Exploring the Impact of Mentoring Relationships for Asian American Senior Women Administrators at a Critical Career Juncture

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BOSTON COLLEGE
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Higher Education Administration

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS FOR ASIAN AMERICAN SENIOR WOMEN ADMINISTRATORS AT A CRITICAL CAREER JUNCTURE

Dissertation
by

JUDY A. KAWAMOTO

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ABSTRACT

Exploring the Impact of Mentoring Relationships for Asian American Senior Women Administrators at a Critical Career Juncture

by

Judy A. Kawamoto

Dr. Karen Arnold, Dissertation Chair

For decades, women of color have been well represented in the administrative ranks in American higher education, but only up to the level of director. Despite gains in enrollment and an increasing number of Asian American women earning the advanced degrees necessary to qualify them for senior administrative positions such as dean, vice president, provost and president, this particular group of women remains severely underrepresented in the upper administrative ranks in our colleges and universities. In addition, very little research has been conducted to date on this particular population at this critical career juncture.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to determine if mentoring relationships, which research has shown to be vital to the success of other women administrators of color, would also prove to be important to Asian American women administrators at critical career junctures. Eleven Asian American senior women administrators from four different ethnic backgrounds (Chinese, Korean, Japanese and Filipina) were interviewed, and the results were analyzed using the triangulation methods of member checking and engaging a colleague with expertise in qualitative research methods. Two theoretical frameworks were used to analyze the data: relational cultural theory to analyze each interview from the participant’s point of view, and; critical race theory to analyze the data from the institutional perspective.
Consistent with the literature, many of the women experienced factors that have been reported by other women administrators of color: a culture dominated by White men; the intersection of sexism and racism; feelings of isolation, and; gender-typed family concerns. The majority of the women also struggled with the model minority stereotype of being perceived as passive and reserved, which most reported as having negative, but some positive consequences.

No woman in this study, however, experienced all of the factors, and several of the women reported more sexism than racism, which is contrary to what the literature has shown to be the experience of other women administrators of color. Analysis of the interviews also revealed that women who were not in traditional, heterosexually-married relationships with children did not report any gender-typed family concerns. And contrary to the model minority stereotype, almost all of the women were assertive, and did not behave passively.

With regard to their mentoring relationships, the majority of the women had White male mentors, which is consistent with the literature. Six of them also had mentors of color, both male and female, and only four of the women had Asian mentors. For the women who had both male and female mentors, several of them experienced more career than psychosocial mentoring from their male mentors, a pattern that is the opposite of what is typical for other women administrators of color. Also, no clear patterns emerged with regard to how the women utilized their mentors at critical career junctures.

The interviews also revealed that the women interviewed for this study were distinctly different from each other, and disputed the assumption that all Asian American women are alike. This study challenges how these women are currently perceived, and colleges and universities must re-examine their current policies and practices to better support this population.
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I will be forever indebted to the eleven remarkable women who participated in this study. Their willingness to share their amazing stories, and their openness in recounting sometimes difficult aspects of their lives and careers was an inspiration to me, and I hope I have done them justice in these pages.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Since the 1970s, women have been well represented in administrative, managerial and
director-level positions in American colleges and universities (Johnsrud & Heck, 1994; National
Center for Education Statistics, 1995; Twombly & Rosser, 2002). Yet women, and particularly
women of color, still lag far behind their male counterparts in senior level administrative
positions such as dean, vice president, provost and president (Glazer-Raymo, 1999, 2002;

The reasons for this disparity are many. Historically, there was a lack of equity in the
educational opportunities available to women (Brubacher & Rudy, 2004), and it was not until the
latter part of the twentieth century that the enrollment of women in colleges and universities
began to outpace that of men. Landmark legislation such as Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of
1964, coupled with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, had a tremendous positive
impact on access and employment for persons of color and women, respectively (Brubacher &
Rudy, 2004; Nidiffer, 2002; Somers, 2002). Yet despite these gains, the lack of senior women
administrators of color is still apparent (Glazer-Raymo, 1999, 2002; Johnsrud & Heck, 1994;
Rickard, 1992).

Several factors continue to inhibit the progress of women of color in American higher
education. These include: a culture dominated by White men (Gerdes, 2006; Glazer-Raymo,
1999); the intersection of sexism and racism (Cotterill & Letherby, 2005; Gaetane, 2005; Glazer-
Raymo, 1999; Jones & Gooden, 2003; Schramm, 2002); feelings of isolation (Gaetane, 2005;
Gerdes, 2006; Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Luna & Medina, 2006); and gender-typed family concerns
that are not experienced by men (Gerdes, 2006; Switzer, 2006; Tinklin, Croxford, Ducklin & Frame, 2005).

These issues are also experienced by Asian American women administrators, and compounded by the persistence of the model minority stereotype (Ng, Lee & Pak, 2007; Osajima, 1988; Schaefer, 2008; Suzuki, 2002; Wong & Halgin, 2006). Asian American women are also evaluated differently than other minorities, and experience additional barriers due to being viewed as reserved, submissive and eager to please, attributes that are in conflict with traditional American views of leadership (Collison, 2000; Hune, 1998; Ideta, 2002; Ng et al., 2007). Other traditional Asian values such as deference to authority and preferring harmony over conflict can also inhibit the advancement of these women into senior administrative roles (Lum, 2005, 2008; Min, 1995). The issues faced by senior women administrators of color, and Asian American women administrators in particular, will be discussed in detail in Chapter Two.

Despite the fact that Asian American women are earning the necessary academic credentials to qualify them for senior administrative positions in higher education, this group remains one of the most severely underrepresented groups in senior administrative positions (Committee of 100, 2005; Glazer-Raymo, 2002; Hune, 1998; NCES, 2009a, 2009b); and as college and university presidents, they are almost non-existent (Ideta, 2002; Museus & Chang, 2009). This lack of representation also helps to explain why so little research exists on this specific ethnic population (Museus & Chang, 2009).

Research has shown that mentoring is one factor that positively impacts the experiences of women administrators of color, including Asian American women administrators (Holmes, Land & Hinton-Hudson, 2007; Lum, 2008; Ragins, 1997; Stanley & Lincoln, 2005; Welch, 1993). Yet the literature on mentoring to date has focused primarily on the composition of
mentoring pairs and the functions of mentoring, but not on the role that mentors play at critical
career junctures. How mentors can impact the career choices of Asian American women
administrators as they strive to move beyond director-level positions is the focus of this study.

**Statement of the Problem**

Research on women in senior administrative positions in higher education has been
limited primarily to female presidents (Grady, 2002; Switzer, 2006). In 2000, the results of a
survey reported by the American Council on Education revealed that out of 511 women college
presidents, 430 (84.1%) were White, and only 15.5% were women of color (36 Black, 31
Hispanic, 7 American Indian, and 5 Asian American). Even when women do manage to rise to
the role of president, they are more likely to head women’s colleges, community colleges and
public four-year colleges, and are least likely to lead research institutions (Glazer-Raymo, 2002;
Hoogeveen, 2009). In short, statistics show that few women of color are advancing to senior
administrative roles in higher education, particularly to the presidency; and when they do, it is
usually at less prestigious institutions. The typical college or university president continues to be
White and male, a fact that has changed little in recent decades. From 1986 to 2006, the number
of university presidents who were minorities increased just over 5 percent; however, if minority-
serving institutions are excluded from those statistics, the increase is barely 2 percent over the
past twenty years. And while the number of women presidents has increased over that same time
period, their rate of growth has slowed considerably since the late 1990s (Hoogeveen, 2009).

The problem does not appear to be one of access or proper credentialing via degree
attainment. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2004), among freshmen
who enrolled in a college or university for the first time in 1995-96 seeking a bachelor's degree, a
greater percentage of females (66 percent) than males (59 percent) had earned a bachelor's
degree by the spring of 2001. Considering degree attainment more generally, females earned 57 percent of all bachelor's degrees in 2001, which reflects the increasing proportions of female students in postsecondary education. Additionally, the proportions of Black and Hispanic bachelor's degree recipients who were female in 2000-01 (66 and 60 percent, respectively) were higher than the proportion of White degree recipients who were female (57 percent). The increase in participation by females in postsecondary education over the past 30 years has meant that, among the general population ages 25 – 29 in 2002, a slightly higher percentage of females than males had attained a bachelor's degree or higher (32 percent vs. 27 percent).

The same trends hold true for graduate study. In examining enrollment figures for selected years from 1976 – 2007, the enrollment of women has consistently outpaced that of men, and the number of women of color has been increasing steadily. In fact, from 2000 – 2007 the percentage of women of color (Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native) increased in each category; the only exception was nonresident aliens, whose numbers held steady. By contrast, the percentage of White women graduate students fell during that same time period (NCES, 2009e).

Women of color are also receiving doctoral degrees in greater numbers in recent years (Hamilton, 2004). While the number of males earning doctorates is still greater than women (28,634 males in the academic year ending in 2006, compared with 27,433 females), the number of women attaining their degrees has been increasing steadily in recent years, while male numbers have been fluctuating (NCES, 2009a). The trend appears to be that more and more women are obtaining their terminal degrees, and the number of Asian American women receiving their doctorates has also increased in recent years (Borden & Brown, 2003; NCES, 2009a).
Interestingly, the same trend that exists for women enrolled in graduate school is also evident for women obtaining their doctorates, although not across all ethnic categories. From 1995 to 2006, the percentage of women of color obtaining doctoral degrees has been fluctuating, with increases in recent years in some ethnic categories (Asian/Pacific Islander and non-resident aliens), but showing slight decreases in other ethnic categories (Black, Hispanic and American Indian/Alaska Native). In that same time period, degrees attained by White women have also been decreasing slightly each year. Despite these slight decreases, however, the number of women overall who are obtaining doctoral degrees is still increasing at a rate slightly faster than that of men (NCES, 2009b).

The facts are clear. For each type of degree, the number of degrees earned grew at a faster rate for females than males between 1997 and 2007; and in 2007, females of each racial/ethnic group generally earned more degrees than their male counterparts for each type of degree (NCES, 2004, 2009a, 2009b). Thus there are adequate numbers of eligible women in the academic pipeline, and they are obtaining the necessary credentials to qualify them for senior administrative positions. Why, then, are these women still failing to reach the highest levels of administration in representative numbers? Clearly gender inequities still exist, a phenomenon that deserves exploration.

**Asian American Women Administrators**

Asian American women administrators are defined by Ng et al. (2007) as administrators who self-identify as being of Asian descent in the United States; such individuals would include Chinese, Asian Indian, Filipina, Indian, Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese women, as well as other Southeast Asian groups such as Laotian, Hmong and Cambodian. Pacific Islanders, which include racial groups such as Native Hawaiian, Polynesian, Samoan, Fijian, Papua New Guinean
and Tahitian, are also often included in the umbrella category of Asian American (Schaefer, 2008). Taken as a whole, women in this racial category remain one of the most severely underrepresented ethnic groups in senior administrative roles in American higher education (Museus & Chang, 2009).

As noted earlier in this chapter, the issue is not a lack of degree attainment, as the number of Asian American women receiving their doctorates has increased in recent years and has even outpaced degree attainment of women in other ethnic groups (Borden & Brown, 2003; NCES, 2009a, 2009b). In addition, Asian American women earned 58.4 percent of associate’s degrees, 54.8 percent of bachelor’s degrees, 54.5 percent of master’s degrees, and 51.9 percent of the doctoral degrees when compared with their male counterparts in the 2006 – 2007 academic year (NCES, 2009a, 2009b).

In comparing this ethnic group to others, Asian Americans fall far below the numbers of Black and Hispanic administrators, and are even more severely underrepresented among senior administrative positions. In 1995, of the more than 3,000 institutions of higher education in the United States, only twenty-four were led by Asian Americans, or only 0.008 percent (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2000). It was not reported how many of those positions were held by Asian American women; but assuming that at least some of those positions were held by men, it is fair to state that Asian American women held less than 0.008 percent of those leadership roles.

To date, research has been scarce on women administrators of color, and virtually non-existent on Asian American women administrators (Museus & Chang, 2009). This may be at least partially due to the model minority stereotype (Ng et al., 2007; Osajima, 1988; Schaefer, 2008; Suzuki, 2002), which feeds the perception that research time and money do not need to be spent on a population that is excelling academically. Some progress has been made, however; in
2007, the University of California system established the Asian American and Pacific Islander Policy Multi-Campus Research Program, a network of faculty researchers committed to supporting and conducting research on this population (Chang, 2008). But such programs are still the exception, and research beyond the state level is needed to identify what other forms of support can be offered to these women to help them climb the administrative ladder in American higher education.

**The Value of Mentors**

As noted earlier in this chapter, one form of support that has been found to help women of color advance in their careers is mentoring. Research has shown that mentoring is one factor that positively impacts the experiences of women administrators of color, including Asian American women administrators (Holmes et al., 2007; Lum, 2008; Ragins, 1997; Stanley & Lincoln, 2005; Welch, 1993). A tremendous amount of research has been conducted concerning the importance and value of mentoring relationships, and there are many definitions of the word “mentor.” Typically, a mentor is defined as an…“experienced, high-ranking member of an organization who assists in the career development of a more junior member. Mentors can provide this assistance by serving in such varied capacities as teacher, coach, counselor, advocate and role model” (O’Reilly, 2001, p. 51). The guidance of mentors can have a great impact on future career paths; in addition, individuals who are mentored tend to advance more rapidly in organizations (Allen & Eby, 2004; Smith & Crawford, 2007). More central to the research questions raised in this study, connection with mentors and other women of color has been shown to be of critical importance to the success and advancement of women and women administrators of color (Blackhurst, 2000; Chandler, 1996; Holmes et al., 2007; Hubbard & Robinson, 1998; Switzer, 2006; Turner, 2007). Mentors can help such women overcome
feelings of isolation, as well as the gender and racial obstacles that result from having no substantial peer group.

Research shows that women tend to utilize mentors more often than men, particularly in the early stages of their careers (Hubbard & Robinson, 1998). One study of women who were mentored found that they were likely to be placed in significantly higher administrative positions than those who have not experienced mentoring, and also experienced greater job satisfaction due to elevated self-confidence, enhanced opportunities for creativity, and opportunity for increased skill development (Reisch, 1986). In short, as one author notes, “Mentoring does matter, and a positive mentoring experience can provide exemplary professional socialization, visibility, access, and integration into senior-level leadership and thus influence decision-making and policy” (Twombly & Rosser, 2002, p. 464). Thus mentoring has both the short-term effect of helping women of color excel in their jobs, and the long-term benefit of retaining them for greater leadership roles within American higher education.

There is some evidence, however, that women of color have more difficulty obtaining mentors. One study conducted with seven Black senior women administrators indicated that few were able to identify role models or mentors other than members of their own families or communities; that same study revealed that none of the women had been socialized into the university community by a senior administrator (Smith & Crawford, 2007). While women of color might realize that having a mentor would be beneficial, finding one to provide much-needed guidance and support can be difficult.

Given how much is known about the positive impact of mentors, it is somewhat surprising that there is little research in higher education devoted to the topic of mentoring senior women administrators of color. While colleges and universities may be more ready to recruit
and hire women of color, there has been little attention given to their advancement, at least at the senior administrative level (Howard-Hamilton & Williams, 1996). Yet the ability to obtain a mentor may be essential to their career success. As one senior female African American administrator stated in Smith and Crawford’s 2007 study, “I had learned that often the difference as to why White folks did so well and people of color did not had nothing to do with intellectual ability, but instead had a lot to do with the ability to leverage the system and to avoid barriers. I decided to help (others) in that way” (p. 257). The assumption might be unfounded that once a woman of color has attained a senior administrative role, she possesses all the skills needed for continued success.

The Critical Juncture

Research on mentoring to date has focused primarily on the composition of mentoring pairs and the functions of mentoring, but not on the role that mentors play at critical career junctures. Despite the fact that there are more than sufficient numbers of Asian American women in the academic pipeline (NCES, 2004, 2009c), the ceiling with regard to their advancement to senior administrative positions is still evident. The question must be asked—is the absence of mentors at least partially to blame? How can we explain why women of color, and Asian American women specifically, fill so many lower administrative positions, and yet are still so conspicuously absent in the upper administrative ranks (Committee of 100, 2005; Glazer-Raymo, 2002; Hune, 1998; Johnsrud & Heck, 1994; Rickard, 1992)? If more mentors were available, could the problem be lessened?

The lack of women of color in senior administrative positions remains a real issue for American higher education, and as one author notes, “Without female administrators, the power of the female voice is lost in the work environment” (Luna & Medina, 2006, p. 9). This is
detrimental not only to the overall environment of higher education, but to the thousands of women students, and women students of color, who are lacking role models and mentors as a result.

**Research Questions**

Therefore, in this dissertation research study I will explore the following questions:

1. How do Asian American women perceive their ethnicity and gender affecting their career advancement?
2. How do Asian American women administrators understand gender and cultural influences in how they obtain and utilize mentors?
3. What are the primary characteristics of mentors as identified by the women in this study (i.e., male or female, racial/ethnic background), and what have been the primary benefits of those relationships (i.e., career vs. psychosocial mentoring)?
4. What is the content of the mentoring relationship, i.e., what activities does it include?
5. What role have mentors played in the careers of Asian American women administrators, particularly at critical career junctures (i.e., at the point they are aspiring to a senior administrative position)?

**Theoretical Rationale**

In this study, I expect to find that Asian American women administrators face many, if not all, of the same issues that other women administrators of color face that were noted earlier in this chapter—a culture dominated by White men, sexism, racism, feelings of isolation and gender-typed family concerns (Cotterill & Letherby, 2005; Gaettane, 2005; Gerdes, 2006; Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Jones & Gooden, 2003; Luna & Medina, 2006; Switzer, 2006; Tinklin et al., 2005). What is not currently known is what other issues Asian American women
administrators might be experiencing as a result of their ethnicity that have had an impact on their mentoring relationships and career advancement.

While Asian American women administrators have been largely ignored by researchers to date (Museus & Chang, 2009), it would not be surprising to find that they, like other women administrators of color, have difficulty securing mentors (Smith & Crawford, 2007). The model minority stereotype may compound this issue even further, as Asian Americans are often perceived as excelling and not in need of assistance (Ng et al., 2007; Osajima, 1988; Schaefer, 2008; Suzuki, 2002; Wong & Halgin, 2006). In addition, even given the opportunity of utilizing a mentor, some Asian American women might find it more difficult to draw the full benefit from such a relationship due to traditional Asian values such as deference to authority and attending to group needs over individual desires (Lum, 2005, 2008; Min, 1995).

For those Asian American women administrators who have taken advantage of mentors in their careers, it will be interesting to learn more about the gender and race characteristics of those mentors. It has been shown that having a mentor of the same race is beneficial to the overall quality of the mentoring relationship (Holmes et al., 2007; Ragins, 1997; Stanley & Lincoln, 2005; Welch, 1993), but given the low number of Asian American administrators in higher education, it is possible that these women are forced to seek out mentors of other racial backgrounds. Or perhaps because the potential pool of mentors continues to be comprised primarily of White men, this study might discover that these women do not seek out mentors at all because they are hesitant about developing such a relationship with a male. Research has shown that individuals having a history of male mentors reported more compensation than those with a history of female mentors (Ragins & Cotton, 1999), so if Asian American women are reluctant to have a male mentor, they could be disadvantaged in the workplace in terms of salary.
Finally, for those women involved in mentoring relationships, my goal is to learn more about the specific activities those relationships include. Research indicates that mentors, regardless of gender, provide more psychosocial mentoring to women, and more career mentoring to men (Allen & Eby, 2004; Armstrong, Allinson & Hayes, 2002; Burke & McKeen, 1990; Holmes et al., 2007; Schrodt, Stringer-Cawyer & Sanders, 2003). Will the same hold true for Asian American women administrators, or will other types of activities be more prevalent for this ethnic group?

**Significance of the Study**

Why is it important to understand the issues surrounding the lack of senior women administrators of color in American higher education, and Asian American women administrators in particular? Much of the current research has focused on the experiences of Black women administrators (Allen, Jacobson & Lomotey, 1995; Gaetane, 2005; Holmes et al., 2005; Moses, 1997; Patitu, 2003; Smith & Crawford, 2007; Tyson, 2002), and this group of women has also had the benefit and support of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) to call their educational home. By contrast, research on Asian American women administrators is extremely scarce, and there are currently no institutions that have been dedicated to serving the needs of this population (W. Chiang, personal communication, May 14, 2010). Given that the number of Asian American women students, graduate students and degree recipients at all levels is rising (NCES, 2004, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c, 2009d), researchers can no longer afford to ignore this growing population of women in American higher education.

This study will provide insights into how race and ethnicity factor into the mentoring relationship, particularly at critical career junctures; my goal is to also identify specific mentoring activities that Asian American women identify as being most beneficial. This
information could provide higher education with a better grasp of how to develop formal and informal mentoring programs that will better fit the needs of Asian American women administrators, which in turn could aid them in their career advancement.

The lack of the Asian American female voice in higher education administration also means that in the policy-making and budgetary arenas, there is virtually no representation of this particular racial category; and the absence of Asian American role models in senior administrative positions is a disservice to the growing numbers of Asian American students, lower-level administrators and higher education as a whole. Hopefully, this study will provide some information as to how Asian American women administrators perceive their gender and ethnicity affecting their career advancement; perhaps if the intersection of these factors were more fully understood, higher education could introduce more efforts to support this population, thus increasing the likelihood that more Asian American women will advance to senior administrative positions.

Finally, as noted earlier, what is currently known about women administrator of color is based largely on research conducted on Black administrators—the Asian American population has been largely ignored. In short, what is currently known about the experiences of women administrators of color may or may not apply to Asian American women, and this study will help shed some much-needed light on the issues facing this particular racial group.

**Research Design**

Since my goal is to gain detailed, in-depth understanding of a relatively small number of Asian American women administrators, as well as how mentors impacted their decision-making process at a critical career juncture, a qualitative approach will best fit the purpose of this study (Ragin, Nagel & White, 2003). Also, as Museus (2007) notes, qualitative methods are
recommended when researching marginalized populations, as members of these groups may not experience campus culture in the same way as majority populations.

**Limitations of the Study**

One clear limitation to this study will be its small sample size. Because Asian American senior women administrators are so few, it will likely be difficult to find enough individuals who are willing to participate. This will mean that the results will be applicable only to those women involved in this study, and not to other Asian American women administrators. Since there is great diversity among the various racial groups that are labeled as Asian American (Collison, 2000; Dervarics, 2009; Ng et al., 2007; Schaefer, 2008; Wong & Halgin, 2006), it would be a mistake, for example, to assume that the experiences of a Japanese American senior administrator would be the same as those of a female senior administrator from Cambodia. Because this is a qualitative study, the goal is to gain a deeper understanding of the individuals involved and the research questions at hand, not to attempt to generalize the findings to others.

Because one of the sources of potential participants will be institutions that are well-known for their Asian American studies programs, my sample will no doubt be influenced by this. While the overall mission of these institutions would not be devoted to Asian Americans (as is the case with HBCUs serving the Black population), it can be anticipated that the work environment for women at these institutions is somehow qualitatively different than the work environment at schools in which Asian American studies programs have not been established.

Finally, my own status as an Asian American senior administrator is a factor which I will need to keep in mind as I am conducting interviews and analyzing the data. I must be constantly mindful of how my own experiences will bias my interpretations.
Definition of Terms

For this study, senior women administrators are defined as those women who serve above the director level in such positions as dean, vice president, provost or president (Glazer-Raymo, 1999, 2002; Johnsrud & Heck, 1994; Rickard, 1992). As noted earlier in this chapter, Asian American women administrators are defined by Ng et al. (2007) as administrators who self-identify as being of Asian descent in the United States; such individuals would include Chinese, Asian Indian, Filipina, Indian, Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese women, as well as other Southeast Asian groups such as Laotian, Hmong and Cambodian. Pacific Islanders, which include racial groups such as Native Hawaiian, Polynesian, Samoan, Fijian, Papua New Guinean and Tahitian, are also often included in the umbrella category of Asian American (Schaefer, 2008); such women may also be included in this study.

Finally, O’Reilly’s (2001) definition of a mentor—a person who is more experienced and assists in the career development of a more junior member by teaching, coaching, providing advocacy, and serving as a role model—will be used.

Overview of the Study

In this chapter, I have provided an introduction to this study, which outlines the current state of senior women administrators of color in American higher education, and specifically the severe lack of Asian American senior women administrators.

Chapter Two will include a review of the relevant bodies of literature that relate to this topic, namely: 1) the historical reasons for this inequity; 2) the issues facing women administrators of color in American higher education; 3) issues specific to Asian American women administrators, along with the current status of these women in American higher education, and; 4) the various forms of mentoring that have been shown to have an impact on
women administrators of color. The primary reasons for the continued lack of women administrators of color—a culture dominated by White men, racism, sexism, feelings of isolation and gender-typed family concerns—will be discussed in detail.

The third chapter will outline my overall research design, indicating the methods which will be utilized to gather data, the rationale for those methods, as well as my sampling techniques and methods of data analysis and reporting the data. In Chapter Four, I will present the findings of my study. In the final chapter, I will summarize those findings, discuss them in light of the relevant literature and the research questions posed, and make recommendations for practice and future research.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Overview

As noted in Chapter One, senior women administrators of color, and specifically Asian American women administrators, are seriously underrepresented in American higher education, and mentors have been shown to make a difference in their career advancement. In order to best understand the research topic at hand, it is necessary first to gain an understanding of several key areas: 1) the involvement of women in American higher education, particularly women of color; 2) the current issues faced by women administrators of color in the higher education setting; 3) issues specific to Asian American women administrators, and; 4) the definition, various types, and impact of mentoring relationships, focusing on these relationships in relation to women administrators of color. This chapter will examine each of these areas in turn.

Involvement of Women in American Higher Education

A Historical Lack of Equity. For much of American higher education history, women were absent from or underrepresented in the nation’s colleges and universities. A university education, originally intended for and designed to prepare members of the clergy, was exclusively for men (Brubacher & Rudy, 2004). Beginning in the latter part of the twentieth century, however, women outpaced men in college and university enrollments. The passage of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, coupled with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, had a tremendous positive impact on access and employment for persons of color and women, respectively (Brubacher & Rudy, 2004; Nidiffer, 2002; Somers, 2002).

In addition, Affirmative Action, while controversial, demonstrated the nation’s support of more individuals from traditionally underrepresented groups gaining a university education (Gutmann, 1987). Women of color were now in a position to attempt to gain some of the same
educational opportunities that had been available to men for centuries, and recent years have seen a steady rise in the number of female college students of color, as well as women graduates of color (Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac, 2006 – 2007; NCES, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c, 2009e).

Other changes in recent decades have also altered the face of higher education for women of color. The creation of women’s studies programs and the inclusion of feminist perspectives across disciplines have pushed the concerns of women and women of color to the forefront. In that same time frame, there has also been an increase in women faculty, women administrators, and the percentage of women as full-time employees (Gerdes, 2006).

**Lack of Women Administrators.** Yet despite these gains in access and overall numbers in the female college and university population, a definite lack of equity still exists between women and men in higher education administration. Between 1981 and 1991, the number of Black, American Indian, Asian American and Hispanic women administrators more than doubled; however, their proportional representation only increased from 4 percent to 6 percent (Ottinger & Sikula, cited in Opp & Gosetti, 2002). One study comparing men and women at different ranks within doctoral institutions of higher education found that at the current rate of increase, it will take women 90 years to be equally represented in the administration, and that the gender gap in salaries has increased since 1975 (Alpert, 1989). Thus while legislation such as Title IX may have helped women gain access, it appears its impact has not yet been strongly felt in the administrative arena. Women also continue to lack promotional opportunities, and have been found to have less autonomy and closer supervision than their male counterparts (Chiu, 1998; Reisser & Zurfluh, 1986). These findings demonstrate that women administrators are still disadvantaged in college and university settings.
The types of jobs typically held by women also illustrate the lack of equity in the higher education environment. Women tend to be clustered in entry-level positions, and are more likely to be in staff positions or jobs peripheral to the primary mission of the institution such as counseling, advising and programming (Johnsrud & Heck, 1994). Another study investigating the progress of women and minority college administrators for chief administrator and director-level positions indicates that women and minorities show different patterns of progress in salaries and appointments (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2007; Reiss, 1999; Rickard, 1992). In short, disparities still exist between women and men in terms of the level of jobs held, the rate of promotion and salary levels.

Some progress has been made by women in higher education administration, but only up to a certain level. As was noted in Chapter One, women have been well represented in administrative, managerial and director-level positions in American colleges and universities since the 1970s (NCES, 1995; Johnsrud & Heck, 1994; Twombly & Rosser, 2002). Yet women, and particularly women of color, still lag far behind their male counterparts in senior level administrative positions such as dean, vice president, provost and president (Glazer-Raymo, 1999, 2002; Johnsrud & Heck, 1994; Rickard, 1992). This same phenomenon is mirrored in the corporate world, as women are more often found in what is known as the “buffer zone”—the administrative level just below the CEOs—since top positions are deemed “highly unlikely” to be held by women (Zweigenhaft & Domhoff, 1998, p. 61).

There has been a surge in recent years of research focusing on the struggles of women faculty of color in higher education (Hamilton, 2004; Li & Beckett, 2006; Opp & Gosetti, 2002; Turner, 2002; Walton & McDade, 2001); however, there is still a relatively small amount of research and subsequent literature focusing on senior women administrators, and even less
devoted to the topic of senior women administrators of color. Why most of these women are still unable to reach the highest levels of higher education administration will be explored in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

Issues Facing Senior Women Administrators of Color

A Culture Dominated by White Men. Despite the gains in enrollment and degree attainment noted earlier, women of color are still significantly underrepresented in positions that have been historically dominated by White men in American higher education: leadership positions, Board of Trustee positions, and in the faculty ranks in traditionally male-dominated fields of study (Gerdes, 2006). Even today, as another researcher notes, “…the institutional culture of most universities is not compatible with the needs and concerns of women in academia” (Glazer-Raymo, 1999).

One theory provides an interesting explanation for these women’s feelings and experiences. Poplin and Rusch (1994) posit that the American higher education system discourages diversity due to “embedded assumptions” that favor White men. Individuals interpret social reality through the culture’s underlying rules and systems of control; and due to the embedded nature of these rules and systems of control, we “uncritically accept them as correct and natural and reinforce that acceptance through the patterns of communication and behavior we internalize” (Poplin & Rusch, 1994, p. 3). In other words, the fact that women administrators feel the need to communicate and interact with their White male counterparts only in dominant cultural ways is evidence that the embedded assumptions that Poplin and Rusch describe are being reinforced. The culture’s underlying rules are being used to explain behavior, rather than attributing the behavior to something that is perhaps more discriminatory.
The uncovering of such assumptions and norms in the academy is paralleled by the tenets of critical race theory (CRT), which focuses on discrimination through subordination, and race and gender as social constructions. A CRT framework emphasizes both race and racism, and centralizes these factors while also addressing the intersection of racism with other forms of subordination based on gender, class, sexuality, culture, and language (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Donahoo, 2008; Lopez, 2003; Smith, Yosso & Solorzano, 2007). In short, it allows for an examination of the interconnectivity of race, racism and gender through institutions in society (in this case, colleges and universities), and how those structures serve to perpetuate and validate existing dominant practices. CRT could help explain why there remain so few senior women administrators of color, as such individuals would be seen as pushing against the prevailing social construct of the type of person who should typically hold these positions in American higher education.

The White male dominant culture in American higher education is also evidenced by what one author describes as the “double bind” experienced by women leaders (Switzer, 2006, p. 1). If women act in ways that are more in accord with stereotypically male leadership characteristics, they may be perceived as pushy, rude and aggressive; however, if they are seen as being more relational, emotional and people-oriented—traditionally female leadership characteristics—they can be viewed as passive and weak. This same author notes that while many organizational environments are beginning to value such people-oriented skills and collaborative leadership styles, women still remain largely absent in higher education leadership roles.

Women’s tendency to rely on relationships for support and to foster personal growth is supported by the tenets of relational cultural theory (RCT), which focuses on “ongoing, growth-
fostering connection as critical to women’s development” (Jordan, 1986; Surrey, 1985, cited in Liang, Tracy, Taylor, Williams, Jordan & Miller, 2002, p. 25). Unlike most traditional psychosocial theories, RCT focuses on connection rather than individuation as the ultimate developmental goal. Each of the three major growth-fostering characteristics of relationships that have been identified by relational cultural theorists and researchers—mutual engagement; authenticity, and; empowerment/zest—focus not on the individual but on the collaborative nature of the developmental process (Liang et al., 2002). These characteristics, however, are not what are typically valued in the upper levels of higher education administration; thus if women continue to be best served by such relationship-oriented characteristics, they will likely have a more difficult time trying to advance in their careers in an environment that continues to value more traditional male-oriented leadership characteristics.

**Sexism, Racism, or Both?** Because research results are often aggregated within race and ethnicity reports (Tyson, 2002), it is sometimes difficult to determine the exact relationship between these two issues. A study by Anderson and Williams, however, does demonstrate considerable evidence that women experience sexism at work from male colleagues, and that marginalization is accentuated by other differences such as ethnicity (as cited in Cotterill & Letherby, 2005). Thus, while more needs to be learned about this intersection between gender and race, there is widespread acknowledgement that they form a complex set of relationships that are “produced, challenged, and transformed every day” within the context of higher education (Schramm, 2002, p. 88), which suggests that women of color are particularly disadvantaged.

Despite the low numbers from which research participants can be drawn, it is widely accepted that barriers exist for women of color in higher education administration, and that these differ depending on the woman’s specific race. For Black women, key barriers include social
climate, historical institutional barriers, racism, lack of organizational support and promotional opportunities. There is also a persistent institutional notion that there is only room for a few minorities in senior positions (Tyson, 2002). For American Indian women, very little is known since the lack of research reflects the very small number of these women holding leadership positions (Grady, 2002). In the Asian American population, women are nearly absent as senior-level administrators, despite their large numbers as students. Culturally, these women are taught to be docile and reserved; at work, they are required to be aggressive, self-assured and decisive, a clear clash of values that is difficult for them to overcome (Ideta, 2002). Latina women administrators are most likely to serve in two-year and community college settings, and face additional stress because of more rigid and traditional sex-role norms and expectations (Grady, 2002). While some of these barriers may be intrinsic to specific cultures rather than imposed by colleges and universities themselves, they nonetheless represent issues that illustrate the difficulties these women face that are not experienced by men.

Gaetane (2005) notes that while greater access and increased opportunities for Black women in higher education has resulted since the Brown v. Board of Education decision, these women still experience bias and discrimination. A study of twenty women leaders in American and British higher education found that these women felt their rise was due more to their success and personal style, not a change in higher education’s view of women (Walton, 1996). In another study of Black women administrators in HBCUs, it was noted that Black women, including faculty and administrators on historically Black campuses, experience and must deal with not only the effects of racism but also those of sexism (Jones & Gooden, 2003); in fact, racism and sexism are so fused in a given situation that it is difficult to discern which is which.
(Moses, 1997). The fact that these issues are present even at an HBCU demonstrates the prevalence of the problem.

Not surprisingly, salary inequity continues to be the most common manifestation of sexism, although sexual harassment and unfair treatment still occur (Bobitt-Zeher, 2007; Gerdes, 2006; Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Reiss, 1999). Glazer-Raymo (1999) also maintains that while overt discrimination is less prevalent today, women of color are still hitting the glass ceiling and have to work harder or be better in order to succeed in higher education’s predominantly White male hierarchy.

Smith and Crawford’s study of seven Black female senior administrators at two- and four-year private and public institutions in New York state found that all described their institutions as environments that were unaccustomed to leaders of color, and that the Black women were “victimized by subtle but powerful ethnic, gender and/or sexual harassment” (2007, p. 252). Again, racism and sexism were closely related in creating a negative working environment for these women administrators of color.

Ultimately, however, the issue of race seems to play a more prominent role than gender in some circumstances. While student affairs appears to be a field in which it is easier for women administrators to advance (Opp & Gosetti, 2000), one study indicates that the typical female student affairs officer is characteristically middle-aged, heterosexually married, has been in the field for more than ten years, and is White (Randall, 1995). In looking at the number of women administrators in five racial and ethnic groups (White, Black, Hispanic, Asian American, American Indian) from 1991 to 1997, it was shown that White women experienced by far the largest increase in proportional representation, and that increases in women administrators of color have occurred primarily at institutions that have served their respective underrepresented
constituencies (Opp & Gosetti, 2000). This is a particular problem for Asian American women administrators, as there are no designated Asian American-serving institutions (W. Chiang, personal communication, May 14, 2010). The conclusion is that in American higher education, race is often a more salient factor than gender for women administrators, at least with regard to career attainment.

