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The University of San Francisco

ASIAN AMERICAN WOMEN LEADERS IN THE PACIFIC COAST:
THEIR PATHWAY TO PRESIDENCY IN TWO-YEAR INSTITUTIONS

A Dissertation Presented
to
The Faculty of School of Education
Department of Leadership Studies
Organization and Leadership Program

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

By
Joan Torne
San Francisco
May 2013

THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Dissertation Abstract

Asian American Women Leaders in the Pacific Coast:
Their Pathway to Presidency in Two-Year Institutions

The field of education continues to see an underrepresentation of women as presidents of colleges and universities especially Asian Americans in general. In comparison with other racial and ethnic groups, Asian Americans are the only group not equally represented in high executive positions such as the presidential. In addition, women, including Asian American women, continue to hold, disproportionately to men, fewer leadership positions in the workplace of today.

It was the intent of this qualitative study to gain an understanding the reasons for the slow progress of Asian Americans in obtaining presidential positions in higher education with the focus on women. This study explored the presidential selection process, career and leadership experiences of five Asian American women college presidents. The study utilized the conceptual framework of the “glass ceiling.” Interviews were transcribed and analyzed and the findings grouped into themes. As being behind the underrepresentation of Asian women in the college presidency, the participants identified multiple factors, as well the general persistence of discrimination and gender influences, gender inequity, and struggles for all women to maintain a work/life balance; and they suggested valuable strategies for aspiring Asian American college presidents to obtain to overcome barriers they face personally and overall to reverse the trend.

The study found that conscious intervention is required in order to address the paucity of women, particularly Asian (and minority) college presidents. Institutions must make a concerted effort to identify and recruit future leaders that better reflect the

communities that they serve. Pathways to the college presidency must be reexamined and alternative backgrounds considered. In particular, the role of search committee and board members in the selection process needs to be investigated and reworked. The position of college president itself needs reconsideration as does the persistent perception that it is a male leader who best fulfills its responsibilities. This false notion needs to be undone by selecting new leaders (female or male, minority or not) with an emphasis in the search processes instead on the qualities of the best “fit” with the institution’s demographic, on valuing people, on sharing credit, on honing the leader/follower relationship, and on integrating one’s personal beliefs and values into the role of being a college president.

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

Joan Torne
Candidate

May 2, 2013
Date

Dissertation Committee

Dr. Patricia Mitchell
Chairperson

May 2, 2013

Dr. Betty Taylor

May 2, 2013

Dr. Christopher Thomas

May 2, 2013

Dedication

To my late grandmother, Conception Corpuz who instilled in me the value of education, modeled tenacity, resilience, discipline, and unpromising love. It brings me great comfort knowing how proud she would have been of me for achieving my dream. To my husband, James Meza for his unconditional love and support. Finally, to my son Jarrett Roth who is turning five years old this year for taking this journey with me. May all of them remain the wind beneath my wings.

Acknowledgements

While I can't acknowledge everyone, I must show my appreciation to the following people:

I would like to acknowledge the inspiring women who generously shared their time, wisdom, and insight during our interviews and beyond. Their passion, humor, and sincerity inspired me and made this research project possible and enjoyable. I am grateful for their participation, friendship, mentorship and encouragement. I would like to thank my dissertation committee. Dr. Patricia Mitchell, my advisor and dissertation chair, who has supported, encouraged, and guided me during my time in the doctoral program and during the dissertation process. I am thankful for her believing in me and keeping me on track. I am grateful for the thoughtful input of Dr. Christopher Thomas and Dr. Betty Taylor; this dissertation has benefited tremendously from their contributions. I would like to acknowledge the many colleagues, mentors and advisors who cared about me enough to allow me the time to successfully complete this process without guilt and with their support from San Jose State University and Santa Clara University.

Thank you to all my family and friends especially to my mother in law. Your support, encouragement, and confidence in me have been invaluable throughout the past five and a half years, particularly during the dissertation process. Thank you for your patience and taking care of my son Jarrett Roth, while I was working on my research. Very special thanks to everyone in my life who gave me the space and time I needed to complete my graduate work. My family and friends love and faith in me are my richest possession. Finally, I would like to acknowledge my husband, James Meza for his love,

care, infinite patience, believing in me, understanding, and continuous support. Without his partnership in this journey, this achievement would have not been possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
SIGNATURE PAGE	iv
DEDICATION	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
CHAPTER I: THE RESEARCH PROBLEM	1
Statement of the Problem	1
Purpose of the Study	5
Background and Need for the Study	5
Conceptual Framework	8
Research Questions	10
Limitations	10
Delimitations	12
Significance	12
Definition of Terms	13
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	15
Overview	15
Asian American Traditional Cultural Values	15
Asian Family Support	20
Presidential & Leadership Diversity in Higher Education	22
Asian Americans in Higher Education	30
Asian American Administrators in Higher Education	31
Women Administrators in Higher Education	38
Critical Race Theory	43
Model Minority	44
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY	48
Restatement of the Problem	48
Research Design	49
Population and Sample	51
Human-Subjects Approval	52
Research Settings	52
Instrumentation	53
Supporting Documents	54
Reliability and Validity	55
Data Collection	57
Research Question 1	58
Research Question 2	59

Data Analysis	61
Background of the Researcher	62
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS	65
Introduction	65
Participant Profile and Description	65
President 1	67
President 2	69
President 3	71
President 4	73
President 5	75
Findings: Research Question 1	78
Sustained Career Growth and Varied Administrative Experiences	78
Family Sacrifices and Support	81
Summary of Research Question 1 Findings	86
Findings: Research Question 2	87
Academic Credibility	87
Documented Accomplishments, Contributions & Leadership Roles	90
Strong People Skills: Dealing with Politics	92
Selection Process: Importance of Fit	97
Sources of Support	100
Important People: Mentors and Role Models	100
Important Groups: Networks and Support Groups	105
Cultural Background: Taking the Challenge to Lead	108
Summary of Research Question 2 Findings	111
Summary	113
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND	
RECOMMENDATIONS	119
Introduction	119
Discussion	120
Research Question 1: Career Path	120
Research Question 2: Strategies and Sources of Support	126
Conclusions	147
Implications	153
Recommendations for Future Practice	154
Recommendations for Future Research	158
Concluding Thoughts	160
REFERENCES	162
APPENDIX A: INVITATION LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS	170
APPENDIX B: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA SHEET AND CONSENT FORM	172
APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	175
APPENDIX D: RESEARCH SUBJECTS' BILL OF RIGHTS	178

APPENDIX E: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF
HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL 185

List of Tables

Table 1 Fundamental Chinese Values	16
Table 2 Yin and Yang	18
Table 3 Overview of Participant's Demographic Information	66
Table 4 Academic Credentials and Teaching Experience of Participants	89

List of Figures

Figure 1. Women and People of Color as a Percentage of All Presidents:
1986 and 20064

Figure 2. Asians Only Group Not Equally Represented in Senior Faculty & Academic
Administration6

CHAPTER I THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

Diversifying the leadership in higher education has been both a challenge and an opportunity for enhancing the quality of higher education and the experiences of college students. Although much has been written already about the social, economic, and educational status of Asian Americans, there has been a lack of attention to the career (life) experiences of Asian American women who are college presidents and the challenges they need to overcome in order to attain and succeed in presidential positions in higher education.

As indicated by the U.S. Census Bureau (U.S. Census, 2010a), out of the total United States population of almost 309 million, 14.6 million people, or 4.8 percent, reported that they were Asian. The “Asian” in the 2010 U.S. Census category consists of a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines Islands, Thailand and Vietnam. It also includes people who indicate their race as “Asian Indian,” “Chinese,” “Filipino,” “Korean,” “Japanese,” “Vietnamese,” and “Other Asian” or provide other detailed Asian responses (U.S. Census, 2010b). This broad category of “Asian” and the option of identifying as “Other Asian” in the census are a challenge in itself for the purpose of studying the group. In total, more than twenty-five different ethnic groups are considered Asian by the United States Census Bureau. The Asian population grew faster than any other major race group between 2000 and 2010 with a 43.3% increase. The Asian alone population gained the most in share of the total population, moving up from about four percent in 2000 to about five percent in 2010 (U.S. Census, 2010a).

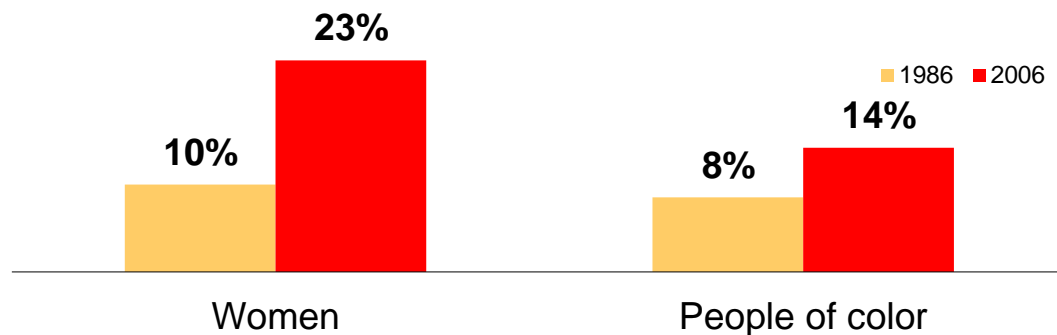
As the representation of Asian Americans within the general population has increased, so too has the representation of Asian Americans in higher education. In the ten year period between 1993 and 2003, Asian American enrollment in higher education increased by 227,000 students, an increase of 43.5% (Cook & Cordova, 2006). Furthermore, the pipeline of Asian Americans into the faculty ranks saw an increase from 25,000 positions in 1993 to 41,000 positions in 2003, a 62.8 percent expansion (Cook & Cordova, 2006). In spite of these improvements, these trends do not mirror what is going on in higher education leadership positions, especially in the presidential positions. A recent report by American Council on Education (2008) revealed that during the past 20 years, the percentage of the nation's college and university presidents who are people of color rose only slightly from 8.1 percent to 13.5 percent. When minority-serving institutions (MSIs) are excluded, minority presidents today lead less than ten percent of colleges and universities. A report by the American Council on Education (2007) found that members of racial/ethnic minority groups represented a somewhat larger share of presidents in 2006 than they did in 1986. Minorities accounted for eight percent of college presidents in 1986. By 2006, this figure had risen to 14 percent. In 2006, six percent of all presidents were African American. Another five percent were Hispanic, and only one percent each was Asian American and American Indian; two percent identified as "other", (p. 19). According to the report, the share of presidents who come from each of the major racial/ethnic minority groups has changed little since 1986, especially for Asian Americans and American Indian /Native Americans who were omitted from tables and figures reported in the report because of their small number (The American College President, 2007, p. 19).

Moreover, in looking at gender breakdown, women are now more active participants in higher education than ever before. For example, more than 50% of all undergraduate students are women, and the numbers of women who are graduate, professional, and doctoral-degree recipients and faculty are increasing (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2003). In fact, according to a recent study, for the first time American women have earned more doctorates than American men have (Smallwood, 2003). These changes should also reflect the increased representation of women in leadership roles in higher education. However, this expectation is not currently supported by recent studies. Though women have represented an increasing presence on college and university campuses, when higher education leadership has been examined, there is compelling evidence that the voice of women is not fully included in the institutional culture (Masland, 1985 & Mintzberg, 1989). It is important to understand that the representation of voice is not equal to the representation of power. Therefore, even if there are voices of women in higher management, there still might not be real power.

Women currently occupy more than half of all management and professional positions (50.3%; Catalyst, 2005), and they make up nearly half of the U.S. labor force (46.4%; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005), but they are still underrepresented in the upper echelons of America's corporations and political system. Women represent only 5.2% of Fortune 500 top earners, they have a mere 7.9% of the highest titles in the Fortune 500, and they represent less than 2% of Fortune 500 CEOs (Catalyst, 2002). The invisible barrier preventing women from ascending into elite leadership positions is commonly called the "glass ceiling." The glass ceiling is a global phenomenon whereby women are disproportionately concentrated in lower-level and lower-authority leadership positions than men (Powell & Graves, 2003).

These trends mirror what is going on in higher education in terms of women representation in higher management, especially in the presidential positions. Nearly 23% of the nation's college presidents are women, which is more than double the number of a decade ago. Only nine% of the presidents in private universities are women. Women hold few of the high-paying presidencies at large, doctoral-granting institutions. Fifteen percent at such public universities are female. The statistical breakdown among women of color in the presidential positions in higher education was not readily available, although it was noted that one % of presidential positions are held by Asian Americans. This percentage was the same as the number of the positions held by Native Americans (ACE, 2007). Therefore, in looking at Asian American women in presidential positions, the percentage is even smaller.

