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## Experiences of Asian American and Immigrant Asian Women in the United States Higher Education Administration

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Running head: EXPERIENCES OF ASIAN WOMEN IN THE U.S.

EXPERIENCES OF ASIAN AMERICAN AND IMMIGRANT ASIAN WOMEN IN THE  
UNITED STATES HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION

by

Sayani Roy

A dissertation submitted to the department of Leadership, School Counseling, and Sports

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES

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**Dedication**

To Thakuma (Radharani Maitra) and Dida (Basanti Dasgupta) who did not live to see me  
graduate

### Acknowledgement

This thesis belongs to six people as much as it belongs to me – my parents, my parents-in-law, my daughter, and the person who completes me, my husband. In a country where a girl child is still often killed inside the womb, I was brought up like a princess. My parents gave me the wings to fly high and the courage to dream and fulfill those dreams. They dreamed of this day, and that's why I am here. In India everyday women are killed by their in laws for a mere dowry, yet my parents-in-law pray for my success, encourage me, and relish my accomplishments. They are true patrons of education. My daughter, whose smiles keep me moving in the darkest of hours, is the one who made this journey more precious than ever. Last, but the most important part of this journey, is my husband who is my confidante, my comrade, philosopher, and the best teacher I have ever had. I could not ask for a better partner than he. He not only understood my dream, but embraced it, made it his own, and did everything to help make it happen. These past 5 years have not been an easy ride; I truly thank him for sticking by my side, even when I was irritable and depressed. I feel that we learned to live life to the fullest, and what we both learned strengthened our commitment to each other. I would also like thank my brother in law for being a supportive and encouraging friend. Special thanks to my husband's maternal uncle and aunt. They have been our local guardians and a constant source of support. My heartfelt thanks to my chair and committee members. I am indebted to Dr. Amanda Pascale as she agreed to be my chair and guided me thoroughly throughout this process. I am grateful Dr. JeffriAnne Wilder for inculcating my immense love for qualitative research. I truly appreciate Dr. Shinwoo Choi and Dr. Matthew Ohlson for their valuable feedback and time to make this journey a successful one. I thank Dr. Francis Godwyll for his initial guidance in this program. I express my sincere gratitude to Dr. David Hoppey for his invaluable guidance and continuous encouragement and support. I

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### Abstract

This study investigates the experiences of Asian American and immigrant Asian faculty members and administrators in the U.S. higher education. The motivation of this study was, in spite of the rising presence and educational attainment, Asian American and immigrant Asian women are notably underrepresented in academic leadership roles. Asian American women fall far behind White females in leadership positions in higher education. Grounded in a theoretical framework guided by Mohanty's Post Colonialist Feminist Criticism, a qualitative research has been conducted where 15 female participants (faculty members and/or administrators in the U.S. higher education), who identified themselves as Asian Americans or immigrant Asians, were interviewed. Data analysis focused on the interview transcripts while coding categories and finding themes. Based on each research question, categories and themes have been described based on patterns. This study focuses on three primary areas, which include the experiences of the participants, their way of combatting challenges, and the role of support system and mentors in their journeys. Findings show that almost all of these 15 participants experienced gender and racial discrimination at varied levels both inside and outside classrooms. Sometimes it was easy for them to decipher whether the discrimination was based on race or gender, sometimes it became difficult. They felt women of color lived in the intersection of multiple jeopardy. Along with racial and gender discrimination, these women talked about discriminations based on their short height and dressing. As a result, most of them expressed disinterest in pursuing or continuing with leadership roles in academia. All participants unanimously admitted the importance of mentoring in shaping their careers. Implications for policy, practice, theoretical framework, recommendations, and future research are discussed.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

According to the Bureau (2013), Asians were the nation's fastest-growing race or ethnic group in 2012. According to the Asian Americans in Higher Education report, the population rose by 2.9% or 530,000 in 2011, increasing to 18.9 million. International migration contributed more than 60% to this growth in the Asian population.

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

In 1969, the total number of foreign-born faculty was 28,200 (10% of the total) increasing to 126,123 in 2007 (Marvasti, 2005; Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006). From 2004–2014, 70% of the doctorates awarded were to temporary visa holders, and the top three countries that accounted for more than half of the doctorates were China, India, and South Korea. In 2014, Asians (Permanent residents and citizens) were the largest U.S. minority population to earn doctorates. Between 2010-2014, 3,539 Asians were awarded doctoral degrees. In fall 2013, of a full-time faculty at degree granting postsecondary institutions, 4 percent were Asian/pacific islander females. Among full-time professors, only 2 percent were Asian/Pacific islanders. On the other hand, according to Planty et al. (2009), from 1998-2007, Asian American women obtaining doctorate degrees increased by 107%. In spite of this rising presence and educational attainment, Asian American and immigrant Asian women are notably underrepresented in academic leadership roles (Chen & Hune, 2011; Huang & Yamagata-Noji, 2010; Digest of Education Statistics, 2009). According to Opp and Gosetti (2002) and Chen and Hune (2011), Asian American women fall far behind White females in leadership positions in higher education, especially in community colleges that are assumed to be more liberal in acceptances than four-year universities while nurturing women in administrative positions (Eddy & Cox,

2008; Tedrow & Rhoads, 1999; Valverde, 2011). According to Huang and Yamatata-Noji, (2010), only nine Asian American women held presidential positions in community colleges in 2010. There was no immigrant Asian woman who reached the supreme leadership position. In Washington State in 2011, only 2 Asian American women held presidential positions out of 34 community colleges. In 2012, the number dropped to one. In spite of being the “model minority” in academia and holding the topmost position among immigrants for terminal/doctoral degrees, Asian Americans and immigrant Asians remain an understudied community in higher education research, and the issues behind their underrepresentation remain invisible (Suzuki, 2002). Due to multiple intersections of gender and racial stereotypes, Asian American and immigrant Asian women face challenges while climbing leadership positions. According to Hune (2011), Asian American women faculty are “differently raced, gendered, and deemed foreign” by whites. McIntosh (2008) argues that while gender discrimination might be posed against both white and Asian American women, racial discrimination prevails, and White women are preferred over Asian American women for leadership roles. Chou and Feagin (2008), Berdahl and Min (2012), and Yamatata-Noji (2011) find that due to cultural barriers Asian Americans do not find appropriate mentors in order to develop leadership efficiencies. Therefore, attaining the leadership positions remains almost impenetrable for them. This scenario solicits the problem: Why are Asian American and immigrant Asian women, in spite of their rising presence in academia, severely underrepresented in leadership roles in academic administration? This is the point of focus I engage to study.

### **Background: Model Minority**

Chou and Feagin (2015), Lee (2015), Shen, Wang, and Swanson (2011), and Suzuki (2002) define the term “model minority” to refer to a notion constructed by society in order to depict

Asian Americans as smarter and more diligent than other minorities and it is assumed that they do not discriminate racially (Chou & Feagin, 2015; S. J. Lee, 2015; Shen, Wang, & Swanson, 2011; Suzuki, 2002). Suzuki (2002) points out the negative consequences of this ‘ostensibly positive image’. Asian Americans, in spite of confronting several obstacles and racial discrimination, are not taken seriously and not protected like other minority groups by government and other organizations. Asian Americans are assumed to take care of their own and not in need of any kind of assistance.

### **Advent of “Model Minority” Concept**

In the late 1840s Chinese laborers first immigrated to the gold mines of California and since their arrival, negative stereotypes prevail in American society against Asians and Asian Americans. From the late 1800s until the 1940s, Asian Americans were portrayed as uncouth, uncivilized invaders, the “yellow peril” and a threat to American society. Around the mid 1960s, a different portrayal emerged when U.S. media started to depict them as a successful and “problem free” minority (Peterson, 1966). E. Lee (1996) asserts, “Asian Americans who seek acceptance by the dominant group may try to emulate model minority behavior” (p.9). According to Yu (2006), Asian Americans and immigrant Asians, instead of going into conflicts with the established norms, assimilated themselves in the new culture, in the dominant social order. They considered “model minority” as a compliment instead of getting rejected as invaders.

### **Effect of “Model Minority” Myth on Asian Americans’ Career Paths**

Asian American students are considered “high achievers” who should not have any difficulty in their careers. This myth results in a detrimental effect on their academic, social, and mental well-being. Toppo (2002) asserts that Asian American students can perform poorly like any other minority groups and therefore, their problems should be treated like any other minority

groups (Yu, 2006). Asher (2001) points to the effect of internalized oppression that this model minority myth has on young Asian American students' career as their parents have internalized this myth. Kibria (2002) and Louie (2004) also find that Asian American students internalize the Asian cultural values of hard work and higher education achievement and project themselves as a "model minority". In order to sustain their success story, Asian American students' parents want them to pursue "safe" career options in the STEM field and therefore, marginalize their representation in other fields. The famous Coleman report finds that the academic achievement of Asian Americans certainly does not outnumber the achievement of Whites (Coleman, 1996). Asian American students fail in schools like their other minority counterparts (Silberman, 1971; Greer, 1972; Ryan, 1976). According to Yu (2006), politicians, through propagating the "model minority" myth try to convey that success does not depend on structural change but is a result of individual effort.

Education reform also results in marginalization of minority groups and unequal distribution of resources and social justice. High stakes testing poses a major roadblock for nonnative English-speaking students who are first generation immigrants. Standardized testing reinforces the idea of color blindness and blindness to consider different groups of people differently (Yu, 2006). In the 1980s, Asian American enrollment at elite universities like Brown, Yale, Princeton, Cornell, and Stanford had been limited by campus administrators in spite of their higher achievement level than their White counterparts (J. C. Ng, Lee, & Pak, 2007). Community colleges that are usually considered as more liberal in acceptances than four-year institutions also have lower Asian American enrollment (2000-2001 census). Ng, Lee, and Pak (2007) argue that the scenario of discrimination and stereotyping are all the same for immigrant Asian and Asian American faculty. Asian American faculty are underrepresented as administrators. The "model

minority” myth works strongly against their aspiration to ascend to a leadership position. Their hard-working, non-confrontational nature works against their leadership capability (J. C. Ng et al., 2007). Nakanishi (1993) and Hune & Chan (1997) emphasize the fact that Asian American faculty are concentrated in the STEM fields, and surprisingly the number of Asian faculty in STEM fields are more foreign-born than native-born. Therefore, the “model minority” and high achiever myth is proved to be wrong, as more opportunities for Asians exist abroad than in the U.S. (J. C. Ng et al., 2007). Multiple studies have established the fact that Asian women, be they native or immigrant, face additional marginalization due to gender stereotyping (Hune & Chan, 1997; Reddy & TuSmith, 2002; Vargas, 2002). Li & Beckett (2006) proclaim that Asian women faculty face resistance in classrooms, even from Asian students who internalize racism and sexism, which results in their preference for and submission to White professors, especially males. This issue is more prevalent for nonnative English-speaking professors. Radicalized sexual harassment is one of the major barriers for immigrant Asian and Asian American women (Cho, 1997). Crosnoe and Turley (2011) and Kao (1995) find that the “model minority” myth creates peer and parental pressure on K-12 Asian American students and negatively impacts their performance. As a result, Asian immigrants start school in a better position in terms of academic school readiness, but lose some of this advantage over time.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine the leadership aspirations, major roadblocks, and support systems Asian American and immigrant Asian women encounter during their journey towards achieving leadership roles in academia. This study will focus on how the intersectionality of multiple identities like race, gender, the residential status (citizen/immigrant), class, ableness, and language contribute to the career paths of Asian American and immigrant

Asian women in leadership roles in higher education.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the major roadblocks Asian American and immigrant Asian women face during their journey towards leadership in academic administration?
2. How do these women combat discrimination?
3. What are the major support systems, more specifically mentoring, that helps them to attain their desired positions and shape their leadership roles?
4. What are the unique challenges Asian American women leaders and immigrant Asian women leaders face in their respective career paths?

### **Significance of the study**

In this study I seek to fill the gap in the extant literature on Asian American and immigrant Asian women in higher education, especially the unique and common challenges faced by both groups. This study is important for multiple reasons. First of all, both Asian American and immigrant Asian women, in spite of their rising presence in higher education, are alarmingly underrepresented in leadership and administrative roles in higher education. The differences in the participants' background and challenges towards achieving leadership positions and in challenge the misconception that Asians Americans are all the same. Secondly, this study will highlight the challenging faced by both groups Asian Americans and immigrant Asians and will try to find the commonalities and differences. Thirdly, during this study I will delve deep into the creative steps each woman leader took to break the stereotypes and how those steps were different or similar for both groups. According to the U.S. Census 2004, and Girves, Zepeda, & Gwathmey (2005), the United States will have a minority majority by 2050. Among the increased minority population, one out of ten will be Asian American; therefore, the notion of



“equality for all” in higher education should be redefined.

### **Definition of Key Terminologies**

**Immigrant Asians.** Foreign born as individuals are classified by the U.S. Census Bureau, as people not U.S. citizens by birth. This includes naturalized citizens, lawful permanent residents, refugees and asylees, legal nonimmigrants (including those on student, work, or other temporary visas), and persons inhabiting in the country without authorization. Foreign born and immigrant are terms interchangeably used. Asian immigrant refers to persons born in an Asian country and later immigrated to the United States.

The U.S. Census Bureau defines Asian regions as: (a) Eastern Asia: includes China, Hong Kong, Japan Macau, Mongolia, North Korea, South Korea, and Taiwan, (b) South Central Asia: includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, (c) South Eastern Asia: includes Brunei, Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam, and (d) Western Asia: includes Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Cyprus, Georgia, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

**Asian American.** The explanation and interpretation of who constitutes “Asian American” is still debatable. According to Diaz (2010), it is not possible for a monolithic identity to define the particularities of specific ethnic groups’ history of struggle against colonial powers. According to Novotny (2009), the term “Asian” refers to any person belonging to the original peoples of Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent, including Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam. The federal government also supports this definition. According to Chung (2007), the term “Asian

American” is an imposed one by non-Asians. According to Tamura (2001), in the 1960s Asian American activists adopted the term in order to designate their political activism. During the civil rights movement in 1960s, Asian activists in the U.S. were looking for an alternative term of “Oriental” as it was used in a derogatory and colonialist sense to designate them, but at the same time they realized that the dominant society would label them with a common name in spite of the many differences in religion, customs, and language (Chung, 2007). In the United States, Asians have been joined by their similar physical appearance in the past and in the future, they must come together in their shared struggle in order to be visible (Wong, 1987). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2003), Chinese and Japanese people were the first set of immigrants to make a move to the United States, and therefore, the term “Asian” is strongly connected to them. However, in the United States, the term “Asian” refers also to people from East and Southeast Asia. The Middle East, Siberia, and Central Asia are not typically included. “American” refers to people born, raised, or currently living in the United States. Therefore, Asian Americans are people who were born or raised in the United States, but their ancestors are from East or Southeast Asia.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review is divided into three different segments of literature: Discrimination in post-secondary institutions, with a focus on micro aggression and micro resistance, mentoring as a way of developing and facilitating leaders, especially for women of color, and the development of leadership for women of color.

### **Racial discrimination against Asian Americans**

**Micro aggression and micro resistance.** Racial discrimination, according to Jones (1997) and Smedley & Smedley (2005), continues to be embedded in American society, but over time it has changed its form. Sue (2003) and Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawakami, & Hodson (2002) find that the “old fashioned” blatant and direct racial aversion and hatred has transformed into “subtle, ambiguous, and unintentional manifestations” (Sue et al. 2007). Some researchers have described this implicit stereotyping as “racial microaggression” found that “racial micro aggression” and is often overlooked and unacknowledged for being unobjectionable and common. Sue et al. (2007) defines micro aggression 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”. It is assumed that Asian Americans are a model minority and resistant to racism, and discrimination, according to Wong & Halgin (2006), but discrimination continues to affect their self-esteem and psychological well-being.

Chester Pierce coined the term “microaggression” in 1970 to describe insults and rejection he regularly witnessed delivered towards African Americans by non-blacks. Sue et al. (2007)

classify racial microaggression into three categories: microassault, microinsult, and microinvalidation. Racial microaggressions are not always intentionally delivered, but the recipient is always hurt. Eight major themes of micro aggressions emerged based on a study on ten Asian American students (nine of whom were women).

1. Alien in one's own land. Asian Americans are not acknowledged as "real" Americans, are considered to be second-class citizens, and are always asked about their place of birth, no matter how long they have been in the U.S.
2. Ascription of intelligence. The "model minority myth" of doing well, especially in the academic sphere, adds pressure and prevents Asian Americans from asking for help or being facilitated.
3. Denial of racial reality. According to Suzuki (2002), Asian Americans are considered "new whites" (p.76) and thereby their racial reality and heritage are denied and remain unacknowledged.
4. Exoticization of Asian American women. "Asian women are also stereotyped as a 'geisha' or 'lotus flower'," in which they are objectified as exotic women for men (Nguyen, 2016). This stereotyping of Asian women is a "product of colonial and military powers interwoven with sexual domination" (Shrake, 2006, p. 88) and demeans their intelligence and capabilities as leaders.
5. Invalidation of ethnic difference. The tendency to consider all Asians as the same and to minimize the interethnic differences denigrates their culture and identity.
6. Pathologizing cultural values/communication. The dominant society considers modesty and quietness to be "Asian values" an inappropriate view that negatively affects leadership roles.
7. Second class citizenship. Asian Americans frequently report being served after "whites" in

restaurants or other places, as they are not considered to be the “best” image as clients (p.77).

8. Invisibility. Asian Americans are invalidated as non-whites but are included to make the environment diverse as they are considered minorities.

Micro aggression, according to the participants in Sue et al. (2007)’s study, leaves a feeling of “belittlement, anger, rage, frustration, alienation, and of constantly being invalidated”.

Microaggressions affect Asian American’s aspiration to pursue leadership positions.

