How Asian American Women Perceive and Move Toward Leadership Roles in Community

Colleges: A Study of Insider Counter Narratives

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Abstract

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Asian American women are often misunderstood and disfranchised due to stereotypes and microaggressions, and they are frequently excluded from the mainstream leadership agenda in higher education discourse. Using critical race feminism (CRF) as a conceptual framework, my qualitative research examined 11 Asian American women's career movements and leadership experiences in community colleges in Washington State. The study focused on the participants' counter narratives in regard to campus climate, microaggressions, mentoring, goals, and professional advancement. As a way to combat microaggressions in a chilly climate where they work, microresistance was also investigated.

My findings showed that all participants faced complex realities of multiple marginalities, each being both "a woman" and "Asian American of color." Under the conditions of such intersectionality, the participants were quick to identify the everyday microaggressions

they encountered. Some of them were not so "micro," but "macro," and illustrated their icy climate in countless instances. However, the participants did not just passively endure these microaggressions. Rather, they proactively combated their invisibleness and inequalities through intentionally applying microresistances. Such efforts became forms of empowerment, collaboration, and resistance against institutional oppression, and ultimately became alternative ways of leading as well as of microresistance. Mentoring relationships were also applied as a form of microresistance. Despite such ongoing effort, however, the participants' encounters with numerous and accumulative microaggressions often solidified as a pattern of unequal power and created a more difficult space for them to plan, anticipate, and pursue meaningful leadership positions. Yet, the study illuminated frequently overlooked activisms and microresistances by Asian American women, as well as their alternative ways of leading. The participants practiced leadership by: (1) being intentional, collaborative, and relational; (2) striving for transformative cultural competency; (3) mentoring and empowering others as role models; (4) being both teachers and learners; and (5) balancing work and life.

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VITA

Sayumi Irey was born in Nagoya, Japan, and immigrated to Seattle, Washington. At the University of Washington, she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in American Ethnic Studies and a Master degree in Information Science. In 2013, she earned a Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Washington in Educational Leadership & Policy Studies in Higher Education (EDLPS) in College of Education.

Chapter 1

Introduction

In this study, I examine how Asian American women perceive and move toward leadership roles in community college settings. Set against a backdrop of a growing number of Asian Americans attaining higher levels of education and the credentials to both teach and lead at the college level, my research is motivated by the striking fact that few Asian Americans assume visible leadership positions in postsecondary institutions, a pattern that is especially true for women. Various forces and conditions may be prompting this pattern, among them, subtle and overt forms of racism and sexism. But we have yet to understand in more intimate detail, from the Asian American women's point of view, how these forces play out in their careers, shape their views of themselves as leaders, and may be counteracted as they seek to build productive and satisfying careers. The study seeks to develop that understanding.

Background: Asian Americans in U.S. Society and Higher Education

Before describing the research problem in greater detail, we need to clarify several background questions. To begin with, who are Asian Americans? Why is a study of Asian American women and leadership in community colleges meaningful in higher education research? I begin with some background on Asian Americans in general and Asian American women in higher education specifically.

Asian Americans are persons who are "born in the United States (U.S.) of Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, South Asian, and Southeast Asians ancestry" (Nomura, 2003, p. 16).

Currently, they comprise six percent of the U.S. population and are the fastest growing racial group in the nation (U.S. Census, 2010). Asian American is a pan-ethnic and umbrella term for a large number of national groupings with different histories and cultures but who share common experiences of racial discrimination, xenophobia, and anti-immigrant bias in the U.S. As such, Asian American is a social construction created by Asian American groups in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and also adopted by the U.S. Census, which incorporated Pacific Islanders as well (Espiritu, 1992). The "appropriate" classification of race and ethnicity has been controversial because such classifications are used by the federal government to determine access to health, education, and other resources, and to gauge political power in terms of political leadership and community representation, and hence carry policy implications (Espiritu & Omi, 2000).

The development of the categorization of "Asians" by the U.S. Census illustrates how this classification has evolved and the social and political reactions toward the group this term represents. In the 1800s, Asian Americans were identified as "colored," as there were only two categories (white/colored) in the U.S. Census (Gibson & Jung, 2005). In 1870, the category, "Asians," first appeared to track Chinese immigrants working on the transcontinental railroad and in other manual labor in California. After the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882 (the first race-specific law to exclude a group of immigrants from the U.S.), Japanese immigrants were encouraged to fill the low-skill labor gap and a Japanese category then appeared (Espiritu & Omi, 2000; Gibson & Jung, 2005). Responding to increasing numbers of immigrants from Asia, the U.S. Census also added "Filipinos, Koreans, and Hindu" in 1930 and 1940 data (Espiritu & Omi, 2000). Interestingly, in regard to the classification of Asian Indians, they were classified as "Hindu" in 1930 but became "white" after World War II, only to be renamed as "Asian Indian"

in 1980. Pacific Islanders were added in 1960 with the categories of "Hawaiian" and "Part Hawaiian" (Espiritu & Omi, p. 49). Such examples demonstrate that "race" for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders has been socially constructed; the concept is not fixed but ever evolving. Nonetheless, race issues severely impact the lives of Asian Americans as well as other minority groups.

Despite their cultural and historical differences from Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders were first included in an Asian American category. It seemed convenient for the U.S. Census to add Pacific Islanders to the Asian American category, as Pacific Islanders were fewer in number and presumed to share some similar characteristics. Moreover, for a time, both Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, especially during the 1970s and 1980s, sought to join together to build pan Asian Pacific American coalitions for political visibility and strength. More recently, the Pacific Islander community and its leaders have advocated for a separate racial category in order to distinguish their unique political relationship with the U.S. and to have their unique concerns addressed, rather than being subsumed within the much larger Asian American community (Espiritu & Omi, 2000). Beginning in 2000, the U.S. Census separated out Asian American and Pacific Islander data. In addition, under pressure from Asian American and Pacific Islander communities for disaggregated data to enable their distinct groups to be better identified in policy and resource allocations, the Census now collects data separately on 24 groups of Asian Americans and 24 groups of Pacific Islanders. This study mostly focuses on Asian Americans in the aggregate, however, where possible, differentiates by Asian American ethnic subgroups to reflect the conditions of specific communities.

The 24 Asian American subgroups identified by the U.S. Census include those whose historic homelands range from India to Bangladesh, Bhutan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam (U. S. Census, 2010). These Asian American subgroups are diverse and complex in their national and ethnic backgrounds, religions, language, immigrant generation, class, and education. Examining language use alone reveals much diversity within the "Asian Americans" category and its subgroups, with more than 300 languages spoken among Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (The National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education [CARE], 2010).

The majority of Asian Americans are descended from three waves of immigrants. The first group (1840-1930) consisted mostly of Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino males who helped to build the railroads, worked in mining and forestry, and developed the agricultural and fisheries economies. Few Asian American women immigrated during that time (Takaki, 1998). The second wave occurred after the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act (the Hart-Cellar Act), which transformed the Asian American population by eliminating anti-Asian restrictions on immigration and providing annual quotas for Asian states. It also favored family reunification and created economic visas for health professionals, engineers, scientists, and other highly educated people – a brain gain for the nation – as well as low-skill semi-literate labor willing to fill vacant positions. Consequently, a sizable portion of immigrant Asian Americans currently works in low-paying or low-status services (e.g., as cooks, wait staff, or textile sewing machine operators) (Berdahl & Min, 2012).

Such socio-economic differences within the Asian American population and immigration pattern continue to this day. The third wave of immigrants (1975-1990) is comprised largely of refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, who were displaced as a consequence of U.S. wars in Southeast Asia. Refugees do not willingly choose to leave their home and families. Their adjustment includes dealing with personal trauma, loss of family members and community, and years in refugee camps (Avakian, 2002; Hune & Chen, 1997). Asian Americans of the twenty-first century are descendants of these three waves and are joined by new Asian immigrants each year with a wide range of national, educational, cultural, and class backgrounds.

Growth of the Asian American population is reflected in their increased presence in higher education institutions. Like all other U.S. racial/ethnic groups, over the past four decades Asian Americans have pursued college degrees in increasing numbers. In 1979, only 198,000 Asian American were enrolled as college students. By 2009, that number had increased five-fold to over 1.3 million. Among Asian American undergraduate students, women comprised 52.7% in 2010, a number that has continued to rise (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2011a). Estimates indicate that by 2019, there will be approximately 1.7 million Asian American students pursuing college degrees (CARE, 2011).

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2009a), from 1998 – 2007 the number of Asian American women obtaining doctorate degree increased by 107%. Table 1 shows the number of Asian American women who attained doctorates in their leading fields of study during 2010 (Chen & Hune, 2011; Huang & Yamagata-Noji, 2010).

Table 1

Asian American Women's Doctoral Degrees Earned in Top Five Fields of Study, 2010.

Field of Study	Degrees Earned
1. Biological sciences	1,161
2. Non-science Education	360
3. Chemistry	288
4. Psychology	236
5. Electrical Engineering	229

Note: The data were drawn from the National Science Foundation's Survey of Earned Doctorate (SED). (2010).

Moreover, Asian American women have become faculty and administrators as well as students. However, their representation here is significantly smaller (Table 2).

Table 2

Asian American Women Faculty and Administrators, 2009

Primary Occupation	Number
Faculty (instruction/research/public service)	36,073
Administrative/Executive/Managerial	4,181

Note: The data were drawn from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2009b). They were not disaggregated and hence include Pacific Islanders, but not nonresident Asians.

In spite of such an increase, educational attainment has not translated into Asian American women's visibility in leadership positions. Asian Americans comprised less than one percent of U.S. college presidents in 2007, with the majority (78 percent) being male (Chen & Hune, 2011; Huang & Yamagata-Noji, 2010; Ryu, 2010). Moreover, while tenure attainment is the traditional pipeline for obtaining academic leadership positions (King & Gomez, 2008), Asian American women remain underrepresented as tenured faculty and administrators despite their wide variety of doctoral degree attainments and qualifications (Chen & Hune, 2011; Huang & Yamatata-Noji, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2009a). In essence, Asian American women, more than Asian American men, experience barriers that contribute to leaks in the higher education pipeline. Chen and Hune (2011) define the "leaky pipeline" as a "loss of talent that occurs at different stages when individuals fail to advance or leave higher education institutions whether by their own choice or because they are not (re) appointed" (p. 164).

Although leadership may be defined and exercised in a variety of ways, I take particular notice in this study of women's access to and actual assumption of formal leadership positions, especially at the "executive" level – such as dean, president, or chancellor – in postsecondary institutions. Here certain trends are clear. Although women have increased their participation in higher education (Department of Professional Employees, 2010; Pew Research Center, 2010) over the past four decades, Asian American women, as well as other women of color, still lag far behind white women in leadership positions (Boggs, 2007; Chen & Hune, 2011; Opp & Gosetti, 2002). This trend holds true for community colleges, a sector of higher education generally viewed as more democratic and more successful than four-year universities in promoting all women into administrative positions (Amey, 1999; Eddy & Cox, 2008; Tedrow & Rhoads, 1999;

Townsend, 1988; Valverde, 2011). However, the reality is that women's career advancement is not as prevalent in community colleges as it is presumed to be (Dougherty, 1994; Lester & Lukas, 2008). In 2010, only nine Asian American women held positions as presidents/chancellors of community colleges nationwide (Huang & Yamagata-Noji, 2010). In Washington State in 2011, only 2 out of 34 community colleges presidents were Asian American women (Spokane Halls and Whatcom Community Colleges). In 2012, that number dropped to one (Whatcom Community College). Numerous researchers point out, perhaps as a condition contributing to the leaky pipeline, that Asian American women, like most women, experience a chilly climate, or unwelcoming environment in colleges and universities (Chen & Hune, 2011; Hagedorn & Laden, 2002; Maramba, 2011). A chilly climate consists of a "myriad of small inequalities that by themselves seem unimportant, but taken together create a chilling environment" (Sandler, Silverberg, & Hall, 1996, p. 1). Microaggressions, as well as microinequalities – daily, sometimes seemingly "innocent" instances of unfairness that people of color experience – impose a barrier to women's personal and professional development and their full participation and career advancement in university life. I provide further details on the chilly climate and microaggressions/microinequalities (hereafter microaggressions) in chapter 2.

Statement of the Research Problem

Although Asian Americans are a visible racialized minority group in U.S. higher education, they remain an understudied group in higher education research, which renders their issues and concerns largely invisible (Committee of 100; Suzuki, 2002). One reason for the lack of adequate study of Asian Americans is that Black/White binary paradigms have dominated

research on racial and ethnic groups in the United States (Hune, 1998; Kim, 1999). Being

neither Black nor white, Asian Americans are perceived as a non-racial group or "racial middle"

(O' Brien, 2008); thus, "Asian Americans are cast outside the peripheries of normalcy" (Ng, Lee,

& Pak, 2007, p. 95). Moreover, the dominant societal view of Asian Americans casts them as a

successful model minority group that does not experience racial prejudice and discrimination

(Lee, 2009; Museus & Kiang, 2009; Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2007a; Teranishi,

2010). Consequently, colleges and universities have frequently and systematically excluded

them from diversity hires because Asian Americans are not considered a racial group that can

contribute to showcasing diversity (Huang & Yamagata-Noji, 2010; Smith, 2009).

The term "model minority" refers to a socially constructed notion depicting Asian

Americans as naturally smarter and culturally more hard-working than other minority groups and

do not experience racial discrimination (Chou & Feagin, 2008; Lee, 2009; Shen, Wang &

Swanson, 2011; Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2007a; Suzuki, 2002). As a result of its

prevalence, higher education institutions also view and treat Asian Americans as a model

minority (Chou & Feagin, 2008; Hune, 1998; Suzuki, 2002; Teranishi, 2010), adhering to the

construct's narrative, which insists that Asian Americans do not need any help in higher

education issues since they are more successful than whites (Lee, 2009; Maramba, 2011; Suzuki,

2002; Teranishi, 2010).

This notion of model minority stems from two major sources: mainstream media

coverage and U.S. Census data. In the media, Asian Americans have been declared a racial

success story in U.S. higher education throughout the post-Civil Rights era. For example, a 1966

U.S. News & World Report article lauded Asian Americans as a minority group "winning wealth and respect by dint of its own hard work – not from a welfare check" (cited in CARE, 2008, p. 2). Despite efforts by Asian American scholars and Asian American communities to counter the model minority myth, once again, 40 years later in May 2006, a *New York Times Magazine* column entitled, "The Model Students," declared that "stellar academic achievement has an Asian face." Moreover, "others would be fools if they did not learn from these perfect students" (cited in CARE, 2008, p. 2). Thus, a longstanding stereotype persists well into the present to the detriment of Asian American students who struggle to achieve.

Similarly, limitations of U.S. Census data continue to reinforce the model minority myth. First, it reports, "Almost one-half of the Asians had a bachelor degree or more education" while the population is less for any other racial group ("The Asian American Community – Asians, 2004," p. 17). These sources of information suggest the "success of all Asians," but the Census does not reveal the holistic realities of Asian Americans in the U.S. For instance, the Census data does not specify where all Asian Americans obtained their college degrees. Educational data conflates recent Asian immigrants' degrees obtained in their home countries with degrees earned by Asian Americans in the U.S., hence distorting overall Asian American degree attainment (Hune & Chan, 1997). Such aggregate data on Asian Americans masks the low educational attainment of particular Asian American ethnic groups, such as Cambodians, Laotians, and Hmong, who have little education and face "risk factors, such as income level, language, occupations, and poverty levels" (Museus & Kiang, 2009, p. 7).

Second, aggregated U.S. Census reinforces the model minority myth by implying that Asian Americans enjoy the highest household income of any racial or ethnic group. A closer analysis of Census data, however, reveals that Asian American families have more wage earners than white families, which helps explain the above and white males as a whole earn more than non-whites or women who possess similar educational qualifications. The majority of Asian Americans also live in metropolitan areas, such as Los Angles, New York, San Francisco, Honolulu, Chicago, Seattle, and Houston, which tend to have a higher minimum wage (CARE, 2010; U.S. Census, 2010). As was the case in the higher education example above, the tendency to use only aggregated Census data is misleading in assessing the economic well-being of Asian Americans. Disaggregated data exposes poverty and other inequalities, for example, when researchers and the public media consider Southeast Asian American subgroups' income (e.g., Cambodians, Laotians, and Hmong); they find they earn significantly lower wages than the whites or other racial minority groups (Asian American Center for Advancing Justice, 2011).

Takaki (1998) characterizes such depictions of Asian Americans in the mass media and U.S. Census as "master narratives" – that is, simplistic yet dominant accounts purporting to explain how things are – that perpetuate white privilege and promote racial hierarchy. In short, the model minority myth "is used to silence and contain Asian Americans even as it silences other racial groups" (Ng & Lee, 2007, p. 416). As the examples above indicate, many Southeast Asians do not fit the model minority role, as they are viewed and treated more like Blacks rather than a model minority (Ng, Lee, & Pak, 2007). Yet, this master narrative continues to perpetuate in media, politics, education, and inter/intra-racial discussions, and to obscure the realities of Asian Americans, which are far more complex.

In addition to the model minority myth, Asian Americans are also stereotyped as "perpetual foreigners," despite the fact that many are U.S. born and raised, and some are several generations American (Hune, 2006, 2011; Kim, 1999; Suzuki, 2002; Yu, 2006). In this regard, Asian Americans "evoke" foreignness because they are racially non-white and hence do not fit the images of "real" Americans (Hune & Chan, 1997). Such perceived foreignness also leads to "othering" (Vargas, 2000) – that is, distancing and tokenizing imposed by the majority in higher education institutions, which leads to isolation and marginalization, especially for women and women of color (Hune, 2006; Li, 2006; Turner, 2002). Li and Beckett (2006) summarize that Asian American women in the academy are treated as "strangers" in their own workplace due to race and gender stereotypes, such as perceived language difficulties (e.g., accent discrimination), leadership styles (e.g., lacking authority), over-feminization images (e.g., cute, passive, small), a "chilly climate" for women, white privilege, "male values," and "Euro-centric male norms" (Chen & Hune, 2011, Inkelas, 2006; Sue, 2010; Teranishi, 2010; Turner, 2002, Vasquez & Daniel, 2010). For instance, because mainstream narratives frequently suggest that Asian Americans, despite many being U.S. born, are to be perceived as foreigners (e.g., lack of Western culture) and a group lacking leadership skills (Berdahl & Min, 2012; Hune, 1998; Woo, 2000), they are often ignored in the leadership literature (Sy, et al., 2010). Being seen as an outsider or a stranger is cited as a problem inhibiting career advancement, job security, as well as career satisfaction for Asian American women (Sue, 2010). Because mainstream U.S. society regards Asian Americans as foreigners and second-class citizens at best, Asian Americans in general receive unequal treatment in job training and hiring (Huang & Yamagata-Noji, 2010; Hyun, 2005).

To challenge the model minority myth and perpetual foreigner stereotypes in higher education, several scholars and practitioners advocate disaggregating data for all Asian American groups (Buenavista, Jayakumar, & Misa-Escalante, 2009; Hune & Takeuchi, 2008; Ng, Lee, & Pak, 2007; Teranishi, 2010). Moreover, these sources have demonstrated through both quantitative and qualitative findings that white privilege fosters racism and stereotypes toward all people of color, including the model minority and perpetual foreign stereotypes for Asian Americans (Bok & Bowen, 1998; Chen & Hune, 2011; Huang & Yamagata-Noji, 2010; McGowan & Lindgren, 2006; Pittman, 2010; Steel, 1997; Suzuki, 2002; Teranishi, 2010). To further investigate the impact of white privilege and racism on Asian Americans lives, a number of studies document the hostile climate and discrimination Asian Americans encounter in the workplace and in public spaces, including higher education institutions (Berhahl & Min, 2012; Chou & Feagin, 2008; Hune, 2011; Inkelas, 2006; Kumar & Dasgupta, 2010; McGowan & Lindgren, 2006; Ng, Lee, & Pak, 2007; Suzuki, 2002; Sy et al., 2010; Teranishi, 2010; Wang, Leu, & Shoda, 2011; Wei, Heppner, Ku & Liao, 2010). Asian Americans, especially Asian American faculty, encounter more limited pathways to higher salaries than do white faculty in higher education institutions (Lee, 2002). The recent Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACH) report (2008) has found that Asian American faculty members are less satisfied than white colleagues in regard to being treated fairly at work.

The Situation Facing Asian American Women

Asian American women experience these adverse conditions in an especially acute form. While both Asian American men and women experience racism, Asian American women are

"often perceived and treated with both negative racist and sexist stereotypes" (Homma-True, 2010, p. 152). Asian American women face an "unequal situation" due to multiple intersections of inequality, especially gender and racial stereotypes (e.g., meek, quiet, and small), as well as hierarchical differences of class, language, and citizenship. For instance, Asian American women faculty "are differently raced, gendered, and deemed foreign" by whites (Hune, 2011, p. 309). Chen and Hune (2011) provide an intriguing example of intersections of race and gender. White women full professors are more likely than Asian American male full professors to be considered for a presidency. This example suggests that a preference for whiteness prevails over the predominance of the male gender. While both white women and Asian American women may share gender discrimination and a chilly climate, white women do not suffer from racism (McIntosh, 2008). Faced with the multi-faceted oppression of being raced and gendered, Asian American women hold a unique position in their workplace. As such, they are frequently misunderstood, undervalued, overlooked, and passed over for promotion (Chen & Hune, 2011; Chon, 1995; Yamagata-Noji, 2005; Wong, 2002).

Scholars define such microaggressions as daily messages and exchange experienced by people of color that subtly degrade them (Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2007b). "Microaggressions," which I will discuss more fully in chapter 2, constitute part of an unwelcoming climate for women that often manifests as self-limiting professional goals, a sense of lost identity, and low self-esteem (Boatwright & Egidio, 2003; Lee, 1998; Museus & Kiang, 2008; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). As shown in Chen and Hune's (2011) example, these treatments also lead to "gendered racism," (Pittman, 2010, p. 184) or gendered microaggressions, in which Asian American women suffer from intersections of race and gender oppression.

Naturally, racism and sexism together affect people in a different way than racism alone. Some Asian American women faculty also experience accent discrimination and marginalization as foreigners (Hune, 2011). Mainstream U.S. society places Asian American women in an extreme binary of typecasting in regard to their sexuality in conjunction with treating them within a racially ambiguous manner. Asian American women are either "china dolls," "madam butterfly," or "Suzy Wong," all of whom are exoticized, exploitable, and not taken seriously in professional roles by whites; if, on the other hand, they are ambitious, confident, and competent, they are cast as a "dragon lady," or "tiger mom" (Humma-True, 2010; Pittman, 2010; Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2007a). Neither alternative is favorable for Asian American women who want to succeed and aspire to take leadership roles (Huang & Yamagata-Noji, 2010). Altogether, such stereotyping and biases render Asian American women relatively invisible and more isolated than both white women and Asian American men in leadership endeavors (Chen & Hune, 2011).

Recent literature has confirmed that these findings are also interconnected to Asian American women's leadership and mentoring experiences (Chen & Hune, 2011; Homma-True, 2010; Huang & Yamagata-Noji, 2010). Fewer Asian American women are selected for formal leadership training by their administrations; thus, Asian American women are systemically disfranchised from leadership and mentoring opportunities (Chen & Hune, 2011; Huang & Yamagata-Noji, 2010). Moreover, despite the extensive literature available on mentoring, little is known about the mentoring relationships of Asian American women (Austria & Austria, 2010). As institutional data does not generally break down by both race and gender, it is difficult to accurately access the mentoring data pertaining to Asian American women (Chen & Hune,

2011). Qualitative studies do reveal that Asian American women have a difficult time finding suitable mentors because of most mentors' perceived cultural barriers with Asian Americans (Berdahl & Min, 2012; Chou & Feagin, 2008; Yamagata-Noji, 2011). In addition, due to misconceptions of Asian American women, those who do obtain mentors frequently find their mentoring experience less effective, or find it difficult to develop meaningful mentoring relationships with their mentors (Maramba, 2011; Liang et al., 2006).

The inequalities of race, gender, and other power dynamics have posed a stark reality for Asian American women in U.S. in the twenty-first century, as in past history (Wang, Leu, & Shoda, 2010). As a result, Asian American women remain less visible in leadership roles in higher education and encounter neither the expectation nor encouragement to become leaders (Chen & Hune, 2011; Committee of 100, 2005; Homma-True, 2010; Suzuki, 2002, Teranishi, 2010) despite demonstrated strengths in intellect and talent. The situation invites the overarching question or problem: Why are Asian American women severely underrepresented as formal leaders? This is the question – one examined by several notable scholars from various angles (Chen & Hune, 2011; Yamagata-Noji, 2010) (see chapter 2), and the one I engage as my central focus.

Purpose of Study

As I noted in a previous section, the notion of leadership is mostly absent from mainstream narratives concerning Asian American issues (Berdahl & Min, 2012; Chen & Hune, 2011; Hardy-Fanta, et al., 2006; Huang & Yamagata-Noji, 2010; Hune, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2011; Jung & Yammoarino, 2001; Kawahara, 2007; Suzuki, 2002; Sy et al., 2010; Teranishi, 2010;

Yamagata-Noji, 2005). A short film, the *Vision Test* (Wes, 2002) based on interviews conducted by the Committee of 100, a non-profit Chinese American organization, illustrates this point vividly. During this six minute documentary, a woman is asked questions such as "Who is better suited for the president of the United States?" and "Who can be the best CEO of a company?" Not even once are Asian Americans, let alone Asian American women, named or considered. This phenomenon is reflected in leadership patterns observable in U.S. colleges and universities.

The purpose of this study is to examine leadership aspirations and career paths of female Asian American faculty and administrators in community colleges with a focus on the campus climate and the availability of mentoring (or lack of it) in their experiences, goals and professional advancement. In regard to campus climate, I devote particular attention to racial microaggressions that "are brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to people of color because they belong to a racial minority group" (Sue et al., 2007a, p. 72). Mentoring is a popular institutional practice in higher education that often leads to promotion and leadership positions for mentees (Girves, Zepeda, & Gwathmey, 2005). In considering how Asian American women negotiate their leadership goals and mentoring experiences, the study also considers the role of microresistance, which is a constructive strategy to cope with microaggressions. Given the limited studies on Asian American women, I also devote attention to the "intersectionality of othering" (Crenshaw, 1991); that is, I consider how an analysis of multiple identities, such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, ableness, language, citizenship/immigration status, class, religion, and age provide a more nuanced examination of opportunities and challenges encountered by Asian American women.

To investigate these matters, I conducted a qualitative study with 11 Asian American women in three community college institutions, using extensive interviews and analysis of documents, such as resumes, tenure documents (faculty only), email correspondence, community college websites, and college and local online newspapers as well as observations of meetings and campus visits where pertinent. I selected community colleges as sites of research because they bring unique characteristics to higher education. Compared with four-year universities in the U.S., community colleges are seen as secondary and less visible, but also as more egalitarian in their treatment of women (Cohen, Brawer, & Lombardi, 2008). Hagedorn and Laden (2002) claim, "despite the prevalence of research literature with clear evidence of a chilly climate for many women college students, faculty, and administrators, little attention has been given to the status of women faculty at community colleges" (p. 69), especially in relationship to community college climate and Asian American women.

Conceptual Framework: Critical Race Feminism

Critical race feminism (CRF) was derived from critical race theory (CRT) (Sulé, 2009), which was introduced and developed by notable scholars in the 1970s, such as Derrick Bell, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Richard Delgado, Mari Matsuda, and Patricia Williams, to provide alternative legal perspectives to combat racism and work for social justice. The views of these scholars of color stemmed from a belief that the U.S. is a racialized, white privileged society (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Lipsitz, 2006; Stanley, 2007). In this type of society, race and racism favor master narratives to explain majority/minority dynamics and further invite an accumulative interlocking system of privilege for the racial majority (Lipsitz, 2006; Stanley, 2007). Lipsitz

(2006) and Stanley (2007) argue that white privilege is a racist agenda that mostly benefits whites, especially white males. CRT was extended from the field of law to other disciplines such as Women's Studies, Ethnic Studies, and Education to counter the dominant narratives in those fields (Ladson-Billings, 1998; López, 2003; Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009; Vue & Newman, 2010). CRF shares intentional focus on issues of both race and gender but also carefully examines intersectionality of other identities. It also holds that race and gender are inter-related and are "endemic" to this society (Crenshaw, 1991; Sulé, 2009). They are endemic because both affect how non-majorities (e.g., non-whites, women, women of color) are viewed through a distorted lens.

I draw upon critical race feminism as the guiding conceptual lens for my study because it challenges hegemonic notions of race, gender, sexuality, and other categories (Wing, 1997a, 1997b). I define hegemonic notion as the white-male centered ideology that governs social relations and perpetrates inequalities for women of color. CRT places women of color "at the center rather than in the margins or footnotes of the analysis" (Wing, 1997b, p. 948). Moreover, in a manner similar to critical race theory, critical race feminism utilizes counter narratives, which I discuss below, to articulate women's and minorities' points of view as legitimate voices. By doing so, CRF helps to examine how hegemonic power dynamic are reinforced and negotiated among Asian American women in higher education. By emphasizing qualitative research paradigms, it also helps to investigate the nuanced lives of Asian American women that are often made invisible to others.

Intersectionality in Critical Race Feminism

Most notably, Sojourner Truth's (1851) "Am I a woman?" challenged the lack of intersectionality with women's and human rights in early U.S. history (Butler, 1997). In 1989, Kimberlé Crenshaw, a critical race black feminist, coined the term, intersectionality, to explain the complexities of lives of women of color (Alexander-Floyd, 2010). As a conceptual framework, CRF asserts that intersectionalities are an integral part of the reality of women's and men's lives in the U.S. For instance, although African American women face different stereotypes than do Asian American women, both women face "multidimensional experience of oppression" (Alexander-Floyd, p. 810).

CRF facilitates evaluation of the intersections of multiple variables, and "uncover[s] the patterns of disempowerment of gender" (Parker & Lynn, 2009, p. 152) that are harmful to women of color. Race and gender and other social identities (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, ableness, language, citizenship/immigration status, class, religion, and age) matter in leadership (Ospina & Su, 2009). Because Asian American women are both racialized and gendered, it is important to find a conceptual lens that emphasizes the intersectionality of being othered (Bowleg, 2008). Asian American women's lives in higher education cannot be fully described without using the lens of intersectionality.

Thus, the usage of intersectionality in critical race feminism demonstrates that Asian American women hold multiple and complex identities, and that they do not mirror simplistic images of Asian American stereotypes. CRF closely examines the effects and impacts on both being an "Asian" and a "woman," and challenges the hegemonic views imposed by the dominant

society. It is also transformational as CRF legitimizes and values alternative perspectives of Asian American women as a crucial tool to combat oppressions and multiple marginalities.

Counter Narratives

In higher education, Asian American women have been employing counter narratives to critique master narratives and oppression (Chin, 2010; Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2007a). This particular counter resistance and "microresistance" lens that focuses on structural inequality has also been widely used by feminists of color in U.S. history (hooks, 1990). Asian American women, like many women and women of color, have been active in voicing structural inequality and resisting discrimination and oppression in U.S. history (hooks, 1990; Homma-True, 2010; Hune, 2011).

Therefore, in order to study Asian American women in light of their own perspectives, it is crucial to use a lens that honors their complex identities through their narratives. Most importantly, CRF helps to center women's narratives and perspectives as core agencies to challenge and counter balance patriarchal narratives that maintain mainstream status in the U.S. Critical race feminism advocates a story telling experience and narratives (individual stories) to respect voices often ignored in higher education (Matsuda, 1995, Sulé, 2009; Wing, 1997b), and by doing so, it legitimizes counter narratives as a core research method. As have other ethnic studies, Asian American Studies has used counter narratives to analyze and "to elucidate the Asian American experience of both overt and covert forms of racism" (Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2007a, p. 73). By applying CRF into this study, I intend to focus on counter narratives in order to demystify Asian American women in higher education, and I seek to examine Asian

American women's perspectives and voices more directly and to refute some of the stereotypical notions that target Asian American women. Demystifying what stereotypes are imposed on Asian American women is an important part of the study, as stereotypes often create conflicted images and expectations regarding who certain people are and who they ought to be (Steel, 1997).

Moreover, critical feminist theorists' work seeks to combat all forms of oppression via use of a feminist lens. By applying CRF, I want to mirror what I learn from Asian American women participants to help end various forms of oppression. Masuda (1995) writes, "Those who have experienced discrimination speak with a special voice to which we should listen" (p. 63). With this conviction, my role as a researcher was to describe both the individual and collective voices of Asian American women in this study. Furthermore, by centering on Asian American women's individual experiences, I honor their ownership of their processes of leadership, mentoring, and career development. The notion of ownership is significant for Asian American women because they have been perceived not to own legitimate access to power and leadership in higher education.

My primary data consists of 11 Asian American women's narratives in three community colleges. Through multiple face-to-face informal interviews, I constructed counter narratives from the accounts my participants provided me of their involvement in microaggressions, microresistances, mentoring relations, and leadership. Allen and Eby (2007) emphasize that the depths and complexities of an experience come from each person's perspective.

There are several advantages of counter narratives in research. First, "They [counter narratives] can build community among those at the margins of society by putting a human and familiar face to educational theory and practice" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2009, p. 142). First, this belief supports the idea that Asian Americans are in fact placed at the margins, but also that illuminating their marginality may help provide a deeper understanding of educational theory. Second, counter narratives "can challenge the perceived wisdom of those at society's center by providing a context to understand and transform established belief systems" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2009, p. 142). Third, counter narratives can be used to provide a reality more grounded than the mainstream belief system. A counter narrative approach provides less simplistic binary and stereotypical interpretations of Asian American women because it utilizes insider accounts and their voices, which provide narratives different from master narratives.