Figure 1.
Women and People of Color
as a Percentage of All Presidents: 1986 and 2006



Source: ACE. 2007. *The American College President: 2007 Edition*.

The figures used in this study were derived from a study conducted by the American Council of Education where they surveyed Human Resource (HR) directors at 4,300 regionally-accredited, degree-granting institutions. Eight hundred and fifty institutions responded with information about 9,700 positions, a 20% response rate. Response rate varied by institution type, and the data was weighted to reflect national

distribution of institutions. Figure 1 above shows that the progress in having more people of color in presidential positions has been slower than the progress in having more women. This data makes a strong case for the importance of the under-representation issue of Asian American women in college president positions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the factors that might explain why there has been such slow progress and under-representation for Asian Americans women in attaining presidential positions in higher education and to explore their career and leadership experiences. This study investigated the factors that influenced Asian American women college presidents in attaining their current leadership positions; the barriers and ongoing challenges they encountered in the pursuit of leadership positions and in their current roles; how they perceived the presidential search process; and how they defined good leaders and their leadership styles. It also documented their recommendations for any policy or institutional changes to increase the participation of Asian American women in college presidential roles.

Background and Need for the Study

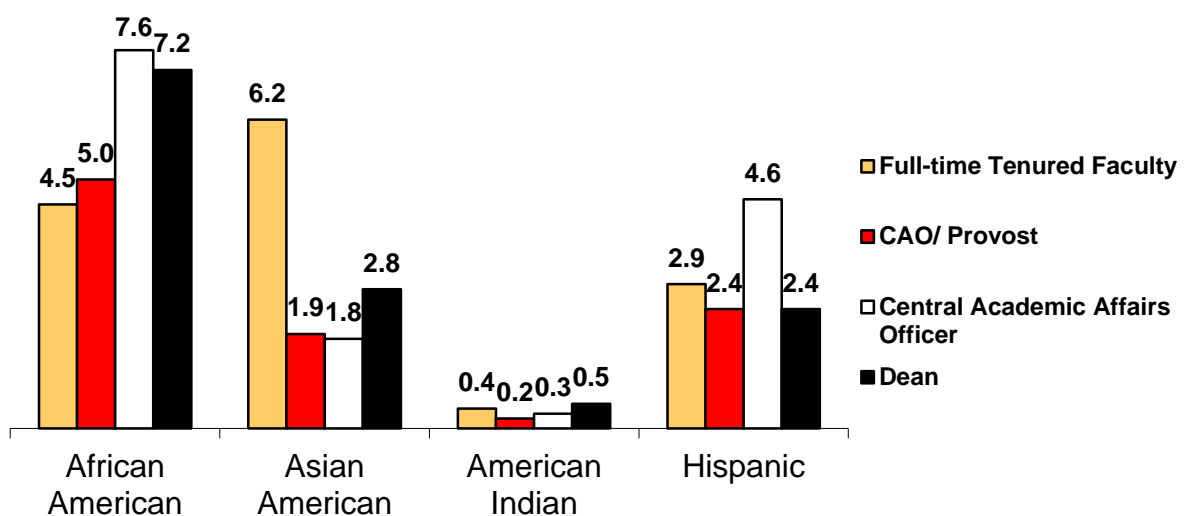
The continuing slow progress and under-representation of Asian American women college presidents needs to be investigated further. The popular media often portray Asian Americans as highly educated and successful individuals - the so-called "Model Minority." As the ethnic minority with the largest percentage of college graduates, many Asian Americans do in fact enter the professional workforce. However, many of them seem to stall at some point in their careers and never make it to the corner offices (Hyun, 2005). The model-minority myth can also lead to the belief that racism

does not exist, that a minority does not need help because it can move ahead of its own. Moreover, it is a dangerous myth because it pits minorities against each other.

The model minority stereotype may be summarized as the belief that Asian Americans, through their hard work, intelligence, and emphasis on education and achievement, have been successful in American society. It is true that Asian Americans have the largest percentage of graduates. Nevertheless, they are not usually seen in corporate leadership roles. Figure 2 below shows that Asian Americans is the only group that is not equally represented in senior faculty and academic administration, which parallels the corporate view. It is evident that there are many Asian American full-time tenured faculties, but their representation in senior positions both in the academia and administration is dismal. To be the only group without an equal representation where it counts most is a major concern.

Figure 2.

Asians Only Group *Not* Equally Represented in Senior Faculty & Academic Administration



Source: *On the Pathway to Presidency: Characteristics of Higher Education's Senior Leadership*. ACE. 2006. Minorities in Higher Education: 22nd Annual Status Report.

According to *The American College President* report (2007) from the American Council on Education, the percentage of college presidents who are women more than doubled, from fewer than ten percent in 1986 to 23 percent in 2006. The percentage of minority presidents grew more slowly, rising from eight percent in 1986 to 14 percent in 2006. These trends suggest that higher education institutions have been slow to expand opportunities for women and minorities to enter senior leadership (p. 11). Members of racial/ethnic minority groups represented a somewhat larger share of presidents in 2006 than they did in 1986. Minorities accounted for eight percent of college presidents in 1986. By 2006, this figure had risen to 14 percent. In 2006, six percent of all presidents were African American. Another five percent were Hispanic, one percent each was Asian American and American Indian and two percent identified as “other” (p. 19). In 1986, only 0.4% of college presidents were Asian Americans, and in 2006 there were still only 0.9%. It was noted in the report that, because of the small number of presidents who are Asian American or American Indian/Native American, the tables and figures in the report do not present detailed information for these groups. The share of presidents who come from each of the major racial/ethnic minority groups has changed little since 1986, most especially with regards to Asian Americans.

In regards to institutions served, minority presidents were most highly represented at public masters, baccalaureate, and special focus institutions, where they led more than 20 percent of institutions in those categories. Minorities were least well represented at private doctorate-granting and master’s institutions, where they held the presidency at only five percent of institutions. In general, public institutions were much more likely than private institutions to be led by a minority president with 17 percent and nine percent, respectively (p. 20). At least one in five presidents at public master’s, public

baccalaureate, and public special focus institutions is a minority. Indeed, minority presidents were more likely than white presidents to lead larger institutions (p. 22). However, minority presidents continued to be underrepresented relative to the higher education workforce, in which minorities accounted for 16 percent of faculty and senior staff in 2003. According to Cook and Cordova (2007), until colleges and universities improve presidential hiring practices, as well as the pipeline of minority faculty and senior staff through ongoing, customized leadership programs, progress in recruiting minority presidents will continue to be slow (p. 23). A study of the Asian American women leadership experiences in the Pacific Coast region will be a helpful addition to the canon of knowledge that may be able to shed light on their under-representation in college presidential roles. This study will focus on Asian American women college presidents in the Pacific Coast states and will provide further data and guidance for aspiring Asian American women leaders through lessons learned from the career experiences of current Asian American women college presidents.

Conceptual Framework

This study uses the glass ceiling concept to analyze the slow progress and under-representation of Asian American women in college presidential roles. Glass ceiling is the primary theoretical lens utilized in general studies related to minorities such as women of color. The term “glass ceiling” refers to "the artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organizational bias that prevent qualified individuals, including those who are non-White, from advancing upward in their organization into management level positions" (U.S. Department of Labor 1991, p.1). As indicated by the *Federal Glass Ceiling Commission Report* of 1995, the term glass ceiling was "popularized in a 1986 *Wall Street Journal* article describing the invisible barriers that women confront as they

approach the top of the corporate hierarchy" (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995, p. 3).

The *Federal Glass Ceiling Commission Report* of 1995 utilized focus groups consisting of Asian and Pacific Islander American male executives in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles to determine the perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes of minority men on the key issues related to the glass ceiling barriers. The Commission concluded that the major barriers to the advancement of Asian and Pacific Islander Americans into executive positions in business included the acceptance of the stereotypical view that Asian Americans are not affected by the glass ceiling and are superior professionals and technicians but are not suited for management leadership. The Commission's report also indicated that there was a benign neglect and ignorance of the complexity, needs, and difference among Asian and Pacific Islander groups, a lack of disaggregated data to use in tracking the progress of the diverse Asian and Pacific Islander groups, and a lack of a understanding by other Americans of the experiences of foreign and U. S. born Asian and Pacific Islander Americans (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995, p. 115). While the report was effective in bringing attention to a neglected area of study, the research focused solely on male executives, limiting the ability to make generalizations from the study about both male and female Asian Americans.

In *Glass Ceilings and Asian Americans*, Woo (2000) argued that, while subtle racism and prejudice are often engrained into systemic aspects of an organization, they are difficult to trace back to individuals or specific policies. Utilizing the glass ceiling concept, Woo conducted a case study of Asian American scientists and engineers working for a large government operation and found no Asian Americans at the senior

executive level. The lack of Asian American executives was particularly striking, since 53 of 105 Asian American scientists and engineers involved in the study expressed a desire for career advancement. Woo concluded that a flaw of the organization was its inability to recognize managerial styles that were different from the traditional white male leadership model.

Studies attempting to explain the existence of the glass ceiling for women found that women are less likely to be identified as leaders because stereotypical male traits are more likely to be associated with leaders. Furthermore, when males and females shared the same leadership characteristics, males were still viewed more favorably than females (Stansbury, Thomas, & Wiggins, 1984; Shimanoff & Jenkins, 1991). In addition, research suggests that the few women who have made it to the executive levels of corporate management utilize more masculine than feminine characteristics (Fagenson, 1990).

Research Questions

The following questions guided this study:

- 1) How have Asian American women college presidents navigated their career path in higher education?
- 2) What strategies and sources of support have Asian American women college presidents used to overcome barriers and challenges in their pathway to college presidency?

Limitations

The primary factor that limited this study was the relatively small sample size. The sample included Asian American women with origins from China, Philippines, Japan, Taiwan and other Pacific Islands such as Guam in the Pacific Coast of the United

States. Only six Asian American women presidents were identified as of April 2012, and one has already retired. Five out of the six identified participated in this study. The small number of participants limited the generalizability of findings and conclusions to all Asian American women college presidents. Still, even though the population is small (and one did not participate), this study was able to provide in-depth descriptions of the perceptions and experiences of these five women. The qualitative study focused on the centrality of the participants and their individual experiences, keeping in mind that each case is different depending on their background and the campus climate. The unique contributions of each participant will be highlighted.

In addition, another limitation of this study was collecting data only from the presidents and not conducting interviews with the presidents' direct reports, members of the board of trustees, and the search committees and consultants involved in hiring the presidents and their mentors and family members. The research focused on how they navigated their career paths to the presidency and the strategies and sources of support that helped them overcome barriers and challenges in their pathways. The data collected from the presidents might not necessarily reflect what others would say about their experiences on their preparation for the presidency role, leadership styles and sources of support. The presidents' responses could have been confirmed, verified and questioned if other persons who worked for them and alongside them, those involved in hiring them, and mentors and family members had the opportunity to provide data.

Finally, another potential limitation of this study was that the researcher's preconceived notions and biases may have influenced the data collection and analysis given that the researcher herself is an Asian American woman who is currently a higher education administrator. Nevertheless, the researcher made every effort to address that

issue in the design of the study, and it is important to note that the researcher confirmed her interpretations with participants in an effort to reduce the effect of bias.

Delimitations

This study was limited to Asian American women who held college presidential positions in the Pacific Coast region between 2007-2012, a five-year period. This study did not include Asian American students or faculty. The integrity of this study depended upon the honesty and accuracy of both the researcher and the participants. Everything the researcher collected in the way of data from the demographic data questionnaire, the current position descriptions and the interviews was based upon the responses, perceptions and lived experiences of the interviewees. All five of the presidential participants were interviewed in their offices or in a conference room in their particular institutions.

Significance of the Study

There are four important contributions of this study to the field of educational research. First, Asian Americans in general are underrepresented in presidential positions in higher education. This research attempts to answer why this phenomenon exists with a focus on Asian American women presidents. First, this study explores the career and leadership experiences of current Asian American women college presidents in the Pacific Coast of the United States. Second, there have been very few studies about Asian American administrators in higher education, especially documenting the career and leadership experiences of the fewer than one percent of college presidents in the nation. This study definitely adds to the canon of knowledge regarding Asian American leadership. In particular, this study seeks to give more voice to Asian American women college presidents in the Pacific Coast.. Third, this study has the potential to inform

current and prospective Asian American women administrators about the challenges and successes they may experience in their career pathways toward a presidency. Finally, this study seeks to provide recommendations to educational leaders and policy makers about ways to diversify the presidential positions in higher education through critical analysis of the presidential search process and leadership phenomenon. It is the hope of the researcher that the recommendation and suggestions for change will benefit members of minority groups, both Asian Americans and minority groups in general.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined as they relate to the study:

Asian Pacific Americans (APA) – According the U.S. Census (2010), The “Asian” in the 2010 U.S. Census category consists of a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines Islands, Thailand and Vietnam. It also includes people who indicate their race as “Asian Indian,” “Chinese,” “Filipino,” “Korean,” “Japanese,” “Vietnamese,” and “Other Asian” or provide other detailed Asian responses. For the purpose of this study, Asian Americans will consist of a person having origins in China, Japan, Philippines, Taiwan and other Pacific Islander. The abbreviation “APA” is also used interchangeably throughout the paper as Asian American.