Feelings of Isolation. A third factor contributing to the lack of senior women administrators of color is the strong feelings of isolation they experience; such emotions are well documented in the literature (Gaetane, 2005; Gerdes, 2006; Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Luna & Medina, 2006). Even in environments in which it would be expected women of color would feel more comfortable, isolation is still a problem. In one study, Black women administrators at HBCUs found it necessary to frequently turn to their spiritual beliefs as a way to cope with their feelings of isolation, as well as to their families and communities for support and a sense of self-worth (Gaetane, 2005). As Smith and Crawford (2007) note, “Minority faculty and administrators encounter significant barriers on predominantly White campuses, including isolation, loneliness, and racially motivated victimization, which inhibit their academic success and tenure” (p. 253). Simply put, these women are vastly outnumbered, and must struggle to find ways to cope with their feelings of isolation.

The “chilly climate” discussed by Sandler and Hall (1986, p. 2) is another factor that leads to feelings of isolation for women in higher education. Their report outlined the many subtle inequities that all women—including faculty and administrators—experience in colleges and universities. As participants in a historically male enterprise, the researchers found, among other issues, that women administrators remain concentrated in a small number of low-status areas that are traditionally viewed as women’s fields, and that women in more central
administrative areas frequently find themselves locked into “associate” or assistant-to” positions. Women administrators are often subjected to overtly disparaging remarks, are ignored, and interrupted more often in discussions than their male peers. Women administrators of color in particular faced the “double discrimination” effects based on both race and sex, and are even more likely to be excluded from the informal and social aspects of their departments, leading to increased isolation (Sandler & Hall, 1986, p. 13).

**Gender-Typed Family Concerns.** One final factor that is a possible reason why women administrators of color have difficulty advancing to senior administrative positions pertains to their gender-typed choices regarding their families. This is yet another issue facing women, and not just women of color, that is well documented in the literature. Almost half the women in one study stated that they had problems balancing career and family demands, faced childcare problems, that more was expected of women than men in this regard, and that women have to make choices that men do not (Gerdes, 2006). Another study of fifteen women college presidents (ten White, four Black, one Hispanic) indicated that only one of the women had children at home during her presidency, and most had delayed their move to senior administration until their children were grown (Switzer, 2006). The implication seems to be that in order to be a successful woman, one must choose between a career and family.

The question must then be asked—do men with families experience these same struggles, or is this a phenomenon that is experienced primarily by women? Older studies seemed to indicate that women simply chose to focus more of their attention on responsibilities within the household and not on the work environment (Becker, 1981, 1985; Veroff, Douvan & Kulka, 1981), or that women simply could not imagine themselves in demanding administrative jobs due to an orientation toward traditional female roles and a lack of socialization into typically
male-dominated leadership roles (Wolf & Fligstein, 1979). The argument here was that women, unlike men, chose not to pursue demanding jobs or careers because they were happier in the home, had been socialized to believe that other roles were inappropriate for women, or that senior administrative positions were beyond their level of ability.

More recent research, however, points to a far less benign explanation. In a study of young men and women, while most believed that both men and women could aspire to virtually any job, they also acknowledged that gender inequities still exist in the workplace (Tinklin et al., 2005). In another study evaluating opinion changes in both men and women from 1974 to 1998, it was found that while women’s participation in family responsibilities has liberalized over the past 25 years, the rate of attitude change is slowing. That same study also noted the attitude that “…women are primarily responsible for making a comfortable home and providing care for children” still prevails (Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004, p. 769). A study of women college presidents also noted that while some of these women have part-time help that was provided by the institution, they still carried the primary responsibility for making sure that household tasks were done, even if they did not carry out all of the tasks personally (Switzer, 2006).

It would appear, then, that women do face more pressure than men with regard to family responsibilities, and that this could be a contributing factor to their low representation in senior administrative roles in higher education. In addition, there is some evidence indicating that women of color, particularly Latinas, face additional stress because gender-role expectations within their culture are particularly strong (Grady, 2002). And for all these women, the fact that their key career advancement years also coincide with prime childbearing years no doubt compounds this problem.
In summary, despite more than sufficient numbers of women of color with the proper academic credentials, they remain underrepresented in senior administrative positions in American higher education. A White male-dominated culture, sexism, racism, feelings of isolation and gender-typed family concerns appear to be the primary reasons for this continued disparity. These women need help in order to persist in their careers, and the existing culture of higher education is not providing them with the necessary environment for success.

**Issues Specific to Asian American Senior Women Administrators**

As noted in Chapter One, recent years have seen Asian American women enrolled in graduate study in increasing numbers, and also earning more doctoral degrees than ever before (NCES, 2009a, 2009c, 2009e). Yet this group of women remains at the bottom of the list in relation to other women of color who are college presidents and provosts, despite the fact that they are earning more doctorates than other racial categories such as Hispanic and Native American women (Committee of 100, 2005; Glazer-Raymo, 2002; Hune, 1998; NCES, 2009a). In short, this particular group of women is seriously underrepresented in higher education administration as a whole, and are almost non-existent as college and university presidents (Ideta, 2002; Museus & Chang, 2009). Why is this so?

**Brief Historical Background.** The first wave of Asian immigration to the United States began in the mid 1800s, mainly for economic betterment and future prosperity; the first recorded Chinese immigration was as early as 1785 (Ng et al., 2007; Wong, 1998). The discovery of gold in California resulted in large numbers of Chinese immigrants coming to the United States between the years of 1848 – 1882; by 1870, the Chinese constituted 8.6 percent of the workforce (Takaki, 1982). By 1882, their numbers had expanded to the point that Congress deemed it necessary to prohibit further immigration via the Chinese Exclusion Act (Wong, 1998).
Japanese immigrants came to the United States in 1868, and were viewed as a threat to White America, introducing and reinforcing the image of “yellow peril.” In 1903, Koreans arrived to work the sugar plantations; Asian Indians followed in 1907, and Filipinos in 1908. Congress again responded to the influx via legislation, and passed the Immigration Act in 1924 (also known as the Oriental Exclusion Act), which barred further entry of Asians into the United States (Wong, 1998). It is notable that the Naturalization Law, passed by Congress in 1790 before large numbers of Asians had began to enter the country, enabled them to serve in the labor force; yet they were not permitted to become citizens or participate in government, ensuring their lower status (Takaki, 1982).

World War II brought an even stronger government stance against Asian Americans, with Japanese Americans being specifically targeted. The signing of Executive Order 9066 in February 1942, which authorized the internment of more than 110,000 Japanese Americans in camps throughout the United States following Japan’s bombing of Pearl Harbor, can perhaps be viewed as the culmination of the government’s growing unease with the status of Asian Americans in the United States, as the Order was carried out without evidence that any Japanese American had conspired against the country (Schaefer, 2008; Weglyn, 1976). After the war ended, suspicions against Japanese Americans began to soften somewhat, as demonstrated by the unanimous Supreme Court decision on December 18, 1944 in Ex Parte Mitsuye Endo, which held that no loyal American citizen could be detained by the government. Yet on that same day in a split decision, the Court also upheld the constitutionality of Executive Order 9066 in Korematsu v. United States, citing that the need to maintain national security at the time the Order was executed outweighed individual rights. Executive Order 9066 was eventually revoked
via Proclamation 4417 by President Gerald R. Ford on February 19, 1976, the thirty-fourth anniversary of the original Order.

**The Model Minority Stereotype.** The shift in public opinion from Asian Americans as the enemy to the belief that they were productive citizens took place in a relatively short span of time. Following World War II, and particularly since the 1960s, the press has portrayed Asian Americans as a “model minority” (Ng et al., 2007; Osajima, 1988; Schaefer, 2008; Suzuki, 2002; Wong & Halgin, 2006). The term was originally attached specifically to Japanese Americans by sociologist William Peterson, mainly on the basis of the group’s overall educational attainment and strong sense of pride and respect for authority, which resulted in the perception that they are educationally and vocationally successful (Peterson, 1966). Asian Americans were seen as achieving the American Dream through their hard work, intelligence, patience and strong family structure and stability. Popular culture in the 1970s and 1980s extolled the virtues of this model minority, reporting on the success of Japanese Americans in particular and depicting a positive image and desirable values such as drive to succeed, sacrifice for children and strong family ties (Newsweek, 1971, 1982, 1984).

This stereotype, however, has had negative ramifications as well. Ancheta (2000) notes that there are two primary forms of racialization faced by Asian Americans: racialization as non-Americans, coupled with racialization as the model minority. As a result, Asian Americans as a group are in a no-win position—ostracized by the White majority, and subject to racial tensions with other minorities due to their perceived success. The stereotype also ignores the fact that not all Asian Americans are high achieving academically, and broad “truths” depicting all Asian Americans as intelligent can serve to drive an even deeper wedge between them and other ethnic and racial groups (Ng et al., 2007).
The model minority stereotype has also resulted in some ironic racial twists. Lee (2006) notes that because Asian Americans are typically viewed in such a positive light, they have been in essence “de-minoritized,” and largely ignored in terms of racial issues as a result. Asian Americans have even begun to be grouped with Whites as victims of Affirmative Action (Takagi, 1992; Wu & Kidder, 2006), further evidence that their racial background is viewed as a non-issue. The admissions controversy of the 1980s, in which Asian American activists charged that campus administrators had placed a cap on Asian enrollments at elite universities, furthered the notion that there were too many Asians being admitted (Byung & Hinton, 2009; Ng et al., 2007). Also within the higher education setting, researchers have noted that this stereotype penalizes Asian American women in particular by assuming that they do not need academic or professional guidance and support; as a result, such services are often lacking for this population (Hune, 1998; Liang, Lee & Ting, 2002).

One study found that student affairs administrators had more positive feelings toward Asian American students in situations versus those same situations in which race was not identified. Answers to questions such as, “You see a group of young men loitering by your car” versus “You see a group of young Asian men loitering by your car,” and “A student offers to fix your computer” versus “An Asian student offers to fix your computer” demonstrated that the administrators in the study subscribed to the stereotype that Asian Americans are docile, peaceful and even good with computers (Liang & Sedlacek, 2000). One of the authors in that study even had to refer an Asian American student to counseling, because his peers kept asking him for computer-related help and would not interact with him on any other basis. In short, the model minority stereotype, viewed by many as having only positive ramifications, can serve to mask the issues that Asian Americans are facing in colleges and universities.
Other Barriers. In addition to the model minority stereotype, research has shown that the higher education setting poses particular problems for Asian Americans, and for Asian American women in particular. An inhospitable campus climate, being evaluated differently than men and other minorities, lack of a sense of community with their colleagues, invisibility and marginalization are some of the issues cited by one researcher (Hune, 1998). These women also face stereotypes and barriers due to sexism and an image of Asian American women as reserved, exotic, submissive and eager to please (Collison, 2000; Ideta, 2002; Ng et al, 2007). Such stereotypes feed into the notion that these women do not have the right leadership qualities to assume top-level administrative positions.

Similarly, the retention of traditional Asian values such as deference to authority, humility, preferring harmony over conflict and attending to group needs over individual desires has been observed in even fourth-generation Asian Americans (Lum, 2005, 2008; Min, 1995). These values are in conflict with what have been traditionally valued as leadership traits in the United States, and could pose a barrier for Asian American women seeking senior administrative positions.

Current Status of Asian Americans in American Higher Education. Perhaps because Asian Americans have long been viewed as high achievers in education, research on this population remains extremely limited (Museus & Chang, 2009). There is, however, a growing body of dissertation research focusing on Asian American women administrators, although not all of it has taken place in the higher education setting (Chung, 2008; Ideta, 1996; Lee, 1998; Manlove, 2004; Naber-Fisher, 2009; Pacis, 2005; Wiking, 2001). This body of research also emphasizes that further study is needed, as little is known about this particular group of women.
There is larger body of research on Asian American students. One study indicates that the current campus climate for this population still includes racism, social adjustment issues and experiences with stereotypes; these negative experiences have been correlated with depression (Cress & Ikeda, 2003). Other problems facing Asian American students include: communication and language problems for some groups; family economic status, which can affect students’ educational experience; first versus second generation issues affecting academic achievement; prevalence of prejudices against non-White foreigners, especially against women, and; the quota system that can negatively impact Asian Americans due to their large numbers in higher education (Bhattacharyya, 2001).

One positive sign is the recent emergence of many Asian American studies programs on college and university campuses, largely due to an increase in enrollment from Asian American students (Bhattacharyya, 2001; Ng et al., 2007). In addition, Asian Americans as an overall group have developed an upwardly mobile ethnic identity. This identity, however, has raised tensions in schools where some fear that Asian Americans will “take over” classrooms, raise test scores, and generally make life more difficult for other students (Ng et al., 2007, p. 95). These authors and others also note the danger of lumping all Asian Americans together as one group when conducting research and forming conclusions, when in fact large differences may exist between ethnicities (Collison, 2000; Dervarics, 2009; Ng et al., 2007; Wong & Halgin, 2006). Studies in which data have been disaggregated (Escueta & O’Brien, 1991; Hsia & Hirano-Nakanishi, 1995; Hune & Chan, 1997) reveal marked differences between ethnic groups, with Southeast Asian American groups experiencing lower high school completion than other Asian American subgroups, and debunking the model minority myth.
Asian American administrators, as noted in Chapter One, remain underrepresented in both administrative and faculty positions (Museus & Chang, 2009), and are even more severely underrepresented among the chief executive officer positions (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2000; Lum, 2008). One author notes that while women and ethnic minorities serving in college presidencies have increased in recent years, Asian Americans have not kept pace. In 2004, there were only 57 colleges or universities in the entire United States that were led by Asian Americans, and most of those presidents were male (Lum, 2005). That same author notes that in 2005, there were only five Asian Americans leading public universities in the United States, and only one of those presidents was female (Lum, 2008).

There does appear to be a growing concern that little research is being conducted on Asian Americans in the higher education setting; in fact, prior to the 1960s, no research on Asian Americans in higher education had been conducted (Suzuki, 2002). Even today, there is far more research being conducted on Asian American students as opposed to faculty or administrators; and research on Asian American women administrators is virtually nonexistent.

Museus & Chang (2009) outline four reasons for the lack of research on Asian Americans in higher education. The first is the chronic burden of demystifying myths about Asian Americans, particularly the model minority stereotype. Despite research that debunks this myth (Escueta & O’Brien, 1991; Hsia & Hirano-Nakanishi, 1995; Hune & Chan, 1997), it remains a barrier to justifying studies in this area.

Second, because the model minority stereotype is so prevalent, research on Asian Americans requires additional justification. The persistent view that all Asian Americans are successful and well-integrated into American higher education leads to the belief that this
population does not need assistance, and researchers who concentrate their attention on this population are accused of having too narrow a scholarly focus.

Third, there is a lack of resources available to facilitate research for this population. Some funding agencies, such as the National Science Foundation, do not even include Asian Americans in their definition of underrepresented racial minority groups, and consequently do not allocate funds toward studying this population (Museus & Chang, 2009).

Finally, the lack of scholarship in this area means that there is little that researchers can draw upon to provide a context for their work. This empirical void means that the knowledge base that is typically present in the literature and used to ground research questions and formulate studies is not available. Simply put, there is very little existing knowledge to build upon. Researchers must draw upon related literature (in the case of this research topic, the literature related to other senior women administrators of color) as a starting point.

In the end, however, none of these reasons justifies the continued lack of research on Asian American women administrators in higher education. As noted by Museus & Chang (2009, p. 102), “Failure to examine particular populations carefully leads not only to faulty stereotypes about individuals of certain groups and their cultures, but also to magnifying inequities in educational opportunities and outcomes.” In addition, lack of empirical information about Asian Americans can lead to faulty decision making regarding critical higher education policy issues such as college admissions, financial aid and cultural literacy (Chang, 2008).

Clearly, significant barriers remain for Asian American women in the higher education setting. These women experience all of the issues that impact other women administrators of color—a culture dominated by White men, sexism and racism, feelings of isolation and gender-typed choices regarding their families—and are also subject to other barriers, most significantly
those perpetuated by the impact of the model minority stereotype and images of Asian American women as being docile and reserved, and thus not leadership material. There does appear to be one factor, however, that has made a significant difference for women of color, including Asian American women, when faced with these problems—the use of mentors (Lum, 2008).

As noted in Chapter One, a great deal of research has been conducted on the importance of mentoring relationships. Most relevant to this study, connection with mentors and other women of color has been shown to be of critical importance to the success and advancement of women and women administrators of color (Blackhurst, 2000; Chandler, 1996; Holmes et al., 2007; Hubbard & Robinson, 1998; Switzer, 2006; Turner, 2007). The various forms of mentoring, and issues affecting the mentoring relationship, will be outlined in the next section of this chapter.

Forms of Mentoring

Career Mentoring. Perhaps the most traditional view of mentoring refers to what is known in the literature as career mentoring. This form of mentoring is focused primarily on job-related functions, and the mentor guides the protégé in his or her career advancement efforts. Coaching, providing challenging assignments, visibility within the work environment and sponsorship are some of the functions that typically fall within this category of mentoring (Allen & Eby, 2004; Chandler, 1996; Chao, Walz & Gardner, 1992; Kram, 1985). To date, this form of mentoring has received the greatest amount of attention in the literature, and most definitions of the term “mentoring” tend to focus on these types of activities.

Psychosocial Mentoring. Other aspects of the mentoring relationship are now receiving more attention in the literature; namely, the psychosocial aspects. These functions enhance the protégé’s sense of competence and self-image through such activities as role modeling,
friendship, counseling, acceptance, confirmation and even involvement in social activities outside the work environment (Allen & Eby, 2004; Chandler, 1996; Chao et al., 1992; Kram, 1985). Some studies indicate that women tend to value these aspects of the mentoring relationship as much, if not more, than career mentoring functions; in one recent study, women identified championing behaviors, as well as acceptance and confirmation, to be more important than men (Levesque, O’Neill, Nelson & Dumas, 2006).

**Formal versus Informal.** There is some debate in the literature about the relative value of formal versus informal mentoring relationships. Formal mentors are the result of some type of institutionally-sanctioned assignment or matching process, are initiated by a third party, and often require considerable resources from the organization to establish and maintain (Armstrong et al., 2002; Chao et al., 1992; Noe, 1988; Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Typically, a formal mentoring relationship also has a timeframe associated with it, and the mentor and protégé are matched for a set period of time, usually six months to one year (Armstrong et al., 2002; Noe, 1988). Establishing formal relationships is cited as a way for organizations to reduce employee turnover, improve job performance, and socialize employees into the organization (Viator, 1999). Another potential advantage of formal mentoring programs is that they have the benefit of ultimately creating an environment that is then more conducive to the formation of naturally-forming relationships, which aids in the development of a more positive overall work environment (Kilian, Hukai & McCarty, 2005).

Some argue, however, that formal mentoring systems violate the true spirit of mentoring, and can create suspicion and superficial alliances (Armstrong et al., 2002). Effective mentor matching could be the answer to these potential problems, although few studies have outlined specific strategies for how this matching process might best be achieved. Formal mentoring
programs are also relatively short-term, and because they are mandated by the institution, one
could argue that there may be less commitment from the mentor and protégé due to the fact that
their participation in the relationship is not voluntary.

By contrast, informal mentoring relationships are defined as those that spontaneously
evolve through a process of mutual selection, and are typically more lasting—many last several
years or more (Armstrong et al., 2002; Chao et al., 1992; Noe, 1988). These types of
relationships can begin by either the protégé approaching an individual already within the
organization, or vice versa. In some cases, protégés can establish both formal and informal
relationships, and the option of developing informal relationships is often considered important
(Wilson, Valentine & Pereira, 2002). In fact, some research indicates that informal mentoring
relationships result in greater benefits than formal relationships in both the career and
psychosocial areas, and that those individuals with informal mentors reported greater satisfaction
overall with the mentoring relationship (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Other data, however, show
that while informal relationships can be more beneficial, the difference in satisfaction between
informal and formal mentoring is not very significant (Chao et al., 1992)

Because most American colleges and universities are still dominated by White men and
women administrators, it is likely more difficult for women of color to obtain access to informal
mentors (Chandler, 1996; Welch, 1993). Individuals tend to be drawn to and form relationships
with those who are most like themselves; and if there are few women administrators of color to
choose from, these women are at a distinct disadvantage in the higher education setting with
regard to mentoring.

**Gender and Race Considerations.** There is a significant amount of research indicating that
gender combinations in mentoring relationships make a difference in the nature and quality of
the relationship; and while research results are mixed, the tendency appears to be that mentors, regardless of gender, provide more psychosocial mentoring to women, and more career mentoring to men (Allen & Eby, 2004; Armstrong et al., 2002; Burke & McKeen, 1990; Holmes et al., 2007; Schrodt, Stringer-Cawyer & Sanders, 2003). In addition, it has been found that female mentors consistently provide more psychosocial mentoring to their female protégés, and are more likely to engage in after-work, social activities with them as well (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). One study also found that women identified championing behaviors, acceptance and confirmation to be more important in a mentoring relationship than their male counterparts (Levesque et al., 2006). One interpretation of these findings is that overall, women are receiving less support and advice in job-related matters, which could be a barrier to their career advancement.

Cross-gender mentoring relationships can prove problematic for women, as both men and women may be inclined to assume traditional stereotypical gender roles, thus constraining mentoring behavior (Welch, 1993). Cross-gender relationships also carry a certain stigma for women, as the relationship can potentially be viewed as being inappropriate or too intimate (Noe, 1988; Pillsbury et al., 1999; Welch, 1993). Yet since most mentoring relationships are hierarchical in nature, and most upper-level administrative positions are still occupied by men, research shows that women are more likely to have opposite sex mentors (Levesque et al., 2006). The persistence of these cross-gender views is particularly problematic for women seeking mentoring relationships to help them advance in their careers.

Research also reveals another interesting finding: a study of 1,258 men and women from a variety of occupations revealed that—after controlling for position tenure, number of career interruptions, occupation, length of prior mentoring relationships and whether those relationships
involved formal or informal mentors and supervisory or non-supervisory mentors—both male and female protégés with a history of male mentors reported more compensation than protégés with a history of female mentors (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). There appears to be a significant relationship between the presence of a male mentor and salary, which may be linked to the fact that men still typically hold more power within organizations, and can thus better assist their protégés with career outcomes. In short, women may feel more comfortable with and be more likely to choose female mentors, but that choice could prove detrimental to their careers in a financial sense.

In addition to gender, there is also a growing body of research dealing with race considerations in the mentor/protégé relationship, with some studies indicating that having a mentor of the same race or ethnicity is helpful due to the particular discriminatory barriers and sense of isolation that women of color face (Holmes et al., 2007; Ragins, 1997; Stanley & Lincoln, 2005; Welch, 1993). For women administrators of color, however, this scenario is improbable given the low numbers of women of color in academe. Mentors often seek protégés who are like themselves, in an effort to “replicate themselves” (Allen et al., 1995, p. 411); and since so many administrators continue to be White men, women of color run into a wall. Race, even more than gender, can prove to be a primary barrier in finding a mentor. In fact, there is some evidence that few Black administrators are able to identify role models or mentors outside their own families or communities (Smith & Crawford, 2007). Thus it is one thing to know that a mentor of the same race or ethnicity would be beneficial; it is another for women of color to actually find one within the halls of academe.

To address this problem, Holmes et al. (2007) describe co-mentoring, a non-hierarchical model in which both participants mutually benefit, as a viable option to the traditional mentoring
model. This approach might prove more plausible for women of color at higher administrative ranks, given they would find few women of color above them in the organization to serve as mentors in the more traditional sense.

Other studies, however, indicate that matching mentors and protégés along racial and ethnic lines is not critical to the success of the relationship—although this finding was also related to gender. Ensher and Murphy reported that male mentors paired with different-race protégés reported a low likelihood of future contact, while male mentors with same-race protégés reported high likelihood of future contact. Race, however, did not seem to play a role for female mentors (cited in Wilson et al., 2002). Female mentors, according to this study, remained committed to the mentoring relationship regardless of protégé race.

In a study detailing the importance of mentoring women administrators in higher education, Black women administrators reported facing barriers of isolation, loneliness and racially motivated victimization (Crawford & Smith, 2005). In addition, dominant groups, typically White men, at the top of the leadership hierarchy often impose their way of seeing the world and their views upon women and people of color at the bottom (Schramm, 2002).

Research findings such as these only underscore the need for mentoring women administrators of color in American higher education.

There is little question that connection to mentors is vitally important to the success of women administrators of color. Such relationships have been shown to help in the advancement of their careers, and result in greater job satisfaction. Yet it is also clear that women of color have greater difficulty identifying and obtaining mentors, either formal or informal, due to the gender and racial constraints outlined earlier. This is particularly true for women administrators
of color who are considering or have attained senior positions, as the pool of potential mentors (defined in the traditional hierarchical sense) is even smaller.

While there is ample research being conducted on the positive impact of mentoring relationships for women and women of color, there is scant research in this area that relates to Asian American women. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, there is a growing body of dissertation research focusing on Asian American women administrators (Chung, 2008; Ideta, 1996; Lee, 1998; Manlove, 2004; Naber-Fisher, 2009; Pacis, 2005; Wiking, 2001); however, some of that research did not take place in the higher education setting. Further, only one of the dissertations discussed mentoring (Naber-Fisher, 2009), but the focus in that study was not on senior Asian American women administrators, or the role that mentoring might play at critical career junctures. While some research has been done in the area of mentoring for Asian American adolescents, students, and faculty (Hu & Ma, 2010; Larke, Patitu, Webb-Johnson, Young-Hawkins, 1999; Li & Beckett, 2006; McCarty & Hirata, 2010; Yeh, Ching, Okubo & Luthar, 2007), an exhaustive search of the literature revealed only one article mentioning the importance of mentoring for Asian American women administrators in higher education (Montez, 1998). Clearly, this is a research area that warrants some long-overdue attention.

**Summary**

This chapter reviewed four areas of the literature that relate to the research topic. The first outlined the involvement of women in American higher education, with an emphasis on women of color. The passage of landmark legislative acts such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX and Affirmative Action have helped higher education overcome its history of exclusion, and women have made great strides in access and degree attainment. Women now outnumber men as undergraduate and graduate students, and are now also earning doctoral degrees in
numbers almost equal to those of men. In addition, the number of women of color participating in higher education, both as undergraduate and graduate students, has also increased dramatically in recent decades.

However, despite these gains in access and credentialing, women—and particularly women of color—remain seriously underrepresented in senior administrative positions in American higher education. The second section of this chapter discussed some of the reasons for this continued disparity, and outlined the issues that are present in colleges and universities that inhibit the advancement of such women. The literature is replete with information about how a White male-dominated culture, racism, sexism, feelings of isolation and gender-typed family concerns are serious issues that women administrators of color must face and overcome in order to persist in their careers. In addition, the institutionalized, systemic nature of racism and sexism still prevalent in colleges and universities continues to subordinate women, and pose added barriers to their advancement.

The third section of this chapter discussed Asian American women administrators, a group that is severely underrepresented in senior administrative roles in higher education. Despite their high numbers as students earning degrees at the bachelors, masters and doctoral levels, they lag far behind other women of color in roles such as dean, vice president, provost and president. The model minority stereotype, which is not supported by research findings on the total population, allows the view to persist that this racial group is successful, does not need help, and does not warrant scholarly inquiry. The lack of research on Asian Americans, and Asian American women administrators in particular, leads to faulty assumptions about this racial group and furthers existing inequities.
Finally, this chapter discussed mentoring, the one factor that appears repeatedly in the literature as being critical to the success of women administrators of color. Yet while there is general agreement about the many benefits of mentoring, little of that knowledge has been applied directly to the higher education setting in relation to women administrators. There is a growing body of research devoted to similar issues facing women faculty of color, but their counterparts in administration have been ignored by comparison. In addition, previous studies have focused primarily on anecdotal information gained from women already involved in mentoring relationships, with little emphasis on what colleges and universities could do in order to foster an environment conducive to the establishment of such relationships for women administrators of color. Whether through formal or informal systems, there is little doubt that mentoring could help these women; but by and large, institutions are failing to recognize this issue as critical and are not devoting the resources necessary to address the problem.

One major shortcoming of the literature and research to date is that much of it has focused on the experiences and mentoring relationships of Black women administrators. This is no doubt due to the fact that these women comprise the majority of the population of women administrators of color, and are thus more available as research participants. By comparison, other racial and ethnic groups have received very little scholarly attention. This is likely due to the small number of women administrators of color available in other racial categories for study, but it remains an area that deserves further attention if we are to gain a fuller understanding of the experiences of women of color as a total group.

Another shortcoming of the literature is that when attention has been given to the experiences of women administrators of color, the focus has been primarily on the experiences of women presidents. Information on the experiences of women at other senior administrative
levels such as deans, vice presidents and provosts is lacking. Again, this may be at least partially
due to the scarcity of research participants due to the low numbers of women of color currently
serving in these roles overall.

Taken as a whole, the literature tells us a great deal about why women administrators of
color, and specifically Asian American women administrators, are struggling to attain senior
positions, as well as how mentoring relationships might assist them in their career aspirations.
The literature, however, is virtually silent on the topic of the impact of mentors at critical career
junctures, particularly with regard to women of color who are seeking or have attained senior
administrative positions. The prevailing assumption seems to be that once women of color are
on the verge of or have attained that administrative rank, they do not need the assistance of a
mentor; but the literature, coupled with the continued lack of women of color in such positions,
demonstrates that this is not the case. The problem has been clearly identified—what is missing
is the next step. Knowing that mentoring is critical to the success of these women, what will be
the response of higher education? By learning more about how mentors can impact these women
at this critical point in their careers, we can begin to re-shape their work experiences and change
the quality of their lives. Eventually, the overall environment of American higher education will
be improved as a result.
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN

Introduction

As outlined in Chapter One, women of color are well represented in administrative roles in American higher education, but only up to the level of director (Johnsrud & Heck, 1994; NCES, 1995; Twombly & Rosser, 2002). Women of color, and Asian American women specifically, remain seriously underrepresented in senior administrative positions (Glazer-Raymo, 1999, 2002; Johnsrud & Heck, 1994; Museus & Chang, 2009; Rickard, 1992). Research has shown that connection with mentors and other women of color is of critical importance to the success and advancement of women and women administrators of color (Blackhurst, 2000; Chandler, 1996; Holmes et al., 2007; Hubbard & Robinson, 1998; Switzer, 2006; Turner, 2007). Through this study, my goal was to learn more about how Asian American senior women administrators utilize mentors in their career advancement.

Research Questions

As stated in the first chapter, my primary research focus was to examine the role that mentors have played in the careers of Asian American women administrators at a critical career juncture (i.e., as they considered the move to a senior administrative position), as well as the characteristics of those mentoring relationships, if they exist.

To that end, the following questions were addressed in this study:

1. How do Asian American women perceive their ethnicity and gender affecting their career advancement?

2. How do Asian American women administrators understand gender and cultural influences in how they obtain and utilize mentors?
3. What are the primary characteristics of mentors as identified by the women in this study (i.e., male or female, racial/ethnic background), and what have been the primary benefits of those relationships (i.e., career vs. psychosocial mentoring)?

4. What is the content of the mentoring relationship, i.e., what activities does it include?

5. What role have mentors played in the careers of Asian American women administrators, particularly at critical career junctures (i.e., at the point they are aspiring to a senior administrative position)?

**Research Design**

To answer these questions, a qualitative study was conducted, utilizing individual, semi-structured interviews with Asian American women administrators. My goal was to interview women who had already attained a senior administrative position; but because the literature indicates that there are very few Asian American women administrators above the director level (Glazer-Raymo, 1999, 2002; Johnsrud & Heck, 1994; Rickard, 1992), I anticipated that other Asian American women administrators might have to be interviewed if it was not possible to locate enough senior-level administrators who were willing to participate.

Because the goal was to gain detailed, in-depth understanding and hear the individual voices of a relatively small number of women representing this population, as well as how mentors impacted their decision-making process, a qualitative approach best fit the purpose of this study (Patton; 2002; Ragin, Nagel & White, 2003). Those same authors also note that qualitative methods should be utilized when anomalous cases—in this instance, Asian American women administrators—are being studied, as this research method may lead to re-thinking current theories about mentoring relationships since so little is currently known about this phenomenon as it relates to this specific population. Also, as Museus (2007) notes, qualitative
methods are recommended when researching marginalized populations, as members of these
groups may not experience campus culture in the same way as majority populations.

Research Methodology

Following the protocols outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994), several methods were
utilized for generating meaning from the data. Because my review of the literature revealed that
there are several issues consistently experienced by women administrators of color, a grounded
theory approach was not appropriate for this study. Instead, each transcript was reviewed line by
line, and I searched for patterns, as reported by the women, that either supported or refuted the
research to date on the issues faced by women administrators of color, and Asian American
women administrators in particular, namely: 1) they are experiencing a work environment that is
dominated by White men; 2) instances of sexism and racism; 3) feelings of isolation; 4) gender-
typed expectations regarding their families, and; 5) living with the model minority stereotype
(Cotterill & Letherby, 2005; Gaetane, 2005; Gerdes, 2006; Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Moses, 1997;
Ng et al., 2007; Tinklin et al., 2005; Tyson, 2002; Wong & Halgin, 2006). Using a constant
comparative approach, I first noted any patterns and themes that arose from the interviews in
each of these five areas, and assigned a pattern code to each.

Because there are issues that are specifically faced by Asian American women
administrators versus other women administrators of color (Collison, 2000; Hune, 1998; Ideta,
2002; Ng et al, 2007), I suspected that these women may have faced unique challenges in their
work environment and in the mentoring relationship. As an example, it was possible that the
women in this study (as with other women administrators of color) had difficulty securing
mentors, but the reasons for this might not be the same as those that have been identified in the
literature for other racial groups.
My research questions also guided me to search for other pieces of information in the data that related to the nature of the mentoring relationship and the characteristics of the mentors themselves (Allen & Eby, 2004; Chandler, 1996; Chao et al., 1992; Kram, 1985; Noe, 1988; Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Schrot et al., 2003; Stanley & Lincoln, 2005; Welch, 1993; Wilson et al., 2002). Each transcript was reviewed a second time, utilizing a process outlined by Foss and Waters designed to gain meaning from the data by noting specific concepts, ideas, statements or “units of analysis” (2007, p. 195). For example, because one of the research questions centered on the content of the mentoring relationship, any information the women stated that was an example of an activity that occurred within the mentoring relationship (going to lunch, working on a project together, sharing personal stories, networking, the mentor providing emotional support or validation) was assigned the code “mentoring content.”

The next step was to review these codes and group them into categories; these eventually became the overarching themes for further analyzing the data. For example, instances of shared social or work activities, collaborative skill building, and honesty and personal information sharing became the overarching theme of mutual engagement through mentoring, as the specific units of analysis within that code had the common thread of the mentor and protégé being involved in some type of mutually beneficial activity. Using the same method, examples of advocating for increased responsibilities, providing emotional support and validation, and networking became the theme of characteristics of successful mentoring relationships. This method was utilized until all of the codes that had been noted in my initial review of the data had been assigned to an overarching theme.

Another method of qualitative data analysis outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994) is that of “subsuming particulars into the general” (p. 255). Relational cultural theory (RCT) was
used to discuss my findings, to interpret each woman’s story from her point of view, and to
search for themes in their mentoring relationships surrounding each of three growth-fostering
characteristics: mutual engagement; authenticity, and; empowerment/zest (Liang, Tracy, Taylor,
Jordan, Miller & Williams, 2002). Critical race theory (CRT) was also used to interpret my
findings from an institutional perspective, and participants’ responses were analyzed around the
larger issues of power, privilege, institutionalized racism and sexism, and use of language as a
means of subordination (Donahoo, 2008; Lopez, 2003; Smith et al., 2007). A pattern code was
assigned to each of these specific areas. Both of these theories are discussed more fully at the
end of this chapter.

Sample

My research design centered on the question of how Asian American women
administrators utilize mentors at a critical career juncture, i.e., in making the decision whether or
not to pursue senior administrative positions in American higher education. As stated in Chapter
One, Asian American women administrators were defined as administrators who self-identified
as being of Asian descent in the United States; such women would include Chinese, Filipina,
Indian, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, and other Southeast Asian groups such as Laotian,
Hmong and Cambodian (Ng et al., 2007). Pacific Islanders, which include racial groups such as
Native Hawaiian, Polynesian, Samoan, Fijian, Papua New Guinean and Tahitian, are also often
included in the umbrella category of Asian American (Schaefer, 2008); however, no such women
took part in this study.

Senior administrative positions included those above the director level, with job titles
such as dean, vice president, provost or president (Glazer-Raymo, 1999, 2002; Johnsrud & Heck,
1994; Rickard, 1992). Based on my review of the literature, it was clear that study participants
ASIAN AMERICAN SENIOR WOMEN ADMINISTRATORS

would be scarce and likely hard to find; thus a nonprobabilistic, purposive sample was used, as I
was seeking “information-rich cases for study in depth” in order to learn a “great deal about
issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry” (Patton, 2002, p. 230). My goal was
to interview Asian American women who had already attained senior administrative positions;
however, because the overall number of such women in American higher education is so low
(Museus & Chang, 2009), the need to screen for additional Asian American women
administrators who were aspiring to that level might be necessary, and such women would be
interviewed for my study if it was not possible to locate enough senior-level administrators.