**Microinequalities.** Along with microaggression, microinequalities is another form of racial discrimination. According to Rowe (2008), microinequalities are also mostly unintentional and implicit and “apparently small events”. Microinequalities, similar to microaggression, target people of ‘difference’. Sanchez-Hucles & Davis (2010) find that, microinequality, like microaggression, is accumulative and causes internal oppression in women of color. Internal oppression lowers the self-esteem of Asian American women. Asian American women report having increased low self-esteem along with increased discrimination.

**Micro resistances.** According to Hall & Sandler (1982), micro resistances are ways of challenging inequalities and discrimination women of color confront in their daily lives. Hooks (1990) affirms, “resistance is the struggle we (women of color) can most easily grasp” (p.15).

Turner (2002) finds that Asian American women faculty experiences the intersection of marginality (p.74) and a hostile work environment (Thandi Sule’, 2009; Turner, 2002).

Microresistance is a technique used by women of color in order to survive in a dominant and not-so-friendly society. According to Hune (2011), women of color combat daily discrimination by asking help from mentors and helping students. In order to become student friendly and a way of microresistance, women of color faculty organize informal curricular and co-curricular activities (Baez, 2000). Acclaiming women of color’s experiences as a tool for resistance has been aptly

illustrated by Lorde (1984) “master’s tool will never dismantle the master’s house”. Liang, Li, & Beckett (2006) describes microresistance as a “tool for advocating racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity” (p.99).

**Racial Discrimination against immigrant Asian faculty in academia.** Immigrant Asian faculty face challenges mostly because of their linguistic accents and cultural values. These challenges are based on linguistics have been termed as “nonnative linguistic peripheralization” by Liang et al. (2006, p. 85). In Liang’s (2006) study, Thomas-George, a South Asian professor in Illinois remembers her experience regarding the mispronunciation of the word “pseudo” for three years and how that impacted the climate of the classroom. In the same study, three native Chinese-speaking female professors describe the classroom as a “mine field of student resistance and negative attitudes” (Liang et al., 2006, p. 85). The way students challenge their authority and credibility in the classroom makes them experience “internalized peripheralization of linguistic self and socioculturally marginalized professional identities” (Liang et al., 2006, p. 86). Many Asian women faculty report of dwindling between two cultures (Asian and American) and not belonging completely to either of them (A. Lin, Kubota, Motha, Wang, & Wong, 2006). Nguyen (2016) in the study describes the narratives of Asian women faculty in universities and how suddenly their identities are defined by their ethnicities they never considered to be of importance. Lin (2006) asserts that “overnight my identity changed (suddenly) I was a Chinese representing China’s 1.3 billion people for the first time I was defined by my race” (p.295). Immigrant Asian women faculty report that along with ethnic or racial stereotyping, their credibility also has been challenged due to accent. A South Asian professor, in (Asher, 2006), recalls in spite of the fact that she belongs to an English-speaking former British colony, her knowledge in English was doubted by a student as she is not from the United States. According

to Thomas & Johnson (2004), the cultural identity of international faculty members influences their socialization.

Mamiseishvili and Rosser (2010) find using the National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPEF:04) that international faculty members are not involved in service and administrative activities, even if they excel in teaching and their performance is better than their U.S. citizen counterparts. Skachkova (2007) also finds that foreign-born women faculty are not “actively involved in administrative leadership as part of their service activities”. Mamiseishvili and Rosser (2010) find that “international faculty members were less involved in-service activities than U.S. citizen faculty members, especially in terms of hours spent on administrative committee work”. International faculty members describe how their cultural backgrounds and experiences influence their teaching experiences and communication with students (Skachkova, 2007; Manrique & Manrique, 1999; Marvasti, 2005). International women faculty members, according to Mamiseishvili and Rosser (2010), are assigned teaching responsibilities more than their counterparts, though in general international faculty members are prevented from teaching undergraduate courses.

According to Manrique and Marique (1999), though international faculty members are “highly visible symbols of the changing face of the population in higher education”, they feel to be “discriminated against in the workplace either by their colleagues or by administrators”. Prejudice and stereotypes are obstacles international faculty members face regarding their credibility as teachers from students. Skachkova (2007) finds that foreign-born women faculty members are excluded from administrative leadership activities and research networks that would be beneficial for grants and publications. According to Wells, Seifert, Park, Reed, & Umbach (2007), Middle Easterners and Asians report lesser satisfaction with autonomy and contracts

than their citizen counterparts. Mamiseishvili and Rosser (2010) suggest that international faculty members' diverse experiences are not fully extracted in universities. Instead of contesting, students should listen to their different and diverse ideas, and institutions should acknowledge their efforts. Mamiseishvili and Rosser (2010) also find that international faculty members, not getting enough recognition for their efforts in teaching and service, focus on research where they think they can exceed and get recognition and rewards. Another significant reason for international faculty members focusing more on research than on teaching and service is the stereotypes and challenges they face in these areas. International faculty members think that their communication skills, language proficiency, and ability to interact with students are less significant factors in research; therefore, research becomes their comfort zone (Mamiseishvili & Rosser, 2010).

### **Leadership ideas and practices for immigrant Asian and Asian American women**

**Gender and Leadership.** According to the (Index, 2011), across all organizations, women constitute 52% of the professional and managerial positions, but only 26% of chief executives. 36.3% of the total population in the United States is women of color; yet only 2.7% of Asian American women occupy managerial and professional positions. It has been seen that in female dominated organizations, male leaders are more likely to climb leadership positions faster than their female counterparts, a phenomenon defined as "glass escalator" by Maume Jr (1999) and Williams (1995). Society continues to view leaders as male (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011) and female leaders are not considered as effective as their male counterparts in a highly male-dominated society. Gender stereotypes are reinforced when combined with the intersection of race and ethnicity. These intersectional stereotypes aggravate the disadvantageous position for women of color. For example, African American women are considered to be less



competent as leaders, Hispanics are considered to be less ambitious, and Asian American women are considered to be less assertive, fragile, and meek, all views that count against their leadership capability (Madon et al., 2001; Niemann, Jennings, Rozelle, Baxter, & Sullivan, 1994). Women of color are considered to be less effective leaders because their presence in leadership roles is often doubted as a result of affirmative action or a tokenism (Turner, 2002; Smith, 2009).

According to Wen-Chu Chen & Hune (2011) and Eagly & Carli (2007) irrespective of gender, White leaders are preferred by both male and female subordinates. Women acquiring power is assumed to be a misuse of “female ways” (Keohane, 2007, p. 70). Sinclair & Kunda (2000) and Atwater, Carey, & Waldman (2001) suggest that people are less receptive when criticism comes from female leaders.

**Organizational roadblocks for women in leadership.** The traditional representation of leadership is a male figure in a leadership position holding authority. Therefore, organizations are designed in a way that best suits the needs and experiences of men (Eagly & Carli, 2007). This male-oriented design of organizations poses major roadblocks for female leaders aspiring to climb to leadership positions. Acker (1990) and Martin (2003) suggest that organizations, on a superficial level, seem to be gender-neutral, not favoring either of the two groups, but at a deeper level men are in an advantageous position. The increasing demand of long work hours results in personal sacrifices. The inherent demand of devoting oneself completely for the sake of the organization, especially from high-status executives, where advancement and pay are contingent on long hours of work, certainly do not propagate the principle of inclusion for women (Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1995; Williams, 2000). Asian American and immigrant Asian women belong to a collectivist culture where family plays a major role in defining their careers. Cheung & Halpern (2010) assert that the work-family integration in a collectivist culture for women

aspiring to leadership positions becomes harder when the leadership trait based on Western men starts to operate. Galinsky et al. (2003) in a study find that 75% of senior executives have stay-at-home wives, whereas 74% of women have employed spouses. Therefore, it is only natural that women executives confront challenges while balancing between family and career. In collectivist Asian cultures, women are assumed to play the domestic role like taking care of children and older members of the family and doing the household chores. These family responsibilities undermine their ability to network, a necessary condition to ascend to a leadership position (Eagly & Carli, 2007b). Dreher & Cox Jr. (1996) find that women leaders have less access to powerful networks than their male counterparts. T. W. Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman (2005) argue that networking influences the salary hike and promotions, and women's lack of social capital poses major roadblocks in their journey towards leadership (Timberlake, 2005). Finding a suitable mentor also becomes difficult for women leaders as male leaders dominate the leadership arena and they find it gender-segregated (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). Apart from lack of mentoring, female leaders are given more challenging assignments than their male counterparts, so they fail and more often cannot proceed in their leadership journey. Haslam & Ryan (2008) define this phenomenon as the glass cliff.

**Asian American Leadership Organizations.** In order to combat and confront the marginalization and limited presence in leadership roles in American society, Asian American community members realize the need to be united through various organizations to make their needs visible (Eagly & Carli, 2007b; Huang & Yamagata-Noji, 2010).

Leadership Education for Asian Pacific, Inc. (LEAP) is an organization that proclaims the principles of commonality, community and capacity building in order to bring change in the leadership arena. 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). The aim of LEAP is to inculcate leadership skills in participants in order to become effective leaders. Asian Americans do not necessarily advocate for themselves. Lack of mentors also prevents them from ascending to leadership positions. Therefore, leadership improvement programs are necessary for them for career advancement that organizations like LEAP aim to instill. Asian Pacific Islander Community Leadership Foundation (ACLF) was founded in Washington State in 1988 in order to recruit and develop Asian American and Pacific Islander leaders in Washington State. ACLF aims “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). ACLF aims to develop leaders who are multiculturally proficient and professionally equipped. Generating and widening professional networks is one of the biggest aims of ACLF. National Association of Asian American Professionals (NAAAP) is another non-profit organization that seeks to empower Asian and Pacific Islander leaders through professional development, networking, and community service. Yamagata-Noji (2005) emphasizes a sheer need for training for Asian Americans and immigrant Asians who aspire to ascend leadership positions, especially where institutions internalize the model minority myth, as the model minority myth negatively impacts Asian American women’s leadership aspirations (Berdahl & Min, 2012; Huang & Yamagata-Noji, 2010). Therefore, these organizations for Asian and Asian American aspiring leaders purposely serve the need for being united and empowered.

### **Role of Mentoring**

“Mentoring is viewed as a dyadic, face-to-face, long-term relationship between a supervisory adult and a novice student that fosters the mentee’s professional, academic, or

personal development” (Donaldson, Ensher, & Grant-Vallone, 2000). Every person has a “desire for affiliation and acceptance from others” (Eby & Allen, 2008) and affiliation is pivotal to leadership. Mentoring is a key factor in leadership literature, especially for Asian American and immigrant Asian women (Eddy & Cox, 2008; VanDerLinden, 2004; Brown, 2005; Ebbers, Conover, & Samuels, 2010). “Mentoring moves through a number of phases from establishing the relationship through cultivating and nurturing it” (Kram, 1988). A mentor facilitates a mentee to develop his leadership identity, and in successful mentoring a mentee is provided with personal support and career related guidance (Kram, 1985). As mentoring is a dyadic process, mentors, along with mentees gain personal satisfaction and mutual support in this process and improve their productivity (Johnson, 2007). An array of studies has discussed the sheer importance of mentoring in leadership development (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; Strathe & Wilson, 2006; VanDerLinden, 2005; Neilson & Suyemoto, 2009; Garza Mitchell & Eddy, 2008; Hassan, Dellow, & Jackson, 2009; Holmes, Land, & Hinton-Hudson, 2007). According to Bernstein, Jacobson, & Russo (2010), the mentoring relationship is an essential aspect for women of color for their leadership development. According to Austria and Austria (2010), Scanlon (1999), Paludi, Martin, Stern, and DeFour (2010), mentors usually look for mentees with the same traits, such as race, gender, class, making the relationship intricate (Denmark & Klara, 2010, p. 14). For women of color, successful mentoring is defined by the level of trust, honesty, the eagerness to learn, and “the ability to share power and privilege” (Stanley & Lincoln, 2005, p. 47). Experts admit the importance of same gender and ethnicity in mentoring, though cross-race and cross-gender mentoring is also feasible (Stanley & Lincoln, 2005). Austria and Austria (2010) find that Asian American women are generally excluded from an institution’s mentoring program, because it is assumed that Asian Americans face lesser challenges (or sometimes no

challenges) than other minority groups for their ethnicity and background. They are perceived as a model minority and are projected as a success story in the United States. Uba (2003), Zhang, Snowden, & Sue (1998) support the notion that Asian American college students look for less support than their other minority counterparts. Chang (1996) and Jung (1995) find that Asian Americans, while dealing with personal challenges, use coping strategies more than their majority counterparts. However, Museus and Kiang (2009), assert that White Asian Americans do not use campus resources and support available on campus, it does not mean they do not need them.

**Minority women and mentoring.** The literature on women's mentoring experiences is sparse and lacks many important aspects. Peer mentoring, which can be of great importance in a protégé's life in academia, has not been thoroughly studied (Chandler, 1996). The idea of a mentor is always conceived as a White male person. This lack of women of color mentors or absence of role models discourages women of color in pursuing the desired leadership positions and higher-ranking faculty positions (Bem, 1981). Freeman (1989) coined a term "the null educational environment" in order to describe the campus climate for women. According to (Freeman, 1979), this kind of environment does not recognize women's existence, and as a result women do not get any kind of support in order to pursue their career goals like their male counterparts (Glazer-Raymo, 2001) (Golde, 1994; Glazer-Raymo, 1999). This lack of support and recognition compels female students to consider higher education administration as an embracing profession. The absence of mentoring and lack of female role models in institutional administrations reinforces their desire to join the profession (Shakeshaft, 1987).

As found by Grubb (1996), Ruhe and Allen (1997), and Vincent and Seymour (1995), mentoring is a crucial aspect of professional development for protégés. Lack of women

administrators and the absence of a mentoring relationship make the female administrators' career progression difficult and prevent their ascension towards senior level administrators (Bolton, 1987). Cullen & Luna (1993) find that only three participants out of twenty-four participants talk of protégé protection where the mentor takes responsibilities for the protégé's mistakes. Participants perceive this lack of commitment towards mentoring as one of the major barriers towards pursuing senior level administrator.

### **Chapter 3: Research Methods**

The purpose of this study was to understand and explore the experiences of the immigrant Asian and Asian American female faculty and/or administrators' experiences in US universities. Cho and Feagin (2008) found that racism is deeply rooted and an integral part of Asian American people's life. This chapter discusses the overall methodology of the study. Chen and Hune (2011), Li and Beckett (2006) also explored in their studies the lived experiences and perspectives of Asian American women faculty and administrators in the academe. This chapter contains the design of the study, site selection, selection of participants, time frame, instruments, and data collection procedures.

#### **Design of the Study**

A research design has been applied in this study that would provide the participants with voice and help them to share experiences from their point of view. In order to explore their relationships in their workplaces, the interaction between the participants, their colleagues, and students qualitative research design has been the best choice. In this section I would like to explain why a qualitative approach was more appropriate for my study in order to get an in-depth understanding of the experiences, career paths, and the strategies Asian American and immigrant Asian women adopt in their respective journeys. The rationale for choosing qualitative method, that will include semi-structured interviews is "reality (and knowledge) are socially constructed" (Glesne, 2006, p.6) for qualitative researchers, and I am interested in "understanding of meaning people (here Asian American and immigrant Asian women) have constructed" (Merriam, 1998, p.6). According to Allen and Eby (2007), the intricacies and depths of a journey can be perceived through a person's viewpoint, and qualitative research is the best way to extract those perspectives. According to Best and Kahn (2003), qualitative inquiry inquires issues in depth and

detail, and at the same time provides openness and credibility to both the researchers and participants. In this study trust is an important factor and in order to build trust there must be openness and credibility between researcher and participants. Qualitative research helps to explore detailed information about a small population. Though generalizability is an issue in quantitative research because of the small sample size, this study ventures to gain an in depth understanding of its small population's experiences.

Qualitative research provided me with the opportunity to delve deep into interviewees' reality and allowed me access to their counter-narratives as a different model from the "model minority paradigm" (Buenavista, Jayakumar, & Misa-Escalante, 2009, p.79). Solorzano and Yosso (2009) define the experiences of minorities as "counter-stories" instead of counter-narratives. Counter narratives in the postmodern era have become specifically important and relevant as the advocates of postmodernism discard the existence of big narratives and place importance on local, temporal, and situational narratives (An Introduction to Qualitative Research). These counter-narratives or counter-stories will allow me to understand the intersectionalities playing as important agents in Asian American and immigrant Asian women's lives. Williams (1991) states that the color of a person's skin is the decisive factor and has immense influence on his/her thought processes, acceptance and treatment in society. Therefore, talking through their perspectives, what they feel and think of their journeys towards leadership and how they made the path can only be explored through qualitative research. Due to "pluralization of life worlds", qualitative research has acquired its relevance in studying social relations (An Introduction to Qualitative Research). In order to study pluralization, researchers should be sensitive to the diversity of the situation. In this connection, I am partially aware of the complexities and diversities faced by immigrant Asian women and I intend to capture the



“individualization of ways of living and biographical patterns” (Beck, 1992). In a qualitative study, “research design should be a reflexive process operating through every stage of the process” (Hammerseley & Atkinson, 1995, p.24). There are five intellectual goals that Sage Handbook of Applied Social Research Methods identifies:

1. Understanding the meaning of the events, situations, and actions participants are involved with and the accounts of participants’ lives and experiences.
2. Understanding the influence and impact of the context on participants’ actions.
3. Generating grounded theories based on some phenomena.
4. Apprehending the process by which the events and actions take place.
5. The causal inference (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002) is well accepted in qualitative research.

The aforesaid intellectual reasons and the open-ended structure of qualitative research give it the legitimacy of “generating results and theories that are understandable and experientially credible, both to the people being studied and to others” (Bolster, 1983). Qualitative research conducts studies with the intention of enhancing the existing practice (Scriven, 1991). The most important contribution of qualitative research is to engage in “collaborative, action, or ‘empowerment’ research with practitioners or research participants (Cousins & Earl, 1995; Fetterman, Kaftarian, & Wandersman, 1996; Tolman & Brydon-Miller, 2001; Whyte, 1991). From this study, I want to contribute to the policies specified for women of color aspiring to leadership positions in academic administration in the U.S. Therefore, this research will be a collaborative action with the participants who have already achieved ‘voices’ in spite of challenges to bring change in the existing system.