College President – The CEO, President or Chancellor of a community college or four-year college institutions.

Critical Race Theory - Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a branch of legal studies interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism and power (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001). It is a valuable tool to critique and analyze educational

research, particularly because it has the potential to examine persistent racial inequities in education, qualitative research methods, pedagogy and practice, the schooling experiences of marginalized students of color, and the efficacy of race-conscious education policy. With regards to Critical Race Theory's utility in examining the experiences of Asian Americans in higher education, Teranishi (2007) indicates that it is a lens to "problematize traditional notions of race by examining the intersections of ethnicity, social class, and immigration among the Asian American population" (p. 39).

Glass Ceiling – Refers to "the artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organizational bias that prevent qualified individuals, including those who are non White, from advancing upward in their organization into management level positions" (U.S. Department of Labor 1991, p.1).

Minority/minorities –Minority leaders or leadership minorities include women and men who are under-represented in the college presidency. Their minority status can include race, class age, sexual orientation, religious affiliation or a combination of the above.

Model Minority - The belief that Asian Americans, through their hard work, innate intelligence, and an emphasis on education and achievement, have been successful in American society and are therefore are not affected by the glass ceiling.

Chapter II REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Overview

In this chapter, an overview of the literature related to the study topic is presented. There is considerable scholarly literature in various topics and subtopics related to Asian American women college presidents around the subjects of leadership, diversity in higher education, and Asian Americans in higher education. Five themes have been selected to present a summary of the literature in order to provide background and context to the topic of this study. The major themes that will be presented in this chapter are as follows: Asian American traditional cultural values; Presidential and leadership diversity in higher education; Asian American administrators in higher education; Women administrators in higher education; and Critical Race Theory and Model Minority Theory. Each theme will be introduced and followed by a review of the pertinent literature and research in that area.

Asian American Traditional Cultural Values

Asian Pacific Americans are composed of people from many different cultural backgrounds. Four regions separate the categories of Asians. Pacific Islanders are from islands located in the Pacific Ocean including, but not limited to, Hawaii, Samoa, and Guam. Southeast Asians consist of Vietnamese, Thai, Cambodian, Laotian, Singaporean, Malaysian, and Filipino. East Asians come from the countries of China, Japan, and Korea. South Asians include countries such as India and Pakistan. Differences in even what countries are considered in which region also prevail from researcher to researcher (Kim & Yeh, 2002; Lee & Lee Manning, 2001; Philip, 2007).

In 1987, the Chinese Culture Connection (CCC), an international network of social scientists under the direction of Dr. Michael Bond, a Psychology Professor in

Hong Kong, approached social scientists and asked each of them to prepare a list of ten fundamental Chinese values. The master list was then analyzed and reduced into four basic factors of the Asian value system: integration, Confucian work dynamic, human heartedness, and moral discipline (Neuliep, 2000, p. 48). (see table 1).

Table 1: Fundamental Chinese Values

Integration	Confucian Work Dynamic	Human Heartedness	Moral Discipline
Tolerance Harmony Solidarity Filial piety Trustworthiness Contentedness Conservativeness Intimacy with friends Chastity in women Noncompetitiveness	Ordering Relationships Thrift Persistence Sense of shame Reciprocation Personal steadiness Protecting “face” Respect for tradition	Kindness Patience Courtesy Righteousness Patriotism	Moderation Disinterested Few desires Adaptability Prudence

Source: Chinese Culture Connection, “Chinese Values and the Search for Culture-free Dimensions of Culture,” *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 19 (1987, p. 150).

These values were then rated by 100 people from twenty-two different cultures, rating the importance of each of the values. This information was used to identify similar and contrasting cultural values. Bond (1987) found that East Asian culture such as Japan, Korea and the Philippines rated the Chinese values as being high for their culture as well. On the other hand, countries such as Pakistan and Bangladesh scored the Chinese values low in comparison with their cultural values. Other social scientists who had studied value orientations among cultures (Hofstede, 1991, Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 1961, Gudykunst, Matsumoto and Ting-Toomey, 1994, Triandis, 1981) have generally agreed that East Asian cultures tend to be collectivistic high context cultures with a strong uncertainty avoidance index and Confucian work dynamism (Neuliep, 2000, Wu, 1997).

Confucian dynamism is essentially adhering to values derived from Confucian thought—persistence, thrift, avoidance of shame, respect for tradition, reciprocity of favors, and subordination of one’s personal private concerns (Hofstede, 1991).

People who believe in collectivism make greater distinctions between in-groups and out-groups, and their concept of the “other” is stronger and more diverse than that of the individualist. These persons place great value on community, groupness, harmony, and maintaining face. In these cultures individuals expect loyalty to be given in exchange for commitment to group norms (Hofstede, 1981). People in high context cultures, look to the environmental, sociorelational, and perceptual contexts for information to reduce uncertainty (Gudykunst and Kim, 1997). In contrast, people from low context cultures tend to rely on verbal information-seeking strategies, usually asking lots of questions. Hofstede (1981) argues that tolerance for uncertainty is learned through cultural socialization. Cultures with strong uncertainty avoidance index try to reduce the level of uncertainty and unpredictability by continuously planning every aspect of their lives. Hofstede also explains that cultures with a strong uncertainty avoidance orientation see life as stressful, with a sense of urgency and with high levels of anxiety. At school, such students are most comfortable in structured environments. There is generally resistance to innovative ideas, and workers are motivated by job security (Hofstede, 1991).

Wu (1997) predicts that although the culture of the American workplace continues to change, and Asian Americans are becoming more culturally savvy and sophisticated, the majority of the APAs will probably continue to find themselves employed in non-managerial positions (p.85). More than half of the people she interviewed for her study on Asian Americans in the workplace, whether Southeast Asian Americans or East Asian Americans, confessed that they could not see themselves

becoming an upper level manager of a large corporation or organization. Wu's (1997) research data, including her observations and in-depth interviews with individual Asian Americans have led her to postulate three typologies for APAs. The three typologies are based on the Taoist polarities called the "Yin" and the "Yang". "Yang", meaning the active and behavioral side of a person; and "yin", the intuitive and cognitive part of oneself. The forces of yin and yang are on opposite sides of the continuum, where both parts are complementary and mutually dependent variables. (see table 2).

Table 2: Yin and Yang

Yin		Yang
Abnegators	↔	Pragmatists
Assimilators	↔	Autonomist
Progressivists	↔	Altruist

Source: Diana Ting Lui Wu, *Asian Americans in the Workplace*, 1997, p. 30-40

Abnegators/Pragmatists

The abnegators/pragmatists are APAs who have passive-aggressive tendencies, tend to be self-centered, dislike conflict or change, prefer the "old way", lack cultural competence and have had limited exposure to the new dominant Western culture. They also tend to hold pessimistic views toward people and feel that they lack control over their own lives. They tend to withdraw from others and work mainly for practical extrinsic means (Wu, p. 31).

Assimilators/Autonomist

Asian Americans who are the assimilator/autonomist types tend to be positive, sociable, open-minded, creative, independent thinkers, who have fully assimilated to their new culture, to the point of distancing themselves from their own ethnic identity. Many have severed all ties with the “old country” traditions and customs. Assimilators are often American-born, have minimal language barriers, trust others, feel in control of their lives, and work for intrinsic rewards (p.32).

Progressivists/Altruists

Progressivists/altruist individuals, much like the assimilators, are typically acculturated to the dominant American culture. However, unlike the assimilators, progressivists tend to maintain elements of their own ethnic culture. They are assertive, capable, conscientious, charismatic, outgoing people who have a strong interest in social causes and humanity. They tend to have a positive self-concept and are willing to “play the game” in order to transform the social setting of the workplace (p.33).

Wu asserts that all APAs fall into one of the above typologies based on four factors: 1) basic personality and perceptual paradigm; 2) life situation and experiences, such as whether one grew up in the United States or overseas before entering the country; 3) economic, political, social, and other external forces in the environment; and 4) the availability of opportunities for interacting with others within the United States dominant culture (p.29). These typologies will be useful for this study in analyzing the data collected on the life and career experiences of APA presidents in higher education.

Asian Family Support

Family support and culture go hand in hand. Culture helps determine the values that families have. Asian cultures value family (Kane, 1998). Hierarchy is imperative, and the elderly are valued for their wisdom and experience (Lee & Lee Manning, 2001). In a study done by Kane (1998) on family perceptions among African Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanic Americans, the results indicated that Asian Americans and Hispanic Americans have less autonomy than do African Americans. Asian and Hispanic families are more collectivist than individualistic; the family or group takes precedence over the individual (Gordon, 2000). In Asian families, the emphasis is placed on deference and respect rather than assertiveness and on self-control and restraint rather than emotional expressiveness (Kane). Stress is placed on success, education, and the wisdom that come with experience (Kane). Consequently, it should come as no surprise that APAs have the highest proportion of college graduates of any race (U.S. Census, 2001).

Lam's study (2002) on six APA Californian college or university presidents concerning their paths to becoming CEOs revealed that education was highly valued by their families. At an early age, each participant was strongly influenced by parents on the significance of obtaining an education, especially that of a college degree. Consistent with the literature, APA parents in the study instilled in their children that they wanted the best for their children and especially stressed the importance of education in that regard.

Some parents of the college presidents studied had a stronger emphasis on education than other presidents' parents did. The parents of the foreign-born president expressed a stronger desire than the APA parents did. This strong desire could be due to

the parents being traditional, while the other parents were American-born. All the presidents stated that the parents showed support and gave guidance during and for their educational endeavors. Although family support values the success of Asian Americans, many APAs' career choices are influenced by their parents (Gordon, 2000; Song & Glick, 2004).

Since APA children will care for their parents in their elderly years, career choices are a collective decision. In addition, Asian family values and practices include the instilling of guilt about parental sacrifices and the need to fulfill obligations which impacts APA children's career decisions (Asakawa & Csikszentmihlayi, 1998). The majority of APA females as well as males are pushed by their families into careers that are well-paying and have prestige due to cultural values. If Asian American females are influenced to follow career paths of prestige, more research needs to be conducted on why those APA females choose the academic path in particular rather than some other.

This section has highlighted the geographical, tradition and values of Asian Americans as it pertains to their career and professional choices. In summary, Asian Americans consist of many different cultural backgrounds that are divided in two groups: Pacific Islanders and East Asians. The fundamental Chinese values are found to be similar and applicable to both Asian groups except for Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. Asian family support is one of the strongest values of Asian Americans. Asian Americans function collectively, and the emphasis is placed on deference and respect rather than assertiveness and on self-control and restraint rather than emotional expressiveness. The majority of APA females as well as males are pushed by their families into careers that are well-paying and have prestige due to cultural values. Wu's research led to the development of three typologies for APAs. The three typologies are based on the Taoist

polarities called the “Yin” and the “Yang”: Abnegators/Pragmatists, Assimilators/Autonomists, and Progressivists/Altruists.

Presidential and Leadership Diversity in Higher Education

The presidential roles in higher education are critical in as much as they guide the whole direction of the university. According to Cote (1985), presidential roles consist of the following: symbol; ceremonial official; executive visionary; long-range planner; public relations specialist; image builder; marketer; salesperson; fund raiser; community leader; trustee rapport builder; advisor; government liaison; resource stimulator, alumni liaison; motivator; inter-institutional diplomat; academic planner; innovator; executive consensus builder; mediator; financial manager; executive physical plant or property overseer; and, last but not least, labor relations specialist.

Given the importance of the presidential role in higher education and the ever-changing demographics of students in the 21st century, it is very important that the best qualified leader be appointed. However, women especially women of color in higher education presidential roles are still very scarce.

Previous research conducted on the president’s position in higher education has focused mainly on four topics. Several studies have examined career patterns of private four year college and university presidents in the US. The main questions asked in these studies were:

- Where do college Presidents come from? What did they do before they became Presidents?
- How long do they remain presidents?
- How old are they?
- What academic preparation have they had? (e.g. Moore, Salimbene, Marlier & Bragg, 1983; Wessel & Keim, 1994).