For this study, a total of eleven Asian American women administrators were interviewed.
The interview protocol was piloted with two participants; the process of the pilot study is
described later in this chapter. In addition to the data gathered from the women who were
interviewed as part of the regular study, the data from the pilot interviews was also included in
the analysis. This was done because in the very early stages of my search for participants, it had
already become clear that finding these women would be even more difficult than anticipated,
and I was increasingly concerned that the minimum six participants required to meet the
qualitative interview sampling protocol outlined by Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) could not
be located. In addition, my analysis of those initial two interviews, when compared with the
remaining interviews in this study, revealed some consistent data patterns that warranted their
inclusion in the total data set.

As anticipated, it was difficult to find participants for this study. I began by investigating
several prominent Asian American studies programs and model Asian American support
programs in the United States such as those found at Brown University, Pomona College,
University of California-Los Angeles, University of California-Berkeley, University of
Maryland-College Park, University of Massachusetts-Amherst and the University of Michigan, among others (Liang, Lee & Ting, 2002). While there were often Asian faculty members involved with these programs, it was not surprising to discover that there were no senior Asian American women administrators in charge of these programs. It was surprising, however, to find that the majority of these programs were not even led by Asian Americans. That avenue proved to be a virtual dead end, although my search of one of the programs did lead to a senior-level Asian American female administrator in another division on that particular campus who eventually became a participant in the study.

I then turned my attention to professional associations for higher education administrators, and began with a search of the membership of the National Association for Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA). I started with my own region, Region I (which includes Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island), in the hope of finding some Asian American senior women administrators who could be interviewed face-to-face. The then-membership coordinator for the region provided a list of current NASPA members in the region as of July, 2010. It was disappointing to learn that out of the entire current membership of the region, which included more than 1,000 higher education professionals, that there was only one senior-level female administrator NASPA member who self-identified as Asian American—myself.

Because it was proving to be even more difficult than anticipated to identify women for this study, I began using my personal contacts. Prior to the start of gathering data, I had planned to be in the Los Angeles area for a vacation, and that opportunity was used to seek out potential participants. I eventually found two women, both of whom could have served in my pilot study.
One of the women, who chose the pseudonym Betsy, agreed to be interviewed, but the other declined.

A family member in Los Angeles suggested that I contact an Asian American friend of hers who currently worked at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT); that individual then contacted his colleague, a professor emeritus at the University of California-Los Angeles Asian American Studies Center. That individual referred me to an article which summarized the findings of a study of Asian American administrators which had been conducted by ACE; the article mentioned two female Asian American administrators, both of whom were contacted. One of them agreed to be interviewed for my study; the other did not respond to my initial contact letter or follow-up telephone call. That same family member also referred me to another colleague who was involved in Asian American studies in higher education at the University of Massachusetts-Boston; two attempts to communicate with that individual, however, produced no response.

I then contacted Warren Chiang, one of my fellow doctoral students at Boston College, to ask if he had any possible contacts. He suggested two senior-level administrators, both of whom eventually became part of this study, and also referred me to the National Asian Pacific Islander Council of the American Association of Community Colleges. A search of that association’s membership yielded two more participants.

At this point, two of the women who had already agreed to participate began contacting me via e-mail with the names of other potential participants, and through this snowball sampling method, the remaining four participants for this study were found. Two of those women contacted me directly via e-mail to indicate their interest, and the remaining two received a letter from me requesting their participation.
The ethnic background of the women in this study was as follows: four were Chinese; two were Korean; four were Japanese, and; one was Filipina. Five of the women had immigrated to the United States (two as small children, the other three as young adults). Two of the women were first-generation (meaning that their parents had immigrated to the United States, and they were born in this country), and the remaining four were second generation (their parents had been born in the United States, and they were the second generation to be born in this country). The women ranged in age from thirty-five to sixty-nine. Most were currently working in, or had recently retired from, large public universities; two were working at community colleges, and one was working at a mid-sized private institution. The institutions at which they worked represented states from the west, midwest, southwest and northeast regions of the United States; Hawaii was also represented.

The following table provides basic information for each of the participants in this study.

Table 1

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**Data Gathering Procedures**

After each participant was identified, initial contact was made via a letter introducing myself and the purposes of the study, followed by an e-mail or phone call to determine interest (the exception was the two women who contacted me directly, having learned of my study from other participants). In the initial letter, I identified myself as an Asian American female administrator. Once a woman indicated interest in participating, she was then contacted by phone to set up an interview time. A minimum of one week prior to each interview, informed consent was obtained from each of them, and each signed my Institutional Review Board-approved consent form that stated the purpose of the study as well as any perceived risks prior to
the onset of the interview (see Appendix A). Although the form clearly explained that they could do so, none of the women opted out of the study.

Each of the women in this study was sent the interview questions a minimum of one week in advance, so they could begin to formulate their thoughts on the topic. Participants were asked a series of questions relating to their experiences as Asian American women administrators; questions focused on their educational aspirations, the institutional culture within which they worked, their perceptions of how their gender and race/ethnicity have affected their career advancement, the role their mentor(s) played, if any, as they considered a senior administrative position, and the content of the mentoring relationship (see Appendix B). The interview questions were derived from my review of the literature and my understanding of the types of issues that Asian American women administrators face, with a particular focus on learning more about their mentoring relationships, if they exist. I was especially interested in learning more about how these women have utilized mentors as they considered a move to a senior administrative position.

The interviews themselves were semi-structured, using the basic questions outlined in Appendix B as a guide. Each woman was asked the same general questions, and additional probes were used to address specific issues if they were not touched upon in the initial answer. I also asked clarifying questions when necessary, if the information contained in the response was not clear to me. During the interviews, I took field notes that recorded my initial impressions and the overall tone of the interview (i.e., whether I felt the woman was comfortable in giving answers, if there was something specific I wanted to touch upon later, etc.).

Once the interviews had been professionally transcribed verbatim, I listened to each one again, reviewing the transcripts line-by-line to ensure that the transcriber had accurately recorded
each woman’s interview. This also gave me the opportunity to become more familiar with the data. I did note some errors, mostly due to the transcriber’s lack of familiarity with the field of higher education (for example, she tried to spell out “SSAO,” not realizing that it was an acronym meaning “senior student affairs officer”). At this point, I also prepared notes summarizing the content of each interview.

Following the qualitative interview sampling protocol outlined by Guest et al. (2006), the data were analyzed after six interviews were conducted to determine if saturation had been reached; saturation is defined as the point at which “new data do not add to the meaning of the general category” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 256). After the first five interviews were analyzed, the same codes and themes were emerging from the data; however, the sixth interview (Margaret) brought a new dimension to the data due to the fact that she identified very strongly with her mother as her mentor, and did not name any other significant mentors in her career. Based on that new information, and on the findings of Guest et al. (2006) that 92 percent of codes and/or themes will have been identified at twelve interviews, I decided to continue with my interviews, and completed a total of eleven. After analyzing the remaining interview data, no new codes or themes were being discovered, and I determined that saturation had been reached and that there would be little value to conducting further interviews.

Because the eleven women in this study were located all over the United States, most of the interviews took place over the phone. All of the women who were interviewed over the phone chose to be interviewed while they were in their office, and I was also in my office at the time of the interviews. Only three interviews were conducted face-to-face. Each interview was audio-recorded, and as noted earlier, was professionally transcribed verbatim. The shortest interview lasted just over one hour; the longest was one hour and forty-five minutes. Each
woman was asked to choose a pseudonym for herself; most did, but two of the participants said they did not have any preference, and asked me to select a pseudonym for them. It was interesting to note that out of the nine participants who chose their own pseudonyms, only one chose an Asian name (Aya).

**Pilot Study**

A pilot study was conducted by interviewing two Asian American women administrators, and I was successful in my goal of interviewing both a woman who was considering a senior-level administrative position and a woman who had already attained such a role. The first woman chose the pseudonym Betsy; she was Chinese, the daughter of immigrant parents, and currently serves as the head of a department at a large public university on the west coast. The second woman was Laura, a Chinese immigrant, who currently holds a senior-level administrative position in student affairs at a large public university in Hawaii.

Both of these women were initially contacted via a letter, which was followed by a phone call to determine their interest. Each agreed to participate, and was then sent an informed consent form. Once consent was obtained, the interview questions were sent a week prior to their actual interview date. One of the interviews was face-to-face, and the other was conducted over the phone. As was the case with all the interviews, these were audio-recorded and professionally transcribed verbatim.

I interviewed Betsy, the woman who was a director, first. The interview took place in her office on campus. My goal in interviewing her first was to determine whether or not she had considered applying for a senior-level administrative position, and if so, to refine my interview questions further in an attempt to gain more information about how she was utilizing her
In my study, I sought mentor(s) at this critical career juncture. The second interview with Laura was conducted over the phone.

Conducting the pilot interviews did help me to further refine my interview questions, as I learned that I had far too many initial interview questions that focused on their early life experiences. Those questions had been included in an effort to “break the ice” and make the participants feel at ease, but in both cases, the women tended to wander off topic in discussing their experiences. While their stories were interesting and very enjoyable to listen to, they provided little or no insight into my research topic. As a result of the pilot study, I realized that I needed to be much more direct and purposeful in how my questions were worded. Most of the questions about their early lives were eliminated, and follow-up questions were added to the ones that remained, which I hoped would provide some additional information about their mentors. Several more questions were also added to the interview protocol that delved more deeply into the nature and scope of their mentoring relationships.

**Coding and Data Analysis**

Using a constant comparative approach and reviewing each transcript line by line, I searched for key concepts, words and phrases and noted those thoughts by writing them on the transcripts themselves. Once my review of all the transcripts was complete, each transcript was compared with the others to search for commonalities and differences. This step was done to begin the process of familiarizing myself with the data prior to any analysis utilizing a qualitative research software package.

As noted earlier, by utilizing this process I was searching for patterns that either supported or refuted the research to date on women administrators of color, and Asian American women administrators in particular, namely: 1) they are experiencing a work environment that is
dominated by White men; 2) instances of sexism and racism; 3) feelings of isolation; 4) gender-typed expectations regarding their families, and; 5) living with the model minority stereotype (Cotterill & Letherby, 2005; Gaetane, 2005; Gerdes, 2006; Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Moses, 1997; Ng et al., 2007; Tinklin et al., 2005; Tyson, 2002; Wong & Halgin, 2006). The data was also searched for patterns which might be relevant to Asian American women administrators specifically, as research suggests that these women face issues that are distinct from other women administrators of color (Collison, 2000; Hune, 1998; Ideta, 2002; Ng et al, 2007).

Finally, relational cultural theory (RCT), which emphasizes mutual growth through relationships and connection with others (Jordan, 2008), was used as a context for analyzing the stories of each participant and for interpreting the data, specifically their mentoring relationships, from their point of view. I searched for themes in their mentoring relationships surrounding each of three growth-fostering characteristics: mutual engagement; authenticity, and; empowerment/zest (Liang, Tracy, Taylor & Williams, 2002).

Critical race theory (CRT) was also used as a framework for interpreting the women’s stories and mentoring relationships in light of their institutional context. Participants’ responses were analyzed around the larger issues of power, privilege, institutionalized racism and sexism, and use of language as a means of subordination (Donahoo, 2008; Lopez, 2003; Smith, Yosso & Solorzano, 2007). A pattern code was assigned to each of these specific areas as well.

To protect the identities of the participants, each participant was asked to choose a pseudonym for herself. Nine did, and the remaining two asked me to select a pseudonym for them. The file which links the names of the participants to the pseudonyms remained in a locked file, separate from the location where the actual interview data was kept.
Due to my own Asian American heritage, I considered myself an “insider” when interpreting the data (Stanfield, 1998, p. 334). While it might be argued that my own racial status gave me particular insight into my research area, it was also clear to me on several occasions that an immediate, positive connection was formed with many of the women due to our shared Asian ethnicity. This was most true with the women interviewed over the phone. It is my belief that because I do not possess many of the stereotypical physical characteristics that most would associate with a member of an Asian ethnic group, the women that I interviewed face-to-face were surprised by my appearance, which may have made them slightly less comfortable speaking with me. Even so, because of the similarities in our ethnic backgrounds, I felt it was necessary to be clear about my own status as an Asian American female senior administrator, and acknowledge that this would impact my interpretation of the data.

It must also be noted for the sake of transparency that as a result of my own experiences as an Asian American senior administrator, I have already experienced (and continue to experience) many of the issues that the literature outlines as problematic for women administrators of color. In my current institution, as was the case with the other three universities at which I have worked, the culture is most definitely dominated by White men. I can also cite instances of sexism and racism—some of them overt—to which I have been personally exposed, and these have become more frequent as I have advanced in my career. Due to these factors, I have done my best to be as transparent as possible during data analysis, and remain aware of how my own work-related experiences might have impacted the analysis. Throughout the discussion of my findings, I will use the pronoun “I” when necessary, to refer to my own personal experiences.
Based on my review of the literature, I looked for several themes within the data: 1) evidence of a White-male dominated culture; 2) experiences involving sexism and/or racism; 3) expressed feelings of isolation; 4) how family concerns have impacted their career choices, and; 5) issues specific to Asian American women administrators. My RCT and CRT frameworks also revealed additional themes such as: growth-fostering characteristics of the mentoring relationships; power and privilege, and; how the systemic nature of sexism and racism is present in colleges and universities themselves and have subordinated these women.

The interviews were also searched for themes that related specifically to mentoring relationships. Based on the literature and my research questions, I was most anxious to learn more about the mentors these women have utilized, and how their Asian American heritage has shaped their use of a mentor at critical career junctures. For example, the data might support the idea that the traditional Asian value of deference to authority (Lum, 2008; Min, 1995) led these women to prefer male instead of female mentors, or that the focus of the mentoring relationship was on career-related issues. Or the data might show that Asian American women preferred female mentors for that very same reason, because deference to authority was a barrier to their seeking out a male mentor. I was also curious to discover if the women in my study did not conform to Asian American stereotypes at all (and many did not), and that their mentoring relationships resembled those of other women administrators of color.

In order to test my findings and be transparent in my role as a researcher, the triangulation methods of member checking and utilizing a colleague with expertise in qualitative data analysis from my current institution were used to review my analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The member checks involved sending written transcriptions of their individual interviews, along with my accompanying summary notes, to each respective participant; my goal
in utilizing this method was to ask the women if I had captured and described their experiences in a way that was consistent with their own perceptions and understanding. While a few of the women made minor corrections (spelling of names, correcting dates), each of the women responded by stating that they agreed with my summary.

Due to my concern that my own status and perspective as an Asian American senior administrator would influence my findings, I made the purposeful decision to solicit a non-Asian American colleague at the institution where I currently work to review my analysis. This was done to set the example that the background of all researchers—and in the instant case, my own gender and cultural background—would influence the interpretation of the data, and this step was taken to guard against the findings being simply a reflection of my personal viewpoint. This same colleague was also sent the transcriptions of the individual interviews, my own summaries and their accompanying pattern codes. A colleague was chosen who has expertise in qualitative research analysis, but with whom I do not have a close personal relationship. Choosing these different forms of data analysis, with their subsequent differences in strengths and biases, helped strengthen the validity of my findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994). My colleague also agreed with my interview summaries and analysis of the prominent codes.

As described earlier in this chapter, the process of data analysis began with hand-coding each of the transcribed interviews line by line, using an open coding method to begin to identify key words, patterns and themes in the data. As an initial step in data analysis, Creswell (1998) defines open coding as “a procedure for developing categories of information” (p. 150). Based on my review of the related literature, I anticipated finding the themes of a White-dominated male culture, sexism, racism and gender-typed choices regarding their families to be present, as well as the theme of the model minority stereotype. I tried my best, however, to remain open to
finding other patterns and themes within the data, particularly as they relate to my participants’ status as Asian Americans.

The next step in the data analysis was to utilize axial coding to analyze the key words, patterns and themes identified via the open coding process. Axial coding is defined as “a set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding by making connections between categories” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 96). Using this technique helped me identify relationships and connections between the categories, and identify key themes within the data.

The MaxQDA software package was used to further analyze the transcribed interviews. This step enabled me to determine the frequency of the identified codes, as well as allowed for better management and retrieval of data as it related to specific codes throughout the process of my analysis.

**Format for Reporting the Data**

My plan was to present the data by using direct quotes and narratives from each participant, as well as by summarizing each of their thoughts in the thematic categories outlined earlier in this chapter (issues faced by women administrators of color, issues specific to Asian American women administrators, mentoring relationships, and examining the data via the RCT and CRT frameworks). As expected, the women’s responses were very rich, and so their exact words were used to illustrate points as much as possible.

Because I was searching for patterns, themes and clusters and noting their frequency, the data will be presented in chart format in Chapter Four for the sake of clarity, noting the results of my open and axial coding and the number of instances in which responses from the individual women fell into each of the identified categories.
Frameworks for Discussing the Findings

Two theoretical frameworks were utilized for discussing the findings. The first, relational cultural theory (RCT) was used to analyze the data from each participant’s point of view, and as outlined in Chapter Two, provided an apt lens through which to analyze these women’s stories and feelings regarding their mentoring relationships. With its roots in feminist theories developed by Carol Gilligan, Nancy Chodorow, Mary Belenky and others (Freedberg, 2007; Gilligan, 1983), RCT stresses growth as occurring through mutually-beneficial relationships. The theory was first developed by Jean Baker Miller, Irene Stiver, Judith Jordan and Janet Surrey in 1978, and became formalized through writings published by the Stone Center for Developmental Studies and Research on Women at Wellesley College when Miller was appointed its first director in 1981 (Jordan, 2008).

There are several core tenets to RCT, as outlined by Jordan (2000, p. 280):

1. People grow through and toward relationship throughout the life span.
2. Movement toward mutuality rather than separation characterizes mature functioning.
3. The ability to participate in increasingly complex and diversified relational networks characterizes psychological growth.
4. Mutual empathy and mutual empowerment are at the core of growth-fostering relationships.
5. Authenticity is necessary for real engagement in growth-fostering relationships.
6. When people contribute to the development of growth-fostering relationships, they grow as a result of their participation in such relationships.
7. The goal of development is the realization of increased relational competence over the life span.
RCT emphasizes connections via relationships with peers, mentors and communities as critical to women’s development, rather than separation and individuation as the ultimate goal of psychosocial development. While the original theory was first developed in reference to women’s development, it has also been applied to other groups marginalized by socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class and age (Comstock, Hammer, Strentzsch, Cannon, Parsons & Salazar, 2008).

Successful connection with others through relationship results in what is known in RCT as the “five good things” (Miller, 1986, p. 3):

1. Each person feels a greater sense of zest (vitality, energy).
2. Each person feels more able to act and does act in the world.
3. Each person has a more accurate picture of her/himself and the other person(s).
4. Each person feels a greater sense of worth.
5. Each person feels more connected to other persons and exhibits a greater motivation to connect with other people beyond those in one’s primary relationships.

By contrast, disconnection is defined as the opposite of the five good things, and while movement and change occur through developing connections and working through disconnections (Freedberg, 2007), chronic disconnection at the societal level can result in the further denigration of the marginalized group (Comstock et al., 2008; Jordan, 2008).

A central concept in RCT is that of mutual empathy, which is defined as “a two-way process which occurs when two people relate to one another in a context of interest in the other, emotional availability, responsiveness and the intent to understand” (Jordan, 1986, p. 7). Closely tied to mutual respect, mutual empathy manifests itself in the “maximum possible relational equality” (Freedberg, 2007, p. 255) between those involved in the relationship. One person does...
not strive to be more powerful than the other; rather, the power differential is minimized, and motivated by the desire to emotionally connect.

Mutual empathy plays a key role in successful mentoring relationships, and within that context, research conducted by RCT theorists has resulted in the identification of three major growth-fostering characteristics: mutual engagement; authenticity, and; empowerment/zest (Liang, Tracy, Taylor & Williams, 2002). The first, mutual engagement, is defined as the “perceived mutual involvement, commitment and attunement to the relationship” (Jordan, 1992, 1997; Miller & Stiver, 1997, cited in Liang et al., 2002, p. 26). The second growth-fostering characteristic of women’s relationships is authenticity, defined as “the process of acquiring knowledge of self and the other and feeling free to be genuine in the context of the relationship” (Jordan, 1992, 1997; Miller & Stiver, 1997, cited in Liang et al., 2002, p. 26). Finally, the third growth-fostering characteristic, empowerment/zest, is described as “the experience of feeling personally strengthened, encouraged and inspired to take action” (Jordan, 1992, 1997; Miller & Stiver, 1997, cited in Liang et al., 2002, p. 26). All three characteristics outlined in RCT appeared very strongly in the stories of the women as they described their relationships with their mentors, and will be discussed further in Chapter Four.

A second theoretical lens, critical race theory (CRT) was also used as a framework for discussing my findings, and to discuss the women’s experiences within the larger institutional context. With its focus on discrimination through subordination, and race as a social construction used for the purposes of stratification which ultimately limits the life chances of individuals as defined by the dominant culture (Marable, 2002), a CRT framework emphasizes both race and racism, and centralizes these factors while also addressing the intersection of racism with other forms of subordination based on gender, class, sexuality, culture, and language
(Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Donahoo, 2008; Lopez, 2003; Milner, 2007; Smith et al., 2007). All of these forms of subordination proved to be relevant to the research questions posed in this study.

Lopez (2003) outlines three basic tenets of critical race theory. The first is that the reason why society fails to see racism is because it is such a common, everyday experience that it is often taken for granted. Its systemic nature means that it is so embedded in our culture and institutions that it is simply viewed as the way that “society does business” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 7). Despite its oppressive nature, it is the common reality we all share. Overt, public acts of racism are against the law, but systemic racism persists.

A second tenet is that Whites will tolerate and advance the interests of people of color only when they promote the self-interest of Whites. This phenomenon has been labeled “interest convergence” by Bell (1995). Using the historic Brown v. Board of Education as an example, Bell maintains that the Supreme Court arrived at that decision due to the fact that the material interests of Whites converged with the civil rights interests of Blacks at that particular point in time. In short, White people’s fear of a potential uprising by Blacks was the motivation behind the decision, rather than an actual change of heart or desire to eliminate racism.

The final tenet of CRT is the privileging of stories and counterstories, i.e., the dominant reality that looks “normal” to most people, versus the racial reality that has been filtered out, suppressed or censored (Lopez, 2003). The counterstories of people of color are consciously and/or unconsciously ignored or downplayed if they do not fit the institutionalized version of the truth. A personal example of this would be my own experiences in high school and college, during which no mention of the Japanese American internment camps was made in any of my American history courses. When I brought up the issue, I was always stunned to learn how many of my fellow students were unaware that the camps even existed; clearly, knowledge of the
camps had been suppressed. Information about this piece of America’s past had simply been omitted from their history courses and textbooks, an example of how the dominant group had manipulated the educational process in order for inequalities to persist (Hill Collins, 2009).

CRT also challenges the dominant ideology that places the “problem” within the non-dominant population, rather than examining how institutions operate to systematically advantage some populations and marginalize others. In an analysis of diversity policies using CRT, people of color were labeled as outsiders, at-risk victims, commodities and dependent on the institution for success (Iverson, 2007). The Asian American women in this study are operating under the strain of such deficit-based beliefs, and “CRT as an analytic lens challenges preconceived notions of race and confirms that scholars and practitioners must listen to those who experience racism, sexism and classism to counter the dominant discourses circulating in educational policies” (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, cited in Iverson, 2007, p. 588).

Part of the explanation for why these systemic issues persist is because only overt acts of racism are identified as problematic (Lopez, 2003). Hate crimes, name calling and other acts of racism and gender discrimination are condemned, and the focus of diversity education on college campuses remains on eradicating such explicit acts. CRT, however, focuses on the invisible forms of racism that are always present in society and operate at a much deeper level. However, seldom is there a questioning of the systems, structures and organizations that serve to perpetuate the problem.

CRT as a theoretical lens through which the findings were analyzed proved to be a powerful tool, one that was particularly suited to the issues related to this study. As one author notes, “If changes are not made, educational administration programs will continue to produce primarily White, middle class administrators with little understanding of or interest in the
institutionalized system of White privilege, oppression and racism” (Young & Laible, 2000, p. 388). If discussions of institutionalized racism are avoided, biases will remain hidden, and Asian American women administrators will continue to struggle.

Summary

Because Asian American women administrators have been, for the most part, ignored by researchers to date, it was my hope that analyzing the interviews with the women in this study would provide some insights into the specific issues faced by this population versus women administrators representing other racial groups who have undergone different racialization processes in a White supremacist society. In particular, my goal was to gain some understanding of how mentors, shown to be so vital to the success of other women administrators of color, could be better utilized by Asian American women administrators in order to increase their numbers in senior administrative positions in American higher education.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of this study exploring the impact of mentoring relationships for senior-level Asian American women administrators at a critical career juncture. As was outlined in Chapter Three, it proved to be even more difficult than anticipated to find a sufficient number of senior Asian American women administrators to participate in this study. Avenues that I hoped would yield some results, such as searching through the regional membership of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), proved to be futile. Even investigating several prominent Asian American studies programs and model Asian American support programs in the United States resulted in only one participant—and in that case, the woman was not involved in any of the above-mentioned programs, but was instead a senior administrator in another area of the institution. The difficulty of my search only underscores the fact that Asian American women who hold such senior administrative positions are indeed very, very rare.

The first section of this chapter will outline large patterns that were discovered in the data, as well as noting any significant departures from what is currently known in the literature regarding Asian American women administrators as it relates to those patterns. The second section will discuss patterns that were noted specifically in the women’s mentoring relationships, particularly at critical career junctures, again with an emphasis on how the information gained from the interviews either supported or refuted what is currently known. The final section of this chapter will cover how these two areas form the groundwork for several overarching themes that resulted from grouping the pattern codes that were assigned to the data, and discussing those themes within the context of both relational cultural and critical race theories.
Patterns in the Data

Several large patterns arose from the data, the first of which was the role that the women’s race and gender have played throughout the course of their careers. For the most part, analysis of the interviews with the eleven Asian American women administrators in this study revealed patterns that are supported by the research that has been conducted to date on other women administrators of color. However, there were some interesting surprises, as there were outliers in each area—some of the women in this study differed from what is currently known about their female counterparts representing other racial and ethnic groups.

A Culture Dominated by White Men. As is the case with other women administrators of color, most of the Asian American women in this study reported working in an environment that is dominated by White men. Nine of the women—Debra, Lisa, Carol, Margaret, Kathy, Elizabeth, Aya, Mary and Susan—worked or had worked at institutions whose leadership was predominantly White men; only Betsy and Laura did not make specific references to working in such an environment. Betsy, who was part of the pilot study, had not yet reached a senior-level administrative role; she admitted that she had confined her work to her “own little niche,” and did not venture out into other areas of the institution. In her immediate environment as the head of a department, she was still surrounded by other women of color, and seldom came in contact with the leadership of the institution, which in fact was predominantly White and male. Laura, however, was already in a senior administrative position, and also worked at an institution whose leadership was comprised of mostly men, including many White men; she was the outlier in this area.
The following observation by Mary, speaking about a positive accreditation report her institution had received under her leadership, is indicative of the difficulties that she felt being in this environment posed for her:

My accreditation report, saying the leadership is so good and all that but the people are not too big on, especially the traditional White male, I would say have a little…either jealousy or looking for fault and you know, you can tell they just didn’t think you should be better than they are. How could you come in from outside, an Asian woman and be so successful? Something’s wrong here.

Lisa also spoke of being surrounded by White men at her institution, even though she worked in a state with a significant percentage of Asian Americans in the overall population:

And Asian Americans themselves would be…maybe something like 40% or something like that. Still, even with that kind of environment in the state itself, the local Asian culture has not permeated (her institution)….When I first got there it was primarily White male. And it still is quite White male and maybe becoming more women but lots of White women.

Mary and Lisa’s responses were typical of the nine women in this study who expressed their discomfort at working in an environment that is dominated by White men, and the institutionalized sexism they expressed experiencing as a result.

**Intersection of Racism and Sexism.** In addition to a White male dominated environment, ten of the women in this study also spoke of instances of sexism and racism—sometimes very overt—that they faced on a regular basis. Susan was the only outlier in this area, as she did not
mention being subjected to what she perceived as sexist acts. One possible explanation for this is that Susan is an “out” lesbian woman with a committed life partner, and the couple has no children. Because she does not fit into a traditional female stereotype or gender role which defines the ideal nuclear family unit as consisting of a father, mother and children (Hill Collins, 1998a), it is possible that others do not perceive her in the same way as the rest of the women in this study, and she is therefore not as exposed to the same kinds of sexist acts as a result.

Overall, however, the women in this study reported being targeted by more sexist acts and institutionalized sexism versus racist acts and institutionalized racism. This is in contrast to what the literature tells us is the experience for other senior women administrators of color, who feel that race is often the more salient factor. As Debra stated, “So I felt that it’s more a women issue because women almost still to this day have to prove yourself, that you can do it. Men, it’s automatically assumed.” Elizabeth also spoke of how sexism manifested itself in specific behavioral ways, noting that “All of a sudden you realize you’re the only woman in the room….You get treated a little differently. You get the hugs and kisses when everyone else gets the handshakes.” In her particular administrative role, she was surrounded by mostly men—both her supervisors and many of her subordinates—and early in her senior administrative career, she learned that a bet had been placed among her staff about how long she would last in her position. This, coupled with her struggles with a male subordinate, demonstrated how she felt sexism was operating within her work environment:

_Elizabeth:_ That’s when I learned that, there was a bet out amongst employees…as to how long I would make it, because first of all I was female and then they found out I was Asian. And then they were all trying to guess is she Filipino? Chinese?


Interviewer: They had a bet about this? You’re joking.

Elizabeth: I can’t make this stuff up.

Interviewer: And you think that was more about being a woman versus being an Asian?

Elizabeth: Probably. So I brought that forward because I got really angry….In fact it all evolved at the time when they gave me another department to take care of while I was still the (her position title) and… there was this confrontation that came up amongst another (male subordinate) who said he wasn’t going to report to me. So I went to (her supervisor) and said, “Hey, he’s all yours. I went to him, handshake, welcome, you guys told me that you told him he was reporting to me. I’m going to tell you exactly what he said to me.” They couldn’t believe it. I said, “You guys invited me, you employed me here. I’m telling you what this guy said, he doesn’t want to report to me. You solve it.”

Interviewer: Wow. How did they solve it?

Elizabeth: He was reporting to me but guess what, I had him demoted. So he had to report to somebody else.

Mary was offended when her male colleagues made an overtly sexist joke that she did not find amusing:

When I became (her first position as a supervisor), I was like 28. So I go to (her department) meeting, they all say, “Oh, (her name), can you bring some cookies?” I said, “Are you serious? You bake it and I’ll set it on the table.”
Yet while the majority of the women told stories of experiencing overt sexism, those circumstances were often closely linked with racism, to the point that, as is also often the case with other women administrators of color, they could not distinguish between the two factors. Ten of the women spoke of being subjected to racism; Kathy was the only one who did not mention any overtly racist acts directed toward her. There is no clear explanation for why this would be the case, as Kathy works in an institution that is traditional in nature and is dominated by White men. Kathy is one of the youngest participants in the study, and it can be speculated that while overtly racist acts were more common in the past, she might still be the target of institutionalized forms of racism, which are not as easily recognized.

When asked if she felt her Asian heritage has had an impact on her career, this was Carol’s response:

I know that it has. I feel that on sort of a gut level, and I know that in terms of how people respond either directly or indirectly to my leadership style or what I do, or how I do what I do…on the other hand, it’s also hard for me to separate how much of…my experience is because of my Asian heritage or because of my being a woman. I think most everybody would probably say that is a woman of color. But it’s hard to really separate those things out. I’m just guessing they both had an impact on that.

But when asked if she could, in her words, “separate those things out” and determine whether race or gender was the more salient factor, she had this to say:

I really can’t. No, I really can’t because I think that when I know people have responded to me in a challenging way, it’s because
they’re responding in part to me as someone who does not fit into some of their expectations of what a petite, Asian American woman is supposed to be like.

This conjoining of racism and sexism, or intersubjectivity (Ladson-Billings, 1992), was evident in many of the examples that the women gave throughout the course of the interviews.

A few of the older women, such as Margaret, described how the intersection of gender and race has changed over time, and in fact is now viewed in what she feels is a more positive way:

*Margaret:* I think at least from the questions that you had given me before, you’d have to know that I’m at the latter part of my career so you’d have to go back like 40 years….And there’d be a great deal of difference. So you’d think of somebody starting in the late ‘60s where the major thing was more having a woman in administration much less even in middle management. So almost every path as I moved through I was the first woman and thankfully there was a Vice President before me…who was the first woman in the history of the institution to be a VP. And I followed her as the second, and was the first person of color I believe to be a Vice President. So you had both of those going. It’s hard to know which came first, but I have an idea that being a female was as different and as much noticed as the ethnic group. Although I’m sure for senior administrators they thought oh, good. We have two things we can tick off.
Interviewer: Two things that they can tick off?

Margaret: Like they can say, “Okay, we have a woman and we have a minority.”

Interviewer: Yes. And that’s a positive thing to them?

Margaret: Yeah, that would be positive.

Margaret, like Carol, viewed the factors of race and gender as being separate, yet inextricably linked. Some of the other older women, however, did feel that they were targeted specifically due to their race, such as the following situation recounted by Mary illustrates:

Mary: Then when I went to (one of her institutions), the first day I was excited, here I have a new job, I got a phone call from (a male) asking, “Are you the new (her position title)?” I said, “Yes, what can I help you?” And I was there until 6:30 and I was working late.

He said, “Oh, we don’t want your kind here.”

Interviewer: You’re kidding. “Your kind?”

Mary: Yeah. I said, “What do you mean?” “You know, you don’t even talk English right. We don’t want your kind here. We don’t want your kind here.”

So as the literature demonstrates is the case with other senior women administrators of color, the Asian American women in this study also experienced sexism and racism in the workplace; and as is also supported by the literature, the two factors are often fused together in any given situation. Some of the women, however, as was the case with Margaret, felt that while being a woman of color made her stand out in her work environment, this was viewed positively by her colleagues, and was not a negative.
Feelings of Isolation. Another pattern that appeared strongly in the data was feelings of isolation, which were cited by ten of the women. Lisa was the exception in this case, as she did not speak of experiencing such feelings. Unlike the others, however, Lisa was heavily involved in professional associations at the national level, and spoke of how her colleagues in that arena were a great support to her throughout her career. She was also responsible for starting a program in one of those national organizations that was charged with providing support and resources specifically to Asian American administrators in higher education. This strong and extended network very likely helped to alleviate any potential feelings of isolation for Lisa, and it is possible that had she not been so involved in those professional associations, she would have expressed some of the same feelings as the other women.

The following sentiment by Aya was typical of the types of comments that the women expressed when speaking of the isolating nature of their environments:

I have a very good friend and I think she is my sounding board and always, always been so positive and helpful but otherwise I think it’s a lonely place to be honest with you….Not safe to share your mistakes or your problems with others…when you get to this level you’re supposed to mentor others and not the other way. And through this leadership program that I co-coordinate we talk to our folks about mentoring “up” in terms of supporting your Vice Presidents and Presidents because oftentimes things become very alienating because of your role, because of their role and nobody wants to invite them or talk with them and so forth.
Yet Debra wondered if Asian Americans themselves were adding to their own sense of isolation due to their cultural background:

So I feel that a lot of Asian people who isolated themselves and because of the culture, the culture says mind your own business…I don’t know if you are familiar with the Chinese proverb….“Wipe off the snow on your walkway….Don’t look at someone else’s.” That’s the Chinese proverb. Just mind your own business is what it’s saying. And that’s very deeply rooted in our culture.

Whether the causes were institutionally-based or culturally driven, feeling isolated was something that was frequently expressed by almost all of the women, and this is consistent with the experiences of other senior women administrators of color in higher education.

**Gender-Typed Family Concerns.** A fourth pattern that emerged, which is also consistent with what the literature tells us is true about other women administrators of color, is the gender-typed family concerns they face. Interestingly, though, this pattern did not appear quite as strongly as the previous three discussed in this chapter—only seven of the women spoke of such concerns, while Lisa, Margaret, Elizabeth and Susan did not. The difference here is that each of the seven women who experienced these issues are heterosexually married and have children—by contrast, Elizabeth is single, Susan has a lesbian life partner and no children, and Margaret is married but has no children. Once again, Lisa was the outlier, as she is both heterosexually married and has children, yet she did not express any gender-typed family concerns throughout the course of her interview.

A scenario such as this one experienced by Debra, when she passed up a promotional opportunity to attend to her family, was an example of a gender-typed family concern:
A couple of times our college has leadership positions open and he (her boss) encouraged me to apply…for instance (a senior administrative) position opened about five years ago, and he encouraged me to apply and due to the fact that I was a newlywed and my daughter (who had been ill) was still in college and she was just getting so much better but still in the final stage of like a stabilization….And I didn’t want to take the chance. And I said to him, I really appreciate you encouraging me to do this, but I have to put my family first and not do that.

Carol also spoke of making a decision that impacted her career, based on her husband’s career choices:

So…when I left (the state where she was currently employed) and I eventually ended up at (another university), I was a trailing spouse. My husband wanted to move to (a job in a different state). I didn’t want to go. I just had our second baby and I remember not being thrilled about that idea, but so I changed jobs because of that.