### **Participants, Sampling, and Settings**

For my qualitative study, I would like to focus on sampling as defined by Gay and Airasian (1996): “Sampling is the process of selecting a number of individuals for a study in such a way that the individuals represent the larger group from which they were selected”. I selected 15 Asian American and immigrant Asian female faculty and academic administrators from universities across the United States. In selecting my participants, I looked for individuals who had ample opportunity of leadership and mentoring experiences in academia. But given the size of the population being very small, I had to choose faculty members as well who did not have significant leadership experiences. But this inclusion contributed to the diversity of the sample and enough space to delve deep into aspects like whether faculty members want to join academic administration in future, if not then why. I identified 3 or 4 participants initially through personal networks. The rest of the participants were found via snowball sampling procedure. The participants themselves recommended names of other participants. Snowball sampling indicates a sampling method whereby one sample member, was asked to name other suitable candidates for this study. Generally, participants recommend names of the individuals who she knows personally. This procedure enabled me to interview those that I wanted to have the availability. I expected this process to be effective enough in order to build the trust, because in many parts the conversations were personal and sensitive. Therefore, trust has been the major concern of this study.

The population for this study consisted of 15 Asian American and immigrant female faculty and administrators who have been in US higher education for a significant amount of time. Snowball sampling was applied in finding them. The criteria for selection included:

1. Participants spent significant amount of time in US higher education

2. I looked for participants with experiences as both faculty and administrators. But given the small size of the population, there are 5 participants who did not play any leadership roles neither they wanted to. This blend of faculty and administrators actually gave this study the opportunity to look at the facets like what prevented these women not to go into academic administration, did they ever consider joining academic administration etc.
3. Also, I included both Asian American and immigrant Asian participants in the sample in order to maximize the availability of participants. But this aspect too gave a new perspective to this study as challenges are somewhere different for both the groups.
4. Participants with mentoring experiences was another major criterion as this has been one of the research questions. In that both faculty and administrators had mentoring experiences, both as mentor and mentee. All the administrators were faculty at some point in their journey. So, this participant sample has satisfied all the aspects of this study and the research questions.
5. Participants willing to participate.

### **Rationale for Selection of Criteria**

The rationale for selecting the first criterion was only after spending a significant amount of time and knowing every nook and corner of US higher education, it would be feasible for an individual to comment upon her experiences. In order to get a substantive perspective and insightful opinion, it was important to spend time in this country as well as in US higher education. All the participants in the present study had on an average 10-15 years of experiences. Therefore, they have gained significant amount of knowledge to comment upon how to navigate in US higher education. Though my primary focus was academic administrators, due to the unavailability of the participants I included faculty members as well. Both of these participant

samples actually help me to have an insightful and comprehensive view of US higher education. I got answers of questions like why some participants joined administration, and why some did not, also why some participant switched their career from administration to faculty. Participants, both Asian American and immigrant Asian contributed to the diverse angles of this study where they shared that in spite of sharing the same skin color, how much varied their experiences are and how unjustified it would be to group them together. The more time participants spend in the system, the more enriched they will become. All these participants had ample experiences of being mentored and mentoring others. Therefore, focusing on my research question on mentoring, I got some excellent responses from the participants which were encompassing and in depth. The participants' willingness is crucial to this study, since this study involved detailed questionnaires, and many sensitive topics were included in the questionnaire, participants needed to be willing and interested to take part in this study. Fortunately, all the participants gave a vivid description of their journey and they were honest.

### **Site Selection**

The participants of this study were from all over the us, so conducting research in their respective workplaces was not possible. Therefore, interviews were conducted over Skype and in order to maintain the confidentiality the setting of the interviews was a closed room. The most important criteria for this study will be women who identify themselves as Asian American or immigrant Asian and are currently working or previously worked as a leader in academic administration in 2-year community colleges or 4-year universities. Initially I have identified three or four prospective participants and I would like to apply a snowball sampling procedure in order to connect with other prospective participants. Snowball sampling is a technique whereby one sample or one participant recommends the names of other prospective participants abiding

by the criteria.

For this study, I interviewed 15 participants. My role was not of a passive observer. In order to build trust and making myself credible, a good amount of conversation on my part was needed, especially sharing my own experiences actually made them comfortable and the ambience conducive to honest and open interactions. This way I had first hand experiences with the participants, and I was able to record information of the events accordingly (Creswell, 2014). Though observation is an integral part of interviews and observational data makes the data collected from interviews more robust and legitimate, in this study it was not possible due to the Skype interviews. the faces were hardly seen during the interviews, sometimes that also got hindered due to poor internet connection. Some participants also did not agree to talk over Skype. In that case, phone interviews were conducted.

I intended to connect with more participants than I need, keeping in mind Stanley's (2007) experiences where her participants dropped in the middle of their interviews because "their narratives were too painful to share" (p.19). That was helpful. Participants were mostly administrators and due to their busy schedule, they could not accommodate time during the timeframe that was convenient for this study. Some participants, whom I considered to be prospective ones did not agree to talk due to confidentiality issues they were afraid of. Creswell (2014) recommends researchers to include unusual sources of information beyond observations and interviews. A common and obvious concern for all the participants was the confidentiality issue and due to that people, who agreed to talk, only interviews could be obtained. Sources like official memos, archival material, the tenure dossier of participants, if available, biographies and autobiographies of participants and their research could not be obtained in order to support the data obtained from interviews. Interview protocol helps a

researcher to enter the arena of participants' perspectives in order to explore their experiences from where the perspectives got generated. In this study, interviews were conducted via Skype and therefore, were recorded and saved on a secured server. There were 14 open ended question in the interview protocol that covered areas like how participants chose the leadership positions, how much important a mentor's role has been in their leadership journey, did they ever face any kind of discrimination due to their gender and color, if so how did they combat, what are the major support systems they have in this journey etc.

### **Instrument**

The main instrument for this research was a semi structured qualitative interview protocol. According to Glense (1999), interviewing allows a researcher to understand the social life, rules, norms, and cultures in order to understand participants' experiences. Qualitative interviews provide with the opportunity to understand participants' thought process through interactions. It also facilitates the researchers to enter the perspectives and minds of the participants. The interview guide consisted of 11 primary open-ended questions guided me within the limited time. In those 11 questions I could specify the key aspects of this study. All the interviews in this study were conducted via skype as participants were located across the country. The primary questions were like why the participants chose the leadership roles, description of their leadership journey, how much important is mentoring in their leadership journey, the role of family background, support systems etc.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

According to Patton (2002), "the fundamental principle of qualitative interviewing is to provide a framework within which respondents can express their own understandings in their own terms" (p.384). The data collection procedure started with submitting the IRB application

for approval on April. This application included a brief summary of this research, such as literature review, purpose of this study, research procedures, interview questions, tentative duration of each interview, an informed consent form for obtaining permission from my participants to allow me to interview them for this study.

Data collection began in September of 2018 and was completed by April 2019. I initially started with emailing two or three participants who fit the criteria and were within my network. After finishing those interviews, I started emailing the prospective participants who were recommended by those initial participants. Some participants, due to their hectic schedule, did not respond to the first email. Most of the participants agreed to talk, but due to semester end, it was difficult for them to find time. 5 prospective participants who I emailed for this study said they would like to participate, but they were not comfortable enough to talk on these issues as they were sensitive. They also expressed their concern on the confidentiality issue in spite of the fact that they were told this would be an anonymous study. A cover letter and the informed consent form were attached in the email. Respondents were assured that neither their identity nor the identity of their institutions would be released anywhere in the dissertation. Some participants asked for the interview protocol beforehand so that they can go through the questions. Participants, who agreed, were excited to contribute to this study. Total 20 individuals were contacted for this study. 15 participants agreed, and 5 participants said no for interview. The duration of each interview was mentioned both in IRB and in the informed consent form was 45-60 minutes. Most of the interviews were completed within that time, but some conversations extended beyond 60 minutes. The conversations were rich and engaging. This study gave voice to a population sample who are understudied for a long time.

### **Data Analysis**

Trust was the most important factor for this study. Before the interview process started, each participant's concerns were clarified and addressed. They were promised that neither name nor the institution's name would be used. As a further step, which part of the country the institution belongs to has also not been mentioned. All the transcriptions have been done by the researcher to maintain the confidentiality. Participants were mostly female administrators, and because of the busy schedule of the participants, member checking of the transcripts has not been possible. The experiences participants shared during their interviews were relatable to the researcher in some cases, so the conversations became open and candid. This also contributed to the authenticity of the research. Participants, especially who belonged to the fields like sociology and related fields, easily understood terms like 'acculturation,' 'assimilation' etc., and had a more detailed conversation. So, the ambience helped them to be more cordial, comfortable, and building trust. Moreover, Post Colonialist Feminist theory helped me to explore the intersectionalities that influenced these women of color's experiences.

Researchers in a qualitative study present a vivid description of the data and provide the coding process that appears from primary data. Maxwell (1999) proposes analytic procedures in qualitative methods: 1. organizing all data; 2. coding the data; 3. Creating categories, themes, and patterns; 4. analyzing findings; 5. searching for alternative explanations; 6. Writing the final discussion of the study. Data reduction has also been an important part of data analysis. "The researcher's decisions-which data chunks to code and which to pull out, which patterns best summarize a number of chunks, which evolving story to tell-are all analytic choices" (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data reduction was necessary to sharpen, focus, and organize the final data set. Especially in a qualitative research, it is likely to happen that participants talk about various issues, and all of them are relevant. But in order to find out the most relevant data for the study,



data reduction is important. Tesch (1990) describes this process of data reduction as “data condensation”.

The data analysis in this study focused on the interview transcripts. The researcher went over all the transcripts numerous times to get an encompassing picture of these 15 participants’ experiences. By reading those transcripts over and again, I was able to decipher the codes and arranged the emerging themes. I categorized the interview transcripts into coding data while finding the possible answers to the research questions. After finding the themes it was important to connect them with the existing literature in order to support and reveal the gaps. According to Roberts (2004), the connection with the existing literature helps us to understand how much relevant the findings are.

## **Chapter 4: Analysis and Results**

The purpose of this qualitative analysis is to explore immigrant Asian and Asian American female administrators and faculty members' experiences in US universities. This study includes both female administrators and faculty members as Asian American and immigrant Asian female leaders are represented in very small numbers in US universities. In the literature review section, I discussed several works that document the underrepresentation of women of color, specifically Asian women in US higher education. Lack of mentoring and lack of role models have been cited as two of the major reasons behind women of color's underrepresentation in leadership roles in US higher education. While analyzing the data, I focused on three research questions: 1. How did racial and gender identity contribute to these participants' journeys? 2. How did they combat the discriminations they faced? 3. What are the major support systems, more specifically mentoring, that helped them to attain their desired positions and shaped their journey? The dominant pattern that emerged from participants' interviews is the microaggressions that they face on a regular basis, both as a faculty member and as an administrator. Another important and major finding of this study is the important role that mentoring plays in the leadership development of women of color.

### **Background of Participants**

The participants in this study were both immigrant Asian and Asian American females who are pursuing their career in US higher education. Due to the underrepresentation of Asian female administrators in US universities, this participant sample is a blend of both faculty members and/or administrators. The age range of this participant sample is from mid 30s to early 60s. Participants were in STEM and humanities fields. Pseudonyms for the participants in this

study were selected; however, Asian names were not selected because search results for Asian names resulted only in Chinese names, but the participants in this study were from many different countries in Asia. Moreover, given the small number of Asian American female faculty and administrators, I selected the most popular baby names used in the US to use as pseudonyms for participants (Table 4.1).

**Table 4.1**

**Participant Description**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Age Range</u>	<u>Immigration Status</u>	<u>Position</u>
Ava	40-45	Immigrant Asian	Full Professor and Chair at a four-year university
Lucy		Immigrant Asian	Associate Professor at a community college
Luna	60-65	Immigrant Asian	Full Professor in a School of Medicine at an R1 university
Iris	30-35	Immigrant Asian	Assistant Professor and an Undergraduate Deputy Chair at a community college

Jane	40-45	Immigrant Asian	Full Professor and Interim Chair at a four-year university
Nora	40-45	Asian American	Dean of Science at a research institute
Eliza	40-45	Immigrant Asian	Associate Professor at a four-year university
Ivy	45-40	Immigrant Asian	Associate Professor at an R1 university
Lyra	55-60	Immigrant Asian	Director at an R1 university
Rose	55-60	Immigrant Asian	Associate Professor at an R1 university
Isla	55-60	Immigrant Asian	Full Professor, Former Chair, and Former Interim Dean at an R1 university

Cora	55-60	Immigrant Asian	Associate Professor at an R1 university
Ada	45-50	Immigrant Asian	Associate Professor at an R1 university
Anna	45-50	Immigrant Asian	Associate Professor at an R1 university
Thea	45-50	Immigrant Asian	Associate Professor at a community college

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Ava, an immigrant Asian, now a citizen, is a full professor and chair of her department in a four-year university. She came to the US with a scholarship to pursue higher education. She leads a group of 25-26 faculty members. She is in her early 40s.

Lucy is an immigrant Asian but came to this country at a very early age. She was schooled in the US. She had all “American” experiences, but her skin color and demeanor make people think otherwise. She is an associate professor in a community college. She has some leadership experience, but primarily she is a faculty member.

Luna is also an immigrant Asian who came to this country when she was seven. She considers herself to be very much “American” though she is proud of her own cultural background as well. She knows languages from her own country other than English. She is

currently a full professor in a school of medicine in a university which has highest level of research activity (R1) institute, director of MSDP program and director of combined MD, PhD program. She is in her early 60s.

Iris is also an immigrant Asian who came to this country when she was six. She had her schooling and education in this country. Though she is proud of her ancestry, she believes herself to be nothing but “American”. Her colored identity and ethnicity also caused challenges throughout her life, and she has the same feeling of being “alien” in her own land. She is currently in her mid 30s, an assistant professor in a community college and an undergraduate deputy chair.

Jane came to this country as an immigrant with a scholarship to pursue a PhD in a R1 institute after completing a master’s degree in her own country. She is currently a full professor and interim chair of her department. Her journey towards leadership has not been a smooth one due to her racial and gender identity.

Nora is an Asian American. She was born in this country, but in spite of that the colored identity became primary and though not always, she has sometimes been looked down upon for that. As a woman in a STEM field, she is a minority there too. She is currently working as a dean of science in a research institute, a former chair of her department and former president of the faculty association. She has a long journey of leadership in US higher education. She is in her late 40s.

Eliza came to this country as a student with a scholarship to pursue higher education, and after finishing her PhD, she joined academia. She is currently an associate professor in a four-year institute. She considers herself to be fortunate enough for not having any discriminatory experiences due to her racial and gender identity. She is primarily a faculty member with

occasional experiences in chairing committees, but she does not have any aspiration to join academic administration or pursue any leadership roles in future. She is in her mid 40s.

Ivy came to this country as a student to pursue her PhD as an immigrant. Currently she is working as an associate professor in a research institute. She is primarily a faculty member. During her journey in academia, she has faced lot of challenges, both inside and outside the classroom.

Lyra, a full professor, also came to this country as an immigrant. She is the director of a specialized section in her area. Her background is STEM and she does not think that her race and gender influenced her journey in any way. She is in her late 50s.

Rose is in her mid 50s, she is an associate professor in a R1 institute. She teaches literature from her own country. Though she did not face any challenges due to her colored identity, she had to face microaggressions for the subject she teaches.

Isla is in her late 50s. A full professor in a R1 institute, she has a long history of leadership in academic administration. She has been a former chair and interim dean for a long time. Currently she is focusing on her research. She came to this country as an immigrant after her marriage and within a year got a scholarship to pursue her PhD. Her colored identity as a woman posed many challenges.

Coming to this country as an immigrant student to pursue higher education, Cora is now an associate professor at a R1 institute. She did not have to face any challenges due to her colored identity. As a mentee she had faced hostility from her mentor and she shared how she encountered the situation.

Ada is an associate professor who came to this country to pursue higher education after having a master's degree in her country. She has faced a lot of challenges due to her colored

identity. Primarily a faculty member, she has occasional experiences in leadership.

Anna is an associate professor in a STEM field at a R1 institute. She also came to this country to pursue higher education with a scholarship. She found her surroundings to be supportive and her colored identity did not pose any kind of challenges during her journey. She is a faculty member and does not have any intent of joining academic administration or pursuing leadership roles in near future.

Thea is an associate professor in a regional college. Her background is in STEM, and she also finds the environment in which she works collegial. She came to this country as an immigrant student.

Almost all the participants said that they want to keep the racial and gender issues separate from their experiences and recognized both as equally important to a woman of color's identity. Luna said: "Frankly speaking both race and gender have been challenging, but I will keep race and gender separate, because the challenges caused from race and gender were different." Nora also emphasized the role of gender saying, "I may not have the male privilege, but I have lot of other privileges. But I think I could not get away because of my gender." Isla echoed both Luna and Nora and said, "I don't think that I had to think much about being a foreigner. I think race has not been an issue as much as the gender has been. I faced a lot of challenges for being a woman." Sometimes the challenges caused by race and have been very distinct for these women, sometimes it was difficult to distinguish. In this section, I focus on the first research question that examines the contribution of race and gender in these women's careers in academia. According to Sue et al. (2007) "bias, prejudice, and discrimination in North America has undergone a transformation, especially in the post-civil rights era when the democratic belief in equality of marginalized groups (racial minority, women, and gays/lesbians)



directly clashes with their long history of oppression in society” and therefore, racism is less blatant than in the past. Microaggressions can best describe the nature of any kind discrimination based on race, gender, and sexual orientation. Microaggressions are “brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to certain individuals because of their group membership” (Sue et al, 2007, p.72). These women elaborated on experiences of microaggression due to their gender and racial backgrounds.