Fourth, counter narratives are also used as a tool of microresistance among women of color, so as not to be co-opted by the dominant mainstream and to provide alternative academic voices that are often overlooked (Stanley, 2007). Fifth, the counter narrative approach helps discredit caricatured and simplistic views of Asian American women and introduces multilayered factors, such as race, ethnicity, language, gender, socioeconomic status, and sexuality, further debunking master narratives. For example, it would be illogical to claim scientifically that one specific cultural tradition, such as Confucian philosophy, supplies a belief or culturally specific trait that drives all Asian Americans successful, when in fact South Asians are often Hindu, Muslim, or Christian and many Southeast Asians are Buddhist. Rather, a counter narrative approach helps highlight that such an essentialist master narrative is both intellectually unsophisticated and dehumanizing. Finally, counter narratives also challenge

biological and cultural interpretations of minorities, enabling people of color and women to use them to combat various strains of oppression (Delgado Bernal, 1998). Asian American women's racial otherness, stereotypes, sexuality, and invisibilities (Hune, 1998; Suzuki, 2002; Teranishi, Ceja, Antonio, Allen, & McDonough, 2004) define who they are perceived to be, and these matters play out in their working lives and institutional contexts (Hune, 2006; Lee, 2009; Yee, 2009).

I examined each participant's story by analyzing the words she used to describe the culture or often multiple cultures in which she participated (Lester, 2008). This approach helped me to understand how each Asian American woman navigated and negotiated her identity within the specific institution she served (Turner, 2007). Requesting that each participant articulate her story allowed her to express and take ownership of her reality. These stories entailed, in large part, counter narratives as the women unpacked their perceived invisibility and stereotypes that were specific to them, giving voice to how their daily experiences of microaggressions and microresistances affected their views on leadership, mentoring, and identity in their work place. The counter narratives also helped each participant to reflect on her experience and legitimate her voice as she was carefully listened to and had her reflections recorded in an academic work.

To summarize, there are three advantages for using CRF as a conceptual lens in this study. First, despite the perception of community colleges as egalitarian and more minority-centered, studies show that their leadership models and decision-making processes remain hierarchical and male dominated (Amey, 1999; Townsend, 2006; Townsend & Twombly, 2007). Second, a CRF lens helps unveil structural but often "hidden" practices and policies entrenched

in community colleges at a systemic level. Third, CRF focuses on activism and resistance by using the intersectionality phenomenon as a tool (Matsuda, 1995). By studying Asian American women, my focus is to shed light on their activism and resistance in a white masculine institution, a topic particularly noteworthy since Asian American activisms are seldom discussed in mainstream America (Kawahara, 2007).

Research Questions

The overarching concern driving this study is the desire to understand more deeply the forces and conditions – both external and internal – that explain why so few Asian American women assume leadership positions in community colleges, despite their growing numbers in the faculty ranks. To extend scholarly understanding of this phenomenon, I looked carefully at the ways multiple factors operate "intersectionally" in these women's working lives and in their career trajectories. Given that my goal is to explore this issue from the vantage point of the women themselves, five specific questions structure my research:

(1) How have institutional cultures, such as the chilly climate and more specifically institutional microaggressions, influenced the career paths of Asian American women?

(2) How, if at all, do Asian American women use microresistances to combat microaggressions?

(3) What forms of career-related mentoring (if any) do Asian American women faculty and administrators receive, either formally or informally? How does this mentoring shape

their views of leadership roles, their aspirations for assuming such roles, and their

identities as current or future leaders?

(4) How, if at all, do Asian American women faculty and administrators define and practice

leadership in community college?

(5) How, if at all, does the "intersectionality of othering" influence Asian American

women's ideas about their own leadership practice or potential and their experience in

formal or informal leadership roles?

Terminology. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, Asian American is a socially

constructed term encompassing a diverse and complex community of over two dozen ethnic

groups. Although the term "Asians" and "Asian Americans" are frequently used

interchangeably, in this study I use the term, "Asians" to designate Asians who are here

temporarily (such as international scholars), and "Asian American" for those born and raised in

the U.S., or young children born in Asia but brought up primarily in the U.S. (1.5 generation), or

any individuals who self-identify as "Asian Americans" rather than "Asians."

Significance of the Study

In this study, I seek to fill a gap in extant research literature on Asian American women

in higher education and specifically their leadership experiences in community colleges. This

study is important for at least five reasons. First, Asian American women in higher education

institutions have been disfranchised due to oppression and the application of stereotypes to them.

By interviewing 11 Asian American women, who represent a number of different backgrounds,

the study offers the opportunity to assess commonalities and differences among them, especially the extent to which traditional interpretations of Asian American women as quiet and passive are accurate. Because Asian American women are perceived as other, the idea of "otherness," (Harding, 1991) brings rich academic perspectives. Having 11 Asian American women in this case study offers the possibility of alternative and multiple perspectives to enrich our understanding of their academic experiences. Second, this study highlights the perspectives and voices of Asian American women in community colleges, which have been neglected as a site of higher education research. In particular, the study seeks to explore leadership aspirations and attitudes as viewed and articulated by Asian American women who experience microaggressions and employ microresistances on a daily basis. Third, by applying the CRF framework and using the women's own narratives, the study demonstrates that Asian American women can hold multiple identities and desires for their future, and that they do not mirror simplistic images of Asian American stereotypes. I assess the participants' awareness of Asian American women stereotypes to illustrate how each woman took different and creative steps to break down stereotypes. Fourth, by applying CRF to Asian American women's situation, the study begins to suggest answers to the overarching question of why are there so few Asian American women leaders in community colleges. Finally, because the model minority myth is closely related to power and white and male privilege, the study challenges a systemic pattern of oppression in community colleges rooted in whiteness and maleness. My study questions what is really meant by "equality for all" in higher education. This is important because, by 2050, the U.S. will have a minority majority and an increase of the non-white population, especially among our youth (Girves, et al., 2005; U.S. Census, 2004). Among them, one out of ten will be Asian American,

which mandates that more attention be given to their higher education experiences (Museus & Chang, 2009).

Organization of This Document

In chapter 2, I provide the literature review for this study. The methodology and research design are discussed in chapter 3. In chapters 4, 5, and 6, I provide an analysis of my findings. The final chapter, chapter 7, will discuss the implications and limitations of the study, as well as suggest future research directions.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Miles and Huberman (1994) explain that conceptual frameworks are "simply the current version of the researcher's map of the territory being investigated" (p. 20). In the previous chapter, I explained how I have situated my study in the conceptual framework of critical race feminism. I also draw on concepts and findings from three bodies of literature concerning: (1) the "chilly climate" in postsecondary institutions with an emphasis on microaggressions, microinequalities, and microresistances; (2) the history and development of mentoring, especially for women of color; and (3) the development of leadership, particularly from a feminist viewpoint.

I utilize three bodies of literature as a conceptual infrastructure to engage in a deeper analysis of my participants' perspectives and voices. I also explore how these research literatures may be interrelated in the development of Asian American women's paths in mentoring and leadership in the less explored space of community colleges.

The Chilly Climate:

Microaggressions, Microinequalities, and Microresistances

Hall and Sandler's (1982) work on the "chilly climate" articulates how women generally are less supported in higher education than their male counterparts, which often manifests in women's lack of professional development support, limited mentoring (if any), lower wages, as well as incidents of sexual harassment and gender discrimination. In the U.S. prior to the civil

rights era, overt racial and gender discrimination was evident for women. In the post-civil rights era, as women began to obtain some legal protections and rights, especially through affirmative action and Title IX, advocates for racial and gender equality brought attention to the more subtle forms of discrimination, such as microaggressions, that women and people of color experience.

Microaggressions and Asian American Women

Pierce first coined the term, microaggressions in the 1970s (Sue et al., 2007a) and defined these as "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative racial slights and insults that potentially have harmful or unpleasant psychological impact on the target person or group" (Sue et al., 2007a, p. 72). Microaggressions, in short, are part of the chilly climate women encounter in higher education institutions.

Several examples from chapter 1 indicate that Asian American women experience a chilly campus climate and microaggressions (Chen & Hune, 2011; Delucchi & Do, 1996; Hagedorn & Laden, 2002; Maramba, 2011; Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal & Torino, 2007a; Turner, Gonzáles, & Wood, 2008). For most Asian American women, microaggressions occur in everyday life (Sue, 2010; Sue et al., 2007a; Wang, Leu, & Shoda, 2011), and some are not even micro but macroaggressions. Hune's (2011) study on Asian American women faculty in the classroom cites countless examples of how microaggressions and race and gender dynamics of white (mostly male) students delineate Asian American women as caricaturized second-class citizens. Such microaggression also manifests in less positive teacher evaluations of Asian American women faculty by white students (Hune, 1998). The most common themes in Asian

American women's encounters with microaggressions involve being treated as foreign, exotic, a second-class citizen, and invisible (Sue, 2010; Sue, et al., 2007a). Some microaggression themes are similar to those of the model minority myth and perpetual foreigner stereotypes, as they both deny Asian American women full legitimacy as an "American." Not only Asian American women faculty but also Asian American students experience these microaggressions. Nine Asian American college students in Wang et al.'s (2011) study reported that "feeling invisible, being perceived as a foreigner, and being treated like a second-class citizen" (p. 168) affected their daily college lives and their academic performance. Cumulative effects of microaggressions often create "a negative aftermath of stress in Asian Americans' daily functioning, such as in their school/work, thinking/judgment, or interpersonal relationships" (Wei, et al., 2010, p. 136). Although white women also experience gender microaggressions, Asian American women report greater negative emotional intensity dealing with racial microaggressions (Hune, 1998; Wang, Leu, & Shoda, 2011). However, few studies examine how Asian American women cope with racial microaggressions (Wei, Heppner, Ku, & Liao, 2010) in relationship to mentoring or leadership roles. This is because "despite the long documented history of racism toward Asian Americans, there has been a lack of attention paid to prejudice and discrimination directed against them" (Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2007a, p. 72).

Microaggressions, which may originate from an individual and/or institution, exist due to power and privilege imbalances in mainstream society. Sue et al. (2007a) further categorize microaggressions into three types:

(1) *Microassaults* are "explicit racial derogations that are verbal and nonverbal, or environmental attack meant to hurt the person of color" (p. 73), e.g., calling someone "Chink" or "Jap." According to Sue et al. (2007a), microassaults are similar to traditional forms of racism that are "often deliberate and conscious act by an aggressor" (p. 73). Similarly, calling Asian American women "exotic" or "Oriental" is a conscious, objectifying act of racism as well as sexism.

(2) *Microinsult* is "a behavioral action or verbal remark that conveys rudeness, insensitivity, or demeans a person's racial identity or heritage" (p. 73), e.g., a white person saying to a person of color that the most qualified person should get this job (implying that people of color are not qualified). For Asian American women, being completely ignored by their peers or being talked over in a meeting is a form of microinsult.

(3) *Microinvalidations* are "actions that exclude, negate or nullify the psychological thought, feelings or experiential reality of a person of color" (p. 73), e.g., a white person saying to an Asian American, "You speak English very well," (implying that she/he must be a foreigner) or "When are you going back home?" (assuming home is not the U.S., making one an alien in own land).

Frequently, all three forms of microaggressions are present at all times. Although microinsult and microinvalidations may be subtle, Asian American women constantly receive social negative messages that they are not the "real" members of U.S. society (Sue et al., 2007b).

Based on Sue et al.'s (2007a) study of ten Asian American students (nine of whom were women) in counseling psychology, eight major themes emerge.

a. *Alien in own land*. Asian Americans are often asked their origin of birth, whether they are the first generation or fourth generation Americans. The implication is that Asian Americans cannot be "real" Americans (p. 76).

b. *Ascription of intelligence*. Asian Americans feel "trapped" when they are forced to confront stereotypes, such as "You people always do well in school" (p. 76). The "trapped" feeling might be a frustration of not being allowed to explore other possibilities, not being able to seek help, or being denied help.

c. *Denial of racial reality*. All participants discuss many microaggressions in relation to the invalidation of their experiences with discrimination. As Suzuki (2002) also puts it, Asian Americans are seen as outwhitening whites and/or "new whites" (p. 76), which invalidates racial realities of Asian Americans.

d. *Exoticization of Asian American women*. Asian Americans are often considered to be exotic. The sexualization and subjugation of Asian American women denies their intelligence and leadership capabilities as well as their feminist values.

e. *Invalidation of ethnic differences*. This idea conveys that "all Asians are the same" (p. 76) and minimizes differences among interethnic Asian American groups that are integral to their culture and identity.

f. *Pathologizing cultural values/communication*. The dominant society subscribes to the idea that there are "Asian values" and "Asian ways" to communicate. Often times, such an assumption emphasizes quietness and modesty of Asians. In terms of

traditional leadership values in U.S. society, so-called Asian ways are perceived as negative values for leadership roles (p. 76-77).

g. *Second-class citizenship*. As I noted previously, whites are believed to be sole holders of "Americanness." Asian Americans frequently report being served after whites at a restaurant, and/or they being seated at the rear of a restaurant because Asian Americans do not fit the "best" image as clients (p. 77).

h. *Invisibility*. Sue et al. (2007a) cite an example of an Asian American who was asked "to appoint a person of color" (p. 77) for a committee. Asian Americans are not only invalidated as non-whites, but they are also not considered minorities who bring added values of diversity to a committee.

All forms of microaggression negatively affect Asian American women who seek to find a suitable mentor or to assume a leadership role. The exoticization of Asian American women (item d. above) is a prevailing racialized and gendered stereotype that poses a unique problem for Asian American women in their professional development. When any forms of microaggression occur in Asian American women's daily lives, most participants express strong and lasting negative feelings of "belittlement, anger, rage, frustration, alienation, and of constantly being invalidated" (Sue et al., 2007a, p. 77). These feelings also lead to feelings of being trapped and invisibleness. Furthermore, all microaggressions perpetuate the model minority myth of Asian Americans (Sue et al., 2007a). The nuanced and masked forms that microaggressions often assume make articulating their cumulative damage to someone's professional choices and paths difficult.

Microinequalities and Asian American Women

Rowe (2008) defines microinequalities, as "apparently small events which are often ephemeral and hard-to-prove events which are covert, often unintentional, frequently unrecognized by the perpetrator, which occur wherever people are perceived to be different" (p. 45). Similar to microaggressions, microinequalities are subtle and accumulative. These effects "can have deleterious consequences" (Allan & Madden, 2006, p. 688) for all women, such as lower self-esteem and poor academic and work performance. Microaggressions and microinequalities are two main causes of lower self-esteem and internal oppression in women of color (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Internal oppression, in short, causes women of color to dismiss their self-worth (Shen, Wang, & Swanson, 2011). Shen et al.'s (2011) Internalization of Asian American Stereotypes Scale (IAASS) concludes the group deals with "internalized stereotypes, low self-esteem, and poor psychological well-being" (p. 284). In other words, the more acts of discrimination that Asian American women experience, the more they express having low self-esteem.

Microinequalities also manifest in responses to the appearance and images of Asian American women and other women of color. A comment such as "She can't represent us in Washington, she isn't even pretty [assuming white is most beautiful]" (Rowe & Slone School of Management, 1990, p. 3) is a good example of how easily microinequalities can be directed at someone for being non-white. Sorting out discriminatory comments from "innocent remarks" is often a subtle process. However, it takes considerable energy and time for women of color to process and negotiate these remarks (Rowe & Slone School of Management, 1990).

Microresistances as a Response

The cultural theorist, hooks (1990) affirms that, "resistance is the struggle we [women of color] can most easily grasp" (p.15). Microresistances are a way to oppose microaggressions and inequalities that women, especially women of color, face in an everyday "chilly climate" (Hall & Sandler, 1982). Research continues to show that many women of color experience a hostile learning and work environment (Sulé, 2009; Turner, 2002). Asian American women faculty who experience intersectionality of "multiple marginalities" (Turner, 2002, p. 74) strive to cope and fight against these daily aggressions by seeking mentors, helping students, and finding other alternative ways to connect (Hune, 2011). Such women often provide extra (and often informal) curricular services for students of color (Baez, 2000) as part of their microresistance work. In other words, microresistance, which involves incremental daily efforts to challenge white privilege and the gender status quo, is how women of color cope with microaggressions.

Looking at microresistance through a feminist lens, X. Liang (2006) asserts that microresistance by women of color is "an asset" and "a tool for advocating racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity" (p. 99). In other words, practicing microresistance by examining reality in a non-dominant way forges a constructive tool to deal with microaggressions. Women of color tend to use this technique as a method of survival and collaboration, which serves as their intellectual framework as scholars. Hune, Maramba, and Lee, all Asian American feminist scholars, offer good examples of such intellectual work that resists and challenges racist and sexist paradigms in academia. Their works also demonstrate that "systems of knowledge are never complete" without alternative and creative voices (Cole, 2009; p. 25). McCarl (1990)

interprets this experience as positive resistance. Scholars who possess double or multiple visions have more complete access to knowledge of women's and other's experiences. Lorde's (1984) famous quote, the "master's tool will never dismantle the master's house" illustrates the importance of honoring women of colors' experiences and knowledge as a tool for resistance (p. 111). For Asian American women, demonstrating and articulating counter narratives of microresistance is one of the proactive ways to address social inequality and the intersectionality of othering.

Mentoring

In the chilly climate just described, it might matter a great deal what kind of supports Asian American women receive in charting their career journeys, especially in relation to the nurturing of their leadership aspirations. Mentoring is an invaluable resource for career development (Brown, 2005). Mentoring is also relational, as is leadership, and "demographic factors, such as gender, age, and education" influence the experience of mentoring (Brown, 2005). When discussing either mentoring or leadership, it is hard to separate them, as the leadership literature generally includes mentoring as a key factor toward creating successful leaders (Brown, 2005; Ebbers, Conver, & Samuels, 2010; Eddy & Cox, 2008; VanDerLinden, 2004). Mentoring helps establish a mentee's leadership identity, while a solid leadership identity construction with a mentor promotes success. When mentoring is done effectively, mentors provide psychological or personal support by modeling and counseling as well as providing career-related guidance through educating and consulting (Kram, 1985). Mentoring, therefore, can be a tool to combat microaggressions.

Benefits of mentoring are not exclusive to mentees. Mentoring is beneficial to mentors

and organizations. Mentees often become more productive with their work, gain networking

skills and career eminence, and become able to handle stress better (Allen & Eby, 2007; Johnson,

2007). Mentors also provide them with visibility, exposure, and support for mentees. On the

other hand, mentors gain personal satisfaction, new ideas, and rejuvenation, as well as earning

mutual support (Johnson, 2007). Organizations can expect higher quality and positive

citizenship behavior and better productivity from both mentees and mentors (Johnson, 2007).

Recognizing the importance of emerging leadership through mentoring, many

universities and colleges have created college-wide mentoring programs to address members of

groups historically marginalized in order to reveal their potential at higher levels (Driscoll et al.,

2009; Ragins & Cotton, 1999); however, little success has been yet reported for minority

members of institutions (Smith, 2009). While many studies identify mentoring as a significant

aspect of leadership development (Brown, 2005; Cawyer, Simons, & Davis, 2002; Daniel, 2007;

Davidson & Foster-Johnson, 2001; Driscoll, 2009; Fennell, 1999; Garza Mitchell & Eddy, 2008;

Hassan, Dellow, & Jackson, 2010; Holmes, Land, & Hinton-Hudson, 2007; Neilson &

Suyemoto, 2009; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; Strathe & Wilson, 2006; VanDerLinden,

2004), the interpretation of what mentoring really entails and the function of mentors differs

among them.

Quinlan (1999) critiques the mentoring relationship by asserting it "has been

hierarchical" (p. 33) as well as simply unfair for women and individuals of color. Mentors

(mostly white males) often seek mentees whose characteristics resemble their own (Austria &

Austria, 2010; Paludi, Martin, Stern, & DeFour, 2010; Scanlon, 1999; Shakeshaft, Brown, Irby, Grogan, & Ballenger, 2007), allowing them to perpetuate their male-centered white privilege. Liang, Tracy, Kauh, Taylor, and Williams (2006) argue that this kind of hierarchical and exclusive mentoring model has not worked well for women of color's career development. Mullen (2009) quotes Darwin's (2000) "cycle of power" to describe a mentoring relationship wherein power circulates and recycles back to mentors and mentees. This power cycle also has been perceived as an "old boy's club" because the members of a dominant culture have often benefited from such mentoring investment (Mullen, 2009), and those who are selected and mentored consequently become additional powerful leaders in organizations. The exclusive mentoring process is problematic for women and women of color because mentoring exhibits a close relationship to creating formal leaders in organizations, a process from which they are too frequently marginalized.

Successful Mentoring for Women of Color

In higher education, especially community colleges, mentoring and leadership development are even more crucial because more women of color choose community colleges over four-year universities as their professional paths. Research literature on mentoring women faculty of color is still limited in scope (Muñoz, 2010; Quinlan, 1999; Singh & Stoloff, 2003; Twombly, 1993; VanDerLinden, 2004). However, several studies on mentoring women of color report that the mentoring relationship is a crucial part of their professional development (Austria & Austria, 2010; Bernstein, Jacobson, & Russo, 2010; Stanley, 2005). As with leadership, "race, gender, sexuality, and class add complexity to a developing mentoring relationship" among

women of color (Denmark & Klara, 2010, p. 14), who also express frustration at not finding culturally suitable mentors (Paludi, Martin, Stern, & DeFour, 2010; Stanley & Lincoln, 2005). Many women of color find their traditional forms of mentoring less satisfactory (Austria & Austria, 2010; Blake-Beard, 1999; Driscoll, 2009; Pratt, 2010) as race, gender, and language disparities can intercede in the relationship (Bernstein, Jacobson, & Russo, 2010).

What does successful mentoring look like for women of color? Stanley and Lincoln (2005) suggest that successful mentoring for women of color includes "trust, honesty, a willingness to learn about self and others, and the ability to share power and privilege" (p. 47). Although some research shows that cultural factors matter (Austria & Austria, 2010; Forbes, 2002), Stanley and Lincoln argue that cross-race and cross-gender mentoring can also work well, provided the mentor possesses an adequate degree of cultural competency, because mentoring is a matter of trust and commitment, not of what one looks like or what culture is shared (Kurtz-Costes, Helmke, & Ülkü-Stiner, 2006; Stanley & Lincoln, 2005).

Mentoring Issues for Asian American Women

Although trust and commitment in mentoring are crucial for women of color, little is known about Asian American women and mentoring, in large part because Asian American women are frequently excluded from an institution's mentoring program (Austria & Austria, 2010). Yet, what is known is that Asian American women continue to lack access to senior faculty's mentoring and lag behind in obtaining leadership roles (Hansman, 2002). In most workplaces, having appropriate credentials is not enough to gain a leadership position. In fact, no one really rises to a leadership role without other powerful leaders and mentors advocating for

them; thus, mentoring amounts to an essential but missing ingredient for highly qualified Asian American women in their career paths and quest for success (Moore, 1982). Despite being unable to find "ideal" mentors, the majority of Asian American women share a strong desire to form a mentoring relationship at work (Catalyst Inc., 2003).

To explain a lack of mentoring success among Asian American women, several studies address cultural barriers and biases by whites as a potential problem (Chen & Hune, 2011; Hyun, 2005; Kawahara, 2007; Liang, et al., 2006). In essence, white mentors often perceive Asian Americans differently. For instance, Asian American faculty members are not perceived as "mentorable" because, for many white administrators, Asian Americans "evoke" foreignness (perpetual foreigner stereotype), and therefore do not correspond to their leadership image (Chen & Hune, 2011, p. 119). For an Asian American woman, when she is perceived to be "too non-Asian (too American)," she may be criticized for being overly assertive and may hit a "bamboo ceiling" (Hyun, 2005), but when she is seen to be "Asian (a foreigner)," she also will likely not be mentored by many leaders. Kawahara (2007) names such phenomenon as "Asian womanhood," a term whereby she explains that both racism and sexism bring out extreme feminine images of Asian American women. In such situations, Asian American women are often seen as sexualized objects and not competent professionals, such as academic leaders. Extreme feminine images are "racialized gender stereotypes" imposed on Asian American women's images of sexuality (Young, et al., 2006). For instance, Asian American women frequently report sexual harassment by white males as well as contra-power sexual harassment by white male students (Li & Beckett, 2006; Pittman, 2010). Specific conflicts between the stereotyped image of being extremely feminine and the nature of power and privilege interfere in

the mentoring dynamics of Asian American women. This conflict is further exacerbated by the fact that Asian American women, and women in general, report low self-esteem and often doubt their own intelligence (Rheinneck & Roland, 2008; Sax, 2008). Consequently, such women are less likely to perceive themselves as leaders.

Successful Mentoring for Asian American Women

Visibility, exposure, and support can benefit Asian American women who are often misunderstood and dismissed at work (Chen & Hune, 2011). Homma-True (2010) elaborates seven distinct Asian American cultural values that might help others to mentor Asian Americans. Although there are different degrees of individuality and collectivism among various Asian Americans' groups, many Asian Americans often put emphasis on: (1) education (as a way to counter and cope with discrimination); (2) respect for elders; (3) interpersonal harmony; (4) deference to authority figures; (5) conformity to family and social norms; (6) collectivism; and (7) placing others' needs ahead of one's own (Homma-True, 2010, p. 153). Although these values differ from the mainstream emphasis on individuality, self-promotion, and assertiveness (Homma-True, 2010), cross-cultural mentors with skillful cultural competencies may offer one way to provide more effective mentoring strategies for Asian American women.

Other studies suggest that multiple mentoring, co-mentoring, peer-mentoring, and online mentoring, all of which tend to be more equitable and egalitarian, ought to be made available to Asian American women (Girves, et al., 2005; Green, 2008; Holmes, Land, & Hinton-Hudson, 2007; Philipsen, 2008). Méndez-Morse (2004) also introduces a "distant role model" as a form of alternative mentoring. A distant role model is someone who sets examples for others, but

does not necessarily have much direct contact with mentees. Capable role models would also be those who can "bridge two worlds" (Vogel & Rude, 2011), which may be beneficial for Asian American women. Recent studies by Asian American women scholars and leaders concur that effective mentoring helps build Asian American women mentees' leadership identity and leadership aspirations (Chen & Hune 2011; Kawahara, 2007; Yamagata-Noji, 2010). Acklesberg et al. (2009) add that mentoring is also used as a "common strategy" for a more supportive work environment to prevent a chilly climate and microaggressions. Johnson (2007) claims that when mentoring is implemented successfully, organizations benefit from higher quality and positive citizenship behavior as well as better productivity by all employees. Thus, these scholars indicate that mentoring – similar to leadership development – is intentional and relational; the mentoring process is about teaching mentees the institutional culture and providing guidance and support (Acklesberg et al., 2009; Chen & Hune, 2011; Johnson, 2007; Kawahara, 2007).

Leadership: Ideas, Practices, and Aspirations

Yukl (1989) claims that unlike mentoring, which has a substantial history, leadership research is a relatively nascent field of study that still has a long way to go in order to develop fully. The leadership paradigm is a social construct and learned process; yet, leadership studies in the past have mainly focused on trait theories (Chin, 2010; Derue, Nahrgang, Wellman & Humphrey, 2011). Trait theorists believe that leaders, who have been primarily white men, ought to possess certain characteristics, such as decisiveness, a tall figure, and intelligence (Watkins, 1989). More recently, however, James MacGregor Burn's (1978, 2003) work on transformational and transactional leadership has gained acclaim and influenced organizations

and educational leadership programs. According to Burns and other leadership scholars, transformational leaders are identified as more relational and empowering individuals who are viewed as "givers" (Bass & Avolio, 1994, p. 44) in an organizational culture, while transactional leaders are more task-and-reward oriented (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Burns, 2003; Eagly & Carli, 2007). Interestingly, transformational leadership characteristics correspond to traits often associated with women (Fennell, 1999). Stout-Steward's (2005) study of female community college presidents' leadership patterns and behaviors enumerates five practices of exemplary transformational leadership: (1) modeling the way; (2) inspiring a shared vision; (3) challenging the process; (4) enabling others to act; and (5) encouraging the heart.

Relational Leadership

Several feminist scholars have described the relational leadership style, which is "about facilitating the work of others who share the power and authority to collaboratively craft direction for the district [or an institution]" (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 10). Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) add that a collaborative leadership style is relational, not belonging to one individual or a specific group. They, as well as Fennell (1999), discuss leadership as shared practice. Fletcher (2004) also discusses the idea of "distributed" leadership, whereby leadership work is interdependent, not independent (p. 648). Folta et al.'s (2005) qualitative study of 16 women leaders affirms that women view collaboration as a key discourse in leadership. Similarly, Philipsen's (2008) qualitative study of women faculty provides a case study of a woman faculty member who put in extra intentional efforts to reach out and connect with her peers. In essence, relation-centered leadership is the opposite of top-down leading, and requires

a community of followers beyond one single leader (Foster, 1989). Without followers who initiate actions with a leader, actions will not take place, because no one is able to lead alone. In addition, Foster (1989) suggests a distinct difference between leaders and leadership. Leaders may initiate movements or changes, but followers must help leaders to "make a path" (Foster, 1989, p. 60). Leadership operates as "a consensual task, a sharing of ideas and a sharing of responsibilities where a leader is a marker of a movement only" (Foster, 1989, p. 61). Thus, leadership involves creating a legacy for a larger community. Leading is not an individual act because, without their followers, leaders alone cannot make any changes. Similarly, leadership is an organizational quality in which personal resources create leadership, rather than being confined to one individual (Ogawa & Bossert, 1995).

Transformational Leadership

Shields (2010) differentiates transformative leaders in that, "transformative leadership begins with questions of justice and democracy, critiques inequitable practices, and addresses both individual and public good" (p. 559). Additionally, transformative leaders respect and encourage cultural differences as a positive force for education. In other words, such leaders strive to cultivate transformative cultural competencies, which center upon the belief and action to transform society through ongoing and proactive cultural learning and advocacy for social justice. Shields (2010) also illustrates Leithwood's (2010) four dimensions of transformative leadership: (1) setting directions; (2) developing people; (3) redesigning the organization; and (4) managing the instructional program (p. 569). In essence, transformative leadership takes actions to help change traditional structural organizations by empowering others through education. It is important to note that critical race feminism aligns most closely with transformative leadership.

Both critical race feminism and transformative leadership point out the powered and privileged hegemonic society that serves the select few, and call for actions to deconstruct and reconstruct racial and gendered cultural norms.

Although transformative leadership might be more gender and race inclusive, historically, leadership and power have been viewed as one; most leadership writings and practices still imply that traditional leadership positions are formal, hierarchical, and masculine (Davis, Steele, & Spencer, 2005). Thus, leadership and power are still often perceived as male currency, and some even argue that women and women of color do not take on leadership due to their fear of being successful (Blackmore, 1989). Being professionally successful is still not a widely achievable norm for most women due in part to the chilly climate and microaggressions they frequently encounter. Moreover, leadership has been perceived as an individual quality or trait considered lacking in women and women of color (Foster, 1989; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). Interestingly, in examining the close relationship between gender and the psychology of success, other studies have found that both genders share the "fear of success model," with male participants showing a fear of success similar to that of female participants (Blackmore, 1989).

Alternative Leadership Practices

Self-confidence, however, prevails as a central component of leadership identity. Leaders are often perceived to be confident individuals. However, other scholars have begun to challenge such a notion (Blackmore, 1989; Forbes, 2002; McGee Banks, 1995; Tong, 2009; Wallin, 2010) as not only stereotypically race and gender biased, but non-scientific (Yukl, 2010). Moreover, leadership is "multifaceted concept" (Wallin, 2010, p. 5), which emphasizes layers of collaboration and processes.

Many feminist scholars suggest that "power through (ability to help others achieve their goals)" and "power sharing" (Fennell, 1999. p. 26) are more suitable models for inclusive and democratic leaders for both women and men than the traditional "power over (control and dominance) model." Fennell (2002) cites Foucault's (1961) theories of "holding on [to power] while letting go," (p. 99) in which power exists in relationship. In addition, Ragins (1997) defines power as the "influence of one person over others… [through an] interpersonal relationship" (p. 485). Not all individuals with power are leaders, as leaders must be "relational, collective, and purposeful" (Burns, 2010, p. 18). Such qualities reflect a less hierarchical manner (Fletcher, 2004), while the competencies they entail are learned (Hassan, Dellow, & Jackson, 2010). Power emerges through "relationship, interdependence, giving, caring, and maturity" (Fennell, 1999, p. 28), as well as mentoring others. Thus, by such definitions, relationship is the source of power.

Recently, even among male dominated fields, such as in Master of Business Administration (MBA) programs, leadership styles have been evolving towards more relational models, such as teaching and coaching models (Eagly & Carli, 2007), rather than focusing on a way to "power-through." Closely examining a number of leadership studies, Rice and Austria (2007) have concluded that leadership qualities do not really belong to a particular sex, because leaders are not naturally born but mentored and created. Other researchers also have found that being a successful leader has nothing to do with a particular race, ethnicity, gender, and/or sexual orientation (Burns, 2010; Rice & Austria, 2007). Similarly, Eagly and Carly's Harvard Business School study (2007) has shown that "psychological portraits of good leaders are neither masculine nor feminine but includes traits from both of these domains" (p. 29). Building on the

transformational leader concept, Rice and Austria (2007) have argued that transformational leaders must possess two key elements: multicultural competencies and feminist collaboration. Both skills require abilities to be culturally inclusive and to negotiate various cultures; thus, by this definition, cultural competence is a core element of successful leadership.