These are just two examples of the many that these women spoke about in their interviews, examples in which the systemic, societal structures outlined in CRT limited their choices based on gender, choices that are not typically faced by men. And for some of the older women, such as Mary, it was clear that she felt her Asian culture demanded such gender-typed behavior:

(One of her professors) wanted me to work on his Ph.D. with him. After I finished, he wanted to send me to (name of institution), I guess to do research, when I told him I had to wait for my husband he said, “Now don’t forget your training is very good, you’re smart and you
need to do something for yourself too….He said, “Do you want to go?”

And I said, “I have to wait for my husband.” And so he understood I
had a conflict of culture and I wouldn’t, and my mom would have killed
me if I decided to just go. I have a Chinese culture and a responsibility
as a woman.

So for the women who were in traditional, heterosexually married relationships with children,
these sorts of issues were common. With the exception of Lisa, the rest of the women who did
not express concerns of this type were not married, were in non-traditional relationships or had
no children.

**The Model Minority Stereotype.** The final pattern that arose from the interviews was that of
the model minority stereotype. Predictably, the majority of the women described circumstances
in which they felt this stereotype had impacted their careers and others’ behavior toward them.
Betsy (who was not yet in a senior administrative position), Elizabeth and once again Lisa were
the exceptions. Because Lisa worked in an environment where Asian Americans were much
more prevalent, and also surrounded herself with a large number of Asian Americans in her
professional affiliations, it is possible that she was not exposed to this stereotype to the same
extent, or perhaps just not in the same overt ways. Betsy also worked at an institution where
Asian Americans were more prevalent, but Elizabeth did not; why she did not report
experiencing such issues is unknown.

Kathy’s recounting of an incident early in her career was indicative of most of the
women’s experiences with regard to the model minority stereotype:

Like when I was (her position title), my supervisor said, “(Kathy),
you are quiet leadership.” Right? So that’s definitely, they’re
looking at me as an Asian American. All Asian Americans are kind of quiet and you need to be more assertive and you need to speak up more. Blah, blah, blah, so they’re trying to mold you into a certain type of leadership.

This “quiet leadership” style also seemed to be the underlying message in how Carol described how she was often viewed as an Asian American female administrator; she also noted that there was a gender difference in how Asian Americans are perceived:

I think some of that, the stereotypes about being subservient, being more the background than the foreground and more the follower than the leader. I think all of that is a little more exacerbated….It’s more strongly applied to women versus Asian American men.

When Carol broke out of the model minority stereotype, she encountered some criticism:

I remember one time, and this person shall remain nameless but as a (senior administrator) I was told by the Chancellor that what he would like from me is to be more subservient or self-effacing I think was the word. He thought I was too assertive, too whatever, and we had an interesting set of dialogue and conversation around that…but it was really, I understood what he was talking about and where he was coming from. So I think that stereotypical expectation impacts Asian American women.

Other women in the study, such as Mary, seemed to agree with the stereotype, and not view it in a negative light. She had the following to say about her decision to hire an Asian American woman:
They gave me four finalists. They all were good and I decided to pick her… and nobody said I can’t. I have a committee and she turned out to be good. I just knew she was going to be good because I trust her skills because I think, Asian women, if you want to do something, always do a thorough job…. I mean, I have never really had anybody want to do a shortcut job on numbers. I think any Asian, basically your father would kill you if you don’t do your best…. My feeling is people don’t know Asians are really good at everything they do and I’m a little biased.

Thus while the model minority stereotype was a factor for most of the women, it did not play out in the same ways for all. Several of the women, like Mary, felt that being subjected to the stereotype had its advantages, since people would automatically view them as intelligent and hard-working based solely on their race.

Table 2 provides a summary of the general patterns outlined above, including the number of times the participants cited an example of each.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>White male dominance</th>
<th>Isolation</th>
<th>Racism</th>
<th>Sexism</th>
<th>Gender-typed</th>
<th>Model minority</th>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### The Mentoring Relationship

**Defining the Mentoring Relationship.** While most of the women in this study defined a mentor in the traditional sense as someone who was above them in administrative rank, had more experience, assisted in their career development and provided emotional support, many of them made a distinction between a mentor and other individuals who they felt were influential in their careers. Carol used the word “sponsor” to describe two White males who advocated for her in various situations but with whom she did not have a close relationship. In a similar way, Debra spoke of an Asian male who “advocated” for her in a specific circumstance, but she did not consider him a mentor because she barely knew him. Debra, along with Mary and Aya, also spoke of individuals from whom they received advice sporadically over the years, but since they did not develop any sort of ongoing, long-term relationship, they did not consider them to be mentors in the traditional sense. Lisa used the word mentor to describe only those individuals who had an impact on her work-life; she did not feel that the word could be used to describe someone with whom she did not work. Margaret and Aya spoke of “confidantes,” but like Lisa, did not feel they were mentors since they did not work with those individuals. Still others, such as Mary and Margaret, used the term “role model” instead of mentor, and stated that these were individuals whom they had looked up to over the years but did not form a personal relationship.

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<th>0</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aya</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
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<td><strong>18</strong></td>
<td><strong>39</strong></td>
<td><strong>45</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
with; they also felt that those role models had influenced them in both positive and negative ways. Kathy spoke of a “mentoring network,” which closely relates to the concept of co-mentoring which was outlined in Chapter Two. While she did not have a close, ongoing relationship with any particular member of her network, she felt she had gained valuable support and advice from the group over the years. In short, a key distinction expressed by these women between their mentors and other individuals who were impactful in their lives was that they felt a mentor was someone with whom they needed to have a close, on-going, long-term relationship.

While the majority of the women in this study did speak of having mentors, nine of them also spoke about the lack (or perceived lack) of available mentors. Only Betsy and Debra did not cite a lack of available mentors as a problem. The fact that Betsy was not yet in a senior administrative position might help to explain why she did not express this feeling, but it is unclear why Debra did not share this perception.

A set of patterns that arose from the data resulted from an analysis of the interviews specifically related to the women’s mentoring relationships. As was outlined in Chapter Three, the data were first analyzed with regard to the gender and race characteristics of the women’s mentors. This analysis also revealed some interesting, yet for the most part results that could be predicted based on the existing literature. Yet, as was the case with the general patterns that were uncovered in the data, there were a few surprises here as well.

**Gender and Racial Patterns.** As would be supported by the research to date in this area, the majority of the women’s mentors were male, and most of those men were White. Debra, Carol and Elizabeth had experience exclusively with White mentors, although several of the women (Betsy, Laura, Lisa, Kathy and Susan) stated that they had also Black or Asian male mentors. Susan was the only participant who said that one of her male mentors was Latino.
Only four of the women—Lisa, Margaret, Kathy and Susan—mentioned having an Asian American mentor, although the particular individuals they named and the circumstances surrounding those relationships were extremely varied. Lisa, who works in a state with a high percentage of Asian Americans in the population, admitted that having two Asian American male mentors was most likely due to that fact; in other words, she had not deliberately sought out a mentor of the same race, and she felt it was unlikely that she would have developed those relationships were she not living in that state. Margaret identified her mother as her sole, lifelong mentor, and could not name any other mentoring relationship at any point in her career. Kathy spoke of a male Asian American and a female Asian American who served as some of her mentors, but was quick to point out that she met the female mentor through a professional association; were it not for that shared professional affiliation, she did not think that their paths would have crossed. Susan spoke of only one female Asian American mentor; and in fact, she shared that same mentor with Kathy, and also met her through the same professional association. Betsy and Laura, two of the women who worked in states with a high concentration of Asian Americans in the overall population, did not report having any Asian American mentors at all.

In addition to Margaret’s identification with her mother as her sole mentor, three other women also cited family members as being influential in their lives and career decisions, a fact that is often reflected in the mentoring relationships of other racial and ethnic groups. Elizabeth, Aya and Mary each spoke of their father as being a key influence in their lives, although not to the exclusion of others as was the case with Margaret. This finding also revealed an interesting generational difference: the age range of these four women was 57 – 67, and no one under the age of 50 described a significant mentoring relationship with a family member.
In terms of their mentoring relationships, Aya and Mary were both outliers of sorts, as they both stated that while they sought advice from people at various points throughout their careers, they did not have any on-going mentoring relationships, not even with a family member. These two women expressed a much more independent, “I can make it on my own” kind of philosophy toward their careers. In Aya’s case, this led to some feelings of isolation; but in Mary’s case, she viewed herself as a maverick of sorts, and while she also expressed some feelings of isolation, she did not attribute those feelings to her lack of connection with a mentor.

Most of the women reported having more male than female mentors, although seven of the women also reported having both male and female mentors. Only two women had mentors of just one gender—Betsy stated she had experiences with only one male mentor, and Margaret was the only participant who had only one female mentor, her mother.

Finally, it was interesting to note that none of the women in this study had participated in a formal mentoring program. All of their mentoring relationships developed through informal means, although as mentioned earlier in this chapter, Kathy and Susan developed one of their shared connections through their participation in a professional association, rather than the work setting.

**Career vs. Psychosocial Mentoring Patterns.** For each of the nine women who reported having an ongoing mentoring relationship, either in the past or present, career mentoring played a key role. Having their mentor advocate for increased responsibilities, working collaboratively to increase their skills and utilizing their mentors in networking situations were just a few examples of how these women viewed their involvement in these relationships as something that helped them to grow professionally. Elizabeth had the following story to tell about how one of her mentors advocated for her promotion after she won a prestigious award:
And then he says, “And then now that you’re done with that, you can put that award in there because I’ve got a new job for you.” I said, “What do you mean?”….And so you’re just sitting there listening to this and it’s kind of like, what is this guy saying? Now here is your next project. You’ve accomplished all this…. You’ve got this award. You wanted to bring (the institution) to this different level…and you’ve accomplished this. You’re gonna move on. Here’s what I have for you.

Though Aya and Mary did not describe any long-term, ongoing mentoring relationships, they did describe similar career mentoring circumstances with the individuals whose advice they sought at various points in their careers. Like Elizabeth, Aya described a circumstance in which a male supervisor encouraged her to take on a new role:

He saw that I had plateaued, that I was frustrated reporting to this other person, so he got me the application for my current job and put it in my hands….I wouldn’t have done it without him doing that because I couldn’t see how stuck I was and I couldn’t bring myself to think of leaving that job. But he did. He did the work, put it in my hands and said, “Okay, go send it in. Here’s what I know. Here’s what I found out. You need to do this.”

It is significant to note that out of the seven women who had both male and female mentors, four of them—Laura, Debra, Lisa and Kathy—stated that they experienced a greater degree of career mentoring with their male mentors versus their female mentors, and spoke of several specific instances in which the men provided them with job-related support or advice. This is in contrast to what research to date has shown to be the case for mentoring relationships for women
administrators of color, as the tendency is for mentors, regardless of gender, to provide more psychosocial mentoring to women. The following example from Laura was indicative of some of the career advice she received from a male mentor:

Laura: The other thing why he was such a great boss was if I came to him with a suggestion he would say, “Put it in writing, cost it out, do the proposal, do the background and if it looks reasonable to me, go and do it.”

Interviewer: That’s great.

Laura: Yeah, he was so great. And I don’t think he even realized how great he was. I told him afterwards but it was great because he said from the ground up just put it in writing, make a proposal, if it sounds good, then go ahead. And that was really terrific for me. It helped me to grow a lot.

For Carol and Elizabeth, the amount of career mentoring provided by their male mentors was almost equal to that provided by their female mentors. Susan did not fall into either category, as she reported that both her male and female mentors provided career mentoring in equal measure. Betsy, who has had only the one male mentor thus far in her career, also felt that he had provided her with equal amounts of both career and psychosocial mentoring. Mary and Aya, the only two women in this study who did not report participating in any long-term mentoring relationships, each gave examples of career advice that was given to them on various occasions by both men and women. Neither one, however, described receiving any advice from their male colleagues that fell into the psychosocial category. This is again inconsistent with what the literature shows to be the case for other women administrators of color, as psychosocial mentoring is typically provided more often to women than career mentoring. Only Laura and Lisa’s male mentors fit the pattern supported by the literature for other women of color, i.e., their male mentors provided
them with more psychosocial than career mentoring overall. Margaret, who was mentored only by her mother, also received a greater amount of psychosocial mentoring from her.

Table 3 outlines the gender and race characteristics of the mentors for each woman, as well as the number of specific examples that were given in the interviews with regard to the amount of career and psychosocial mentoring that took place in each of those relationships.

Table 3

**Gender/Race Characteristics of Mentors and Mentoring Content**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender/Race of Mentor(s)</th>
<th>Career (C)</th>
<th>Psychosocial (P)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Betsy</td>
<td>1 African American male</td>
<td>C – 8</td>
<td>P – 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>4 White (1 female, 3 male)</td>
<td>C: males – 6; females – 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 African American (1 female, 1 male)</td>
<td>P: males – 8; females – 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debra</td>
<td>2 White (1 female, 1 male)</td>
<td>C: males – 5; females – 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P: males – 4; females – 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>3 White (1 female, 2 male)</td>
<td>C: males – 8; females – 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 Asian American males</td>
<td>P: males – 10; females – 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>1 White female</td>
<td>C – 2</td>
<td>P – 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret</td>
<td>1 Asian American female (mother)</td>
<td>C – 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P – 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>2 Asian Americas (1 female, 1 male)</td>
<td>C: males – 4; females – 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 African American (1 female, 1 male)</td>
<td>P: males – 1; females – 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 White male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>3 White (2 female, 1 male)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P: males – 5; females – 11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>2 African American females</td>
<td>C: males – 1; females 1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Latino male</td>
<td>P: males – 3; females 7</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Asian American female</td>
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The Critical Juncture

How the women in this study utilized their mentors when deciding whether or not to pursue a senior administrative position was extremely varied, and the interviews revealed some interesting gender differences in this area.

Out of the seven women who reported having both male and female mentors, only three (Lisa, Elizabeth and Susan) reported utilizing their male mentors at this juncture. Even so, how they utilized those mentors varied a great deal. Lisa asked one of her male mentors to write her a letter of recommendation for her first senior administrative position, but did not discuss any of the details of her decision with him. For her move to a second senior administrative position, another male mentor recommended her directly to the president of the institution; that same person then wrote her a letter of recommendation when she applied for the chief student affairs position from which she eventually retired.

In Elizabeth’s case, it was also a male mentor who assisted her in obtaining her senior-level position, but as noted earlier in this chapter, he approached her directly and stated that he wanted her to take a new job that he was creating for her. She did not take any initiative; in fact, she seemed to be completely stunned by his approach, and was not sure that she would have sought out a senior administrative position otherwise.

For Susan, talking with both her male and female mentors made sense to her, and she utilized them in distinctly different ways. Her female mentor helped her with the “practical
career stuff” like reviewing her resume and cover letter, as well as conducting mock interviews with her. She also used a different female mentor, along with one of her male mentors, for both career and psychosocial mentoring. She described it in this way:

Susan: And then the other pieces too were more I think (her male and female mentor) were about what I really wanted, like were these the right steps to go? Are you ready for it? What you need to expect, during the process but actually after it if you do get it. You know how that works.

Interviewer: Okay. So what kind of things did they explain to you about how things work after you get it?

Susan: Well, the negotiation stuff. In terms of negotiation for salary I think, those were the basic things but then how your life changes, the expectation of professionalism. I think that you need to know how that changes you and how that changes perceptions.

Betsy, who was part of the pilot study and has not yet tried to secure a senior administrative position, stated that she would likely speak with her male mentor—her only mentor—and “run the idea by him” if she thought about applying. Kathy stated that she used all her mentors, both male and female, equally when considering the move to a senior administrative position.

The remaining women, Laura, Debra and Carol, stated that they took the initiative on their own, and did not rely on their mentors to provide opportunities or assistance at this juncture. Laura said that she “actively worked my networks” and used her mentors only as “contacts” when the time came for her to apply for a senior administrative position, and would call other individuals she knew about possible job openings. In Debra’s case, she approached a female community college president when she was a doctoral student, and asked to interview her
for a class project; that interview eventually led to the president offering her a senior-level job, despite the fact that she had no prior experience in higher education up to that point. Carol was the outlier in this instance, and did not discuss any career moves with her mentors, nor use them as contacts. With the exception of the one career move she made because of her husband’s work needs, she stated that she was very purposeful in seeking out specific kinds of work environments in order to build her resume, and made those career decisions without discussing them with her mentors.

Other women, such as Margaret, obtained their senior administrative positions through a combination of skill and opportunity. After having been promoted to her first senior administrative position by a female vice president, that same person left the institution to become a college president. Margaret was then appointed the acting vice president, and eventually chosen to fill the position after a year. So while her skills no doubt earned her the spot, she did not speak with her mentor (her mother) about applying for the job.

The final two women in this study, Aya and Mary, were “tapped” by others at this critical career juncture. As noted earlier in this chapter, a male friend of Aya’s saw that she had “plateaued” in her current position, gave her an application for a vice president position, and told her to apply; she did not feel that she would have applied if he had not taken that step. Mary, in essence, was recruited for her senior level positions, and to use her words, “never really went after a job.” While she did not have any mentors to consult, she did say that she called two male Asian colleagues to ask if she should take the job once it had been offered.

Summary

The general patterns that emerged from the data—a White-male dominated culture, the intersection of sexism and racism, gender-typed family concerns, feelings of isolation and the
model minority stereotype—were patterns that were largely predictable by what is currently known about women administrators of color and Asian American women administrators specifically. There were, however, some notable departures from the literature. Instances of sexism were more often cited by the women than racism, which is the opposite of what the research currently tells us about other women administrators of color. Also, in the area of gender-typed family concerns, the interviews revealed that the women who were not in traditional, heterosexually-married relationships with children did not report experiencing such issues.

An analysis of the characteristics of the mentoring relationship as experienced by the women in this study also yielded some predictable results, as well as some surprises. Many of the women made the distinction between who they felt were mentors as opposed to other people who had helped them at discrete points in their careers; a mentor, they felt, needed to be someone with whom they had a close, on-going and long-term relationship. Several of the women experienced a greater degree of career mentoring from their male mentors, which is contrary to what the literature states is typical for male mentors and their female protégés; only two of the women received a greater amount of psychosocial versus career mentoring from their male mentors, which would be consistent with the current literature. In addition, two of the women, Aya and Mary, reported having no long-term mentoring relationships at all; this fact is even more surprising considering that Aya is in the latter part of her career, and Mary has already retired. None of the women in this study had participated in a formal mentoring program or relationship.

Delving into how the women used their mentors at critical career junctures revealed a myriad of differences. Even though the majority of the women reported having both male and
female mentors, only three of them reported utilizing their male mentors in any way at this juncture—and even then, their ways of utilizing them were varied. Some of the women reported using their mentors only for letters of reference or as contacts, and somewhat surprisingly, some of the women stated that they did not discuss these moves with their mentors at all. A few of the women, such as Elizabeth and Mary, were either recruited or “tapped” by others; in Elizabeth’s case, it was a male mentor who approached her with a senior level opportunity, but no mentor made Mary aware of such jobs. In short, there seemed to be no discernable patterns in this area, as the role that mentors played for the women at this critical career juncture was extremely varied; and in some cases, the women reported that their mentors did not play any role at all.

There were some outliers in several of the areas. As mentioned earlier, Aya and Mary had no mentors; Laura did not describe any issues with working in a White male-dominated environment; Susan did not report being exposed to sexism; Kathy did not report any examples of racism; Elizabeth and Lisa did speak of any instances in which the model minority stereotype came into play in their careers, and; Lisa also did not reveal any feelings of isolation or being subjected to gender-typed family concerns. Lisa’s extensive involvement with professional associations on the national level make her the true outlier of the group, and it is that level of involvement that may have helped alleviate some of those concerns for her, particularly any feelings of isolation.

Taken together, these general patterns form the underlying framework that provides insight into the overarching themes that resulted from a deeper analysis of the data. In the next section of this chapter, these themes will be interpreted from the participant’s point of view using relational cultural theory (RCT), and within the institutional context utilizing critical race theory (CRT).
Themes and Theoretical Context

A deeper analysis of the interviews and grouping of the codes that had been assigned to give them meaning revealed several broad, overarching themes: 1) culturally-related self-effacement; 2) mutual engagement through mentoring; 3) characteristics of successful mentoring relationships; 4) racial/ethnic salience, both within the mentoring relationship and within the institutional culture; 5) gender salience, both within the mentoring relationship and within the institutional culture, and; 6) uses of power. The sections that follow in this chapter will discuss each of those themes in turn.

Culturally-related self-effacement. As might be predicted by the model minority stereotype, the majority of the women in this study expressed examples of, or instances involving, culturally-related self-effacement. What is meant by this theme is that the women spoke of several issues: 1) passivity, or the perception of passivity; 2) self-effacement/humility; 3) deference to authority; 4) negative self-talk, and; 5) lack of assertiveness, as ways in which they felt they were supposed to behave—or how others perceived them as needing to behave—as dictated by their Asian heritage.

Nine of the eleven women described such feelings; only Carol and Elizabeth did not. Elizabeth was the only woman interviewed for this study who was a senior administrator in Business Affairs, and since she was working in a more traditionally male-dominated division of higher education, CRT theory would explain her outlier status. She was clearly labeled as an outsider by her co-workers; and as noted earlier in this chapter, those same co-workers even placed bets on whether or not she would last in her position. The institutional culture labeled her as the problem, rather than the culture itself being identified as in need of change. Carol, however, worked in Student Affairs; and because it is more common for senior women
administrators to hold positions within that division, it is not clear why she was an outlier in this particular area.

Passivity and the perception of passivity, as well as self-effacement, surfaced the most strongly in the interviews. An example of passivity is reflected in Betsy’s recounting of how she felt she should behave in the following situation. Part of her response relates to the fact that she was not yet in a senior administrative position; yet she also felt that being an Asian American at least partially dictated her behavior:

I mean nothing too specific, just situations where we had like, especially visitors from overseas come to visit the campus and then I have meetings with all these Deans and they’re saying all these things and it’s like, you know, I want to speak up but it’s not appropriate because one, I’m not with the Dean’s level. Those visitors that are Asians and I’m Asian American and I shouldn’t really speak up against the Deans in front of them. You know that kind of situation. You know where it doesn’t look appropriate for someone in a somewhat middle position to speak up against someone else, and I’m Asian American anyways and I shouldn’t really speak up against anyone at the table.

Betsy’s reaction seems to be related to both the tenets of relational cultural and critical race theory. Because she does not yet hold senior administrative status, RCT would assume that she has not had the opportunity to form any sort of relationship with the higher-level administrators around the table. She sees herself as very separate from them; there is no mutual engagement, and no opportunity for growth or development. Taken within the larger institutional context,
CRT would view her subordination in this example as being a result of her gender, race and lower administrative status or class. Betsy feels that while she wants to “speak up,” she shouldn’t really do so not only because she’s a subordinate but also because she’s an Asian American.

The perception of passivity, as expressed by Aya when she said that “the stereotypical view of an Asian American woman is hardworking and quiet and smart and reserved,” was typical of such comments made by others in the interviews. Betsy made a similar statement:

I think you know as Asian American, I always felt perceived as they’re kind of like, quiet person. They don’t rock the boat kind of person. They don’t speak up.

She went on to say that as an Asian American, “You know, there’s some expectations that oh well, I’ll just roll over. You know, do what they want me to do.”

Laura spoke of her need to “overcompensate” for the perception of passivity on the part of Asian Americans:

Laura: They kind of want to take you into the quiet Asian role and so I’ve at times felt like I’ve had to overcompensate for that.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about a time that you’ve felt that you had to overcompensate?

Laura: I think with, I don’t generally go to faculty senate or faculty congress meetings unless there’s something directly tied with student affairs. But when I do go, I definitely feel like I need to speak even if I may just agree with the conversation that’s going on. I just sort of feel compelled to say something….And I don’t – I mean it’s hard
to pinpoint why that is except to just to kind of say, I know what I’m
talking about and I’m here and if you need me as a resource I can talk
about such and such.

Susan spoke of the perception of passivity in the following way:

But I think the other thing is how people perceive us. I think there’s
the idea that in terms of leadership we’re not leaders. I mean there’s
so few so you can’t even give examples. Right? Of Asian Americans
as leaders, Asian Americans in higher ed as leaders….there are so
few and so I think when you think of a leader, good or bad, we’re
just not you know, in the minds of individuals.

Lisa knew that her perceived passivity, or “quiet style” as she described it, was sometimes
misinterpreted by others, even though it had proven to be effective for her over the years:

And that style is mentioned quite often and people like style. And
the style is mentioned more often than, and I’m always surprised
at how often it’s mentioned because it’s not – It’s a quiet style I
guess. But it’s a style. There’s strength in it and for me it’s effective
and others recognize that it’s effective but I think sometimes it may
be misinterpreted by those who don’t understand the style.

Debra also felt that this more stereotypically Asian style of leadership could be viewed as a
disadvantage:

I have my own little theories about that and I’m not sure how accurate
that they are but first thinking that some of the Asian values they
precisely become the obstacles…in our own advancement. For example,
we are modest. Asian culture values modesty. And modesty is a virtue.

We should all try to keep that as much as we can. But in this American
culture, they emphasize self promotion. You have to go there and sell
yourself. You have to go interview. You have to write letter. I used
to have a hard time writing those letters, application letters because I
don’t like to brag about what I’ve done. I feel like it’s so not me. I
don’t want to talk about that. And so that part I think is a cultural
shift that we, the Asian women who are living away from our
homeland and this culture is something that we need to embrace
and practice. We can’t let our own cultural values to sort of override
the American value system. Individually at least we won’t be able to
do that.

This “quiet style” and modesty, which run counter to the traditional leadership style that is most
often present in the White male dominated world of American higher education, places Asian
American women at a disadvantage in the institutional context. What is assumed to be the most
appropriate and correct ways for leaders to behave are actually what CRT would label as
institutionalized forms of racism and sexism; alternate styles, such as what Lisa and Debra
described, have no place. Laura’s comments also underscore this issue, as she feels “compelled
to say something” in order to feel valued in her institutional setting.

Self-effacement also appeared strongly in the interviews, as the following statements by
Laura demonstrate when she was describing her career success:
Laura: I mean, I’d like to believe it’s just purely my ability but I don’t think so. But…

Interviewer: That might have something to do with it as well.

Laura: I don’t know about that, but I’ve just been lucky to find people that I’ve been able to connect with who’ve kind of looked out for me.

Lisa, as was mentioned earlier in this chapter, was highly involved with professional associations on a national level and was highly regarded by her colleagues; yet despite her many accomplishments, she had this to say about herself:

I never saw myself, I never regarded myself as a role model, but in the later years of my career I had to sit down and tell myself that you’re a role model and I have to behave differently. I had to because I had a bigger responsibility….

Laura actually viewed this issue of self-effacement and humility as a possible barrier to career advancement:

So I think in addition to you’re not going to have Asian Americans… go around saying I want to be a Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs. Because that’s not being humble, which is a huge part of the culture.

This humility is also apparent in Debra’s recounting of how she was hired for her first senior administrative position:

And once I got this job after accepting, I had to like buyer’s remorse, so I was talking to a male colleague of mine that opinion I trust. I said, “You know, I don’t know if I can do that job. This multi-million dollar budget. I don’t know if I can manage the thing. I have to oversee
the library? I don’t even know how a library functions. And then he says to me, “One of the things I like about you is you don’t know how good you are.” And I said, “Really?” He said, “Really. That’s the cutest part about you.” And I said, “Really? You think that’s cute?” He said, “Yeah, that’s cute. A lot of people think they are better than they really are. But you don’t know how good you are.”

A CRT explanation would be that active White supremacy, not simply a White male dominated culture, is the driving force behind deliberate statements such as those made by Debra’s male colleague, and serves to support the status quo that allows Whites to maintain and assert power. In other words, these instances of self-effacement and humility make it harder for these women to excel in the higher education setting, as the dominant culture values assertiveness and the ability to “sell” oneself in order to get ahead. Debra’s male colleague’s description of her attitude as “cute” also smacks of institutionalized sexism; his use of language, while seeming to be a compliment, only serves to underscore that Debra is somehow different from other senior administrators; one can assume that her male colleague would not refer to a senior male administrator as being “cute.”

Yet while self-effacement and humility was often a barrier in the institutional setting, Debra also saw it as a positive when trying to build relationships:

And to me it’s not a bad trait because to be humble, to be kind of relying on others from time to time is a very good gesture and very good way to earn trust and respect.

This statement is an RCT reflection, as Debra clearly values relationship-building as a key function within her work environment. Her notion of “relying on others” also indicates her
feeling that mutuality is a vital part of successful human interaction, and she uses humility to foster trust with others and build her own relational competence.

Deference to authority was another area of culturally-related self-effacement that emerged from the data. Debra provided an example of this when she described her reluctance to speak with the president of her institution, even though he had consistently encouraged her to do so:

First of all, he is a President and secondly I have a tremendous sense of guilt like even when I call him, I will apologize first and I said, “Well, I am sorry I called you like that. I know you are in a meeting but this is an urgent issue and that’s why I called you.” I would always explain, but he is the one always, “Oh, don’t worry, I always know you have a good reason to call me.” But for me, I always like, feel that I am wasting his time or that I’m bothering him or something.

Margaret expressed how her Asian value of deference to authority impacted her interactions with others in her senior role:

I think race does make a difference as an Asian American if you were educated or brought up as I was more traditionally as in, you know, deference to authority figures, deference to elders, and being generally quieter in this position and that doesn’t always work in a senior level role where it’s a more aggressive, at least as I came up it was more aggressive,

She went on to say:
I know for the Japanese…it is different, the hierarchy. You’re supposed to be very polite to all your elders. You’re not supposed to question authority so in administration, that’s hard.

This deference to authority was not confined to the women’s relationships in their work environments alone. Susan spoke of her deference for a participant in this study—Lisa, who as mentioned earlier in this chapter, was involved in professional associations at the national level:

Susan: I mean I’ve seen other Presidents at other institutions hold her in this high regard, she holds herself and she doesn’t even….

She’s just so sweet and she would never think of herself as this but just so seemingly so senior. I mean so sweet and open but just so senior….It’s not even the age thing either….No, it’s not age. I’ve met folks her age or older…But it’s not the age. There’s something about (Lisa) and I don’t know for me psychologically is because she was the first Asian American woman in leadership. She was the first woman of color who was the (leader of a national professional association)….And then she was the first Asian American of almost everything, in many things in student affairs.

This reflection from Susan is an interesting combination of both RCT and CRT. She clearly feels that Lisa is a likable person, someone with whom she feels a connection, can build a relationship with and learn from; yet she also consistently described her as “senior” and seemed at the same time to find her somehow unapproachable. The RCT element here is that Susan is drawn to Lisa’s style, wants to connect and build a relationship; the CRT element is that the
institutional context—in this case, the professional association—somehow seemed to inhibit Susan’s interactions with her.

Negative self-talk also emerged from the data as a form of self-effacement, although not as strongly as the other codes in this theme, as only Debra and Kathy expressed such feelings. It was somewhat surprising that women who had achieved this level of success in their careers would still express such thoughts, but this might relate to the model minority stereotype that Asian Americans should be humble. Debra had the following to say about being unsure about expressing her ideas:

_Debra:_ So I had many of those moments in my early years of the career and from time to time I will still have those moments today that on a very big, big issue, tough issue, I will have an idea but I’m not quite sure if that idea is a really, really good one….I will run it by with someone and say, “What do you think?” And everybody says, “Well, this is a great idea.” And then I feel better.

As mentioned earlier, Debra also felt that behaving in this way was “not a bad trait because to be humble, to be kind of relying on others from time to time, is a very good gesture and very good way to earn trust and respect.” This is an example of RCT at work, as she clearly viewed humility as a way of building more solid, mutually engaging relationships.

At the same time, Debra also saw how negative self-talk could be a detriment to her career, as it shows up in even non-work related circumstances:

And the very simplest of thing is when people say, “Oh you look great today.” Instead of saying, “Thank you.” Like, no, no, I don’t look good. You know, that’s kind of exaggerated example. But the
point being that the very virtuous value in our culture, part of it could
be hindrance in this culture and one of which is we are not very good
promoting ourselves and kind of etiquette for ourselves.

Finally, a lack of assertiveness on the part of some of the women appeared in the data,
although also not nearly as strongly as some of the other issues outlined earlier in this section.
Only three of the women—Betsy, Debra and Margaret—described situations in which a lack of
assertiveness was a factor for them. Betsy discussed how she was unable to make tough
decisions in her work:

And sometimes having to make the hard decisions. Maybe that’s
one of the things. Having to make those hard decisions, matter of
fact my work is – I think my inability to make that hard core
decision kind of prevents me from being that much harder on the
students when they get into trouble. You know, I always give them
an extension.

In Debra and Margaret’s case, however, this lack of assertiveness was a perception on the part of
others, not a true lack of assertiveness on their part. When she encountered a difficult situation,
Debra felt that others saw her as, “I’m like, all smiley-faced and they think they’re going to crush
me,” and Margaret felt this was a label that had been incorrectly applied to her by her colleagues:

I don’t know if they’re more comfortable there or it’s more of a cause
orientation for them but what happens is then you get labeled. Like
“Oh, she’s really good but…she’s too soft in her logic. She can’t make
the tough decisions.” So everything you put on women and then you
double it for an Asian woman.
Viewed through a CRT lens, this lack of assertiveness—which in most cases was a perception on the part of others, and not based in reality—was a clear way in which the dominant culture subordinated the ideas of these women. In Margaret’s example, both her gender and racial status was used to further differentiate her from the way she was “supposed” to operate.

Table 4 provides definitions of the five characteristics contained within the theme of culturally-related self-effacement, as well as an exemplar quote for each.

Table 4

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<th>Culturally-Related Self-Effacement – Definitions and Exemplar Quotes</th>
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<td><strong>Characteristic</strong></td>
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<td>Passivity/perception of passivity</td>
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| Negative self-talk | Statements that indicate participant feels negatively about herself | “So I had many of those moments in my early years of my career and from time to time I will still have those moments today that on a very big issue, tough issue I will have an idea but I’m not quite
Mutual engagement through mentoring. A second overarching theme that emerged from the data was that of mutual engagement through mentoring. These mutually beneficial mentoring activities fell into three categories: 1) shared social or work activities; 2) co-mentoring and collaborative skill building, and; 3) honesty and personal information sharing. All of the women in this study described situations that fell into one or more of these categories; even Mary and Aya experienced some of these characteristics, although only in relation to the first two categories. These two women did not relate any instances of honesty and personal information sharing; their examples of mutual engagement through mentoring only occurred as isolated, work-related incidents, and with individuals they did not describe as mentors.

A typical example of this mutual engagement that took place in the form of shared social or work activities was provided by Betsy:

Yeah, we sometimes meet. Occasionally we meet sometimes on campus for lunch and if I’m too busy I can’t be out of the office too long, or sometimes we go off campus and go somewhere for lunch.

Laura described a shared social activity with her mentor that truly impacted her overall lifestyle:

*Interviewer:* Okay. And you’ve talked quite a bit about the types of advice that they would give you that they would maybe approach
you about a certain task or being on a committee, job related things.

Are there other types of interactions that you’ve had with your mentors?

*Laura:* Yes. So when I was in (a former job) and mentioned the two African American administrators and also (one of her male mentors) who is White who was the (his job title), I don’t know if you guys are like this at (interviewer’s institution) but our (name of her former department) was really close, really close and we worked weekends. We worked late at night and so you just kind of develop friendships and relationships over time and so (her male mentor) was an African American male. He became my running buddy….He actually taught me how to run. I couldn’t run like a block…I literally could not but he taught me how to run.

When speaking of another male mentor, she went on to say:

*Laura:* And then (her male mentor), this is probably too much information but he loved to party and was kind of a party animal but he was really smart and just a really talented individual and a lot of times he would just round everybody up and it would be like 9:00 at night and say we’re all going to the downtown bar….And I’m not a drinker but we would go down to whatever and hang out and then go home….And we all went to up to his upstate house that he grew up in and we’d all hang out there or when we went to conferences we would hang out at night together so there was
definitely, I’m sure a lot of boundaries were crossed.

_Interviewer:_ A lot of camaraderie.

_Laura:_ Yeah, a lot of camaraderie. Really. I mean it was really nice.

It made for a great work environment as long as we got our work done.

This finding of mutual engagement through shared social activities was one that crossed
gender and generational boundaries. Some of the interactions took place with mentors of both
genders, and both the younger participants (such as Laura) and the older women (such as Lisa)
described similar shared social interactions. Lisa described the following interaction with one of
her male mentors, although she noted that this was the only mentor with whom she interacted in
a social setting:

You had a question here about interacting with a mentor in a purely
social setting. He’s the only one that I really can say was a purely
social setting because he wasn’t a supervisor, wasn’t a boss or anything
like that. And the term social setting was, I was a guest in his home
with my husband. I was a houseguest. He and his partner had a home
in (name of city) and he insisted that I stay as a houseguest. And later
my husband and I were both houseguests of theirs and that probably was
the only social setting but he was a very, very important person in my
life and a very dear friend.