### **Microaggressions based on Race/Ethnicity and Gender**

**Non-cooperative, chilly work climate.** According to Hall and Sandler (1982), women feel less supported in higher education than their male counterparts. Mehra et al. (1998) found that homophily (preference for others like oneself) poses a major challenge for women in creating personal networks. The lack of professional support results in microinsult, a form of microaggression (Sue et al., 2007a). Microinsult is a “a behavioral action or verbal remark that conveys rudeness, insensitivity, or demeans a person’s racial identity” (Sue et al.,2007a, p.73). Iris felt that her new chair, who is a White female, assumed that Asian woman are hardworking, and they can manage everything, no matter how unrealistic and undue the demands are. She said:

There have been numerous occasions where she asked me to do something at the at the last minute as an undergraduate deputy chair with a couple of days, a couple of weeks’ notices. Thinking of someone who doesn’t have a family, it is easier to accommodate. But someone like me, who has a family, we do have some responsibilities, and it is difficult for us to negotiate at the last moment. So there have been occasions so far under her supervision where it happened. I said, “let me see what I can do”. I have to coordinate my husband’s schedule, my daughter’s schedule, her baby sitter’s schedule. They have their own schedule and they don’t do things according to my schedule. I don’t think my

chair understands that. When I brought things up, she said well I don't have children, but I have niece and nephew, so I understand that. That was kind of offensive.

Another instance where Iris felt that because of her racial identity and her vulnerable situation of being on the tenure track, her new chair was taking advantage of her and being unreasonable in her demands with "subtle", "stunning", verbal exchanges to put her down.

According to Iris:

On the transfer evaluation day, the undergraduate deputy chair is expected to be there, but it is not mandatory, and it is in the summer, so the previous chair, who was a Latino, would always let me know as soon as she thought of the dates so that we can arrange before. The new chair is very disorganized. Just a week before the transfer evaluation day, the chair asked me to be there. I told her I would try if I can. I also live far away from campus. It's like two-hour commute and she knows that. So, it's like four hours of commuting, two hours of transfer evaluating, so total of six hours evaluation. So, a total of six hours that I had to negotiate with my husband and the baby sitter. In the meantime, I was emailing back and forth with her when she became aggressive. She said this is one of those times when being an Undergraduate deputy comes into conflict with this long-time commute. I calmed myself and said "it's not the commute. If I had more time I could figure out the schedule, last minute scheduling is always stressful" to which she did not respond.

Similar experiences were shared by Ada and Jane. They felt they were unfairly asked to do overload, because it was assumed that Asian women are hardworking and so it is OK to assign them more work than their peers. Jane shared:

Among 250 faculty members in the whole college, there are only three or four women

who are foreigners, and in the entire university I am the only minority woman chair. In spite of all my accomplishments, my colleagues don't give that respect to me. I am much more accomplished than them, I am doing better than all of them, I belong to a very renowned university, my advisor was a renowned person. Her obituary was published in New York Times. They don't give that respect because I am a foreigner.

Blakemore et al. (1997) found that female faculty members have less of a sense of belonging than their male counterparts. Similarly, Gersick et al. (2000) found that women faculty members report career harm from colleagues four times more than their male counterparts. Also, faculty women tend to have less developed relationships with their colleagues than their male counterparts (Gersick et al. 2000). As an interim chair, Jane expected to see an increase in her salary, and she said:

I did not get a raise, and people told me that is also because of race and gender. I am not getting paid accordingly and this is not commensurate. The dean agreed and acknowledged. I feel like I should be more confrontational and need to set the terms of interactions with my colleagues. A couple of them have been disrespectful to me as a chair.

And then again, she admits that it is against her nature to be "confrontational". These extra responsibilities of interim chair, according to her, were "thrown at her" and she "had to handle them." She was asked if she was willing and able to do the interim chair job, and though she was skeptical, she felt she did not have another option. Another participant, Isla, thought her gender played a more important role in her career journey than her "foreigner" identity did. She said:

I don't think that I had to really think much about being a foreigner. My colleagues, who

are White, who are White and western, also feel comfortable talking to me about their issues. People feel comfortable telling me their personal issues because they know I won't use it against them and I will support them. I have not felt that being foreigner has been an issue as much as being a woman has been.

Nora also thinks that gender played a more important role in her journey than her racial identity. She asserts that though she did not have White privilege and male privilege, she had a lot of privilege. She was born in this country, she had her family background in academia, so it was not a hard stretch for her. She also felt that gender played a more important role in her journey than her ethnicity.

I did not fit the mold...I was the chair of the chemistry department. I knew that I did not fit the mold of the successful chemist. The mold is somebody who likes to talk about certain things and doesn't talk about kids. I feel like because of my gender I really had to be a straight arrow. I think only a White man can fit the mold. The rest of us are just tolerated.

All 15 participants echoed Nora's comment regarding White males as the only fit in academia. More than race, these participants described gender as having played a more crucial and pivotal role in their identity formation in academia. Nora said that she used to look at herself with wonder after becoming the chair of the department because it's mostly White men who have chaired the department in the past. She also added that sometimes, while heading the department, she felt like the faculty members pushed back against her decisions which was not the case for her predecessor, who was a White male. The reason for this resistance, Nora felt, was that she was a woman. She has never been the 'bossy' type of leader that her predecessor was, and she felt that her leadership style led to her colleagues' resistance. She also saw her

fellow women colleagues being given orders and faculty men explaining to faculty women with undertones of superiority. Therefore, Nora felt no woman could fit the mold in a White male dominated academia.

Tenure curbed Isla's willingness to speak out in many aspects, but she wanted to add the gender aspect to it also. She said:

The chair was very happy to have me, always consulted me, then I asked for a course release because I was doing all this extra stuff, and I didn't get it. My colleague who just walked in in front of me and asked for it, got it. That was totally because I was a woman.

A third participant, Ava, did not feel that her race and gender impacted her leadership journey in any specific way. She said:

I don't think race and gender had anything to do with this leadership journey. It was entirely your performance. I don't think I got any favor because of my race and gender.

Also, I did not have any challenges because of my race and gender. Just performance and work ethic contributed to this journey.

Whereas participants like Thea, Anna, Cora, and Rose do not feel any challenges due to racial and gender identity, Ivy's experiences further reinforced the idea of chilly work climate that exists in US higher education. According to Williams (1995), professoriate jobs are highly gendered and most of the departments are male-dominated where female professors are highly segregated. What Sandler (1986) describes as the 'chilly climate' for women and later National Academy of Sciences (2006), National Science Foundation (2003), Astin and Sax (1996) defined as devaluation and marginalization can be cited further in Ivy's experiences. According to Ivy:

There is definitely a racial discrimination. It is subtle, it is not overt, but it is systemic, and it is there. I feel it every day. You are perceived as if you cannot think for yourself.

When your leaders are White, as my chair, who is a White female, talks down at me. In the presence of our departmental secretary, she has come to my office and shouted at me. She could do this only because I was a woman of color. I doubt that she would have done this to any other faculty who is White. The perception is that. 'we can do anything to these people, or women, and get away', because we are perceived as followers.

Another aspect creating a "chilly climate" for a women faculty of color is to exclude them from decision making committees, PhD committees, or leadership roles (Hopkins et al.,2002. Ivy's experienced a chilly climate when she found herself to be excluded from committees across the departments, she has not been selected for leadership roles.

Tenure and job security have been another important factors in these participants' careers, and their courage to speak out for their rights has been curbed in many places because of their vulnerability. Iris said:

Combatting is more complex now because I am at the pre-tenure stage and waiting to hear tenure decisions. I feel restricted. There are things that I want to do, and I can't do because I am not in a position. I would like to have, not confrontations, but more direct conversations with my current chair and address the discrepancies. But I can't do that right now...I absolutely expect myself to be more outspoken after I get the tenure. I have always been an outspoken person. In college I was a student activist for women rights. I was very vocal. To be very honest, I don't like this version of myself...Right now I feel powerless.

Similar experiences were shared by Ada. She used to spend 12 hours a day in her office during the first three years of her tenure when she was the chair of women's studies along with an assistant professor. She was right out of graduate school and got overwhelmed with so many

different responsibilities in her early faculty career. Turner (2002) found that many women faculty of color sacrifice their family and 'nonacademic' commitments and focus solely on their career for the fear of not earning tenure.

Ada shared that she used to say yes to everything that anyone asks for. After the first three years she found herself in a distressed condition both physically and mentally and realized that she was not doing it right. Now she is an associate professor and after earning tenure, she said, I say No to everything unless it's something I truly believe in. She has started giving priority to those 'nonacademic' commitments as well and negotiated her class schedule with her chair. She further shared one day while staying late at office, a fellow colleague said, "Oh, we can't wait for you to become chair of the department" and she replied, "Why does it need to be me? Why not you?" and she said "Well, you are so organized, I have done all this work on campus. I want to give other people an opportunity." Ivy said that to keep her job, she had to be lenient in her students' grades as well, because their annual evaluation depends on student evaluation.

**'Chilly climate' within the classroom.** Though most of the participants don't report a discriminatory attitude from their students in this study, aligned with Bower (2002), McGowan (2000), Stanley et al. (2003), and Vargas (2002), Lucy, Iris, Jane, and Ada report discriminatory behavior from students, complaints made to senior faculty and administrators against their teaching, students challenging their authority, and expertise inside and outside the classroom. Ada said: "several years ago, a student came to me in the corridor and started saying, 'Do you know what you're doing? Have you taught this class before?'" The student was essentially questioning my authority and abilities as a professor. She also said it's not always the White students complaining to the chair, higher authority or questioning my authority. She said:

There's a race card that's sometimes played, particularly by students of color. They think that there's a young woman faculty of color in the classroom and they can skate by without doing the work. They think I will give them good grades only because we share the same racial background or we both are minorities.

Ada said that she did not believe that these students would have acted the same way with a White male or White female professor. Iris had to face a very difficult situation with a student of her own racial background. She shared her experiences of having a student last semester who was older than the average student, and who also had a lot of responsibilities and health issues. Iris showed empathy and told her not to worry about the grade because she would give her an incomplete. She just asked for everything to be turned in because she had to plan her schedule accordingly. The student said she could not meet the deadline set by Iris and would follow the university's deadline instead. Iris explained to the student that the university has policies, but professors have some discretion as well. After all these conversations, that student emailed Iris and said, "I hated to do this, but I talked to the registrar's office, and they said that I have time till November." Iris told the student that she didn't appreciate the way the situation was dealt with.

Lucy cited an experience where a White male student asked about my country "India" to which Lucy asked why she was supposed to know about India. His response was "you are researching about Indian taxi drivers in New York city and I thought you know a lot about India". Lucy replied promptly that researching on Indian taxi drivers had nothing to do with her Indian identity. Then another White male student started questioning her to verify what she was saying was true. Lucy said:

He asked me which part of New York I was from because he was from Brooklyn. I said,



“I am from Richmond Hill, Queens” and then he understood I was not lying. This semester I have the same things happening. Whenever I am critiquing America, I am seen as a foreigner critiquing America. I had the same issue with a student who is a police officer. I had issues with him regarding the content and my authority in the class.

Ivy cited some really difficult challenges she had with her students and defined them as microaggression. She said:

I teach both in class and online classes. When I did online courses, my students’ evaluation was far higher than my in-class evaluations. It is probably because I interact with them online, so they can’t see my face. They only see my picture. The racial discrimination or gender discrimination is more prevalent among lower division courses than in upper division courses. Upper division courses have more mature students. The part of the country in which my university is located is very White dominated and the level of diversity is very low. Students don’t tell me to my face that my accent is very thick, or I cannot speak English, but it all comes out in their evaluations. Comments like my accent is rocky, wonky etc., these comments come from students who are doing very poorly in the class, who cannot perform.

A similar experience was shared by Ada. Students complained about her teaching to her chair saying that she assigned a lot of work, and that all her courses were very hard. Jane said:

I had a hard time with students because I used to teach tough and required courses. Students here are not very good at them. They take those courses in the last semester, and they have the pressure for graduating, and I was not familiar with this practice. I came to this country for PhD and I had limited course work, but there were so many administrative issues. This is a marketplace in this country, like who is taking my

courses, who is taking our department's courses, and I was not at all familiar with these issues.

She also added that in the US it is the instructor's responsibility if a student fails but, in her country, where she studied, teachers used to take credit on how many students they failed. In spite of all these hardships and challenges, all of them admitted what Stanley (2006) found in his study that faculty of color love teaching and their students, and teaching is one of the main reasons that these participants chose to be professors.

**Discrimination based on gender.** Maranto and Griffin (2011) asserted in their study that academia is highly segregated, and male dominated. The marginalization of women faculty of color is described by Stanley (2007) as the Double-Bind Syndrome: "being a woman and being a woman of color" (Diggs et. al., 2009).

Luna had similar experiences to what Williams (1995) described in his study. According to Williams (1995), culturally embedded beliefs and assumptions about gender operate in many practices in higher educational institutions. Employers prefer workers who are free of any familial responsibilities. Luna said that in her initial years, she joined a lab that had very few female fellow colleagues who were not family oriented and her professor told her that a woman's brain turns to a placenta after she has a baby. Luna said that she got intimidated because she wanted to have a family and at the same time she wanted to have a successful career. She did not have a role model to look up to. Now she is happy, after all these years, to serve as a role model to others and be the example that women can have a successful career with a family. She proudly shared that her lab has been funded for 20 years and that she has three children. Furthermore, she and her husband are happily married, and both partners are highly successful.

Nora echoed Luna that to fit in academia you are not supposed to talk about your kids; you have

to behave like a 'man'. According to Maranto and Griffin (2011), the tenure clock overlaps with the prime child bearing hours, and many women, torn between family commitments and work, sacrifice their 'non-work' commitments in order to save the job. Many responsibilities in academia demand time outside an eight-hour boundary, and women, without having much support, fear losing their jobs, and focus on their careers for many years, or even for their whole lives. With immigrant women, the fear is even more intense because a loss of their job also jeopardizes their visa status and risks having to go back to their country of origin.

Jane said that she took the very first job she got because her visa was expiring, and she wanted to stay in academia and have a career in this country. She added that as a faculty member her challenges were limited to her teaching only, within the classroom, because she was not married, and she did not have much social life. Most of the time she was engrossed in her work. She said: I love socializing, but Americans never do that. They have no hospitality, they never feed anyone. I am vegetarian, and they take me to places where I just spend money, but I don't get anything to eat. They are very sympathetic, but they are not hospitable. I regularly cook food for my colleagues because they love (name of the country food). They like it, they appreciate it, but they never reciprocate. Most of them, I felt like think that it is stereotypical, she is a South Asian woman, and cooking is very typical of them.

Ada said that many of her colleagues turned down responsibilities on campus after hours saying they had familial responsibilities like 'son's soccer class' or 'daughter's ballet class' etc. and it all became her responsibility because she did not have familial responsibilities. Before she earned tenure, she had to take all the responsibilities, but after her tenure, when she felt better supported, she started saying no. She said:

I heard people say over and over again things like, 'we know you can succeed, we know

you will be able to do it'. I wondered how they knew before I demonstrated that I was able to do it. It all triggered from the idea that I am a South Asian woman, a woman of color and that gave them the perception that I fit the hardworking Asian stereotype. They were drawing ideas based on stereotypes. This is a modern minority idea.

Isla echoed Nora's experience that even though women were asked to behave like men in academia, especially in leadership, she did not give in to this idea. She said:

It doesn't bother me that I am female. I can be female in my work environment or behave like a female. I don't try to play down, and I'll give credit to my department for this. Because when I started, I had a one-year-old baby and I went through a divorce. I never felt I could not talk about my child or I couldn't bring up a personal issue. I was not asking for something I don't deserve, but yes, certainly, implicitly I was asking for flexibility. So, from that perspective being female was a plus. From another perspective it was a minus because in our generation we were raised not to ask for ourselves. I tended to do more, and I tended to get more taken for granted. The only strategy to combat discrimination was about how to operate as a woman. That was something that I had to learn.

Though Iris thinks that she was chosen for her Undergraduate deputy position primarily because of her ability, she does not deny that her woman of color identity played a role. She said:

Yes, as an Undergraduate deputy chair I might have been tapped because I am an Asian American woman. At that time the chair was a Latino woman, and she wanted to give me more time and to give more opportunities to women, and women of color to be more specific. The graduate deputy was also an Asian woman. So, I don't think it was an accident that we were asked to be in these positions. That being said, I don't feel there

was any undue pressure or unnecessary stereotyping on her part. We do have a new chair now who is a White female and with her I can definitely say a lot of discrimination is playing on my race and my gender. I feel she disproportionately assigns tasks to me based on the assumptions that an Asian American woman like me is passive and hard-working, one who can meet any unrealistic demand. I don't confront much because I am waiting for my tenure. But there have been several occasions where I have been cast with assignments that I don't think it would not have been done if it were not me.

According to Mehra et al. (1998), homophily poses a greater challenge for women while creating networks. Ibarra and Smith-Lovin (1997) found in their study that men are less likely to prefer women colleagues while creating networks based on gender stereotypes. Most departments in academia are male-dominated, and it becomes difficult for women to create homophilus ties. Luna shared her experiences regarding this isolation for being one of the only women in her field:

I feel isolated when my male counterparts go out for dinner/drinks in conferences and they don't invite me. I asked them 'why didn't you invite me' and their response was like "we thought you won't be comfortable drinking". I said, "I don't drink but I can join you for dinner."

Lack of homophily, was also the reason Luna was not hired at a certain university; the faculty there blatantly told her, "You are the most qualified candidate, but we are hiring a White male because he better fits the environment".