The Paradox of Gendered Leadership

Despite such findings from various researchers to refute the patriarchal nature of leadership, women and men still give less credit to women leaders, regardless of their qualifications. This treatment is especially true for women of color whose positions are suspected to be a product of affirmative action or a token hire (Smith, 2009; Turner, 2002). And women in general still tend to choose male leaders over female counterparts for leadership roles as long as the leader is white (Chen & Hune, 2011; Eagly & Carli, 2007). There is also an assumption and stereotype that even if women acquire power, they will wield that power in "female ways" (Keohane, 2007, p. 70), which are considered inferior to male mainstream ways.

Whatever theories of leadership are currently presented, Fletcher (2004) cautions, "if the new leadership model is understood as simply a new approach [or new language]" (p. 657) in a traditional sense, it only dilutes the existing dominant culture. Since the larger issue of leadership discourse is still gendered, "doing leadership" (Fletcher, 2004, p. 648) implies acting like a white and middle-class male in a gendered organization. McGee Banks (1995) further argues that although trait theories and traditional male characteristics of leadership ideologies may not carry the same authority and credibility they once enjoyed, "[white] men still have currency and continue to influence contemporary views of women leaders" (p. 66). Fletcher

(2004) echoes that, unless we challenge the "underlying belief system" (p. 657) of "current work practices, structures, and norms" (p. 658) and develop new concepts of leadership expectations, any conceptual change is just a fad or fancy rhetoric that only further damages the work of innovative social change. Needless to say, such damages are not only a women's issue, but also a men's issue (Giannini, 2001) because men too often have to follow internalized "hegemonic masculine" gender expectations (Forbes, 2002, p. 274) that are socially imposed. Davidson and Cooper (1992) name it the "cultural trap" (p. 272) for both women and men as they are "ill prepared" to accept such organizational changes (Forbes, 2002, p. 272).

Asian American Leadership Organizations: LEAP & ACLF

Asian American and Pacific Islander leaders and their communities have raised serious concerns about their limited presence in leadership roles in all sections of U.S. society (Committee of 100, 2005). Numerous feminist literatures on leadership discuss how women and communities of color, including Asian American communities, frequently draw upon collaboration and coalition building as ways to lead (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eddy & Cox, 2008; Fennel, 2002; Huang & Yamagata-Noji, 2010; Tsunoda, 2001). Yamagata-Noji (2005), a community college administrator and co-director of Leadership Education for Asian Pacific, Inc. (LEAP), echoes that Asian Americans are perceived as more collective and consensus building than non-Asian American leaders. She claims it to be a strategy Asian American leaders adopt to build commonality, community, and capacity for change. Several scholars also explain that being bicultural or multicultural and constantly experiencing multiple cultures on a daily basis, Asian American leaders as well as other minority leaders are keenly aware of the importance of

cultural competency (Kawahara, 2007; Muñoz, 2010; Opp & Gosetti, 2002; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; Tsunoda, 2001) and the need for transformational leadership for social change.

Hence organizations can also play a role in leadership development. In the next section, I discuss two organizations, Leadership Education for Asian Pacific Inc. (LEAP) and Asian Pacific Islander Community Leadership Foundation (ACLF), both created by Asian American and Pacific Islanders to develop leaders from within their communities. Both emphasize Asian American and Pacific Islander centered leadership training that fosters relational and shared leadership styles with commitment to creating transformative leadership ("LEAP: Growing Leaders," 2005; "ACLF," n.d.). Both also insist that such changes require a clear vision and shared leadership.

Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics, Inc. (LEAP). LEAP was founded in 1982 in California, where the majority of Asian Americans live. The mission of LEAP is "to achieve full participation and equality for Asian and Pacific Islanders (API) through leadership, empowerment, and policy" ("LEAP: Growing Leaders," 2005). LEAP strives to create culturally relevant workshops to train leaders. As of 2012, more than 125,000 people from colleges and universities, as well as community and student organizations, government agencies, and Fortune 1000 companies across North America, have participated in their programs. Guided by the philosophy that Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders can retain their own cultures and lead, LEAP helps participants develop new skills to be effective leaders in the dominant society as well as in their own communities. LEAP focuses on both increasing the number of Asian

American and Pacific Islander leaders and guiding them to be proactive participants and leaders of the global society.

Yamagata-Noji (2005) emphasizes a critical need for Asian American leadership training, especially in situations where institutions, as well as Asian Americans themselves, have internalized the model minority myth (e.g., reserved, dependable, passive), and thus do not recognize themselves as "leadership material" (p. 181). LEAP provides Asian Americans with specific career advancement trainings and considers such preparation essential since many Asian Americans do not advocate for themselves via their own accomplishments and/or seek out mentors to gain more leadership experience, even when doing so is appropriate or necessary (p. 117). Notable Asian American women scholars have articulated that such efforts are critical for Asian American women who severely lack leadership representation (Chen & Hune, 2011; Yamagata-Noji, 2005).

Asian Pacific Islander Community Leadership Foundation (ACLF). Another organization, ACLF, was founded in Washington State in 1998 by Asian American and Pacific Islander civic organizers, government officials, and educators who felt an urgent need to recruit and develop emerging Asian American and Pacific Islander leaders in Washington State. ACLF's mission is "to promote social, economic, and political justice by training and supporting a strong, sustainable community of civically engaged leaders that reflects the diversity of local Asians and Pacific Islanders" ("ACLF," n.d.). Like LEAP, ACLF seeks to develop new leaders to be culturally responsive and professionally equipped to engage in various leadership activities,

such as community organizing, public speaking, and fund raising. In addition to these trainings, both organizations feature extensive mentoring components as a part of their curriculum.

ACLF's leadership program explains that each new member is assigned to an Asian American or Pacific Islander mentor who can help guide the mentee's professional development. Mentors are often administrators in higher education and/or community or government leaders who have already paved crucial paths for the future Asian American and Pacific Islander mentees. Upon completion of trainings, participants are encouraged to connect with other participants and continue to generate a widening professional network. Some alumni are asked to "pay forward" by mentoring others, or to participate in workshops as guests or experts in their field ("ACLF," n.d.).

Asian American Women and Leadership

Leadership in the U.S. has been frequently associated with masculinity, "power," and "command," as well as "a high level of self-confidence" (Blackmore, 1989; Chin, 2010; Kim, 2009). These attributes do not necessarily describe "typical" Asian American women. Furthermore, self-promotion, which is often linked to self-confidence and male characteristics, is perceived by most Asian Americans and Latinos to be in poor taste (Austria & Austria, 2010). Thus, in the U.S., the traditional notion of leadership promotes white (race) male (gender) privilege. Given the prominence of such a notion, Chen and Hune (2011) argue that Asian American women are still treated as "guests" of higher education institutions. Women of color are viewed negatively for not behaving stereotypically; in the case of Asian Americans, being confident and strong rather than passive and coy, gets one dismissed as a "dragon lady," which is

an unfavorable connotation (Hune, 1998). In a traditional leadership scheme, Asian Americans also face a "plexiglas ceiling," such that, in their pursuit of higher or administrative positions, they are too often rejected and bounced back (Yamagata-Noji, 2011. p. 178). Moreover, the dominant culture views Asian Americans as diligent, yet often labels them as "nerds" or exotic "foreigners" (Chou & Feagin, 2008, p. 9). Berdahl and Min's (2012) study on stereotypes reveal that Asian Americans, especially East Asian Americans, are depicted as "cold" and "nondominant" (p. 141). This type of categorization further translates into 'all' Asian Americans being perceived as poor communicators; thus, they cannot possibly be capable and effective leaders, because leaders communicate well. Based on a traditional image of leaders, Asian Americans' model minority image negatively affects their aspirations for leadership (Berdahl & Min, 2012; Huang & Yamagata-Noji, 2010).

However, Jung and Yammarino's (2001) comparative analysis has found that Asian Americans show a predilection for transformational leadership qualities. Transformational leaders make great mentors because they tend to use their personal resources, such as "time, knowledge, and experience," to "transform followers" (Yukl, 1989, p. 211). Based on transformational leadership theory, Asian Americans are well suited for advanced leadership positions. Significantly, the ability to build relationships emerges as a common thread among women and Asian American women leaders in higher education, and such a skill is ranked highly for effective leadership (Bordas, 2007; Kawahara, Esnil, & Hsu, 2007; Huang & Yamataga-Noji, 2010).

Other studies show that Asian American women perform as leaders just as capably as others (Chen & Hune, 2011). LEAP and ACLF supply clear examples of such leadership models. Individual women have also broken through stereotypes to become high-ranking and highly influential leaders. For instance, Rose Y. Tseng was chancellor of the University of Hawaii- Hilo from 1998 to 2010, and Renu Khator was a past president of the University of Houston who became the chancellor of the Houston System in 2007 (Chen & Hune, 2011). Patsy Mink (1927-2002), a congresswoman from Hawaii, peace activist, and co-author of Title IX, as well as human rights activist Yuri Kochiyama (1921-), or proactive organizations, such as Pacific Asian American Women Bay Area Coalition (PAAWBAC), all offer excellent examples of transformative leaders and organizations that challenge power and privilege through empowering others.

Summary

Microaggressions, microresistances, mentoring, and leadership, are interrelated and evolve together. In this chapter, I have used three bodies of research literature to connect and ground my study of Asian American women's leadership aspirations and goals in community colleges. In this study, I explore how microaggressions constitute part of the chilly climate. Regarding Asian American women, microaggression themes consist primarily of variations on the model minority myth and perpetual foreigner stereotypes. While various microaggressions persist in Asian American women's daily lives, mentoring is often employed as a "common strategy" (Acklesberg, Hart, Miller, Queency, & Van Dyne, 2009, p. 92) to establish a more supportive work environment and to counteract microaggressions and the chilly climate. Yet,

studies on Asian American women and mentoring remain scarce. Similarly, most traditional leadership literature does not include Asian American women. However, individual Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and their communities have raised concerns about their limited presence in leadership studies, as well as their roles as leaders, and have formed organizations to develop leaders.

To respond to such issues and to promote more inclusive leadership paradigms, recently feminist leadership theorists have begun to pay closer attention to feminist visions of leading, such as those incorporating relational, shared, "power with," equity, and social justice (Burns, 2010; Fennell, 1999; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Ragins, 1997; Shieds, 2010). Challenging traditional top-down leadership paradigms based on masculine traits and advocating instead for multiple visions and practices of leadership are emerging forms of microresistance raised by women and women of color. Such models of leadership can be described as "nonhierarchical, collective, inclusive, egalitarian, flexible, co-operative, participatory, appreciative of multiple perspectives, transformational, and relational" (Shapiro & Leigh, 2007, p. 137). Moreover, these leadership models can be fostered by a mentoring model that is more egalitarian. As an example, peer-to-peer mentoring or more informal mentoring have been suggested as an alternative model for women of color, including Asian Americans, because they involve less hierarchical relationships (Stanley & Lincoln, 2005).

In chapter 3, I describe the methodology of the study using critical race feminism as the conceptual framework. In it, I discuss the Research Strategy and Design, Participants, Selection of Study Sites, Data Collection, Data Analysis, and the Study Design.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Stereotypes, multiple marginalities, and microaggressions rooted in white privilege contribute to Asian American women being frequently misunderstood and disfranchised. Consequently, they are too often excluded from the mainstream agenda in higher education discourse. Cho and Feagin's (2008) study, which included over 40 interviews has revealed that racism and stereotypes are closely embedded in the everyday lives of Asian Americans. Other studies utilized the perspectives and voices of Asian American women, faculty, and administrators to illuminate the impact of racialized sexism and stereotypes on their sense of well-being and advancement in academe (Chen & Hune, 2011; Hune, 1998; Li & Beckett, 2006). In this study, I focus on a specific sector of academe – the community college. Furthermore to explore how intersectionality of othering and stereotypes might play out in the working lives of Asian American women faculty and administrators considering and seeking leadership roles, I utilized a research design and tradition that is sensitive to nuances in people's experiences as seen from their point of view, attentive to the complexities of their working roles in specific contexts, and attuned to power imbalance.

Research Strategy and Design

Based on critical race feminism as a conceptual framework and my selected research questions, I designed a qualitative case study involving 11 Asian American women in three

community colleges (Merriam, 2009). My case study was primarily a qualitative study. Specifically, I applied a semi-structured, face-to-face interviewing approach and observations to tackle questions of access, race, gender, power, leadership, and mentoring in a "basic" interpretative tradition (Merriam, 2009), combined with a narrative analysis strategy that drew from critical race feminist research traditions which emphasize the construction of counter narratives. Through multiple face-to-face informal interviews, I first collected narratives or accounts of their experiences with microaggressions, microresistances, mentoring relations, and leadership, and then constructed counter narratives, which I explain in more detail below, through an analysis of their responses and other materials. For qualitative researchers, "reality [and knowledge] are socially constructed" (Glesne, 2006, p. 6), and I was particularly interested in the "understanding of meaning people [in my case, Asian American women] have constructed" (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). Allen and Eby (2007) also emphasize that the depths and complexities of an experience come from each person's perspective. Although Solórzano and Yosso (2009) use the term "counter-stories" rather than counter narratives, their view of how counter narratives function applies to my study. While master narratives have perpetuated the Asian American "model minority" myth, and "perpetual foreigner" status, counter narratives with respect to the intersection of othering seek to bring crucial and alternative perspectives that reach toward understanding Asian American experiences.

Qualitative research further allowed me such "discoveries" (Richards & Morse, 2007, p. 1) of the interviewees' reality and provided authority to their voices as a legitimate counter narrative and a different model beyond the "model minority paradigm" (Buenavista, Jayakumar, & Misa-Escalante, 2009, p. 79). In short, their stories (counter narratives) helped present the

reality of my participants' experiences as they perceived them. For example, because I was

looking for the implications of intersectionality in their experiences, I needed a research

approach that would help me grasp what all these attributes might mean altogether, understood

holistically. While Williams (1991) has stated, "the simple matter of the color of one's skin so

profoundly affects the way one is treated, so radically shapes what one is allowed to think and

feel about this society" (p. 256), I would add to William's quote the matter of gender. The goal

for my research study was to discover how these attributes work together with the nature of the

academic context to define my participants' leadership trajectories in community colleges.

Interviewing 11 women on three community college sites also allowed me conduct some

comparative analysis.

Participants, Sampling, and Settings

I applied a two-tiered process and criteria for selecting and narrowing down my

participants. As noted previously, I selected 11 full-time Asian American women faculty and

administrators from three community colleges in Washington. I discuss the three sites in a

separate section below. In selecting my interview sample, I looked for individuals with

sufficient opportunities for leadership and mentoring experience in higher education because

these were key themes of my research. I identified participants through an initial set of three or

four women through personal networks and snowball sampling. Snowball sampling refers to a

technique whereby one sample member, or in this case, one participant, was asked to name

additional candidates for participation; generally, the participant thought of someone she knew

personally, such a friend or colleague. Snowball sampling enabled me to find key individuals I

wished to interview (Patterson, 2003), while also gaining access to various networks of Asian American women in community colleges (e.g., sociologists, English as a Second Language (ESL) faculty, and student services). I hoped this process would prove effective in terms of setting up trusting relationships with the participants because I anticipated that some of our conversations might be personal and perhaps challenging in nature.

The full participant sample. During the initial stage of data collection, I was not so much concerned with whether or not prospective participants currently held formal leadership positions as I was with their participation (current or future) in formal and informal leadership roles, as well as their aspirations for future leadership roles. The most important criteria were that they self-identified as Asian American and worked full-time for one of the three selected community colleges, either as faculty, an administrator, or both. During the initial recruiting period, their discipline, education, household status (single, married, partner, unknown), age, language/s, and family origin were recorded, but these were not criteria for their participation.

To contact and interview the full participants sample took from June 2010 to February 2012. I visited each individual at least twice in her workplace for between 60 and 90 minutes (sometimes longer), except for one who left for a fellowship overseas after our first interview. Initially, I had 12 participants on my list, but one immediately dropped out as she told me that "it was too painful" to discuss her work situation. Her comment did not surprise me. When Stanley (2007) solicited African American faculty participants for her qualitative study, she experienced a similar situation; some declined to participate in her study because "their narratives were too painful to share" (p. 19), a response similar to the one I received, while others feared retaliation

by their white colleagues. Thus, I accepted my participant's withdrawal, but this loss reinforced for me how prevalent and damaging racism and sexism can be in higher education.

With some women, I spent extended hours interviewing and informally exchanging ideas about pedagogies and college climate. However, my main intention as a researcher was to collect as much descriptive information as possible. Although I maintained communications with all of them throughout my research period and had a distinct set of information to collect, I purposefully did not use a "one-size-fits-all" approach. My focus was to gather information based on my research questions and conceptual framework, but it did not require a completely standardized approach to the interviewing process. My ultimate goal was to gain the maximum information from each participant, either by interviewing, informally visiting, or observing classes/meetings (if applicable). As a result, I obtained multiple points of data based on their job assignments and responsibilities. I also visited their student services, library, cafeteria, and registration office to get a feel for their institutional culture and demographics. I looked for both online and on campus visuals and college materials (e.g., posters, signs, college brochures) that represented the mission and population of each college.

While I was recording my interviews, I also kept observational data in the form of field notes. I transcribed all interviews and field notes on my own. This process helped me to revisit what I heard and record nuances I remembered but had not quite captured the first time. The intention was to capture not only their spoken narratives, but also their mood and emotions during interviews and observations (e.g., meetings). I also requested their resumes, syllabi (if they taught), tenure documents (faculty only), dissertations or any published articles, meeting

agendas, and email correspondence. Participants provided such information to me via email

attachments or in person. Table 3 summarizes the current job title, last degree, origin, language,

household status, and ethnicities of each participant. The participants are listed in alphabetical

order within their specific community colleges.

Table 3

Brief Description of 11 Participants

Name	Job Title	Last Degree	Origin	Language	Household	Ethnicities
Mountain View College						
Elizabeth	Director	M.A.	U.S.	Bilingual	Married/Children	Chinese American
Miranda	Faculty	Ph.D.	China	Multilingual	Married/Children	Chinese American
Susan	Faculty	Ph.D.	Canada	English	Married	Japanese American
Beachland Community College						
April	Faculty	M.A.	U.S.	English	Married	Chinese American
Grace	Associate Dean	Ed.D.	U.S.	English	Married	Filipino American
Theresa	Director	B. A.	U.S.	English	Married/Child	Biracial (Filipino /white)
East Gate Community College						
Christy	Faculty	M.B.A.	Canada	Bilingual	Married/Children	Chinese American
Diana	Faculty	M.A.	U.S.	English	Single	Filipino American
Lily	Dean	M. A.	Vietnam	English	Partner	Biracial (Vietnamese/white)
Linda	Faculty	Ph.D.	U.S.	Bilingual	Undisclosed	Chinese American
Mary	Vice President	Ed. D.	Philippine	Bilingual	Married/Children	Filipino American

Note: Pseudonyms were used for all participants and their colleges. Ethnicities are self-

identified.

Executive leadership sub-sample. Within the set of 11 participants was a subset of women who had clear ambitions to assume a college presidency, or were positioned to aspire toward this goal. I applied a purposeful criterion sampling for this particular group (Patton, 2002). During my visits with them, I spoke with their office support staff (informally) and observed three different committee and departmental meetings. I treated these women as a subsample to further examine their actual movement toward formal leadership positions and observed closely how their leadership endeavors worked or did not work. In analyzing data from this sample, I especially emphasized one of my research questions, "How, if at all, do Asian American women faculty and administrators define and practice leadership in community college?" This question addressed the actual movement to date of specific women faculty and administrators into formal leadership positions, as well as their personal views of leadership work.

Selection of Study Sites

Although some view community colleges as more equitable, Townsend and Twombly (2007) claim that community colleges, far from being as equitable for women as they appear be, are both racialized and "gendered institutions whose practice have not always served and do not currently serve women" (p. 209), especially women of color. Equity for community colleges is largely accidental, because community colleges have been perceived as second-class institutions, while male instructors and administrators prefer to work for more elite institutions (Eddy & Cox, 2008; Shaw, Callaham, & Lechasseur, 2008; Townsend, 1998; Townsend & Twombly, 2007). Community college settings shed an interesting light not only on the institutional culture of

community colleges but also in regard to women of color, especially Asian American women. Few studies have been undertaken pertaining to Asian American women in community colleges. This dearth raises various questions about the career paths of Asian American women into administrative positions in community colleges, and the institutional conditions that support their work or movement into such positions.

I selected the community college sector for three reasons. First, community colleges are understudied in higher education research. Second, since few Asian Americans women occupy roles as administrators and full-time faculty, and even fewer assume executive leadership roles (CARE, 2010; Chen & Hune, 2011; Teranishi, 2010; Turner, 2002, 2007), a study of their opportunities or lack thereof in community colleges, which are considered to be more open and less hierarchical, might shed light on the possibilities for advancement in this sector. More specifically, I sought to examine whether the small numbers in administrative or formal leadership roles might reflect subtle or overt forms of institutional discrimination and microaggressions based on race or gender-related perceptions of Asian American women's leadership capacities, and what associated actions or policies and networks might exclude them from administrative and career advancement. The situation might also reflect a more internal dynamic within and among Asian American women, as they form or evolve their professional identities and associated career aspirations. A more complicated dynamic reflecting the interaction between images of self and career could appear, with the most immediate influences residing in mentorship and leadership experience. In addition, the situation raises questions about leadership development practices and supports, as Asian American women have encountered them, especially concerning their access to mentoring, but also for developing

leadership knowledge, skills, and identities. Third, I myself am a full-time tenured faculty member of a community college in Washington, who, over the years, has gained some working knowledge of Asian American women's lives and changing circumstances at several of the community colleges, which might be helpful when I interviewed Asian American participants and compared and contrasted their community colleges.

In determining my sample choices, my conceptual framework drove my decision toward institutional settings in which certain conditions were present that might encourage Asian American women faculty and administrators to grow in leadership aspirations and voice. Community colleges offered different versions of such an environment. The three community colleges I selected in Washington State have distinct cultural characteristics in terms of mission, size, location, average household income, student demographics, ethnicity/race of president, Asian American director report to president, and Asian American full time faculty (See Table 4). Pseudonyms are used for all campuses.

Table 4

Institutional Context for Women's Work

2010-2011	Mountain View College	Beachland Community College	East Gate Community College
Mission	Promotes educational excellence in a multicultural urban environment.	Constantly evolving educational community dedicated to providing quality learning experiences.	Student centered, comprehensive and innovative.
Size	Middle	Small	Large
Location	Urban	Rural	Suburban
Average Household Income (by zip code)	$60,843	$54,563	$100,414
Student Demographics	53% African American 19% Asian American & Pacific Islander 14% white 5% Multiracial 5% Other race 3% Hispanic 1% Native American	44% white 23% Asian American & Pacific Islander 19% African American 10% Hispanic 2% Native American 2% Other race	64% white 21% Asian American & Pacific Islander 7% African American 6% Hispanic 1% Native American 2% Multiracial
President	African American Male	White Male	White Female
Asian American women directly reporting to the president	None	6 out of 78	Not available
Asian American Full-time faculty	23 people – all genders	6 people – all genders	15 people – all genders

Note: This information is from College websites (2010), Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC, 2006), Human Resources (2011-12), and official city websites (2010).

One community college, to which I gave the pseudonym, Mountain View College, is a mid-size, urban college known especially for its diverse student body and reputation of liberalism. Mountain View College has had a legacy of student activism since the early 1970s, and was one of the first community colleges to see Asian Americans occupying formal leadership roles early on. Currently, the college has an African American male president. At Mountain View College, I hypothesized that leadership aspiration was not only a personal choice, but one the institutional culture might nurture. If a college had an institutional memory of visible Asian American or people of color acting as role models in activism or formal leadership, I might uncover insights or discoveries in terms of the Asian American women's aspirations for formal leadership there.

The second community college, to which I gave the pseudonym, Beachland Community College, is a smaller college with students from mostly lower income families of various ethnic backgrounds, including Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. Although Beachland Community College offers transfer degrees, it is also known for its professional technical programs, such as auto mechanics and hotel management. In 2008, Beachland Community College was selected as an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving

Institution (AANAPISI) [1] in the state. Similar to other Minority-Serving Institutions (MSI), the

AANAPISI program helps Asian Americans and Pacific Islander Americans to prepare better for

higher education. Since AANAPISI is a relatively new federal program enacted in 2007, it

might be difficult to ascertain whether AANAPISI status in and of itself affected the lives of

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[1] Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI) is one of the most recent Minority-Serving Institutions (MSI).

Historically, Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) students were largely ignored by the MSI discussions, as most policy makers perceived AAPI students as a "model minority" in higher education institutions. However, AAPI students face many educational challenges, just like any other minority students. To ensure an equal educational opportunity for all AAPI students, several policy makers, such as Representative Robert Underwood of Guam, Representative David Wu from Oregon, Senator Barbara Boxer from California, and Senator Daniel Akaka from Hawaii, as well as numerous AAPI organizations worked together to help implement, S. 2160, the Asian American and Pacific Isander Serving Institutions Act in 2005. However, this legislation did not come smoothly and was met with many challenges by policy makers. After years of uphill battles with legistrators and building on-going political coalitions, AANAPISI was finally created in 2007 (Park & Chang, 2009; Park & Teranishi, 2008).

The purpose of AANAPISI is to (1) manage a rapid increase of AAPI students who were enrolling in U.S. colleges and universities with educational needs, and (2) help low-income and under-served ethnic specific subgroups, such as Southeast Asian American and Pacific Islander students (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

In 2008, a notice of invitation to appply for AANAPISI grants appeared in the Federal Register, and the first 6 institutions were awarded the AANAPISI grant. One recipient was the campus I refer to as as Beachland Community College. By 2009, at least 116 institutions met AANAPISI eligibility criteria. The following year, the Department of Education designated 27 colleges and universities as AANAPISI and 15 of them received funding. In 2012, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) increased the AANAPISI's financial support to $8.6 million (U.S. Departmetn of Education, 2010).

In order to be eligible as an AANAPISI campus, the institution must have an undergraduate enrollment of at least 10% Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander, and at least 50% of the students must receive financial assitance, such as the Federal Pell Grant, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportuntiy Grant (FESOG), Federal Work Study (FWS) or the Federal Perkins Loan. AANAPISI grants provide opportunities for colleges and universities to focus on increasing the academic success and retention of AAPI student populations, and give resources that can be used for the training of both AAPI and non-AAPI populations.

Asian American women employed in such institutions. That said, the conditions that enabled

this institution to join the federal program – attention and service to a critical mass of Asian

American and Pacific Islander students – might still reflect a longer-term environment in which

Asian American women faculty and administrators would be encouraged.

East Gate Community College (pseudonym), the third community college, is a large and

middle class suburban community college with the highest rate of transfer students to four-year

universities. I selected East Gate Community College as it has one of the largest numbers of full

time Asian American staff and faculty in the community college system of Washington State. It

also has a white female president. During my research, East Gate Community College was

experiencing a critical turnover of deans and several vice presidents, and these changes might

have also affected how women and women of color saw or did not see themselves in such roles.

The large number of Asian American employees, changing of formal leadership personnel, and

woman college president might reflect alternative leadership, campus climate, or even mentoring

styles in the college culture.

Each community college setting signaled the presence of a different kind of institutional

culture and communicated to Asian Americans images of their potential leadership roles.

Together, the three community college settings represented environments in which Asian

American women faculty and administrators might have assumed that they were or were not

invited to assume formal leadership roles.

By adopting three community college sites, I applied a multi-case sampling strategy in

which I was "looking at a range of similar and contrasting case[s]" and settings (Miles &

Huberman, 1994, p. 29). I assumed that if certain events concerning Asian American women were repeated in multiple community colleges, I would have findings that were more robust. In comparing my findings with existing peer-reviewed studies regarding Asian American women faculty and administrators, I sought to "identify new leads" or "reinforce main trends" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 31). However, my multi-case sampling was not a random act, nor was I merely looking for larger samples. For data collection and analysis, I purposefully set aside information I wanted to collect with "some standardization of instruments so that findings [could] be laid side by side in the course of analysis" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 35).

Data Collection

My study relied on five sources of data: (1) initial semi-structured interviews of the full participant sample; (2) second-semi structured Interviews of the full participant sample; (3) classroom observations (faculty only); (4) document analysis at both macro (institutional) and micro (individual) levels, to capture archival information about the 11 participants and their three community college campuses; and (5) shadowing and follow-up with the executive leadership subsample. See Appendices A and B for interviewing questions.

Initial semi-structured interviews. Merriam (2009) defines a semi-structured interview as being "guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored" (p. 89), which is used to obtain certain data from each participant. However, interview protocols are not completely "predetermined." I also asked participants to choose their preferred interview locations to ensure they were confortable and secure. My goal was to describe the daily concerns and actions of each woman from her perspective in the workplace. At the beginning of each interview, I asked

her to tell me about her family and community, so that I was able to learn about her as a whole person. Clark (1998) adds that a researcher should ask women in academe to describe their daily experiences and feelings because such personal experiences will define the reality of their academic lives from their perspective. My first interview questions covered their views of leadership, participation in leadership roles, aspirations for leadership roles, working experiences, perceptions of institutional conditions, preception of self, and acess to various forms of support for their work and career advancement. Interviewing enabled me to document the personal and historical memories (Armitage, 2002) of each individual.

This interviewing approach built trust between the participants and me. In this regard, I was seeking to take advantage of my "insider" status as an Asian American woman community college faculty member. Baca-Zinn (2001) has highlighted the "unique methodological advantages" (p. 160) of an insider researcher. As an Asian American woman faculty member working in a community college, I shared many similarities with the participants, including being viewed in stereotypical ways.

Yet community college lives are unpredictable, and most of the faculty and administrators I contacted had frantically busy schedules. Determining meeting dates and times sometimes took several emails over months, and more than a few times, we had to cancel at the last minute. Some meetings were also confidential, and participants and I had to specify what I could and could not reveal. Since I also work full time in one of the community colleges I studied, I understood such concerns.

Second semi-structured interviews. The second interview with the participants provided more contextual information about their college politics and college climate. The focus of the second interview was to ask clarifying or additional questions based on document analysis and class observation (faculty only), and to gain more information on their involvement in professional development; committees and social networks (both online and in person), formal and informal mentoring experience, and college life. If needed, I went back to the first interview questions for clarification.

Classroom observation (faculty only). Participants wanted to know of my own experience as Asian American woman faculty member. With some faculty members, I discussed classroom management techniques and even exchanged some teaching materials. I observed classroom teaching of lessons by faculty members because I wanted to gain more understanding of their classroom leadership. As a faculty member myself, this was a privilege because it is rare for faculty to observe one another's classes, especially across campuses. During the class observation, I sat with students and took field notes with some graphics (e.g., seating arrangement charts). I also sent my feedback to the faculty member I observed by email, as several wanted to receive my responses to their teaching. Such shared experience, which Delgado Bernal (1998) explains as "cultural intuition," or which I define as "shared teaching and learning moments among peers," helped me to understand the depth of challenges and joys experienced by these Asian American women faculty. Lacking a cultural intuition, researchers unfamiliar with Asian American women stereotypes and multiple marginalities could easily overlook certain subtle aspects of experience, which I was readily able to note.

The meeting time and class observation time varied depending on what the participant allowed me to observe. Although this was informal, I made a point to visit each campus early and walk around their offices and departments to observe daily activities. I took hand-written field notes before, during, and after the meetings to document discussions and dialogues, as well as the milieu surrounding each participant. My focus for the field notes was on observing the participant's leadership style as well as interactions with others (e.g., peers, students, or staff members). I was also mindful of how others treated and interacted with the participant. These field notes became both descriptive and reflective (Merriam, 2009), including not only information about participants' leadership activities, but surprises, confusions, or insights I observed during the visits. I also noted the participant's apparent mood during my stay. All field notes were taken by me (Kondo, 1990; Lee, 2009) and typed within 48 hours.

Participant work-related document analysis at both the micro (individual) and macro (institutional) level. I also sought and analyzed documentary sources on two levels. To gain further information at a micro-level (personal), I asked each participant to provide me with a copy (either physical or electronic) of her resume and any parts of their tenure/official documents, such as student evaluations, peer-evaluations, and self-evaluations (if they were faculty) that they wished to share. For faculty, I also received some of their syllabi and teaching materials. For administrators, I accessed some public email correspondences (email announcements, meeting agendas). Since two of the administrators had recently finished their Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) degrees, I also obtained their dissertations to learn more about their passions and academic interests. Two faculty members also gave me articles, as well as artifacts, concering their family history. Although I did not access the same types of information from

each participant, various combinations of documents created for each a composite sketch of their leadership experience, empolyment, and family history, as well as their values, struggles, and triumphs as Asian American women.

On a macro-level (institutional), I researched each community college website and reviewed their college brochures. I looked for mission statements, history, student online newspapers, organization charts, and demographics. I was fortunate to discover 40-year old archival materials (student newspapers and media material) regarding Asian American student movements at one of the colleges. In addition, I researched the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) website to access more statistical information about community colleges. I also used two local Northwest Asian Americans newspapers – *Northwest Asian Weekly* and *International Examiner* (both online) – to search for information on these three colleges (e.g., job announcements, advertisements, college news), as well as my participants' local community involvements or activities (e.g., volunteering, awards).

Shadowing and follow-up with the executive leadership subsample. When I began my study, only two women out of 11 had a strong desire to become a college president. The third participant started as undecided while actively entertaining the idea as a career possibility. These three individuals, who comprised my "executive leadership subsample," afforded a more direct window into the practice, context, and trajectory of individuals who were more actively considering the pursuit of executive leadership positions, namely the presidency. I shadowed these three women more exclusively to gain further information about their leadership movement.