Carol also described how shared social activities also helped the mentoring relationship to evolve
into a friendship with one of her female mentors:

I don’t know when the mentoring stopped and it just evolved into a
friendship but it started within a working relationship and we’re
talking about the work and then it evolved into more connections at a personal level and then obviously socially as well.

Kathy also described how one of her mentoring relationships had evolved into a friendship, and felt that, unlike her relationships with her other mentors, this had occurred because of shared work-related activities. In other words, proximity made the difference for her:

_Interviewer:_ Okay. So you talked a lot about traveling to conferences and interacting with your mentors through work. Did you ever interact with them in just a purely social setting?

_Kathy:_ No. I mean (her female mentor) and I are really good friends. So yeah…but everybody else. No. I don’t really socialize with them.

_Interviewer:_ So what is it about your relationship with her that makes those social interactions possible?

_Kathy:_ We’re just friends. We worked together at (one of her former institutions) and I think working there was kind of a bonding experience….

So the other people, I didn’t work with them.

Clearly, the women who were interviewed for this study did not seek to separate from their mentors; whether in a social or work setting, they cherished the personal, often long-term interaction that resulted from years of communication and sharing, and were grateful for the benefits they gained from the relationships. These feelings are supported by RCT, as significant development took place within the context of the mentoring relationship. Many of the women’s stories as they described interactions with their mentors brought both parties feelings of enjoyment and enrichment; these feelings relate closely to the RCT tenets that “People grow through and toward relationship throughout the life span,” that “movement toward mutuality...
rather than separation characterizes mature functioning,” and that “the ability to participate in increasingly complex and diversified relational networks characterizes psychological growth” (Jordan, 2000, p. 280).

Another area in which the women experienced mutual engagement through mentoring was via co-mentoring and collaborative skill building. This was another RCT finding, as all of the stories that the women had to tell in this area spoke strongly of mutual growth that occurred as a result of sharing ideas or tasks, and both parties felt mutually empowered as a result.

Susan gave the following example of collaborative skill building with one of her female mentors:

I remember when she said something like, let’s co-chair this charity event. We have to raise money for a community organization. And I said, “I’ll be your assistant.” And she’d be like, “No, you’re my co-chair. We’re doing this together.”

Elizabeth described how some of her male mentors have also worked side-by-side with her in order to build both their skills:

One’s my direct boss, so he’s been a mentor just, I want to say, guiding me through some of the ways in which to handle a challenging situation and how to present cases and all the information to make sure that I would have my whole program fully developed and be able to give some alternatives so when making those presentations they could see that you just didn’t, I’m not looking at one thing but an alternative ones…. And he trusts me with the operational, he doesn’t like that stuff. It’s not his forte so I try to teach him. But it’s been important for me to understand
the politics and that’s where he’s been very helpful because he’s in the university setting with the board, with the city with other administrators the politics that need to go on and that go on in the background.

Elizabeth also described similar situations with her female mentors, as is shown in this example of the two of them working on a project:

*Elizabeth:* So that exposure I had…studied up on that for her was good.

It was good for her and it was good for me.

*Interviewer:* So it was kind of a mutual exchange?

*Elizabeth:* It was a mutual exchange. She would know what she was doing, but she knew she could trust me or that I was smart enough to be able to figure it out, the information.

Margaret described how some of these co-mentoring benefits can take place within the context of professional associations, although she was quick to point out that she did not view these individuals as true mentors since they did not have an on-going relationship:

I was very active nationally in the organizations at the time and some of my closest confidantes which I think would be different than a mentor were all those people out there in other universities, because we did share a lot of confidences…I think that’s a different role once you get to a certain place is you actually work with, confide in, consult with more your peers from other campuses. Then when I was the (position title) there’s a group that consisted of about 25 people and it’s split among public and private universities most of them major VPs that had been involved in (name of a professional association) and then
those that were in a comparable private school and we would get
together...we would get together a couple of times a year and spend
two to two and half days just in round tables and discussing what the
issues are.

This type of mutual engagement and empowerment is supported by RCT, as all the participants
in those relationships are growing and developing as a result of their collaboration with each
other.

Analysis of the codes revealed a final area of mutual engagement through mentoring, in
the areas of honesty and honest communication, and through personal information exchange.
This characteristic appeared most strongly in the data, and this story from Carol was a typical
one:

As I said before my first mentor became a close friend. So...I don’t
know when the mentoring stopped and it just evolved into a friendship,
but it started within a working relationship and we’re talking about the
work and then it evolved into more connections at a personal level and
then obviously socially as well.....I can’t definitively say that the social
aspect of it was part of the mentoring relationship because the
relationship changed and it evolved into a friendship.

Laura also described how a relationship with one of her female mentors developed to the point
that she was viewed as “a daughter,” and how that happened:

…it’s more through the working relationship, and then you start
talking about other things or you start talking about their lives and
how they’ve balanced this or that and how they’ve moved up and
then I guess the relationships just kind of form.

Some of the women, such as Lisa, grew very close with their mentors as a result of some difficult
life circumstances:

Lisa: Now (one of her male mentors), maybe I got to be friends with
him because after awhile he wasn’t too well and so yeah, I think that’s
what it was. He was not in a position where I think he personally, he
felt like he could do things for me but always appreciated when I
visited him….Like take him his favorite foods.

Betsy described how honest communication was critical to the success of her mentoring
relationship with her male mentor:

Interviewer: What do you feel is the most important part of your
mentoring relationship?

Betsy: Openness, open communication….I mean, I think if you
can’t be true about your situation, about your doubts, about your
lack of ability, the other person can’t help you.

Interviewer: And you feel you can be very open with your current
mentor and he’s very open with you?

Betsy: Um-hum. Yeah.

This aspect of mutual engagement through mentoring reflects another growth-fostering
tenet of RCT, that of authenticity. Authenticity is defined as “the process of acquiring
knowledge of self and the other and feeling free to be genuine in the context of the relationship”
examples of personal information sharing and honesty that the women in this study described are circumstances in which they disclosed information about themselves, or learned personal information about their mentors, and they reported that both parties felt very comfortable in these exchanges.

Some gender differences appeared in this area of mutual engagement. Betsy stated that she experienced this kind of openness with her male mentor, but Carol was able to develop this sort of relationship only with women:

> Oh, well because my mentoring relationship has really been with women, it hasn’t been with men, the fact that we are both women made a difference. It was more comfortable for me to be able to talk with them about sort of the gender and power dynamic issues. And I haven’t had that kind of relationship with males.

Susan, on the other hand, had developed this kind of authenticity with both her male and female mentors:

> And I self-disclose to my mentors. I am a trusting person. I’ve been fortunate that my mentors have all been trustworthy I guess and so there’s a lot of trust that needs to be built but I think I’m open to all that.

The following table provides a listing of the three characteristics contained within this theme, as well as a definition and exemplar quotes for each.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Quote</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shared social or work activities</td>
<td>Activities that took place outside the work setting (social) or within the work setting (work)</td>
<td>Social: “Occasionally we meet sometimes on campus for lunch…or sometimes we go off campus for lunch.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Work: “It would be work driven. I mean, not that we didn’t talk about friends, family, golfing, baseball games or other things, but that was the common denominator of what brought you together was some sort of work thing.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Co-mentoring and collaborative skill building</td>
<td>Mentor/protégé assist each other in learning new skills</td>
<td>“He’s been my mentor just, I want to say, guiding me through some of the ways in which to handle a challenging situation and how to present cases….And he trusts me with the operational, he doesn’t like that stuff. It’s not his forte so I try to teach him.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty and personal information sharing</td>
<td>Honest communication and sharing of non-work related information</td>
<td>“And then you start talking about other things, or you start talking about their lives and how they’ve balanced this or that and how they’ve moved up and then I guess the relationships just kind of form.”</td>
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**Characteristics of successful mentoring relationships.** Relational cultural theory also provides a strong theoretical backdrop for the other characteristics of successful mentoring relationships that were expressed by the women in this study. These characteristics included: 1)
advocacy for increased responsibilities; 2) emotional support; 3) empowerment; 4) networking; 5) skill building, and; 6) validation. All eleven of the women in this study provided examples of these characteristics in their mentoring relationships. Even Mary and Aya, who again had no long-term mentoring relationships, gave examples of how individuals had helped them in these ways at discrete points throughout the course of their careers.

The first of these characteristics, advocacy for increased responsibilities, was by far the most prominent characteristic of a successful mentoring relationship as described by the women in this study. All of the women cited examples of this during the course of their interviews. This characteristic is most closely aligned with the RCT growth-fostering concept of empowerment/zest, which is described as “the experience of feeling personally strengthened, encouraged and inspired to take action” (Jordan, 1992, 1997; Miller & Stiver, 1997, cited in Liang et al., 2002, p. 26). This characteristic appeared very strongly in the stories of the women as they described their relationships with their mentors. While many of the situations they described involved being encouraged with regard to career-related aspects of the relationship, there were also many circumstances in which the women spoke of feeling generally supported and thus more empowered to attempt difficult tasks—tasks they might not have otherwise attempted, simply due to the positive feedback they received from their mentors.

Betsy described how her mentor advocated for her:

He gave me opportunities while I was at (her former institution) in terms of getting more responsibilities, in terms of the workload and responsibilities…so he was able to make things happen for me.

Similarly, Laura’s mentors pushed her toward more challenging assignments:

And both of these mentors…they were pushing me to do more and…
they were kind of cheerleaders behind me and that’s really been so
invaluable to me to find people like that who really are just looking
out for your best interest.

One of Debra’s female mentors was so confident in her abilities that she recommended her for a position in an area in which she had no previous experience:

And so she asked me to be in charge of their accreditation which is just coming up to work with the faculty because I told her my interest is in shared governance. How to share the leadership, share the decision making and the kind of collaborative relationship between Presidents, administrators and the faculty, so she said, you’re in charge of accreditation and we have a shared governance body…and you’re in charge (of it). I said, “Okay, I have no idea what I’m supposed to do,” but that’s how she hired me.

One of Lisa’s male mentors put her in the national spotlight when he recommended her for a project:

And then (her mentor) again, before he was (her boss)…he encouraged me to pursue a national project for a federal grant and I had never pursued a national project in my life….And as it turned out I got the funds and they gave me twice the amount that I requested because they thought my project had potential and so I mean it was bigger than I ever would have dreamed of but he’s the one who encouraged me to do this.

Carol’s mentors also advocated for increased responsibilities for her:
And so there’s been a couple men who have been sort of sponsors if you will who like my work, who trusted me who would promote me or who would mention my name in various places to sort of give me the opportunity to be seen and heard.

In addition to advocacy for increased responsibilities, emotional support was another characteristic that surfaced strongly in the interviews. Laura described this type of support in the following way:

They were really great mentors was because they never, they were always looking out for my well being. And both of these mentors… they were always pushing me to do more and to, if it was to leave (her specific area of work) they were kind of cheerleaders behind me and that’s really been so invaluable to me to find people like that who really are just looking out for your best interest.

This type of support was also echoed by Debra’s description of her relationship with one of her mentors, someone who had encouraged several people in addition to herself:

He was very encouraging and that is very consistent with his personality because he has maybe inspired six people who became college Presidents all over the country who used to report to him.

Encouragement was a characteristic that Lisa also experienced with her mentors:

Yeah, I would say first of all they were all very encouraging, very respectful of me….They gave me confidence….And they were never giving advice actually, but simply making statements
that showed their values that let me feel like I was encouraged to
do something and to think of something higher than I would have
thought otherwise.

In describing one mentor with whom she had a particularly close relationship, Kathy had this to say:

I wouldn’t say she’s just a good personal friend but she’s somebody
that I know that, when you know I was having some problems at another
job, I’d call her and she’d kind of really boost me up.

Her relationships with her mentors went beyond a basic connection due to work; Kathy seemed
to gain emotional support from her mentors at a deeper level when she stated that “All these
people care about me and they care about my growth. They care about me as a human being.”

In a similar way, Susan also felt that her mentors supported her emotionally:

I mean, I feel like these are individuals that I can literally, that
I do call just for ideas or touching base or a bad day or a good
day. I mean not that I do it all the time but I think pretty supportive
of the things that I’ve done….

Even Mary, who did not have a mentoring relationship per se with anyone, mentioned
this kind of emotional support from the female president of her institution when she was
considering hiring a new person in her division who also happened to be Asian American:

She told me…”I trust what you are doing. You always follow the
rule, you’re thorough. What’s wrong with two Asians in your one
college?” Yeah, so she said if you want to do it, do it. If he’s good
enough, then do it. So she encouraged me to do that because I didn’t
even want to call my Vice President, they’re all male…so I called her and I would say deep down it’s not personal mentorship more that she knows a lot….

All of these examples of emotional support are closely related to the RCT concept of mutual empathy, defined as “a two-way process which occurs when two people relate to one another in a context of interest in the other, emotional availability, responsiveness and the intent to understand” (Jordan, 1986, p. 7). When Kathy states that her mentor would “really boost me up,” and that they cared about her “as a human being,” she clearly feels that she is relating to her mentors in a very personal way. Lisa’s mentors demonstrated their mutual engagement in the relationships by “making statements that showed their values,” which resulted in her feeling “encouraged to do something and to think of something higher than I would have thought otherwise.” Both parties were gaining something positive as a result of the relationship.

Aya, who also stated that she has had no mentors in her career, was the only woman in this study who did not mention receiving emotional support from anyone during the course of her interview. She is also someone who described some particularly disturbing situations and interactions with some of her colleagues, both male and female, which will be discussed in the final section of this chapter.

RCT also provides a solid theoretical framework for empowerment, the third characteristic of successful mentoring relationships as described by the women in this study. While not as strongly represented as the first two characteristics in this theme, examples were cited by several of the women. This characteristic refers to the mentor’s ability to provide an increased sense of personal strength to their protégé, enabling them to take on more than they
thought possible; it is closely aligned with one of the “five good things” of RCT, namely, that “each person feels more able to act and does act in the world” (Miller, 1986, p. 3).

In this example, Elizabeth describes how she felt empowered by one of her female mentors:

I was very shy….I can’t describe myself as shy anymore. I think I am in some ways but I’ve learned to be much more through (her mentor)...I’ve learned to be assertive because (her mentor) was the most assertive woman I have ever met before. I mean just ballsy…. So I learned that from her. And that was a good thing.

One of Kathy’s male mentors also empowered her to pursue more challenging opportunities, even at the point when she had just begun a new role:

I just got this job. But that’s kind of exactly what my other mentors did when I was in (her first work area). “Oh, you need to be Director of Student Activities.” And I’m Director of Activities. And then they’re like, “You need to be a Dean of Students.” It’s like I feel people in my life that I guess are called mentors they keep seeing me in this higher role.

Similarly, when Betsy’s mentor told her that, “You know, I see something in you. I know you can do things. I know you’re going to be going somewhere. I want to help you,” she felt empowered to seek out additional responsibilities and a higher role within the institution.

A fourth characteristic within the successful mentoring relationships theme was that of networking, which is defined as networking opportunities that occurred as a direct result of the
mentoring relationship. Lisa provided a good example of this when she described a research project that she participated in with one of her mentors:

He is the one who collaborated and...he provided resources or contacts with me to meet with people and follow people who could help me to get briefed for the, actually it was a major research project that we got done. And we succeeded...And it was due to this particular mentor.

Like Lisa, Elizabeth also felt that one of her mentors in particular had helped her to connect with other people who were beneficial to her:

He’s helped me to really expand my network of people across the university...So he’s been a good one to introduce me to other folks or help me, opportunities to open doors to help me meet people that I could be helpful to or that they would be helpful to our department, etc.

She went on to say that one of her female mentors “...taught me about the whole networking piece. I wasn’t good at networking.”

Susan described networking as one of the most beneficial aspects of her mentoring relationships:

I think the other piece has been making personal connections with regards to making new friends, getting close to folks, getting insight about people’s lives and me sharing that with them.

However, a few of the women, such as Carol and Kathy, drew a clear distinction between the networking opportunities that were provided by their mentors and the opportunities that were a result of their involvement with professional associations. As Carol explained:
Carol: And I think of networks, either professional networks or support networks, but groups of people who come together who can be very helpful and I’ve certainly benefited from being a part of women’s network or people of color network in various communities and universities that I’ve been at where I was able to both check my sanity, get support, sort of at the personal emotional level and I think that that plays a different function than a mentor or sponsors.

Kathy also felt that she has benefited from networking through professional associations, particularly since she attained a senior administrative position:

We had this (meeting associated with her institutions’ athletic conference) once a year…and so you have your big conference meeting and then in the summer they have a summer meeting with just student affairs, vice chancellors or vice presidents. That’s a really good group that I need to connect with, and I make it a priority to go to that conference because then you’re in a room of all vice chancellors of all big universities and that’s a really valuable group…. So I have this group of people that I can talk with and I see them. That’s why it’s so important for me to go to conferences because I see them at conferences and then we can talk….It’s a pretty high level group.

And while she was hesitant to describe herself as a mentor to others, Lisa’s involvement with a national organization provided her with the opportunity to mentor and network with others:
I was very active in national organizations…and I found that the younger professionals who are Asian Americans across the nation in my field, student affairs, really needed the support…and it then occurred to me that my experience at (her institution) was so different from theirs in other states….And for that reason I have become I think a major advocate for them and a role model…when I became the president-elect, one young Asian person came and approached me and told me how painful it was to be on this campus and to feel the isolation and to feel the, he didn’t use the word prejudice or bias but I knew that’s what he meant. He felt very, very lonely, very isolated and felt that he was not the only one. And so we arranged for the following year a conference…a meeting, a session, for the Asian Pacific Islanders who wanted to join us and come together as a group. I thought we’d get maybe 20 or 25 people. And we got 75….And that room was like electricity.

This characteristic is another clear example of one of RCT’s “five good things,” namely, that “Each person feels more connected to other persons and exhibits a greater motivation to connect with other people beyond those in one’s primary relationships” (Miller, 1986, p. 3). It is also reflective of one of the core tenets of RCT, that “The ability to participate in increasingly complex and diversified relational networks characterizes psychological growth” (Jordan, 2000). These women described the building of these networks and relationships as being vitally important in their lives, not just in work-related settings but as Susan said, “making new friends, getting close to folks, getting insight about people’s lives.”
However, CRT is also at play here, particularly in the networking examples provided by Carol, Kathy and Lisa. Carol described a “people of color” network, Kathy’s professional network was comprised of only senior level administrators, and Lisa felt the need to develop a group specifically aimed toward Asian Americans. The marginalized groups (in this case, women and people of color) are seen as needing particular help or support, and the association created a network specifically geared toward them. In other words, rather than the association seeing that its own dominant systems do not allow these groups to feel comfortable, the “problem” is associated with the marginalized groups themselves, and this structure continues to label them as outsiders and dependent on the institution for success (Iverson, 2007). The fact that Carol uses this network to “check my sanity” only underscores this assertion. For Kathy, the only way she can gain access to the network she describes is by attaining a senior level administrative position; were she not at the top of the hierarchy, she would be unable to take advantage of what that particular network has to offer. In other words, the structure of these associations helps to ensure that current hierarchies and systems of privilege remain in place.

Skill building, the fifth characteristic within this theme, describes specific skills that the mentor teaches the protégé; these were usually career-related, but could also be psychosocial. Laura provided the following example of very practical advice that one of her bosses provided:

The other thing why he was such a great boss was if I came to him with a suggestion he would say, “Put it in writing, cost it out, do the proposal, do the background and if it looks reasonable to me, go and do it.”

One of Carol’s mentors provided her with valuable managerial skills:
And she was someone that I admired the way she supervised and sort of worked with me and others in our group. We eventually became beyond colleagues, really good friends so it comes with managerial or manager skills and also around dealing with the politics of the campus as well as social politics around particularly around sexism and to some extent racism as well I think (her mentor) has been very, very helpful.

Elizabeth felt that just being in the presence of her mentors was an opportunity to gain new knowledge, and was the most useful aspect of the relationship:

*Interviewer:* So thinking back over these relationships…what has been the most useful aspect of those relationships for you?

*Elizabeth:* I think it’s the ability to really, I’m going to say gain and absorb the knowledge that they would share. It’s was like taking some sort of a class sometimes. It could be a dinner conversation…and the light bulb goes on and how to use it and you think about how you can relate to a situation and somebody told me about that and kind of go back to your mental role of how to handle that.

The skills that were taught through their mentoring relationships no doubt contributed to a “greater sense of worth,” for the women in this study, one of the “five good things” described by RCT theorists (Miller, 1986, p. 3).

The final characteristic within this theme was that of validation, which is defined as circumstances in which the mentor validates the protégés job performance or personal qualities.
Lisa’s story about how her mentors encouraged her to pursue advanced degrees provides an excellent example:

*Interviewer:* Now you mentioned the word encouragement several times when speaking about your mentors, that they really encouraged you. Can you be a little bit more specific about that? What did that encouragement entail? What kind of things would they say or do?

*Lisa:* Well for one thing I never, you know, I didn’t have the confidence that I could do even Master’s level degree work….I was already a mother and that was not something I wanted to pursue but it was my mentors and other colleagues who suggested it, encouraged me and regarded me as though I was just their colleague. These were people who already had their doctoral degrees and they just regarded me and engaged me in discussions as though I were already a colleague… So that was one kind of encouragement. And pursuing positions, I never even looked at those positions I never dreamed again that those positions were even within reach. But I was either nominated or suggested that I accept the nomination or that kind of thing.

Margaret’s mentor, her mother, provided a similar form of validation when she was recognized with an award. While Margaret wanted to share the spotlight with others, her mother made sure that she understood the accomplishment was really hers alone:

When I received an award once for something and they wanted to have my dad in the photo, then they wanted to have my husband in the photo, and I always remember this one too because she was so
much about family but at that point she said, “You know…you received this award. You earned this award. It’s not about the men. And so I don’t think you should have them in the photo”….

I think she thought I needed to be my own person.

Susan also spoke of how her mentors “high expectations” provided validation for her:

So I think that’s been fantastic for me. It really pushes me to grow actually and I mean it’s just great to get such high expectations because then you really have this ethos of feeling like, I can do that.

Okay, people believe that I can do it and then I can do it.

The RCT tenet of empowerment and zest, one of the “five good things” is clearly related to this characteristic of validation (Miller, 1986, p. 3). In describing these situations, the women felt that one of the results of their mentoring relationships was the increased feeling that their skills and abilities would allow them to accomplish even more.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Aya and Mary, the two women who did not mention any mentors in the course of their careers, also did not cite any examples of validation. What is surprising is that Betsy, who expressed strong positive feelings about her mentor, did not offer any examples of validation during the course of her interview. So while her mentor provided her with emotional support, he did not validate her job performance or personal qualities. This is an odd finding, and one that possibly relates to CRT. By providing her with emotional support, yet no validation of her skills, her male mentor was reinforcing her subordinate status.

The following table provides a listing of the characteristics within this theme, a definition of each, and exemplar quotes.
Table 6

**Characteristics of Successful Mentoring Relationships – Definitions and Exemplar Quotes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Quote</th>
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<tr>
<td>Advocacy for increased responsibilities</td>
<td>Mentor advocates for new job, increased responsibilities for protégé</td>
<td>“He gave me opportunities while I was at (her former institution) in terms of getting more responsibilities, in terms of workload and responsibility…so he was able to make things happen for me.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotional support</td>
<td>Emotional support provided by the mentor to the protégé</td>
<td>“Simply encouraging me to persevere, and also I think being there when I needed to have somebody to talk with, and they also showed some sensitivity…in terms of how I was feeling about something. I think they showed some sensitivity to the feelings and didn’t just slough it off.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>Increased sense of inner and personal strength; protégé feels enabled to do more</td>
<td>“I was very shy…I can’t describe myself as shy anymore. I think I am in some ways but I’ve learned to be much more through (her mentor)…I’ve learned to be assertive because (her mentor) was the most assertive woman I’ve ever met before. I mean, just ballsy….So I learned that from her. And that was a good thing.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>Networking opportunities directly resulting from the mentoring relationship</td>
<td>“He’s helped me to really expand my network of people across the university….he’s been a good one to introduce me to other folks or help me”</td>
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</table>
Skill building | Practical, work-related skills taught by the mentor | “For example my current mentor...he thought the most difficult part of the job was the personnel issues, which surprised me. I hadn’t thought of that. But he was right. Absolutely right.”

Validation | Mentor validates the protégé’s job performance or personal qualities | “When I received an award once for something and they wanted to have my dad in the photo, then they wanted to have my husband in the photo...(her mentor said), ‘You received this award. You earned this award. It’s not about the men.’”

**Intersection of racial/ethnic salience and gender salience.** Predictably, the fourth and fifth broad themes that emerged were the intersection of racial/ethnic salience and gender salience. Issues surrounding the women’s race and gender were frequently cited, and fell into the following categories: 1) family issues/family support; 2) loss of Asian identity and the impact of Asian accents; 3) sexism and institutionalized sexism, and; 4) racism and institutionalized racism. The themes of sexism and racism will be discussed together because, as supported by the concept of intersubjectivity (Ladson-Billings, 1992), they were often so fused together that it was impossible to determine which theme was more strongly at play in any given situation.

These two themes also provided some of the most disturbing stories, particularly in the case of Aya.
The characteristic of family issues/family support was represented in two different ways in the data. The first was the role that family played in the decisions that the women made about their careers, and in all cases, the decisions made were in alignment with traditional gender-typed family choices. Laura’s example was typical:

*Interviewer:* So…how did you get to (her current institution)?

*Laura:* My husband…. I met my husband who is a local…born and raised in (her current location). He did college (in another state) but had returned to (her current location) and we had this long-distance relationship…it was really bad. We racked up all those frequent flyer miles…and there was no Skype back then. And he had already kind of established his career, so we were discussing who was going to move and I said, “I’m not moving, I love it here”…And he said, “I’m not moving”….But I’m originally from (her current location)…So it kind of just made sense for me to move.

The second way in which family issues were evident was in how the women’s Asian values influenced their decisions. This actually appeared more frequently in the data than the traditional gender-typed family concerns, which demonstrates not only the priority that these women placed on family, but also how closely linked race and gender issues are for these women. Betsy, when discussing whether or not she would consider moving to another part of the country for a job, had this to say:
Probably not because my parents are here, my husband’s parents are here. Most of our families are here and I think in terms of the Asian culture and I think of your parents and I think for both myself and my husband is that we feel the most responsibility for our parents than any of our siblings do…So it would be hard for us to move even to another part of (her current state). I think if we were to do that if I was to relocate or something like that I would ask my parents to move with us.

Another way in which their families influenced the women was in terms of the value placed on education. A few of the women, such as Susan and Mary, talked about how high educational attainment was a family expectation. As Susan explains:

Susan: My mother and my father both had degrees. My aunts, my grandmother had a degree. My grandfather had a degree. My grandmother’s a teacher. Her sister was a doctor. So it was kind of just a basic of, generations of folks that had degrees, women too. It wasn’t like the women in my family didn’t have it, so it was just kind of a thing so and all my cousins all went to four-year universities.

Interviewer: So in your family, it was typical that someone would have a college degree so it wasn’t out of the ordinary for a woman to do that.

Susan: No.
Mary expressed a similar sentiment:

*Mary:* Yeah. I think I came from a family…that everybody go to college. I never thought about not going to college….It’s not an option.

*Interviewer:* Was there anyone in particular who influenced those decisions?

*Mary:* Not really. I think it was a family thing. It’s an environmental thing.

These family issues are a combination of both RCT and CRT reflections. The women’s need to remain close to their families and maintain those relationships are an example of a “movement toward mutuality rather than separation,” which “characterizes mature functioning” (Jordan, 2000, p. 280). And yet Laura’s decision to move (rather than her future husband making that sacrifice) is an interesting intersection with both RCT and CRT. RCT would support that she made that choice in order to continue and build the relationship that was so important to her; viewed through a CRT lens, the fact that she was the one who made the move, rather than the man, only reinforced her subordinate gender status.

A few of the women in this study—Betsy, Debra, Kathy and Susan—expressed a loss of Asian identity, although this was in relation to others in their family, not themselves. In Debra’s case, she worried about her daughter:

I’m very optimistic for the future generations because my daughter is 22. She was born in China but raised here. And she is totally different. She is so, in a way very much like Americans but I worry about those people as well because they kind of forget and lose the part of our tradition
that is good. Like modesty, respect for elderly, hardworking and be really kind of persistent towards your goals, value education, all of those things. I’m not sure because some of them are so money-driven and I don’t want to keep the kind of virtuous service goal in mind because our nation emphasizes service to the public, service to the community. You know, sacrifice yourself for the good of the collective interest. I see very little in the new generation. And that worries me.

Kathy also spoke of this generational difference:

I mean, you go to NASPA, you go to ACPA, they’re like “I’m getting my Ph.D.” and I’m like “Oh, my goodness. You’re getting your Ph.D.?” Why because they eventually know they want to be a Dean so I think that the culture is changing with each generation, you’re going to have a little bit more of melding of American and Asian cultural values. So there’s a whole lot of younger, people that I mentor in NASPA, they’re way ahead of the game compared to me.

Susan spoke specifically about the loss of her brother’s ability to speak her native language:

You know, my brother lost his ability to speak Angola (native Filipino language)….I retained mine….It’s funny because when you hear my mom talking it’s the funniest thing because she has this proper way of talking outside of the house and when she talks in the house it’s like she has this Angola accent….And I say I do, too. And my father had said it’s her survival mechanism. He goes, “It’s not the best thing but it’s a survival mechanism.”….I mean the Filipinos actually sometimes
first language is English. But people would look at me like they didn’t understand me.

It is interesting to note that these four women were among the youngest in the study (with ages ranging from 35 – 52), and that they represented all generational categories. So whether they were an immigrant, first or second generation Asian American, it was the younger women who worried about a loss of Asian identity within their families, manifested in what they felt was a loss of traditional Asian values such as modesty, respect for authority, valuing hard work and placing the collective over the individual. The loss of fluency in their native language was also cited as an issue.

Another way in which Asian identity was discussed by the women was in relation to their accents, or lack thereof. Only four of the women in this study spoke with any discernable accent—Betsy, Debra and Carol had slight Asian accents, and Mary spoke with a very strong Chinese accent. Of this group, Betsy was the only woman who was not an immigrant; however, she stated that her parents still spoke mostly Chinese at home and lived in a neighborhood that was predominantly Asian, so she grew up in an environment in which Chinese was the first language. Laura and Susan, the other immigrant women in this study, came to the United States when they were young children, and began speaking English early in their lives, and did not speak with a discernable Asian accent.

Debra acknowledged that her accent might make it difficult for others to understand her at times, but when she was speaking at a conference to a largely Asian audience, she chastised those who felt they needed to have others record their voicemail messages for them, so that their accent would not be apparent:
And I said, “How many of you have your voicemail outgoing message recorded by somebody else?” More than 70% of the hands went up. Because they’re all Indians, Chinese, you know, and these people have very strong accents. So they don’t want to record their own voice as outgoing message. So I asked them why? And they said, “We don’t want people not understand(ing) us.” And I said, “I think that there’s more to it. You are embarrassed of your own accent.” And so sure enough, I have an Asian librarian on this campus. She had been in this country for over 40 years, she is from China. And her outgoing message is recorded by her secretary. This is not her voice. Everyone on campus who knows her will know this is not her voice. So one day I ask her, I said, “Why is (her secretary’s name) recorded on this?” She said, “Oh, no, I just don’t like to record my own voice.” Now this is a woman who has been here 40 years.

While Margaret did not speak with an accent, she acknowledged that it could be a problem for those who do:

The subtle discrimination more is “Wow, you don’t really belong here” or “You do okay in math and science but you’re not good in English. You don’t speak well and you have a strong accent and you have a hard time communicating.”

Susan expressed a similar thought:

There was one of my friends here who had left a university and he’s an Asian immigrant. He’s American now but he was an immigrant. He
has a thick immigrant accent. And he just talks. It’s almost comical how he goes, “I can see people trying to decipher what I say.” I can understand it, but I think when you hear an accent and you’re not familiar with one and everyone has accents but when you’re not familiar with that you automatically will block it and say, I’m not going to understand what he’s going to say…so I’m not going to listen.

In Mary’s case, she acknowledged that her accent has had an impact on her interactions with others:

And I always expected to be treated differently. It’s like a norm. I am different. I have an accent. I have other stuff, things that I’m different and you take it as a positive and prove you can do it. I don’t think anything is going to be that hard but I do have a lot of experience how people are treated me differently and sometimes it is a drawback.

This “drawback,” as well as the examples cited by Debra, Margaret and Susan, is a CRT observation, as they clearly perceive the institutional culture as making it more difficult for individuals with an accent to operate and be accepted. In essence, they perceive that their accents have marginalized them (Iverson, 2007).

Sexism and institutionalized sexism was another characteristic that appeared strongly within this theme. Sexism was defined as instances in which the women perceived that their gender made them the target of discriminatory acts, while institutionalized sexism refers to circumstances in which the institutional culture itself perpetuated the sexism. The distinction is that in the latter case, the discrimination was not the result of a particular person’s intentional act towards the women in this study.
Ten of the women related stories of sexism and institutionalized sexism, and the following circumstance described by Laura was typical of how the women felt they needed to behave in order to be perceived as equal to the men in their institutions:

But when I work with community leaders or with our upper VP administration, I think now I’ve kind of established relationships but initially you do sort of feel like you have to be really excellent at what you do and kind of go the extra mile to prove yourself…. And that’s how I’ve kind of felt like, to gain credibility you have to be excellent.

Yet sometimes, if the women behaved in overly stereotypically male ways, it still got them into trouble, as this additional reflection from Laura shows:

And just thinking about that, you know those few like, two or three Asian American administrators that I mentioned are like, vice presidents or chancellors that I didn’t really connect with. You know a lot of people didn’t like them….Because they felt that they were either overly aggressive or did these kind of like, political dealings behind the scenes outside of what’s been sanctioned by the administration to get things done. But you know at least two of them are very accomplished. They did a lot for their campus or their area. They really furthered their division’s agenda.

So while Laura admits that she “didn’t really connect with” the women that she describes, she also acknowledges that they “did a lot for their campus or their area.” She herself seems to be acknowledging the perception that the women who behaved in such ways were
viewed as operating outside the institutional norm, something that CRT would claim only further reinforces that these standards are applied differently to women than to men. Interestingly, she seemed to acknowledge this discrepancy very specifically later in her interview:

And what I mean by that is when you put yourself out there, there are going to be ruffled feathers, people are going to be unhappy with you. Often with females if you’re, you know, that whole stereotype if a man is aggressive oh, he’s ambitious. If you’re a female it’s like, she’s a B-I-T-C-H.

Carol related a similar example of this double standard:

And so I think that what happens once I know that when people have responded negatively to me…so they would see me as aggressive or assertive or they would see me as being not as nice as I could be or that I should be, when in fact if the same thing was done by one of my White, male colleagues….I’m guessing that they would say, “Wow, he really is in charge and knows how to lead.”

Lisa’s story of some of the sexism she experienced is an example of how sexism is often closely tied to racism:

One of the Presidents really did not support, I’m going to be blunt, did not like Asian women executives….And there were three of us. I was one of them…and there were two others in the system and it was pretty obvious and a number of people commented on it. Even the people in the community, in the legislature for example. And one of them chose to retire before this President left. The other one
retained a lawyer and threatened a lawsuit so he left her alone and the other one…I was the other one.

When asked why she felt this was the case, she had this to say:

Well, he might have done it with other minority women executives. He might have. There was some speculation at the University and in the community that the Asian senior executive women were very effective in their positions, both on and off campus, and therefore were perceived by the president as a threat to his personal ability to influence and be effective.

Carol drew a clear distinction between how she felt sexism and racism were used in specific ways against Asian American women versus other women of color:

I think it goes back to what I was saying to you earlier about the stereotypical expectations that are generally applied to Asian Americans and maybe is specifically applied to Asian American women. I think when you are a woman of color and especially as an Asian American woman, the notion of you not being seen as a leadership material and not having the courage or skill sets that it takes to be a visible leader, I think kind of unless you fight against it pretty consistently hard it can be discouraging for folks coming up the line as well as few opportunities are given to be perceived as appropriate choices…there are different stereotypical expectations…if we look at say, (the) Asian American women stereotype…I remember one time as a Vice Chancellor I was told by the Chancellor that what he would like from me is to be
more self subservient or self effacing I think was the word. He thought I was too assertive, too whatever….So I think that stereotypical expectation impacts Asian American woman….but I think it’s not the same for say African American women because they have different set of stereotypes to deal with. But they don’t suffer from this stereotype that says they’re not leadership material.

And while Elizabeth feels that the two factors are intertwined, it is her gender that she feels is the more salient factor:

Well, some of it could come down to the diversity of your nationality or ethnicity but I still think it comes down to gender, do they want a chick at the table versus an Asian chick or a Black chick you know, Latino chick. But then I think it goes the female first and the ethnicity second. That’s what I learned.