Some participants agreed that being a female gave them the opportunity to become a 'mother figure' to many people especially to their students. Their students, colleagues, and many other people shared their problems and looked for their suggestions or advice because they felt

warmth and comfort with the female faculty. Isla said, “people bring personal problems to me and I give them advice. From that perspective if you are a female and you get older, it’s easier because you just play the mother and people rely on you”. Iris remembered once a student addressed her as “mom”. As an undergraduate deputy, Iris has a lot of students who come to her with their problems, and she talks with, nurtures, and mentors them. She feels that her motherly nature also makes students come to her for comfort. She said:

I have students coming to my office upset, crying, both men and women. This is when I feel it advantageous to be a mum, to be an Asian American woman, to be at the intersection of all those. They all feel comfortable telling me things. They feel comfortable even if they are not taking my classes. They like to talk to me about what’s going on in their lives and how it is impacting their schooling. I appreciate that they trust me. Sometimes it is emotionally taxing. Because then what happens, I carry them with me and am always concerned about their well-being.

According to Sue (2010), dismissive looks, gestures, or tones are delivered towards people of a minority race or gender. “These exchanges are so pervasive and automatic in daily conversations and interactions that they are often dismissed and glossed over as being innocent and innocuous (Sue, 2010). He further added that microaggression impedes and damages persons of color’s performance by damaging their spirit and creating inequities. Among the eight major themes that emerged in Sue et al.(2007a)’s study, feeling alien in one’s own land is one that was reiterated by many of the participants. In this study too, some participants reported the same. Lucy relocated to this country when she was in high school. She has all “American” experience and she considers herself to be very much a part of this country. But still she is perceived as “foreign” by people around her, and that is based on her skin color, she said:

There is a woman in the education department who keeps asking me every summer if I went back home. When she says this, she means New York is not my home. I don't belong to this group. New York is my home. I came here at a very early age. I have multiple homes.

Similar experiences have been shared by Jane. Other faculty would comment to her regarding her long travel to go back to her home insinuating that it must be tiring. She said, "my American friends go home for five or six days, but for me it's like three weeks or so, and for them I am away when I am home, I am 7500 miles away".

Luna migrated to the U.S when she was seven. Being woman with a foreign name has always been a challenge, and she faced extra pressure to prove herself. She shared that even before people meet her she felt they had developed some assumptions from her name. She also shared that her name is gender neutral, and that it is hard for others to decipher from her name whether she is male or female. She said:

They expect a foreigner when you walk in the door. I think they are a little surprised when they meet me in person. They are actually surprised because I don't have an accent. I was raised here mostly. The biggest bias I felt is that I am Punjabi; we are Sikhs. My father had a turban, and people don't understand the difference between Punjabi and Muslims. I had long hair when I was in school. I think being a woman is itself a challenge.

### **Importance of Intersectionality**

For a woman of color, it is hard to define and decipher whether the microaggressions are based on race or gender. Women of color live in the intersection of race and gender, and in this study the participants who came to this country as immigrants added immigration as another important aspect of intersectionality. Crenshaw (1989) defines intersectionality as

'multidimensionality' of marginalized subjects' lived experiences. According to Collins (2000), Hune (1997), and Turner (2002, *Strangers of the academy*, p.18) suggest that gender, race, and class are inseparable in understanding the lived experiences of minority women. Collins (2000) and Turner (2002) found that gender is embedded in various spaces of education, and small differences in treatment "accumulate over time into pronounced gender disparities" (Valian, 1998, *strangers of the academy*, APA, P.18). According to Li and Beckett (2006, *Strangers of the Academe*, P.26) APAs face discriminations based on gender, race, and class. APAs often report the unwelcoming environment of campus and 'feeling like a guest in someone else's house' (Turner, 1994).

### **Role of Family and Community**

U.S. culture is categorized as an individualist culture, whereas Asian culture is described as a collectivist culture. Being members of a collectivist society, community and family played a very important role in shaping these 15 participants' journeys. Similarly, class played a very important role as well. Iris remembered:

It was like common immigrant stories. We took part in Chinese community events; we were involved in that. This is an interesting dynamic, I think I pushed myself more to go to college because I wanted to belong more to this Chinese community. We were actually marginalized in the Chinese community. My parents did not go to college, and most of the Chinese people who were in town were graduate students, professors, or family of professors. So, they were already highly educated, and my parents were not invited there. Even if sometimes we showed up, obviously there was a status difference. I think I pushed myself to be more Chinese because we were marginalized. It was a complex process. I was trying to assimilate like Chinese American or upper-class people to a



Chinese community that we were not part of.

While most participants reported having a supportive family background, inspiring parents, and encouraging community, Iris has a different story. Because Iris did not feel she was part of a 'model family', she also did not feel family pressure to be a "success story". Her parents did not care about the "model minority myth", but she faced a different kind of challenges. She recalled:

My parents cared about grades. I got good grades in school, but my parents did not want me to go to college. Because of that, I became rebellious; I pushed myself to go to college. My parents couldn't help my brother or me with education, so, I financed my education. I got financial aid, I worked, and I got scholarships through graduate school.

During my junior high school, my family declared bankruptcy. My dad wanted me to quit school, but it was not expected from my brother. My friends, after I shared what was going on in my home, had a very wrong perception about my parents. They still are struggling with my own upper mobility. They think as if my brother and I are better than them because my brother also did a PhD.

Li and Beckett (2006) found in their study that Asian cultures treat men and women are differently treated. "Whereby males historically have been privileged and remain so and females are called upon to set lesser goals for themselves" (Li & Beckett, 2006, *Strangers of the Academe*).

Regarding community, Isla and Ava had similar negative experiences when they were going through some difficult times. Ava explained:

If I were in (name of the country), there would have been a lot of censure against it, because I am divorced which is a taboo in my country, I don't have children, and I love

my life. I did not have any difficulty while mingling with people, but I stay away from people of my own community. I think I had more cultural shock seeing some people from my community in the US. They clung to many things that I have never seen happening in my country.

Isla recalled when she was going through a divorce:

I just closed the door on them, well not completely, but I had to say no. They wanted me to stay married because they have all invested in it for different reasons. I had made up my mind that it was not going to work anymore.

She added that her academic friends were her support system. While asking for a support system, most of the participants mentioned their parents, spouse, family, friends, both inside and outside the campus. Most participants actually attributed their success to their strong and encouraging parents and family. Participants also mentioned their colleagues' acquaintances within academia, both male and female, colored and White as their support system. Mentors have been mentioned as a major support system, and have a crucial role in these participants' journey, and will be discussed later under a different research question.

### **Physical Appearance as an Important Factor**

**Dress.** According to Li and Beckett (2006), "APAs who are first-generation college students, working class or recent immigrants relate how class biases in accents, speech patterns, life experiences, dress, and so forth disrespect their intellect, research interests, and other contributions". Three of the 15 participants who came to the US as immigrant students to pursue their PhDs report that whenever at their workplace they wear clothes from their culture, they are looked at differently.

**Height.** Van Vugt (2006) suggests that when men and women work together, male

members usually take the leadership role and behave in an authoritarian way. Research suggests that men are perceived as leaders naturally, and this male leadership bias is often related to the taller height of men as males are on average much taller than females (Gustaffson & Lindenfors, 2004). According to Blaker et al. (2013), throughout evolutionary history, height has been perceived as an important indicator of health, fitness and dominance because in the past leadership used to involve a lot of physical risks. People used to depend on someone who was physically fit and could protect followers. In that case, taller men in the group were usually chosen as group leaders. This notion probably still has some influence on leadership perceptions (van Vugt, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2008). Asian women, in general, are smaller in height. Studies show that the average height of a Chinese woman is 5' 2.5" (Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2002) and average height of Japanese women is 5' 2.6" (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology, 2002) whereas the average height of a woman from United Kingdom is 5' 3.8" and average height of a woman from United States is 5' 4". According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, in the United States, the average height of a male aged 20 years and above in the year 1999-2000 through 2015-2016 is 5' 8". Therefore, while interacting and working in a profession that is White male dominated, the feeling of intimidation comes naturally to Asian women, and that is what they reported in the present study. Some participants reported that height has been an important factor while interacting with their male colleagues. Luna said:

I feel it is a challenge to be a woman, especially a small woman. There is a very popular saying that most presidents and CEOs are six feet tall, White and male, so height has something to do with power. So, you can imagine my challenges – a 5' 1" woman who is foreign looking, whose name is foreign looking, physically a very small person and a

woman.

Jane also shared similar experiences in her career: “I have always felt that I have multiple jeopardies. Being a woman, being a woman of color, a foreigner, being not very old, and also I am small, petite”. The importance of height in their careers, especially as leaders has been reinforced by Iris and Lucy as well. Blaker et al. (2013) found “men are seen as more leader-like than women, and tall individuals are seen as more leader-like than short individuals”. This study further found that taller women are perceived to be more intelligent, and therefore, more leader-like. This correlation between tall height and leadership further reinforced the idea of White male privilege and an idea of a gender segregated academia that is unwelcoming for women of color.

### **Age as an Important Factor**

Ruffins (1997) and Smith and Wit (1996) found faculty of color experience higher levels of occupational stress than their White counterparts. This stress level is heightened in the case of women of color faculty by the double bind syndrome (Alfred, 2001; Bowie, 1995; Bronstein, Rothblum, & Solomon 1993; Opp & Gosetti, 2002; Turner, 2002). Classroom challenges appear to be age and gender dependent to African American faculty (McGowan, 2000). Similar experiences have been reported by some participants in this study. Ava asserted:

The only thing I am conscious about is homophily. Homophily is the tendency to relate or associate with people who look like you. I had a chair who was a White male, old. He did not look like me, so I had to gain his trust. I am much younger than them. Most of the faculty members whom I am dealing with are older than me, and I had to gain their trust because I look different, I am younger than them.

Lucy remembered an incident where she was co-chairing with another White male professor and the committee was discussing collecting data about student drop out, and there was no mention

of the student's race. She said:

I raised my voice. I said you have to understand why a student's race is important.

Though it was largely a White student body, you have to understand who's dropping out and why, how race and gender play a role in that. I had to raise my voice and sort of assert. The reason they were not listening to me could be because I am younger, and all of them were older than me.

She further added:

There was an older White female professor who advised on how to take minutes properly of the meetings. That person's suggestion was actually a good one of taking a detailed minute, that is true. But in my place if there was somebody who is an older White male professor, she would not have said that.

Another situation when Lucy was chair of the governance in the meeting and without knowing who the chair was, a White female professor asked her co-chair whether he would be interested in taking chairship of the governance. This too she thought happened because of her young age on top of being a woman of color.

The second research question focuses on the strategies these participants acquired to combat the discriminations they faced during their journey. A prompt response came from Ivy who experienced a 'chilly climate' in her workplace:

We have to exert a lot more, so our only escape is if we publish. If we publish in very good journals, if we publish a book, we are known because we can publish, and we can show scholastic aptitude. If you can show that, then I think they can't touch you there.

A similar response came from Jane who is right now an interim chair of a department dealing with lots of challenges and non-cooperation. She asserted:

The only way this should be dealt with by challenging and I am not a very aggressive person. I am not a very combative person. I am a person who is not at all confrontational. Sometimes I feel that I should confront, and I need to set the terms of interactions with my colleagues. A couple of them were very disrespectful. They didn't respect me as a chair. The only thing I do instead is what I can do best. I am very good at my research, and that will fetch me respect from my colleagues, but not from upper administrators. I didn't get any raise in salary after becoming the chair and people said it was only because of my race and gender.

Iris also acquired similar strategies to gain respect from her colleagues. She said:

With a lot of my students, I can relate myself. I fit the negative stereotyping. I was a first-generation college student from a working-class background. When I came to this country I was seven. The majority of my students fit that. They are not all Asians, but majority are first generation college students. They are also from immigrant families. So, I want to help them to succeed. I really don't argue with them. But with my colleagues it is absolutely unacceptable. Though I feel a little powerless right now as a pre-tenured faculty member, I took up other strategies to draw their respect. My book came out last year, and since then as an expert in this area, media has called me. I have been noticed for my expertise, a couple of my interviews were published in New York Times, and a couple of my interviews were published in other places, and this is my way to let my employers and colleagues know about my existence. Right now, I can only do that instead of any direct confrontation.

Isla said the only strategy she has ever followed in academia is how to operate as a woman. She had to learn this without getting emotional or without taking things personally. She

said:

I learned it to do when discriminations happened, 'okay, I would like you to explain to me why it is that when I am asking you, based on x,y,z, you think I don't deserve it, when I am seeing you give this accommodation to my colleague who sure has done a, b. To me it doesn't look like the two compare, so could you explain this to me?

Being logical actually helped her a lot more than getting emotional, Isla said. Luna says that while facing any challenging situation, she first decides that whether she should argue or not. When she was powerless, she used to stay silent, but now she has power, so, she takes measures. Lucy said that confronting is not so easy. She faces this issue of discrimination every Wednesday in the classroom, and she has no colleagues to share with, no support to go to. In classroom she feels like her authority and knowledge are always questionable. She has some thoughts in her mind lately to go to the diversity council and talk about the dignity of work in a classroom where almost 90% of the students are White. So, again, she feels helpless. Some of her colleagues, who present themselves as progressives, also do not speak out or question issues like race or gender privilege. All of these participants learned from their experiences "the need to be effective in interacting and working within the dominant culture" (Kawhara, 2007).

### **Role of Mentoring**

The participants in this study unanimously admitted the importance of mentoring, be it formal or informal, in their journey. They all talked about that support "whether it was within their families or in persons outside their familial lines. These women found people who believed in them, who they could turn to for advice, and who supported them through the setbacks and difficulties" (Kawhara, 2007). All 15 participants talked about informal mentoring; only Cora talked about having formal experiences. The mentors were 1. Asian American women, 2. Other

women of color, 3. White male mentors, 4. White female mentors, 5. Other role models from family or outside familial lines. Most of the participants shared that mentoring and finding a role model happened to them without having to search for them. During their journey, they found someone who they could look up to and eventually that person assumed a mentoring role. Gender and race had minimal influence in these mentoring relationships for most of the participants, while some felt more comfortable only around people from the same race if not the same gender. The foundational values for these mentoring relationships, unanimously reinforced by all the participants, have been trust, respect, and similar perspective of analyzing a situation. How mentoring helped to shape these participants' journey was the pivotal question. These participants' continuous dealing with microaggression and experiences with microresistance made them think of the need and importance of having a mentor. To build and retain an identity in a gender-segregated and male-dominated academia, mentoring has been described as one of the major keys of survival by these women of color. Maranto and Griffin (2011) found that women in academia feel more exclusion from informal networks than their male counterparts. Faculty decision-making, exclusion from different committees, informal discussions about future research, formal collaboration – women faculty report exclusion from these informal networks which are instrumental to academia. “In a profession in which informal collaboration and mentoring is directly instrumental to the primary measure of success – publications – women’s exclusion, however unconscious or inadvertent, constitutes a powerful barrier to achievement” (Maranto & Griffin, 2011). Among this lack of support and ‘chilly climate’, mentoring has been the pivotal survival strategy for women of color. “Though academia is realizing the importance of mentoring,” Ada said:

I wouldn't be where I am without my mentors. I think a lot of graduate programs don't do



a great job. I did not get a good job for not being mentored in grad school. I learned in grad school how to create mentoring networks. We kind of peer mentored. There were a group of us in our graduate department who kind of mentored each other. We were step laddered. Once I came out of grad school, I kind of recreated that. I take that pretty seriously. In terms of mentor, it's not just my students, but if I get an opportunity to mentor through professional organizations and professional associations, I am happy to do that. I also like to share contacts and resources with people. I am happy to put people in touch. I got helped a lot of way. I just pay it forward.

Ada echoed what Stanley (2006) said:

Many faculties of color spend a great deal of time mentoring students of color. They engage in mentoring because they view this service activity as a way to give back to the community and a chance to effect a positive change as role models.

A similar perception has been communicated by Luna:

So, over time, my research really took off, I started feeling what I really want to do, help other people achieve the same thing that I have achieved. I have been successful, and I really enjoy helping new people like you. I learned about how to get more women, especially women of color, to get them to a position of leadership.

Women faculty of color sometimes are called as diversity experts to serve the university and local committees. Sometimes they hesitate, but "they do so because they know if they do not, the diversity voice gets lost at the table" (Stanley, 2006). Stanley and Lincoln (2005) found that many women faculty of color regret that they hardly got any mentoring, especially during their journey towards tenure, but for those "who have benefitted from mentoring, there is no doubt that this experience has enabled their success" (Stanley & Lincoln, 2005). Ivy said that she

did not get much help from her colleagues but met some very good mentors. According to Stanley and Lincoln (2005), cross-race mentoring is helpful for faculty of color. Some participants in their study reported that they had to look beyond the senior faculty members and outside their department for mentoring.

An important aspect of mentoring is whether the racial and gender background is important in the mentor-protégé relationship, to which most of the participants responded that only the similarity of politics, philosophy, how they are treated by their mentors, and how much trust they can put on that person for the mentor-protégé relationship to be successful. Similar political or philosophical ideology played an important role in the mentoring relationship as reported by the participants.

One particular author stated in Stanley (2006)'s study, "I had a mentor, a White female, who gave much of her time to listen and advise me during the difficult times of my early years. . . She was the person who helped me change my habit of initially thinking people's responses were because of who I was" (Stanley, 2006, p. 118).

Anna also supported the fact that it is much easier talking to talk matters to someone who has a similar background. She added: "I would say, to understand each other, and feel what the other party's feeling. Yeah, definitely, it's easier; more efficient I would say, compared to the male faculty, with different backgrounds."

Ada responded to the question of whether she has in mind her mentor's race and gender by saying:

Yeah. Always. If anybody says they don't think about it, they are lying. The way race, gender, and class operate in our society, it's invisible, but we all are aware of it. It didn't happen by chance that I have cultivated relationships with women of color. I reached out

to them because they are women of color. Because there is a language that I can use when I am talking to them. I don't have to explain to them what I am feeling in a particular situation and why. There are some things that I would not say to a White woman. It's very similar to when I am talking to women of my community. There are words I can use in my language; it's not that I can't say it to a White person, but then, I spend all my time explaining it, which loses the point of saying it.