One of them had recently been promoted to a vice president position, and was ready to take a leave of absence to have her first baby. Nonetheless, she arranged three different meetings for me to observe: One was conducted with her Institutional Research Team Committee members and her college president. Observing multiple meetings was conductive to my understanding the dynamics of my participant's leadership position and communication with her colleagues. With the one undecided participant, I met informally for a third time, then followed up via texts and phone conversations (mainly due to her scheduling conflict).

By accessing multiple sources of data, I was able to garner rich information to present emerging themes (Merriam, 2009). However, my intention was not to simply generalize these women's experiences. I also visited them at different times and quarters of the academic year, so that I was able to collect data relating to various activities, rather than one major event that participants or the college were engaged in. Appendix C shows the observation focus.

Data Analysis

I incorporated several strategies simultaneously to establish the accuracy of data collected and to generate and confirm meanings in my data. First, I asked each interviewee to check my written transcripts for inaccuracies or nuances that I may have missed (member checks). These member checks comprised one strategy for promoting the trustworthiness of data (Merriam, 2009). Second, during the interviews, the participants and I often discussed the importance of research on Asian American women in higher education, as they desired strongly to demystify the stereotypes of Asian Americans. As a result, participants were open and candid about their personal experiences and work situations. Yet, as some of the conversations became more

private, I had to stop recording some portions of conversations. These private conversations were significant, as they often related to microaggressions within the participants' experiences, but I felt comfortable recording no more than they wished to share. Trust was important for my study, and I felt I had reached an adequate maximum data retrieval with topics such as microaggressions and the ways these women had experienced stereotyping (Merriam, 2009). Third, using the critical race feminism lens, I was purposefully mindful of the role of intersectionality in their identities and inhabiting the counter narratives they provided as well as my own intersectionality as a researcher.

Open and Focused Coding

I read the transcripts several times using an open-coding process (Merriam, 2009). The open-coding process allowed me to select words and phrases that stood out and that conveyed meanings and potential themes in the participants' own terms, initially without the imposition of my conceptual framework. Since I wanted to analyze their narratives, I used the participants' words and phrases to create coding themes. While still interviewing and transcribing data, I found the initial open-coding process helped me to review and adjust the interviews/observations protocol and to strategize my next meetings.

I open-coded all interviews multiple times and organized the results into themes, which at this point were organized by categories in my conceptual framework. However, the more interviews I accumulated, the more messy my open-coding became, so I re-organized a more categorical aggregation into themes and patterns by reviewing my research questions and conceptual framework (Creswell, 2007). I also adopted some visuals, such as tables and

matrices (Creswell, 2007). By comparing all typed interviews and color coordinating their words and ideas into focused coding, I perceived emerging categories. However, my intent was not to oversimplify the participants' experience or create generalizations; thus, I took some notes on outliers (responses that did not fit into my framework). During this process, I solicited feedback from my research colleagues to verify whether my focused coding and themes made sense to them. This process was repeated several times. Their feedback helped me to create two types of matrices (Miles & Huberman 1994).

The first matrix was a thematic matrix, in which I categorized coding into three conceptual themes (case-by-theme matrix). I also created a case-by-institution matrix by organizing relevant aspects of the institutional context identified by participants into themes. After such processes, I added layers of document analysis into my matrices. My main layers of documents were field notes, resumes, tenure documents, syllabi, email correspondence, meeting agendas, and local Asian American newspaper articles.

Cross-institutional Analysis

In a system similar to the interview analysis, I created tables to compare and contrast each college setting. I paid special attention to leadership and its institutional histories from each college. Because I work for one of the colleges, I had more insider information for that college. However, by visiting the other two colleges several times during my data collection, I became comfortable maneuvering through their campuses (both physically and virtually) to observe and collect data, such as college activities, demographics, organizational charts, and initiatives. Such information also helped me better understand my participants' feelings and observations about

their own college. Moreover, a case study approach to these institutional comparisons was not only useful for an illuminative purpose, but also effective to "document institutional" [legacies] as well as "racism," (Parker & Lynn, 2009, p. 151), sexism, and microaggressions that Asian American women faculty and administrators face.

Study Design Limitations

This study design had some limitations. Individual Asian Americans are unique. Moreover, the term, "Asian Americans" includes over twenty-four Asian American ethnic groups (Teranishi, 2010; U.S. Census, 2010) whose demographics and identities are ever fluid. By reflecting on my samples, I acknowledged Forbe's (2002) self-critique of her small research samples of five women of African decent. Forbe (2002) claimed, "the analysis presented cannot be understood as universal and wholly generalizable," (p. 287), yet my study, like hers, has an important academic significance. The limited number of women in this study does not render their perceptions and voices less real or authoritative. Studies such as this one supply a crucial addition toward building a new conceptual framework that goes beyond the current and primary focus upon the perpetuation of masculinity in leadership and mentoring studies. Moreover, it provides a more varied set of images for understanding subtle racial, gender, and cultural dynamics in the leadership trajectories of individuals from particular racial/ethnic groups.

Moreover, using a case study approach, I was able to create "an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" and "inquiry for real-life context" (Merriam, 2009, p. 40). I also felt comfortable selecting 11 Asian American women from three different colleges and leadership situations to "inform in such a way that their vantage point provide[d] research with

rich information and a point of view" (Molina, 2008, p. 16) that is otherwise often minimized. These women faculty and administrators differed markedly in their educational backgrounds and life experiences; yet, they shred common experiences in their workplace that challenged institutional practices affecting Asian American women. Illuminating their various points of view could guide future researchers to generate more informed questions and avenues of research.

Another limitation was the short period of time (approximately two years) for collecting data, which meant that whatever stood foremost in each participant's mind at that particular time was emphasized (Miles & Huberman, 1994). To avoid such a limitation, I visited all of them in different quarters of the academic year, and compared and contrasted their interviews with my literature review. I also investigated negative evidence (opposing data) for any inconsistency with my conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). However, even within the two years, I witnessed a personal and professional transformation that reflected development in these women's values and identity. During these two years, four women made career transitions; two of the 11 women applied for new positions, and two were appointed to higher positions. While these four gained new positions, one decided to leave her current administrative position and return to faculty position, and another was deciding whether to leave or stay.

The third limitation was my position as a full-time community college faculty member. I had to remind myself constantly not to make subjective assumptions while participants talked about their own departments, colleagues, and college life. To counteract my own biases, I asked

clarifying questions and obtained other information to triangulate my findings. I reviewed my

transcripts and observation protocols frequently in order to not to miss any pertinent information.

The fourth limitation derived from the fact that this was mainly an interview-based study.

Because interviews are also considered self-reporting, the scope of the participants' experiences

may have been narrowed by their own interpretations of events and feelings at the time.

However, based on the critical race feminism framework, it was important that I focus on their

counter narratives as they actually experienced and recounted these narratives. As I noted at the

beginning of the chapter 3, I intentionally looked for a research design and tradition that was

sensitive to nuances in people's experiences as seen from their point of view, attentive to

complexities of their working roles in specific contexts, and attuned to power imbalances. This

design proves especially significant for Asian American women as they are often invisible or

believe that they do not have a tenable voice.

The fifth limitation is that despite my insider status, I was aware of my outsiderness

(Collins, 1986). I am a first generation immigrant for whom English is a second language.

Although I consider myself an Asian American, I immigrated from Japan as an adult, and none

of my participants came from the same culture. A few were immigrants from other countries,

but most were born in the U.S. Despite our "Asian Americanness," the participants and I

brought differing experiences and perspectives to our understanding of the workings of U.S.

society and community college cultures. Yet we were also brought together by an Asian

American identity in this country, and our personal and political views, such as a strong desire

for social justice and multiculturalism. While my differences from the study's participants may

sometimes have made it harder for me to hear or understand their narratives, my experience base shared many similarities with theirs, so that I was well positioned to capture the nuances of their professional and personal stories.

Chapter 4

Asian American Women's Encounters with Microaggressions and Response to

Microaggressions: Microresistances

The purpose of the qualitative narrative analysis in both chapters 4 and 5 is to explore

Asian American women's typical day in community colleges using their own accounts as

counter narratives. In order to discuss their typical day, I will revisit the chilly climate in relation

to microaggressions and microresistances. As I introduced in chapter 1, the "chilly climate" is a

"myriad of small inequalities that by themselves seem unimportant, but taken together create a

chilling environment" for women (Sandler, Silverberg, & Hall, 1996, p. 1). In the literature

review (chapter 2), I documented numerous works that address how women in general are less

supported in the workplace, including in higher education institutions. This tendency often

manifests as lack of professional development, limited mentoring and networking, as well as

incidents of sexual harassment and gender discrimination (Acklesberg, et al., 2009; Sandler,

Silverberg, & Hall, 1996). In such a "chilly climate," microaggressions fester in various forms,

such as microassults, microinsults, and microinvalidations (Sue et al., 2007a, 2007b). Among

various forms of microaggressions, there are eight major themes which emerge among Asian

American women. They are: (1) Alien in own land; (2) Ascription of intelligence; (3) Denial of

racial reality; (4) Exoticization; (5) Invalidation of ethnic differences; (6) Pathologizing cultural

values/communication; (7) Second-class citizenship; and (8) Invisibility (Sue at al., 2007a).

Although one incident of microaggression might not seem too damaging, microaggressions are

often frequent and accumulative. Furthermore, such microaggressions in the workplace serve as

a barrier to women's career advancement and contribute negatively to their psychological and physical wellbeing (Sue et al., 2007a, 2007b). By focusing on microaggressions and microresistances in a chilly climate where the participants work, I attempt to unlock two research questions. First, how have institutional cultures, such as a chilly climate campus, and more specifically institutional microaggressions, influenced the career paths of Asian American women (question 1)? Second, how, if at all, do Asian American women use microresistances to combat microaggressions (question 2)?

In order to focus on these two questions, I highlight the themes of microaggression and microresistance that emerged from three participants, followed by an analysis of all 11 Asian American women to identify patterns. I introduce my three participants first through biographical profiles. Biographical information is important to examine how each makes sense of who she is as an Asian American woman in a higher education institution. I discuss these three participants from an individual appraisal of their own stories and use direct quotes whenever possible to let their voices tell their counter narratives. In this section, I introduce Miranda (a faculty member from Mountain View College), Theresa (an interim director of Student Services from Beachland Community College), and Lily (a former dean from East Gate Community College). I have assigned pseudonyms to maintain their privacy.

Three Cases: Sample Individual Profiles

Case 1—Miranda (Faculty Member) at Mountain View College

Miranda grew up in China and immigrated to the U.S. in the 1990s from Canada. Miranda came from an upper-middle class family. Her parents were medical doctors in China

who later moved to Canada due to the Cultural Revolution. After earning her Ph.D. in Canada, she applied for a tenured position in a community college although she had little idea what community colleges in the U.S. were like. Miranda has worked for two community colleges, but she prefers the current community college (Mountain View College) because the work environment "suits" her better.

"So I spend my day…I spend my time teaching. Very busy." Miranda teaches ESL, but she also teaches a graduate program for majors in the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) program. Miranda said, "I really love teaching, but I also still love research and professional development." During my second year of the data collection period, Miranda went overseas to teach.

Microaggressions. Miranda explained the unique invisibility she faced as an Asian American woman. The following story offers a good example of both "invisibleness" and "exoticization" as well as "microinvalidations" (Sue et al., 2007a, 2007b). Microinvalidation are "actions that exclude negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings or experiential reality of a person of color" (Sue et al., 2007a, p.73). Miranda began,

> I am tall, and I speak very well, but you just get bypassed, and you are still
> invisible. Here is a tall person, but they get to pass you to the next person.
> Sometimes, people have certain expectations of your being a Chinese and woman;
> they see you in a certain way – exotic. They want you to behave in certain ways. If you
> are out of the box, you get shot down. That is another challenge we get.

Miranda also stated white students' subtle remarks used to affect her. In the eyes of several white students, Miranda was a foreigner (not a "real" professor), and she experienced many instances of "microinsult," which is "a verbal remark that conveys rudeness, insensitivity, or demeans a person's racial identity and heritage" (Sue et al., 2007a, p. 73). She explained,

> Sometimes, white students challenge you. They challenge my credentials. "Have you ever taught in American public schools?" "No, I have not, but I have children. I serve for a PTA." In teachers' training, I have many students who go through my program. They challenge you. They would say, "Oh, you have an accent!" "Yes, I do, and so do you."

Miranda's service for the college has been extensive, from participating on the Curriculum Committee to serving as a faculty union representative and being a head of Faculty Professional Development. She has also had opportunities to apply for a dean's position and was strongly encouraged to do so by her mentors, but in the end, she decided not to. She cautioned, "For a certain position, it is not quite suited for Asian American women. As an Asian American woman, as a second language speaker, you get this unspoken discrimination all the time, so you really have to pick your battles."

Miranda's sentiments reiterated Hune's (2011) study on immigrant Asian American women faculty who teach TESOL in their second language. According to Hune (2011), immigrant Asian American women faculty felt that others dismissed them as unprofessional due to their ESL background. Not being native speakers of English seems to limit some of the Asian American women's career aspirations, as they feel that they may not be most effective in certain

positions. Such formal leadership roles often entail a high demand of verbal communication and more public scrutiny. Miranda's comment, "You have to pick your battles" addressed an institutional microaggression indicative of a campus culture not open to "other" types of accent, which, as a result, cast doubt upon her intelligence and leadership capabilities.

Microresistances. Miranda explained that building trust and friendships helped her deal with microaggressions, especially around controversial issues such as diversity. "Dealing with diversity issues, you really get to know people and people get to know you." Miranda also dealt with one individual microaggression by asking for help from a white male mentor from the TESOL community. She does not contact him often, but "for certain things, I need to ask someone like him…" In this case, "someone like him" indicates an expert in her filed who respects and supports her scholarly work by publicly showing his support. This is a good example of how mentoring relationships can have a positively effect in building stronger microresistance.

In regard to teaching, Miranda said she was getting much better at dealing with individual microaggressions by white students. Yet, such individual microaggressions are often a cumulative result of societal ethnocentrism and less about institutional culture. Miranda realized that she did not have to feel discouraged by her students, because "those are the students we have to find a way to educate." By using her sense of humor and empathy for her students, Miranda was able to transform microinsults into critical teaching moments.

Case 2—Theresa (Interim Director of Student Services) at Beachland Community College

Theresa is biracial. She grew up mostly in a white community, but she connects herself more with the Filipino American side. Theresa began, "I visited my grandmother and spent much time with her since I was younger." She continued, "My grandmother in Yakima was pivotal in my identity development, as I learned about the Filipino culture and Filipino elders' stories." Theresa stated, "The elders and aunts pushed education." Theresa was "originally trained to become a K–12 teacher," but she said, "I had a very negative experience as a student teacher, and I chose not to be a K–12 teacher even though I really enjoyed interacting with students."

While she was deciding what she would like to do for her future career, she got involved in a Women's Center and an Asian Pacific Center as a student leader. "Through such experiences as an undergraduate, I realized that I wanted to continue to work with students." While she was applying for jobs, the college Theresa now works for took its place at the "top of [her] list." "I really liked the rich and diverse cultural communities surrounding the college!"

Theresa has been an interim director for two years in student services, where she felt her mission was to help new students and their families "to navigate the system." In order to do her job effectively, "Being culturally competent and aware of these communities around us is definitely an important emphasis of this job, even though it is not specific to the job description…, but because I have a passion for it." Theresa defined cultural competency as, "awareness that people have different life experiences; also, being sensitive enough to ask questions in a polite way or to definitely do some research before trying to make a connection." Theresa described herself as "a kind of social butterfly, as I go around and talk with many

different kinds of people. That [being social] is part of my job, and part of building relationships, and I like that a lot."

As a whole, Theresa saw her college as mostly supportive, but she felt a bit frustrated at being an interim for the past two years. "I will be honest: the interim thing is a little bit frustrating because it has been going on so long." Although Theresa understood the ongoing budget crisis, she also hoped that the college would place more priorities upon filling some positions.

Theresa is currently planning to apply to graduate schools to obtain a Master's degree to further study student development theories. She also would like to teach again. "That will be something I would love to. I can see myself doing basic studies."

Microaggressions. When Theresa first became an administrator, others at work often mistook her for her supervisor, who was also Filipino American. Theresa said, "It used to bother me as I felt like I was in her shadow," but the situation has improved since people have begun to know her better. This story is a good example of "invalidation of ethnic differences" (Sue et al., 2007a. p. 73) where the majority population sees all Asians as the same and cannot tell the difference among Asian American women. This also made her feel "invisible" at first, as she felt that she was not being seen as an individual.

Theresa was aware of being one of few Asian American women administrators. "I don't see a lot of staff and women of color in higher education." Moreover, her institution tended to make stereotypical assumptions of who people of color are. Theresa continued, explaining such assumptions.

They [the college and some of her colleagues] assume that I do not have understanding [of the system], but there is a lot I can do. Even physical things like that, carrying things and opening doors…I am also very aware of interactions and cultural nuances with gender, too.

Such assumptions made by her institution and her colleagues were clearly examples of both institutional and individual microaggressions because Theresa was treated as a "second-class citizen." They assumed that she was not fully qualified to do her job. Although Theresa was articulate about the meaning and practice of cultural competency as a professional working in student services, she reflected that the institution did not value such skills in her formal job description. This indifference by the college to Theresa's efforts to reach out to neighboring communities might have led to "microinvalidations," if she had not received any support by the college at all. Moreover, Theresa was a little frustrated by being asked to take an interim position for two years, as she felt that the college did not prioritize or legitimize her work, but let her "informally" do the job.

Microresistances. "The age thing still bothers me," Theresa said. For her, "my youthful appearance matters greatly as others often assume I am younger and inexperienced." To prevent others from assuming she was "too young" to do her job well, she purposefully dressed formally at work. She took this action to combat "microinsults" where she was made to feel that unqualified to do her job well. Theresa continued, "Although my youthful appearance, my identity, and knowledge – I can use them to my advantage – it still bothers me. But I am slowly getting more comfortable with it." She continued, "I talk with other colleagues who are in a

same situation who are not being taken seriously because of their youthful appearance or their skin color." Theresa said she felt lucky that she could talk with her Filipino American woman supervisor about the issues she faces, such as microaggressions, stereotypes, sexism, and generational differences. Through such dialogues, Theresa began to notice "more alternative cultural practices and generational views, and got to know some innovative people participating in the student services field." Theresa continued, "I hope that we see more of that. I also see a different school of thought starting to transition now." For her, "a different school of thought" refers to practices that are more multicultural and less traditional. By connecting with others who share similar situations, Theresa attempted to decrease her "invisibility" and "microinvalidation" instead strategizing with her mentors and networking with others beyond her college.

Case 3—Lily (From Dean to a Faculty Member) at East Gate Community College

Lily was born in Vietnam; she is biracial, and she considers herself more Asian American than white. Lily said, "My world view does not coincide very often with the American white side of me. Even if my exterior [some think of her as white] appears to say one thing, my interior is not; the landscape is not on the same planet." This was a clear indication of "denial of racial reality" by others where she was perceived as among the "new whites" (Sue et al., 2007a, p. 76) rather than as biracial. This was also a case of "microinsult" to her, where her racial identity and heritage were denied because others in the administration saw her as only white (Sue et al., 2007a).

Lily has been in higher education for two decades as a faculty member and administrator at several colleges. She was quickly promoted to a dean of one of the largest divisions at East Gate Community College. Lily said, "Transitioning to becoming a full-time administrator was not difficult for me, as I was often asked to take on more administrative duties even when I was full-time faculty, and I enjoyed them." As a new administrator in a fast-paced community college, she was working 12 to 14 hours a day. Lily said, "A typical day is that you have a very low ability to successfully plan out your day," and "there was no balance, and it was not healthy." She continued, "It's like running a marathon every day." After two years as a dean, she resigned her position and went back to teaching, mostly because "the relationship to the institution and the college structure was very frustrating" for her. She added,

> My goals and professional plans significantly shifted over the last two years from this experience because I had an ambition to want to be a chief academic officer earlier, and I thought I would be very good at it. But the thing that I experienced was an absolute lack of vision and acceptance and inclusion, and I did not want to be in that space.

Her last example indicated a case of a massive institutional microaggression and "microinvalidation" (Sue et al., 2007b) where Lily was expected to work overtime while her differences as a minority and a woman and her perspectives were dismissed.

Microaggressions. While some people thought of Lily as white, when she led her division most faculty and staff saw her as a person of color, as her leadership style was different from other white administrators on campus. For instance, Lily stated, "I knew what my staff's lives were like." Lily continued, "I got the impression that it did not happen very often that they

had access to someone who could help them solve a problem." However, in leadership meetings outside her own division where most in attendance were white, she encountered dissonance. The following is a clear case of a "microinvalidation" where her reality as a person of color was completely ignored. Lily reflected,

> In leadership, I think it is easier to disregard me and let me pass [as white]. My evidence for that is when I have conversations with the dominant group and they forget there is another [non-white] at the table, they speak as if others are not there, so I have an insight… there is blindness and cognitive dissonance; they got so comfortable and they forget [that someone at the table is non-white].

Lily also experienced institutional gender bias and quickly realized that being one of a few role models on campus presented an uphill battle. Lily explained,

> I think it is a difficult environment for women. My experience was gender bias, and it is institutionalized. And you have to be on it all the time to see, just your presence [being in a leadership position] is not enough.

Lily concluded her thoughts in regard to her experience of campus climate:

> If you are effective and you excel, and show any evidence of ambition, and I don't mean that in a negative sense, ambition that you want to do better tomorrow than you do today, and you want to be a chair of something, you are more likely to be ignored or undermined than you are to have leaders seek you out and help you in higher education. That's always been my experience.

Lily's accumulative experiences dealing with microinvalidations, such as exclusions and denial of her identity as a person of color, contributed to her decision to leave the deanship completely.

Microresistances. Lily was well aware that she was one of the very few Asian American woman administrators, and several women of color saw her as their mentor. She said, "faculty of color and staff of color often gravitated toward me as their mentor." Yet, Lily stated her internal conflict in this manner:

> I have guilt about whether you should fight the good fight and stay there anyways, and make a difference. But I don't want to – sorry! At the end of the battle, I just want to be healthy and positive, and I do not want to be an angry person who leads out of anger, because that's the first step to being *them* [an institutional member]. I did not want to morph slowly into a big A (administrator)…So it was very personal, but I cannot do it all.

Her narrative indicates her resistance not to become the type of leader that she did not value. Instead, she now teaches English composition. Her syllabus encourages students to engage in a "dynamic exchange of ideas" through a learning community. When I visited her classroom on a rainy Friday afternoon, the classroom atmosphere was informal, and students seemed to know each other well. Everyone sat in a circle, and during a three-hour session, most of the activities involved interactive learning, such as discussions (class and small groups) and peer-reviews. The students seemed to be comfortable sharing their thoughts and their own writings with their peers and the instructor.

When I asked about her transition, Lily explained, "I made the transition back to teaching because wherever I go, teaching came with me. It was the teaching that was holding it together, so I decided to step down from administration and went back to the classroom."

By moving from one of the few top-level Asian American administrators to teaching in classrooms, Lily proactively ended the institutional microinvalidations that she frequently faced.

Cross-Case Patterns of 11 Asian American Women

The previous section focused on three Asian American women's narratives in regard to microaggressions and their responses to them. In this section, I include all 11 participants' cross-case pattern encounters with microaggressions and microresistances. Despite substantial differences, the participants experienced several common contextual forces and pressures, and developed remarkably complementary ideas about their experiences as Asian American women at three community colleges. Although race and gender concerns might not have been explicit and manifested differently at each college, the manner in which each community college addressed (or did not address) their professional and personal concerns help us to interpret how all participants navigated their work.

Encountering and Responding to Microaggressions

The narratives of the 11 Asian American women revealed countless instances of both individual and institutional microaggressions. These were encountered everywhere and frequently on campus. As Grace, a vice president of Student Services from Beachland Community College, articulated, some instances of aggression were not just micro, but macro.

Ultimately, microinvalidations coupled with white privilege and sexism were a prime reason for Lily's resignation from her position as dean.

Microaggressions took three different forms. In particular, the participants spoke of: (1) *individual microaggressions* based on specific stereotypes toward Asian American women; (2) *institutional microaggressions* due to intersections of white privilege, racism, and sexism; and (3) *classroom microaggressions* by white students. Participants' stories also affirmed that they combat microaggressions with various forms of *microresistances.*

Individual microaggressions. Significantly, all 11 participants experienced microaggressions as individuals, primarily through stereotypical perceptions and treatment of them with over-feminized imagery of Asian American women. Kawahara (2007) claims that "Asian womanhood," and "Asian-ness" together bring extreme feminine images of Asian American women (e.g., coy, meek, shy, cute). In my study, the participants discussed the negative effects of over-feminized images of Asian American women, in particular, the features of: (1) perceived youthful appearance, (2) petite size, and (3) Asian accented English. Hune (1998) and Maramba (2011) also provide similar results from their study on Asian American women. These images can affect various choices in terms of how the women decide to navigate and pursue/not pursue formal leadership positions. For instance, Linda, a counseling faculty member, felt ambivalent about taking on a leadership role in her department. She felt "there is an established culture and absolute dynamic with age," along with an expectation that she would not be a leader because of her youth and direct communication style. Linda's comment was

similar to Theresa's in relation to her youthful appearance. Both felt other's perceptions

invalidated their professional efforts to perform their jobs most effectively.

Miranda, who taught ESL, also talked about her experience of individual

microaggression intersections incurred by her being Asian and a woman. Though she is tall,

Miranda often felt small and invisible. She was often overlooked or ignored in meetings.

Miranda said perception of her "Asianness" topped those of her physical appearance. Miranda

explained that sometimes people see her in a certain exotic way. Miranda continued that these

expectations manifest in actions toward her. "They [other people] want you behave in certain

ways."

Mary, a vice president in charge of a $94 million college budget, felt she was perceived

as less intelligent (i.e., as more feminine or less authoritative) because she spoke English with an

Asian accent. Mary recalled one past incident in which she did not get a Certified Public

Accountant (CPA) job. Someone else she knew with lesser qualifications got the offer instead,

because the other person was a native English speaker. Mary reflected,

> You know, it sometimes frustrates me that the expectation of you being in a high
>
> position is that you need to be always articulate and you need to have excellent
>
> command of this language; at the same time, it pains me that when you do not have such
>
> a command of the language, people think you are incompetent.

Lily, a 1.5 generation with an M.A. in classical English literature, spoke with careful

enunciation. While she carried no noticeable Asian accent, she compensated for her ESL

background with careful pronunciation and enunciation. When I pointed out the way she spoke,

Lily recalled, "When I was growing up, my [Vietnamese] mother taught me that learning American English was a way of survival."

Miranda, Mary, and Lily each experienced others' "ascription of intelligence" (Sue et al., 2007a, p. 76) as affected by perceptions of "Asianness," such that they felt "trapped" within Asian American stereotypes. All three of them were aware of these assumptions about them, namely, that they could not possibly become effective leaders because leaders must speak "correct" English without even a hint of an Asian accent.

Although each experience may seem minor at first to other individuals, the participants felt "disempowered," as these daily remarks and attitudes by others constantly placed them in subordinate positions in their workplace. Both Mary and Lily found a way to "survive" and even to overcome this perceived deficiency by putting extra effort into their mastery of English. Interestingly, their non-native English speaking status did not dissuade them from applying for more formal leadership positions. When I first interviewed them, Mary was a vice president and Lily was a dean. However, Miranda felt differently as a second language speaker. She said, "for a certain position, it is not quite suited for [a second language speaking] Asian American women." She chose not to apply for certain positions, such as dean and vice president, as she anticipated that others would not approve or support her.

Institutional microaggressions. In addition to individual microaggressions that all or most experienced on a daily basis, broader sets of microaggressions were traceable to the institutional settings in which they worked. The patterns differed somewhat by college, but several women specifically referred to their experiences as institutional microaggressions.

East Gate Community College is known as innovative, its leaders and faculty priding themselves on being a top and cutting-edge community college. In such a work environment, the participants felt they were "always running" with a lack of support, echoing Amey's (1999) qualitative study of women administrators in community colleges. Amey's (1999) participants described their lives as "swimming upstream" (p. 64). Mary, Lily, and Linda, all of whom worked for the same community college, shared similar comments and expressed frustration at the lack of balance and inclusion. Mary felt like she was "running and running." Lily echoed, "It is like running a marathon every day…[A] typical day is that you cannot, you have low ability to successfully plan out your day," and "There was no balance, and it was not healthy." Similarly, "a typical day looks like I was juggling many balls," said Linda.

Although the fast work pace itself was not a negative factor, the combination with excessive expectations to be "always on the go but [receive] no support by the institution," resulted in a discouraging atmosphere. These women preferred different styles of leading and connecting with others than those the college culture supported. The college culture was individualistic and competitive. Mary, vice president, felt it was important in her position to spend time mentoring others and providing guidance to her subordinates, but working at such a fast pace, she did not feel confident that she "contributed much" as a role model. Lily likewise felt that she "no longer wanted to be in that space," given that the college placed little emphasis on inclusion and persisted in affirming whiteness as the norm; moreover, others assumed her to be white while she considered herself Asian American. Lily also felt her alternative leadership practices (e.g., less-hierarchical, with mentoring of other women and men of color) were frequently discouraged. Soon after her tenure, Linda, too, felt she was becoming burned out and

did not feel that the college supported her enough for her to pursue a higher leadership role as a chair. Linda, a faculty member, felt called upon to negotiate a summer stipend with the administration. She explained, "The administration had him (an Asian American male faculty member) working without any financial compensation, and it was unfair because the college compensated other faculty members during summer." Thus, Linda felt that the administration did not treat Asian Americans equally or take them seriously. During the two years of my study, Mary decided to move to a different community college, Lily resigned from her position as dean and went back to teaching, and Linda began to consider giving up her tenured position for a better leadership role elsewhere. Once again, subjected to the daily experience of being perceived in stereotypical terms as an Asian American woman (e.g., hard-working, not complaining, docile), these women had to negotiate the cumulative daily stresses of being expected to accomplish much amid little respect for fairness and inclusiveness. The three participants also felt that their institution lacked an understanding of the importance of informal mentoring. A fast work pace was not unique to these Asian American women in this college, but the whiteness norm and imposition of stereotypes did not support their practice of their own leadership styles. Not only were these three women disproportionately expected to perform more, but they were also given little support and no resources for their leadership practices. Instead, they were expected to act individually. Although research findings discuss the dominant cultural expectation of women of color performing more, for Asian American women, there is also the stereotypical expectation that they perform more with fewer resources, as they are supposed to be "naturally hard-working" (Suzuki, 2002). In these cases, all three participants experienced "pathologizing cultural values/communication" and "second-class citizenship" (Sue

et al., 2007a, p. 77) in that their institution forcefully ascribed the idea of "Asian values," such as being naturally hard-working and docile, to their professional lives. These Asian American women, overtly aware of internalized oppression, chose to take different paths. I will further discuss their preferred leadership styles in chapter 6.

Both April (faculty) and Grace (administrator) at Beachland Community College, who were participating in the AANAPISI program, encountered a different form of institutional microaggression. In this case, they experienced treatment more specifically linked to "color-blindness" and "the model minority myth," concerning their Asian American background. Due to the stereotypical belief that Asian Americans were doing well at school, their college did not believe Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders needed any extra assistance or resources. Grace recalled, "There were many backlashes by the administration for focusing on Asian American and Pacific Islanders." April echoed, "non-API [Asian Pacific Islanders] faculty and staff were wary of it because they could not understand…why would you not put money for all students, instead of focusing on a particular group of people?" In such interactions, both participants experienced "denial of racial reality" and "invalidation of ethnic differences" (Sue et al., 2007a, p. 76) because they were told that Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are all on equal footing with mainstream students and did not need any help. With this message, the institution communicated an invalidation of Asian American and Pacific Islander's experiences with racism and discrimination.

April felt that, by working diligently and overachieving their AANAPISI goals, the AANAPISI team became viewed by the institution as a model minority, much as Asian

Americans in general were viewed. Once again, the institution engaged in "ascription of intelligence" (Sue et al., 2007a, p. 76) to such a degree that both Grace and April felt they had to overachieve to reach their AANAPISI goals.

In all three colleges, several participants noted ways that current hiring practices perpetuated white privilege and continued to evince favoritism for the selected few. Although Grace, an administrator, understood the budgetary restrictions of her college and was a member of the system, she felt that the college used the budget as an excuse to continue its favoring of whiteness because the "budget allows us to protect it [whiteness]." Grace continued, "The college had not been diverse at all, and had not been actively hiring people of color into the vacant positions."

April also added, "We [the college] do not necessarily walk the talk. I'm almost an anomaly because I'm the only Chinese American female instructor in our department," and "we do not have good balance of representation." April suggested,

I think hiring practices have got to change because it's very prevalent in my own area. You've got second language learners and their needs are just as great as those who are native speakers of English, except that I just don't hear the voices.

April pondered whether her lack of an Asian American mentor stemmed from her campus not hiring enough diverse faculty of color.

Christy, who taught business transfer classes at East Gate Community College, emphasized favoritism in regard to hiring practices: "The tendency is that we rehire the same

folks, because those people are in positions now, and you can just look at any selection committee and know that they'll hire someone who looks just like them."

Elizabeth's employer, Mountain View College, has been viewed as one of the most diverse and liberal colleges, but she also felt differently about the administration. She recalled,

Twenty years ago, there was more diversity among staff and administrators, but it's not the case any longer. Sometimes, they [the administration] do not have a clue. There are examples of racial microaggressions everywhere, so when you're the only director of color, it's clear that they have no clue.