Even her story related earlier in this chapter, when her White male boss approached her to take on a new role after she had received a prestigious award, has a potential sexist and racist undertone. According to the tenets of CRT, his actions, while seeming to be purely for her benefit, actually promoted his interests within the institution as well, an example of the “interest convergence” phenomenon (Bell, 1995).

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Aya had some stories relating to sexism and racism that were particularly disturbing. She was exposed to some of the more blatant acts of sexism and racism, in situations that sometimes became abusive:

*Aya:* I believe that there have been times when I have been mistreated because I’m an Asian American woman, mostly by White men who
feel that they can speak to you in degrading tones and be unprofessional, these are my colleagues or even those in lower level positions. They’ve all been men. They’ve all felt a freedom to just scream and yell. It was horrifying to me….It was kind of like, what possesses you to think that you can lose all decorum and launch a personal attack when we’re sitting here having this conversation?....I think that they would not do that to another man or another Anglo.

Interviewer: Now I don’t want to get into anything that’s too painful for you to recall, but can you give me some examples of those types of interactions that occurred?

Aya: I had a college Vice President walk into a President’s cabinet meeting with paper in his hand, screaming, “Don’t you ever e-mail any of my staff again” and he proceeds to read something, an e-mail that I had sent…..And the way he read it was really not how I wrote it and so then he proceeded to look at the President and say essentially, “I don’t want her ever talking to any of my managers and if she has to she has to cc: me.”

She went on to say:

Aya: And later another incident happened wherein you know how you go back and forth and back and forth on these e-mail strings? And it was kind of a discussion that honestly, I didn’t know who was in on it anymore when I weighed in on this discussion and he wrote me an e-mail that essentially condemned me again and reminded me that I was
ordered never to do this.

*Interviewer:* Was this the same person that had talked to you that way before?

*Aya:* Yeah. He yelled at me in a public setting….He’s just out of control.

*Interviewer:* And have you heard him do this with other administrators?

*Aya:* Not to the way he talked with me….He would often do this and I remember turning to a male colleague and I said, “What did I do?” And he said, “Nothing. Nothing.” And I said, “What is going on? Why is he doing this?” And he just shook his head. And so okay, well, that didn’t help me any.

*Interviewer:* Why do you think that he feels that he can act this way towards you?

*Aya:* I think it has to do with at that time, I was the only woman on the cabinet. Plus an Asian American woman I think he thought I was an easy target.

*Interviewer:* What do you mean by that? “An easy target?”

*Aya:* That he could just dump all over me and get away with it. It’s almost like there are certain kinds of people who prey on the weak. He saw me as a weak target. Just because I’m unhappy I’m going to dump on you because I think I can get away with it.

*Interviewer:* And what was your response when these things happened?

*Aya:* Well, you know the worst thing to me because it’s such a personal attack that I oftentimes was moved to tears where it was very difficult
to speak. I very rarely have the wherewithal to meet anybody at that same level. So at this moment I just said, that’s not how I wrote it, that’s not what I was trying to say….And then I think I got a little bit tough but I may have said something like, I don’t appreciate you accusing me on that. But the thing is that the culture of this organization, nobody stopped him. And I still thought I was the one being blamed because he was louder and more opinionated and was making a charge and I was on the defense and nobody was coming to my rescue.

These personal attacks on Aya were always at the hands of White men, and sometimes over what were seemingly mundane issues:

Aya: In my second, third month here at the college, I’m a (her senior administrative title). We are the largest community college in the state….I had no door to a hallway. There was no door. You could walk all the way in and I had no printer, no filing cabinet, and no photocopy machine….And so I asked for a photocopy machine, and this is a different White male but in the same position said, he tore me apart in our president’s cabinet meeting and his words were, “What do you do that makes you think it’s so important that you would need to have your own photocopy machine?” And I had never faced anything like it and I couldn’t believe it. And he said, “Where were you during the budget process. You should have requested this before.” And I said, “I wasn’t hired yet. I just got here.” And it was horrible. So nobody said anything. Nobody came to my defense. Nobody did anything. Not the President,
Interviewer: Not even the President?

Aya: No, no President has come to my aid at all. So I’m basically surrounded by White men.

Finally tired of this abusive behavior, Aya decided to take a different approach:

When I got to (her current institution), I had another White male attack me on something and I just took him on…what I learned was that they grew to respect me because I fought back….Now I’m sitting here in total devastation and they’re thinking that they can respect me. So I think there is something to that. That you have to know how the men play the game and have somewhat of a similar style or be able to take it or something to get on top.

Aya became so isolated in her work that she attempted to reach out to another female colleague for support

Aya: I went to one woman because I thought she could help me and asked to go to lunch with her and she didn’t think that she could be of any help so that was the end of that.

Interviewer: She didn’t think she could be of any help?

Aya: I was in Student Services. She was in instruction. She didn’t see that we had that much in common….Now when you reach out one or two times and that happens you just don’t do it anymore.

Interviewer: Yeah. You actually approached her to try to develop some
sort of relationship and she said, “No.”

Aya: Right.

Viewed through the lens of CRT, all of stories shared by the women, and Aya in particular, are examples of ways in which the institutional culture and White supremacy worked to continue to subordinate them in terms of their race and gender. The White men who were at the highest levels of administration used their status within the institution as a way to continue to reinforce and perpetuate the existing racist and sexist culture. The fact that no one attempted to help Aya underscores the systemic nature of the problem, and how deeply it is viewed as “the way society does business” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 7). Only when she began to behave in ways that were more closely aligned with a stereotypically male leadership style did she feel that she able to gain the respect of her male colleagues.

In RCT terms, Aya’s experiences are a clear case of disconnection, the opposite of the “five good things.” This chronic disconnection essentially resulted in her giving up trying to form relationships with others, as was evidenced by her failed attempt to connect with a female colleague. While it is possible for development to continue by working through disconnection, chronic disconnection can result in the further denigration of the marginalized group (Comstock et al., 2008; Jordan, 2008).

Susan was the only woman in this study who did not speak of any instances of sexism or institutionalized sexism. As was pointed out earlier in this chapter, this might be due to her status as an “out” lesbian woman with a committed life partner. Because she does not fit into a traditional gender role, she might be perceived by others as being less of a target for these specific types of discrimination, as she was being classed in different ways by those in power.
Finally, racism and institutionalized racism reported by the women was the most strongly represented characteristic within this theme. As was the case with sexism and institutionalized sexism, racism was defined as instances in which the women’s race made them the target of discriminatory acts, while institutionalized racism refers to circumstances in which the institutional culture itself allowed the racism to exist or persist. Again, the distinction is that in the case of institutionalized racism, the discrimination was not the result of a particular person’s deliberate, overt act towards the women in this study.

All eleven women experienced acts of racism or felt they were the victims of institutionalized racism. As was the case with sexism and institutionalized sexism, some of the stories told by the women in this study were particularly upsetting.

Mary spoke of racist assumptions that were made about her background when she was invited to speak at Rotary Club meeting, an international organization:

*Mary:* After I talk about future and all that, they say, can you tell me, are you a boat person?

*Interviewer:* A boat person?

*Mary:* Yeah, because at that time, they don’t know the difference… the Rotary Club, there are very few women….So traditional people will say, how did you get here? Did you get welfare?….Are you a boat person? Did your parents get help? I said, “My parents are doctors, but I said they were not rich. They worked really hard and I was not rich. I paid my own tuition.”
This particular organization did not allow women as members until the 1980s, and since sexism and racism are often closely linked together, CRT would support the fact that the organization’s history helps to explain why these racist notions persisted within that context.

Debra had the following to say about racist assumptions and her ability to communicate as an Asian American:

I had another Department Chair who’s a female and literally wrote me like a six-page single-spaced letter lecturing me what academic freedom means…she wanted to test if I can write English back….I had an assistant department chair in one department told other fellows that the memos that I sent out were written by my secretaries….I think it’s targeted to the group. You know, if you’re not a native then people just tend to think you’re an idiot or something. You’re not good at English language.

Debra also felt that the model minority stereotype is at work in her interactions with others:

I think later on I came to understand where they came from because in a lot of people’s mind they have like, sort of a stereotype about Asians. You know, they think Asian people are smart and they are good with mathematics or computer science or other sciences….

Debra also spoke of others blatantly stating that she was an “outsider” and “didn’t belong” at her institution because she was an immigrant and “didn’t grow up here.”

Margaret’s experience with racism fell along the lines of the de-minoritization concept (Lee, 2006) that was outlined in Chapter Two, as being an Asian American was not viewed by others as giving her minority status:
Interviewer: Can you think of an example of a time where you were definitely treated very differently either due to your gender or ethnicity or both? A time when maybe you felt uncomfortable in the setting and it was because you were a woman or an Asian American woman?

Margaret: Well I don’t know whether I felt uncomfortable. I always thought of them as interesting observations that would help me or others in the future like we really have to increase our minority whatever. You know fill in the blank whatever they were. Minority. But then of course, “(her name), you don’t count.” That would be one.

Interviewer: Explain that a little bit. “You don’t count.”

Margaret: In other words if they were going to consider people they wouldn’t consider me because I just really didn’t count. I wasn’t really, really the minority.

Interviewer: Um-hum. And what do you think they meant by that?

Margaret: Basically in (her location within the United States) it would be Hispanic primarily and African American after that and Asian American would not count….a colleague of mine says, I’m the token person they put on the boards. I’m this and that because they need somebody who’s not going to be so confrontational.

Two things are of particular note in Margaret’s comments. She did not label racist or sexist acts as such, and instead chose to call her experiences “interesting observations.” CRT would explain this by stating that even she was failing to recognize racism because it is so embedded in the culture (Lopez (2003). Secondly, she stated that she “wasn’t really the minority,” yet named
Asian Americans third in her listing of the most highly represented racial groups in her area of the country. Her colleague’s comment also reinforced the token nature of Margaret’s presence on boards, so she is clearly the “outsider” according to CRT (Iverson, 2007). Her comments are an interesting mix of both acknowledging and denying the institutionalized nature of the problem. The model minority stereotype, in her view, was also working against her, as she felt she was perceived as the person who was “not going to be so confrontational.”

Laura expressed a similar mix of emotions by first stating that she doesn’t really feel uncomfortable in her day-to-day interactions, followed by acknowledging the lack of Asian American women administrators on her campus:

- But I do have to say in upper administration, not too many Asians….
- You have the, like you mentioned, it’s definitely mid-career, mid-level and maybe even upper mid-level but upper, upper, yeah, not too many….So especially in our system you have female chancellors but Asian American, yes, you don’t see as many….But in my day-to-day I feel fine as an Asian American. Sometimes when I go to the senior administration meetings for the President and the Vice Presidents you know, it’s myself and our general counsel, our head lawyer she’s Filipino Japanese American….And so just kind of the two of us.

Unlike Margaret and Laura, however, Carol acknowledges the contradiction, and views it as a problem within the institutional culture, a clear CRT finding:

- I mentioned that I’ve done consulting work in the private sector….The same challenge exists for Asian Americans, both men and women in the private sector as well…they reach, what I often say especially in the
private sector, is Asian Americans have a higher floor but a lower ceiling, a higher floor in the sense that they have the kind of educational background to start at a higher level….They have challenges managing stereotypical expectations and what are often referred to as the bamboo ceiling…they have a lower ceiling that they can only reach up to say, maybe mid-manager level.

She continued:

And I know that’s around the perception piece…that stereotypical expectation exists that others may not see you, and their evaluation of your work is not fair but it’s also you have to have a fairly persistent streak in you to respond to that, to confront that to move on….I think it’s discouraging for people because after awhile it’s easy to internalize it and think that it’s you and not a social condition.

Other women in this study feared that they were being tokenized due to their race:

Interviewer: Can you think of an example that demonstrated that it was positive that you were an Asian American and then maybe an example of a time when it wasn’t positive that you were an Asian American?

Lisa: I think I was often sought out by faculty and students. You know, I became sort of the go-to person because there weren’t many of us around…at that level of competence and executive position and I think I got a lot of contacts that way. I was pointed to a lot of community groups and boards and that sort of thing. At first I was
like oh, this is token but I think it really wasn’t token, they really did want the thinking, the input and contributions of a person who was from (her part of the country) and not my ethnic background.

Susan, however, did not view being singled out in this way as a positive thing:

And being able to, at 18, figure out this isn’t right. And so others being able to negotiate that and think “Oh good. This means that I’m going to be the superstar of this space.” And it’s like, not really. You don’t want to be tokenized. And so I think that’s our role is to make sure that tokenism doesn’t happen. It’s easier to be tokenized if you’re one of the few. Right? We need someone to serve on this committee. It’s a high powerful committee and you look around and you can’t help but think, I know why I’m on this committee….It’s not a good feeling of your talent. It’s one of the things that I can offer but it’s definitely not all of it. And so when you know that’s the primary reason it’s not a good thing.

As is evidenced by the stories of the women in this study, being subjected to sexist and racist remarks and a sexist and racist institutional culture was a given in their environments. While some of the women, such as Margaret and Lisa, came to view some of these things in a positive light, there is no question that they were treated differently due to their gender and race.
The sexism and racism experienced by the women in this study no doubt undermined their ability to form relationships. Since RCT emphasizes connections via relationships with peers, mentors and communities as critical to women’s development, there can be little question that working in these types of environments are a barrier to their overall growth.

The table below defines the various characteristics contained within this theme, and includes exemplar quotes for each.

**Table 7**

*Gender and Racial Salience - Definitions and Exemplar Quotes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Quote</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family issues/family support</td>
<td>Circumstances in which family issues or family support were an issue</td>
<td>“I would probably not relocate because my parents are here, my husband’s parents are here. Most of our families are here.”</td>
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| Loss of Asian identity and the impact of Asian accents | Expressed feeling that Asian identity or heritage was lost, or that having (or not having) an accent was a factor | “I worry about those people as well because they kind of forget and lose the part of our tradition that is good. Like modesty, respect for elderly, hardworking and be really kind of persistent towards your goals, value education, all of those things.”  
“The subtle discrimination more is ‘Wow, you don’t really belong here’ or ‘You do okay in math and science but you’re not good in English. You don’t speak well and you have a strong accent and you have a hard time communicating.’” |
Sexism/institutionalized sexism  Discrimination due to gender  “You know, no matter how hard you work, how good your record is, I think that glass ceiling, I think is always going to be there.”

Racism/institutionalized racism  Discrimination due to race  “I did want to diversify my experience at that kind of institutional level but the commonality among all of the seven institutions is that they are predominately White institutions….I mean every one of them talks about wanting to be inclusive, multi-cultural institution in some language or another. But if you look at the, clearly the power structure, the leadership structure, that’s not the case. It’s not only a predominately White institution it’s also led predominately by men and White men at that.

Uses of power. The final theme presented in this chapter surrounds the uses and misuses of power as expressed by the women interviewed for this study. At times, the women used their own internal sources of power to become more successful in their environments or careers. This was evident in two ways in the data: 1) assertiveness and; 2) a strong, individualized work ethic. On the other side of the coin, there were several examples given of how misuses of power within the institutional culture inhibited the women’s relationships or professional growth. Three characteristics were evident here: 1) negative stereotypes about administrators; 2) use of language to subordinate, and; 3) a perceived lack of available mentors, which in essence limited access to opportunities for the women.
In terms of their own uses of power, assertiveness was the characteristic that appeared most strongly in the interviews; all of the women except Betsy described situations in which their own assertiveness played a key role in their career advancement. This finding is particularly striking given the adherence to the stereotypically Asian American values of humility and self-effacement that were also described by many of the women as so important to them earlier in this chapter. When Carol described her assertive behavior, she acknowledged that it ran counter to what people expected from her as an Asian American woman:

Yeah, I mean I tend to be and I’ve always been pretty outspoken, direct, I don’t avoid conflicts and issues. I speak my mind, and I’m assertive. And so I think that what happens once I know that when people have responded negatively to me is their response to that is negative so they would see me as aggressive or assertive or they would see me as being not as nice as I could be or that I should be when in fact it’s the same thing was done by one of my White, male colleagues. I’m guessing that they would say, “Wow, he really is in charge and knows how to lead”…. When people have responded negatively, I know that part of it is coming from my not meeting their expectations and therefore I think they either feel a little bit uncomfortable or it exacerbates their evaluation of my behavior.

Aya, after overcoming some of her initial feelings of shock and disbelief at how she was treated at the hands of her predominantly White male colleagues, decided to utilize a different strategy:

When I got to my current position, I was not on the budget committee. How can you be a Vice President…and not be on the budget committee?
I just went….It was a public meeting and I went. I didn’t get to vote for anything but I went. So then the next year I was on the committee.

Mary offered some of the more striking examples of assertiveness. When speaking about a time when the department in which she worked was about to be eliminated, she took the following approach:

They didn’t have enough money. They want to cancel (her department) …the Vice President just hates us, he’s going to cancel our department. I said, “Let’s do something. Let’s get community involvement.” So they said, “Hey, if you want to do it.” So I ended up doing a lot of things bringing people in.

She went on to describe how she essentially revolutionized her entire functional area:

I grew the school to 6,000 students. I created (two new areas of study). I changed the name….So I told the President at that time, “We’re the largest, why can’t we call it a college? He said, “Fine.” And then I said, “I’m changing it to (new name). He said, “Well, as long as your faculty likes it.” So I got faculty to discuss and at the end everybody said it sounded like a better name. So the name got better and the reputation got better.

Mary described her assertiveness by saying that “I think maybe I wasn’t too shy,” an understatement considering the breadth and depth of initiative she showed throughout her career.

The pervasive stereotype that Asian American women are submissive and reserved is a sharp contrast to the assertive behavior that the women in this study exhibited, and it is even more interesting to note that this behavior crossed all generational lines. Laura, one of the
youngest women in the study, talked about how she took the initiative to find out more about higher education as a possible career path:

I started to do some informational interviews with people who were in higher ed administration and it was mainly just to find out what they did and how they got to where they were and at that point, decided maybe I want to do higher education.…

Debra even managed to get herself accepted into an Ivy League school, simply by being assertive enough to ask to have the application fee waived, which she couldn’t afford to pay at the time:

So application fee is like $45 to $75 depends on which school but if you apply for ten schools that’s hundreds of dollars….I didn’t have it. So I wrote a letter with the stamp of $0.19 to all the ten schools and said, can you waive my application fee because I’m a poor international student from China….Nobody listened to me. No, we don’t waive this. Except the one (Ivy League school), the Grad School of Education and they said, “Sure.” So I got in there.

Yet oddly, while she certainly demonstrated assertive behavior in the above example, Debra still had difficulty with promoting herself in other situations:

But in this American culture, they emphasize self promotion. You have to go there and sell yourself. You have to go interview. You have to write letter. I used to have a hard time writing those letters, application letters because I don’t like to brag about what I’ve done. I feel like it’s so not me. I don’t want to talk about that.
In RCT terms, Debra might have felt that this type of self-promotion would be a detriment to building mutual relationships with others, as such actions might be viewed negatively.

A second way in which the women in this study used their power was by maintaining their strong, individualized work ethic. As in the following example given by Debra, this work ethic was instilled in her as an Asian American:

Thank God in general Asian people have the value system instilled in us by our parents work hard, work hard, and work harder. So we tend to be hard workers, so that helped us.

Debra even used this strong work ethic to push her staff to work just as hard:

And so they seemed to like that kind of approach that we are going above and beyond to do the homework and so when I pushed the technician I said, “Look guys, I want you to give me a recommendation. No matter how late you have to work tonight I need my recommendation tomorrow morning on my desk.” They don’t push back and say, “No, we can’t do it.” Because they know that I will be staying later than them. And so that’s sort of like a double edged sword. They kind of judge you but they also give you the benefit. When you push them to work hard.

Mary gave a similar example of how she used her strong work ethic as a tool to engage her staff. When one of her colleagues explained that he didn’t read reports, this was her response:

And as a Dean I said, “Do you see this?” He said, “I don’t read those things.” You don’t read these things? I said, “I do.” (He said), “Oh,
you have your staff reading those. Deans don’t read those things.” I said, “Well, but if I want more money, more enrollment, I need to read these things. I need to know myself, criteria and how was FTE counted and all that.” And I made myself know all this stuff and I’m pretty quick. Two or three weeks later, they don’t say a thing. Ask (her name), she knows….So then they start reading too. So in a way I think I was a good influence in many of their lives. People were work a little harder because I worked so hard.

Margaret, however, spoke of this strong Asian American work ethic as a possible negative, as she sometimes completed work assignments that should have been completed by others:

The tendency for me is okay, I’m on it. You gave the charge, I’m on it and sometimes it’s after the fact, not that you can help it. But you know coming through the ranks, did you ever think that was not the right thing to do? And you could have challenged that? Well, maybe I couldn’t have but I didn’t, either. You know you want me to go up there and be in charge of a ball game, okay. Whoa, I’m there. You know, see the goal, be the goal.

When Kathy spoke of a time when quitting her job would allow her to pursue her personal dream of participating in Semester at Sea, her Asian American work ethic initially got in the way:

So and at that point quitting your job and being Asian American that’s not something that you do. That’s not something in your cultural DNA.
This strong, individualized work ethic might appear to run counter to the RCT concept of building relationships, yet it seemed to produce exactly that effect in the examples offered by Debra and Mary. While their actions might not have been mutually engaging, they seem to have at least earned them the respect of, and solicit a positive response from, their colleagues—and in the end, the relationships were strengthened.

The positive ways in which the women in this study used their power were countered by the misuse of power by others. The first characteristic in this category was the negative stereotypes associated with administrators, which were described by five of the women. These stereotypes crossed divisional lines, as women in both student affairs and academic affairs cited examples, although the following reflection from Kathy, an administrator in student affairs, was more typical:

So I you know, I don’t go home at night and think, “Oh god, I was treated differently because I was a woman or I’m treated differently as an Asian American.” I’m just like, I’m in student affairs, they treat you differently because you’re in student affairs.

Other women related stories of how their Asian American status meant that others perceived them as not fitting the stereotype of an administrator. Mary gave the following example:

Mary: I remember the one meeting…and people would say, you don’t look like a Dean. What are Deans supposed to look like? And then they start getting embarrassed. Then I’d say, what are deans supposed to look like? After I say it twice, the next time, excuse me, excuse me.

Interviewer: What do you think they meant?

Mary: They meant I don’t fit the stereotype. I must have gotten in
through some affirmative action or charm or something. And that’s what I don’t like, the kind of way he said it, but I think after I worked with him for awhile they started realizing I know my numbers. I know my stuff.

Laura also spoke of how her Asian American status might be viewed negatively by others when assessing her administrative ability:

It’s not that people don’t recognize that Asian American administrators are capable and do great work or are smart or will get the job done. It’s sort of that barrier to the next level of, can they be a leader? Can they put themselves out there? Can they make difficult decisions? Are they willing to take the hits?

Mary went on to say that in order to be taken seriously, she had to conform to certain traditional stereotypes:

So people just think of soft skills. People think you don’t look like a leader…why don’t I look like a Dean? I said, “Because I don’t wear men’s three-piece suits?”….The guy gets all embarrassed. He doesn’t know what to say. And I did wear a suit and I always wore a suit before and I feel like that’s one thing, you see, I had to wear traditional suit. I had to do all those things. I had to meet halfway. You are Asian, you are woman, and you don’t even act like them. You don’t even dress traditionally but even some younger people say, why do I have to dress like that? I like to dress any way I want….we tell people maybe you could start if you are really strong but I would say the first interview, dress up….Look traditional.
Aya also spoke of needing to fit into a certain stereotype in order to be taken seriously:

_Interviewer:_ As I’m sure you know, there are very few Asian American women administrators who are in senior positions, and so the big question is, why do you think that is the case? Because there are plenty of women who are getting the proper credentials, plenty of women who are qualified who are Asian American, why are they not in senior administrative roles?

_Aya:_ I think two-sided. I think that there is a stereotyped perception. That the stereotypical view of an Asian American woman is hardworking and quiet and smart and reserved. And so that is not somebody at a higher level. That is a good backup person….And then I’m thinking now, and I’m not sure about this thought, that perhaps Asian American men can be better seen as upper level material than women because of bias against a woman who seem weaker than the men.

The stereotypes that the women in this study felt were about their status as administrators are, viewed through a CRT lens, actually stereotypes based on gender and race. While a few of the women did feel that their work in student affairs was what caused their lower status, the remaining examples were interlaced with references to their status as Asian American women. For example, Mary’s recommendation that women administrators should “dress up” and “look traditional” has little to do with being taken seriously as an administrator per se, and everything to do with being taken seriously by her other, mostly White male, colleagues. Thus while the women in this study felt they were being targeted simply because they were administrators (and in some cases, this was true), this characteristic was more closely aligned with institutionalized sexism and racism than a negative attitude toward administrators as a whole.
A second way in which the misuse of power revealed itself in the data was through the use of language to subordinate. Some examples of this were given earlier in this chapter, such as Mary’s colleagues asking her to bring cookies to a meeting and Laura’s comment about being labeled a “B-I-T-C-H” if she behaved in a way that was deemed too aggressive or stereotypically male. While these were cited earlier as instances of sexism, they are also indicative of how specific words are used to indicate that these women are different and have a lower status than their White male colleagues. CRT states that language is one of the key ways in which institutions perpetuate discrimination (Bonilla-Silva, 2010), as the use of a derogatory word aimed at Laura makes her lower status more obvious. Perhaps less obvious is the fact that the women were constantly reminded that they were Asian Americans, and the application of that label, while accurate, was a constant reminder that they again were outside the norm in their institutions. As was noted in Chapter Three, part of the reason why institutionalized racism persists is due to its systemic nature; only overt acts of racism are identified as problematic (Lopez, 2003). CRT, however, focuses on the invisible forms of racism that are always present in society and operate at a much deeper level. Seldom, however, is there a questioning of the systems, structures and organizations that serve to perpetuate the problem.

Finally, the perceived lack of available mentors was another way in which power was misused. This is largely a CRT finding, as the institutional culture inhibited the women’s ability to identify and connect with mentors. In other words, the largely White male dominated culture was not conducive to the formation of mentoring relationships; in fact, Carol felt that trying to form such a relationship could be too risky:

   My experience is that the higher up I go, and so I’ve been a VP since the early 90s. There are very few people that you could be in that kind
of relationship with. It could be your peers as fellow VP’s…and it could be the president or the chancellor if you had the desire to go at that level…. And I think it’s a little bit risky to be in a mentor relationship when you reach a certain level. The circle of available people that you can be honest and share freely with and be frank with narrows itself as you move up in the organization.

Even when mentors could be identified, Lisa’s observation is that there are too few of them trying to address the needs of an overwhelming number of protégés:

Another factor I think is there aren’t enough role models and not enough mentors….And I feel we need to change that….We’ve tried to get more mentors and mentoring of the Asian Americans and many of them are women. But we don’t have enough women at the very top who are doing the mentoring…and I think that they are probably overworked. It’s like when we had few women faculty members, few women professors, they were overloaded because there weren’t enough of them and I think that that’s happening now with senior, top-level, chancellor and President level women executives. We just don’t have enough. And we have to have them at the top so that they can help to pull up the others.

Others, such as Kathy, felt that this lack of mentors was such a big problem that she decided to pursue a career in higher education in order to create change:

I really wanted to work in the area of diversity. That’s why I went into higher ed because I felt there were very, very few Asian American
administrators….And if I was going to go into administration whether
it be business or public administration, I said I’m just going to go in
educational administration because I felt there were very few role models.
In addition to the lack of perceived mentors, Kathy also felt that part of the reason why Asian
American women have so few mentors is because they are limiting themselves in terms of who
they identify as potential mentors:

Because I’ve read articles where African Americans are like, well I
have to have an African American mentor. Well, you know what?
The people that are successful are a little open minded. If you’re out
there and you seek people that want to help you and people want to
help you and have the time to give to you, then that’s where you go to
get the help….If you get locked in and say I have to have an Asian
American mentor you’re not going to find it. I don’t hardly know
that many.

Mary’s view of why there is such a lack of available mentors is simply due to her higher
administrative rank; in other words, she felt she had difficulty finding someone who could teach
her something new:

Long-term mentoring for my career only? I don’t have anyone. I don’t
think you can find anyone. I don’t know where you can find….I think I
was high enough in level or ability of doing things…I just don’t know if
that kind of person even exists.

In CRT terms, these examples show that the institutional structure of higher education, which is
dominated by White men, only serves to perpetuate the perceived lack of available mentors. The
RCT concept of mutual empathy could also explain the persistence of this perception, as the women in this study often simply did not see anyone with whom they could form a mentoring relationship. Defined as the “maximum possible relational equality” (Freedberg, 2007, p. 255) between those involved in the relationship, mutual empathy means that one person does not strive to be more powerful than the other; rather, the power differential is minimized, and motivated by the desire to emotionally connect. Because the potential mentors for these senior level Asian American women administrators would likely be above them in administrative rank, the women might feel less inclined to seek them out as there is little possibility of relational equality.

The following table outlines the characteristics contained within this theme, as well as definitions and quotes for each.

Table 8

*Uses of Power – Definitions and Exemplar Quotes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assertiveness</td>
<td>Demonstrating assertiveness; taking the initiative</td>
<td>“If there’s some project that clearly somebody else wants to do and you think you’d be better at, you should go for it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong individualized work ethic</td>
<td>High value placed on working hard as an individual</td>
<td>“I was selected, and as I said I just turned that job around and it became an exciting job and I think it made a contribution to the college.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative administrator stereotypes</td>
<td>Perception that others view administrators in a negative light</td>
<td>“At least here and probably other places too, there’s always this, we’re so top-heavy with administrators”</td>
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and they get overpaid and they’re just really a bother.”

“There have been times when I have been mistreated because I’m an Asian American woman, mostly by White men who feel that they can speak to you in degrading tones and be unprofessional. These are my colleagues or even those in lower level positions.”

“There just wasn’t anybody. It’s so sad when I think about it. There just wasn’t anyone that I felt I connected with that I felt I could pursue that kind of relationship with.”

Summary

What became clear in analyzing the interviews with these eleven Asian American senior women administrators is that an environment of White male dominance and supremacy, sexism, racism and power relations has pervaded every aspect of their lives, including their mentoring relationships. The themes reviewed in the second half of this chapter—culturally related self-effacement, mutual engagement through mentoring, characteristics of successful mentoring relationships, racial/ethnic salience, gender salience, and uses of power—all underscore the issues and difficulties these women face on a persistent, daily basis.

Within the theme of culturally related self-effacement, passivity and the perception of passivity on the part of these women was the most prevalent characteristic. Yet what the interviews revealed was not what the literature would have predicted. Only Betsy gave an
account of what could be viewed as truly passive behavior; the overwhelming majority of the women in this study told stories of being perceived as passive, or suffering from the stereotype that they should behave in a passive manner due to their Asian American heritage. In a related characteristic, only one woman (again, Betsy) gave an example of lack of assertiveness; two other women (Debra and Margaret) related stories in which they had been perceived as lacking assertiveness, when circumstances clearly showed that was not the case.

All of the women gave examples of characteristics in the mutual engagement through mentoring theme, although Aya and Mary were again outliers—they were the only women who did not relate any stories of validation. Aya also did not describe any situations in which she was provided emotional support, shared personal information, or engaged in honest, open communication. Aya’s lack of connection with a mentor, and even with colleagues to any significant extent during the course of her career, resulted in some severe feelings of isolation and disconnection. Mary, on the other hand, did not seem to be disturbed at all by her lack of connection with a long-term colleague or mentor.

Exploring the theme of characteristics of successful mentoring relationships revealed that stories of advocacy on the part of their mentors were, by far, the most strongly represented. Betsy, however, was again the exception; all of the women except her stated that their mentors had advocated for increased responsibilities on their behalf, something that was essential to their career advancement. It was interesting to note that while Betsy cited several examples of other characteristics within this theme, her one male mentor did not advocate for any increased responsibilities for her.

Networking was another characteristic of successful mentoring relationships that proved to be very important to the advancement of several of the women’s careers. There was a
distinction, however, between networking that occurred within the mentoring relationship, and networking that took place via participation in professional associations. Lisa, Susan and Elizabeth spoke specifically of how their mentors helped them to network and build relationships, while Carol and Kathy gave examples of how they effectively used their contacts in professional associations to network. Lisa, the one woman who was most extensively involved in professional associations on a national level, did not mention personally benefiting from networking via that organization.

Predictably, the theme of racial/ethnic salience revealed that all of the women were victims of racism, both in passive and overt ways. Aya and Mary, two of the older women in this study, related the most stories of overt acts of racism. The model minority stereotype, however, put an interesting twist into this theme. Some of the women, such as Margaret and Lisa, felt that their status as Asian Americans actually worked in their favor, because people tended to view them in a positive light based solely on their race. Others, such as Susan, felt that she was “tokenized” and did not appreciate having a stereotype—even a positive one—applied to her.

Examining the theme of gender salience showed that while the majority of the women (with the exception of Susan) in this study did follow traditional gender-typed family expectations, it was their Asian heritage, more than their gender, which dictated the need for that behavior. In other words, when making a decision that would be considered traditionally female-oriented, the women expressed that they made that decision not because they were women, but because it was what their Asian heritage would demand. While their gender no doubt played a role in those decisions, their cultural background was what they expressed as the more important consideration.
Finally, the theme of uses of power also revealed some interesting characteristics. In terms of their own internal use of power, assertiveness was revealed as the strongest characteristic within this theme. This is a striking contrast to the existing stereotype of Asian American women as being submissive and reserved, and it is important to note that this finding crossed all generational lines. No matter their age or generational status, these women displayed assertive behaviors, which no doubt impacted their career success.

Also within this theme, while the women stated that they felt they had a lower status as administrators in the institutional setting, what their stories actually reflected was that this lower status was connected to their gender and race, not their status as administrators. So again, race and gender, as is the case with other women administrators of color, permeates every aspect of their lives.

Out of all the women in this study, Aya’s story was perhaps the most unsettling. While all of the women experienced sexism and racism, she was the woman who had the most overt acts directed toward her on a consistent basis, always at the hands of White male administrators. Recounting those stories was no doubt painful to her, and they were certainly painful to hear. Why she was persistently subjected to these acts is unclear, as the other women in this study were also working, or had worked, within White male dominated environments.

Lisa’s was the biggest success story, if success is defined as having achieved positions of responsibility and status both within her work environment and professional associations. Her involvement in those associations may have been a key factor to her success, as several other women in the study also relayed stories of how their involvement outside the work setting was of critical importance to them.
Taken as a whole, the women in this study tended not to fit the stereotype of the submissive, docile, eager to please Asian American woman. With the exception of Betsy—the one woman who did not yet hold a senior administrative position—they were assertive and successful despite being constantly subjected to sexism and racism, both in overt and institutionalized ways. The final chapter of this study will discuss these findings in light of my research questions, as well as present implications for practice and further research.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

This chapter will provide a discussion of the key findings from this study of the impact of mentoring relationships for Asian American senior women administrators at a critical career juncture. First, a summary of the findings will be presented, followed by a discussion of those findings in relation to the research questions and what is currently known in the literature. Those sections will be followed by outlining the limitations of the study, and presenting implications for policy and practice. Finally, the chapter will conclude by identifying potential areas for future research.

Summary of the Findings

In general, the broad patterns that emerged from the interviews conducted with the eleven women for this study—a White-male dominated culture, the intersection of sexism and racism, gender-typed family concerns, feelings of isolation and the model minority stereotype—were patterns that were largely predictable given what is currently known about women administrators of color and Asian American women administrators specifically. Yet for each of these patterns, there was at least one woman who was an exception—so it cannot be said that there was any pattern that was experienced by all of the women in this study. Thus while the overall patterns in these areas supported the literature, there were some interesting departures from what is currently known as well.

One such departure that emerged from the data was that many of the women interviewed for this study reported being exposed to more instances of sexism than racism, which is the opposite of what current research tells us is the case for other women administrators of color. In only one case, that of Betsy, was this finding associated with working at an institution with a
critical mass of Asian Americans. One might suppose that such an environment would be more supportive, and would provide some relief from racism; but for those women who did experience more racism than sexism, or experienced them in equal measure, three of them worked at institutions with a high number of Asian Americans in the student body and within the overall population of the state. Thus being surrounded by a great many Asians still did not always lessen the impact of racism on the lives of those three women, which is in keeping with what current literature describes as the experience of Black women at HBCUs (Jones & Gooden, 2003). Still, it is notable that this was the experience of only three of the eleven women interviewed for this study; as a group, the women were subjected to more sexism overall.

In the area of gender-typed family concerns, the interviews revealed that the women who were not in traditional, heterosexually-married relationships with children did not express concerns or issues of this type. Susan in particular was the outlier in this area, as she is in a committed relationship with a female life partner, and the couple has no children. Susan’s circumstance means that she falls outside the norm of what is “typical” for a senior student affairs administrator, as research shows that most female student affairs officers are characteristically middle-aged, heterosexually married, have been in the field for more than ten years, and are White (Randall, 1995). Perhaps because Susan did not fit within this norm, she was less prone to this particular brand of bias and discrimination.