Nora echoed Ada in this aspect that it is definitely easier to ask questions to other women than to men in her workplace. Being in leadership roles for many years, she found that she usually feels safer asking vulnerable questions to a woman colleague. Usually, when assigned by the institution, women faculty of color are always assigned someone of similar race and gender. Faculty of color though, reported the immense significance of mentoring while navigating in academia because the power relation is also very much present in this mentor-protégé relationship. Hansman (2002) describes mentor-protégé relationships as being "neither politically neutral nor free from power issues". Cora said:

I think that, in my case, one of the people that was assigned to me as a mentor required a lot of flattery, and I am not good at that. I think, in this case, I can address one issue, that is, ethnic difference. I think a lot of White female academics feel themselves superior to women of color, even if the so-called junior faculty is more talented than the senior one, you know. There is a sense that women of color need to kowtow to the White female academic, especially when they are in a superior position and the woman of color is just starting out as an assistant professor. They expected a certain kind of subservience, and flattery that I wasn't willing to give. As far as gender goes, yeah, older male professors passed off color comments from time to time, but I don't want to make too much of

those.

On the contrary, Anna recalled, she was assigned a senior woman faculty member who was Asian. The official mentor was very helpful and supportive. She helped Anna navigate through the tenure process and tried to help her out doing the right thing in her early career. Most participants in this study reported that they had a supportive chair who helped them navigating through the process of understanding their situation. Participants in this study talked mostly about having informal mentoring relationships and having more than one mentor because different people can bring different perspectives, resources, and support.

According to Gilbert (1985), mentoring is more important for female students, and female students of color in particular, in order to succeed. A mentoring relationship with advisor is one of the most important aspects of these participants' career. Some participants in this study said that they did not have a supportive advisor during their PhD programs. Lucy said:

I wish I was better mentored in grad school. You know when I was in grad school, she was very helpful getting me funding and all that. Also, part of me doesn't want to be ungrateful because I am very grateful for having that support through the years when I was there. But I wish I was better mentored in terms of my career trajectory. Talking about job choices, advising me about what should I do and what not would have been very helpful. When I was in the job market, the advice she should have given me, I didn't receive.

Jane also talked about a less supportive advisor while Ava talked about two very supportive mentors-one was her PhD advisor, and the other one is the chair who hired her. She said:

They both are White male, old. But they could be Black women. It was where they were

and where I was in our respective career that made them my mentors. I trust them with all my heart. I also make sure if I have a question I ask it. I am pretty open to asking for help.

Anna said Her PhD advisor was been very supportive. They still support her in writing grants, recommendation letters etc. Her PhD advisor still continues to facilitate her in terms of offering leadership responsibilities. A similar experience was shared by Isla. She said: "I had a very supportive advisor who helped me to sail through. He still looks out for me". She recalled:

Dr. (last name) was hosting a conference last year. He was the general chair, and I was chairing one of the sessions and attributed responsibilities regarding paper review, acceptance, and rejection. He is very supportive in giving opportunities.

Black-beard, Bayne, Crosby, and Muller (2011) found in their study that racial or gender matching, though have been reported as important factors by female students, make no significant academic difference in academic outcomes. Most of the participants in the present study also report that while having a mentoring relationship, the gender/race did not matter; in fact, some participants report that they found some excellent mentors in older White men who recognized their potential and championed for them. Though Ada said she found mostly women mentors, specifically South Asian women mentors in her life, Iris said:

I got through college because I had mentors. I had professors who were very supportive, and who understood my background. My parents weren't all that important in my education, and when I got awards, my professors were there. They were like family. I got one really big award, which is the Presidential scholarship. To my family it was kind of OK. There was a reception for it. I was also the president of the Asian American student union, there was a rehearsal going on for another event, in the middle of which I decided

to go by myself to receive the award. So, when my professors understood that there would be no one from my family, they were there. It was so touching. I had people around me, I didn't need my family, I don't know whether that sounds bad. I always had other people around the corner who supported me. I needed different mentors for different things. One of my professors from grad school had been a great mentor. Apparently, we had nothing in common, but he is also first-generation college student. My Asian American professors did not have that working-class background, that is why they did not understand the anxiety, the imposter syndrome that I faced.

Participants like Ada and Nora said they will be more than happy to mentor, especially minority female students, junior faculty members, or anyone who needs help. They consider this act of mentoring as a way of sharing their knowledge and experience for the overall betterment of academia and minority females specifically. Nora said

I have helped both women and men faculty reach their potential, learn to avoid conflict and problems. I have helped them develop professionally by leaving bad behaviors behind. The mentoring I have done with students has been life changing. I just had one of my students defend her dissertation and send me a note saying she is going to Cornell for a post doc.

She talked about another student who was dragging out his degree. She pushed him to graduate, apply to graduate, and guided him throughout the application process He was accepted to a good graduate program and is now publishing in a Science journal. For another female student who wanted to pursue a career in medicine, Nora discovered she would be a better scientist than surgeon. She asked her about her passion, and the next day the student said that science is her passion, not medicine. After graduation, the student decided to enroll in a graduate

program in neurosciences. Nora said that discovering potential in others and guiding them in the right way is a great feeling. In these examples, race and gender matched relationships have not been important at all. Nora did not even mention these students' ethnicity.

Zirkel (2002) found "the presence or absence of others in different social positions implicitly conveys information to young people about the possibilities for their future." Griffiths (1995), Robst et al. (1996), and Sumrall (1995) found that young people, from the race and gender matched role models in front of them can assess about their ability and future for being a member of a specific social group. What Luna shared from her experiences has been supported by Bem (1981) in her gender schema theory that asserts that in minority female students' lives race and gender-matched role models play a very important role. Luna shared a similar experience where her advisor discouraged her, made sexist remarks like "women's brains turns to placenta after she has a baby", tried to convince her that if she had a baby, she could not be successful, and she did not have anyone she could look up to or consider as her role model. She said:

There was no one in that big research laboratory. The women who worked there had no children. They sacrificed their family, their family wishes, but I was not willing to do that. I was worried whether I would be able to do that, because I had no role models.

Luna is happy that she could present herself as a role model, a successful woman who leads a lab funded over 20 years with three children and a happy married life. Nora said when she held the presidential position of faculty association, many women faculty, not only from her own department, but from different departments applauded her for being a strong woman leader and a role model. Many women considered her as their role model, she shared. She further shared that having mentors and role models has been crucial in her leadership journey because

mentors saw the potential in her that she did not think she had. She said:

I was the chair of the department and my world was my department. All I thought about was what my department needed and what not. Then one of my most supportive mentors told me that he wanted me to run for president of faculty association. I was shocked. It was life changing. I had so many experiences that I would have never had. I got to meet President Obama, I got a chance to shake hands with him. I got to serve [on the] presidential search committee. My mentors saw in me something in me, that I could take myself higher. When I took their challenge, my life was totally altered. My mentors put the idea in my head that I should go for university presidency someday. Now I can see that. I can see that in the next few years, I will go for either provost workshop or president workshop. I [will] see if I have got what it takes.

Though Zirkel (2002) found that race and gender matched mentors have more positive effects on a person than non-matched mentors, Lucy said:

I don't think race and gender have anything to do with mentoring. I think that it's about who the people are and what their politics is, and how I have known them for years. One of my professors, who is a White man, has been a great mentor. Racial politics was very much center. In terms of his trust in me and my trust in him to guide me in the right path, I had no doubt about that. He had seen me as undergrad, and he was the first professor who had ever given me a C. I was horrified. I was so ashamed. Then I went to talk to him. He nurtured me, and I grew intellectually. There are other people also who are White, but I trust them because I trust their politics. Their politics are also very progressive, I am very much to the left. When I connect with somebody in that way, in that mentoring relationship it doesn't matter, their skin color doesn't matter, because after



all Whiteness is an identity, right? It's not something that is stuck to the skin, so it's about how the person is thinking. On the other hand, I know many South Asian women, when I see them I will run because they are not my kind.

Female faculty members and administrators usually prefer homophily in their work environment due to gender minority status within their department. Maranto and Griffin (2011) found that continuous exclusion from informal networks within the department and role of mentoring becomes important for female faculty and administrators. Their hesitation to join the collegial environment in a department where they are minority makes the role of mentors even more important. Tillman (2001) suggests that effective mentor-protégé relationships lead to high productivity both in teaching and research for females. To conclude, all these participants unequivocally admitted the role of mentors in shaping their journey in academy, both as faculty and administrators.

### **Chapter 5: Discussion, Recommendations and Conclusion**

The results in Chapter 4 present various aspects of these female administrators' experiences. This chapter provides a discussion based on those findings. In the previous chapter, it was found that, although these participants share similar Asian American or immigrant Asian background, their experiences varied based on their upbringing, immigration status, family background, and class. Race and gender are not the only factors defining and shaping these women's experiences. Kawhara (2007) says, "the racialization of Asian womanhood blends racism and sexism by presenting Asian and Asian-American women as stereotypically feminine, thus upholding White superiority." Espiritu (1997) found that some popular media and literature continue to perpetuate the stereotypes of Asian American women as passive, exotic, or victims of a patriarchal "traditional" Asian culture. Kibria (2002) found that it is a common tendency of Americans to lump Asians of different ethnic groups into one homogenous racial category. One of the participants of this study shared that Chinese are considered to be the representative group of all Asian people (Kibria, 2002).

In this present study one of the major probing questions was whether these participants' journey in the U.S. was an acculturation process or an accumulation process, to which they had varied responses. Lee and Rice (2007) discuss cultural discrimination and its intensity where a participant said while she belonged to a majority culture in her country, she became a 'minority' in the U.S. The majority of the participants said that it would be difficult to describe this process in a single word because it has never been simple, it has been a complicated process of assimilation and acculturation. According to Iris, in order to escape from bullying in schools because of their Asian identity, she and her brother tried to assimilate to U.S culture. At the same time, they were

proud of their roots, and they tried to hold on to their Asian identities. Their parents also inculcated Asian values, so, it was a constant negotiation of fitting in the new mold and adhering to the ancestry.

Isla remembered her early days in this country when she observed things more than participating. Initially the way Americans behave seemed rude to her; then she understood their way is different from the Indian way of doing things. They also show care, but they show it in a different way. She also said her journey in this country was both acculturation and assimilation. She further added that if she embraced a new idea, a new culture, that does not imply she gave up her own culture; it never seemed like a conflict to her. Luna, who came to this country at the age of seven, unequivocally said that though she knows languages from her country and she speaks them as she is proud of her ancestry, she got assimilated to this culture. According to Ada, adaptation could be the best word to describe her journey in this country. Ada said, "I am and will always be an (name of the country) woman; it does not matter whether or not I become a U.S. citizen down the road. The upper middle-class woman from my country that resides within me will always inform what I do and has been the foundation for everything I have done." Ava echoed what Ada said. Ava's family was global, and she grew up with a global outlook. She travelled to a lot of countries even before coming to the U.S. Ivy described her experiences as living between two worlds that was found by Johnsrud and Sadao (1998), Sadao (2003), and Segura (2003). Some participants in their study shared that they always feel that tension, that "pull" between their ethnic culture and the university culture. Many participants in this present study have talked about a strategy that they apply to deal with this dilemma. Sadao (2003) named this strategy as "code switching". It is the capacity to apply "parts of their separate value systems to different situations as appropriate" (p.410). Ivy defined herself as "selective American".

“Maintaining one’s own ethnicity is not very difficult in a multicultural society like America”, she said.

Rose presents an altogether different perspective saying in day-to-day life, it is very difficult to differentiate between acculturation and assimilation. In order to survive, people try to fit the mold. It is like a constant shift in identity between the native culture and the dominant culture. Leong (2015) narrated a Chinese student’s story where he shared his roommate’s pizza once without permission and got rebuked for it. This was an embarrassment for that student because he did not intentionally mean to cause offense. He belonged to a collectivistic culture where sharing is encouraged.

The survival strategy of these participants has been fitting in the mold, the mold that has been created by the dominant culture. Some participants found assimilation as the most suitable survival strategy, a strategy to gain access to the dominant culture, while others tried to balance between the two cultures and suffered from acculturative stress. Participants who described their experiences as “living between two worlds” were more likely to experience acculturative stress. Immigrants experience acculturative stress because of a sense of loss, alienation, isolation, distance from near and dear ones, and a transition from a collectivist society to an individualist society where they need to take care of everything themselves (Bhattacharya & Schopplery, 2004; Gee et al.,2007; Frey & Roysircar, 2006; Tummala-Nara,2009). Jane narrated her experiences during the first three years of her tenure. She found it difficult to find suitable accommodation as she was not driving then. Initially it was overwhelming for her to take care of every element of her life all by herself. Her distress was reinforced by the disrespect from colleagues. She said, “. I don’t get enough respect from my colleagues for being a woman and a foreigner.” She talked about the lack of accommodation for “foreigner”. She further added,

“That is why I did not want to be the chair, because this is a 12 months job, and it is not an 8.00-5.00 job. You have to keep contact via emails or telephone and communicate with people constantly. I need to send so many emails, and I need to take care of small things. I am always expected to be there. I am tired at the end of the day, and then I have to do the household chores, cooking and all that. I have compromised my life; it has been a sacrifice.”

Ada had similar experiences in the initial years of her tenure. Along with being an assistant professor, she was the chair of women’s studies. In her own words, “I had no life in those three years... I didn’t have a single friend... I am a spiritual person. I had not joined a church... I would be working or grading or writing on the weekends. When I wasn’t doing that, I would be doing chores... I did have a nervous breakdown at the end of those three years.”

### **Role of Family and Support Systems**

Tummala – Nara, Algeria, and Chen (2012) found in their study that acculturative stress varied in degree among Asians. South Asians reported a higher level of acculturative stress than Filipinos, but a lower level of acculturative stress than other Asians. This study also partially supported the role of family and peer support in order to moderate the correlation between perceived discrimination and past-year depression. “Family support seems to play an important role as a buffer against the negative effects of perceived discrimination on depression”

(Tummala – Nara, Algeria, & Chen, 2012). All 15 participants in this present study unequivocally admitted that family and peers played very important roles in their journey.

Almost all the participants talked about encouraging parents and a very strong family background that actually pushed them one step ahead in this journey. Ada said:

The fact that I come from a middle class, English-speaking background has been of great help, especially in the context of U.S. English being my first language. I am a woman of

color, and many times I have been treated poorly as a woman of color. The fact that I am a native English speaker, I do not get intimidated by public speaking and that has been very useful. Along with that my educational background, class status played a huge role. Public speaking was part of our training and education in school. I went to an elite school. My social work background enabled me listen to others and to work collaboratively. That is my leadership style. Both my parents are highly educated, so, leadership never intimidated me. When I was going through that critical phase of breakdown due to huge work pressure, my parents literally saved my life. My mom used to call me in the morning, and my dad used to call me in the evening. They have always been my biggest supporters.

Nora also said that both her parents were professors, so apart from being a native English speaker, she was already privileged by having a family in academia. Thea shared that both her parents were engineers in her country. They taught her that books were her best friends while growing up. That actually triggered her to join academia. She never saw her parents in leadership positions, and therefore, it never occurred to her to take up leadership responsibilities. Lucy said that being born in a highly educated family, she always had that pressure. She said:

I knew I had to get an MA when I was a kid. There was no other way of it. I knew I wanted it when I saw people around me; I knew I didn't have any other choice. Anything less than that would make me feel bad about myself. Norms and values are internalized. My appetite for education was inculcated. I know that is a class goal and that invested in my personal goal. Now I know these two are connected.

Similar experiences have been shared by Iris. Though she never belonged to that model minority family, her parents were always worried about good grades. There was no pressure,

though, to do well, to be successful. Luna recalled her father was a professor and mother was a mathematician. Her father was a very academic and professional person. She said:

They really value education. So, there was really strong emphasis on education. They always made me believe that I can do anything. There was no limit on what I could do. They gave me immense support and love, but the biggest thing they gave me was the ability to think big, anything you want to do, you can do. That was the greatest gift from them. The math thing that I got from mom and dad both, I think math is knowledge, math is logic. If you are good at math, you can learn so many things, so, that was very helpful too.

### **English language proficiency**

A common perceived notion about Asian students and faculty is their non-proficiency in the English language. Various research also supported this notion. Lee and Rice (2007) discuss cultural discrimination and its intensity where a student shared, while she belonged to a majority culture in her country, she became a 'minority' in the U.S. This change in status in society induced a sense of discomfort and inferiority in her. Some participants in this study reported that they faced derogatory comments about their culture, home country, and non-fluency acculturative stress more than European students do. They identify English language fluency as a reason behind this difference in acculturation levels. European students are more proficient in English than their non-European counterparts. As a result, they feel more connected socially. As mentioned in the literature review, several authors (Zhou, 2014; Lee & Rice, 2007; Kubota, 2001; Sherry et al., 2010; Lee, 2007; Constantine et al., 2005) have pointed out language as a problem for international students in the U.S. Hsieh (2006) points out the "American ideology of cultural homogeneity" that reinforces the language problem among international students. Hsieh (2006)

states, this ideology “implies an American mindset that because the English language and Eurocentric culture are superior to others, people with different cultures and languages should conform to the dominant monocultural canon and norms”. Three participants in this present study, not aligned with these aforesaid studies, reported they did not confront any problems due to their non-proficiency in English language. They never heard any complaints from their students or colleagues. Thea said:

As English is not my native language, it reflects in my accent. When you speak, when you teach, especially in the classrooms, to actually command a full class of students, and sometimes even in the middle of discussion that I somehow forget the words and try to find a suitable word to best describe the situation, things like that. It reflects in your teaching, in your communication with the students. Students notice this actually.

Especially at the beginning of my career, when I read the teaching reviews and there were a couple of students who wrote reviews saying, ‘oh, yeah, nice professor, but the accent gets in the way of understanding her’ kind of thing.

Only one participant, being not very proficient in speaking English, opted for written responses. Another participant, not facing many problems due to her non-native English-speaking fluency, got some bad remarks in some students’ evaluations. She explained that these remarks came from those students who could not do well in her class.