Here, the "microaggression" of discriminatory hiring, though perhaps unconscious or unintended, had the net effect of isolating and disenfranchising the participants I studied. Moreover, such hiring practices at all three institutions continued to perpetuate white privilege and tokenism as well as feelings of invisibility among many employees of color.

More overt forms of institutional harassment. Christy said for the last two decades, her college had received a number of formal complaints by Asian American employees due to racial, sexual, and national origin harassments. But the legacy of oppression and harassment toward Asian American women continued nevertheless. She explained that an Asian American woman had brought a lawsuit more than two decades ago. Christy recalled, "That's really weird that something that far back still affects us. It has never been reconciled." She continued, "In 2001, some groups of Asian American women were harassed and some wrongfully terminated, and in 2007, six women of color [3 Asian Americans and 3 African Americans] filed a formal complaint against the college."

Christy pointed out some of the ill management initiated by the college: "The college tried to buy me silence by giving me a new position." She was also frequently harassed by a couple of her white male colleagues and summarized the institutional racism and sexism in the following way: "It was basically bullying and harassing of Asian American women, and the college practically did nothing to change this [practice]." In addition, some white male faculty purposefully excluded her and other Asian American women from departmental decision-making and verbally harassed some of them. This was a clear example of "microassaults" (Sue et al., 2007a, p, 73) where Christy experienced deliberate and conscious acts by an aggressor, in this case, by white male colleagues and her own institution.

Miranda explained that after she got tenure, she moved to another community college because it was "a better fit" for her. This notion of "better fit" implied several examples of microaggressions she had faced. For instance, Miranda talked about invisibility and being boxed in, and she believed that certain jobs were "not a good fit for Asian American women due to unspoken discrimination." Although Miranda learned to negotiate her accented English with students and colleagues, her professional contributions were frequently dismissed. She recalled being overlooked in meetings, and said, "I am tall, and I speak very well, but you just get bypassed, and you are still invisible."

Finally, across all the college settings, most participants attributed the oppression they experienced to whiteness on their campuses – that is, to the pervasive system of privilege, often unconscious, that disproportionately favors white people. Lily recalled, in reference to her deanship, "In leadership, I think that it is easier to disregard [her being bi-racial] and let me pass

[as white]… " In her cabinet meetings, the administrators often did not consider her otherness, as most of them were white males. Diana who taught English at the same college summarized such a sentiment. Knowing of her mentors of color's daily struggles and lawsuits, Diana stated, "We fight it [institutional oppression] every day. It isn't something we've intellectualized; for people of color, it's it is our daily existence. Our survival!" In these three cases, the women were addressing institutional "microinvalidations" and "microassults" where their experiential reality as a person or people of color were nullified and even attacked (Sue et al., 2007a, 2007b).

Microaggressions in classrooms by white students. The participants who held classroom teaching positions encountered additional microaggressions in subtle, cumulative, daily forms that posed a challenge to their authority, sense of professional standing, and capacity to lead constructively. Perry, Moore, Edward, Acosta, and Frey's (2009) study discovered that most faculty of color face student resistance, especially by white students, in their classrooms. Hune (2011) echoes the dominance of whiteness and effects on Asian American women faculty in classroom. Susan, Linda, Diana, and Miranda were all tenured faculty members with various teaching backgrounds, and they all experienced such microaggressions by white students in their classrooms. Susan explained how white male students challenged her credibility by asking where she obtained information. Susan said,

> I think sometimes, white male students perceive me in a particular way. (Pause.) Often
> times, for these things, you don't have anything to go by except your own intuition or
> your feelings about these things, but the combination of being female, and relatively
> young, and being Asian, plays into some of their ideas about who is the expert or who has

the appropriate kinds of knowledge, …it is sticking to me the way I am perceived, I am often challenged, the materials that I am presenting in class.

Miranda's students doubted her "American-ness" and her legitimacy as a professor as she spoke with an Asian accent. On more than one occasion, Linda felt that white students gave patriarchal comments, such as "You don't have to be so aggressive," "You should be really proud of yourself," and "You did a really good job."

In each case, all three participants' credibility, intelligence, and capability as a classroom leader were challenged. In addition to facing "exoticization of Asian American women," they were constantly aware of "microinsults" by some white students (Sue et al., 2007a, p. 76). As Linda put it, as an Asian American faculty member, "there was a different awareness of how differential [power] exists with students."

Response to Microaggressions: Microresistances

All 11 Asian American women participants did not just passively endure daily microaggressions; they resisted such microaggressions by practicing many forms of microresistance. Not only did they seek out mentors and role models for support, they also implemented several counteractions to balance inequality on their campuses. Some examples are: (1) *mentoring, affinity groups, and social networking support;* (2) *career changes and/or Ph.D. aspirations;* (3) *teaching;* (4) *consciously challenging Asian American women's stereotypes*, and (5) *demonstrating alternative leadership models*.

Mentoring, affinity groups, and social networking support. All participants intentionally mentored someone at work, and students and staff of color also gravitated towards their mentoring styles. In addition, most women purposefully looked to find mentors at work and outside of work. For instance, Elizabeth from Multicultural Student Services mentored students who identified as European Americans who came to her office to discuss issues of race or differences. Both Lily and Grace believed that mentoring was among their leadership responsibilities. Lily said, "If you're in a leadership position, [you] bring people in and work with you, especially if they are your mentees." With such a belief, Lily made sure she knew something about her support staff's lives because she wanted her staff to be aware that "[they] had access to somebody who could relate and help them solve a problem." This was important for Lily because she believed that her office space itself carried power and authority. Lily said, "I wanted to ensure that I did not just represent an authority figure, but wanted to show openness and helpfulness to my staff." Lily continued, "it doesn't matter how often you say your door is open and everything else rhetorically, the language and [the Dean's office] space says, you are different."

Grace also mentored a younger Asian American female administrator who was subordinate to her. "I coached her to walk tall in hallways so that people recognized her." Grace understood earlier on that Asian American women were too often equated with invisibleness as she was once overlooked for a position she was well suited for; thus, it was important for her to demonstrate her knowledge to her mentee. Grace knew that breaking an image of invisibleness could help her mentee be considered for a more visible career assignment.

In addition to finding mentors or mentoring others, several initiated and/or joined Asian American affinity group on campus. Mary, using her role as an administrator, started an Asian Pacific American employee's affinity group at East Gate Community College. She recalled, "We don't know each other on campus. We need to start to get to know each other." While Elizabeth and April worked for another community college, they also joined a newly reborn Asian Pacific American employee group. Elizabeth said, "This happened around 10 years ago by a handful of Asian American leaders, and I am excited to be involved in it again." In addition to personal social networks, Grace said she frequently communicated with her friends and allies via Facebook, while Diana texted with her mentors of color.

*Career changes and/or Ph.D. aspir*ations. Some participants proactively changed their career plans to align with their own leadership values while at the same time combating microaggressions. While Susan was an administrator in student services, she was frequently ignored due to her youthful appearance and Asian American image. Susan stated:

I thought that a higher-level position or a position of power would have been more

fulfilling back then. I think as a woman of color, we get tired at some point

because we spend much of our time, you know, fighting, resisting, absorbing some of

these things.

But, after earning a Ph.D., she applied for a tenured position because she realized how much she enjoyed teaching and her students.

Similarly, Lily resigned her dean's position to become a faculty member as she had learned during the two years of her deanship that East Gate Community College "lacked vision

and acceptance of inclusion and [she] did not want to be in that space." While Lily was a dean, she defined her leadership style as more "intentional" and "non-hierarchical." Having re-discovered that "teaching and leadership are synonymous," she chose to teach in classrooms once more.

For Elizabeth and Diana, aspiring to earn a Ph.D. was one form of microresistance, as they would have more career development opportunities. Elizabeth was actively seeking a graduate school, partly because she believed she frequently had to modify her behaviors to accommodate the institutional white-centered culture. Elizabeth recalled one of the incidents and noted avoidance and discomfort about race issues among white administrators. Elizabeth said, "When I invited several administrators to Michael Dyson's [African American social justice activist] town hall meeting, the response from them was 'Well, what about other possible professional development opportunities?'"

Being constantly aware of how her own values differed from most administrators' in her workplace, Elizabeth wanted to alter her career path. Instead of remaining a mid-level administrator, she decided to earn a Ph.D. to research how students of color and immigrant communities access information, especially in community college systems. Elizabeth hoped to teach part-time some day. Diana stated, "My mentors often tell me to get a Ph.D. while I'm still young." Diana began to research what graduate programs might be suitable. Both Elizabeth and Diana were mostly interested in the fields of multicultural and ethnic studies.

Teaching. Teaching itself is a microresistance for Asian American women faculty. Teaching is not only their passion and love, but also an effective way to critically educate and

mentor students, as it often brings out a social collectiveness among students. Diana summarized such a thought. "Students motivate me, especially students of color motivate me." Among faculty members, actively teaching issues of oppression (e.g., racism, sexism, genderism) is a common strategy. Linda teaches racial justice and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) workshops while April, an ESL faculty member, uses materials that tackle issues of race, gender, and discrimination. Christy also created a new business class in her department that focuses on minority-owned businesses. Linda explained, "Students who took my workshops often came back and wanted to talk more in depth about their issues." Even among administrators, teaching college level classes is one of their higher priorities. For instance, Mary stated, "I would like to teach a leadership class in a graduate school some day." Similarly, Theresa would like to teach. So would Elizabeth. For most of them, teaching is indeed integral to their professional identity. As Diana stated, "I could not take out instruction and being a person of color, as they are inseparable." Lily who recently decided to go back to the classroom, summarized these women's attitude toward teaching. "Teaching and leadership are synonymous," and it is "principled."

Consciously challenging Asian American women's stereotypes. Another way to combat microaggression was to break Asian American women's stereotypes. All participants were quite familiar with them. Some addressed their Asian American features as a negative stereotype. To illustrate stereotype microaggressions, Susan talked about how frequently some of her colleagues could not distinguish her from her Asian American colleagues. She continued,

In fact in happened the other day. It often happens when we [she and other Asian American woman faculty] are not with each other. I get called her name and she gets called my name. But, it happened the other day when we were sitting with each other.

Susan intentionally participated in several committees and took leadership roles so that she could be "seen" and "heard" as an individual. Susan explained that being heard was important when she taught, too. "I speak loud. I am forceful for some of the things I say because I am trying to be heard." Interestingly, even Miranda, a tall Asian American woman, felt that she was treated as someone small. Miranda, like Susan, took several leadership roles in committees. In other words, they tried to "take more space" in professional settings to be less invisible. Proactively participating in committee work was an additional strategy of microresistance, to assert their voices and practice their leadership skills.

Demonstrating alternative leadership models. Invisibleness and microinvalidations resulted in these women adopting an alternative leadership styles to be more proactive. For instance, Christy worked collaboratively with other women of color to challenge administrative practices. Christy took the lead in helping other women of color file formal complaints to the college and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Among the Asian American women I interviewed, their marginalities sowed strategies for empowerment, collaboration, and resistance against institutional oppression. While both Lily and April had had little experience as mentees at their community colleges, they intentionally mentored other Asian American women to help eliminate such marginality. April stated, "I sought out mentees who were going through tenure processes, but I did it unofficially." In the case of Theresa, " I meet with other young

professionals of color" to empower them. I discuss mentoring and leadership more fully in chapter 5.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of 11 Asian American women's experience dealing with various forms of microaggression and microresistance in their community colleges. Each of their experiences was unique and rich with personal examples, but they all experienced pervasive microaggressions. Their experience echoed several patterns of Sue et al.'s (2007a, 2007b) eight themes of microaggression, such as ascription of intelligence, denial of racial reality, and exoticization of Asian American women. Most of them often interacted with model minority myths and perpetual foreigner syndrome, coupled with racism and sexism.

Site differences did not matter greatly in terms of institutional microaggressions, but the participants generated different meanings and possibilities through such experiences. For instance, although one of the community colleges, Mountain View College, was known for diversity, the participants still faced racial microaggressions as well as institutional microaggressions. This was true for all participants I interviewed from East Gate Community College and Beachland Community College. In other words, size, location, history, reputation, or mission of their colleges did not really matter in dealing with microaggressions because all community colleges had a degree of "chilly" to "icy" climate. Based on their narratives, it was clear that leadership focused singularly on white male privilege presented a problem for several participants. Some called such situations racist as well as sexist, while others named them color-blind racism and model minority stereotyping. Having frequently reflected on their "multiple

marginalities" (Turner, 2002), the majority of the participants were quick to name them as such, and freely shared several examples of their everyday "microaggressions." Grace (administrator), Linda (faculty), and Elizabeth (administrator) who were all from different colleges, used the exact word, "microaggressions" to explain their "icy" campus climate. Grace explained that some of them were even "macro," not just "micro."

The first research question asked, "How have institutional cultures, such as the chilly climate, and more specifically institutional microaggressions, influenced the career paths of Asian American women?" My analysis showed that institutional microaggressions contributed greatly, and negatively influenced these Asian American women's career paths and their professional career choices. Specifically, while most participants did not necessarily name their leadership styles or articulate career plans, all of them could provide numerous examples of both individual and institutional microaggressions. In other words, microaggressions and the chilly climate were constantly in their awareness, as if they had to pay extra taxes just to be a member of their own institutions. Thus, their encounters with numerous and accumulative microaggressions solidified a pattern of unequal power, and created a more difficult space for these participants to plan, anticipate, and pursue meaningful leadership positions. As a result, despite the various leadership skills they possessed, most of them did not wish to occupy formal leadership positions. For instance, Elizabeth, Miranda, Susan, Christy, and Lily decided earlier in their careers to not pursue or to quit their administrative roles. They did not believe they could carry authority and power as Asian American women administrators. Moreover, they refused to perpetuate the current leadership practices, discriminatory and unequal, that they did not value. Others (April, Theresa, and Diana) acknowledged the chilly climate in various

manners (e.g., as color-blind racism, racism, and sexism) and had little desire to take on more leadership roles. Yet, at the same time, three participants, Grace, Linda, and Mary, chose to take more formal administrative roles. I will discuss their cases more in depth in chapter 6.

The second research question, "How, if at all, do Asian American women use microresistances to combat racism?" drew a vivid response from all participants. To combat microaggressions, they applied various and multiple means of microresistance to proactively cope with micro and sometimes, macroaggressions. They used: (1) mentoring, affinity groups, and social network support; (2) career changes, and/or Ph.D. aspiration; (3) teaching; (4) consciously challenging Asian American women's stereotypes; and (5) demonstrating alternative leadership models. How they chose to apply microresistances also cultivated their own views on leadership and helped them establish their leadership identities. I will address both microresistances and mentoring opportunities more in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Asian American Women's Mentoring Experience and Leadership Aspirations

As chapter 4 illustrated, the leadership development of the participants I studied took place in the context of continuing, sometimes overt microaggressions. These features of the participants' daily work experience contributed to their views of themselves as leaders, as well as their approaches to the exercise of leadership. In this chapter, I attempt to analyze the following research questions: "What forms of career-related mentoring (if any) do Asian American women faculty and administrators receive, either formally or informally?", "How does this mentoring shape their views of leadership roles, their aspirations for assuming such roles, and their identities as current or future leader (question 3)?", and "How, if at all, do Asian American women faculty and administrators define and practice leadership in community colleges (question 4)?" Lastly, "How, if at all, does 'intersectionality of others' influence Asian American women's ideas about their own leadership practice or potential and their experience in formal or informal leadership roles (question 5)?" I introduce Elizabeth (a director of Multicultural Student Services from Mountain View College), April (a faculty member from Beachland Community College), and Diana (a faculty member from East Gate Community College) to illustrate their cases in regard to mentoring and explain how they make sense of their leadership experience. After three case sample profiles, I again introduce the cross-case analysis of 11 Asian American women regarding mentoring choices, leadership experience, and intersectionality, and conclude this chapter with a summary.

Three Cases: Sample Individual Profiles

Case 1—Elizabeth (Director of Multicultural Student Services) at Mountain View College

Elizabeth, who identified as a second generation Chinese American, grew up in Chinatown, New York. Her neighbors were Chinese, Blacks, and working class Italians and Irish. She has worked for Mountain View College for over 22 years and developed extensive networks with Asian American communities and professionals of color organizations in Washington State. Most of her work is involves Multicultural Student Services. Her college is considered one of the most diverse and liberal in Washington State. Elizabeth said, "I think I'm really fortunate that I work with students who are much engaged in their choices, both life choices and educational choices." Clearly, the college emphasizes diversity in tis various posters and visuals.

When Elizabeth was asked to reflect on recent changes in her service area, she said, "there's not really been clarity [by the college] about my office for years." Moreover, a few years ago, her operational budget was cut by 90%. One reason for these changes was "a very high percentage of administrative changes, and it has been a national trend to cut budgets from multicultural areas." With less institutional support for her office, Elizabeth has been seriously considering going back to school to earn a Ph.D. She would like to conduct research on "how students of color and immigrant communities access information, especially in a community college system." After her Ph.D., she would also like to teach part-time. Elizabeth said she has always enjoyed teaching: "Although I've provided several workshops for students, I would really

like to teach intercultural or developmental college courses." With a new administration coming in, she was planning to negotiate whether she could add teaching to her current duties.

Mentoring experience. Intentionally, most of Elizabeth's mentors have been Asian American, and one of her supervisors was also an Asian American woman with whom she "sometimes had disagreements" but who mentored Elizabeth for decades. Asked why she had mostly Asian American mentors, Elizabeth answered, "Because when I was in college, there were only a few Asian American faculty around, and because that's the community I'm most comfortable with, and because they were really willing to support me."

Elizabeth has also mentored a variety of students in her college. Mentoring has meant regular contact in person or via text. She shared one such encounter.

I have a lot of students who identify as European Americans and who are here [her office] all the time. I think that I have some honest and open conversations with a lot of them who identify as European Americans, where issues of race or differences come into play, and there's that trust and respect, and conversations become pretty deep.

Elizabeth referred to a new Asian Pacific Islander employee affinity group starting up. Several Asian American leaders in her community college had initiated it, and Elizabeth was also invited to take a lead on this effort. She recalled that several Asian American leaders first created an affinity group around 10 years ago and was excited to be involved in once again.

Leadership experience and aspirations. Actively working in Multicultural Student Services as well as being a statewide leader in this area, Elizabeth and some administrators

sometimes encountered differences working with students. Elizabeth believed that her

leadership style was much different from the dominant college culture. For instance, she

explained that while the Multicultural Student Services Council leaders she worked with tended

to be "collaborative and team-oriented," her institution in general was not.

> I have to mitigate some of my leadership style with some folks who are [in
>
> administration] because it's very clear that my approach has been seen as a threat,
>
> and they're not comfortable with certain approaches like mine.

> Previously, Elizabeth's supervisors asked her if she wanted to take on a more formal

leadership role, but she told them she preferred not to move up. She has "a different kind of

ambition."

> Maybe a half a dozen years ago, I thought that I'd be a kick-ass dean, or a kick-ass VP
>
> [vice president]. But I also realized that personally, my ambitions do not lie there. I
>
> have excellent people skills and good managerial skills, and I think I know how to
>
> negotiate with different people, and I understand the institutional procedures, and I
>
> understand the budget and stuff, and I understand research and data collection. I
>
> understand outcomes and all that stuff, but do I really want to focus on that? No, I've
>
> never had ambition in that direction.

> Elizabeth believed that she had more "organizational freedom" working at the middle

management level. Being in the middle, she had more access to the faculty and staff she needed

to connect with and added:

Maintaining these lines of connection between other administrators allows me the
latitude to continue and connect with all these other folks. And it's rare that higher-level
administrators can still maintain these kinds of relationships with either faculty or staff or
even directors. So that's been my choice.

Case 2—April (Faculty Member) at Beachland Community College

April is a third-generation Chinese American who was born and raised by parents active
in local immigrant communities. Her father used to own a shop in Chinatown, and she watched
him help out other immigrants. He taught her that it was not a choice but a responsibility to help
others. She is also a second-generation ESL instructor, as her mother and her sister were ESL
instructors.

When I first interviewed her, April wore two hats at Beachland Community College. She
was a member of the AANAPISI grant team and an ESL instructor. The first year I visited her,
her main responsibilities focused on the AANAPISI grant. She went back to full time teaching
the second year. Prior to receiving the AANAPISI grant, the college had had an Asian American
and Pacific Islander American Community Advisory Board. Even though this happened more
than 10 years ago, April recalled:

When the college had an Asian American male president, he initiated the effort to bring
the local community voices to the college. He possessed a different perspective in
leadership management, and he wanted the college to tap into the rich local Asian
American and Pacific Islander American communities.

Mentoring experience. When April was hired, there were very few Asian Americans to mentor her. After she received tenure, "I sought out mentees who were going through tenure processes," but "I did it unofficially…Because they're colleagues but they're friends in terms of knowing each other and [even] not sharing the same disciplines, we were able to talk about everything." April decided to help them because she did not want the future tenure track faculty to go through what she had had to go through, as she was the only Asian American faculty member in her department and had felt lost with the tenure process as she found very few colleagues to talk with.

Asked about her own experience as a mentee, she said that she had had some [white mentors] in the past, but not anymore. With only a few Asian American women faculty at Beachland Community College, "it was hard to find someone, and I also didn't want to infringe on somebody, but I wish I'd networked more in my earlier career."

Leadership experience and aspirations. A few years ago, an Asian American male vice president of Student Services asked April to join the AANAPISI grant team. According to April (and also discussed in Grace's dissertation, which I read as part of my research), he was the one who successfully spearheaded the grant effort. April recalled that the vice president asked her to be part of the team because she had an extensive ESL teaching background and knowledge regarding the transitional English Language Learners (ELL). As an AANAPISI team member, April became a project director, responsible for administrative duties such as data collection, data management, and assessment. "AANAPISI has changed me because… it took me to a place I'd never realized existed." April no longer felt "stuck in the faculty castle and faculty

classroom." The grant encouraged her to take an institutional leadership role to empower students from marginalized communities who were often underrepresented in college.

When asked to reflect on taking administrative responsibilities, April recalled, "It has awakened me for the first time to the fact that I can do it." If the college got another AANAPISI grant, she would be willing to direct again, as long as she could have a shared leadership position. April said, "I will do it, if I can co-chair with somebody" as she preferred to work collaboratively and share responsibility. However, if the grant did not continue, she would rather stay in teaching, as she jokingly said, "I'm happy administrating myself."

Case 3—Diana (Faculty Member) at East Gate Community College

Diana is a Filipino American who grew up primarily in a white neighborhood in Washington State. In primary school she was one of the few students of color, and she recalled that people often treated her poorly because she was "Brown." Diana remembered her mother getting upset during Diana's childhood, and both her parents crying because of discriminations she faced. Later, in high school, she began to see more Filipino Americans, Pacific Islanders, Asian Americans, and African Americans in her neighborhood. Diana received her M.A. in literature and became a tenured English faculty member in 2010. She is a first-generation educator, and currently thinking about continuing her education to earn a Ph.D. Her leadership identity was closely related to being a life long learner. Diana said, "Everyone needs to continue to learn. [Even] a college president isn't excluded from this."

Diana often reflected on what it meant to be a woman of color, as well as being one of the few tenured female faculty of color. "My identity as a woman of color and a teacher are one," as

well as being a self-identified "feminist of color." Diana believed her visibility and her

perspectives helped all students to learn other views. When I checked her in

ratemyprofessors.com (a popular commercial website that students rate professors), some

students commented on her non-traditional perspectives. While most of the comments were

complimentary, other students were more critical: "She can be a bit of a feminist, but it makes

class interesting," and "She constantly goes on about liberal politics and feminism

(ratemyprofessors.com, 2011)."

Mentoring experience. Diana said she had never had any Asian American mentors until

she came to East Gate Community College. "There were few of them, especially as faculty."

Now, she has a tenured Asian American faculty mentor from a tenure-candidate mentoring

program; "I grabbed her [the tenured Asian American woman faculty] before anyone else got

ahold of her. I wanted an Asian American faculty mentor, and I attended her workshop, and I

liked her culturally responsive approach."

Diana believes women of color have to battle with institutional microaggressions. One

strategy she has employed is to intentionally surround herself with a support system and to

develop an "inner circle" [of friends and mentors] to share her experiences and connected with

her about them. Most days, carpooling with "two male buddies of color" from the same college,

she and these colleagues talked and joked about things. She told me "it's a good way to start and

end the day – with like-minded people" who understand her struggle as a person of color.

"Because people of color have to fight and resist institutional racism, sexism, and other isms,

having carpool buddies of color is my way of coping as well as survival." Diana also has had several women of color mentors.

> When I see women, especially women of color, I have so many mentors who are fighting this, and that motivates me. I definitely have something I call an inner circle. My inner circle is primarily women of color. The way I define my inner circle is that if I had a bad day at work that has to do with race or gender or both, I know that I can call or text them anytime.

Most of the time, Diana said her mentors responded by asking if she was okay. "That's how I know they're in my inner circle…because this is my life, and this is resistance [work], when you're facing resistance almost on a daily basis, you do need [mentors]."

Like several participants I interviewed, Diana also mentored students.

> Students motivate me; more specifically, students of color and female students motivate me. A lot of it's because I'm a woman of color and I know that I'm usually or I might be their first woman of color teacher, and I know that it's – without being conceited – it's inspiring for them, right? Because they don't see that too often, especially in the instructor of something like English 101 [a required class], which is needed by everybody. I think that's very important.

Diana wanted students to see her as a woman of color because she brought "a different discourse." She believed it was beneficial when she spoke from her experience. For her, being an instructor and being a woman of color were inseparable.

Leadership experience and aspirations. Diana said the term, "leadership" made her uncomfortable, but she did not know why she felt that way. During the follow-up interview, I asked Diana once again about her perception of leadership. She shared the following story:

> Recently, some of my colleagues asked me if I wanted to be a program chair some day, and I used to say to them that I didn't ever want to become one. But after I spoke with one of my Asian American mentors, I no longer say that in public. She scolded me privately and told me, "Why do you want to perpetuate Asian American model minority stereotypes?" I realized that perpetuating a quiet Asian American woman stereotype would not be helpful, especially when I had little idea about the responsibilities of a program chair.

Diana continued, "there are some ideas I now have that I would like to bring to a program chair role, such as having a co-chair to balance both teaching and administrative work as well as getting to know more adjunct faculty members better." Diana also wanted to get to know the program better before she took on the formal responsibilities, as it was the largest program in the college. Asked about her own leadership qualities, Diana said,

> My best quality is I have extensive people skills and I can network with others…I'm keenly aware that when several people of color take on leadership positions, things might change for the better, and policies will also become more transparent for other minorities.

However, Diana continued, "When people of color take a position of power, it often comes with battle scars and with a price tag."

Cross-Case Patterns of 11 Asian American Women

Based on all 11 Asian American women's narratives and document analysis, the following section summarizes key findings in mentoring choices and leadership practices and aspirations in three community colleges. In this section, I attempt to answer these research questions: "What forms of career-related mentoring (if any) do Asian American women faculty and administrators receive, either formally and informally?" "How does this mentoring shape their views of leadership roles, their aspirations for assuming such roles, and their identities as current or future leaders?

Mentoring Choices and Experiences

As I discussed in chapter 4, these participants' experience of microaggressions and their responses to them in the form of microresistance, frequently involved the matter of mentoring. The presence (or absence) of some form of mentoring support could mitigate the microaggressions, or could prompt a search for optimal forms of mentoring support. In various degrees and in varying ways, mentoring arrangements offered the participants a set of connections that made their struggle more manageable to develop themselves as faculty, colleagues, and leaders. Mentoring itself was informal and varied, but several participants gravitated toward more established relationships with Asian American mentors, or white mentors who understood and translated the system for them. Diana, a faculty member, was the only person who participated in a formal mentoring program set up by the institution.

Although it seemed accidental at first, most participants had specific reasons for how they came to have: (1) *Asian American women mentors*; (2) *white male mentors*; or (3) *other role*

models and support systems. Most participants had had multiple mentors ranging from white males to Asian American females. Their mentoring choices revealed how each woman shaped her leadership identity. In addition, my findings uncovered an unexpected source of role modeling from one individual, and discussion of how his role modeling shaped several women's perceptions of a non-traditional, effective leader. In addition, several participants noted their family members as role models.

Asian American women mentors. All participants had Asian American women mentors, except two. April claimed that she had no mentors because there were only a few Asian American faculty members on her campus. Lily had several white mentors (both male and female), but no Asian American mentor. The majority of the participants found Asian American women mentors through informal relationships through work, professional networks, local Asian American communities, and friends. In the case of Theresa and Elizabeth, their Asian American woman mentor was also their supervisor who provided guidance and a leadership role model.

Elizabeth and Diana, in particular, sought out Asian American women mentors purposefully, as they felt they had had very few Asian American women role models while growing up. Elizabeth stated that she specifically wanted Asian American mentors (both males and female) because having grown up in Chinatown in New York, and she felt most comfortable with the Asian American community. Moreover, she found out quickly that Asian American mentors were most willing to support her. Although sometimes her mentors and she had disagreements, they continued the mentoring relationship even after retirement. Similarly, Diana "grabbed" an Asian American woman faculty member as her mentor, as she immediately felt

close to her and liked her culturally responsive approach. This same mentor also told Diana not to perpetuate Asian American model minority stereotypes.

Asian American mentors often provided familiarity, role modeling, friendship, accessibility, trust, respect, honesty, and support. For instance, Theresa discussed her Filipino American woman supervisor as her role model and mentor. Theresa described her supervisor as someone who "advocated" for others using her power, and someone who could push Theresa "in a right direction." "A right direction," indicated that there was trust, as well as an underlying understanding that her mentor knew what was best for her. The supervisor also coached Theresa on how to present herself with more authority.

Susan's mentor was an older Asian American woman administrator who took the initiative to meet with Susan for lunches and taught her the college culture and practices. Susan knew "her mentor was well-liked," as she was known as a hard-working administrator on campus. Susan said, "She is my role model even though I've never actually told her about it."

Through her personal network and friends, Christy recalled how two Asian American women (faculty and dean) from a community college helped her to get a teaching position in their community college. Christy said, "Growing up in Canada, I had little idea about the community college system in the U.S." Similarly, Diana had an extensive circle of women of color friends whom she could text freely to talk about her issues at work.

The consistent pattern of seeking out or otherwise becoming associated with an Asian American woman mentor was easy to understand, at least on the face of it. Such mentors shared a number of life circumstances and experiences with the women in my study; they had,

presumably, been in the field for longer, and therefore were a natural source of advice on how to cope with or address various issues that might arise; and they offered most obvious kind of role model. These Asian American women mentors were often pioneers of higher education who were among the first to serve as administrators and faculty, and these mentors often provided a long-term friendship to the participants.

White male mentors. It is striking that most of my participants seemed to have multiple mentors, as current literature rarely addresses Asian American women and mentoring experience. Despite the prevalence of mentoring relationships with Asian American females, most of my participants also connected with a white male mentor, though perhaps for different kinds of support or advice, or at different points of their career path. These mentors had often become linked to them during a certain segment in their careers, rather than providing a continuing relationship over a long period. Mary, Lily, Susan, Linda, Miranda, and Christy all had white mentors, and the majority of them were male. Unlike Asian American mentors, these white male mentors had been pursued more selectively by the participants who emphasized that "trust" was integral to their cross-cultural relationship. Interestingly, most of the white male mentors were individuals the participants had known prior to their community college employment; in other words, most did not connect with white male mentors where they currently worked. However, Susan did have a white faculty colleague as a mentor in her department. Not a "traditional" mentor, he was considered a faculty peer-mentor who practiced similar social justice centered pedagogy as Susan, and with whom she frequently collaborated on projects.

White male mentors provided the participants in my study with trusting and respectful relationships, professional expertise, interpretation of white culture, support, and advice. For instance, while she was working for a health services agency, Mary had a white male supervisor who was also her mentor. Mary, said, "I liked asking for his advice as he was humble, and I felt comfortable talking with him even about whiteness, and we respected each other."

Lily also identified two white male and female supervisors as her lifelong mentors. Lily recalled, "They left a vast impression on me because they took me seriously despite my inexperience with their businesses." Both mentors took her under their wings and showed her "how to be ethical and successful in whatever I had to do."

Both Susan and Christy worked closely with a white colleague whom they trusted and communicated with on a daily basis. Susan explained that her white male mentor helped her develop her identity as faculty, and she "respected" him. The two developed interdisciplinary courses together, and he believed Susan immediately when she told him of some classroom problems she had experienced because of white privilege. Christy also shared a kind of comradeship with her white female colleague: having "fought" the administration and built the department together, they were seen by their graduates as two "grandmothers."

Linda also had white male mentors while she was in a graduate school. Linda said, "I had a trusting relationship with him beyond race, but it did not last after my graduation." Similarly, Miranda relied on a white male mentor for his TESOL expertise. Although Miranda asked sparingly for his advice, he provided expertise in TESOL and much support, especially

when Miranda faced backlashes from other TESOL scholars upon publishing some of her scholarly works.

White male mentors often held a formal leadership position and authority. Unlike Asian American mentors, their mentoring tended to be short-termed. Similarly to Asian American mentors, they were not officially assigned to the participants. Based on the interviews, these mentors did not to stereotype the participants as Asian American women, and treated each as an individual. Christy explained that, in the firm she once worked for, "leaders [mostly white males] pay attention to individuals or groups who are innovative and competent." Lily echoed that her white mentors took her to "their private meetings" and taught her business ethics even though she was still new to their company. In Miranda's case, her white male mentor provided support and guidance. In short, both Lily's and Miranda's white mentors took them under their wings to nurture them professionally.