An analysis of the mentoring relationships experienced by these women also yielded some predictable results, but more surprises as well. In some ways, their mentoring experiences were typical—the majority of the women in this study had mentors, and most of them were White males. But six of the women did have mentors of color, yet only four of the women had
Asian mentors; and of those four, only Lisa was working at an institution with a critical mass of Asian Americans. Margaret’s sole mentor was her mother, and two of the other women acquired their Asian mentors through their affiliations with professional associations, although not through any formal means. Making connections via professional involvement was a pattern that emerged for several of the women, and many examples were given of how these types of connections had helped them throughout their careers.

Many of the women made the distinction between who they felt were mentors as opposed to other people who had helped them at discrete points in their careers; terms such as “sponsor,” “advocate,” “role model” and others were used to describe such individuals. The term “mentor,” they felt, needed to be someone with whom they had a close, on-going and long-term relationship. Why this distinction is important, and a discussion of its possible implications for the mentoring relationship, will be discussed in a later section of this chapter.

For some of the women who had both male and female mentors, a pattern emerged that is contradictory to what is known via the current literature. Three of the women experienced more career mentoring from their male mentors than their female mentors, and an additional three experienced career mentoring from their male mentors in equal or almost equal measure. Only three of the women with male mentors received a greater amount of psychosocial versus career mentoring from them, which would be consistent with the current literature. In addition, two of the women, Aya and Mary, reported having no long-term mentoring relationships at all; this fact is even more surprising considering that Aya is in the latter part of her career, and Mary has already retired. Both did mention asking for advice from a few individuals at different points in their careers, and when they did, they gave more examples of receiving career advice from men. Neither one, however, has experienced a long-term mentoring relationship, not even with a
family member. Margaret was the only woman who cited a family member as her sole, life-long mentor, and all of her stories of the relationship she shared with her mother revealed instances of psychosocial mentoring, but no career mentoring.

Finally, none of the women in this study had participated in a formal mentoring program of any kind. Why this was the case is unclear, as several of the women very likely had some opportunity to participate in such programs due to their involvement in professional associations. One possible explanation relates to the persistence of the model minority stereotype—such formal mentoring programs might not be viewed as being necessary for Asian American women, due to the fact that unlike other racial and ethnic groups, Asian Americans are still viewed as successful and not in need of assistance. Lisa’s individual, personal efforts to create a support network for Asian Americans within her professional association supports this assertion.

How the women used their mentors at critical career junctures also revealed no distinct patterns. Even though the majority of the women reported having both male and female mentors, only three of them reported utilizing their male mentors in any way at this juncture—and even then, their ways of utilizing them were very different. Some of the women reported using their mentors only for letters of reference or as contacts, and some stated that they did not discuss any career moves with their mentors at all. A few of the women, such as Elizabeth and Mary, were either recruited or “tapped” by others into senior-level positions; in Elizabeth’s case, it was a male mentor who approached her with a senior level opportunity, but no mentor made Mary aware of such jobs. In some cases, the women stated that their mentors did not play any role at all as they considered moving on to another position.

As mentioned earlier, there were some outliers and exceptions in virtually every area. Aya and Mary had no mentors; Betsy and Laura did not describe any issues with working in a
White male-dominated environment (even though Betsy’s institution was, in fact, led by White men); Susan did not report being exposed to sexism or gender-typed family concerns; Kathy did not report any examples of racism; Elizabeth and Lisa did not speak of any instances in which the model minority stereotype came into play in their careers, and also did not reveal any feelings of isolation or being subjected to gender-typed family concerns, and; Margaret also did not mention any gender-typed family concerns. At first glance, Elizabeth and Lisa appear to have had similar experiences; but a closer look at their interviews shows that Elizabeth gave more examples of her struggles within a White-male dominated environment, and also experienced more sexism than Lisa. This may have been due to Elizabeth’s role within Business Affairs as opposed to Student Affairs, since senior women administrators tend to be concentrated in Student Affairs and are less common in other divisions (Opp & Gosetti, 2000). Lisa’s extensive involvement with professional associations on the national level make her an outlier in the group, and it is that level of involvement that may have helped alleviate some of those concerns for her, particularly any feelings of isolation.

A deeper analysis of the interviews using the theoretical frameworks of relational cultural theory (RCT) and critical race theory (CRT) showed that these eleven Asian American women administrators were subjected to White male dominance, sexism, racism and struggled with power relations in every aspect of their lives, even their mentoring relationships. The overarching themes reviewed in the second half of Chapter Four—culturally related self-effacement, mutual engagement through mentoring, characteristics of successful mentoring relationships, racial/ethnic salience, gender salience, and uses of power—all underscore the issues and difficulties these women face on a persistent, daily basis.
Within the larger theme of culturally related self-effacement, the data showed that passivity and the perception of passivity on the part of these women was the most prevalent characteristic. Yet what these women’s stories revealed overall is that they suffered most from the perception of passivity, or that others felt they should behave in a passive manner due to their Asian American heritage. Only Betsy (the one woman in the study who had not yet attained a senior administrative position) gave an account of what could be viewed as truly passive behavior; the other women, based on the information shared in their interviews, could not be described as passive. In a related characteristic within this theme, only one woman (again, Betsy) gave an example of lack of assertiveness; two other women related stories in which they felt they had been perceived as lacking assertiveness, when circumstances clearly showed that was not the case.

All of the women gave examples of characteristics in the mutual engagement through mentoring theme, although again Aya and Mary—the only two women without long-term mentors—were again outliers. Neither related any stories involving validation. Aya also did not describe any situations in which she was provided emotional support, shared personal information, or engaged in honest, open communication. Her lack of connection with a mentor, and even with colleagues to any significant extent during the course of her career, resulted in severe feelings of isolation and disconnection, an RCT finding. Mary, on the other hand, did not seem at all bothered by her lack of connection with a long-term colleague or mentor. Possible reasons for this difference will be explored later in this chapter.

Stories of advocacy for increased responsibilities were, by far, the most strongly represented within the theme of characteristics of successful mentoring relationships. Betsy, however, was again the exception; while she cited several examples of other characteristics
within this theme, her one male mentor did not advocate for any increased responsibilities for her.

Networking was another characteristic of successful mentoring relationships that proved to be very important to the advancement of several of the women’s careers. Two different types of networking were described: networking that occurred as a result of the mentoring relationship itself, and networking that took place via participation in professional associations. Lisa, Susan and Elizabeth spoke specifically of how their mentors helped them to network and build relationships, while Carol and Kathy gave examples of how they effectively used their contacts in professional associations. It was odd that Lisa, the woman who was most extensively involved in professional associations on a national level, did not mention networking as a personal benefit of her involvement with that organization.

Almost all of the women were victims of racism in both passive and overt ways. The older women in the study, such as Aya and Mary, were more often subjected to overt racism. The existence of the model minority stereotype, however, resulted in some interesting findings. A few of the women felt that their status as Asian Americans actually worked in their favor, because people tended to view them in a positive light based solely on their race. Others felt tokenized, and did not appreciate having a stereotype, even a positive one, applied to them.

With the exception of Susan, the majority of the women in this study did follow traditional gender-typed family expectations, although it was their Asian heritage, more so than their gender, which they felt dictated their behavior. When making a choice that would be considered traditionally female-oriented, the women said that they made that choice not because they were women, but because it was what their Asian heritage and culture would demand.
Uses of power, the final overarching theme, also contained some interesting characteristics. Contrary to the stereotype that Asian American women are docile and reserved, assertiveness was the strongest characteristic within this theme, a finding that crossed all generational lines. Within this same theme, while the women stated that they felt they had a lower status as administrators in the institutional setting, what their stories actually revealed was that this perceived lower status was connected to their gender and race, not their actual status as administrators. Again, this finding shows how powerfully race and gender impact every aspect of these women’s lives.

Several of the women told stories that were upsetting, but Aya’s experiences were arguably the worst. While all of the women experienced sexism and racism, she was the one who had the most overt acts directed toward her on a consistent basis, always at the hands of White male administrators. The possible reasons for why she had so many negative experiences will be discussed later in this chapter.

In contrast, Lisa’s experiences were much more positive. Her involvement in professional associations may have been a key factor to her success, as several other women in the study also related stories of how their involvement outside the work setting was of critical importance to them.

Overall, utilizing CRT and RCT to analyze the interviews was helpful in revealing how institutions, socially constructed norms and personal relationships (or lack thereof) either helped or hindered each woman’s career and mentoring relationships. The down side of utilizing these two theoretical frameworks was that CRT is focused solely on larger social institutions and their systemic, hidden structures, while RCT is focused on individual, personal relationships and the mutual development that occurs as a result. One is very “big picture” and assigns little
importance to one-on-one relationships, while the other zeroes in on personal, mutual interaction. There is no space in the middle where the two overlap, which at times left a gap when interpreting the data. Where some of these gaps appeared will be discussed later in this chapter.

Taken as a whole, the women in this study did not seem to fit the stereotype of the submissive, docile, eager to please Asian American woman. With the exception of Betsy, who had not yet attained a senior administrative position, they were assertive and successful despite being constantly subjected to many forms of discrimination, both in overt and institutionalized ways. Yet for every potential pattern, there were outliers, making it difficult to discern patterns at all. What follows is a discussion of these findings, in relation to the research questions which guided this study.

Discussion of the Findings

The Effect of Race and Gender on Career Advancement. One of the goals of the interviews with these eleven women was to gain a greater understanding of the impact that their Asian American heritage has had on their career advancement. Two key findings in this area centered on the model minority stereotype. The first is that the women definitely felt that being perceived by others according to stereotypes had mostly negative, but sometimes positive, effects. Kathy’s supervisor describing her as “quiet leadership,” and Carol stating that people viewed Asian American women as “subservient” and more “the follower than the leader” were examples of how the stereotype limited their potential career advancement due to others’ perception of their abilities. It is important to note, however, that in many cases it was a perception on the part of others that they were not leadership material, and not a reflection on their actual leadership style or actions. The model minority stereotype, as is the case with most stereotypes, was being applied to these women with a broad brush, whether it was accurate or not. Others, like Mary,
felt that being Asian had some advantages, because people perceive that “Asian women…always do a thorough job.”

The second finding that pertained to the model minority stereotype is that the women in this study fit some aspects of the stereotype, but not all. Self-effacement and humility, in addition to deference to authority, were two aspects of the model minority stereotype that were evident in the interviews. It can be speculated that these traits are a barrier to career advancement, since they are at odds with what the White male dominated culture of American higher education would dictate are necessary qualities for its leaders to possess.

But here is where the adherence to the model minority stereotype ends for the women in this study. One of the strongest characteristics that appeared in the interviews was that of assertiveness. Over and over again, the women in this study—whether they were an immigrant, first or second generation Asian American—offered examples of how their assertive behaviors had earned them respect and helped them advance in their careers, which is in contrast to the stereotype that Asian American women should be reserved, submissive and eager to please (Collison, 2000; Ideta, 2002; Ng et al, 2007). Similarly, while passivity and the perception of passivity surfaced strongly in the interview data, it was the perception of passivity that impacted the women the most. An examination of the situations they described showed that, with the exception of Betsy, the women had not behaved passively at all. Passivity, just like the overall model minority stereotype that had been applied to them, was a perception on the part of others and not a reflection of their actual behavior.

So the question must be asked—did these women succeed because they do not fit the overall model minority stereotype, or is the stereotype itself a myth? The fact that examples of assertive behavior crossed all generational lines of the women in this study tells us that at least
some aspects of the model minority stereotype must be questioned as outdated and perhaps no longer valid.

There can be no arguing, however, that whether it was accurately applied or not, the women in this study were forced to deal with the model minority stereotype on a regular basis. Being subjected to this stereotype placed them in the no-win situation described by Ancheta (2000), whose research notes that Asian Americans are often ostracized by Whites, and at the same time victimized by other racial minorities due to their perceived success. In this study, the White supremacist manifestations of the model minority stereotype were particularly evident in the after-hours phone call to Mary (letting her know that “we don’t want your kind here”), as well as the Rotary Club members asking if she was a “boat person.” At the same time, she was also racialized as the model minority, as her story about how others responded positively to her strong work ethic reflects. Similarly with Aya, her White male colleagues used their institutional privilege to launch public, verbal attacks in an effort to maintain their status; the fact that they perceived her as a submissive Asian American woman who would not fight back made these attacks possible in their eyes. In both cases, race was used as the driving force to keep the dominant culture in power and the minority culture in check.

The persistence of the model minority stereotype could also help explain why those in power felt safe, and perhaps even justified, in taking such actions. Because the stereotype dictates that Asian American women are supposed to be docile—or as Aya stated, an “easy target”—she was perhaps subjected to racist acts that women of other racial backgrounds would not be. Lisa’s observation that the president of her institution “did not like Asian women executives,” and recounting how he publically humiliated one of her female Asian colleagues is another example, as she could not recall an instance in which he targeted women of other racial
backgrounds. Carol’s comment that African American women are allowed to behave more assertively than Asian women because they have a “different set of stereotypes to deal with” also demonstrates her perception that the model minority stereotype dictates that it is specifically Asian women who are labeled as docile and reserved, and that they are less likely to push back when victimized.

How the women themselves processed the model minority stereotype also affected how they perceived their race impacting their career advancement. For example, at first glance, Aya’s statement that “it’s not safe to share your mistakes or your problems with others, when you get to this level you’re supposed to mentor others and not the other way,” appears to relate to what she feels is her obligation, as a senior administrator, to mentor others. But is her statement also a reflection that as an Asian American held to the model minority standard, she feels she must be successful, and therefore should not require mentoring herself? In the same vein, Debra observed that the cultural demand of “minding your own business” further isolates Asians, and places the responsibility for that isolation squarely on Asians themselves; an alternate view would be that the institutional culture is responsible for perpetuating that isolation, based on her race. In both cases, it can be argued that the women were locating responsibility within themselves, rather than recognizing what CRT would identify as institutionalized racism at work.

Margaret, Kathy and Lisa also seemed to embrace some aspects of the model minority stereotype, and for the most part, viewed it positively. When Margaret stated that being a woman of color was viewed as a “positive thing” by others, one wonders if she would make that same statement if she were a Black or Latina woman instead of an Asian American, as all races are socialized and perceived differently. Kathy, while recognizing that her supervisor describing her as “quiet leadership” was perhaps an inappropriate nod toward her Asian heritage,
nonetheless seemed to view it as a compliment. And Lisa, who seemed to be extremely comfortable with her self-described “quiet style” because she felt it was “effective,” did not recognize that perhaps the reason why her style was so effective is because she was not challenging the stereotype of how an Asian American woman should behave. In short, the pervasiveness of the model minority stereotype made it difficult for even some of the women in this study to recognize racist sentiments that were directed toward them.

During the course of the interviews, several of the women spoke of how they felt either race or gender was the more salient factor in a given interaction. How this difference presented itself in their minds seemed to center around how they felt they should behave as Asians, as dictated by their particular culture and/or the model minority stereotype. In other words, race became more salient than gender when they spoke of situations describing how they felt they, as Asians, were expected to behave.

An example of this would be when Margaret spoke of how her Asian heritage, not her gender, was at work with regard to her deference to authority. Her statement that “I know for the Japanese…it is different…you’re supposed to be very polite to all your elders” is indicative of how she felt her race, and not her gender, dictated her behavior with regard to those in authority. Debra, when stating that she does not accept compliments easily, noted that it was because her culture demands humility; she did not state that she was uncomfortable with flattery due to her gender. Margaret also gave an example in which she felt that race was the more salient factor with regard to assertiveness; women who behaved assertively, in her opinion, were subject to criticism; and that criticism is “double” for Asians due to the stereotype that they are docile and “too soft” in their behavior.
In short, the women in this study who attempted to separate the two factors invoked that separation when their behavior did/did not fall in line with the model minority stereotype, or supported/ran counter to the expectations defined by their cultural heritage. For the situations in which they discussed both their race and gender status as contributing factors, they articulated that their Asian heritage often trumped gender. Why they felt that way is not clear. Perhaps it is because one is more easily discussed than the other, or as Margaret phrased it, that “things have changed over time.” In the past, she expressed that being a woman was what set her apart; yet now that more women are in the upper administrative ranks, it is more her Asian status that makes her stand out in her role.

This study also showed, however, that for several of the participants, their perception of how race and ethnicity have impacted their careers was often closely tied to their status as women, to the point that very often, they could not separate the two factors. This finding is consistent with current research on other women administrators of color (Moses, 1997; Smith & Crawford, 2007), and is also in keeping with the intersubjectivity concept in which “more often than either/or, our universe presents us with both/and possibilities” (Ladson-Billings, 1992, p. 308). This concept maintains that one factor is not dominant over the other, and in fact, race and gender are conjoined and constantly shifting in their social constructions, impact on any given situation, and in how subsequent forms of discrimination are manifested. As hooks (1989) maintains, it is important not to try and separate these oppressive systems, as doing so fails to acknowledge how the two sustain one another; they cannot be fully understood in isolation. Carol’s statement that she “can’t really separate those things out” provides an example of this intersubjectivity. Another example was offered by Laura, who commented that being assertive meant that she could be perceived as a “B-I-T-C-H.” She attributed that criticism to her gender,
yet it is also possible that assertive behavior on her part could be seen as contrary to how she was expected to behave as an Asian American woman; thus it would be her race, combined with her gender, which made her a target. In short, these women’s experiences were shaped and defined by the intersection of race and gender, and how those systems met in any given situation (Hill Collins, 1998a).

As was noted in Chapter Two, Asian American women also face stereotypes and barriers due to an image of Asian American women as reserved, exotic, submissive and eager to please (Collison, 2000; Ideta, 2002; Ng et al., 2007). This exoticizing was also experienced by the women in this study, and was the tenor of several comments.

One of the most obvious of such comments was the one leveled at Debra by her male colleague describing her as “cute.” It is hard to imagine that he would use that same adjective to describe a male colleague, or for that matter, even a woman from a different ethnic group. In a similar fashion, Mary being told that she didn’t “look like a dean,” and her subsequent decision to “dress up” and “look traditional” emphasizes her status as an woman of color, and an Asian American woman specifically. In her words, Mary felt that she needed to “meet halfway” in order to be accepted in her environment.

Mary’s choice of words is notable. It is one of many examples in which several of the women in this study were compelled to be less true to themselves—or in RCT terms, less authentic—in order to fit in. Being Asian was often a handicap when trying to maneuver within a White-male dominated environment, and some of them chose to change their outward appearance and behavior in an effort to assimilate. Similar to Mary deciding to “dress up,” Aya’s decision to change her style and interact more aggressively with her White male colleagues allowed her, in her words, to “gain respect” in order to “get on top.” While she would
have preferred to build a mutually beneficial relationship, being berated by her White male colleagues left her in “total devastation,” forcing her to sacrifice that relationship and become less authentic, ultimately compromising herself within the discriminatory institutional context brought to light by CRT.

Another area in which there were differences in how the women’s race and ethnicity affected their career advancement was in relation to their accents. Only four women in this study (Betsy, Debra, Carol and Mary) spoke with a discernable accent; and of those four, three were immigrants. But not all of the immigrant women in this study had accents—the two who came to the United States as small children, Laura and Susan, did not speak with an Asian accent.

One might predict that speaking with an Asian accent would expose the women to more, or perhaps more severe, racist behaviors. This was true with Mary, who spoke with a very pronounced Chinese accent; yet Aya, who had no perceptible Japanese accent, was subjected to some of the worst examples of sexism and racism. Aya’s perceived passivity, as well as her disconnection from her colleagues, might help to explain why she was targeted more than the other women in this study. It must be noted, however, that both of those possible explanations are the result of institutionalized racism and its subsequent impact on Aya, and are not characteristics inherent within her as an Asian American woman.

Speaking with an accent did not seem to be a determining factor in whether or not the women were subjected to more racism or racist acts. Other women without a discernible accent, such as Laura and Susan, actually spoke of racism and racist acts more often than some of the women who spoke with an accent.

Still, the issue of accents was clearly an area in which some of the women felt they also had to compromise themselves in order to be accepted in their environments. For example,
Susan feeling that not speaking her native language was a “survival mechanism,” Debra relating how her accent might make it difficult for others to understand her, and her chastising other Asians for having non-Asians record their outgoing voicemail messages, are examples of how they, according to RCT, could not be fully authentic. Mary acknowledging that people “treated me differently” due to her accent, and that “sometimes it is a drawback” also illustrates that being Asian in her environment forced her into a position of having to “prove” that she could succeed. The CRT context meant that there was no mutual engagement or empowerment, and that same context forced them to adapt in order to cope with systemic inequities. And while some of the women did adapt, the collateral damage was assimilation, hurt and sacrifice.

So it seems that there is definite variability within the group, and no clear patterns emerged between generational status and speaking with an accent that made a difference for these women with regard to being exposed to racism and racist behaviors. Mary, an immigrant who spoke with an accent, gave examples of being targeted because of that accent; yet Debra and Carol, also immigrants with accents, did not. Also, similar to the greater amount of racism versus sexism experienced by some of the women who worked at institutions with a critical mass of Asian Americans, Mary was working at an institution and within a state with a high concentration of Asian Americans; yet Debra and Carol were not. As was the case with Black women administrators working at HBCUs, having a large number of Asians within the work environment did not necessarily help to ease racial strains (Jones & Gooden, 2003).

So the question is, why? Again, the conjoining of racism and sexism, or intersubjectivity (Ladson-Billings, 1992), might provide an answer. As the research shows is the case with other women administrators of color, it is their race and gender that makes these women an anomaly within the institutional context. If only one of those variables were at play—i.e., if they were
women, and not women of color—their experiences would undoubtedly be different. This also helps to explain why White women have managed to achieve more senior administrative roles than women of color (Opp & Gosetti, 2000), as they would at least have race in common with the White men who currently hold the majority of leadership positions within American higher education.

While several of the women in this study experienced overt acts of sexism and racism, the analysis also revealed that most have experienced some of the more invisible forms of sexism and racism that a CRT framework would have predicted. The interviews were searched for data that either confirmed or debunked the three tenets of CRT. The first tenet—that society fails to see racism because it is such a common, everyday experience that it is often taken for granted—helped to explain why the model minority stereotype associated with Asian Americans remains so persistent despite evidence to the contrary, particularly for some groups of Southeast Asian Americans (Escueta & O’Brien, 1991; Hsia & Hirano-Nakanishi, 1995; Hune & Chan, 1997). Because the stereotype has been in existence since the 1960s (Peterson, 1966), several generations have grown up believing that all Asian Americans are high achievers and do not need any special consideration or support.

As expected, CRT also helped explain why there remain so few Asian American senior women administrators, as such individuals are seen as pushing against the prevailing social construct of the type of person who should typically hold these positions in American higher education, as well as working against traditional Asian American values. Such constructs are not of an individual or personal nature; they are societal and systemic, and perpetuate the existing dominant positions of power (Lopez, 2003). Analysis of the interviews revealed that the women in this study are operating within this same social construct, and are falling victim to the notion
that they will not be viewed as legitimately holding such senior positions, and they remain marginalized as a result. Aya and Mary’s experiences in particular provided strong examples of this marginalization.

The CRT framework used in this study also revealed themes such as power and privilege in the interview data, as well as how the nature of these and other themes such as sexism and racism are systemic in colleges and universities themselves and have subordinated the women in this study (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Donahoo, 2008; Lopez, 2003; Smith et al., 2007). As noted in Chapter Four, nearly all of the women experienced sexism and racism, in both systemic and overt ways.

Because CRT also challenges the dominant ideology that places the “problem” within the non-dominant population, rather than examining how institutions operate to systemically advantage some populations and marginalize others, it was not surprising to find that the women were often disadvantaged due to both their race and gender. For example, the women in this study were subjected to institutional policies or practices that categorized them as a marginalized group, thus labeling them as being in need of help in order to advance in their careers. Elizabeth spoke of being marginalized, both because she was an Asian American and because she was a woman, and her subsequent feelings of frustration. Aya was painfully honest in sharing how she felt the need to hide her pregnancy for several months from her colleagues, because the campus policy would only allow her to be absent for a very short period of time for maternity leave.

The fact that the women in this study gave more examples of being exposed to sexism than racism is notable, as it is a departure from what the literature tells us is the case for other women administrators of color. One explanation for this might be due to the lingering perception of passivity that was outlined earlier in this chapter. While the women in this study
could not accurately be described as passive, the perception that Asian American women are submissive, reserved and eager to please (Collison, 2000; Ideta, 2002; Ng et al, 2007) is still so pervasive that others continue to view them in overly sexist ways. This sentiment was reinforced by Aya, who felt that her White male colleagues viewed her as an “easy target” simply because she was an Asian American woman who was not likely to fight back.

A second possible explanation for why these women were being exposed to a greater degree of sexism was offered by Carol, who felt that Asian American women, because of the stereotype that they should be quiet and reserved, are treated even more harshly when they behave in assertive ways. Because the women in this study showed such a high degree of assertiveness, which ran counter to the stereotype for Asian American women, it is possible that they were victimized even more due to their gender. Carol observed that women of other racial groups, such as African Americans, do not suffer the same attacks when they behave assertively, because while they suffer from racial stereotypes, those stereotypes do not dictate that they should be docile. This stereotypical racial difference could help to explain why the Asian American women in this study reported more sexist acts being directed toward them.

Yet another explanation might be the de-minoritization concept that was previously outlined in Chapter Three, which holds that because Asian Americans are typically viewed in such a positive light, they are largely ignored in terms of racial issues (Lee, 2006). In other words, their race has become a virtual non-issue, so when they are victimized, it is their gender that more often makes them a target. Christine’s colleagues telling her, “Christine, you don’t count” as a minority, even though she was working in an environment in which she clearly was a minority, supports this possible explanation.
As noted earlier, Susan was the only woman who did not report being subjected to sexist acts. The study by Randall (1995), which indicated that the typical female student affairs officer is characteristically middle-aged, heterosexually married, and White, is a possible explanation for this exception. Susan did not report any homophobia or discrimination based on her sexual identity, perhaps because she did not fit the norm of the “typical” student affairs administrator. As a senior administrator in student affairs on her campus and an “out” lesbian with a life partner, it is possible that she—and any other individual whose lifestyle is not consistent with the “traditional family ideal” of a state-sanctioned, heterosexual marriage with children (Collins, 1998, p. 63)—is not as prone to the same types of sexist acts that were reported by the other women.

Yet while the women reported being exposed to more sexism than racism, it is important to note that the theme of institutionalized racism still appeared very strongly in the data. Is it possible that the women were exposed to racism just as frequently as sexism, but did not perceive it due to its embedded nature? From a CRT perspective the answer to that question might be “yes.” Perhaps the women in this study had also fallen victim to the “de-minoritization” concept; that, coupled with constant exposure to the model minority stereotype, may have made them less aware of the racist undercurrents that were operating within their institutions.

Whatever the reasons behind the higher number of sexist versus racist acts as reported by the women in this study, it is clear that they faced stereotypes and barriers due to both—particularly the image of Asian American women needing to be quiet and reserved—that fed into the notion that they somehow did not fit the mold of what a senior level administrator should be. And while the women in this study did contradict the stereotype by being assertive, they also still
displayed other traditional Asian values such as self-effacement, humility and deference to authority. As is supported by the literature, these values crossed all generational lines (Lum, 2005, 2008; Min, 1995), and are deeply imbedded in the Asian American culture. These values, however, remain in conflict to what is traditionally valued in American higher education as the leadership qualities necessary for success in senior-level administrative positions.

Involvement in professional associations was noted by several women, most particularly Lisa, as essential to their career development and advancement. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Lisa’s establishment of a group whose sole purpose was to provide support and mentoring for Asian Americans no doubt provided her with some much-needed support as well. As is supported by the literature, it seemed to be the case that such professional involvement helped the women in this study feel less marginalized, and enabled them to better cope with any feelings of isolation on their own campuses (Hune, 1998).

Another way in which race impacted the career advancement of the women in this study was in relation to their gender-typed family concerns. When these issues arose in the interviews, the women spoke of their Asian American heritage, in addition to their gender, as being a key factor in their decisions. This fits with what is currently known for women from other racial groups, who report facing additional stress because gender-role expectations within their culture are particularly strong (Grady, 2002). Debra passing up a promotion because she was a newlywed whose daughter was ill, Carol following her husband when he got a promotion, and Mary declining an offer to conduct additional research with her advisor because she needed to put her husband’s needs first were all examples of how their status as women, and Asian American women in particular, at times limited their career choices. RCT would maintain that it was their strong need for relationship that dictated those choices.
Finally, it is worth noting that one of the three tenets of CRT—the privileging of stories and the existence of counterstories—did not surface in the interviews. The women in this study did not give examples of how their racial reality had been suppressed, censored or downplayed by others in order to better fit the institutionalized version of the truth (Lopez, 2003). When the topic of institutional culture did surface, the women spoke only in descriptive terms of what they observed—primarily, that the culture was dominated by White men—but they did not express that their own racial reality had been censored or suppressed.

One possible explanation for the lack of counterstories is that the women in this study had started to change and define themselves in terms of the existing culture. Aya, who initially struggled a great deal in her White male dominated environment, began to feel better when she “got a little tough” and fought back when she was attacked. As noted by Zweigenhaft & Domhoff in the corporate setting, “upper management was willing to accept women and minorities only if they were not too different” (1998, p. 51). The higher education setting seems to mirror that of the corporate world—it is only when minority women start to behave more like White men, and when this forced assimilation means that their “perspectives and values do not differ markedly from those of their White male counterparts” (Ibid., p. 192) that they can become more successful in their careers.

**The Impact of Gender and Race in Obtaining and Utilizing Mentors.** Taken as a whole, the women in this study had more male than female mentors over the course of their careers, a finding that is consistent with the literature (Levesque et al., 2006). Because individuals tend to have mentors who are above them in rank, and because most upper-level administrative positions in higher education continue to be held by White men (Gerdes, 2006), this finding is not surprising. The literature also states, however, that having an opposite sex mentor can cause
issues for women. As noted in Chapter Two, cross-gender mentoring relationships can be problematic, as both the men and the women might be inclined to assume traditional stereotypical gender roles, which can constrict mentoring behavior (Welch, 1993). Such relationships also carry a certain stigma for women, as the relationship can potentially be viewed as being inappropriate or too intimate (Noe, 1988; Pillsbury et al., 1989; Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Welch, 1993). Betsy, who had only one male mentor, referenced this issue when she stated that “having a relationship with a male and female regardless of the circumstances is always a little bit different.” Along the same lines, Carol described personal information sharing as only being possible with her female mentors, stating that “the fact that we are both women made a difference. It was more comfortable for me to be able to talk with them about…the gender and power dynamic issues.”

As was also presented in Chapter Two, women of color face barriers that are not experienced by White men, and those differ depending on the woman’s specific race; these differences were also manifested in the gender and racial characteristics of their mentoring relationships. Several women in this study had non-White mentors, but it is interesting to note that none of those women expressed that having a Black, Asian or Latino mentor meant that that their mentor had an understanding of White male privilege, or of the specific issues facing Asian American women.

It could be speculated that the stereotypical traits of their Asian American culture, such as deference to authority, would somehow inhibit these women even further with their male mentors, but that did not appear to be the case overall. Lisa in particular spoke of one of her mentors, a White male, as being a “very dear friend,” and described how she cared for yet another Asian American male mentor when he became ill. Laura also spoke of having “a lot of
camaraderie” with one of her White male mentors; and while Betsy related that having a male/female mentoring relationship could be “a little different,” she still stated that “open communication” with her African American male mentor was the most important part of their relationship. For some of the women, their ability to connect with their mentors crossed both gender and racial lines.

Yet the mentoring relationship itself remains problematic, simply because it is not mutual. The definition of a mentor used for this study (O’Reilly, 2001, p. 51), is a relationship which involves an “experienced, high-ranking member of an organization who assists in the career development of a more junior member.” This definition indicates a difference in power—something that is not in line with RCT. Viewed from a CRT perspective, this power differential instead keeps the current institutional hierarchy in place.

So why were these women able to build such strong connections with their male mentors, particularly their White male mentors? Their strong need to build relationships seemed to be the answer, a concept that would be supported by RCT. The relationships described by the women with their male mentors all closely aligned with the core tenets of RCT (Jordan, 2008), namely that individuals grow through and toward relationship throughout their lives, and mature functioning is characterized by mutuality, increased participation and competence in growth-fostering relationships. For the women in this study, the need to build and grow through relationships was a critical factor in their mentoring relationships; and if they had any misgivings about maintaining a relationship with a male mentor, those misgivings were overridden by their stronger need to further develop the relationship. In fact, only Betsy articulated some hesitation about a male/female mentoring relationship, and some of those relationships, as evidenced most clearly by Lisa, grew to be very personal in nature.
Given their strong need to develop personal relationships, it was somewhat surprising to learn that, unlike what the research shows to be the case for Black women administrators (Smith & Crawford, 2007), the Asian American women in this study, with the exception of Margaret, did not name members of their own families as key mentors. While it was clear that their families and traditional Asian values impacted some of their decisions—as was the case with Elizabeth, Aya and Mary, who felt their fathers had influenced them—their most important mentors did not come from their families; or at least, they did not label this support as mentoring.

Why this is the case is unclear. It can be speculated that as the women in this study progressed in their education and their careers, they relied less on their family members and more on their colleagues for mentoring and advice due to the very specific nature and demands of their work. Higher education administration is still a relatively young field; and unless one is familiar with its many aspects and current trends, it could prove difficult for a family member to provide work-related advice. The nature of Margaret’s mentoring relationship supports this idea, as she was given only psychosocial, and not career mentoring, from her mother.

That still does not explain, however, why the other women in this study did not rely more heavily on family members for emotional support or psychosocial mentoring; or if they did, they did not mention it during the course of their interviews. Perhaps the Asian American value of a strong, individualized work ethic at least partially explains this finding, as the women may have simply decided that it was up to them as individuals to figure out the answers to their problems, rather than burden their family members.

With regard to racial considerations, some studies indicate that having a mentor of the same race or ethnicity is helpful due to the particular discriminatory barriers and sense of isolation that women of color face (Holmes et al., 2007; Ragins, 1997; Stanley & Lincoln, 2005;
Welch, 1993). But besides the mentoring relationship that Margaret shared with her mother, only three of the women in this study had an Asian American mentor, male or female. Betsy and Laura, two of the women who worked in states with a high concentration of Asian Americans in the overall population, did not report having any Asian American mentors at all. In addition, out of the nine women in this study who had mentors, three of them had only White mentors. For two additional women, the majority of their mentors were White, and two other women had at least one White mentor. Only two women in this study—Margaret, who was mentored by her mother, and Betsy, who had just one African American male mentor—did not have a White mentor.

Since research shows that it is beneficial to have a mentor of the same race, is it possible for Asian American women to reach their full potential if they continue to be mentored by primarily Whites, and by White men in particular? As one author notes, for empathic communication to be successful, people must understand that other’s worldview is “filtered through his or her own cultural frame of reference” (Freedberg, 2007, p. 257). Knowing this, is it truly possible for non-Asians, and White men in particular, to effectively mentor Asian American women? And even if the answer is “no,” would it even matter since there are virtually no Asian Americans in senior administrative positions available to serve as their mentors?

Luckily, for the women in this study at least, race did not seem to be a key factor in choosing their mentors, or in their assessment of the success of the mentoring relationship itself. No one mentioned purposely seeking out an Asian American mentor, or for that matter, a mentor of any particular race. Laura commented that “I don’t think it’s impacted at all” when thinking about both the gender and race of her mentors, and instead her focus was to find “people…that you respect and want to be like.” Carol, who had only one female mentor, thought that “… it
would have been helpful and interesting if I had a male mentor, whatever the race might be....,”
also indicating that race was not a great concern for her. Kathy went so far as to bluntly state, “It
makes no difference if they’re Asian American or not.” Throughout the course of the interviews,
the women tended to mention the race of their mentors only when asked a direct question about
it; for the most part, they seemed unconcerned about that aspect of the mentoring relationship.

One potential reason for why the women in this study did not view race as a critical
factor in obtaining and utilizing their mentors was because as a group, they themselves did not
experience racism to the same extent as the literature has shown to be the case for other women
administrators of color. They seemed to be more conscious of, and reported more instances
involving, how their gender was an issue in their interactions in the workplace, more so than
their race. For some of the women at least, the concept of being “de-minoritized” (Lee, 2006) as
Asian Americans seemed to hold true, as they did not view their race as a potential barrier or
even a factor to consider when choosing and interacting with their mentors.

A related explanation for this lack of concern with the race of their mentors is society’s
lingering attitudes regarding the model minority stereotype. Because Asian Americans are
viewed as high achievers, successful overall and not in need of help (Hune, 1998; Liang, Lee &
Ting, 2002; Museus & Chang, 2009), perhaps the women felt less marginalized due to their race,
and less need to connect with members of other minority groups—even their own group—as a
source of support. In other words, as CRT would support, they had also come to accept the
institutionalized racism that was prevalent in their work environments. It might be that because
the stereotype they were being subjected to was largely a positive one, the women in this study
did not view it as an area of concern.
Finally, it is also possible that, as is the case in the corporate world, racial minorities with lighter complexions—such as many Asian Americans—are subjected to less racism than darker-skinned minorities such as African Americans and some Latinos (Zweigenhaft & Domhoff, 1998). Ironically, this type of color discrimination is still a very real form of discrimination, but because the specific cultures represented by the Asian American women in this study tend to have lighter complexions, they may be able to reap a positive benefit from the stereotype.