Other studies focused on educational qualifications such as degrees held by presidents of state colleges (McGinnis, 1928). Moreover, several studies also focused on “constructing” the presidency, which is a comparative study of college presidents’ images of their leadership roles (Neumann & Bensimon, 1990). Furthermore, a lot of concentration has also been paid to presidential succession (Birnbaum, 1989). Succession is defined as “the ordered process by which individuals succeed each other in occupations” (Birnbaum, 1989, p. 4). Keeping this in mind, the presidential role and expectations in higher education should have definitely evolved to meet the needs of the diverse college student bodies of today. But is this really the case?

The “*On the Pathway to the Presidency*” study (2008), a collaborative effort of the American Council on Education (ACE) and the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR), focused on the different points of entry to the presidential position and also highlighted the current pipeline addressing both gender and racial minorities. According to the report, only 13 percent of presidents came directly from a position outside academe., The report also references the faculty as primary point of entry to the presidential career pathway, almost 70 percent of presidents having served as faculty members at some point in their academic careers (p. 1). The survey data suggest that senior leaders are, as a group, younger than presidents and are more likely to be women; 16 percent of all senior campus administrators are people of color, compared with 14 percent of presidents. In contrast, women are much more likely to serve in senior leadership roles other than the presidency: 45 percent of senior administrators are women compared with 23 percent of presidents (p. 3). In terms of race and ethnicity, for African Americans, Hispanics and American Indians, greatly expanding the number of presidents will likely require increasing the number of people entering

faculty positions, as each group's share of senior academic affairs officers roughly mirrors its share of tenured full time faculty.

One important exception to the above exists: Six percent of faculty are Asian American, but Asian Americans represent only two percent of Chief Academic Officers (CAOs) and other senior academic administrators and only three percent of deans. In this case, a pool of potential leaders is available, but institutions must do a better job of attracting Asian-American faculty into the administrative ranks (p. 5). Only 16 percent of all senior administrators at the responding institutions are people of color, and less than ten percent of CAOs are racial or ethnic minorities (King and Gomez, p. 15). Overall, seven percent of senior administrators are women of color and nine percent are men of color. These data confirm what many in academe have long suspected. There is a significant pool of white women in senior administrative roles who could rise to the presidency, but there is not a significant number of minority candidates both men and women (p. 6).

As a group, senior administrators at doctorate-granting institutions are somewhat older and less diverse than their peers at other types of institutions. The *American College President Study* (2007) found that the two most common paths to the presidency are through the positions of chief academic officer (33 percent of presidents came from this position) and senior academic affairs officer (21 percent of presidents) (p. 7). The racial/ethnic distribution of senior administrators at doctoral institutions is generally comparable to the distribution for all institution types, with several important exceptions. Asian Americans are more likely to serve as the chief academic officer or dean of an academic college at doctorate granting institutions than at other types of institutions -- five percent of CAOs and deans are Asian American -- suggesting that there is a small

but still significant pool of Asian American talent in these positions that could be tapped for presidential leadership (p. 9).

According to the *Broadening the Leadership Spectrum: Advancing Diversity in the American College Presidency* report (2008) conducted through the American Council on Education, the leadership of American higher education is about to experience a dramatic changing of the guard. This coming turnover will be unprecedented in its size and scope and requires all institutions to think intentionally about their next generation of leaders (Bridges, Eckel, Cordova and White, p. 1). During the past 20 years, the percentage of the nation's college and university presidents who are people of color rose only slightly from 8.1 percent to 13.5 percent. When minority-serving institutions (MSIs) are excluded, minority presidents today lead less than ten percent of colleges and universities. College and university presidents are also considerably older on average than they were 20 years ago. Today, only eight percent of college and university presidents are 50 years of younger and 49 percent are 61 or older. Thus the aging of presidents presents a unique opportunity to increase the diversity of higher education's leadership (p. 2).

The five main reasons for stalled progress were discussed in detail in this same report. The first reason is "Biased perceptions." According to the researchers, women and candidates of color continue to be underestimated for their potential to lead. This can be the result of conscious or unconscious reliance on existing group stereotypes. Lingering negative stereotypes play a role in how these groups are perceived by boards and search committees. The notion of fairness and equity is further complicated by the reality that cultural and stylistic differences in leadership approaches do exist. Inclusion, then, is not so much about treating everyone the same as it is about preventing their differences from

being an unfair hindrance, a concept that can be far more difficult to promote and even more difficult to implement. (p. 5). The goal is not to diversify leadership for its own sake but to add missing or underappreciated talents and abilities to the institution, a concept that makes diversity seem essential. (p. 6). The second reason is “Apathy about diversity.” Apathy about diversity can easily lead to a “status quo” presidential search. Developing a rich pool of diverse talent takes significant work. It is far easier for members of a busy campus search committee to rely on traditional processes to identify effective leadership (p. 6). The third reason discussed in the report is “Inadequate leadership development for female and minority talent.” The researchers noted that Higher education, for the most part, has not invested formally in developing its own leadership talent. Instead, people often almost stumble into positions of leadership.

The implication is that only the fortunate have the experiences, formal or informal, to prepare them well for higher positions. This can mean that, for instance, women and people of color do not have the levels of authority and responsibility, given the positions in which they often find themselves, that would allow them to demonstrate their capacity to lead effectively (p. 6). The fourth reason is “Foregoing long-term commitments for short-term successes.” The implication is that diversity is a one-time commitment that, once accomplished, can be replaced with other priorities (p. 7). Last but not least, the fifth reason is “Uncertain times, uncertain leadership.” This points to the direction on having a broader exploration of candidates might result if university boards and campus search committees focused more on identifying the requisite talents and capacities needed to successfully execute the duties of president and less on making sure candidates have fulfilled a list of previous experiences that are not always required to carry out the job. This is not to diminish the power and importance of experience; all

college leaders need the knowledge and skills gained from undergoing certain experiences. However, ignoring the presence of transferable skills gained through activities that do not conform to standard expectations of presidential candidates further minimizes the pool of available talent. It may be that candidates of color who are connected to non-traditional networks or who have demonstrated the ability to succeed cross-culturally are more highly skilled at making those connections than candidates without such experience (p. 8).

This report also focused on the different ways in expanding the search for talent, which addresses the fifth reason of stalled progress mentioned above. In order to expand the search for talent, the researchers highlighted six things for current leaders and recruitment committees to keep in mind as they go through the presidential search for their institutions. The first one is to be able to “Define talent broadly.” As noted by the researchers, higher education must first take a hard look at its definition of presidential leadership and begin to openly question whether that definition – which is not only explicit in job descriptions but also implicit in hiring preferences and search process -- is too narrow for today’s demands. The challenges facing higher education are deep and broad; so too should be the talent pool tapped to lead higher education (p. 9). The next thing the report recommends to keep in mind is to “Look in different places for different talents.” This means recruitment efforts need to be open and broad in order to get the word out in different avenues. The third one is to be able to “Attend to the Pipeline.” An essential part of widening and deepening the pool of potential talent is to persuade more women and minorities to pursue the job (p. 10).

Talent often must be coaxed, fostered, encouraged, supported, and reassured...Once identified, emerging leaders need a plan to ascend the administrative ladder and the support and encouragement to move forward. This work frequently is fostered by a willing mentor who understands the path upward

or it is provided through a structured leadership program with sufficient time spent on coaching... There is a fear among white administrators of giving constructive, critical feedback to minorities whether they are deans or in staff positions... One way to make certain the pipeline is broad and widely diverse is to develop leadership intentionally on campus. Succession planning has long been a hallmark within corporate America but has not been employed to the same degree within higher education... The fear is that if I prepare someone, they will leave... Minority and female junior faculty and administrators who have expressed a commitment to the institution could provide an influx of new ideas and energy to a campus leadership pipeline for years to come. (Bridges, Eckel, Cordova and White, p. 11).

The fourth recommendation is to “Construct Equitable Search Processes.”

According to the interviews conducted in this study, many women and presidential candidates believe that the search process itself disadvantaged them. A common perception found by the researchers is the feeling among those they studied that they were scrutinized far more heavily than their white or male counterparts. More probing questions were asked, more references are contacted, and more officials visited the candidate’s campus. “People of color are filtered through a different lens,” said one minority president. “Sometimes the search process is very very painful. The scrutiny is extensive.” In some ways, candidates who appear to be most out of line with traditional perceptions drew the greatest scrutiny.

Moreover, too many women and people of color report having been a token candidate, eventually realizing that they were not serious contender. Therefore, campus search committees additionally may need to look at their processes and questions for eliminating potential bias. What type of questions do they ask? How have they constructed the search process? Does it favor some types of candidates over others? How do they use references? What types of questions do they ask their search consultants? (p. 12). The fifth recommendation is to “Increase Board Diversity.” According to the researchers, one of the most important changes that can occur over the long run is to

diversify boards of trustees, which are now quite homogeneous. More diversity on boards would go a long way toward ensuring a wider pool of candidates would be seriously considered for the presidency (p. 14). Last but not least is to “Foster Successful Presidencies.” The researchers noted that being selected for a presidency is only half the battle for a female or minority candidate; other factor such as support from the board of trustees must be in place to ensure a successful presidency.

Successful women and minority presidents not only advance their institutions but also inspire other underrepresented candidates to follow in their path. However, the trepidation and perceived abandonment that women and minority presidents often feel in office can compromise their ability to lead successfully “Once we get in these positions whether you are a woman or a person of color, we’re fragile,” admitted one president. “We’re vulnerable. We’re targets. We’re told, ‘Give it a try. It’s OK. The water’s OK.’ But having now jumped in the water, it’s really cold” (p. 14-15).

Diversifying leadership is really about enhancing higher education’s and, in turn, the nation’s intellectual capacity. It provides the means for fresh ideas and perspectives and it serves as a beacon for future generations. “It’s about giving a global edge to students,” added one roundtable participant. “I think that is the reason why we need to harness every ounce of energy whether it comes from black, white, or any color in between. It’s the reason why we need to mine the intellectual capacity of this country,” ... When the talents of significant parts of the population are not tapped, opportunities to expand the talent pool are being missed. “I want to use a metaphor that I heard someone use many years ago when a search committee handed him a list of final candidates that were all white men,” said a chancellor. He said, “You’re only fishing in one-quarter of the lake. That is, the primary goal in my view is to make sure that we are getting all the talent that the country has to offer. And we don’t look at all the people; we’re going to miss a lot of the talent.” Finding ways to capture all of the talent- not just a portion of the pool – is essential, as another chancellor noted simply, “We’ve got to get ready for the America that is before us.” (Bridges, Eckel, Cordova and White, p. 19 - 20.)

Under the topic of diversifying leadership in higher education, the *Broadening the Leadership Spectrum: Advancing Diversity in the American College Presidency* report

(2008) found five reasons for stalled progress in diversifying the presidential role. The five main reasons were: Biased Perceptions; Apathy about Diversity; Inadequate leadership development for female and minority talent; Foregoing long-term commitments for short term successes; and, last but not least, Uncertain times, uncertain leadership. The report also focused on the different ways in which expanding the search for talent can address the fifth reason of stalled progress. The first one is to be able to “Define talent broadly.” The second is to “Look in different places for different talents”. The third is to “Attend to the Pipeline.” The fourth is to “Construct Equitable Search Processes.” The fifth is to “Increase Board Diversity.” Last is to “Foster Successful Presidencies.”

This section has highlighted the critical role of a president in higher education as its leader. It is very important to note that successful women and minority presidents not only advance their institutions but also inspire other underrepresented candidates to follow their path. Nevertheless, in regards to race and ethnicity, the only group that is not equally represented in the presidential role in higher education are the Asian Americans.

Asian Americans in Higher Education

Overall, Asian Americans have the highest number of population and percentage growth among other groups in higher education due to their traditional high value and respect for education. Perhaps due to this traditional respect for education, APAs tend to attain higher educational goals than the general population. Today Asian American students can be seen on nearly every university campus in the United States (Hsia, 1998). Although APAs account for about three% of the United States population, they constitute more than 30% of the student body at California universities and more than 15% at many prestigious Ivy League schools on the east coast (Ong, 1994). Asian Americans

immigrants today, as a group, are likely to be highly educated (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1993). In a 1994 survey by the U.S. Census, 41% of Asian Americans had four-year college degrees, compared to 20% for the general population, and about 18% of Asian Americans hold doctoral or professional degrees in comparison to only nine% of the general population. Twenty-three percent of Asian American workers are professionals, including nearly 11% of the nation's practicing physicians and seven% scientists and engineers (Ong, 1994).

According to the *Minorities in Higher Education Report* (2006) by the American Council on Education, Asian Americans have made the largest enrollment gains at four-year colleges and universities in the past ten years than any other ethnic minority group. California, where the largest Asian American population resides, experienced a 101.3% growth in APA enrollments at 40 four-year institutions and a 55.4% gain in two-year institutions (Carter and Wilson, 1995). Nationwide, the number of Asian Americans in higher education has nearly doubled due to the increasing immigrant population and the increased presence of Asian American women in higher education.