Other role models and support systems. Lily, Grace, and April did not have any mentors in their own community colleges. Although Lily had had exceptional white mentors in her corporate business world, she said, "I've never had that kind of close mentorship since I went into higher education at all." Lily said, "Higher education is more competitive and individualistic," and these conditions made findings appropriate mentors more difficult. She also criticized mentoring in academia as "too formal and inauthentic."

Grace explained her difficulty finding a mentor, saying she wanted her mentor to be a woman of color, but also someone "right" who could talk about strategies for coping with color-blind racism and microaggressions. Grace added that generation gaps might have hindered her

search because her leadership values did not always mesh with those of women leaders older than she.

April wished she had had mentors, especially while she was younger, but she "felt I was infringing on others" in asking for help. Instead, April mentored others, so that her mentees would have the support that she did not have.

This lack of mentors at work isolated the participants from receiving appropriate or insider information for promotion. For example, April discussed how she felt lost during the tenure process, as "there was no one who knew what to do." For both Grace and April, not having a mentor at their workspace also meant having no role models about them. As each was the "only one" (token) in her department, they found fewer individuals with whom they felt culturally connected. Lily also felt "dissonant" in leadership meetings where most in attendance were whites who simply ignored non-white perspectives.

Based on interviews of all 11 participants, they could also gain some of the benefits of mentorship indirectly through what Méndez-Morse (2004) calls a "distant role model" – someone who sets examples for others, but who does not necessarily have any direct contact with mentees. Role models are also someone who can "bridge two worlds" (Vogel & Rude, 2011). Incidentally, Theresa, Mary, Grace, Linda, Elizabeth, and April all named the same individual to whom they looked up as a role model. He was an Asian American vice president in one of the community colleges I visited. The distinctive characteristics they all shared about him was that he seemed to demonstrate less stereotypical male leadership traits, as they described him being "a good listener" and "approachable." For instance, Theresa explained she liked his

interpersonal approach, as he knew everybody's name and listened well. This individual acted as a role model, even though most of my participants had only limited or rather brief contact with him.

Additionally, April also mentioned a former Asian American male college president from the time when she first started working. April remembers him well as he brought a style of leadership different than a traditional individualistic model. For instance, he made sure that Asian Americans and Pacific Islander American communities' voices were part of the leadership agenda. When the same president became a chancellor, he also initiated a welcome reception for newly hired Asian American faculty and staff in Washington on his campus. This was the first time that such an event was orchestrated to specifically welcome Asian American employees.

Both role models were Asian American males who had substantial access to more formal and institutional power, and they explicitly demonstrated alternative leadership qualities that represented a distinct contrast to the way others exercised leadership on the college campus. They seemed to understand the importance of creating a sense of community, especially when there were only handful Asian American administrators or formal leaders in each campus. When I asked about other formal or informal leadership examples on each campus, none of the participants talked about other leaders this way. This invites an additional question of influence and impact on an ethnic representation, as well as creating a community in each campus. Furthermore, it brings up the prominence of alternative leadership models for both male and female leaders.

In this study, I focused on mostly career-related mentors, but several participants also discussed their family members (e.g., grandmother, mother, father, relatives, elders, husbands), social network of friends (e.g. Facebook), and "circle/inner circle of friends" as their support system. Concerning family, Brown (2005) expresses that women perceive family members as a source of strength, and that women report gaining leadership skills from them. Although not all participants discussed their family members as role models, it was very important for Miranda and Christy to share with me that their family members were community leaders and who had instilled activism in them at an earlier age. Grace, Mary, Theresa, and Linda also discussed women family members, especially their mothers, as their role models.

Although Christy did not have any administrative role models in her college, she did develop a mentoring relationship by reaching out to other higher education institutions and community organizations. For instance, Christy was co-writing a textbook with a prominent African American male business professor who also acted as a mentor for her. Lily, who had no on-campus mentors, acknowledged the importance of role models. She stated that even finding fictional characters from literature and media as role models might be beneficial. The ways each mentoring experience shaped the 11 women's leadership aspirations formed no liner pattern, but what was clear was that all participants had conceived their own leadership identity based on the influence of mentoring (or lack of it) and role models, along with their own values. Mentoring itself did not shape each woman's aspiration for assuming leadership roles. Among the 11 participants, two strived to become a college president while one was considering the possibility. I will discuss these three individuals in greater depth in the following chapter.

Defining and Practicing Leadership

Daily encounters with microaggressions and the limited availability of suitable mentoring relationships set the stage for the way these women viewed, aspired to, and practiced leadership. The findings reviewed above revealed that some of the participants had more negative or ambivalent associations with leadership at community college due to institutionalized microaggressions. In other words, leadership was equated with "institutional practices" for some, and with the implication that if they assumed formal leadership, they, too, would have to engage in practices, which they often found distasteful or in conflict with their values. For example, for Christy, leadership often meant the current dysfunctional administrative practices on her campus. Mary, administrator from the same campus, joked that she had became "institutionalized," as she understood the mistrust some staff and faculty had toward those acting in a leadership capacity. However, to define her own leadership style, Mary was able to name her leadership practice distinctively. Both Mary and Grace took a graduate level leadership class while pursuing their Ed.D. Mary said that she practiced "servant leadership," in which she sought to empower and provide guidance to her staff, so that as collective members of an institution, they could serve all students on campus effectively. Grace also mentioned servant leadership as her desired way of leading.

All participants were quite aware of the white male representing a leadership archetype, but none of the participants believed that leaders had to be white males. Although the participants understood that race and gender played multiple roles in leadership, in their view, leaders did not have to be of any specific race or gender, or to be born with certain

characteristics. The participants understood that leadership was both learned and shared, and they talked about leadership and mentoring as one.

The conventional idea of leadership remains controversial, and none of the participants agreed on one single specific leadership quality; yet, the findings revealed several shared ideas on optimal leadership. Such leadership qualities were influenced by their own organizational culture (e.g., chilly climate, mentoring/role models), family history, and evolving professional and personal identity. For instance, Diana was initially uncomfortable discussing leadership; however, when her mentor and she had a conversation about her professional goals, she had an opportunity to personalize what leadership meant for her. The next section addresses a summary of five core leadership ideas that all or most of the participants shared. Separately and together, these ideas derived in various ways from these participants' values, experiences, and their intersectionality.

Five Core Leadership Ideas

For all participants, a community colleges leader's mission was foremost to serve and advocate for students, especially underrepresented students. In addition, the participants articulated five common ideas about leadership and leaders' work: (1) *Leadership is an intentional, collaborative, and relational practice*; (2) *Leadership and leaders must strive for transformative cultural competency*; (3) *Leaders are mentors and empower others as role models*; (4) *Leaders are both teachers and learners;* and (5) *Life balance is essential for becoming future leaders*.

Leadership is an intentional, collaborative, and relational practice. Each participant learned from her daily experience that an intentional way of collaborating was key to her success, as well as her survival. Lily, a dean at East Gate Community College, emphasized her intentionality as a leader. "Everything I do is intentional. I make it intentional, so that others can see it. Transparent, collaborative, non-hierarchical, and it's collective, and non-cohesive." An administrator from another college, Grace at Beachland Community College, echoed, "I try to make sure everything I do, sharing and questioning publicly, is intentional and meaningful."

Building collaborative relationships in leadership requires sharing power. The participants seemed to know that "power sharing" was crucial to building trust and relationship. It was also coalition building for Christy, as she closely collaborated with her colleagues to achieve departmental goals (Safarik, 2003). Fennell (2002) cites Foucault's (1961) theories of "holding on to [power] while letting go," (p. 99) in which power exists in relationship. For Miranda, a faculty member at Mountain View College, "Leadership is a person who owns it, but who is also willing to give." She continued, "In the division I work in, you exercise leadership by sharing information and exercising your ideas."

Grace, an administrator echoed,

Leadership I see and I value is someone who can give away as much of that power as she can. Leaders should be able to make others look good; leaders help others to build careers…and I do believe that it builds you up more as a leader.

Christy, a business faculty, said, "A leader is someone who is not individualistic but someone who works collaboratively and works behind the scenes and encourages people who

have potential." April, another faculty member, stated, "[as a leader], you're controlling it, but you're doing it in a relaxed way. It's defused, in a way. I see that for me, I don't do it [leadership] alone." For Diana, an English faculty, leadership collaboration extended to her family members.

> I think in terms of a leadership, I prefer a communal [model]…I would have family members be part of my decision-making, and my parents are part of this process. I would ask their help on it, and I could never make hard-core decisions on my own.

Diana's comment on including her family in decision making might come from her family values as well as her own views on leadership. It was clear that leadership was not about individuality, but relational among those whose lives were connected with hers. In other words, leaders shared power to build community.

Leadership and leaders must strive for transformative cultural competency. Cultural competency, inclusivity, multiculturalism, social justice, and diversity were terms commonly used among the participants to describe effective leadership. Theresa, a biracial administrator, stated that cultural competency was an important part of her work and responsibility. She defined cultural competency as being sensitive and respectful while also willing to learn from other cultures and their communities. Theresa frequently visited local communities to learn about and research them, so that she could provide culturally appropriate orientations for both students and family members.

Linda, a faculty member at East Gate Community College and emerging leader in the psychology field, added that cultural competency for social justice was required of professionals.

"We [psychologists] do a lot of work together on issues we're all passionate about –

multicultural issues – and we support each other." Christy, who frequently worked with Asian

American communities and non-Asian American organizations with social justice issues,

explained, "A leader is someone who can navigate through multiple cultures."

Grace articulated that cultural competency was crucial for developing effective leaders,

but also that she had encountered situations where other leaders did not quite understand

dynamics of intersections of race, gender, and age. For instance, Grace noted that older white

leaders sometimes mistook her for a secretary because she was Filipino American, and their

frame of reference with Filipino Americans was as secretaries, and not administrators like

themselves. In terms of cultural competency, Elizabeth, Linda, Christy, Grace, and Lily, who

were all from different campuses, criticized their current leaders for not dealing with racism and

sexism on their campuses. Once again, these dynamics are examples of institutional

microaggressions.

Striving to become more culturally competent as educators was also important for several

participants. Susan, Linda, Diana, Christy, April, and Miranda all taught classes or workshops

dealing with race, gender, sexuality, and power. For instance, Miranda specifically assigned

Having Our Say (story of two African American sisters who lived through the Jim Crow era) for

her ESL students, while Diana incorporated readings on white privilege in her English classes.

Both Diana and Linda also worked closely with other faculty to provide a more gender-and

sexuality-informed pedagogy.

Moreover, as an educator, Miranda held herself accountable for culturally responsive teaching. Miranda discussed some situations in which she used to feel discouraged by her graduate students' ethnocentric comments, such as "You have an accent" (implying she was not qualified to teach TESOL to "American" students); however, she realized that, "those are the students we have to find a way to educate." The faculty participants' syllabi, assignments, and class observations revealed that their choice was to incorporate materials that explicitly introduced race, gender, language, sexuality, and other power issues. The participants' views about cultural competency as a reference point for leadership echoed scholarly assertions that cultural competency is also closely related to practices for transforming leadership. In their qualitative study, Ospina and Su (2009) have explained that culture and leadership are inter-related for social change organizations. The participants seemed to reflect on their institutional culture and leadership as interrelated as well.

Leaders are mentors and empower others as role models. All participants talked about informal mentoring for students and faculty, and most, if not all, mentored students of color. For instance, Diana, who said she had no woman of color mentor while growing up, intentionally mentored women students of color because she identified herself as a role model for them and vice versa. April also mentored new tenure candidates among the faculty. Christy guided her faculty mentees carefully toward specific leadership positions so that they could learn various skills as emerging leaders. This worked as a cycle of power development because, by helping her mentees, Christy gained from them both new knowledge and access to institutional planning. Moreover, by fostering emerging leaders, Christy, along with her mentees, created a shared and collaborative vision, rather than an individual one.

Lily and Mary also mentored several women, as well as women and men of color. They saw mentoring as their responsibility and an opportunity for role modeling. Linda explained why she mentored: "If you're in a leadership position, [you] bring people in to work with you, especially if they're your mentees, because leadership is about the collective and for greater good." Mary added, one of the keys of "Leadership is realizing [yourself] as a role model." Both women understood that being a leader meant to intentionally mentoring others in their institutions.

For both Mary and Grace, mentoring also meant providing an alternative leadership model. Mary used to work overtime at work and home, but stopped sending late night emails to her staff because she realized she was setting the wrong example. Mary wanted to convey the message that leaders should balance their work and personal lives. Grace, who had several women mentees, also demonstrated a specific role model for Asian American mentees as she knew Asian Americans were frequently perceived to be invisible. As one of few Asian American leaders on her campus, Grace coached one of her Asian American mentees to "walk tall" in hallways so that people would recognize her. Grace felt it was important to demonstrate confidence as she had experienced the challenge of being an Asian American woman while she was still new to her campus. In short, role modeling is a strategy that women often use to coach others about relationship and power (Fennel, 2002).

Leaders are both teachers and learners. John. F. Kennedy once said, "Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other" (as cited in Brazeau, 2008). This sentiment resonated with several participants I interviewed. Although Miranda stated there were many leadership

practices, for her, teaching was leadership. In a classroom, "You see yourself as a leader." Lily added,

> I think leadership is not just a job title, and it is principled in teaching. For me, teaching and leadership are synonymous…[As with leadership practices] you have to raise the bar, set high expectations, and support them when needed. This is exactly teaching.

Diana explained, "leaders are also learners, even a college president is not exempt from it." Mary also appreciated the opportunity to learn from others. She said, "That's one thing about me, is that I like to hear from people because I know there's not just one way of doing it. It's always an evolving process, and I always value the opportunity to learn." Linda also talked about urging herself to "just keep learning" about the campus culture and her profession.

Although having a master's degree was generally the norm in community colleges, most participants believed that getting a higher degree, such as a Ph.D. or Ed.D., would be important for their own personal growth, as well as for gaining professional credentials. Linda, Susan, and Miranda had Ph.D.s, and Christy had an M.B.A. In 2011, both Grace and Mary earned a Ed.D. Moreover, Theresa, Diana, and Elizabeth shared their plans to get higher degrees. Elizabeth would like to bring "research" into her practice. April also told me that she would have pursued a Ph.D. if she were younger. Lily, on the other hand, was pursuing her photography more, as she was planning to spend more time developing her art as an artist-teacher. Christy had just finished co-writing a textbook, and she planned to publish more.

Interestingly, all administrators except for Grace, who once taught high school math, stated that they would very much like to teach college level classes, such as human development

classes, leadership classes, or intercultural studies classes, so that they could provide more direct services to students. For instance, Elizabeth was negotiating with a new administration to add teaching to her duties. Despite her previous negative teaching experience, Theresa, too, would like to get back to teaching, as she saw herself "as educator working with students directly."

Life balance is essential for becoming future leaders. Leadership, exercised in formal or even informal ways, demanded a lot from these participants, as it might from anyone. For these participants, finding the right balance was an essential challenge, one that could shift their leadership identity and trajectory one way or the other. Their ideas and experiences here differed; however, they shared commonalities in regard to the importance of life balance.

For instance, when Grace was attending a leadership conference, she recalled listening to several female presidents who had had little choice but to sacrifice their personal and family lives for their work. Although Grace felt great respect for them, she did not believe that women had to give up family and children to become a president. Grace claimed, "I'm not willing to give up all of that up, and I'm not convinced that I have to give up all that to become a president. Men don't – not really!"

Similarly, Mary used to believe clocking excessive hours was a rite of passage for a college president, working late nights and overtime hours like her woman president who had no children. But Mary eventually realized that she needed to acknowledge her own leadership identity, her island (values), and her boundaries. Mary began,

> [Leadership] is a having a sense of yourself, knowing yourself, and also a good sense of
> balance to always to know what's important in life. For me, you kind of need to know

what your limit is, too – in a way that you go to the point that you will not compromise, based on your belief.

Thus, Mary decided to stick with her own values. Instead of postponing her graduate work and putting more hours at work, Mary decided to complete her Ed.D. and stop "working herself to death."

Miranda learned that work itself did not define who she wanted to be. Work used to be her number one priority, but after missing her mother's death, Miranda realized that balancing her family, children, and her inner life had to become her top priority. Work and research were still important for her, but they were no longer the point of her life. Linda used to believe having a family and children by certain age was what she needed to accomplish; however, she started to realize that such constraints were socially imposed, and she no longer believed that she had to fit a certain mold to be who she was. For Linda, creating changes within her gave a different sense of leadership paradigm. Linda began to select committees more carefully, so that she could candidly assert her values among them.

In the case of Theresa, she was "already stressed enough" with her current administrative job and felt reluctant to advance because she did not want even larger responsibilities. Theresa also tried to stay within a 40-hour per week schedule to avoid getting sick and "burned out." When Theresa got sick, she too quickly learned that she needed to balance her life. Paradoxically, Theresa was selected for promotion in 2012 and accepted the advancement.

Summary: Career-related Mentoring and Active Pursuit of

Different Leadership Paths

At the beginning of this chapter, I posed several research questions. One of them inquired what forms of career-related mentoring (if any) Asian American women receive, either formally or informally. Based on my findings, the Asian American women I studied have had mostly informal mentoring experience. Diana was the only participant who had a formal mentoring experience at work.

Their mentors were: (1) Asian American women; (2) white male mentors; and (3) other role models and support systems. All participants believed that mentoring was crucial to their professional success and support; thus, they intentionally searched for mentors, whether on their own campus, via professional affiliations, or otherwise. Some considered their family members mentors, especially their mothers. Each participant's mentoring experience varied; some were friendships while others featured more formal professional support, and some had both in varied degrees. Despite racial and gender differences, the commonality with all mentors and the participants came down to trust, respect, and shared similar political ideologies. Some, however (Lily, April, and Grace), had no mentors at work and looked for alternative ways to find role models, including through media representations.

How does this kind of mentoring shape the participants' views of leadership roles, their aspirations for assuming such roles, and their identities as current or future leaders? First, whether the participants had mentors or not, they were not passive regarding the assumption of leadership roles. In other words, mentoring experience (or lack of it) alone did not shape their

views of leadership roles or their aspirations for assuming them. Rather, their mentoring contributed, in conjunction with their own reflection of self and core-values in relationship with others as Asian American women, to the shaping of their leadership identities. For instance, Diana felt it important to arrive at decisions communally by soliciting her family's input in her decision-making process. Yet, Diana did not consider her own leadership potential until her Asian American mentor reminded her of her responsibility not to perpetuate Asian American stereotypes by not even investigating jobs of higher ranking. Thus, for Diana, leadership identity has been interpersonal rather than individualistic. Similarly for Christy, leadership identity closely related to collaborating with others. However, such practice is not always common in the mainstream U.S.

Their leadership identities had developed gradually. For instance, several participants intentionally acted against Asian American women stereotypes, and such actions shaped their leadership styles (e.g., being vocal, challenging white privilege). Some participants chose not to take an executive leadership role in their institutions because they did not want to perpetuate a non-inclusive and non-collaborative leadership role. Based on my findings, there was no distinct culture or practice that nurtured Asian American women's leadership skills at any of the three community colleges. For instance, having a female president did not make any difference in terms of encouraging more inclusive leadership practices for Asian American women or women of color. Most often, the current institutional leadership model did not provide equal opportunities for them. Instead, the participants practiced leadership by being: (1) intentional, collaborative, and relational; (2) culturally competent in transformative matters; (3) givers who mentored and empowered others; (4) teachers and learners; and (5) well balanced in their work

and personal lives. In addition, (6) most administrators identified teaching and having a more direct instructional impact upon students as their leadership identity, and they wished to practice more of it.

Moreover, "intersectionality of othering" and the positioning of these Asian American women on their respective campuses influenced the participants' ideas about their own leadership practices. For instance, Lily thought of herself as an administrator-leader at first, but through her difficult and discriminatory relationship with her community college, marked by its failure to acknowledge her as a biracial Asian American woman administrator, she concluded that her leadership practice would be better utilized as a teacher-leader. Despite the participants' different job titles, they frequently used their "intersectionality of othering" to educate, mentor, and advocate for their students, colleagues, and others. By doing so, they rendered their marginalities a tool of resistance and way of collaboration. In essence, their "othering" became a part of their leadership values and practices.

These ideas about leadership derive in many ways from clear sense of self, in particular, from each participant's experience and reflection as an Asian American woman and her interpretation of her own values (both knowing and respecting them). As such they bring a collective strength to leadership that may not yet be fully recognized in their institutional context, but over time may become so. And when it is recognized, they will have much to offer institutions that take collaborative and transformative leadership seriously, because Asian American women's experiences bring much relevance to transforming leadership in community colleges. Since more women and students of color, including Asian American students, choose

to attend community colleges, individuals with sound cultural competencies and more inclusive leadership skills, such as my participants, will play a crucial role in the growth of future community colleges, as well as providing role models for students who may otherwise feel themselves to be invisible.

Despite the shared qualities of leadership identity that all participants demonstrated, the way each woman navigated a career path and her choices was unique and nonlinear. Among all 11 participants, Mary, Grace, and Lily from different campuses chose to strive for top executive leadership roles. Chapter 6 will focus on these three participants' profiles and re-visit their leadership aspirations.

Chapter 6

Explaining Asian American Women Leaders' Drive for

an Executive Leadership Role

As the analysis of my findings in chapters 4 and 5 made clear, the context of a chilly campus climate, namely, microaggressions and the mixed conditions of mentoring, could prompt Asian American women faculty or administrators to pursue a number of career paths. Frequently, their career trajectories lead away from formal leadership roles. However, working against the grain, Mary, Grace, and Linda continued to aspire to executive leadership positions. Given what they were up against, this career trajectory offers an interesting special case within my participant sample, one which I will discuss in this chapter.

Three Cases

Mary and Grace were vice presidents at East Gate Community College and Beachland Community College, respectively, and planned to become college presidents someday. They had also taken a graduate level leadership class together, having both decided to complete graduate work in preparation to pursue a leadership position in a community college system. Through such graduate work experience and reflection on their own daily leadership practices, they began to identify themselves as servant leaders. Servant leaders are those who maintain a strong commitment to serve others by advocating and sharing power (Greenleaf, 1996). Linda, however, who is likewise at East Gate Community College, remains undecided but at least willing to entertain the possibility of pursing an executive leadership role, unlike other

participants who clearly do not aspire to it. Linda's colleagues elected her chair of their

department immediately after she earned her tenure. Linda, however, was not confident about

whether her current workplace environment was conductive to her achieving an executive

position. In this chapter, I focus on these three participants in more detail to investigate what has

made them pursue leadership paths different from the rest of participants. In examining how

Mary, Grace, and Linda articulated their commonalities and differences regarding

microaggressions, microresistances, mentoring, and their leadership experiences and aspirations,

I seek to show how these experiences could nurture their continued aspirations for executive

level leadership roles. In this context, I also focus on a particular research question (question 4),

that is, "How, if at all, do these Asian American women define and practice leadership in

community college?"

**Case 1 – Mary (Vice President of Administrative Services) at East Gate Community
College**

Mary, a vice president of Administration Services at East Gate Community College, was

one of the few immigrant women among 11 participants. While working full-time, Mary earned

an Ed.D. in 2011. Her dissertation topic centered on foster youth care in Washington State.

Mary wrote in her dissertation, "As a granddaughter of a first-generation college student, I have

personally benefited from the effects of education in promoting upward mobility." Mary's

mother also went to college when she was in her 40s to earn a law degree and become a lawyer.

Coming from a middle class family, what Mary remembered vividly about the Philippines was

the class divisions. She recalled that where she grew up, poor people lived just a creek away,

where most young children lived in cardboard homes. Mary said, "Those were the exposures I

had growing up. Those children, they just stay uneducated and illiterate generation after generation, always that kind of exposure." This experience as a young woman became a critical moment for her, as Mary had never forgotten the inequalities many children had to endure, and she knew she wanted to help others who were less fortunate.

When she first moved to Washington, she dreamed of building an accounting career and becoming successful in a large U.S. accounting firm, but none of them would hire her. Instead, Mary soon found herself working in a human services organization. During that time, she had become active within Filipino American communities, to which she referred as one of her "communities." Her other two communities included those of a community college and a local human services organization. It was "important [for me] to connect with them." Mary had her Filipino American family and friends in the state, and she also kept in touch with relatives via Facebook. "For me, building and keeping relationship with others has been a significant part of who I am." Through such relationships, Mary found a white male mentor who facilitated her navigation of the system in human services organizations – a connection she still maintained. Mary believed her prior professional experiences helped her vice presidency in a community college because her passion was always to "serve others." In 2011, an Asian American newspaper honored Mary for her contributions as one of the community's women of color leaders (*Northwest Asian Weekly online*).

As a working mother of two daughters, Mary said she was one of "the luckiest women," as her aunt helped her out with household duties while she worked. Mary was not a stereotypical homemaker, or a stereotypical Asian American woman, and perhaps not even an average woman – she was willing to delegate her housework to another in order to pursue and advance her

career. Mary and her husband also created a norm early on that "it was okay to have a busy life" for the sake of their career developments. Now, as a vice president in a community college system, she wished for more balance in her work and family life. Despite this desire, Mary still kept long hours while, "taking advantage of building relationships with others during business hours," which meant she relegated care of administrative paperwork to home. As an administrator, Mary also knew of recent formal complaints and a lawsuit brought by Asian American and African American women faculty and staff of color at her workplace. In fact, one of the Asian American woman employees informed her of the matter in detail, so that Mary would be protected from it.

Despite her very visible position, Mary described herself as "introverted," even though she actively led most meetings. While her meetings were fast-paced, serious, and matter of fact, showing a serious side of her, she also furnished snacks at meetings to show her appreciation of attendees. For a couple of years, Mary had been reflecting on her own leadership style. When I asked about meaning of leadership, Mary responded:

> Leadership means to be a role model (pause). For instance, working until 1am, even though that's my choice – is that something I struggle to say. But do I want to *promote* it? I hope it's not setting a false expectation that in order to succeed, everyone has to work until 1a.m. Is that really what we want people to do?

Mary was recently working to encourage her staff to maintain a more balanced lifestyle and prioritize their personal needs. She tried to model this herself by not emailing her staff members late at night. "Now, I am being more cognizant of that…The other way to balance is

knowing and being grounded on what is valuable and important for us, and respecting it."

During her business meetings, Mary frequently reminded her staff to ask, "Why we are doing it

this way?" or "Why do some projects take priority over others?"

Mary applied for a college president position in Washington State and got so far as

finalist, but she did not get the job. However, recently she received another job offer as a vice

president for another community college, and she was preparing to leave her current community

college. When asked what she wanted to do at her new college, Mary said, "I'd like to teach a

leadership class, because I want to have more direct connections with students." At her current

work, Mary visited ethnic and cultural studies classes as a guest speaker, sharing her Filipina

identity and paths as a woman leader of color. Although Mary "learned a lot from" her white

female president, she did not completely agree with her leadership style that promoted

competition among administrators. Mary said, " I'd like to provide a different leadership style

where collaboration and mentoring are the norms." Because of recent retirements and multiple

administrative position changes, she found this new job to offer an opportunity for an alternative

leadership approach. According to Mary, "changes are happening, and leadership is changing."

At her new community college, Mary's plan is to cultivate more leadership experiences,

be mentored by her next superior who is an African American woman, and someday become a

college president. Mary concluded. "My leadership aspiration comes from knowing where my

island is." – a term reminiscent of her roots that refers to a collection of personal strengths and

boundaries. Her passion is "to make a difference with children by doing what I can to get rid of

poverty and build equality for these children…Leadership is to be able to reflect back and ask

what my values are and realizing them as a role model, and understanding unintended consequences." Moreover,

> I think it's a having a sense of yourself, knowing yourself, and also having a good
> sense of balance to always to know what's important in life. For me, you kind of need to
> know what your limit is too, in a way that you go to the point that you will not
> compromise based on your belief.

Case 2 – Grace (Vice President of Student Services) at Beachland Community College

Also occupying a vice president role, though at a different community college (Beachland), Grace presented a different profile and narrative of an Asian American woman who had persisted in pursuit of executive level leadership roles. Grace was born into a middle class Filipino American family in Washington State and grew up in a mostly white community. Her upbringing contradicted the typical Asian woman stereotype (e.g., meek and quiet). "My mother is a really scary-strong woman, and all my aunts are very strong, and all the women models are strong." In her high school, Grace said she was treated differently than other "Brown students." She "stood out [among her peers] and ended up doing many leadership things. Most Brown kids were either seen as remedial or special ed [education], but I was placed in a pre-college track."

Prior to community college, she was a high school math teacher, but soon "I fell in love in with this place [her community college] because of the concept and mission of community college. I liked the idea that community colleges were in general open to all individuals, who came from different walks of life." Her high school experience had pushed her into a community college, and then into administration.

Grace reflected:

When I was in high school, I became passionate about education, and trying to figure out

what I was really passionate about, I realized that it was working with students of color

after understanding what their barriers were. I can't say, I identify with a lot of struggles,

but I really came to understand them through relationships, and being able to feel that

kept me passionate about them [underrepresented students]. And it still is a big driver in

my work.

Grace continued,

At my current job, I really found ways to merge my personal values – social justice

and multiculturalism – with certain professional goals. I kind of changed the focus for

more communities of color and not just anybody who might want to come here.

When I first met Grace, she was an associate dean, but within a year, she was promoted

to vice president of Student Services at the same college she has worked at for 11 years.

According to the official email sent by the college president, she was chosen because of her

"passion, enthusiasm, and perspectives that will guide student services, and she will make

decisions that are based on what is best for our students."

Unlike Mary, with her sense of being "introverted," Grace joked that she had always been

"bossy" even when she was a child. She was "an extrovert," who could be "pretty vocal in

meetings," and felt comfortable with her style. As an example of being vocal, Grace explained

that she nominated herself into another position when a new opportunity arose. The

administration was looking for someone who could fulfill some of the student services and

program development work for the AANAPISI grant they had acquired, discussing possible

candidates. Grace was sitting with several vice presidents in that meeting and simply said to

them, "'You know what, I think I'm qualified and I'd like to be considered for this.' And they

kind of stopped and looked at me, and another vice president from the IR [Information

Resources] department said, 'Absolutely, you'd be perfect!'" Grace clarified her assertiveness:

"I'm not just a cage rattler. Although that's sometimes called for, I try to make sure everything

I'm saying and sharing and questioning, publicly, is intentional and meaningful."

In 2011, Grace not only became a vice president, she also completed her Ed.D. Grace

said her husband and family members supported her successes. Her dissertation addressed the

AANAPISI grant work and color-blind racism in her own institution. Given what she had

witnessed in her own high school regarding racism toward "Brown skins," combating racism was

important work for her. Moreover, Grace has experienced both ethnic and gender stereotypes of

herself. She explained that most people did not even know the difference between Japanese

Americans and Filipino Americans; however,

> I'm more comfortable with such situations now, because I've been through these
>
> processes at work here. For others, they only [saw me through] a frame of
>
> reference for a youngish Filipino, and a number of secretaries they'd had in that area,
>
> and I am aware of that frame of reference. They're the Baby Boomer generation, mostly
>
> white women. So age, gender, race, all that – and there are conflicts with that in a lot of

interactions. I'm aware of that on a daily basis; I don't react or analyze every day, but I'm aware of it every time.

However, in terms of institutional experiences, Grace continued, "Some of them are not so micro [microaggressions]. They are definitely macro!" She cited one example dealing with the AANAPISI grant. "First of all, at the institution level, the college has never sponsored any programming focused on any racial groups." Thus, there were many backlashes from the administration against efforts to focus on specific groups, in this case, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. Grace said this exemplified color-blind racism and she wrote about this problem in her dissertation. The white administrators would voice objections like, "We're not saying that we can't serve APIs, but we need to serve *everybody*. It's fair, and it's equitable," or "Why are we just focusing on Asians? They are the biggest group and they're the smartest group," or "How about African American students or Latinos? They're going to get mad at us."

Grace continued, "That was an ongoing challenge. Nobody really learned that it was okay to focus on somebody." Moreover, despite the diverse student body, the college staff was not diverse, and she was concerned about the current hiring practices and ways budgetary restrictions continued to perpetuate a preponderance of whiteness. Grace added, "everybody [at work] is very friendly, but when it comes to issues of race, there's still high level of discomfort. A lot of that is sort of white fear around issues of race."

Grace was expecting her first baby in early 2012. Her goal remained becoming a college president and "to serve underserved populations, and to carry on the mission of community colleges." This glimpse of her leadership trajectory underscored both her affirmative steps

toward her goal and the fact that those around her did not initially see her in that role, until she actively convinced them that she could do that kind of work. Asserting herself fairly frequently, Grace commented that she had become more comfortable doing so, and mentored others to be more proactive.

While observing one of her meetings with a president, I noticed that the meeting was collegial with many jokes and a definite sense of understanding that meetings need not always be serious. By contrast, Mary's meetings seemed much more formal. For example, Mary's meetings took place either in her office or a boardroom where people came to see her, while none of Grace's meetings took place in her office.

When I asked about her leadership style, Grace emphatically responded:

Leadership is being a model for my expectations for other people, expectations for my staff, expectations for my colleagues, and my expectations for my superior. By being collaborative, by being warm, by being knowledgeable, by being sensitive, by being culturally competent, I feel that I'm demonstrating that. And wearing these qualities on my sleeve, I'm leading people by presenting them as my values. This is definitely intentional in my interactions.