Overall, it was not the gender or race of their mentors that was most critical to these women. What was most important to them were the benefits of the relationship, which will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

**Primary Characteristics of Mentors, Benefits and Content of the Mentoring Relationship.**

As noted earlier, most of the mentors named by the women in this study were White, and White men in particular, although six of the women did report having mentors of other racial backgrounds. The types of activities they engaged in with their mentors were varied, but most involved face-to-face interactions, phone conversations, meetings over lunch or dinner, and shared social or work activities. The nine women in this study who reported having mentors described them as individuals who provided them with a great deal of psychosocial support such as honest communication, emotional support, personal information sharing, empowerment and validation.

Yet in contrast to what the literature would predict to be the case with their male mentors in particular, it was in the category of career mentoring that several of the women received the most guidance. Skill building and collaborative skill building, networking, and advocacy for increased responsibilities were most often cited. Advocacy for increased responsibilities was the most strongly represented characteristic in the interviews, and it is possible that part of the reason
why the women in this study were so successful is because their mentors made those increased responsibilities available to them. Given the traditional Asian values of self-effacement and humility, one wonders if they would have pursued those opportunities on their own.

But why did their male mentors provide them with more career mentoring than research has shown to be the case when male mentors are paired with other women administrators of color? Based on the existing literature, it would have been logical to assume that having mostly male mentors would be a possible barrier to their career advancement, since men tend to provide more psychosocial mentoring to women (Allen & Eby, 2004; Armstrong et al., 2002; Burke & McKeen, 1990; Holmes et al., 2007; Schrodt et al., 2003). It is possible that for the women in this study, their male mentors were buying into the model minority stereotype, and viewed their Asian American protégés as having more potential than their female counterparts from other racial backgrounds. If they viewed the women as intelligent and having a strong work ethic, perhaps they felt the women were more capable of taking on additional responsibility. The strong, individualized work ethic that several of these women mentioned no doubt played a role here as well. If it were not for their strong work ethic and obvious administrative skill, their mentors might not have advocated for them so strongly.

Or perhaps there is another explanation that does not place their male mentors in such a positive light. It might be that it was the women’s humility and self-effacement—not their assertiveness and strong work ethic—that the men were responding to. CRT might posit that by providing career mentoring to Asian American women, their male mentors were not only working to advance their own interests by placing someone competent in a leadership position, but also attempting to cement their own place in the hierarchy, as those same women would not be likely to question their authority. This explanation fits with the second tenet of CRT, namely,
that Whites will tolerate and advance the interests of people of color only when they also promote the self-interest of Whites (Lopez, 2003).

On the flip side of the coin, traits associated with empathy—compassion, sensitivity, feeling, emotionality—are considered atypical for males (Freedberg, 2007). Yet these are exactly the types of psychosocial traits that some of the Asian American women in this study cited as the most valuable aspects of their mentoring relationships, and a few of the women did have male mentors who provided them with a great deal of psychosocial support. However, the remaining women whose male mentors did not fit the pattern described in the literature (i.e., men who provided more career than psychosocial support) might find it more difficult to be mentored into leadership positions by their male mentors. In other words, if the women in this study are seeking the type of truly relational, growth-fostering approach that RCT deems necessary and their male mentors are not providing it, it could pose a barrier to their career advancement since they would not be able to become their fullest, most authentic selves through relationship.

The fact the several of the women made a distinction between the word “mentor” and other labels such as role model, advocate, sponsor and confidante to describe individuals who assisted them in their careers is worth exploring. According to the definition offered by O’Reilly (2001, p. 51), mentors can provide assistance by “serving in such varied capacities as teacher, coach, counselor, advocate and role model.” That definition was the basis for this study, and using that definition, the women did in fact experience mentoring from individuals who they did not choose to label as such. Why, then, did the women in this study not define those individuals as mentors, when they had engaged in what could be defined as mentoring activities with them?

Perhaps part of the explanation relates to RCT and the importance of relationship. Because some of those activities revolved around isolated incidents, there was little connection
to those individuals. The ability to “grow through relationship” (Jordan, 2000, p. 280) was not present, and the feeling of mutuality was not experienced. In short, the women did not perceive themselves as being in a mutually beneficial relationship with the people they described as role models, advocates, sponsors or confidantes, which is perhaps why they did not use the term “mentor” to describe them.

Or perhaps it is because what constitutes mentoring is largely in the eye of the protégé. Perhaps the individuals they described also did not perceive themselves as mentors; they might not even have perceived that they were role models, advocates, sponsors or confidantes for these women, since little or no ongoing relationship was present. Care must be taken when the word “mentor” is being applied, as there are definitely distinctions between what constitutes a mentor, at least in the eyes of the women in this study.

In at least one sense, using RCT to interpret the women’s stories and their mentoring relationships was lacking. A key concept in RCT is that of mutual empathy, which manifests itself in the “maximum possible relational equality” (Freedberg, 2007, p. 255) between those involved in the relationship. Because the mentors described by the women in this study were most often above them in administrative rank, a power differential was present and true mutual empathy as defined by RCT was not possible.

Why none of the women chose to participate in a formal mentoring program is unknown. It seems particularly odd given the extensive involvement in professional associations on the part of some of the women, since such programs are often featured as a benefit of membership, particularly at conferences. Perhaps, as the literature would suggest, the type of relationship that would result from participation in a formal mentoring program felt too superficial for these women (Armstrong et al., 2002), and contrary to the type of mutually beneficial relationship that...
RCT would consider so vital to their development and growth. Also, because formal mentoring programs are typically short-term (Armstrong et al., 2002; Noe, 1988), the women in this study might not have viewed them as a viable option, since they considered true mentoring relationships as requiring a long-term commitment.

Finally, as noted in Chapter Four, some of the women in this study made a distinction between the types of networking that took place in the context of their mentoring relationships, and mentoring that took place through their involvement with professional associations. Both were described as being very beneficial, but which was the more beneficial in terms of career advancement? This question will be addressed in the next section of this chapter.

**The Role of Mentors at Critical Career Junctures.** One of the primary research questions of this study was to discover how Asian American women administrators utilized mentors at critical career junctures, yet the interviews did not yield any discernable patterns. In fact, only four of the women reported utilizing their mentors at all when they were considering a move to a senior administrative position. And as noted in Chapter Four, out of the seven women who reported having both male and female mentors, only three reported utilizing their male mentors at this juncture.

Not only was the use of their mentors not very extensive at this point in their careers, how the women utilized those mentors was extremely varied. Writing letters of recommendation, speaking with their potential supervisors and conducting mock interviews were a few of the ways in which their mentors helped them, but some of the women reported not utilizing their mentors at all. Considering the close relationship that several of the women professed to have with their mentors, it seems strange that they did not utilize them more fully at this critical career juncture.
Perhaps one explanation for this is that the women in this study did not consider work-related issues to be of the most importance to them, or to the mentoring relationship. For example, while they cited advocacy for increased responsibilities as the most frequent characteristic of a successful mentoring relationship, they did not describe it as the most important one. Along the same lines, within the theme of mutual engagement through mentoring, it was honesty and personal information sharing that appeared most strongly in the interviews, not such work-related characteristics as skill building. And even when describing how their mentors advocated for them, the women would in the same breath describe how those actions made them feel, rather than focusing on the increased responsibilities as the most important aspect of advocacy. Laura’s description of her mentors as “cheerleaders” who were “always looking out for my well being” has less to do with advocacy and more to do with emotional support. Again, it is the relationship that is most crucial to these women, which might explain why they did not view consulting their mentors in career-related decisions as being absolutely necessary.

Finally, utilizing their mentors for networking purposes, which was mentioned earlier in this chapter, seemed to play a very limited role at critical career junctures for the women in this study. They utilized networking opportunities via professional associations to greater effect in this regard, which again might mean that involvement in professional associations is critical to the career success of Asian American women administrators. If, as this study shows, Asian American women are utilizing their mentors inconsistently (and in some cases, not at all) at critical career junctures, networking via professional associations might be even more crucial for those seeking to advance in their careers.
However, for those women who did utilize their mentors at this juncture, it was their male mentors who either helped them with the process of applying (as was the case with Lisa), or created a new opportunity for them (as was the case with Elizabeth). And while they were not mentors, it was also men who “tapped” Mary and Aya for their senior roles. It appears, then, that having a male mentor, sponsor, or connection was important for the women in this study as they were moving to a senior administrative position.

In short, whatever it is that explains the career development of these women at critical junctures, it was not the relationships described with their mentors—or at the very least, there was such variation in their stories that there are no discernable patterns that demonstrate how their mentors helped the women in this study achieve their senior administrative roles. For every potential category, there were exceptions. This lack of patterns might be at least partially explained by the fact that, as noted earlier in this chapter, the women themselves defined mentors and mentoring in so many different ways. In fact, if the definition of mentoring used to guide this study were applied, most of the women did in fact receive mentoring at this critical career juncture from an “experienced, high-ranking member of an organization,” someone who served as a “teacher, coach, counselor, advocate and role model” (O’Reilly, 2001, p. 51). The form of that help varied, but it was often present; the women just did not view it as such because in some cases, it did not come from someone who they perceived to be a mentor.

The Outliers. It was surprising to learn that two of the most senior women administrators in this study, Mary and Aya, did not name any mentors throughout the course of their careers, and thus had no one available to potentially consult at critical career junctures. Why this was the case is not clear, although it was very evident that Aya suffered from her lack of connection to anyone, mentor or otherwise. According to RCT, a lack of mentors and connection to relational networks
would lead to an inability to be one’s most authentic self through relationships (Jordan, 2008), and ultimately an inhibitor to development. In some ways, given her struggles, it is truly amazing that Aya was able to be as successful as she was in her career. Her story shows that her success came at a cost, however, as her isolation and disconnection were no doubt painful to endure.

But why was this Aya’s experience alone, when Mary also did not report having any mentors? Both of them should have been prone to the same feelings of isolation and disconnection, yet Mary seemed unaffected—or at least, she did not relate any stories that would indicate that she was affected in the same way as Aya. As mentioned earlier, perhaps Aya’s constant exposure to “disaffirming stimuli” (Comstock et al., 2008, p. 284) at the hands of White men undermined her confidence and created significant self-doubt. Being the chronic victim of racist and sexist acts must have been extremely debilitating for her, and having already been so marginalized, she became even less likely to seek out relationships as a result, and became even more isolated.

Another factor is the environments in which they worked. Aya was a senior level administrator in a community college setting that did not have a large Asian American population, while Mary served at a large public institution with a significant number of Asian Americans, both at the school and within the state itself. Thus while neither one of them reported having any mentors, Mary at least had the advantage of not being in an environment that further isolated her due to her race.

Another contributing factor might be their very different family backgrounds. While this is pure speculation, Mary spoke proudly of her parents’ education and achievements; they were both medical doctors, innovators and, to use her words, “out of box” thinkers who felt that “you
have to go to college.” They expected that their daughter, like them, would get a college degree and be very successful. They gave her a confidence in herself and her abilities, and as a result Mary said she felt empowered to attempt virtually anything.

By contrast, Aya’s family had more humble roots. Her parents were farmers and the owners of a small market, and they did not instill in her any expectation that she would go to college and have a career. Perhaps because Mary was exposed to highly educated parents, encouragement and university environments from an early age, she felt more confident and comfortable in that setting; whereas Aya, having not been exposed to those things, may have felt like more of an outsider in the institutional setting.

Finally, their different cultural backgrounds might also be part of the explanation. Mary is Chinese, and Aya is Japanese. Within the Japanese culture, there is a saying, “It can’t be helped.” While this might sound fatalistic at first, it is actually a more stoic approach to dealing with the ups and downs of life’s circumstances. When faced with sexism and racism, Mary was more assertive; Aya, on the other hand, reacted differently, and her Japanese roots may have dictated that she accept some of those circumstances as something that just needed to be borne, and not something that could be challenged. Again, this is speculation, but their cultural differences may have played a role here.

Lisa’s experiences, the other outlier in this study, also deserve some additional discussion. Unlike Mary and Aya, she had several mentors throughout the course of her career; in fact, she was one of the few women in this study who had Asian American mentors. She was also one of the very few women who did not express any feelings of isolation, being subjected to the model minority stereotype, or experiencing any gender-typed family concerns.
Lisa’s work environment and geographic location, in which there was a critical mass of Asian Americans, may have helped to alleviate any feelings of isolation. Her extensive involvement with professional associations, and her work with Asian Americans within that association, most likely helped with this issue as well. Perhaps because she was mentored by and surrounded by (both within and outside her work environment) a large number of Asian Americans, she did not feel she was an outsider or a minority, which would help to explain why she did not express feeling isolated due to her race.

With regard to her lack of gender-typed family concerns, the only explanation that could be gleaned from the data was the support that she received from her family, and particularly her husband, throughout the course of her career. She stated that she felt “very fortunate that I had personal support at home,” from both members of her immediate family and her in-laws. When speaking of her husband, she said, “I can’t thank him enough, even now, because I had really tremendous encouragement and support.” How that support played out in practical terms is not known, but it can be speculated that her gender-typed family concerns were lessened due to the high levels of support that she received from her family members.

Ultimately, the stories of these outliers are ones that neither CRT nor RCT can fully explain. In the cases of Mary and Aya, both were subjected to the types of discriminatory acts and isolation predicted by CRT; yet Mary worked in an environment with a critical mass of Asians, and Aya did not. One might think that their different institutional context would result in them experiencing discrimination and White male supremacy differently, but they both experienced verbal attacks in similar ways—ways that the other women in this study did not.

Examining the data through an RCT framework, one would assume that Mary and Aya’s inability to form mutually beneficial mentoring relationships would inhibit their growth and
development, yet both had attained senior administrative positions. The distinction might be that while their *career* development was not inhibited, their *personal* development was somehow compromised, since they were not able to “grow as a result of their participation in such relationships” (Jordan, 2000, p. 280). It can be argued that while they both experienced tremendous growth in their careers, growth was somehow lacking in their personal development since they were unable to individually connect with a mentor and become their fullest, most complete and authentic selves through that type of relationship. Yet no distinction is made in RCT between various types of relationships and the context in which they are formed. A relationship with a family member, close friend, work colleague, husband/wife/life partner, casual acquaintance or mentor are qualitatively different, but all are defined as simply “relationships” in RCT, which limited how well the theory could be used to interpret the findings and the various relationships that the women in this study described. In addition, exactly what constitutes growth and development in RCT is also not clearly defined, which posed another limitation to the analysis.

Likewise, CRT and RCT cannot fully explain Lisa’s story. She did not express feelings of isolation like so many of the other women in this study, perhaps because there were many other Asian Americans in her work and professional association settings; yet the leadership at her particular institution was, according to her, still dominated by White men. But somehow, she was able to develop the kind of mutually beneficial relationships that RCT deems so vital to overall development, even though her work environment was infused with the systemic inequities outlined by CRT.

The distinction again might have to do with the difference between her *career* connections and her *personal* connections. She asserted that a mentor had to be someone with
whom she worked, yet it was not those individuals that she named as being her most important relationships. She seemed to gain only limited career support from her mentors (as noted by the fact that she did not utilize them at critical career junctures), while the greatest personal, growth-fostering relationships were with individuals with whom she did not work.

In short, CRT did not fully explain why the outliers—along with some of the other women in this study—experienced similar environments differently, and RCT does not address the impact of different types of relationships (i.e., personal versus strictly career-related) and in what context they are formed. These types of distinctions, however, seemed to be relevant to the women in this study and for the outliers in particular, and posed limitations when using CRT and RCT to interpret the data.

**Limitations of the Study**

There are several limitations to this study. As outlined in Chapter Three, finding an adequate number of participants was a challenge, and the small sample size that resulted means that the findings cannot be applied to any other population, or even to any other Asian American women administrators. Also, due to the overall lack of senior-level Asian American women administrators serving in American colleges and universities, a snowball sampling method was utilized to locate participants. This is obviously one of the least desirable methods by which to gain participants for research purposes, but unfortunately, the scarcity of potential participants made it necessary after initial attempts to locate a more random sample proved ineffective.

Secondly, while there are many, many ethnic groups that are categorized as Asian American, including Pacific Islanders (Ng et al., 2007; Schaefer, 2008), women representing only four ethnic groups were interviewed for this study: Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Filipina.
The stories of any other Asian women are not represented, and interviews with other groups would likely reveal new and different data.

Another limitation is that only the eleven Asian American women themselves were interviewed for this study. No interviews were conducted with the mentors of any of the women, so no data was gathered from their perspective. It is impossible to know with any certainty that the women’s perspectives are completely accurate, as the information gathered was purely one-sided.

As was also mentioned in Chapter One, my own status as an Asian American female administrator no doubt impacted my research and interpretation of the findings. Attempts to mitigate this limitation through the triangulation methods of member checking and utilizing a colleague with expertise in qualitative methods to review my analysis were utilized, but cannot eliminate this bias completely.

Finally, a potential limitation that was outlined in Chapter One—a bias that might result from drawing participants from institutions that are well-known for their Asian American studies programs—did not materialize. As noted in Chapter Three, attempts to recruit participants from such programs did not yield any results, and only served to further underscore the scarcity of the number of Asian American senior women administrators available to complete this study.

**Implications for Policy and Practice**

With regard to policy and practice, this study points in several possible directions. The first is obvious—institutions and individuals should make efforts to combat the belief that all aspects of the model minority stereotype apply to all Asian American women, and not assume that these women are not in need of support. The fact that for Asian Americans, race is often viewed as a non-issue leads to the assumption that this group of women does not need help, and
has resulted in a lack of services for this population (Hune, 1998; Liang, Lee & Ting, 2002). But it is clear that they do need help, given their disproportionately low numbers in senior administrative roles.

Because involvement in professional associations proved to be so beneficial for several women in this study, institutions should commit to providing funds for conference travel and professional development opportunities to Asian American women specifically. And if the focus of that professional development opportunity were to involve interaction with other Asian Americans, as proved to be so helpful to Lisa and others, even better. For the women in this study who had Asian American mentors, several mentioned meeting them via their professional involvements. Such interactions would not only help to combat feelings of isolation, they would also provide some of the networking opportunities that proved useful for many of the women in this study.

Providing a male mentor to assist Asian American women at critical career junctures might be an avenue to explore, although this should be approached with some caution. While it was true that some of the women had opportunities presented to them or created for them by their male mentors, it might also be true that their actions only served to reinforce the values of the existing White male dominated culture. Research has shown that dominant groups, typically White men, at the top of the leadership hierarchy often impose their way of seeing the world and their views upon women and people of color at the bottom (Schramm, 2002). On the surface, having a male mentor might seem helpful, but might also only serve to preserve the status quo.

To combat the systemic nature of racism and sexism, current leaders of colleges and universities could implement more innovative mentoring strategies. First, they should utilize not just those individuals who are currently in the highest administrative positions as mentors, as that
population would likely be mostly White men; tapping only them to serve in such roles would just further cement institutionalized sexism and racism. Instead, co-mentoring, or the establishment of mentoring networks could be effective, as they would lessen the power differential and hierarchical nature of higher education and the mentoring relationship itself. Additionally, men and women of all races should be identified as potential mentors, as each would have something unique and valuable to contribute to the development of others.

Outside the mentoring relationship, it would also serve both Asian American women and institutions well if those in leadership did not tokenize these women by asking their opinions on subjects that relate to all Asians. Lisa’s example of being asked to participate in community groups and serve on advisory boards means that she is being pigeonholed, and that others are assuming her Japanese heritage somehow allows her to speak on behalf of all Asians.

To that end, privileged populations should make it their obligation to learn more about other races and cultures, rather than the burden always being placed on the minority to teach the majority. Marable notes that most White Americans live their entire lives without learning about the “character, construction and reproduction of white racism as a social system,” which allows those systems to continue to be perceived as normal, acceptable and unquestionable (2002, p. 320). As another author notes, it is of critical importance for individuals “to be politically aware so as not to be complicit in perpetuating White male supremacy, which continues to be at the root of so much discrimination in the academy” (Schramm, 2002, p. 91).

Researchers should also start examining the reasons why there are so few Asian American senior women administrators long before they are eligible to fill those positions. Before these women can become senior administrators, they must first become college students; and a look at current college admission practices yielded a potential area for improvement.
Because there is such diversity among various ethnic groups that are categorized as “Asian” (Ng et al., 2007; Schaefer, 2008), colleges and universities need to examine their current practices when gathering information on prospective students. As an example, a closer look at the application processes for incoming first year students at six universities (both public and private) in Rhode Island and Massachusetts revealed that all six utilized what is known as the “Common Application.” This application is used for undergraduate admission purposes by more than 450 member colleges in the United States and other countries (M. Beauregard, personal communication, August 22, 2011). On that application, students are asked for demographics regarding race, and the only category for those who self-identify as Asian to select is listed as “Asian - including Indian subcontinent and Philippines” (retrieved 8/20/11 from https://www.commonapp.org/CommonApp/Docs/DownloadForms/2012/2012PacketFY_download.pdf).

Thus from the start of the college process, very little distinction is made between the many Asian racial and ethnic groups, which only serves to perpetuate the myth that all Asians are similar. As one of the key social institutions that shape how individuals view the world (Hill Collins, 2009), colleges and universities should be more conscious of what ideas are being reinforced via their admission practices and other processes.

Those same six institutions also required a supplemental application for their prospective students. Three of the schools did not ask for further clarification regarding race or ethnicity, two contained the same wording as the Common Application, and the remaining supplemental application simply listed the category as “Asian.” Again, this broad category does not capture the varied cultures and experiences of millions of Asian students, and allows colleges and universities to continue to view all Asians as one and the same. And as noted earlier by Bhattacharyya (2001), disaggregating this category could also combat the quota system that can
negatively impact the Asian American population due to their high numbers in colleges and universities.

That same lens can also be applied to other standard higher education practices. Residence hall roommate matching, the diversity component that is so often a part of first year orientation programs, training for faculty, staff and student leaders, the assigning of academic advisors to specific students—these are just a few of the many instances in which race and ethnicity are often a factor, but Asians are likely placed in a single category for purposes of discussion and ease of policy implementation. Only when these policies and practices are questioned can we begin to de-bunk the stereotypes that negatively affect the experiences of Asian Americans in higher education, and Asian American women in particular.

**Implications for Further Research**

As noted earlier in this study, there has been little research conducted on Asian American women administrators in American higher education. What little exists is confined primarily to dissertation research, although much of it has not taken place in the higher education setting (Chung, 2008; Ideta, 1996; Lee, 1998; Manlove, 2004; Naber-Fisher, 2009; Pacis, 2005; Wiking, 2001). This body of research also emphasizes that further study is needed, as little is known about this particular group of women; and research about Asian American senior women administrators is virtually non-existent.

Clearly, some aspects of the model minority stereotype were challenged by this study, which supports previous research on this topic that the stereotype is more myth than reality (Escueta & O’Brien, 1991; Hsia & Hirano-Nakanishi, 1995; Hune & Chan, 1997). Despite this evidence, however, the persistence of the stereotype means that research on this population still often requires added justification (Museus & Chang, 2009). This attitude must be challenged.
Because the stereotype lingers, resources are not readily made available to facilitate research for this population. As noted earlier, some funding agencies, such as the National Science Foundation, do not even include Asian Americans in their definition of underrepresented racial minority groups, and consequently do not allocate funds toward studying this population (Museus & Chang, 2009). Again, this barrier to further research is something that must be challenged if we are to try and gain a better understanding of the experiences of Asian American women administrators.

As touched upon earlier in this chapter when addressing the differences between Mary and Aya, the specific ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the individual women could be a factor in explaining some of the differences between their stories. While it was not the focus of this study, it would be very useful to delve more deeply into the ethnic and cultural differences between specific Asian American populations, and analyze their mentoring experiences through the appropriate cultural lens. Finding enough participants for such a study would no doubt be extremely difficult, but the information gathered could be very useful, as it is likely that their specific backgrounds impacted their mentoring relationships and overall experiences.

As a follow-up to this particular study, it would also be interesting to seek out some of the mentors the women utilized, and interview them to gain their perspective on how they helped (or did not help) the women at critical career junctures. Because several of the women had mentors of different genders and races, information could be gained about how those differences impacted the relationship, from their perspective as mentors.

Another possible area for future research would be to approach one of the primary research questions of this study from another angle. Rather than seeking out Asian American senior women administrators to determine how they utilized mentors at critical career junctures,
it might prove useful to approach Asian American women in lower administrative positions—such as Betsy—in an effort to determine why they are not seeking such positions. Is it because their mentors are not providing them with career mentoring, as was the case with Betsy, or are there other factors involved? Finding participants for such a study might be easier, and could shed some light on the overall topic.

Exploring some of the generational differences that appeared in the data could also prove useful. While some of the findings crossed all generational lines (such as assertiveness or fearing a loss of Asian identity), there were others that were confined to either the younger or older women in this study (for example, only the older women reported having a mentoring relationship with a family member). The latter example would be particularly interesting to explore within the context of this research topic.

Finally, it was clearly evident that there were some women in this study who were outliers, in both positive and negative ways. A comparative study examining their lives, and searching more deeply into their backgrounds and experiences, might provide more information on how we can work to create environments in American higher education that will decrease the chances that others will suffer in the ways that Aya has, and increase the likelihood that more Asian American women, like Mary and Lisa, will become exemplars.

**Conclusion**

The continued low numbers of Asian American senior women administrators in American higher education is something that should not be minimized or ignored. The current picture for Asian American women in American higher education seems somewhat bleak, but is not without hope.
One thing that became clear through this study is that there really were not any categories within this sample. Each of the women interviewed was distinctly different, and for every proposed category, there were exceptions. The eleven women in this study were very different in a myriad of ways—culturally, institutionally, in their life and family circumstances—all of which demonstrate that they really are not alike, and are not truly a category.

A key question, then, is whether or not it would be beneficial to continue to group Asian American women in higher education as a distinct category. The answer is not a straightforward one. On the one hand, keeping these women as a category will provide them with a place from which to push back against the persistent stereotypes that dampen their experiences, and to provide a common denominator for continued research. As noted in Chapter Two, the current lack of scholarship gives researchers little context to draw upon, and difficulties exist with justifying research on Asian Americans (Museus & Chang, 2009). Preserving the category might help to draw attention to them as a group that deserves further research, attention and support, at least until a larger body of research has been established.

On the other hand, lumping all Asian American women into a single category ignores the large differences that exist between cultures, as was demonstrated even with the small number of women who participated in this study. To believe that Chinese, Filipina, Indian, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Laotian, Hmong, Cambodian, Native Hawaiian, Polynesian, Samoan, Fijian, Papua New Guinean and Tahitian women are similar because they are often all grouped together under the category of “Asian” is both simplistic and problematic (Ng et al., 2007; Schaefer, 2008). Doing so allows researchers to ignore how their varied backgrounds and cultures have shaped their experiences.
Still, the danger in separating Asian American women by their distinct racial categories for purposes of research is that some racial groups could receive even less than the scant attention they are currently afforded in the literature. For example, if this study had chosen to focus on only one specific racial subgroup of Asian American senior women administrators, it is very likely that not enough participants could have been found to complete the study.

In order to continue building scholarship on Asian American women administrators, the answer might be to maintain the overall category as a common denominator, simply because taken as a whole, the entire group does have some characteristics in common and has been largely ignored. Given the current lack of research on this group, disbanding the category could do more harm than good, as it might prove even more difficult to launch and justify research on any particular subgroup. And the Asian American women in this study, while very different from each other, did share some common characteristics—they all faced discrimination based on either their race or gender, and most faced issues common to other women administrators of color that made their career paths more difficult. Only when additional research is conducted on this group of women will more light be shed on the forms of institutionalized discrimination that they face.

Care must be taken, however, to construct research questions that will also shed light on the differences between distinct racial groups at the same time. For example, as suggested earlier in this chapter, more in-depth questions of the women involved in this study could reveal information about how their different racial backgrounds impacted their mentoring relationships and career advancement. In other words, maintaining the overall category provides researchers with a place to start; and once that first step is taken, it will be possible to look more closely at
the individual experiences of different racial groups of Asian American women in an effort to build a more comprehensive knowledge base.

Something else that was made clear by this research is that the model minority stereotype is just that—simply a stereotype. The Asian American women in this study had excelled in their jobs and their careers because they did not behave in the ways that were expected of them based on their race. They were not docile and reserved—they were assertive. Some of the women had managed to retain certain characteristics of the stereotype, such as humility and self-effacement, but taken as a whole, the women in this study could not be described as passive. Apparently, leaving some of their traditional Asian values behind was necessary in order for them to succeed.

As is supported by RCT, it is clear that women, including the women in this study, tend to rely on relationships for support and to foster personal growth, growth which focuses on “ongoing…connection” (Jordan, 1986; Surrey, 1985, cited in Liang, Tracy, Taylor, Williams, Jordan & Miller, 2002, p. 25). This study focused on one specific context for that connection, that of mentoring relationships. Each of the three major growth-fostering characteristics of relationships that have been identified by RCT and researchers—mutual engagement, authenticity and empowerment/zest—focus not on the individual but on the collaborative nature of the developmental process (Liang, Tracy, Taylor & Williams, 2002). All of these characteristics were evident in the mentoring relationships that the women in this study described as being so valuable to them.

Yet, as CRT proponents would be quick to point out, the women’s need for relationship is in direct conflict with the existing White-male dominated, racist and sexist culture of American higher education, thus limiting their mentoring and career choices. The model minority stereotype only compounds this problem, as they are perceived as either not needing
help or are too docile to be true leadership material. Thus while RCT states that women need to experience development through relationships (in this case, mentoring relationships), Asian American women may have difficulty establishing those growth-fostering relationships due to the institutional, systemic structures that CRT invokes. In other words, the current culture of American higher education is literally an affront to positive relational functioning. For the Asian American women in this study, their need for relationship is inconsistent with their existing work environments, and is compounded by the persistence of the model minority stereotype that leads others to believe that they do not need support in the first place.

One might conclude that if there is a path to success that increases an Asian American woman’s chance of career success, it would be Lisa’s. Out of all the women in this study, she seemed to be the most comfortable within her work environment, family relationships, mentoring relationships and career overall. Is hers the pattern to follow—be heterosexually married, have a supportive husband and family, work in student affairs, do not speak with an accent, find at least one Asian American mentor, and surround yourself with other Asian Americans, both within your institution and within professional associations? And if by chance an environment does not exist within that association that is supportive of Asian Americans, you should take the initiative to create one? Lisa was the only participant in this study for whom all of those elements were in place.

This would be a faulty conclusion, however, because it assumes that assimilation is the answer to the problem. For reasons of survival, “disempowered groups…often mold their ideas and behavior to the expectations of more powerful groups” (Hill Collins, 2009, p. 9). Asian American women might understand this is what they need to do to survive, but hopefully do not believe this is what they should do in order to move ahead in their careers. It is the institutional
culture and the embedded discriminatory systems that drive them that need to change, not Asian American women themselves.

In the end, what is to be done to improve the circumstances for Asian American women in American higher education? Shedding light on the problem is only the first step. Creating understanding is the second. What must happen next is a commitment on the part of the existing leadership of our colleges and universities to create policies and practices that will bring about change. Almost thirty years ago, Ronald Takaki stated that “…universities may find their very legitimacy questioned unless they can racially integrate their student bodies and help assure greater…opportunities for racial minorities” (1989, p. 38). If such steps are not taken, barring any significant shift in the White male dominated culture of American higher education, or a shift in what is valued within Asian American cultures, it is likely that the barriers to advancement for Asian American women administrators will remain.
Appendix A

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A STUDENT RESEARCH STUDY

Introduction and Purpose:
You are being invited to participate in a research study about Asian American senior women administrators of color in higher education. My own experiences as an Asian American senior administrator have led to my interest in this topic, and I hope to learn more about the particular issues facing such women, how those issues may have helped or hindered their career advancement, and how mentors have impacted their careers.

You have been asked to participate because you have self-identified as an Asian American female administrator at a college or university. Your participation is completely voluntary. The individual completing this study is Judy Kawamoto, a doctoral student in the Higher Education Administration program in the Lynch School of Education at Boston College. The research conducted in this study will be used to complete my dissertation, under the supervision of Dr. Karen Arnold, Ph.D. The results of this research may be presented at meetings or in published articles.

Procedures:
The research will involve an open-ended, face-to-face interview and will be done in a location that you find comfortable. The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this interview is expected to be approximately 60 – 90 minutes. During the interview, you will be asked a series of questions about your career experiences in higher education, and how you feel your gender and racial/ethnic background may have impacted your advancement, and your experience of mentors.

With your permission, I would like to audio-record the interview. The audio recording is necessary to help me to recall what you said so that I do not misquote you. The interview will be professionally transcribed; only the transcriber and myself as the researcher will listen to the interview.

Risks:
To the best of my knowledge, the only risk is being asked questions that might cause you to recall uncomfortable experiences you may have had in the past, or are currently experiencing. There may be unknown risks.

Benefits:
You will not receive any direct benefit from being in this research study, but I hope it will help me gather information to foster my understanding about the experiences of Asian American senior women administrators of color in higher education, as well as add to the scholarship in this specific area.

Compensation:
You will not be compensated for participating in this study.
Withdrawal from the study:
You may choose to stop your participation in this study at any time, and your withdrawal will not result in the denial of any entitled benefits. As the principal investigator, I may withdraw you as a participant if you experience untoward side effects, fail to comply with the study requirements, if the study is closed by the funder or if it is in your best interest.

Confidentiality:
Strict confidentiality will be maintained during the interview and afterwards; we will make every effort to keep your research records confidential, but it cannot be assured. In my dissertation, a pseudonym will be used instead of your real name. Although it happens very rarely, I may be required to show information that identifies you, like this informed consent document, to people who need to be sure I have done the research correctly. These would be people from a group such as the Boston College Institutional Review Board that oversees research involving human participants. Records that identify you and the consent form signed by you, may be looked at by a regulatory agency such as federal agencies overseeing human subject research or the Boston College Institutional Review Board.

Questions:
You are encouraged to ask questions now, and at any time during the study. You can reach me at the following number: 401-232-6162. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in a research study, please contact the Boston College Office for Human Research Participant Protection, 617-552-4778.

Certification:
I have read and understand this Informed Consent document. I believe I understand the purpose of the research project and what I will be asked to do. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and they have been answered satisfactorily.
I understand that I may stop my participation in this research study at any time and that I can refuse to answer any question(s).
I agree to an audio recording of the interview. ________ (initials)
I understand that the researcher will work to keep the information that I give her confidential. My name will not appear in any reports on this research and a pseudonym will be used instead.
I have received a signed copy of this Informed Consent document for my personal reference. ________ (initials)
I hereby give my informed and free consent to be a participant in this study.

Signature: __________________________________________
Consent Signature of Participant
__________________________________________
Date
__________________________________________
Printed Name of Participant
Appendix B
Interview Protocol

*Early career*
As you were growing up, what were your educational aspirations? Was there someone who influenced your thoughts about the future?

At what point did you know that higher education was the specific career you wanted to pursue? Was there a particular person or experience that influenced your decision?

Have you always aspired to your current position? If yes, why? If not, what caused you to change your career plans?

*Institutional culture*
What have been your impressions of institutional culture as it relates to your status as an Asian American administrator?

Do you feel that students/faculty/staff relate to you differently as an Asian American? As a woman? Is that a positive or a negative thing? How so?

Which do you feel has had a greater impact on your career—your gender or your race/ethnicity? Please elaborate.

Has your mentor(s) helped you navigate these types of issues throughout your career? How so?

Can you describe a circumstance where you felt uncomfortable in a work setting due to your gender and/or ethnicity? Did you mentor provide advice about how to handle that situation?

*Mentoring*
Have you had mentors in the past? Describe that relationship.

Do you currently have a mentor? Describe that relationship.

How, if at all, has your ethnicity and gender impacted your “match” and relationship with your mentor? Have your mentors been primarily of the same or different gender and ethnicity as yourself?

Describe the types of advice your mentor gives/has given you.

What types of activities does your mentoring relationship include?

Do you ever interact with your mentor in a purely social setting? If so, how?

Is there anything about your mentoring relationships that you would like to see change?
Is there anything missing that you wish were included as part of the relationship?

What was the most useful aspect of your mentoring relationships? Have there been any negative aspects?

Tell me a story about a favorite memory involving your mentor(s).

Which of your mentors do you feel has been most influential? Why?

Have your mentors been male or female (or both)? Have they been in close proximity to you?

What is the typical nature of your communication (by phone, e-mail, face-to-face interaction)? Approximately how often do you interact?

Is your mentor someone who is above you in administrative level? Has that always been the case?

What has made your mentoring relationships unique/different from your relationships with other colleagues?

Has the nature of your mentoring relationships changed over time? If yes, how so?

Did you seek your mentor’s advice when making a decision to change jobs? Tell me about that interaction.

What role, if any, did your mentor play as you consider (or have considered) advancing to a senior administrative position?
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