### **Implications for Theoretical Framework**

In “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses”, Chandra Talpade Mohanty intends to analyze the construct of “The Third World Woman” as homogeneous as depicted in some Western feminist texts (Mohanty, 1988). Mohanty’s critique of this construct is directed at three principles on which the representation of women of the third world is based. The



first of them is the assumption that women are a coherent group (Mohanty, 1988) and therefore their goals, interests and desires are the same for all despite location or race. The second basis of this representation was “uncritical use of particular methodologies in providing proof of universality and cross-cultural validity”. Thirdly, the assumptions about third world women were based on the political principles implied in the methodologies. These principles altogether contribute to representing the “average third world woman” as a part of a consistent and oppressed group. This consistency, it is assumed, is based upon the oppression women share. In this article, Mohanty critiques Western feminist writers who present Third World Women as “a powerless group and victims of a particular socio-economic system”. Mohanty argues that it is not use of the phrase “Women of Africa” used to describe women from the African continent that is problematic, but rather issues arise when African women are presented as a consistent, oppressed, and powerless group. Mohanty asserts that as a Western feminist writer, Huston mistakenly considers the needs of all third world women to be the same, and thereby, the needs of urban, middle class women and poor, uneducated maids are seen and treated as the same. Ironically, the development policies are the same for all groups though they are not affected by oppression the same way.

After all the findings and discussions in chapter 4 and 5, it has been found that the lived experiences of these 15 women are varied, and it would be unjustified if they were to be considered as a homogenous group. Their status and position in the U.S. have been defined not only by their color of skin, but by their family background, class, upbringing, politics and philosophy, and their experiences as a woman. The importance of intersectionality has been rightly described by Kawhara (2007):

As the process of examining these women’s stories unfolded, it became clear that there is

multidimensionality and complexity that influence these women's lives throughout their whole being. It was not that they were Asian, or that they were women, or that they were administrators or reverend that made them leaders. These multiple identity dimensions are intertwined with one another as well as with their unique life experiences. The experiences described by these women supported the assertion that it is impossible to examine one identity dimension at a time (e.g., race) separate from other dimensions (e.g., gender), hoping to somehow combine them to understand their intersections (Kawahara, 2007).

Mohanty (1988)'s critique of the notion propagated by dominant culture that all Third World women consist of a homogenous group has been thoroughly investigated in this present study and thus supported by the lived experiences of these 15 women. First, all third world women are considered as a coherent group, and therefore, their interests, goals, and desires are the same. Among these 15 participants, only one participant was born here in the U.S., three participants came to this country at a very early age, and the rest of the 11 participants came to this country to pursue higher education. They have varied interests – some participants are in STEM fields, some are from language studies, and others are experts in social education. Therefore, their interests are not the same. In talking about goals and desires, only the common thing among these 15 participants is they all belong to academia and all of them are faculty members. Among them, some participants expressed their passion and interest in leadership while others were not at all interested in pursuing leadership and administration. The interests and goals of all women in this sample were not aligned regardless of the fact that almost all of them would have been described as “Third World Women” (Mohanty, 1988). Again, most of the participants talked about how their rich educational backgrounds, encouraging and educated

parental support, and peer support contributed a lot to their journey in academia. “They are truly powerful women who are inspiring and motivating others. These women illuminate the agency in their lives and counter the stereotypes of the passive, submissive, or exotic” (Kawhara, 2007, p.30). All the participants agreed that they live in the intersection of race and gender, but the additional factors like class, ethnicity, role in the department, and position in society defined their identity as well. They also agreed that in some situations particular aspects of their identity become more salient— sometimes race becomes important, sometimes gender, sometimes class. However, although the importance of intersectionality has been acknowledged by all the participants, the ways in which intersectionality played a role in their daily lives was different for each woman. Therefore, Mohanty’s (2003) view that all third world women are not a homogenous group, and they should not be treated same way has been justified by this present study. Fayad (2003) echoed Mohanty (2003):

After much thinking, it occurs to me that it is you who veil the Arab woman, it is you who make her into a passive victim, it is you who silence her. Arab women get on with our lives. I try to get on with my life, but it is difficult to constantly confront what I am not. I am not THE Arab Woman. And, further, I cannot represent Arab women. Each Arab woman must represent herself, with the range of identities that include Syrian or Saudi Arabian, Berber or Copt, Bedouin or society woman from Beirut, Druze or Alawite, villager in the Upper Nile or Minister of Culture from Damascus. We’re not an object that can be crushed together and concentrated for Western consumption in a box labelled: Organic Arab Woman.

The portrayal of all Third World women as a powerless, unified group set up “the commonality of Third World women’s struggles across classes and cultures against a general

notion of oppression (rooted primarily in the group in power – i.e., men) necessitates the assumption of what Michel Foucault (1980, 135-45) calls the ‘juridico-discursive’ model of power, the principal features of which are ‘a negative relation’ (limit and lack)” (Mohanty, 2003). Mohanty (2003) further argues that Third World women should not be defined in terms of their ‘problems’ or their ‘achievements’, that too in the context of an imagined free white liberal democracy. This tendency removes them (and the liberal democracy) from history, freezing them in time and space. According to Mohanty (2003), the term ‘women of color’ and ‘Third World women’ are often used interchangeably and with same implication. These terms are used for political constituencies, not for biological or sociological ones. “It is a sociopolitical designation for people of African, Caribbean, Asian, and Latin American descent, and native peoples of the United States. It also refers to ‘new immigrants’ to the United States in the last three decades: Arab, Korean, Thai, Laotian, and so on” (Mohanty, 2003). Mohanty (2003) adds “it is Third World women’s oppositional political relation to sexist, racist, and imperialist structures that constitutes our potential commonality. Thus, it is a common context of struggles against specific exploitative structures and systems that determines our potential political alliances.”

These 15 women, in spite of having varied lived experiences, are always put in a ‘single box’ for the feasibility of describing them. Cora observed that she had very little in common with her South Asian colleagues. Commonality always depends on the person and the situation. She further reinforced this idea by saying her African American friend’s feelings of marginalization were much greater than hers to which she could not relate. She concluded saying “although we lump people together because of the color of the skin, it should not be so”. Isla also said: “It’s that I don’t take the individual to be representative of the group as easily as some people might.”

### **Perception and Style of Leadership**

**Style of leadership.** Kawhara (2007) found “despite continued growth of the Asian American population and the increasing diversity within this group, the rising visibility of advocacy and activism among Asian American women leaders is seldom addressed.” A qualitative interview study is an excellent way, therefore, to understand these Asian American and immigrant Asian female leaders’ perspectives and experiences as leaders in higher education in the U.S. Color, race and gender, play important roles in defining these women’s leadership journey, because race and gender are both oppressive forces in society. Women of color in their leadership journey are guided by two forces – biculturalism and gender. LaFromboise, Coleman, and Gerton (1993) and Phinney and Devich-Navarro (1997) found that negotiation of two different cultures is referred to as biculturalism that Asian American women internalize biculturalism and it has immense effect on their thoughts, feelings, and perceptions. “In such situations, it is perceived that the person’s bicultural competence will assist her in building and maintaining support networks in the different contexts” (Kawhara, 2007). All these 15 women in this present study, who assumed leadership positions and who did not, expressed their interest and trust in a decentralized and more participatory form of leadership. Some explicitly said that they believe in collaborative style of leadership. Ava, who is now the department chair, said:

The people I am leading all has PhDs. They are at the top of their fields. I can’t tell them what to do and how to do it in their subjects. They know better than me...I see my role as a facilitator. Even the good things that happen in the department, I give the spotlight to my faculty, but indirectly obviously the credit comes to me. Even if I am the person to give him/her the idea. That’s how I like to work, I like to lead.

Ada explicitly said that she liked to work collaboratively; she always tries to figure out other people’s needs and believes in a collaborative leadership style. She said, “By nature I tend to be

a collaborative leader. I want to get feedback. I want it to be democratically organized.

Nora aligned with the bicultural efficacy theory while creating a supportive network said:

In (name of the subject), we mostly don't have underrepresented minorities. We have Asian students. I definitely feel that due to gender and race, I felt like people talked about their problems to me, and a lot of women told me that they really admired having a strong woman in leadership role who can be their spokesperson.

Lucy also said that she believed in inclusion and sharing. Coming from a collectivist society probably helped these women to inculcate sharing and inclusion in their leadership style. They take care of others' needs and demands. Relationships with others is at the center of their leadership. Working together and empowering others seem to be the most important parts of many of these women's leadership. Jane said:

The department is like family. If you have siblings, the responsibilities always fall on one of them. Parents rely on one of them. So, it just happens. Being a department chair I am just like the older one; they trust me because they know that I will take care of everything.

Eagly and Johnson (1990) also found "women, more than men, manifested relatively interpersonally oriented and democratic styles".

There was a probing question in this present study whether these women want to assume leadership roles and administrative responsibilities in future. If yes, then what motivates them to stay in academic leadership and if not then what triggers them not to take further leadership responsibilities to which all except a few participants responded that they want to further assume leadership responsibilities, but most of the participants vehemently opposed the idea of assuming leadership in their career. One of the most important reasons cited by these participants who are

not inclined to assume further leadership responsibilities was because their research suffered. Rose, who is an associate professor now and has been an undergraduate director, acting department chair, and also graduate director, said:

I assumed those responsibilities partly by choice, but mostly, when you're in small departments, it's impossible to avoid such duties, because someone has to do the work. There's not much choice involved. But in future, honestly, I don't want to do administrative work because you don't get much time to do research. My first interest and passion is research, and I need more time for that. I struggled to get time to do that, so no. I had the possibility of saying no, but there's a moral obligation.

Lucy reacted vehemently to the question of assuming further leadership roles saying she had absolutely no interest in leadership because she is a 'people person.' She wanted to teach in prisons and did her research. She wanted to make a difference in society through her teaching. Anna also said she would have to assume leadership responsibilities because it is required to be full professor to show the expertise in leadership and service. Otherwise, by choice she would not have done it. Ivy, who has been a faculty advisor and now an associate professor, said she refrained from taking a leadership role because that made her research suffer. She remembered:

It's very time consuming and involves a lot of responsibilities. I have not purposely taken a lot of leadership roles in the university. I would like to devote time for my research. The teaching responsibilities are already very heavy. I teach four classes per semester. With this very heavy teaching load, it becomes almost impossible to obtain any further responsibilities, more than what is required. Well, I would like to be involved more in leadership positions, but maybe there will be a time and a date when I will feel inclined to do that. But as an international faculty member, you need to get ahead with your research.

That's where the evaluation of your scholastic aptitude is, right?

Though passionate about leadership responsibilities and sometime soon would like to join provost or presidential workshop currently assuming the role of a dean, Nora is a little bit reluctant while thinking of assuming further leadership roles. She said:

I had mixed feelings about leaving a life of scholarship and teaching. I haven't taught since 2016. Seems like a long time ago. I never felt that administration or academic leadership is not for me. I just felt like I don't want to lose touch with all of my scholarly interests. When I am ready, I want to teach again, but right now, I am enjoying what I am doing. I really love my students, but currently I have too many new responsibilities in my job.

Martin (2003) found organizations often place barriers in front of female employees. Apparently, they seem to be gender-neutral but end up favoring male employees. Demands for long work hours and personal sacrifices specially for those 'high-status executive positions' hinder female employees' career advancements. Isla completely agreed. Isla became the department chair after her tenure. Being a single mom, it was an overwhelming experience for her, and she said no to a second term as chair. In her words, "I had a small kid then, I was a single mother, there was lot of active parenting. Moreover, I had a lot of students and my research would suffer. I made the calculation and said no".

Butler and Geis (1990) found another aspect of women's leadership style when followers negatively react to those female leaders who attempt to direct followers. They further added that female leaders are appreciated when they are modest and not boasting about themselves. Nora echoed their words:

I feel like because of my gender, I really had to be a straight arrow, a straight shooter,



honest, and straight forward, never cynical, never imperious, like, 'I am the boss'. Even though they thought of me as the man, I could never really act like THE MAN. I had to have some serious and difficult conversations with some of them sometimes, but I always had to be gentle, and I always wanted to be. I didn't want to crack on people.

Peer pressure and organizational expectations are important factors behind these women's holding leadership positions. Jane remembered that she assumed the leadership responsibilities primarily because of peer pressure, though she admitted her interest in leadership as well. Not being aware of the exact scenario she took over the role of interim chair and then realized it was not the right thing for her. Her research suffered a lot and that made her disappointed of her responsibilities.

Being department chair, Ava also encountered similar problems:

I am ambitious, I am competitive, so, I know I never wanted to be average. Even if it was just as a faculty member, I know that I wanted to be known in my field. And if I did not have a leadership position, I would be in a leadership position through my professional service. That's something I cannot do right now, unfortunately, because I cannot sit in editorial boards of journals, I don't have time to do that.

Lack of time to invest in research has been highlighted as one of the major reasons behind these 15 women's their dilemma for assuming leadership responsibilities. All of them unequivocally admitted that they joined academia predominantly because of their love for teaching and research. The immense pressure of administrative responsibilities hampered the research that they are passionate about. Therefore, at the first opportunity, they gave up the idea of administration and embraced their love for teaching and research. Thomas and Hollenshead, (2001) found that many faculties of color thrive in their academic careers despite all the

diminishment and disregard. They daily challenge the academic power structure while making a difference in the success and longevity of their own careers as well as those of others”

While asked whether they have been chosen because of their ethnicity and gender for leadership, all of them asserted that it was their intelligence, capability, and personality that brought them these positions. They never agreed on the idea of tokenism behind their hiring. Ava said:

I don't think race and gender had anything to do with my leadership journey. It was entirely my performance. At least I like to think that way. I don't think I got any favors because of my race and my gender. I don't think I have any challenges because of race and my gender. Just performance and work ethic contributed to this journey.” Jane also said that she was chosen because of her personality and ability. She asserted: “My personality is very consistent, very disciplined, and very regular. They know it, and that's why they elected me. They knew that I am not an erratic person. I am very structured, and I am very reliable. I will show up at work every day even when I don't have to.

The women I interviewed do not fit the stereotypes of typical Asian women suggested by dominant American culture. They are not submissive, passive, exotic, apolitical, and fragile. Rather they are powerful, influential, and they decide the direction of their own career paths as well as facilitating other people to find their way. These 15 participants were asked to share their piece of advice for future women of color leaders, faculty, and administrators. One common response emerged. They all reflected precisely what Nora said:

Just stay strong and keep believing that you can do it. It does not matter how people treat you or what they say, or how they try to undermine your leadership and your power, keep on believing in yourself. A lot of the time, even if you're doing the right thing, and you're working hard, the naysayers will find something against you. A lot of them are too weak

to hold leadership roles. They are really strong about whispering behind your back. They are the strongest when they hold court with their own little people, but they have no courage out in the arena. I would tell women of color, 'if you are strong enough to go out in the area, you are stronger than 99% of the people'.

Being in academic administration and leadership roles for many years, Isla's advice is to always maintain a gender - neutral stance and not to show a reaction while interacting with people., no matter how challenging the situation might seem. Iris highlighted the importance of a strong support system and mentors irrespective of their race and gender.

Cora has been in leadership roles and had administrative duties for many years and then stepped after having an altercation with the chair. Currently, she is only teaching and while asking what her piece of advice would be, she emphasized the role of a mentor in the immediate work space. Connecting to people is the key she said. While dealing with students, she reinforced the importance of intellect over ideology. Unless the person was being blatantly offensive, she preferred to give benefit of doubt. Lucy's idea as a minority woman is to take charge; even though there is a mentor, women of color themselves should explore the opportunities.

Almost all of these 15 participants discussed about their defense mechanisms after being asked for a piece of advice for future women of color leaders/administrators and faculty. From their experiences, they have learned to resist from the margin. Developing defense mechanisms has been important to them because of the unequal workload distribution between them and their White counterparts, little or no support for academic pursuit, and exclusion from networks (Park, 1996; Cox & Nkomo, 1990, resisting from the margins). Thomas and Hollenshead (2001) found in their study that marginalization often results in invisibleness, a lack of acknowledgement. Women of color get over burdened in the name of services, be it extra class load or taking

administrative responsibilities on top being faculty. Ada felt that as a South Asian woman, she was always perceived to be able to meet people's demands, no matter how unrealistic they were. In spite of her immense contribution as a chair of women's studies, she was advised by her colleagues not to mention the hard work that she put into reforming women's studies in her tenure dossier. She added that if she had done a terrible job in women's studies, the authorities would have been reminded and might have declined her tenure. In her words, "I feel as woman of color, we are asked to do all this service. Then, when we go up for promotions, we have to justify why we are doing the service. Fortunately, my work in women's studies completely aligned with my feminist principles, feminist methodology, and feminist research work. I was therefore able to make an argument in my tenure letter about how this incredible service, these three years of service to women's studies actually aligns with who I am as an academic."

All of these women were asked to describe whether academia is exciting or exhausting, to which all of them said it was exciting in spite of all the barriers they faced. Ava said, "I love academia. I love the freedom academia gives you – the intellectual freedom - you are your own boss. This freedom also helps me to be happy with what I am doing."

Stanley (2006) found that many contributing authors of the book named *Faculty of Color: Teaching in Predominantly White Colleges and Universities* expressed their immense interest in teaching and admitted that teaching is the only reason they joined academia. Lucy communicated her similar utmost passion for academia saying:

I love what I do. I don't think I want to be anything else but an educator. I have no second thoughts about it. I have a 5-5 teaching load, I encounter racism inside the classroom. It has its ups and downs, but as long as I am doing my research, and I am teaching successfully, I am happy.

Nora shared that thought of making people's lives better is itself satisfying. She said: "I definitely find it very exciting, I feel very fortunate. I feel fortunate that I picked this thing to do with my life." Anna added to Nora's perspective saying:

I will do more with students, because this is my purpose of life to show my students the right path to their future. As faculty, they trust us, and we need to make this trust worthwhile, to make their lives better. That is something I really want to keep doing, guiding my students, mentoring my students.