Grace concluded, "Leadership in changing right now, and you can't sleep through it." Her biggest concern in taking more leadership positions was that she had no suitable woman mentor at her community college. She felt it was especially difficult for Asian American women to find mentors, because they had to find someone who could mentor them in a "right way." Grace said "it was harder to find someone really competent in these issues of race who can talk

with me about how they navigate color-blind racism, institutional racism, and microaggression –

someone who can speak the language with me." Perhaps because of her own lack of mentoring

experiences, Grace intentionally mentored other women of color. When I asked about her

personal social network, Grace said laughingly, "When I think of my friends on Facebook,

they're awfully yellow and brown!" The last comment reminded me that despite how others

treated her, Grace considered herself as Brown, not white.

Case 3 – Linda (Faculty Member) at East Gate Community College

Linda is both Chinese and Japanese American and grew up in Hawaii with a single

mother. As a child, she grew up amid a racial majority, and most of her friends were fourth

generation Japanese Americans. She left Hawaii to earn her Ph.D. in California. Linda was

hired as a tenure candidate counselor/faculty at East Gate Community College. Linda thought of

herself as a different kind of leader as she could inspire her colleagues to show up more

personally, such as by sharing more freely with each other how to best help students. As a way

to better get to know her colleagues, she organized after work get-togethers. Linda stated, "I like

the fact that this inspired my colleagues to communicate more freely and honesty." This

collegial relationship further motivated Linda at work, as did her internal drive "to grow, and just

keep learning and building more camaraderie," so that "we can serve students better."

Linda was the only faculty member among the participant who was considering taking

the role of a college president someday. She had a Ph.D. in clinical psychology; even as a child

she had wanted a Ph.D., as the title sounded important. Adults told her she was a good listener,

and Linda knew she wanted to use her skills to help others in her future. When she had only

been working at her community college for three years, her colleagues elected her to serve as chair. However, Linda felt ambivalent toward taking on more formal leadership roles in her college because, as an Asian American woman, she continued to receive mixed messages.

Linda stated:

I do want to definitely mention culture, in terms of leadership, because I think there is a piece, and I don't know whether it's cultural or racism, but I think there's an expectation of me that I will not be a leader, or I cannot be because of my youth or my interpretation [of ways the current leadership is dysfunctional].

For instance, Linda said, "I was once told that I was too direct in my speech, and my colleagues told me that I needed to change my communication style." Linda wondered if this had something to do with her being an Asian American woman.

Linda continued:

I talk a lot about when microaggressions happen. When I feel something isn't right, I'm intuitive enough to feel something really bad, and I get angry…I'm getting better at noticing, first of all, honoring [my] anger, and I have to be better at not expressing it right away. But, I think how I cope with it is to talk with someone, another psychologist of color or someone who can reflect back to me, and even a white ally, and they would say "that was a microaggression."

In the classrooms, Linda also experienced microaggressions by white students. Linda explained, "Younger white students challenge some of the rules and boundaries I set, and then, when I get really firm on it, there reaction is, 'Oh, you don't have to be that aggressive!'"

She questioned whether, if she were to have different demographics, she would get the same reaction. Linda also had older white female students who gave comments at the end of the class such as "You should be really proud of yourself," or "You did a really good job!"

Linda observed that there was a different awareness and attitude toward Asian American women by white students.

I think because there is youthfulness about Asian American women, and there is exoticness and objectification. I think if I were African American woman, there would be another projection on me, but that would be different. And if I were Latina, it would be different, and if I were white, it would be different.

Linda was not quite sure whether she wanted to stay as a chair for more than a year, or whether she even wanted to stay at the same college. Linda explained, "the administrators don't seem to understand the culture of the program, nor do they have any vision." Linda's ambivalence toward an executive leadership position heightened when she started to notice diminishing support from her direct supervisors. The situation was becoming worse, and she "felt embarrassed" by the administrations' lack of vision and insensitive and ineffective business decisions they continued to make. When Linda confronted her supervisors, they "apologized for their mistakes," but no improvements were made. During the same period, her workload increased without any financial compensation. Linda started directly questioning administrative

practices and decisions made during division meetings. Linda also brought her concerns to the president and the head of the union. Although Linda felt the president understood the problems, Linda began to feel more isolated in the sense that she had only handful individuals she could really trust. "I'm not even sure if I want to continue to be chair." Such helplessness also made her feel less effective, as the institution undervalued her leadership by not taking appropriate actions.

Despite the ongoing problems she faced, Linda had interest in administrative work; thus, she actively met with her mentors and asked for their advice. She also spoke with her college president and other executive leaders outside her college to learn their perspectives on effective leadership in higher education. Unlike Mary or Grace, Linda did not characterize herself as a servant leaders or as any specific leadership type, but she explained that she was "a different kind of leader" [than her supervisors] as she "can inspire her colleagues to try different things and come up with ideas to look at things from fresh perspectives." When I asked where she learned these leadership skills, Linda indicated her mother, who, in her work as a bank manager, had modeled the importance of building relationships.

During the last follow-up meeting, Linda shared that she had decided to search for a new position elsewhere, as she felt that she could not really grow professionally at East Gate. After reflecting on her strengths and professional interests with her several mentors, she realized that she still enjoyed administrative work and was willing to give up her tenured faculty position. Linda applied for a few positions at both community colleges and universities. During that time, a couple of her Asian American woman mentors told Linda about LEAP and recommended that

she ask her president to write a letter of recommendation for her admission. Linda knew the reputation of LEAP, and she was excited at the prospect.

Emerging Themes

While their stories differ in important ways, these three women share several experiences, supports, challenges, and responses in their careers that begin to explain why and how they have persisted in an executive leadership track. These include: (1) *a strong, educated mother*; (2) *a persistent drive to "keep their eyes on the prize;"* (3) a *sense of urgency for cultural change*; and (4) *the effort to create an alternative leadership paradigm*. These features of their career trajectories combine external forces and conditions with their own internal work and response to these conditions. The patterns that emerge from their stories point to a unique set of circumstances that characterize the Asian American woman leader's ascent into executive leadership roles in a community college setting.

A Strong, Educated Mother

All three women grew up with strong and educated mothers. For instance, as a child Mary watched her mother studying to be a lawyer, while Grace grew up with a "scary" strong mother and aunts. Linda's mother, a single parent with two children, had a successful career as a bank manager and taught her daughter the importance of building relationships as a leader. Although other women (e.g., Teresa and April) talked about their family members as role models, for Mary, Grace, and Linda, it seemed that their mothers were not only inspiring role models, but also effective heads of household or breadwinners taking care of family members.

Having a strong mother for women of color is not necessarily abnormal. Blair-Log and Dehart's (2003) case study on African American women lawyers notes that being a strong mother and breadwinner have long co-existed. One of the lawyers in their study states, "My mother was always supportive of me…and a major source of motivation in my life…" (as cited in Blair-Log & Dehart, 2003, p. 911). Blair-Log and Dehart's case study indicates that mothers who have careers tend to expect more for their daughter's career.

Perhaps, because their mothers' ways and lives differed so markedly from Asian American women stereotypes, all three seemed comfortable with their own gendered roles. For instance, Grace described herself as "bossy," but for her, bossy or scary were not necessarily negative concepts; rather, being bossy (authoritative) or scary (intimidating) could easily co-exist with being a woman. Mary also had her aunt to take care of her household, so that she did not have to follow a traditional stay-at-home mother's role, but became instead a joint breadwinner with her husband. When I observed her in meetings, Mary was often the first person to speak up, give advice, or interrupt, and that was all right with her and her colleagues. Linda, too, described her communication style as direct. Although all three participants were quite aware of Asian American women stereotypes (e.g., less authoritative, not taking a lead, and indirect), they debunked such stereotypes by intentionally assuming assertive leadership styles.

A Persistent Drive to "Keep Their Eyes on the Prize": Education is Power

All three participants understood the power of education to give them more access to upward mobility, and they had actualized this potential in their own education, while the other participants I interviewed had not. All three participants recently gained either a Ph.D. or a

Ed.D. Moreover, they had their "eyes on the prize," beyond their own personal gain because "certain events happened" both externally and internally in their earlier lives, and kept their dreams going. Mary, for example, had witnessed a number of poor illiterate children when she was growing up, and she decided that eradicating the cycle of juvenile poverty was her future goal. Prior to her community college experience, she worked for human services agencies, which strengthened her commitment to helping and empowering others, especially through education. While growing up, Mary remembered education was the key for upward mobility in her family.

Grace found herself a leader in high school, and decided that she wanted to be "an agent of change." She claimed that, while she did not face the same severity of challenges as other students of color, working closely with those overcoming multiple barriers in schools helped shape her desire to become a leader in education. Grace believed that systemic change was needed to make a difference, and realized that having a higher position would help her to make such changes happen.

Linda also knew what she wanted at a young age:

I always knew that I wanted to work with people. I knew that, and when I was little, for a long time, it was the power of having a Ph.D. and having the privilege of education. So it wasn't a question, and I was very driven. I had a lot of support from my mom, emotionally and financially; basically, everything kind of led to the field of psychology. So it kind of all fell into the place.

Bass and Avolio (1994) define such leaders as transformational self-defining leaders. As did these women, transformational leaders have "strong internalized values and ideas" (p. 18). According to Bass and Avolio (1994):

They are willing to forgo personal payoffs and, when necessary, to risk loss of respect and affection to pursue actions that they are convinced are right. These leaders have a sense of self-worth that is self-determined; not in a self-serving way, but in a manner that allows them to make tough, unpopular decisions. They exhibit a strong sense of inner purpose and direction, which often is viewed by others as the great strength of their leadership (p. 18).

Linda, who challenged her administrations to develop more clear institutional goals and action plans for student services, was clearly a leader "pursuing actions that they are convinced are right." Madsen (2008) adds, "Having a strong sense of self-identity, strengthening their self-awareness, and developing their own voice as leader were important" (p. 178) ingredients as well.

A Sense of Urgency for Cultural Change

Both Mary and Grace, administrators for several years, had experienced a number of leadership changes in their colleges due to budget cuts and retirements, especially in the most recent years. Mary knew "changes are happening," and Grace added, "We cannot sleep through it [the transformation]." Both women expressed a sense of urgency, as they believed this was their chance to bring systemic and cultural change to leadership. In 2011, both Mary and Grace applied for new positions, and began to advance new phases of their careers. Linda, as soon as

her tenure process was over in 2011, had been appointed department chair, but she decided to leave her community college, applying elsewhere for new positions, as she wanted to be in a place where she could grow and help transform the culture.

Although all three participants' circumstances differed, what tied them together was a proactive approach to their career development to create meaningful changes in their chosen field. All three had reflected on the current culture and campus climate in their workplace and wanted to make different impacts. In order to so most effectively, Grace decided to apply for a vice presidency in her own workplace, and Mary and Linda applied for positions elsewhere.

The Effort to Create an Alternative Leadership Paradigm

When examining these participants' resumes and interviews, it appeared their leadership paths were not by any means accidental. They had purposefully built their career paths by adding more credentials and gaining more professional networks along the way. By doing so, they had fostered leadership paradigms of their own which diverged from those of their predecessors. First, all three participants discussed the importance of personal values reflected in their professional lives. Second, they challenged traditional leadership practices and authority within their institutions in order to effect change. Both points relate to their core values as leaders. For instance, Mary implemented an Asian American and Pacific Islander Affinity group among staff and faculty at a time when there was little institutional encouragement. Grace wrote about color-blind racism on her own campus in her dissertation. Linda began to question her supervisors' administrative practices. Moreover, despite the different official titles they held, all three acknowledged themselves as leaders. This acknowledgement, as I noted previously, came

in part from their strong desire to empower and advocate for others. For instance, although Mary considered herself as introvert, she felt it was her responsibility to become a leader to advocate for children in poverty. Similarly, Linda and Grace talked about their leadership style as inspiring others to do things they had not done before (Linda) and empowering others by being a role model (Grace). Creating an alternative leadership paradigm comprises the ultimate form of microresistance.

Summary: The Interplay of Individual and Institutional Forces

in the Women's Career Trajectories

Among these participants, Mary (administrator) and Linda (faculty member) worked for East Gate Community College while Grace (administrator) worked for Beachland Community College. During the two years of my study, both Mary and Linda decided to leave their positions, as their professional values did not align with the institutional leadership values surrounding them. In addition, East Gate Community College did not provide any adequate leadership or mentoring for them, especially for those who wished to grow into executive leaders. Although East Gate Community College featured a formal mentoring program, it targeted only tenure candidate faculty members. The participants required mentoring in types of leadership unrelated to becoming successful faculty members. Moreover, Lily, who also worked as an administrator for East Gate Community College, resigned from her position, naming the lack of leadership visions, white privilege, and sexism as her key reasons. Interestingly, although Grace also criticized her college's lack of diversity, color-blind racism, and lack of mentoring, she chose to stay in her college, as did April. Thus, this study cannot determine

conclusively how much their institutional cultures and practices themselves influenced these three women's career trajectories.

Mary and Grace worked for community colleges different from each other in many ways. Despite these differences, both community colleges valued diversity and an open-door policy, so that more students could pursue their academic/professional and life goals. Although both Mary and Grace came from middle class families, they understood that not everyone was so fortunate. For many students, especially low-income and/or students of color, community colleges gave better access and an opportunity to pursue life-long goals they could not otherwise begun. Thus, community colleges were important for both Mary and Grace.

Based on both Mary and Grace's narratives, document analysis, and shadowing, their positions as vice presidents in community colleges were no "accident"; rather, they had arrived there by direct intention. Both had persistently applied for positions where they could refine and obtain new skills (e.g., learning about grant work, familiarizing themselves with different departments, closely working with institutional research, looking for suitable mentors) as administrators. Their paths differed from those of Theresa and April who were promoted during the two years of my study only by being "appointed" or "encouraged" to apply for a higher position. Neilson and Suyemoto's (2009) study has confirmed that to attain certain mid-level administrative positions, women can be promoted "accidently," but to become a president, "accident" is not enough. Grant (2010) has echoed that she first thought of herself as an accidental leader, but later realized that she had always been purposefully building her credentials through perseverance.

What separated Linda's case from Mary and Grace's cases was the lack of immediate administrative support and mentoring by her own supervisors, and Linda's increased frustration and mistrust toward them. Linda felt the lack of administrative support in her department stifled her professional growth. However, despite the experience, Linda was the only faculty participant who concluded that she may still pursue an executive administrative position, and even presidency someday.

In essence, what connected all three are the following. First of all, they grew up with a strong and educated mother who demonstrated that being a woman and being a leader could coincide. Learning from their own mothers, they were unafraid to assert their values and authority. Second, all three participants found their passion when they were younger, and nurtured it as adults. Third, they were not afraid of seeing themselves as leaders because they had altruistic visions beyond personal interests. Fourth, they also built strong academic credentials. Fifth, although their mentoring experiences were varied, each had clear vision of who her mentor should be, or of serving as a role model for others.

To answer the research question, "How do these three Asian American women define and practice leadership in community college?", Linda, Mary, and Grace's perspectives were similar to those of the other participants I studied. They valued collaboration, relationship, and intentionality, cultural competency, mentoring and teaching aspect of leaders, and life balance. In addition, they valued obtaining a terminal degree, systemic cultural change, and an immediate alternative leadership paradigm. Although both Mary and Grace were more explicit in naming their leadership style as "servant leader," for the most part, leadership was about constant efforts

to empower others and help transform the institution. Yet, the biggest distinction between these three and the rest of the participants was that they were unafraid to call themselves leaders. For instance, Linda, who is still new to the community college system, described herself as "an emerging leader." By constant self-reflection and refinement of their own values, they have envisioned themselves as leaders, and advocated for themselves proactively despite a chilly or icy climate or any other discouragement imposed on them. As Madsen (2008) states, developing one's own voice is the key for effective leadership.

Having a clear sense of who they are was one of the key components of leadership identity for Mary, Grace, and Linda. Khator (2010), a chancellor of the University of Houston System confirms, "self awareness is the key [for becoming a leader]" (p. 31). Among these three participants, additional insights emerged: (1) They found it acceptable to break Asian American women's stereotypes and re-construct alternative gendered images (e.g., women can be both a mother and a head of household); (2) They knew the power of education in leadership and kept their passion alive from earlier stages of their lives; and (3) They called themselves leaders and carried visions beyond their own benefit. In addition, Mary and Grace felt a sense of urgency to participate in actively transforming traditional institutional leadership practices by promoting an alternative leadership paradigm. For Linda, her community college leadership contradicted its institutional mission of inclusiveness and excellence; thus, she sought other institutions where she might practice her leadership values more effectively. Lastly, in addition to crediting their mothers, both Mary and Grace indicated that their husband and families had been supportive throughout their administrative career paths. Grace and Mary did not necessarily elaborate upon

this point. It might be that it has become a norm for their husband and family to support their

career paths.

Although these three women were exceptional in many ways, the other participants were

also exceptional. All participants I studied purposefully demonstrated different types of

leadership, as I explained in chapter 5. Yet, the overriding difference was that these three

women wanted an immediate systemic change and believed they could foster it by taking

executive leadership role. Mary cautioned, "… you kind of need to know what your limit is too,

in a way that you go to the point that you will not compromise based on your belief." Khator

(2010) affirmed, " . . . you must recognize the limits and misperceptions that may come with it

[being a leader] and transcend them" (p. 31). In essence, even though all three women were still

transforming as leaders, their sense of knowing themselves, including their own limits, helped

them make clear decisions and be persistent with their professional goals.

In my concluding chapter, I will provide a summary of my findings and alternative

interpretations. I will also discuss the limitations of the study, future research opportunities,

what findings tell us, and draw conclusions and suggest implications.

Chapter 7

Conclusions and Implications

There is no agony like bearing an untold story inside you.

Zora Neale Hurston

Summary of Findings

The purpose of my study was to examine the leadership aspirations and career paths of Asian American faculty and administrative women in community colleges. In particular, I focused on mentoring, goals, and professional advancement in the context of campus climate. Specifically, the overarching concern driving this study was the desire to understand more deeply why so few Asian American women assume formal leadership positions in community colleges.

Based on my findings from chapter 4, it was apparent that all participants experienced microaggressions. These experiences negatively influenced the participants' career paths and their professional career choices. In particular, they talked about: (1) individual microaggressions based on specific stereotypes toward Asian American women; (2) institutional microaggressions due to intersections of white privilege, stereotypes, racism, and sexism; and (3) classroom microaggressions by white students. Each of these factors affected them, which in turn, influenced their career decisions. Some institutional microaggressions were more overt and led to formal complaints or resignation by Asian American women. However, all 11 Asian American women participants did not just endure these microaggressions. They actively resisted microaggressions by finding mentors, creating affinity groups, and connecting with social

networking support circles. Some participants also changed their career paths and/or sought a

Ph.D. to obtain alternative job opportunities in higher education. Most of them also focused on

teaching, as this was an important part of their professional identity – whether they were faculty

members or not. Moreover, clearly aware of Asian American women's stereotypes, they

consciously challenged such stereotypes and replaced them with alternative leadership practices.

Yet, most of these women acknowledged that their campuses were chilly and even icy.

For example, their narratives frequently echoed Sue et al.'s (2007a, 2007b) eight themes of

microaggression, such as ascription of intelligence, denial of racial reality, and exoticization of

Asian American women. Several participants also discussed the model minority myth and

perpetual foreigner syndrome, and their "intersectionality of othering." The participants'

constant encounters with microaggressions often solidified a pattern of unequal access to power

in every community college, and created more difficult circumstances in which to plan,

anticipate, and pursue meaningful leadership roles.

To mitigate microaggressions, the participants searched for informal and various means

of mentorship, but several of them gravitated toward more established relationships with Asian

American mentors or white male mentors. The participants looked for mentors whom they could

respect and trust, and with whom they shared a similar political ideology. In addition, several

participants talked about unexpected sources of role models. For example, several mentioned

one highly visible individual who demonstrated an alternative leadership style, which helped to

shape several women's perceptions of an effective non-traditional leader. A number of

participants also referred to some of their family members as role models. Several specifically

named their mothers as individuals who set a different norm as a leader in their households and beyond.

In chapter 5, I found that most participants' mentoring relationships were informal, and that none of them identified mentors who had direct access to institutional decision-making on their own campuses. It was evident that their daily encounters with microaggressions and the availability (or lack) of mentoring relationships at work shaped their own development of leadership styles.

For all participants, their leadership mission was foremost to serve as advocates for students, especially underserved students. In addition, five common ideas about leadership emerged: (1) Leadership is an intentional, collaborative, and relational practice; (2) Leadership and leaders must strive for transformative cultural competency; (3) Leaders are mentors and empower others as role models; (4) Leaders are both teachers and learners; and (5) Life balance is essential for becoming future leaders. However, despite such intentionality and leadership practices, several participants had negative or ambivalent experience with leadership due to ongoing institutional microaggressions, coupled with white privilege and racism/sexism. For some, leadership was equated with "institutional practices," with the implication that if they assumed leadership amid the current leadership dynamics, they would have to engage in practices that were discriminatory, unfair, and racist/sexist. In these cases, they refused to take formal leadership positions or searched for alternative career opportunities.

These findings indicate that the lack of formal leadership representation from Asian American women was not just about their personal choices. Indeed, it was influenced by a chilly

campus climate, institutional discriminatory practices, and accumulative microaggressions that frequently dismissed them as non-leaders and labeled them as individuals who did not fit into the mainstream campus culture. Despite their college contributions, several felt that they were constantly trespassing, and being made to feel like "strangers" (Hune, 1998) on their own campuses. Moreover, although there were different degrees of a chilly climate, site differences did not matter greatly among Asian American women's difficult challenges in dealing with microaggressions.

Yet a chilly campus climate and microaggressions did not necessarily stop the participants from achieving their goals. Three women, Mary, Grace, and Linda, persisted on the executive leadership track (chapter 6). All three had strong, educated mothers, a persistent drive to "keep their eyes on the prize," a sense of urgency for cultural change, and the desire to create an alternative leadership paradigm. By constant self-reflection and self-confronting of their own values, they envisioned themselves as leaders willing to navigate the system, who proactively advocated for themselves. For these three participants, their aspirations extended far beyond their personal benefit, and they believed that a constant effort to empower others at a systematic level would help transform the institution.

What The Findings Tell Us

Asian American women are a heterogeneous group, and no single narrative captures the range and complexity of their personal and professional experiences. My findings conclude that there is no one magic formula to produce more Asian American women leaders, as each woman's leadership aspirations were different. In several cases, however, the combination of an

institutional chilly climate, white privilege, racism/sexism, stereotypes, and extreme institutional individualism negatively influenced the participants' leadership identities as well as leadership aspirations. Despite such obstacles, without questions each participant in my study was taking on various leadership roles, several of them practicing relational leadership while others practiced transformative leadership. For instance, Lily's discussion of placing public good over individual gain as a leader provides a good example of transformative leadership. Yet, the current traditional leadership paradigm at their institution did not quite align with the 11 Asian American women's leadership practices. The institutional leadership paradigm tended to be too exclusive and discriminatory. As a result, their leadership roles often went unnoticed or were dismissed by their institutions.

Based on my findings and existing literature, I identify seven significant factors that relate to the microaggressions, microresistances, mentoring, and leadership experiences and aspirations. They are in brief: (1) Not just a chilly, but an icy climate; (2) Differential stereotypes against Asian American women; (3) Mentoring choices; (4) Alternative role models; (5) Staying in the middle; (6) Emerging images of leadership; and (7) The role of the community college setting. Although I cite them categorically here, they are intertwined with each other, as a chilly climate and stereotypes tended to escalate both individual and institutional microaggressions, but also led participants to practice microresistances; moreover, microaggressions and mentoring choices (or lack of) influenced these Asian American women's leadership choices and aspirations.

Not Just a Chilly, but an Icy Climate

Hune (1998) quoted Turner (1994) saying in that Asian Americans often feel like "strangers" or a "guest in someone else's house" (p. 26) on their own campus. Ng, et al. (2007) illustrated that Asian Americans feel like a "marginalized minority" (p. 108), as well as an invisible group.

In my study, invisibility (rather than hyper-visibility) and microinvalidations came through as core elements of marginalization for Asian American women. Frequently, the white and non-Asian American leaders overlooked talented Asian American women. For example, no one really thought of Grace until she nominated herself for the AANAPISI grant coordinator position. Somehow, her qualifications were hidden behind her being an Asian American woman. Susan, too, was not taken seriously as an administrator. Not only was she the only Asian administrator, but other administrators treated her with indifference. On the surface, Lily was "accepted" on an administrative team, as long as the administrators saw her as white. In all cases, the women's perspectives, professional experiences, and presence were not valued.

Ng, et al. (2007) introduced the problem of institutional assumptions about Asian Americans in conjunction with the notion of microinvalidation. The institutions perceive Asian American women as invisible, and not part of diversifying a campus (Huang & Yamagata-Noji, 2010). For instance, many non-Asian American employees from Beachland Community College did not support the AANAPISI grants because they believed the college already had "too many Asians." Despite the range of diversity and ethnicities among Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders on their campus, all "Asians" were seen as one large, single group, and a program, even

one sponsored by the federal government, for Asians needing "extra help" was perceived as unfair for other "real" diverse groups. Thus, the institution invalidated the presence and racial/ethnic differences of Asian Americans as well as Pacific Islanders.

East Gate Community College tried to invalidate Christy's activism by offering a position in exchange for her silence and inaction. Paradoxically, because of such accumulative oppressive experiences, Christy and others realized "injustice" for themselves and others and began to take the paths of activism, as well as developing a "feminist consciousness" (Yee, 2009, p. 57). I define feminist consciousness as acknowledging inequality and power struggles, and taking collaborative action to redress them. Redress took place from intentionally breaking the Asian American woman stereotype and asserting their feminist values of collaboration and activism to work with the system.

In terms of institutional culture, several participants had critical views and experienced not only a "chilly" but "icy" campus climate, specifically from administration. Several viewed the current administration as ineffective, discriminatory, and lacking cultural competencies. The icy institutional climate was also manifested in a form of "Orientalism" (Said, 1978), giving non-Asian Americans an unwritten license to dismiss and dominate Asian Americans. For Grace's institution (Beachland Community College), it manifested as color-blind racism, where no one had to take the blame or responsibility for racist actions. At Linda and Christy's institution (East Gate Community College), it was a mixture of racism and sexism, as their institution dismissed race, gender, and sex in their decision-making. Cho (1997) has explained such institutional

harassment as "racialized sexual harassment" (p. 11), which Asian American women and other women of color experience in the everyday workplace.

Yet, despite these icy climates, the participants challenged the dominant cultural norms. The ultimate action was to file formal complaints of both gender and race discrimination, as Christy and her women of color colleagues did. Grace also wrote about color-blindness in her dissertation to point out why and how changes needed to happen on her campus. April, like several others, decided to reach out to other faculty and students of color, so that others behind them might further benefit from mentoring.

Acklesberg et al. (2009) describe creating a relatively self-contained and safe sphere, "microclimate," (p. 84) for many faculty of color to maintain a workable environment. Ultimately, despite or perhaps because of such an icy climate, Mary and Grace decided to become college presidents to make changes from a system level. Linda also began to entertain the idea of presidency someday, perhaps, to transform the current icy climate to a more inclusive work environment for all employees.

Differential Stereotypes Against Asian American Women

A critical race feminism conceptual framework made clear that Asian American women were treated as racial beings and experienced microaggressions. For Asian Americans, such microaggressions often derive from the model minority myth and a perpetual foreigner stereotype. These two labels tend to emphasize femininity, as in being "quiet (non-leader)" and being "foreign (exotic)." Harlow's (2003) study reported different layers of stereotypes among women of color. The study illustrated that young African American women faculty members

face invisibility, similar to Asian American women; yet, society defines African American women as "unfeminine" and "matriarchal" (Harlow, 2003, p. 360) while Asian American women are placed at the opposite extreme of the spectrum. For instance, recall how a white male student told Linda that she ought not be so aggressive. This furnishes a good example of the expectation was that she (Asian American "girl") should be "nice" to him. Linda observed that there was a different awareness and attitude toward Asian American women by white students. Linda wondered whether, if she were a white male professor, African American woman professor, or Latina professor, the student's reaction would have been different. The stereotype was also applied to Miranda, whose qualifications were challenged despite her extensive expertise with TESOL.

Sue et al.'s (2007a) focus group of 10 Asian Americans reconfirms the idea of differential stereotypes. Their findings illustrate "qualitative differences" (p. 74) in how racism and sexism are expressed toward groups of women of color. Those stereotypes undermine performance (Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995) and negatively affect the self-confidence of women of color, including Asian American women. Steele and Aronson (1995) refer to such phenomenon as a "stereotype threat," which causes a risk of confirming a negative stereotype about one's group as self-characteristic. In the case of Miranda, her comment, "some jobs are not suited for Asian Americans" might have resulted from such a stereotype threat. In other words, Miranda accepted such a stereotype as her own characteristic and decided not to even apply for a dean's position.

However, to combat "meek" Asian American women stereotypes, Grace took a different action. She learned to walk tall and also taught the same behavior to her Asian American mentees. Moreover, Grace, Susan, and Linda learned to be more vocal at work. Taking up space, speaking up, questioning intentions, and interrupting others were perceived by most as male qualities. While the participants preferred to be collaborative and non-hierarchical, it seemed strategic for some of them to perform with certain authority. These strategies, "performing authority," on the one hand, aided these women to claim their rightful space on their campuses; however, some might also argue they were perpetuating a socialized image of masculinity by projecting power in such a manner. As the findings indicated, such unstereotypical actions were part of their lessons in growing up. Yet, because these were not typical "Asian-like" behaviors, some of their colleagues and supervisors acted as though they were not acceptable. For instance, Elizabeth made a choice to refrain from being "too" vocal for her white administrators, as they were not comfortable with her approach. Linda also had a similar experience, being told that she was too direct. Davis et al. (2005) concluded, "women vulnerable to stereotype threat avoided leadership in favor of nonthreatening subordinate roles" (p. 285). This may be a reason why both Miranda and Elizabeth decided not to pursue a dean's position. Thus, such findings bring out additional questions: how does the model minority myth affect the leadership choices and daily performance and behaviors of Asian American women in higher education? How does stereotype threat work against Asian American women aspiring to obtain a higher position at work?

Differential stereotypes also affected the campus where each woman worked. Acker (1990) discusses the "contradiction of divisions along lines of gender" (p. 146); in a college

system, some departments are perceived as more "feminine" than other departments. For instance, among all administrators, Lily alone worked for the office of instruction while the majority of others worked for student services. Traditionally, women of color, including Asian American women, tend to work for student services (Maramba, 2011) and have been perceived as being more suitable for female oriented sectors. Such gendered sectors have less access to power and decision-making, especially when it comes to institutional strategic planning and financial planning.

In my study, Grace was the only administrator who had direct access to institutional financial planning. Acker (1990) asked a provoking question, "Are white-male-dominant organizations [like community colleges] also built on underlining assumptions about the proper place of people with different skin color [and gender]?" (p. 154). Although where each woman worked might appear to be mostly her personal and professional choice, being an Asian American woman with more service oriented professional assignments may bring additional differentiated stereotypes. Moreover, although all Asian American women faculty I selected were tenured faculty, I wonder if, due to certain disciplines they taught, if they had the same access to both formal and informal college structures as did their non-Asian American faculty peers. Why don't colleges consider selecting Asian American women faculty members to serve in a leadership capacity on more influential committees, such as tenure review, budget, or union work, rather than placing them on more service-oriented committees (e.g., retention and mentoring for students of color)?

Facing differential stereotypes and stereotype threat frequently and simultaneously, the participants had to negotiate and balance their own values and confront who they were and who they ought to be; however, such an extra burden did not necessarily help to eliminate effects of the chilly climate on campus. Each institution continued to hold stereotypical expectations of Asian American women. Such struggles also showed during the interviews. Several participants frequently used expressions, such as "fight" (Christy, Lily, Susan, and Diana), "resist" (Susan and Diana), and "battle" (Lily, Diana, and Miranda) while describing their work situations.

Mentoring Choices

Turner and Myers (2000) have reported that, to diffuse a chilly climate, the most common recommendation for success and retention for faculty (and administrators) of color is mentoring. Neilson and Suyemoto's (2009) qualitative study also concluded that the majority of Asian Americans claim mentoring to be a significant factor for their career advancement. My findings also confirmed that mentoring was crucial, and most participants had informal mentors through friendships, family relationships, and professional networks. Yet, the methods by which the participants chose their mentors were more complex than the traditional literature suggests. Much peer-reviewed literature (Driscoll, Parkers, Tilley-Lubbs, Brill, & Bannister, 2009; Gireves, et al., 2005; Kurtz-Costes, et al., 2006; Stanley & Lincoln, 2005) has provided various mentoring methods (e.g., traditional, peer/collegial, cross-gender, group, triangular, online, alternative networking) for women of color. However, these studies seldom explain the choices and connections women of color have to make to connect with appropriate mentors.

According to Holmes, et al. (2007), "a level of conscious awareness" of mentors' race and ethnicity is a crucial criterion for effective mentors. Cross-mentoring relationships are common, but in business sectors, there has been some concern due to the lack of cultural competencies of mentors (Davidson & Foster-Johnson, 2001; Kram, 1985). On the other hand, Holmes, et al.'s (2007) qualitative study on African American women in academe reported: "there was not a consensus on whether a mentor should share [a mentee's] gender and/or ethnicity" (p. 113). However, this may be because of a lack of African American mentors in the academy. This is also true for Asian American women who encounter a very limited range of potential Asian American mentors in higher education institutions.