Asian American Administrators in Higher Education

A review of the scholarly literature found a limited amount of research related to Asian American administrators, fewer studies focusing on Asian American administrators at California community colleges, and no study pertaining to Asian American administrators at California State Universities. Studies pertaining to Asian American administrators included *The Community College Presidency: An Asian American Perspective*, a reflection by Jack Fujimoto (1996);

Shintaku's (1996) study of Asian American faculty and administrators; Neilson's (2002) study of career paths/mobility of senior Asian American administrators, Wong's

(2002) study of Asian American student affairs administrators, and Suh's (2005) study of the characteristics of Asian American student affairs administrators. Finally, a study specific to California community college administration and minorities included Sugimoto's (2000) study of the perceptions of community college board members in the selection of presidents.

The single piece of literature focusing specifically on California community colleges and Asian American administrators was written by Jack Fujimoto, former President of Sacramento City College. The article by Fujimoto (1996) consisted of a commentary on the need for more Asian American California community college leaders. Fujimoto documented his experience as a College President, reviewed the *Federal Glass Ceiling Commission Report* of 1995, and analyzed the seven Asian American California community college presidents who were leading community colleges at the time. Fujimoto recommended an improvement of the pipeline to educational administration through leadership development, partnerships with private corporations, and mentorship. The primary benefit of Fujimoto's article was his contribution of his own personal story to the limited literature of Asian American administrators. Fujimoto's article brought a voice to Asian American community college presidents, a voice that had been missing in the past. However, Fujimoto's reflection was limited in an empirical sense, as it lacked theory and was primarily a statement of facts only.

Shintaku's (1996) study sought to understand the representation and characteristics of Asian American faculty who participate in academic administration, to document the pathways to academic administration, and to explore the barriers that affect the representation and development of Asian Americans in academic administration. The

researcher used secondary data collected from a national survey of college and university faculty combined with personal interviews with Asian American academic administrators. Shintaku concluded that Asian American faculty are not adequately represented in academic administration, and he suggested possible explanations for this phenomenon including racial stereotyping, lack of encouragement, and the presence of a glass ceiling.

Neilson (2002) conducted a qualitative study interviewing ten Asian Americans holding senior administrative positions in higher education. The researcher sought to understand, "What are the career paths/mobility of Asian Americans in higher education administration that currently hold senior level positions of dean and above and how do they compare with those described in the literature" (p. 50). Neilson relied on both the model minority myth and glass ceiling theory as a theoretical framework. Neilson's research revealed that their cultural values of hard work as honor, legacy and moral obligation, collaboration as an interconnection in the present, and risk taking for the sake of the children may provide Asian Americans with sustained direction and dedication that compensates for not having clearly articulated career paths. One limitation of Neilson's (2002) study involved the lack of in-depth findings. Beyond documenting the life histories of the research subjects and identifying cultural values as key to administrative success, Neilson added little to the literature regarding the under-representation of Asian Americans in senior administrative positions in higher education.

Wong (2002) carried out a qualitative study interviewing 36 Asian American student affairs administrators to identify their perceptions about why there are so few Asian Americans in senior leadership positions. The research question guiding the study was, "Why are there so few Asian Americans in student affairs administration" (p. 45).

Wong based her research around the theoretical framework of model minority myth, glass ceiling theory, and the emergence of collaborative leadership models. Wong found participants saw themselves as having experienced a glass ceiling and subtle racism in academia. Furthermore, Wong discovered that subtle racism included the stereotype that Asian Americans are hard workers but not good leaders and that they are not interested in advancing in leadership. As a result, these administrators felt they were rarely considered as potential candidates for senior level positions and that they were often passed up for promotions. It is noted that Wong's (2002) study had a singular focus on Student Affairs. Traditional College governance models include Academic Affairs, Student Services, and Business Affairs. Since the study failed to include Asian American administrators in Academic and Business Affairs positions, the study excluded the voices of other critical divisions within the higher education community.

Suh (2005) sought to understand the characteristics of Asian American student affairs administrators as well as the factors that have influenced their career advancement. Utilizing an online survey of 518 self-selected participants, Suh surveyed members of the American College Personnel Association (ACPA), the National Association of Student Personnel Association (NASPA) and Asian Pacific Americans in Higher Education (APAHE). By utilizing an online survey, Suh was able to generate a large sample size. Of the 518 participants, 117 were Asian American. Of the 117 Asian American administrators, six% were vice provosts or vice chancellors, 1.7% were associate vice presidents or associate vice provosts, and none were chancellor or provost. The theoretical framework Suh used to analyze the data was economic supply-and-demand theory. Suh found that Asian American administrators had lower educational

levels, shorter tenures in their positions, and more hostile work conditions characterized by the glass ceiling and tokenism.

Through an analysis of public documents, surveys, and interviews, Sugimoto (2000) studied the perceptions of California community college governing boards in the selection of a community college chief executive officer. Sugimoto sought to understand, "What are California community college governing board members' perceptions of the characteristics and processes used in the selection of a chief executive offer (CEO)?" (p.7). The researcher found that the governing board members' perception of race and gender in the final selection of a CEO were similar regardless of the board members' gender or race. In addition, Sugimoto found that the governing board members' concept of "fit" was the distinguishing factor board members applied in the CEO selection process. It is noteworthy that white male board members may not have fully disclosed their opinions during the interviews with Sugimoto. As Sugimoto reflects, "board members who were historically underrepresented in California community college boards more than their white male counterparts openly spoke about issues of gender and race in the CEO selection process" (p. 126).

As we can see, the existing body of literature of Asian American administrators in higher education suggests that a glass ceiling and subtle racism may be potential barriers to advancement for these leaders. In addition, Sugimoto's study of California community college boards provides a potential explanation for the lack of Asian American presidents in the California community colleges system. While the shared decision-making process employed at college's may create a level playing field for positions at California community colleges below that of President, the inclusion of board of trustees members

in the hiring of a President may bring the subjective concept of "fit" into the hiring process.

Feminist Theories and Leadership Phenomenon

A leadership study supports the fact that women are equally as qualified as men in attainment of presidential positions. Even if women entered the academia world at a later period, women had occupied administrative positions for a long time in higher education and private industries. Therefore, women should be able to compete to attain presidential positions in higher education. While this is simple logic, women's situation and history is completely different and unequal to that of men. There has been substantial research about women leaders in higher education, its implications, challenges, and gender inequalities in attaining administrative positions (e.g., Andruskiw & Howes, 1980; Kent & Moss, 1994);. However I want to focus on feminist theories and leadership barriers that explain these situations.

Women in leadership roles in higher education are scarce, especially the representation of women in higher education presidential roles. The question "Why is women's situation as it is?" can be explained through the four basic feminist theories. The first theory has to do with gender difference, which indicates that women's location in, and experience of, most situations is different from that of the men in those situations. The second theory has to do with gender inequality, which indicates that women's location in most situations is not only different from but also less privileged than or unequal to that of men. The third theory has to do with gender oppression, which indicates that women are oppressed, not just different from or unequal to but actively restrained, subordinated, molded, and used and abused by men. The fourth theory has to do with structural oppression, which indicates that women's experience of difference,

inequality, and oppression varies by their social location within capitalism, patriarchy, and racism (Ritzer, 2004). Based on these definitions, Ritzer believes that gender inequality is the theory that most adequately supports why women are still underrepresented in higher echelon positions in higher education. Specifically, women get fewer of the material resources, social status, power, and opportunities for self-actualization than do men who share their social location, be it a location based on class, race, occupation, ethnicity, religion, education, nationality, or any intersection of these factors.

Other past research has consistently shown that men more often emerge as leaders than women. This phenomenon has been attributed to internal barriers limiting women's leadership emergence. However, recent evidence suggests that there have been shifts in the societal acceptance of women as leaders and that some of the barriers that prevented women from emerging as leaders may be coming down (Kent & Moss, 1994). The result of Kent and Moss's (1994) research indicated that comparing the effects of gender role on the self and group perceptions makes it clear that those classified as masculine and androgynous were not only more likely than feminine and undifferentiated subjects to be perceived by their groups as leaders but also were also more likely to perceive themselves as leaders. This conforms that leadership roles are still associated with masculinity and that is why it is very challenging for women to get executive positions in higher education.

Moreover, women are considered to be socially disadvantaged individuals who often encounter resistance when they rise to high-status positions. For example, women, according to status characteristics theory, will be disadvantaged relative to men in social interactions, other things being equal. Therefore, institutionalizing women as leaders may

overcome such disadvantages. Drawing from status characteristics theory and institutional theory, it is predicted that institutionalization of female leadership can reduce the influence gap between women and men by legitimating structures of female leadership. Results of an experiment conducted to test this idea show that, as predicted, male leaders attained higher influence than did female leaders, and leaders appointed on ability attained higher influence than did randomly assigned leaders. Institutionalization, however, reduced the advantage of men such that female leaders appointed on ability when female leadership was institutionalized attained influence as high as male leaders appointed on ability when female leadership was not institutionalized (Lucas, 2003).

This section has highlighted the feminist theories that address the leadership phenomenon in which women's advancement into executive positions is stalled in comparison to that of men. Research had shown that women are able to be successful in attaining and performing executive positions. The main way to break through the glass ceiling is the concept of institutionalization of women leadership.

Women Administrators in Higher Education

The literature reviewed regarding women administrators in higher education included: Viltz's (1998) study of African American women California community college presidents, Wilking's (2001) study of Asian American chief executive officers in higher education, Ideta's (1996) study of Asian American female senior level administrators, Madsen's (2008), Steinke's (2006), Bornstein's (2007), and Somers' (2007) studies of female Asian American administrators. Viltz (1998) interviewed eight African-American women California community college presidents to learn about their life histories. The researcher was interested in investigating whether there were common threads of preparation for African American women presidents. Viltz indicated that "subtle and not

so subtle forms of prejudice were manifested most often in white society's disdain for the language patterns of African Americans, differences in fashion and personal grooming preferences, and attitudes towards perceived aggressiveness of African American women" (p. 3). Her study suggested that perceptions of African American women and other women of color can often act as barriers to career advancement. However, Viltz's study was limited in scope since the research question as well as the data analysis only focused on preparation for the presidency.

Wilking (2001) conducted a narrative inquiry of five Asian American women chief executive officers in higher education. She was interested in finding the barriers and challenges faced by these women chief executives. Wilking found that the challenges faced by these women administrators included balancing work and home, dealing with stereotypes about women and Asians, and enduring phases of self-doubt. Positive influences in these women's lives included a willingness to take on new challenges, family support, a continual development of leadership skills, a "servant" leadership style, a strong work ethic, feeling lucky/fortunate, having a positive attitude, and feeling different from the typical Asian American. One limitation of Wilking's study was the small number of California community college participants (one) in the study.

Ideta (1996) utilized narrative inquiry when she interviewed 10 Asian American female senior level administrators in higher education. She used narrative inquiry as a theoretical framework. Ideta discovered "critical incidents" which served as turning points for the professional lives of her participants. The themes which Ideta uncovered included how these women administrators found strength through adversity, attributed their success to good fortune, and pursued excellence in their profession.

Madsen (2008) conducted in-depth interviews with ten women who were serving as presidents or chancellors of universities or who had recently retired from those positions. The women served at different types of public and private institutions and all were in their 50s or 60s at the time of the interviews. The author examined how these women developed the knowledge and skills that assisted them in their careers and identified major influences in their lives. Madsen observed that there was a dearth of literature that specifically explored the leadership of female college and university presidents, which is what inspired her to conduct her research. The interview questions in her study spanned the lifetime of the presidents, exploring their childhoods, their early educational experiences, and their professional, personal, and academic experiences as adults. Through the data she gathered, Madsen was able to draw several conclusions about the leadership practices of the women. Madsen identified nine motivations that the female presidents shared: to accomplish and achieve, to make a difference, to be involved in meaningful work, to have challenges and complexity, to have fun and enjoyment, to do work that they knew they could do, to enable others, to have power and influence, and to serve.

In addition to leadership motivation, Madsen explored the presidents' leadership styles. Her findings supported the literature that suggested that such women tend to have flexible, collaborative leadership styles. Specifically, Madsen described the presidents as participatory, flexible, ethical, authentic, connective, and team-oriented (p. 246). Further, Madsen categorized the presidents' leadership styles as "androgynous." That is, the presidents were skilled in using both traditionally male and traditionally female leadership qualities to achieve their goals. Madsen noted that the presidents believed that situational leadership was a necessary leadership style in higher education. Given the

complexity of higher education and the multiple responsibilities that a president must manage, the ability to lead in the most appropriate manner for each particular situation was an important asset.