### **Summary of the Findings**

The objective of this study was to understand the experiences of Asian American and immigrant Asian women faculty and administrators in U.S. universities. From their lived experiences, 15 participants in this current study shared varied challenges, analyses of academia, their suggestions for women of color who want to join academia in future, how they acclimate themselves in the ambience, and what factors have kept them motivated. The findings of this study seem to focus around three broad yet interconnected themes: campus climate, discrimination, and role of mentoring and support systems.

1. Participants talked not only about 'chilly' but a freezing climate, both inside and outside the classroom. Almost all of these 15 participants talked about non-cooperation, lack of respect and recognition from both colleagues and students. An overburdened and unequal distribution of work load also made many of these participants, especially administrators unhappy. Most of these participants, who already had previous leadership and administrative experiences, expressed disinterest in assuming further leadership roles. As a reason, all of them talked about the unusual pressure of administrative responsibilities beyond an 8-5 schedule that made their research suffer. Their personal lives became hampered as well.

2. Talking about discrimination, these women said that as a woman of color, they live in the intersection of gender and race. Sometimes it becomes difficult for them to decipher which aspect of their identity becomes more important while interacting with colleagues and students. Short height and young age have been mentioned as significant problems by some participants, especially by the participants who hold leadership roles. Pressure to prove themselves more than their White counterparts has also been observed by these women. Many of these women expressed disapproval to the attitude of lumping them together as women of color. All women of color's challenges and experiences are not similar; therefore, they should be treated as individuals. Class also played an important role in shaping these women's experiences. Publications and demonstration of scholarly aptitude have been mentioned as forms of defense mechanisms and combatting challenges.
3. Peers and family have been identified as major support systems. Family background regarding education by parents and family contributed towards these women's journeys. Role of mentor has been cited as one of the major factors in these women's journey. Many of them described the immense impact that their mentors had in their lives. Though gender and cultural match would be nice, it is not absolutely necessary for success. According to them, the relationship and trust between mentors and mentees matter most. Although some of them preferred the same gender and race, the importance of mentoring was unanimously emphasized by all of them.

In spite of all the challenges and barriers, all of the participants expressed their immense love for students, teaching, and research and described academia as exciting.

### **Implications for Policy**

The Asian population grew 72% between 2000 and 2015. Asians are considered to be the

fastest growing minority community in the United States. In spite of this escalating presence, The National Center for Education Statistics reported in Fall, 2016, that of all full-time faculty in degree granting postsecondary institutions, 6% were Asian/Pacific Islander males and 4 % were Asian/Pacific Islander females, whereas 41% were White males and 35% were White females. Smith (1989) found that faculty members from diverse backgrounds contribute to varied perspectives and different approaches. According to Hurtado (2001), a significant presence of faculty of color help to inculcate a comprehensive pedagogical approach. U.S. higher education policy should focus on and accentuate the importance of a multicultural environment and therefore, make policies more accommodating for those diverse faculty.

The implications of this study show that policymakers should review existing policies in order to make the hiring and tenure process more welcoming to create a warmer and more accessible campus climate for women of color. Cole and Barber (2003), Hurtado et al. (1999), and Smith (1989) found that the performance and persistence of students of color increase with the presence of minority faculty whom they can consider to be their role models. A similar finding has been discussed by Bem (1981b,1983) in her gender schema theory. In the context of university campuses, Bem's (1981b) gender schema theory highlights many aspects related to students' persistence. Gender schema theory suggests that students come to college with some predefined notion of majors based on their genders, and faculty members play a major role against these stereotypical ideas. The scarcity of female faculty members in STEM fields actually reinforces the underrepresentation of female students in this area. A similar problem occurs in the case of minority female students. In this study, the importance of mentoring was cited by every participant in their journey, and many participants expressed their preference for race and gender matched mentors. Chandler (1996), and Smith (2007) found that the role of

mentoring and presence of role models affects the performance and persistence of minority female students. However, the underrepresentation of Asian faculty and administrators makes this scenario difficult and therefore, makes overall higher education less accessible to the Asian female students.

The policymakers and stakeholders, therefore, should incorporate and accommodate more Asian females, both immigrants and citizens in U.S. higher education. Along with uniform division of classes and services, policymakers should provide the Asian faculty members and administrators ample time and resources to do their research. In this study, almost all the participants, especially those who are administrators, expressed their regrets for not having been productive in their research and decided to quit administration in order to focus on research. The presence of Asian female administrators in academia is notably small. On top of that, if those who volunteered or expressed their interest to join administration quit, the voices of this community will be silent altogether. Life for immigrant females is considerably more difficult than their citizen counterparts. The immigrant females leave their family and friends back in their country. Along with acculturative stress, they face challenges regarding the visa and immigration process. Policymakers and university administrators should take more initiative to make immigrants' stay in the U.S. easier and pleasant. The policymakers of U.S. universities can provide several opportunities for the Asian female faculty and administrators in order to make the overall journey starting from their PhD life to their professoriate enjoyable. Mentoring programs for both Asian female faculty and students in order to help them sail through PhD life is very important. Facilitation starting from Asian females' graduate student experience is important because many of them, due to their not so enjoyable journey during the PhD leave the country right after their degrees are done. In addition, many students drop out from PhD



program. Therefore, in order to get more representatives from Asian American and immigrant Asian minority groups, the accommodation process should start before they join professoriate.

### **Implications for Practice**

The primary audiences of this study are (a) women faculty of color, (both current and future), especially Asian women (both immigrants and citizens), (b) senior administrators in higher education (e.g., presidents, provosts, deans, department chairs), (c) faculty members who want to pursue leadership roles in future, (d) female students of color, (e) policy makers and community stakeholders who have an interest in attracting and retaining more female faculty of color. Therefore, I would like to cite some implications for practice for the retention and development of Asian American and immigrant Asian female faculty and administrators.

**Making the ambience warm.** In both literature surveys and the present study, it has been found and reported by the participants, that academia, though projected as a liberal and inclusive system, often fails to be warm and welcoming for faculty, especially women faculty of color. Subtle acts of racial microaggressions and gender discriminations make the ambience ‘chilly’ if not freezing. This present study also supported this impression. To combat this pseudo inclusive image, academia should address the injustice and microaggressions targeted towards women of color faculty and administrators. Studies show that tokenism does not help to improve women faculty of colors’ stature in academia. The result is that they are “often assigned labor-intensive administrative and teaching duties” (Lin, Kubota, Motha, Wang, and Wong, 2007, p.1, Ireya, 2007). They should be considered on par with their White counterparts, both male and female, in both capabilities and responsibilities without any predefined notions and stereotypes. Only then they can be assigned equal responsibilities and provided with an inclusive environment. The differences should be addressed not based on ideas like the ‘model minority myth’ or women as

'passive' and 'exotic' and eternal victims of patriarchy. They should be evaluated and facilitated based on their individual capacities and competence. Equity should be introduced in order to make the academic environment inclusive.

**Consider them as individuals, not as a group.** The qualitative design of this study reinstates the importance of individual voices. Some of the participants also addressed this inclination of the dominant culture and even among other people of color to address them as a 'lump' or a group. The reality is these women are different from each other – in their upbringing, in their challenges, in their ways of dealing with challenges, in their aspirations, and in their goals. They are different because of the intersections they are situated in. Asian women, both immigrants and citizens are a large group with a lot of differences. The present study highlighted the different journeys of the women in the sample. The intersections of many aspects like race, gender, class, parental support, and upbringing define and shape these women's journeys, and in order to facilitate their success, universities and colleges should address these differences first, so that they can modify and design the resources according to their needs.

Not only for Asian faculty and administrators, these policies should be customized according to the needs of Asian female students as well. The lack of persistence and retention of Asian female students contributes to the underrepresentation of Asian females in the faculty and leadership roles. For student affairs professionals in U.S. universities, it is important to understand the difference between assimilation and acculturation in order to impact international students (Ladd & Ruby Jr., 1999). International students suffer from identity crisis in a new culture and eventually lose their identities and find assimilation in the new culture more convenient (Ladd & Ruby Jr., 1999). Instructors and student affairs professionals should facilitate international students in the acculturation process so that they can adapt amicably in the new culture and at the

same time not lose their traditional identity (Ladd & Ruby Jr.,1999). International faculty members, especially Asian women faculty members, being a member of collectivist society, look for counselors from friends, family members or religious leaders, but they do not consult professional counselors as mental illness is considered a stigma in their society (Heggins III & Jackson, 2003). They should be counselled thoroughly by the faculty members, counsellors, and other stakeholders to convince to ask for help whenever needed. What Ada shared in her conversation regarding her severe isolation from everyone in her life due to overload in the first three years of tenure and which resulted in her nervous breakdown and depression after those three years might be the story of many others. Otherwise, academia will eventually lose many of its intelligent and treasured faculty who could contribute to its growth. The most important issue that stands out while dealing with international students in U.S universities is the problem of homogeneity. It is assumed that all international members' problems are same and can be dealt with in a similar way. It is important that faculty members, international student advisors, and personnel from the international students' services office treat every student as a unique individual and come up with customized solutions to fit their needs. Special attention should be given to the immigration and visa problem, as many of the international faculty members need to spend a lot of time and money and go through some anxious moments because of uncertainty of their future. Both Ada and Jane shared that they had to go through some real uncertain phases because while they were waiting for a job, their visas were about to expire. Therefore, whichever job came up, they had to accept it to retain visa status, though both of them were not very happy with the jobs they accepted.

### **Support Groups**

Carr, Koyama and Thiagarajan (2003) describe a support group for Asian international

students to help them to acculturate and cope with difficulties they face in American society. This support group facilitates participants in practicing English and communicating with other Asian students in order to become multiculturally proficient. The similar support group can be formed across universities to help international faculty members. A stereotype of being strong women who can deal with the problems themselves prevents these women from asking for help. They also internalize stereotypes and hesitate to share their problems, but almost all of these participants said that it's very important to reach out to people and ask for their help. Some participants shared that they believe in creating solidarity. Support groups can provide them with the space where they can speak without any intimidation. This present study and literature support the idea that a racial and gender matched environment helps women of color open up without getting intimidated.

**Mentoring Programs and Affinity Groups.** All of the participants in this present study except one talked about informal mentoring, mentors they have found in their high schools, colleges, graduate school, the department, or workplace. The only participant who talked about formal mentoring had not had an enjoyable and satisfying experience. Therefore, instead of assigning one mentor, mentoring programs should be introduced where participants are provided with the option of choosing their own mentors, and the control of the mentor-protégé relationship will not be dependent on just one mentor, but a group of people will share the responsibilities. Affinity groups can also be another form of support. Adams (2006, Sayumi Irei) describes these affinity groups as “internal network” (p.37). These affinity groups have immense impact on the socialization, intercultural competence building, and retention of minority faculty members’ especially, minority female faculty members. Affinity groups play the role of a “safe place” for these minority women to share their problems and as a group they find a solution to combat the

challenges. Many institutions might have these programs, but sometimes they are not propagated and showcased properly to the target group. Therefore, minority female members, Asian American and immigrant Asian female faculty members are not aware where they should go and look for support. Universities should include affinity groups as part of their policy in order to accommodate minority groups.

**Increasing the opportunity to teach and research for female leaders.** All the participants in this present study, who assumed leadership positions and who did not assume leadership roles, agreed on one thing: leadership responsibilities hampered their research. The primary motivation of all these women has been their love for students and their research. Lack of time because of the over-assigned administrative responsibilities make them frustrated sometimes because they cannot afford time for publications. Universities, in order to retain, increase the number of female leaders and accommodate minority females, especially Asian females should create the space for them. Umbach (2006) stated that incorporating diverse faculty and presence of diversity are signs of a university's engagement towards diversity. Therefore, it is the university's responsibility to create an environment that propagates diversity. Weick (1979) asserted that the symbol of diversity propagated by university makes its faculty members act likewise. Universities should focus on the pipeline as well in order to incorporate diverse faculty members. Trower and Chait (2002, p.33) suggest "even if the pipeline were awash with women and minorities, a fundamental challenge would remain: the pipeline empties into territory women and faculty of color too often experience as uninviting, un-accommodating, and unappealing." The pipeline is made of those qualified graduates, and many graduate students drop out in the middle of their PhDs because of the uninviting environment of higher education,

### **Limitations of the Study**

Conscious attempt has been made not to involve the researcher's perspective with the participants' narratives. Still the little possibility cannot be ignored. The sample size is not big enough, though participants' experiences overlapped in many places with each other. However, generalization becomes difficult with a small sample size, but analytic generalizability has been achieved with the help of literature. The wide range of participants reflected on their experiences. It could have been consolidated and uniform if participants could be found within 10 years of range. Their experiences would have been similar. Uniformity could have been attained if all the participants were citizens or all of them were immigrants. The nature of the institutions in this study is not also uniform. Participants belong to community colleges, four-year universities, as well as R1 institutes. Therefore, varied responses and experiences were bound to happen. In order to get more similar and uniform responses, participants' backgrounds should have been similar. Nonetheless, this variety in participants' backgrounds provides us with more insight about the encompassing scenario of Asian females' experiences in U.S. higher education. The available participants were very small in number; therefore, participant sample consists of both faculty and administrators. It would have been more insightful if participants were only administrators. Only two dimensions of race and gender have been examined. Certainly, there are many other dimensions such as socioeconomic class, religion, time period, geographical location, age, sexual orientation, disabilities, motherhood status, and marital status that influence women and their leadership.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Future researchers can gain more scope in this area because this area of Asian women and immigrant Asian woman in academic leadership is understudied. Few Asian women participate in academic administration, and immigrant Asian women are even fewer. Therefore, it would be a

great area to study whether the scenario is the same for Asian men as well, or it is different. There is a scope of comparative study also between Asian men and women. Importance and significance of gender in shaping a woman's journey would be easier to decipher then. A comparative study between Asian American and immigrant Asian women and White females can also provide us with an insightful perspective. Most studies are only based on the assumptions and presuppositions from the perspective of Asian women about their White counterparts; therefore, it would be important to know the perspectives of White females as well about their journey to understand the broader picture of a gender-segregated field like academia. Studies should be done on different ethnic groups to understand the problems that are exclusive to that group. For example, in this present study and other studies, Asian women have been describing as a lump, but Asian women are accumulation of many ethnic groups with a lot of difference in their challenges, experiences, family structure, education, and outlook. Therefore, Chinese, Japanese, Indians, Saudi Arabian – they all should not be considered as part of a larger group, a 'lump'. These ethnic groups should be studied separately because of their varied background, and because of the fact, not all Asian subgroups are the "model minority".

### **Conclusion**

This qualitative research, in spite of all its limitations, offers an insightful perspective of these 15 women's journey. The research design gives them a voice that otherwise, they may lack in the gender-segregated setting of academia. Countering the stereotypical notions of "exotic", "passive", "fragile", and eternal victims of patriarchy set by the dominant culture, these women spoke powerfully in defining their existence. They are passionate about what they do, and they are capable of changing their own lives as well as others'. Listening to their journeys has been an experience I will cherish forever. They changed my perspective in many aspects, they inspired

me, and they helped to define my own journey.



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## **Appendix A: Interview Protocol**

### **Personal Story/Journey**

- Tell me about how you decided to go into leadership.
- What are the responsibilities you currently hold? Among them what kind of administrative responsibilities do you have?
- What kind of racial and cultural community did you grow up in? (location, parents' background etc. )
- Does your racial and ethnic identity somehow influence your journey towards leadership?
- Do you see any issues you encounter at work that maybe unique to your ethnicity or race? Will you please provide some examples?
- Do you speak any other language other than English?
- In what way (if at all) do you think being a woman of color (or Asian woman) impacts your day-to-day experiences in your position?
- Did your colored identity influence your role of a leader or an aspirant leader?

### **Interviewee's Current Position and Responsibilities**

- Now tell me about the responsibilities you currently hold.
- In what ways leadership comes into play in your current responsibilities?
- Do you feel or ever felt that people, while dealing with you, keep in mind your racial background? As a leader how do you react to those situations?
- Do you aspire to further leadership roles? If so, what those roles would be? What motivates



you to retain in leadership roles?

### **Barriers and Discrimination**

- How did you combat discriminations, if any?
- How did you conclude that you were being discriminated?
- Did you talk to anyone of your same racial background while deciding the strategies to combat discriminations? What kind of measures did you take while resisting challenges?

### **Support System**

- What are the major support systems do you have in this journey of leadership? With whom do you talk most regarding your professional matters? What kind of social networks do you have inside and outside your workplace?
- Did anyone take the role of mentor during this journey? Please describe your experiences with mentors. How did this mentoring relationship develop? Describe your mentors. What are those persons? What kind of interactions do you have with them? What are their backgrounds? Do they belong to the same field as yours? Do their race, ethnicity, and gender play important role in this mentor-mentee relationship?
- Other than mentors, who are the other people you go to for support? How important role does your family play in this journey of leadership?

### **Closing Reflection**

- Is there anything that you would like to add?
- Do you have any suggestion, advice for future leaders, especially women of color?

Vita

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Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership. University of North Florida, Jacksonville, Florida. (Anticipated) 2019.

Bachelor of Education. University of Kalyani, Kalyani, India. 2012.

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Student Assistant. Center for Community Based Learning, University of North Florida (Part-time position, May--July 2016).

Communicative English Teacher and Student Counselor. School of Indian Hotel Management, Kalyani, India (Full-time position, Jan--Nov 2013).

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Roy, S. (2015). Challenges for Female Indian Graduate Students in U.S Universities: A Case Study. 2015 MWERA Annual Meeting, Evanston, IL, October 22, 2015.

Roy, S. (2015). Women Empowerment in India: The Breach Between What It Is and What It Could Be. Roundtable discussion at 2015 Educational Leadership Doctoral Symposium, University of North Florida, June 5, 2015.

Allard, D., Friswold, S., & Roy, S. (2015). Living-Learning Communities at the University of North Florida: Initial Assessment of Programmatic Impact on Persistence and Academic Performance. Presented at UNF Doctoral Symposium, Jacksonville, FL.

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