Ultimately, the best mentors must know their own identity and be able to articulate their values (Davidson & Foster-Johnson, 2001). In addition, Cawyer, Simonds, and David (2002) reported, "the most important feature of mentoring may be accessibility." This is important because women of color often feel isolated at work. Hune's (1998) study on Asian Americans also confirmed Asian Americans feel isolated due to "lack of mentoring," and "the absence of a sense of community with their colleagues and indifference to their contribution to campus life" (p. 21). In my findings, participants connected with mentors who shared a similar political ideology. For instance, Mary explained that she was able to discuss whiteness openly with her white male mentor, and that understanding between them created a trustful mentoring relationship. He was also a humble person, and Mary valued this attribute in a leader. Lily also realized that all of her psychologist mentors had something in common: they all worked for causes for social justice. This was an important discovery for Lily, as she, too, valued social justice. Thus, in addition to having a trustful and respectful relationship, sharing similar political

ideologies was a significant part of identifying suitable mentors for the Asian American women I interviewed.

In addition, while some participants text to connect with their mentors, they also meet with them in person. This might be one reason why one of the participant's mentoring relationships ended after graduate school, as she and her mentor could no longer conveniently meet with each other. Although virtual mentoring was one way to communicate, most of my participants seemed to prefer more direct and personal communications with their mentors. For instance, Susan's mentor regularly invited Susan for lunch to meet and discuss campus know-how. As a mentor, Lily put an emphasis on getting to know her mentees and others. Christy also met with her mentees every week.

These findings showed that all participants had created some form of informal mentoring, but the effects of mentoring varied. Moreover, it was rare for their institutions to provide an explicit mentoring opportunity for women of color or Asian American women, except for Diana's, which provided a new-tenured candidates' mentoring program (Note: The program was for all tenured candidates faculty, not just for women faculty of color). Even then, mentoring was more about the tenure documentation process. Although studies indicate informal mentoring functions better than formal (Cawyer, et al, 2002), is there not any institutional responsibility to support a culture of (both formal and informal) mentoring with "a potential role to transform" (Gibson, 2006, p. 77) the overall college culture toward increased inclusivity?

Such institutional transformation happens when new values, beliefs, and assumptions enters the central understanding of the institutional culture (Safarik, 2003). In other words, it

becomes an institution's responsibility to intentionally create a mentoring culture, if that institution is willing to change itself. A mentoring culture brings a great return on the investment for the institution because successful mentoring increases productivity from mentors and mentees, as well as producing a better learning environment for all students (Girves, et al, 2005). Moreover, when faculty members are new, their socialization is one of the most crucial processes for organizational progress, as it will bring new ideas and institutional successes (Tierney, 1997). I would expand Tierney's suggestion to staff and administrators who often have a direct impact on student success: mentoring can be one tool to mend leaky pipelines, especially among women of color.

Alternative Role Models

Lily posed a significant rhetorical question: "What can a single Asian American woman leader accomplish when she has little power and authority?" On most campuses, there are painfully few Asian American leaders (males and females), and even fewer have access to institutional power and authority. Unfortunately, representation without substantial power is merely symbolic and has no teeth (Pitkin, 1967). It might be even harmful if the institution believes that symbolic representation of a single leader of color is all they need for diversity. Such tokenism (having only one or a few members) invites only more stereotypes and exclusion. Lorde (1984) explained that tokenism is not "an invitation to join power" (p. 13). Nor can one person change the culture or the climate. In order to have true impact, the representation needs to have real access to decision-making and act to redistribute unequal power.

During the study, several participants spoke favorably of an Asian American male role model although most had limited contact with him. However, what if this Asian American male administrator were not working for a community college at that time? What if he had chosen not to reach out and touch the experience of so many other Asian American faculty, staff, and administrators? Alternately, what if we had several role models like him on each campus? What would the ripple effects be?

Regarding his leadership, several participants characterized his style favorably (e.g., a good listener, relational, approachable), and said they could relate to him. However, as much as they admired him, having role models alone did not provide adequate impetus for these participants to want to take on more executive leadership roles. Although it is important to have role models of any given gender, Asian American women also face different challenges than their Asian American male counterparts due to gender dynamics. This invites more questions. For example, do we have LGBTQ Asian American role models? In Washington State, there are only a handful of Asian American presidents and administrators, and they are perceived to be invisible; in terms of sexuality, LGBTQ Asian American administrators are even more hidden. What other talents has the institution overlooked for growth and transformation?

In addition to distant role models, several participants also identified family members, such as grandmothers, mothers, fathers, aunts, and others as role models outside of work. While higher education institutions tend to view an individual and her family/community members separately, it makes most sense that role models are not just colleagues in higher education, but

anyone who can teach and demonstrate values that help shape someone's life goals and help determine their professional goals.

Staying in the Middle

Although presidential leadership is important, Wallin (2010) emphasized the "importance of mid level leaders" (p. 9), such as deans, vice presidents, and directors who are often responsible for daily functions and success of the college. Elizabeth once thought about becoming, in her own words, "a kick-ass dean," but realized that she would have more "organizational freedom" when working in the middle management level. As a director, she had more access to faculty and staff with whom she needed to connect. Theresa also enjoyed being "on the front line," and still saw herself "as an educator working with students directly." Her fear was that if she went higher up in administration, she would lose the direct connection with her students. Theresa added, "I am completely happy and challenged in this level."

In both Elizabeth and Theresa's cases, it was their choice to stay at the middle level where they felt they were most effective. Yet, if Elizabeth did not have to frequently mediate her own leadership style to cater to other white administrators, would the institution have benefited from having a dean like her? What if Theresa were treated more professionally and respectfully despite her youthful appearance, would she have become an executive administrator? Would the colleges greatly benefit from having administrators who brought different perspectives and additional cultural competencies? Did the college fail by not recognizing their abilities and differences?

Both Lily and Susan were former administrators for whom staying in the middle meant going back to teaching, since their experience as administrators had been isolating. Meanwhile, Linda, who had been recently appointed as a chair, became ambivalent about taking more leadership positions due to sexism and lack of vision by her supervisors.

While staying in the middle might be an effective survival strategy, from an institutional lens, the problem of sexism coupled with Asian American racial stereotypes was definitely a cause for massive leakage of Asian American women from the administrative pipeline (Chen & Hune, 2011). This massive leakage presents a serious problem in terms of fostering more Asian American women leaders, especially in executive leadership positions.

Emerging Images of Leadership

Several participants reflected upon the importance of balancing work and family, and demonstrating their values to the college. For instance, Grace chose to have her first child in the middle of an upward career movement, and also applied for a vice president position. Grace applied for this position knowing that she could be a role model for other women and women of color. Grace also believed that if men could do it, she could also become a college president some day. She refused to believe that a college president must sacrifice her own family life for the sake of her career. Mary, too, believed that intentionally demonstrating a different leadership practice could transform her and her staff. Mary continued to pursue her Ed.D. during her vice presidency to demonstrate to others that it was all right to have a balanced work life.

Other participants I interviewed also showed commitment to their personal values. While Linda was in her 20s, she thought that getting married, having children and buying a house by a

certain age was important for her; however, as she gained more personal and professional experience, she realized that she did not have to constrain herself with such social norms. Although professionally she was at a crossroads, she no longer worried much about what others expected of her. She began to focus more on building relationships with allies across and beyond campus. Lily resigned her dean's position but rediscovered her passion for teaching. She realized that teaching always came with her, no matter what type of leadership title she held. Similarly, Susan no longer was interested in administration, but focused on teaching, where she knew she could practice her passion in a meaningful way.

Such examples indicate an emerging image of leadership that might differ from traditional leadership. Having a balance between work and personal values was more important to these women than working long hours. Moreover, working intentionally through collaboration and building relationships was a core aspect of their leadership style. Several participants also practiced cultural competencies through teaching, mentoring, and learning. Some also felt that inviting neighboring communities and families to be a part of their decision making was an important aspects of inclusive leadership. Mentoring was also crucial, so that they could empower themselves and others around them.

Such leadership preferences were, in part, a reflection of their family legacies, such as their mother's role modeling or civic activism by some of their family members. Moreover, being constantly stereotyped and marginalized as Asian American women, the participants learned the importance of cultural competencies in order to create a more equitable work environment through building relationships, not just for themselves but for others, as well.

Although there is no such thing as one "Asian-ness" or Asian American women's way of leading, in order to proactively work through the system of oppression, collectiveness rather than individualism was emphasized by all. This strategy was also demonstrated by two organizations, LEAP and ACLF. At the same time, some actions by the participants were anti-stereotypical for Asian American women, such as taking up space, speaking up, and challenging authority.

In essence, their emerging leadership dynamics drew from a complex combination of continuing family legacies, fighting against Asian American women stereotypes, and reclaiming their own identity and the values they have practiced through their personal and professional lives. Although such values have not been fully recognized by their institutions, their effort brought a collective strength to alternative ways of leading.

The Role of the Community College Setting

In chapter 1, I posed questions about whether or not community colleges were more democratic than other higher education institutions, and whether they were more supportive of Asian American women's leadership aspirations. In order to understand these questions, I selected three community colleges that were unique to each other. Based on my findings, none of the community colleges I studied were more democratic than others, or better situated for the participants' leadership paths. Each college imposed various forms of institutional microaggressions focused around white privilege and often sexism. Moreover, the current leadership culture in all community colleges lacked adequate cultural competencies and explicit leadership plans to help guide emerging leaders, like the participants who were practicing more intentional culturally transformative, collaborative, and alternative leadership models.

Across the three campuses, several participants identified current hiring practices as the biggest problem responsible for perpetuating white privilege and giving an unfair advantage to a select few. The participants felt that, by being exclusive, the college leadership showed a lack of vision. Christy criticized such hiring practices: "The tendency is that we rehire the same folks, because those people are in positions now, and you can just look at any selecting committee and know that they'll hire someone who looks just like them." Such observations and accounts from Elizabeth, Grace, and April revealed that community colleges were no more democratic or minority-centered than other institutions. Moreover, constantly having to contend with microaggressions did not help the 11 Asian American women to fully participate in leadership opportunities. In Linda's case, a lack of inclusion and sexism by the leadership led her to an earlier leak in the pipeline. Such leaky pipelines continued to affect others as well, as most of the participants purposefully choose not to apply for administrative positions earlier in their professional lives. Although Amey's (1999) qualitative study of women administrators in community colleges was conducted more than a decade ago, my participants' lives still involved "swimming upstream" (p. 64) against the chilly campus climate.

During the interviews, several participants also shared anecdotal observations of an increase of Asian American student dropouts where they worked. The institutional record of one community college proved their observations correct. The leaky pipeline has not only affected Asian American faculty and administrators, but seemed to affect Asian American students' retention rate as well, as there were few role models who could model their unique cultural perspectives as positive leadership attributes. This presents a serious problem for future leadership. In one college, three tenured women of color quit their positions in one year, and

were replaced by three white tenured-candidates faculty members. In Washington State, there

were two Asian American women presidents in 34 community colleges in 2011, but only one in

2012. Elizabeth, who had been in the system for over two decades, noted that there had actually

been more administrators of color when she first started.

Alternative Interpretations

Based on the participants' counter narratives, it is clear that Asian American women

make capable leaders who bring alternative perspectives and practices to higher education.

However, master narratives continue to insist on different stories. First, one common master

narrative concerning Asian American women and leadership holds that they do not want to take

on any leadership roles due to their culture or language abilities. Such a simplistic master

narrative does not consider that Asian American women are also Americans with various goals

and aspirations.

The 11 participants' counter narratives tell different truths, including that culture and

language differences were not pivotal in whether they sought out a leadership role or not. In my

study, six out of 11 participants were born in the U. S., were either second or third generation

Asian American and spoke English as their first language. Two women were from Canada but

had immigrated to the U.S. over two decades ago. Three women (Mary, Lily, and Miranda) had

grown up speaking other languages besides English, but contrary to the master narrative, two of

them rose up to executive leadership (dean and vice president) positions, while the third

(Miranda) was a leading scholar in the international TESOL community. Moreover, the

participants' counter narratives, as well as existing literature, reinforce that, similar to women in

other ethnic groups, Asian American women have aspirations and desires to take on more leadership roles (Hewlett, Leader-Chivée, Fredman, Jackson, & Sherbin, 2011). Thus, the culture or language abilities argument is based on false assumptions.

The second master narrative insists on trait leadership theory; according to this view, Asian American women are not born leaders. Yet, the master narrative ignores the fact that leaders are created, not born, and that the notion of leadership and leadership theories have been transforming to reflect changes in society. Leadership identity is also involves a process of learning who one is. In the case of Theresa and Grace, they learned to become leaders while in high school and college. Asian American women often develop leadership identity through college and university leadership activities (Hune & Gomez, 2008). This is similar to most students who develop their leadership identity while in school. Moreover, in contradiction to the master narrative, "Asian American women have been active in the public sphere in effecting social change" (Hune, 2000, p. 45) and have taken leadership roles in various fields in the U.S., past and present. Yet, such facts are not freely available to many Asian American women students, which makes some of them assume there are no Asian American women leaders.

Zane and Song (2007) also confirmed my findings. They argued that the dominant culture misunderstands the notion of Asian Americans and leadership. They concluded that the underrepresentation of Asian Americans in leadership does "not appear to be a phenomenon solely associated with the problems concomitant with being an immigrant – learning a new lifestyle, communicating in English, and accessing useful social networks" (p. 284). Instead, "Perceived racial, ethnic, and/or cultural issues are major factors that contributed to Asian

Americans' difficulties in career advancement" (Zane & Song, 2007, p. 285). Zane and Song (2007) further criticize the dominant stereotypical views of Asian Americans: When Asian Americans are seen as "socially or culturally awkward" by institutions, they may be excluded from consideration for leadership positions because society, including colleges and universities, does not think Asian Americans fit the images of leaders (Glick & Fiske, 2001; Jost, Burgess, & Mosso, 2001). In other words, that Asian Americans lack leadership interests and capabilities is a false perception toward Asian Americans. Rather, a power differential of race and ethnicity hinders Asian Americans from gaining more leadership positions.

The third master narrative concerning Asian American women and leadership claims they possess a lack of self-confidence and/or traditional leadership qualities. However, my findings, as well as the literature review, showed mixed results in regard to self-confidence and leadership identity (Blackmore, 1989; Rheinneck & Roland, 2008; Sax, 2008). In short, the lack of self-confidence or of traditional leadership qualities did not really apply to most of the participants. In my findings, Linda was the only individual who directly addressed her self-esteem; yet, she was also the only faculty member who was still interested in taking an executive leadership role. Mary also talked about herself as an introvert, but that did not stop her from pursuing role as a college president. Grace, Theresa, and Susan described themselves as extroverted and vocal, which are often attributes associated with traditional leaders. Susan also described herself as organized and goal-oriented, likewise more traditional leadership qualities. In essence, the participants demonstrated various kinds of leadership qualities ranging from more traditional to alternative, or a combination of both.

Interestingly, upon closely examining the self-esteem issue in both women and men, several authors discussed women's lack of self-esteem as a problem (Rheinneck & Roland, 2008; Sax, 2008). When males are asked about leadership aspirations and their self-confidence, little difference is found among their responses (Blackmore, 1989). Yet, "Leadership associated with a high level of self-confidence and self-esteem is highly suspect" (Blackmore, 1989, p. 101). Blackmore (1989) continues, such analysis "ignores the way in which certain behaviors are developed through experience and positive reinforcement, and portrays leadership as a set of individual characteristics without regard for how behavior is both learned and situation specific" (p. 102).

Moreover, the participants' counter narratives remind us that this type of argument also ignores sexism and other biases in institutions and neglects the fact that leadership is learned and has no gender. While many traditional leadership authors use white males as the standard, the participants demonstrated that there were alternative leadership models that fit better with their Asian American identity as well as their leadership identity.

Based on this evidence, the master narrative claim that Asian American women do not want to become leaders is false. Yet, my findings show that the majority of women I interviewed did not wish to become *executive* leaders. Some based this preference in personal choice, but the reasons they articulated did not refer to any lack of leadership abilities or self-confidence. Rather, most decided not to take formal leadership positions because they had made a conscious decision not to become complicit in a discriminatory and sexist institution that often excludes other cultures and perspectives. For Elizabeth and Susan, the institutional indifference

to the contributions of Asian American women also dissuaded them from wanting to become an executive leader. At a systemic level, none of the community colleges I visited evinced any clear or consistent articulation of antiracist and antisexist behaviors (Townsend, 2006). Such institutional indifference often promotes a "revolving door" for many faculty and administrators of color (Moreno, Smith, Clayton-Pedersen, Parker, & Teraguchi, 2006), and my findings based on the participants' counter narratives indicated that Asian American women were not excluded from this phenomenon. Yet, wherever they go, the 11 participants continue to resist.

Limitations of the Study

My study has two limitations in terms of scope. First, I did not interview any current Asian American presidents in the Washington State community college system. My personal communication with my community college president indicated that there were four Asian American presidents out of 34 presidents in 2011. Two were male (one is multi-racial) and two were female in 2011. However, in 2012 that number decreased to three, only one of whom was female. Although it would be quite worthwhile to interview them for another study, I chose to not include them. First of all, I was mostly interested in studying emerging Asian American women leaders' lives and perspectives in community colleges, as they matched my research agenda. In addition, executive leadership positions in Washington State have been unstable due to many leadership changes, so gathering consistent personal data might not have worked well at this time.

Second, although I believe qualitative methods, using critical race feminism as a framework, were the right choice for this study, conducting longitudinal ethnographical research

with several Asian American women faculty and administrators would have been fruitful for two reasons. First, several participants talked about their youthful look as a disadvantage in taking leadership positions; thus, if age were an issue, a longitudinal study would tell how their youthful appearance affected their leadership identity over time. Second, even within two years of my study, more than half of the participants changed their official job titles; thus, tracking their professional lives for a longer duration might bring out additional patterns of their leadership paths and mentoring experiences. Moreover, since more than half of the executive level administrators are facing retirement age by 2016 (Weisman & Vaughan, 2007), a longitudinal study might be able to capture different types of institutional and cultural changes from previous to future leadership.

Future Research Opportunities

In this section, I propose two possible future research opportunities.

First, my study focused on full-time faculty and administrators who have, in some way, "made it." My study did not address how their early mentoring processes began in relation to their leadership aspirations. Although only briefly, two women (Theresa and Linda) discussed the benefits of having a trusted mentor while in college. If the study had included their mentoring processes in graduate school or earlier in their education, it might have shed additional compelling light upon why some participants chose to take more formal leadership positions while others did not. For instance, many students of color, including Asian American students, find that their experience with secondary and college educational systems deters them from wanting to pursue a career in the field of education (Davidson & Foster-Johnson, 2001);

however, at the same time, mentoring intervention has proven a successful retention strategy. Poon and Hune's (2009) study addressed the importance of examining this type of intervention for retention. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2011), there are fewer Asian Americans earning Ph.D.s than any other race and ethnic group in education. It would also be important to continue to study Asian American women's mentoring experience in under graduate or graduate school to examine how Asian American women students navigate campus climates and investigate how they are included in or excluded from both formal and informal leadership opportunities.

Second, in my study, the three Asian American women (Mary, Grace, and Linda) who wished to become college presidents came from non-instructional departments. Traditionally speaking, colleges and universities prefer a college president from instructional or academic ranks: "60% of current community college presidents arrived in their current positions either from a previous presidency (26%), or from the chief academic officer positions (34%)" (American Council on Education, 2007, p. 794). Yet, only 5% came from faculty ranks (King & Gomez, 2008). It would be noteworthy to research such an area to determine desired paths for future community college women presidents of color.

Implications for Practice

Too often, Asian American women and "women of color feel marginalized, silenced, invisible, or tokenized in institutions of higher education" (Molina, 2008, p. 10). In this section, I will cite four implications and additional research questions for retention and leadership development for Asian American women in community colleges.

Eliminating Microaggressions for All

My study showed that both individual and institutional microaggressions against Asian American women were pervasive and disturbing. As an institution, the largest microaggression is to not recognize Asian American women as a racial minority and to treat them as invisible. The institution also needs to acknowledge the frequency and the accumulation of microaggressions Asian American women experience on each campus. Poon and Hune (2009) also emphasized this problem. It would be important to revisit some of the commonly held institutional assumptions of Asian American women (Maramba, 2011) and review following questions: "Does the institution have any Asian American women administrators?" "In which departments do we see them?" "Do they serve on any committees that have direct impact on the management and institutional strategic planning of the campus?" In terms of Asian American women faculty members, "In what types of committee work do Asian American women faculty members participate?" "Is there a trend in terms of where they provide their services?"

As far as Asian Americans in general are concerned, how do institutions see and treat Asian Americans? For example, does the institution feature more than one Asian American image for college posters, websites (main page), or brochures? If any, what images do they show? Moreover, does the institution publicly invite Asian American scholars or Asian American activists and community members for campus events? Does the institution differentiate Asian faculty, staff, and students from foreign countries from the domestic Asian American faculty, staff, and students? Does such information disaggregate Pacific Islanders or

non-resident Asians? These questions are crucial for the institution to critically assess their performance as an equitable institution, and not to lose talented Asian American employees.

Asian American Affinity Groups

During my research period, a few Asian American administrators and faculty started an Asian American affinity group on all three campuses. According to Elizabeth, over 10 years had elapsed since they originally reunited. It was revealing to learn that several Asian American members from all three colleges felt they needed to re-ignite an affinity group on campus. Adams (2006) describes such groups as an "internal network" (p. 37) in predominantly white colleges and universities. Without question, such groups are important for socialization, support, and retention of Asian American employees across generations. However, these groups generally do not seem to survive when their core leadership members move on.

College institutions would benefit greatly from asking the following set of questions: "Has the institution ever considered the institutional benefits of having an employee racial/ethnic affinity group on campus?" "Does the institution publicly support such affinity group? Why or why not?" "Does the institution or foundation provide specific financial assistance (e.g., scholarships for attending workshops for staff and faculty) or physical space for any affinity group?" "If there exists already an Asian American affinity group on campus, are the institution's administrators familiar with it? Why or why not?" In essence, what does the institution know about Asian Americans and how can it provide further support for them?

Teaching Opportunities

It was not surprising that six faculty participants wanted to continue teaching, as all of them spoke of teaching as their passion; however, it was unexpected to discover all five administrators, except for Grace who once taught high school math, would also very much like to teach a credit class. Strathe and Wilson (2006) affirmed that successful administrators most often demonstrate the characteristics for a successful teacher, such as mentoring and establishing trustful relationships, and such a desire may have several positive implications. First, community colleges are the nation's foremost teaching colleges (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Thus, it bodes well for an administrator to understand that teaching and learning would help them undertake more effective student-centered institutional planning and policy. Second, in order to communicate with faculty, administrators need experience teaching in a classroom and knowing the language and culture of teaching and learning. Third, the advent of Asian American women administrators teaching in a classroom might also help with their retention, as they could create deeper and more direct working relationships with students.

Chen and Hune (2011) discussed the Asian American "leaky pipeline" occurring in earlier stages of higher education; thus, more Asian American women teaching might be one way of intervention. Yet, some challenges arise. Some faculty might argue against having administrators teach a class for credit, as it takes classes away from part-time faculty. Also, instructor performance evaluations of administrator-instructors might bring some discomfort. However, the benefits might outweigh the challenges. The institution might want to implement a pilot program for administrators who possess adequate teaching credentials, similar to the current part-time faculty hiring criteria. It would be important to follow up whether retention of Asian American women administrators was improved by adding a classroom teaching assignment.

Furthermore, the institution needs to monitor their workloads, as Asian American women are "often assigned labor-intensive administrative and teaching duties" (Lin, Kubota, Motha, Wang, & Wong, 2007, p. 71).

Institutional Vision for Nurturing Future Leadership

According to Shields (2010), "moral and ethical behaviors are intrinsic components of leadership" (p. 546). When institutions are perceived to be amoral or do not show the potential for social change, many individuals will choose not to invest their talents fully in for the institution, and may apply elsewhere.

During my study, a couple of participants left their current institution or planned to leave because they did not believe they could bring about any effective systemic and cultural changes within the current oppressive institutional culture. The institution needs to ask critically whether it has any vision or a specific plan of action for nurturing future leadership that reflects current cultural changes. Women and women of color still mostly hold service and lower level positions in higher education, but research and reports show that women are also "highly suited for more advanced leadership positions" (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010, p. 172). Change is an inevitable process to transform any institution.

Conclusions

Baszille (2005) has written that counter narratives furnish powerful tools "to disrupt the status quo, to inspire critical thinking, to challenge the culture of power, to critique the nature of knowledge" (p. 204). By using counter narratives, my case study examined the community

college climate of a rarely studied population – Asian American women in relationship to their aspirations for leadership and mentoring experience in community colleges. Asian American women "occupy unique cultural space" (Chon, 1995, p. 5) under the dominant white privileged society, yet, the Asian American women's "problem" is also every woman's problem. My study was an important step in revealing the climate of community colleges in relationship to the leadership aspirations of Asian American women.

According to Weisman and Vaughan (2007), the average age of a community college president is 58 years, and more than 80% of them plan to retire by 2016. Moreover, 38% of their chief administrators will also retire by 2016 (Weisman & Vaughan, 2007). In addition, "There are fewer individuals in the work force between the ages of 30 and 50 to assume leadership roles," and most institutions have not prepared succession planning (Keim & Murray, 2008, p. 120). Grace clearly articulated the urgency, "We cannot sleep through it [the transformation]."

Community colleges have been working to recruit staff, faculty, and administrators of color to make community colleges reflect the diversity of the student body. Yet, despite this diversity, the majority of full-time community college employees, especially leaders, are white (Eddy & Cox, 2008). Grace, April, Elizabeth, and Christy, from three different community colleges, saw little parity among students and staff, faculty, and administrators, as hiring practices were not equitable and affected the diversity of the institution at many different levels.

Opp and Gosetti (2002) have suggested that attaining a critical mass is a positive predictor of social change. In order to attain critical mass, especially among women administrators of color, higher education institutions can no longer exclude Asian American

women. In other words, a critical mass of women of color is "an essential ingredient in enhancing the number of women administrators" (Opp & Gosetti, 2002, p. 603). Stereotyping must be "dismantled" (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010) as part of the process. Such efforts bring direct benefits to community colleges, whose professed mission is closely linked with social justice and equality for all people. Teranishi (2010) as well as Bowen and Bok (1998) found that faculty and staff of color (including Asian American women) chose a career in higher education because they saw the connection between education and social equality. Furthermore, when an institution is facing multiple challenges and at a crossroads (e.g., multiple styles of diverse learners, financial realities, public expectations), leadership that incorporates varied perspectives and experiences enhances problem solving (Stout-Stewart, 2005).

My findings illustrate that leadership and identity are closely interrelated, and ultimately, an institution's leadership conveys its identity because leadership is a social practice. In creating varied leadership, it is crucial not to rely upon only one role model, but to involve multiple mentors to create critical mass. If we want to continue legacies of leadership, it is important for all students to have leaders who look and speak like them so that the cycle of leadership continues.

Moreover, my data revealed that traditional and individualistic leadership practices, coupled with Asian American women stereotypes, frequently exclude many Asian American women from taking formal leadership roles. This is not because Asian American women cannot practice traditional and individualistic leadership roles, but because they favor alternative leadership styles, such as collective, non-hierarchical, and more relational leaderships that

include other cultures and different perspectives. Such varied leadership styles are crucial for community colleges, in contrast to more traditional top-down leadership models, as challenges such as budget cuts, student success rates, academic rigor, and diversity continue to challenge them. Thus, Asian American women bring a unique social dynamic and can contribute experiences and perspectives that challenge the status quo of exclusive leadership practices, for the betterment of the institution as a whole.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

First tell me how you got into your current position. [Probe: What other positions have you held in this college? In other colleges or organizations?]

1. What is your original education for faculty work—degree, discipline? [Probe: Where did you do this training?]

2. How long have you lived in the Northwest? Where did you grow up?

3. What kind of racial and cultural community did you grow up in? [Probe: location, parent's backgrounds, etc]

4. Do you speak any language other than English?

Interviewees' Current Position and Responsibilities

5. What is your typical day look like at work?

6. What motivates you at work?

7. Now talk to me about the responsibilities you currently hold.

8. What administrative responsibilities do you have, if any?

9. What is your balance of teaching, administration, service, or other responsibilities?

10. How are these responsibilities balanced with each other?

11. In what ways do you see yourself as exercising leadership in your current work?

12. Do you aspire to further leadership roles? If so, what? What motivates you to seek these roles?

13. Explain what you think of as "leadership." What does this term mean to you?

14. What are your prospects in this organization for attaining the positions that would allow you to exercise leadership in that way? What would facilitate your career advancement and what would inhibit it?

15. What professional work do you see yourself doing five years from now?   And is that what you most want for yourself?

Interviewees' Experience with Supports and mentoring

16. Tell me about your social networks (persons or organizations) both at work and outside work. Who do you interact with the most about professional matters? What interactions?

17. Describe your experience with mentors in this organization and elsewhere. If we take "mentor" to mean a more experienced professional person who guides and supports you in your work and career advancement, what people, if any, are now providing you mentoring in this organization? Over the last five years, who might have done so, if anyone?

18. How did this/these mentoring relationships develop?

19. Describe this/these mentors. What kinds of person are they? What is their background, experience, expertise, and how does that help to guide or support you, if at all?

20. What about outside this organization—any mentoring from other sources in the last five years up the present? Who, how, and how developed?

21. Other than mentors, who are the people you go to for support?

22. How important is their gender, race, and ethnicity? How so? Why do you go them? How did they help you professionally or personally?

23. Are you also asked to advise someone on their professional work?

Interviewees' experience of race/ethnicity

24. Do you see any issues you encounter at work that maybe unique to your ethnicity or race? Will you please provide some examples?

25. Does your racial/ethnic background play any role in the way you do your current work? In the way others respond to you?   Probe: for example? How so?

<u>Closing Reflections</u>

26. What advice do you give for future leaders?

Is there any questions do you have?

Do you have any information you would like to share with me?

APPENDIX B: SECOND INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Thank you very much for sharing your tenure document files with me. It helped me understand your career goals and accomplishments more. Now, I have a few more questions today to help me further understand and document your accomplishments, goals, and career and personal challenges.

A Look Back at Career Advancement so far

This portion of the interview will be devoted to probing specific items from the tenure file that seem to shed light on the interaction between this individual and the institutional setting. Questions will be specific to the information in the file, but would include such things as: Your file shows you with a significant teaching load prior to the tenure decision. How did you balance that off with other work demands? What were they? Did the College provide you with any support or mentoring prior to the tenure decision, concerning how to advance in this institution? If so, what kind of support?

A Second Look at Career and Professional future

1. Tell me how you balance your work and personal life. What are your challenges? Motivators?

2. Last time you told me that you saw yourself doing _____ five years from now.

- How are you preparing yourself to achieve your career goals? [Probe: professional development, mentors, committee involvement, social networks, and others?]

- How does your institution, if at all, help you prepare for your career goals?

3. What is the most recent professional development/community network event have you participated in? How did you find out about the event? What was your role? Why did you decide to attend it?

4. How does being an Asian American woman faculty, if any, affect your decision making in your career?

5. How do others (i.e. colleagues, students, administrators, families, extended families, and friends) perceive you as a leader? Has anyone recently asked you to take a leadership role (both formal or informal)? If so, will you tell me more about it? If not, will you be interested in taking a leadership role someday?

6. Imagine yourself as a college president. What types of leadership will you exercise? What skills do you think are   crucial for such a role? What do people say are your strengths and weaknesses?

7. Are there any questions that you have?

8. Do you have any other information you would like to share with me?

APPENDIX C: SHADOWING OBSERVATION GUIDE

Purpose: Shadowing will be conducted after the initial interview/s. I will be observing the participant's leadership styles as well as interactions with others (e.g., peers, students, or staff members). I will also be observing how others treat and interact with the participant. I will be spending with each participant between 2-7 hours. The time varies depending on what I am allowed to observe by the participant, as some of the meetings are confidential.

1. I will provide a written consent form to each participant and secure her signature.

2. I will also use pseudonym for both participants and their institutions.

With each participant's permission, I will be taking filed observation notes (hand written) during meetings, such as committee, departmental meetings, classroom teachings (if they teach), or any other interactions with others where they work.

Observation focus:

Committee, Departmental, any other Meetings:

- The nature of meeting (if any, meeting agenda or meeting objectives); how is the meeting begin?

- Role of the participant (e.g., chair of the meeting, note taker, etc)

- Who is present (check gender, race, ethnicity, age, as well as job descriptions, if possible)

- Physical set up of the meeting (e.g. lecture style room, sitting in circle)

- What artifacts or documents are presented

- Interactions: who facilitates the meeting and who speaks the most at the meetings; who are allowed to speak/who is silent; how people interact at the meeting; who interrupts? Who gets interrupted? who is taking notes?

- Tone of the meeting & voice: formal or informal? excitement, boredom, any challenges or conflicts, any silences? – what topics?

- What types of body language are occurring? Eye contact? Facial expressions?

- Are there any occurring words or phrases being spoken?

- How is meeting concluded?

Classroom Teaching

- The name of the class, topic being covered

- How many students? Who are present (check gender, race, ethnicity, age, etc)?

- Physical set up of the meeting (e.g. lecture style room, sitting in circle)

- What artifacts or documents are presented

- Interactions: who facilitates the class discussions and who speaks the most; who are allowed to speak/who is silent?

- Tone of the meeting: excitement, boredom, any challenges or conflicts – what topics?

- What types of body language are occurring? Eye contact? Facial expressions?

- Are there any occurring words or phrases being spoken?

- How is class concluded?

Other interactions

- Topics being covered

- Relationship with the participant

- If possible, position, race, ethnicity, gender and age of the persons that the participants are talking with

- Who is leading the conversations?

- Any artifacts or documents are presented?

- Formal languages or informal conversations or both?– evidence?

- Where are they talking- staff room, office, etc

- What types of body language are occurring? Eye contact? Facial expressions?

- Are there any occurring words or phrases being spoken?

- How is the conversation ended?