Madsen also identified four key themes that emerged from the interviews. She found that the women in her study dedicated time and energy to knowing and understanding themselves. This self-awareness allowed them to make choices that complemented their strengths. Second, Madsen observed that the women were reflective in nature. The presidents all discussed the importance of reflecting on and learning from their failures. Madsen reported that the presidents believed that challenges they encountered gave them opportunities to grow as people and as leaders. Finally, the participants in Madsen's study had a deep love of learning and a willingness to learn from all experiences. This quality was essential to their personal and professional journeys and contributed greatly to their success as presidents.

Steinke (2006) explored the experiences of women who were the first female presidents at small, private colleges. She explored the career paths, orientation experiences on campus, and insights of these women pioneers. Steinke used a constructivist or hermeneutic paradigm as the framework for her study and conducted interviews with eight women. Her sample included women who had pursued administrative and academic career paths. The presidents in Steinke's (2006) sample reported somewhat unplanned career paths and did not set initial goals for themselves to become college presidents. Although they had pursued different paths, all had teaching experience and had earned Ph.D.'s, including those who were never full-time faculty members. The women reported that issues related to gender were largely peripheral in spite of their being the first woman to hold the presidency at their institution. At the same

time, they acknowledged that there were some adjustments that had to be made on their campuses as a result of their gender, including redefining the role of the presidential spouse and acclimating their leadership teams to different styles of leadership and interaction.

Bornstein (2007) reflected upon the difficulties that female presidents encounter, particularly those pioneers who were the first female presidents in their institution's history. She suggested that female presidents, particularly the first at an institution, are subject to internal and external scrutiny. The first president who does not fit in the traditional male mold is carefully watched to make sure that she has the capability to be a successful president.

Somers (2007) conducted a qualitative narrative inquiry exploring the experiences and perspectives of five Asian American females who had sought presidencies and or vice presidencies at community colleges. Her research sought to discover, "what is the experience of Asian American females who have sought advancement in leadership positions in community colleges" (p. 5). Somers based her study on multiple theories, including glass ceiling, model minority, and cultural values. She also used Critical Race Theory as guide to inform her research design. She found that the themes, mother-as-role-model, biculturalism and bicultural efficacy, unplanned pathways and not self-identifying, earned leadership positions, strong work ethic, stereotyping and assumptions, Asian physicality and invisibility, fracturing the glass ceiling, and positive attitude and strength, captured the barriers, as well as the facilitators, faced by Asian American females seeking promotion in higher education.

The existing body of literature of female administrators in higher education points to the complex nature of the career experiences of female Asian American administrators.

Not only do Asian American female administrators face potential barriers to advancement through the glass ceiling and subtle forms of racism, they also must deal with negative career experiences which manifest as a result of their gender.

Understanding this complex interaction of race and gender requires a robust theoretical framework capable of acknowledging the unique challenges faced by Asian American female administrators.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a branch of legal studies interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism and power (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001). According to Lynn and Parker (2006), Critical Race Theory is a valuable tool to critique and analyze educational research, particularly because it has the potential to examine persistent racial inequities in education, qualitative research methods, pedagogy and practice, the schooling experiences of marginalized students of color, and the efficacy of race conscious education policy. In regards to Critical Race Theory's utility in examining Asian Americans in higher education, Teranishi (2007) has indicated the utility of using Critical Race Theory as a lens to "problematize traditional notions of race by examining the intersections of ethnicity, social class, and immigration among the Asian American population" (p. 39). Through this lens of CRT, we may be able to gain an understanding of the unique experiences of Asian Americans, recognizing their unique racialized status, as well as their social, political, and economic positions in society (Teranishi, 2002). The converse of using this framework is the research paradigms that have placed Asian Americans in a black/white racial framework, labeling Asian Americans as the "model minority" and failing to acknowledge their diverse experiences.

Model Minority Theory

The Model Minority Theory is the theory that, although Asians have experienced racism and discrimination, they still have managed to succeed academically, financially and socially (Shaefer, 2004). In other words, Asian Americans have managed to achieve well-paying positions and higher socioeconomic statuses through education and hard work, bigotry and racism notwithstanding (Wong, Lai, Nagasawa, & Lin, 1998). The success of Asian Americans is the basis of the Model Minority theory. It is also the argument one hears from the majority culture. The theory has been used to silence the complaints of racism by other minorities and to show how other minorities should behave in the white-dominated society (Kobayasi, 1991). According to the argument, if all minority groups were like Asian Americans and worked hard and conformed to the values and norms of the majority group, they, too, could achieve the American Dream (Wong et. al.). Therefore, the theory suggests if a minority group tries and fails to achieve success, then the failure lies with the minority group. Because of this belief, not only do other ethnic groups believe in the Model Minority Theory but many Asians have also begun to buy into this theory themselves (Guillermo, 2000; Wong et. al., 1998).

In a study conducted by Wong et al., college students of diverse racial groups were surveyed on their perceptions of Asian Americans. The results of the study revealed that Asian Americans were perceived to be more motivated to do well in college, most likely to succeed in their careers, and most likely to achieve superior results academically compared to the other ethnic groups (Wong et al). In addition, the researchers found that some Asian Americans had also adopted the Model Minority label and that the popular media often portrays Asian Americans in that way as highly educated and successful individuals.” As the ethnic minority with the largest percentage of college graduates,

many Asian Americans do indeed enter the professional workforce. However, many of them seem to stall in their careers and never make it to the corner offices (Hyun, 2005). It is true that Asian Americans have the largest percentage of graduates, but are not usually seen in corporate leadership roles.

The Model Minority theory or label is both misleading and problematic. The theory groups all Asians (Asian Americans and Asian Nationals) into one homogenous group, ignoring the diversity that exists between and within APA subgroups (Kim and Yeh, 2002; Wong et al., 1999). Moreover, the theory does not take into account the factors that contribute to the differences such as level of assimilation/acculturation, educational background, economic status, political and social standing. Furthermore, the Model Minority leads one to believe that members of the APA population are problem-free. On the contrary, the myth obscures the presence of genuine racism against APAs (Kawaguchi, 2003). APAs experience racism at all levels, in the community (Woo, 2000) and in the workplace (Kim & Lewis, 1994). Academia is no exception. A study conducted on Chinese American students revealed that Chinese American students experienced peer discrimination and victimization by non-Asian students (Qin, Way & Mukherjee, 2008). Chinese American students spoke of bullying, physical harm as well as verbal harassment. Reasons for the mistreatment were based on their accent, their ability to speak English, and the Model Minority Myth.

In higher education institutions, the situation is not so different. The harmful effects of the myth are also evident (Li, 2005). Recent studies on APA college students reveal that APAs feel marginalized, misunderstood, disconnected from college campuses, and are experiencing institutionalized racism (Lagdameo, Lee, et al., 2002; Li). A study conducted on reactions from administration and students in response to racial incidents

revealed that there were differences between Black and Asian racial incidents (Delucchi & Do, 1996 as cited in Wong & Halgin, 2006). Racial incidents toward African Americans were labeled as acts of racism. On the other hand, racial incidents towards the Asian population were either ignored or not investigated when reported. When racial incidents occur with other minorities, the incidents are labeled racist. However, when actions or comments are made toward APAs the incidents are called satirical. More recently, racial comments or acts have occurred at Dartmouth College due to the recent hiring of the new college president, Dr. Jim Yong Kim, who took office in July 2009. The president who is Korean was referred to as a “Chinaman” and was accused of taking another hardworking American’s job in an email that was sent to students (Jan & Schworm, 2009). This makes it evident that racism still exists and that the Model Minority stereotype is a myth and is very problematic.

The above review of related literature covered the following topics: Asian American Traditional Cultural Values, Presidential and Leadership Diversity in Higher Education, Asian Americans in Higher Education, Asian American Administrators in Higher Education, Feminist Theories and Leadership Phenomenon, Women Administrators in Higher Education, Critical Race Theory and Model Minority. The highlights of the topics led to an understanding of the different types of circumstances, situations, cultural differences, gender differences and perceptions that an Asian women needs to consider, face and go through her journey in attaining an executive position in higher education, especially the presidential role. This current Ph.D. study focuses on the five Asian women who have achieved the peak leadership role in a two-year college system in the Pacific Coast region and provides further data concerning strategies and the

influences of inspiration for women leaders who may also aspire to ascend to the college presidency one day.

CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY

Restatement of the Problem

Although much has been written about the social, economic, and educational status of Asian Americans, there has been a lack of attention to the career (life) experiences of Asian Americans in presidential roles and the challenges they need to overcome in order to attain presidential positions in higher education. Based on a study conducted by American Council of Education in 2008 where they surveyed HR directors at 4,300 regionally accredited, degree-granting institutions, it is evident that there are many Asian American full-time tenured faculties, but their representation in senior positions in both the academia and administration is dismal. In addition, that fact that Asians are the only group without an equal representation in Academic Administration poses a major concern.

The purpose of this study was to understand the reasons for the slow progress of Asian Americans in obtaining presidential positions in higher education with the focus especially being on women. This study explored the presidential selection process, career and leadership experiences of Asian American women college presidents. The following research questions guided this study:

- 1) How have Asian American women college presidents navigated their career path in higher education?
- 2) What strategies and sources of support have Asian American women college presidents used to overcome barriers and challenges in their pathway to college presidency?

Research Design

To conduct this study, a qualitative research design was adopted in order to explore the research questions and elicit descriptions of the lived experiences of the participants and to identify emerging themes. As with most qualitative research, it was the intent of the study to reflect the individual and unique perspective of the participants in order “to develop patterns and relationships of meaning” (Creswell, 2003, p. 15). A qualitative research design enabled the researcher to meet with the study participants in their work settings, conduct an in-depth interview and make a comprehensive analysis of data gathered to reveal themes, challenges and solutions. In short, this research design was chosen in order to provide rich answers and detail to the study’s research questions.

The qualitative research methodology employed in this study involved an open-ended search for data and an ongoing analysis of the data supplied by participants from interviews and documents collected. Each Asian American woman college president in the Pacific Coast region had her own experiences in her pathway to a college presidency and the strategies and resources that she used to overcome the barriers and challenges along the way. Providing transcripts of interviews conducted by the researcher to the participants allowed the researcher to gather input and feedback to supplement data analysis and its interpretation. Considerable interpretation, reflection and understanding of the data collected were involved in the data analysis of this study. Consequently, data generated from lived experiences shared by the participants are constructions or interpretations.

The researcher entered the study firm in the knowledge that there is “no ‘pure,’ ‘raw’ data, uncontaminated by human thought and actions, and the significance of the data depends on how material fits into the architecture of corroborating data” (Freeman et al, 2007, p. 27). Qualitative data and information are by definition interpretations made by participants as they answer questions and/or by researchers as they write up their observations. It is

acknowledged that neither participant nor researcher can achieve neutrality in a qualitative research design “because...they are always positioned culturally, historically and theoretically” (p. 27).

Through the interviews conducted with the five Asian American women college presidents in the Pacific Coast, the researcher was able to organize the participants’ realities and experiences on their career paths to college presidencies in a way that is not only helpful to other aspiring leaders in higher education but also for diversifying the leadership in higher education. Ultimately, the use of semi-structured, in-person interviews, follow-up phone conversations and emails, and the collection of the researcher-developed demographic questionnaire yielded detailed information about the careers and leadership experiences of Asian American women presidents. Based on the purpose of this study, a set of questions was developed that sought to investigate the career and leadership experiences of Asian American women presidents. The initial two-hour interview was conducted in person and was followed up with phone conversations and emails for clarification and verification. The follow-up phone conversation and emails were conducted after a transcription of the interview was made and the data collected from the initial interview for clarification and verification was reviewed. This process ensured greater accuracy of the collected data.

In addition to the interviews, supporting documents were collected to gain additional insights and corroborate data from the interviews (Patton, 2002). Online biographies of the presidents were obtained by the researcher in advance of the interviews. Moreover, the researcher collected *curriculum vitae* or resumes from each president after the interview, which addressed Research Question 1 regarding how the presidents navigated their career paths or their professional journeys in higher education. Press releases issued by the colleges when the presidents were appointed to the position were gathered as well. The press releases

provided additional insight into the participants' professional journeys, career paths, values, and preparation for the role of president, thus further addressing Research Question 1.

All the data collected were analyzed and interpreted by the researcher. The researcher first explored the individual stories of the presidents and then identified experiences or perceptions that were common to all the participants. The research questions provided a framework in which to organize the data and identify themes that emerged from the data.

