international student friend groups to international orientation, which many of them remember as one of their best experiences at Colby. Regarding international orientation, Maya said,

My friends and my roommates now are people I met at international orientation. ... When I came here and I noticed the big difference between regular orientation and international orientation ... it was scary to have all these new people come in [after international orientation].

International orientation happens before the arrival of most domestic students on campus, so for a few days, the on-campus student body is almost entirely international. At the first Coffee Talk, some attendees expressed their concern that the College's decision to forego international orientation this year would prevent international first-year students from finding each other and forming a community. Here is yet another manifestation of neoliberal multiculturalism, which appears to support international students even as it fits them into an economically profitable social order.

A bounded international student community makes international students visible as marketable symbols of cosmopolitan diversity. Furthermore, separating international students from the larger student body makes the campus community appear domestic, which is how Colby has historically been imagined. Because domestic alumnae and alumni are responsible for more donations to Colby than international students, it is advantageous for the College to retain its familiarity to these alumnae and alumni. In fact, Colby has always been an institution designed for a predominantly white, domestic student body. A member of Colby's faculty gave me a striking example of how the College consciously constructs its identity:

There's nothing formal about what I am about to tell you because the institution backed away from it. A few years ago, before President Greene, when we had Bro Adams, we were getting tons and tons of Chinese students who were applying. And to be honest, the Chinese students who were applying were blowing the American students out of the water with credentials. So there was this backdoor discussion about retaining the school's identity as an American institution. They didn't want to become too Chinese, something that happened at

Emory, for example. And there were consequences there of changing the identity of that institution [Emory]. And word got out that they [Colby] were trying to cap Chinese [students] and how racist that was, and people stopped that conversation, or they stopped making it public to the faculty that they were having these conversations. It was a big focus of the Board of Trustees and the president for a time: how many Chinese students can we take, how many international students can we take, without changing our identity?

The institution maintains its image as a domestic, white community through organizational strategies both in the admissions process and on campus which marginalizes international students by lumping them together (and together with students of color) and isolating them from the larger student body. Tellingly, I have heard international students refer to the domestic students on campus as the “dominant culture,” a term which is equated with the identity of the College itself.

Spatialization

The marginalization of international students has a distinctly spatial aspect and, consequently, international students are very concerned with making space for themselves as a community on campus. A moment of spatialization in my first year at Colby was my earliest encounter with internationality on campus. During my first-year JanPlan, I had become friends with a group of international students and had taken to occasionally spending time with them on Fridays and Saturdays. One weekend night, there were five of us gathered around a computer screen in a cramped dorm room, watching a movie. (If my memory serves me right, the movie was *The Room* (2003), an ineffable cult classic.) My four friends, a couple of whom have since become interlocutors for this thesis, were first-year international students. In the middle of our movie, another international student entered the room to join us. He greeted us as a group, but when he noticed me, he paused and jokingly remarked that the “one rule” had been broken, “no Americans.” The laughter that answered his observation felt awkward, as if all of them were already well aware that I was the odd one out. This was the vignette that I used to begin my 2018 paper because it was the first time that I recognized the categorical divide between my international friends and me (Shamgochian 2018). I am repeating it here as an interesting and personal example of how international students construct community-space for internationality. The vignette illustrates that the process of spatialization is vitally linked to identity — my peers felt that my domesticity was an intrusion on the internationality of the room. In a more abstract way, the incident surrounding the Facebook petition illustrates a similar moment of spatialization: some international students were uncomfortable with the

petition-makers claims to internationality, so, in response, they asserted the boundary of internationality and made space for their own voices on the petition page before it was taken down. Frequently, in the course of my research, I have heard my interlocutors blur the distinction between space, community, and identity, a reflection of the way spatialization and community-making are continually mediated by identity-making at Colby.

During the first Coffee Talk, Masi pointed out that some people who live abroad as United States citizens, such as the petition-makers, find international students an exclusive label. "We want to be open to everybody," he said, "but at the same time there is the idea of having our own space which we can call our own." Space and spatialization is a conscious topic of theorization and conversation for many of Colby's international students. For instance, the second Coffee Talk discussion focused on the following questions: "Who defines who we are? What is your place in the larger campus community? What is our space in the larger campus community?" These were the questions that Masi posed to the talk's approximately twenty attendees, out of whom all but two, me and another domestic student, were international students. Everyone was in agreement that, as one participant put it, "International students need space," but just what sort of international student community-space was needed on campus was a matter of contention.