Population and Sample

The study's population consisted of six Asian American women in the Pacific Coast of the United States who held presidential positions between the years 2007-2012. This population was selected for study because they were identified as having Asian cultural background. To identify the specific population, the researcher acquired a list from the Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics, Inc. (LEAP) organization. LEAP is an organization that provides leadership training and mentorship to Asian American professionals in higher education. Given the limited number of the specific population, the researcher invited all six to participate in the study. Invitation letters were sent to all the Asian American women in the Pacific Coast who held presidential positions between the years 2007-2012 to solicit participation. The letter explained the purpose of the study and asked the president to consent to an in-person interview. Follow up emails were sent to those who did not respond to the initial invitation letter. Their presidential aids and executive assistants were cc'd on the email. A second follow-up through a phone call to the potential participants and their aides/executive assistants was made to those who did not respond to the initial invitation letter and email.

Five out of the six presidents agreed to participate in this study. One of the five participants is retired and is currently a faculty in a four-year university. The researcher

conducted five in-person interviews. One of the five presidents requested that her interview not be recorded; therefore, the researcher took copious and detailed notes to capture responses and quotes from the interview. All the participants in the study led community colleges, which is very important information to note in this study. Participants' campuses were located in two states: four in California and one in Washington. Student populations at the colleges ranged from 5,000 to 18,000.

Human-Subjects Approval

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at the University of San Francisco approved the methodology described in this chapter, including the letter to participants referenced above (see Appendix A). Each participant signed a consent form that included the demographic data form (see Appendix B) and received a copy of the Participant's Bill of Rights (see Appendix D). Further, the IRBPHS approved the questions that were used on the interview guide to facilitate each interview (see Appendix C). A copy of the approval letter from the IRBPHS is included (see Appendix E) and is retained in the School of Education Dean's Office.

Research Settings

The interviews were conducted in person. Three of the interviews took place on the campus where each president serves. The researcher sought to immerse herself in the environments of the participants (Creswell, 2003). Visiting the presidents in their own offices allowed the researcher to observe their surroundings and to gain additional insight into their daily lives. Due to scheduling, one of the interviews unfortunately had to be conducted on a different campus.

The first campus the researcher visited was located in a suburban town in California. The school was part of a state community college system and served more than 18,000 students in a variety of associate's degree and certification programs. Next, the researcher

traveled to Southern California where three of the presidents were located. One campus was a public suburban-serving, multi-campus community college. The college served nearly 11,500 students including many servicemen and women through its military programs. The researcher then visited a public urban-serving, multi-campus community college. This campus is the home for the city's Regional Public Safety Institute that has grown into a comprehensive community college with nearly 12,000 students enrolled. The next campus was located 100 miles away, where the retired participant currently teaches. The retired participant was a former president and chancellor of the community college that served servicemen and women through its military programs. The final campus visited was located in Washington State. The campus is a public associate-degree granting college, has course and program offerings in the liberal arts, professional/technical, basic education and personal/professional enrichment. This campus is medium-sized with nearly 5,000 enrolled students.

Instrumentation

The researcher conducted five semi-structured interviews (Patton, 2002) using open-ended questions to gain insight into the participants' perceptions and understanding of issues that were indicated in the research questions. Each president participated in one interview which lasted approximately two hours. The interviews were audio-recorded to provide a detailed record of the conversation, for which participants gave their permission, except for one participant. Participants were assured that their confidentiality would be protected through the use of pseudonyms in all written accounts of the interviews, by password-protecting all files related to the interview, and by using a locked file cabinet for all research related materials pertaining to the study.

A general interview guide (Patton, 2002) was developed that contained open-ended questions (see Appendix D). The questions sought information related to the factors that

influence Asian American women college presidents in attaining their current leadership positions; the barriers and ongoing challenges they encounter in the pursuit of leadership positions and in their current roles; how they perceived the presidential search process; how they define good leaders; and documenting their recommendations for any policy or institutional changes to increase the participation of Asian Americans in college presidential roles. The interview questions were emailed to the presidents approximately a week before the interview in order to give them time to prepare their thoughts, if needed.

Through the interviews, the researcher explored how participants make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness, both individually and as shared meaning (Patton, 2002, p. 104). The interviews allowed participants to share their experiences and perceptions with the researcher to address the two research questions. The interview guide listed the questions to be asked in each interview but was flexible enough to allow for appropriate follow-up or clarifying questions and any new questions that arose during each conversation. During the first interview, the president brought up the topic of balancing work and personal life and addressed it generally and offered her personal experience and story. Since it was brought up during the first interview, the researcher made it a point to ask the same question to the all the other interviews conducted for this study. All the presidents were very friendly and open with their responses and added insights and comments that they felt were helpful and related to the purpose of the study.

Supporting Documents

In this research study, the researcher gathered supporting documents to enhance the data collected through the interviews. This provided information that might not be readily obvious to the researcher and also helped guide the line of inquiry (Patton, 2002). The supporting documents collected for this study were the demographic data and biographical

sketch of each president, their *curriculum vitae* and resumes, and public press releases regarding their presidential appointments and issues/events related to their leadership roles and responsibilities.

The demographic data covered their specific Asian cultural background, educational background, marital status, number of children, if they ever took time off from their professional careers to care for any dependents and how many presidential searches they had participated in before their first appointment as college president. The demographic data helped in addressing the research questions in regards to the career paths and barriers challenges the presidents have encountered in their pathway to a presidency. The biographical sketch of each president was obtained from the institutional website. The biographical sketch provided each participant's past professional experiences and educational backgrounds, which was very helpful in addressing Research Question 1. The researcher also asked for the participant's *curriculum vitae* or resume after the interview was conducted. The *curriculum vitae* or resume outlined each participant's educational degrees, past professional experiences, their affiliation and memberships in professional groups and a list of their academic and professional publications. The public press releases regarding their presidential appointments and issues/events related to their leadership roles and responsibilities gave the researcher insights into their particular leadership styles.

Reliability and Validity

Qualitative studies, such as this study, must address the issue of reliability and validity. Several authors have discussed the importance of validity in qualitative work and suggested steps that can be taken to ensure findings are accurate and reflective of what occurs in the research setting (Creswell, 2003; Maxwell, 2005; Patton, 2002). The researcher took several steps to ensure validity and reliability in this study.

A pilot study was conducted for this study. Pilot study is defined by Light, Singer, and Willett as, "a preliminary study that informs a future effort by systematically examining specific facets of the eventual design" (p. 214). For the purpose of this study, the pilot study was conducted 1) to make sure that interview questions were clear and unambiguous, 2) to estimate the reliability and precision of the interview questions, and 3) to practice the use of digital recorder. The interview questions and protocol were piloted with two Asian Pacific American women leaders in a community college. Once the protocol and interview questions were updated based on the pilot interviews, the researcher sought out potential interview subjects among college presidents.

Bogdan and Biklen (2003) defined reliability in qualitative research as a fit between what the researcher described and what actually transpired in the research setting. Four out of the five dialogues during the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. A portion of a sample transcript from one of the interviews is included in Appendix D. One participant asked not to be audio-recorded; therefore, the researcher took copious and detailed notes during the interview. Each participant was sent an electronic copy of the transcript and notes to review and check for accuracy. In instances where there were mistakes or errors, participants informed the researcher and provided corrections.

Creswell suggested that researchers should triangulate different data sources of information (p. 196). In this study, the primary source of data was from the participants during the interviews, However, the researcher also collected supporting documents that were used to confirm or contradict themes that emerged in the interviews. The presidential biographies and resumes confirmed the data collected in the interviews about the participants' career paths and professional journeys.

Following Patton (2002) and Creswell (2003) who discussed the need for detailed and “thick description,” the researcher included many direct quotations from interviews and collected documents to enable readers to assess the legitimacy of the researcher’s conclusions for themselves. Readers are better equipped to assess the accuracy of the researcher’s findings when they are exposed to the primary source data that was collected during the study.

Maxwell (2005) identified one of the main validity threats in qualitative research as “reactivity.” Reactivity can be the result of the researcher coming into the research setting and causing the participants to alter their natural behavior. The researcher attempted to mitigate this validity threat by providing the participants with the interview questions at least one week in advance of the interviews so they had an opportunity to consider the questions and their responses when the researcher was not present.

Data Collection

The five participants in this study were asked to fill out a brief demographic data sheet (see Appendix C) which also became their signed consent form. The statement below is from the consent letter which was given to all participants in this study:

If you agree to be in this study, you will complete the attached demographic sheet that asks about your cultural and educational backgrounds and other demographic questions relevant to the research I am conducting. If you agree to participate, please complete the attached demographic sheet and consent form and return it to me in the enclosed pre-addressed envelope.

Obtaining the demographic data before the interviews helped make the actual interviews and discussions more effective and meaningful since the researcher had a general idea of the participant’s educational, career and cultural background.

The researcher conducted a two-hour semi-structured interview with the participants. Except for one participant due to a scheduling issue, the interviews occurred

at the participant's office at a mutually convenient time. The interview questions used in this study in order to obtain data to answer each of the study's research questions were as follows:

Research Question No. 1: How have Asian American women college presidents navigated their career path in higher education?

1. Could you tell me about your background and upbringing?
2. Could you describe your education and how it influenced you?
3. What do you think contributed to your success in attaining your current position?
4. Explain how your cultural background played a role in your life choices such as education, career and marriage?
5. What are the strengths and skills you bring to your current position?
6. What skills or strengths were particularly important for you personally?
7. What type of strengths and skills do current leaders need in order to make it to the college presidency?
8. Please describe and share your experience of the presidential search process?
9. Do you feel that the search process disclosed most or all of the information you need to know about the institution, the position, your spouse or domestic partner's role, the board's and the institution's expectations?
10. Were there any steps or requirements during the selection process that you perceived were not fair? Please explain your answer.

11. Based on your experience, what was the best part of the selection process?
12. Based on your experience, what was the most important part of the selection process?
13. Based on your experience, what was the least important part of the selection process?
14. What are some of your recommendations in order to improve the presidential search process?
15. What is your leadership style?
16. Define what it means to be a good leader.
17. What is it like to be a college president?

Research Question No. 2: What strategies and sources of support have Asian American women college presidents used to overcome barriers and challenges in their pathway to college presidency?

1. In your experience, what are the barriers you have faced as an Asian American woman leader in higher education?
2. In your experience, what are the ongoing challenges you have faced as an Asian American woman leader in higher education?
3. What were the challenges and barriers that were particularly significant for you personally?
4. What strategies have you used to address these barriers and challenges, and how successful were those strategies?

5. How do your previous work experiences help you in your current leadership role?
6. Who are your mentors and what are their leadership styles?

Miscellaneous Questions:

1. What advice would you give Asian Americans who aspire to be in high executive positions in higher education?
2. What contribution, if any, can Asian Americans who currently hold the position of college president make to address the under-representation of Asians in college presidencies?
3. Is there anything else you would like to share that we have not already covered?

The interviews were audio-tape recorded in order to allow for later transcription for the purpose of data analysis. During the interviews, the researcher took descriptive notes to capture key points and ideas and used probing questions to gain more knowledge and understanding. The interview transcripts were emailed to the participants to ensure that the researcher had an accurate understanding of the participant's experiences.

The researcher used the interview transcripts and other supporting documents to check on emerging themes and noted consistencies and inconsistencies. The researcher also used the follow-up emails to clarify things that were missed during the interviews. In addition, the researcher collected for further analysis, if available, the participant's *curriculum vitae* or resume and other public press releases related to the participant's presidential appointment and issues/events that reflect their leadership styles. Once all the data was collected, the researcher developed a profile for each participant. The profiles of each participant were structured to cover the personal and professional background,

career pathways to college presidency and strategies and resources used to overcome barriers and challenges along the way.

Data Analysis

The researcher followed the data analysis procedures described by Creswell (2003). After the interviews were completed, the researcher transcribed the interviews, electronically scanned the supporting documents, and organized all the data (transcripts, online presidential biographies, presidential resumes, press releases or announcements, and presidential welcome messages or speeches). Once all the transcripts were reviewed and approved by each participant, data analysis involved detailed reading, coding and recoding of notes, memos and interview transcripts. Coding involved highlighting and transcribing key words and phrases on a hard copy of each transcript. Descriptive vignettes and quotes were highlighted for use in the narrative of findings. Once coding of each transcript was completed, key words and phrases were transcribed separately, and, upon review of all four transcripts and detailed interview notes, data analysis of the words and phrases resulted in their categorization into subsequent themes that emerged from the data.

Throughout data analysis, the study's research questions framed the process of identifying themes that would identify and spotlight factors regarding the underrepresentation of Asian women in college presidencies, their career paths, the challenges and barriers they experienced, and the strategies and sources of support they utilized through their presidential journey. During data analysis, the conceptual framework of glass ceiling and critical race theory, described in Chapter Two were utilized as a lens through which the researcher identified connections or disconnects of the participants' lived experiences with the scholarly literature.