Although the conversation touched on a number of different physical and social spaces, I-Club and I-Club's main annual events International Extravaganza and International Food Festival were of particular interest. Some praised the events for the way that they give space for international students to represent their cultures to the

larger campus community. Others countered that the Extravaganza and Food Festival showcase Colby's diversity without challenging the institutionalized social order which marginalizes international students. When I spoke up to say that I had previously performed at International Extravaganza with a band of domestic students playing American roots music, many attendees seemed pleased on the grounds that the participation of domestic students disrupted the event's apparent exclusivity and visibly troubled the isolating boundary between international and domestic students. This seems to contradict the work of the spatialization which I identified on the petition's Facebook page, where international students came together to stake out the boundary between international and domestic students. This contradiction reflects the way that international students spatialize flexibly to navigate the pressures of neoliberal multiculturalism. They need their own space, but they need to find that space on their own terms.

I have shown how international students construct aspects of their international identity around the precarity and complexity of the neoliberal state and around the special needs that they face within the institution. This legally-structured identity brings international students together around shared experiences and challenges. International students need space to navigate state, institutional, and social pressures as a community. At the same time, by making space for themselves, they isolate themselves from the larger campus community, marginalizing and homogenizing their needs. Spatialization is entangled in the complexity of neoliberal multiculturalism through which the institution makes visible international students' diversity while simultaneously obscuring their needs.

International students have agency over the way that they make social and physical space for themselves on campus, but that agency is limited by the College and the College community. Colby visibly strives to make welcome international students, who symbolize cosmopolitan diversity, through organizational frameworks which alienate them and deprive them of space. As the conversation at the first Coffee Talk progressed, Masi observed that, in the Pugh Center, most people make the choice to join a particular affinity group, but international students do not get to choose their identity — instead, international students are assumed to be a member of I-Club simply on the grounds of their internationality. He said, “Default identity choice’ is temporary for the time that you are an international student ... it is a passage, a temporary state.” One of the participants built on Masi’s comment: “If you’re international then you are default I-Club.” I-Club is one of the clubs located in the Pugh Center, which is both a physical space on campus and a conceptual hub for diversity. Many of my interlocutors were frustrated by neoliberal multicultural pressures that, as Maya put it during one of our interviews, “pushed” international students into I-Club and the Pugh Center, a space in which they are “bunched” with students of color. There was also frustration about the lack of physical space in the Pugh Center because the I-Club club room is too cramped. Adrian told me that

The space in the Pugh Center is not really adequate — there’s rarely an international student in the room, and we’re also sharing it with the Colby African Society. So we do go to the Pugh Center, some of us, but it would be nice if we had a room that was just ours.

Therefore, while international students can decide what spaces they occupy, they either must comply with or circumvent the assumption that they *belong* in I-Club and the Pugh Center, *belong* in certain spaces, because of their internationality and diversity.

The Pugh Center is a community-space that is at once visible and invisible to the larger campus community. Indeed, when I interviewed Mark in 2018, he told me that “The Pugh Center is the only transparent building [on campus] ... you feel like an animal being watched on the outside I need to perform my internationalness.” The Pugh Center, an annex of the Cotter Union building, is clearly divided and closed off from the bustling and public Cotter Union, but large glass windows make much of the Pugh Center’s main room visible from the outside. Students can and do look inside as they pass the Pugh Center. The physical structure of the Pugh Center reflects a particular neoliberal multicultural social organization in which diversity is put on display even as the students and organizations inside are isolated from the larger campus community.

Visibility is complex and contradictory. International students benefit from visibility which highlights their needs and experiences because such visibility can generate support from the larger community of the institution and the state. For example, an attendee of the first Coffee Talk remarked about the proposed visa restrictions in the summer of 2020 that “People started talking about international students then [when the Trump administration announced the visa restrictions], and afterwards forgot again.” It was this moment of visibility that generated the public outcry, including the Facebook petition, and legal challenges which turned back the law. However, visibility entails neoliberal multicultural social pressures and neoliberal precarity; for example, the legal

statuses through which international students are discreetly visible to the power of the state produce precarity.

According to Licona and Maldonado, whose paper “The Social Production of Latin@ Visibilities and Invisibilities: Geographies of Power in Small Town America” (2014) explores spatialized practices by which Latin@s in rural Iowa produce visibility and invisibility:

There are various kinds of visibilities and invisibilities, and each has different consequences. Within dominant populations, visibility is often experienced as positively coded. To be visible in community spaces means to be included, to have a voice that gets heard, to have access to institutions and resources. By contrast, in the present context of entrenched anti-immigrant hostility and heightened immigration enforcement, for Latin@s (immigrants and non-immigrants), visibility is often negatively coded: it often entails standing out as an ‘unbelonging’ presence, being the subject of surveillance and policeability, of criminalizing, pathologizing, and otherwise alienating discourses and practices (Licona and Maldonado 2014, 520).

My interlocutors desire visibility, the positively coded kind, on their own terms; they look for their own community-spaces where their needs can be visible and supported. The objections that they raise about I-Club, the Extravaganza, and the Food Festival are not objections to the existence of the club and its events. Instead, these objections are directed at the negatively coded visibility that alienates international students as Others rather than as members of the College community. International students’ cosmopolitan

diversity is put on display at public I-Club events, but not necessarily their unique needs and precarity. At the same time, I-Club as a community-space can and does make international students' needs visible to the community and the institution. My interlocutors see merit in the club; almost all of them reliably attend club events and several have been involved in the club's leadership. It is a restricted and a restrictive community-space, but it is a space in which international students can come together to voice the needs of their community as a community. My research shows that Colby's international students, or at least my interlocutors, are constantly mediating ways of being visible and being *made* visible by finding community-space where they can collectively theorize and make visible the international student community's particular needs, which arise from the precarity of neoliberal governmentality.

Conclusion

I introduced this thesis with a vignette, narrating the conflict that took place over Facebook in early July 2020. In a moment of particular legal precarity for international students across the United States, a pair of Colby seniors created a petition calling for the College to support its international students. Both of the petition-makers identified themselves as international students but did not face the same precarity because of their secure legal statuses in the United States. The petition was quickly taken down after a number of international students posted on the petition's Facebook page, challenging the posters' positionality and insisting that the posters did not speak for international students.

When I saw the pushback that the petition received from international students, my initial feeling was confusion. The petition was seemingly created with the best intentions, and whether there was a need for it or not, making need visible rarely does more harm than good. I have framed my thesis around this vignette and my research has been done in an effort to understand why F-1 visa international students condemned the petition and refused the petition-makers membership in the international student community. I have examined the response to the petition as a moment of identity-making and spatialization that built off of international students' experiences and concerns as academic migrants. In the course of my fieldwork, it has become apparent that precarity and complexity, theorized in terms of need and felt particularly through work regulations, are dominant aspects of internationality at Colby. Precarity and complexity are produced and structured principally by bureaucratic governmentality. Space and visibility are also dominant aspects of internationality. Neoliberal

multiculturalism makes international students uncomfortably visible as racialized, commodified Others, who symbolize the cultural diversity and cosmopolitanism of the institution. Simultaneously, it deprives international students of space or forces them into particular spaces where they are isolated from the larger college community. The interplay of these neoliberal macroprocesses, both governmentality and neoliberal multiculturalism, at the level of the state and the institution, construct internationality as an entanglement of identity and community-space. My interlocutors utilize identity-making and spatialization in complex and contradictory ways to mediate and situate themselves within the pressures of neoliberalism.

In the case of the petition, international students denied the petition-makers' claims to internationality because the latter do not have the same needs as F-1 visa international students. Rather than accepting assistance, the international students who replied to the petition asserted the legal structure of their identity, insisting that, to be an international student, one must have an F-1 visa, a precarious and temporary legal status. This insistence upheld the boundaries of the international student body, resisted the neoliberal multicultural system that allowed the petition-makers to claim to be international students, and constructed a community-space for international students to make visible their own experiences and needs on the petition's Facebook page. This vignette narrates just one of the countless moments of identity-making and spatialization that maintain the particular configuration of internationality that I have described. My interlocutors have shown me how they navigate the precarity and the complex pressures of governmentality and neoliberal multiculturalism in multiple, often contradictory ways.

The complexity and contradiction produced by neoliberalism is an important topic for ethnographic research. As I said in the introduction to this thesis, I am not going to offer solutions to the challenges that Colby's international students are forced to navigate. Addressing their particular needs and making community-space for themselves is a work in progress. How international students choose to do this work is up to them, not me. My hope is that the research which I have presented in this thesis will encourage my readers, whoever you are, to recognize the systems of power that racialize, commodify, other, and marginalize international students and to acknowledge the ways that international students demonstrate agency in the face of these pressures. I hope that this thesis has inspired you to reconsider your beliefs and perspectives and to introspectively examine your own place in these systems of power. I hope, too, that this thesis will motivate further research. I hope for research that will build on my conclusions or critique them, research that will explore the topics that I have left to unknowability, research that will become praxis, and research that will continue to make visible the structure of internationality and international students' particular needs.

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This research has been profoundly rewarding for me. I have learned so much about how to do fieldwork, how to read ethnographic sources, and how to utilize anthropological theory. I have learned about my interlocutors and their experiences, and I have learned about myself. I have defined my interests, recognized my skills and my weaknesses, and tested the limits of my perseverance. I have struggled, wept, and thrived through this work — I would not have had it any other way. It has been one of the pleasures of my life to learn with this group of interlocutors. They gave me friendship and support and I cannot begin to express how thankful I am for each of them. They care about my research and value my findings, and I have written this thesis for them.

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