Background of the Researcher

In qualitative research, this study is interpretive (Creswell, 2003). The researcher's background, experiences, biases, and thinking are regarded as influences in interpretation (Glesne, 2006). I am an Asian American woman. Although my parents have mixed cultural backgrounds (Chinese, Filipino and Spanish), I identify myself as Filipino. I am an administrator in higher education and had been in the HR profession for ten years. I value higher education and have enjoyed my role as an administrator at a four-year university. As I became more involved in higher education's culture and engaged with students and executive leaders at my work, I have set my goal in the future to one day become a president and lead a university. In 2007, I was fortunate to be nominated by one of the executive leaders at my previous place of work to attend a four-day leadership program particularly designed for Asia Pacific Islanders. I submitted all the necessary paperwork for the program, and I was lucky enough to be accepted. The program is called Leadership Development Program for Higher Education (LDPHE) for Asia Pacific Islanders (API). The program was created in 1997 to promote the professional development of APIs in leadership roles as executives, managers, faculty and staff in our nation's colleges and universities. The program was conducted by Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics, Inc. (LEAP) in partnership with Asian Pacific Americans in Higher Education (APAHE). The LDPHE is the only program in the United States that provides leadership training based on a unique understanding of API values, styles, and contributions.

The LDPHE program is an intensive, four-day experience, with a format that focuses on in-depth interactions between participants and program faculty. In addition to leadership skills training, the program is also designed to build networks among

participants, leading college and university presidents, faculty, and senior administrators. It is through the completion of this program that I was made aware of the under-representation of Asian Americans in executive positions in higher education and the struggle in building the leadership pipeline for Asian Americans. At the same time, my spirit and passion were renewed through the encouragement and mentorship I received from the program for me to pursue my long-term career goal to become a college president.

It is also in 2007 that I started my doctoral program. Through the leadership classes that I have taken at the University of San Francisco, I became very interested in studying women leadership, particularly women college presidents. It is through my research in completing required papers for my classes that I encountered the issue of the combination of a glass ceiling for women and minorities and the “bamboo ceiling” that Asian Americans in particular experience in attaining executive positions in organizations. I never thought about the issue before since I grew up in a family of medical professionals and had not heard of any discussions or issues regarding job promotions in the workplace. Moreover, at the four-year university at which I used to work, there is a good representation of Asian American women as Vice Presidents and Deans. Therefore, I had never thought much about it previously.

Once I became more conscious and better informed about the issue, I started to doubt myself and thought that it might well be impossible for an Asian American woman to crack both the glass and bamboo ceilings at the same time, especially if they are married with kids. Knowing that only about one percent of college presidents in the United States are Asian Americans, I do hope that conducting a narrative life story of each of the five Asian American women college presidents in the Pacific Coast of the

United States on their career paths to college presidencies and learning about the strategies and resources they used to overcome the barriers and challenges they faced along the way will give hope and inspiration to aspiring future leaders in higher education such as myself. I believe that a strong diversity of executive leaders in higher education will benefit and enrich the students' college education and experience. A final caveat: I recognize that my biases and my personal lens as an Asian American woman may affect my interpretation of data. Hence I will take whatever prudent precautions I can in my data collection.

CHAPTER IV RESULTS

Introduction

This study investigated the factors behind the slow progress and underrepresentation of Asian Americans, with the focus on women, in attaining presidential positions in higher education. Specifically, this study explored the factors that influenced Asian American women college presidents in attaining their current leadership positions; the barriers and ongoing challenges they encountered in the pursuit of leadership positions and in their current roles; how they perceived the presidential search process; and how they define good leaders and their leadership styles. It documented their recommendations and advice to women of color who are aspiring to be in executive positions in higher education, specifically the presidential role. Data was gathered from interviews and supporting documentation, as detailed in the preceding chapter.

This chapter will provide a description of the participants in the study on both an aggregate and individual level. The participants will be referred to in the order in which the researcher interviewed them for the purposes of identification in reporting (i.e. President 1 was also the first participant interviewed by the researcher). Following the profiles made of the participants, findings from the study will be presented through the research questions. Major themes that emerged from each research question will provide a framework for discussion of the findings.

Participant Profile and Description

Five women participated in this study. Four of the five participants currently serve their presidency at community colleges located in the Pacific Coast region of the United States. Four of the participants were in California and one was from Washington State. Four of the five participants were in their first presidential appointments. At the time of

the interviews, those women had been in their current presidencies between two and seven years. The one who was retired had held her presidential role for seven years and was also the district's Chancellor for three years. One participant had previously served as president at another institution of higher learning. All of the participants led two-year community college institutions of higher learning and generously shared their leadership perceptions and insights to inform this study and address its research questions.

The scholarly literature reviewed earlier in Chapter Two suggested that women are less likely than men to be presidents of doctoral institutions (ACE, 2007; King & Gomez, 2008). None of the participants had ever held a tenured faculty position, but all of them had taught part-time in higher education. Table 1 provides an overview of the demographic data of the participants. The data was assembled through the researcher developing a demographic data sheet that was completed by each participant before the interview was conducted.

Table 3: Overview of Participant's Demographic Information

Participant	Race/Ethnicity	Highest Degree	Marital Status	Children
President 1	Guamanian	Ed.D.	Divorced	No
President 2	Filipino- American	Ph.D.	Divorced	Yes
President 3	Chinese	Ph.D.	Married	Yes
President 4	Chinese	Ed.D.	Married	Yes
President 5	Japanese- American	Ed.D.	Married	Yes

Two of the participants identified their race and ethnicity as Chinese, one as Filipino-American, another one as Japanese-American, and one as Guamanian. One participant had recently retired from a community college chancellorship and was previously a community college president. All of the participants had earned doctoral degrees. Two of the participants held Ph.D. degrees in Education and International Education. Three of the participants held Ed.D. degrees in Organization and Leadership, Institutional Management in Higher Education and Higher Education Policy and Administration. Three of the participants were married with children. Two were divorced, one with and one without children. A detailed profile of each participant follows, presented in the order in which they were interviewed.

President 1

It's so exciting to know that there's this incredible honor of leading a really amazing institution and through my actions that I can help create an institution that reaches some of the most underserved population. It's just huge on my agenda. And so I guess that's really what I love about being able to be a President. There is so much freedom of action to do good work, hire good people, and to build those alliances and to build that community to which students feel incredibly welcomed and are successful (President 1).

President 1 had been an administrator in higher education for 33 years. She worked 31 years in the community college system of which six years were at the institution she now leads, a two-year public college in a suburban area with more than 18,000 students. Prior to assuming the presidency, she held positions such as Chief Academic Officer, Dean of Academic Services, Dean of Matriculations and Dean of Student Services. President 1 has vast experience professionally and has served on many committees and boards throughout her career. She attributed her success in attaining her current role to two great women mentors early in her career. One of her mentors opened the door for her to move up based on all the merit of her work. She noted that she was

hired by her mentor six times -- her initial hire and, subsequently, through reorganizations and interim appointments. President 1 has modeled her style after that mentor, whom she noted is an “amazing and a great human being.”

President 1’s leadership style is highly inclusive. “I do very well in navigating shared governance models, because for me, it is a part of my value to really allow people a voice.” She believes that good leaders empower the people they’re leading to really achieve their potential and to be fully engaged in the work of the institution. President 1 sees herself in a position of stewardship, as opposed to being in a position of authority. “It’s about how do I motivate, how do I inspire, how do I model, how do I encourage, how do I cultivate. The last thing I want to do is to rely on, if you will, presidential authority from a legal framework to get things done.”

President 1’s Asian cultural background is Guamanian. Both her parents came from interracial unions between Mexican and Irish and Chamorro and German. She identifies herself as her “father’s daughter” since she feels more connected to her father who is Guamanian than her mother. She is a product of 22 years of Catholic education, from elementary school to her doctorate degree. She attributed her love and passion for education to her interactions with the nuns and the high expectations they set for her as a woman. “The nuns had such strong feelings about young women being educated.” This is contrary to her mother’s expectations for her to get married and have a family after high school. She received her bachelor’s degree in history and French, her master’s degree in history and her Doctor of Education degree in organization and leadership with a concentration in education law.

President 1 is divorced without children. She was married for a short time thinking that she would accommodate herself to her husband as part of a cultural

expectation. However, she later realized that she had outgrown her husband and no longer wanted to be married.

President 2

It is a privilege to be a president because you are put in a position of deep respect... I think people may disagree with you but you're still in a privileged position, but it's also a very big responsibility; it's a big responsibility...Because, in the end, while really it's not the president, just like the president of the United States doesn't really run the whole nation, you have to have really good people that help you. I happen to believe that – you got to be able to create teams (President 2).

President 2 is the president of a medium-sized two-year public community college serving multi-campus with a student body of more than 11,000. She has held her current position for over two years. She has more than 20 years of experience in the community college system and has extensive experience working in a large multi-college district. She has an extensive and in-depth background in student services and a history of collaboration with Instruction. Her previous roles in academia before her presidency include: Vice President of Student Services, Dean of Student Affairs and Student Affairs Officer. She has also had international experience in the field of international training. She attributed her success in attaining her current role to her vast experience in higher education, holding an advanced degree and, as the most important factor, having a set of achievements: “You have to excel in something that you do; you have to have an exceptional record”. She described her pathway as being unplanned, and it allowed her to enjoy what she was doing rather than being stressed, tunnel-visioned and linear.

President 2 is authentic is down-to-earth and does not see herself as being above other people: “I like being able to be myself and yet understanding that I have a different role. As president, I’m still learning that I’m everything that I say and my actions are much more visible and they become more subject to different types of interpretation.” As a

leader, she is defined by others as someone who feels at ease and having strong interpersonal skills. President 2 believes that effective leaders need to be authentic, since you cannot change who you are. She thinks leaders can somewhat tweak their style or adjust certain things to fit a culture; but, in the end, they have to be who they are, so they feel comfortable in their own skin. She also believes that having passion for, wanting, and loving what you do is very important. Lastly, she noted that having a vision is critical to being a good leader. “Somebody who can see beyond and can see the possibilities and can actually instill hope when there seems to be no hope, I think that’s what a leader is.”

President 2 is Filipino-American who was born and raised in the Philippines. She came to the United States during her early 20’s. Her parents were both elementary school teachers. Coming from a strong Asian cultural background, “education is not a choice; it is something you had to do”. She was not encouraged by her parents to go into the education field because of the notion of lower salaries and wages, as they had lived it themselves as teachers. President 2 attended the best high school and university in the Philippines for her undergraduate studies. She was not always the best student, but she felt honored in attending highly reputable schools. President 2 earned her bachelor’s degree in Philippine studies with emphases in linguistics and Philippine literature, her master’s degree in communication theory with emphases in intercultural, and organizational communication, and her Doctor of Philosophy degree in education with emphases in leadership and diversity.

President 2 is the only participant who became a single mother after being divorced. She is the mother of two children. She commented repeatedly during the interview that her mother, sister and brother provided her support to get through her divorce enabling her to find a job, build her career and be able to raise her children. She

attributed this to her Asian cultural background. While building her career, she did not have a lot of time to spend with her children: “I was a single mom, my kids were teenagers and they usually never saw me during the day. Those were some of the sacrifices.”

President 3

Being a president is like an orchestra conductor...Because you are in front of all sorts of talents and you know the talents. You are there to create that symphony. You are the conductor but they're really doing the work in harmony. It has to be in unity, in harmony, in unison, otherwise it's a cacophony. When it's all designed right by the conductor, it becomes a beautiful symphony, that's what I feel like... It's a feeling that is very rewarding (President 3).

President 3 served both as a president of a community college and, eventually, became the chancellor of the district. She is recently retired. She served as president for seven years and later as the district's chancellor for two years. The district included three colleges that served over 60,000 students. She is a nationally and internationally recognized leader with more than 30 years of experience. The roles she held in academia prior to her chancellorship include: President, Vice President of Economic and Community Development, Assistant to Vice President of Instruction and Matriculation Coordinator. Her personal passion is entrepreneurship: She fulfilled that in her various roles, especially in her VP of Economic and Community Development position where she built a program from the ground up and raised funds for the program.

She attributed her success in attaining her presidency and chancellorship to the successful people around her who provided her mentoring, modeling and friendships: ‘I learned a lesson early on in my career to stick with successful people.’ She described her pathway as zigzagged, beginning from student services to instruction to economic development to technology. President 3 also believes the breadth and depth of all her experiences strongly contributed to her success and that her accomplishments in each stage of her career were critical in attaining her presidency and chancellorship positions.

President 3 has a flexible and empowering style of leadership. “It’s really kind of an existential in many different ways; it’s a collection of a lot of variety of styles such as transactional, transformative or situational, or servant leadership.” She said in the interview she incorporates just a little bit of everything because, in a crisis mode, a leader has to be authoritative. “I really think the strength of a leader comes from empowering each individual in the institution.” President 3 believes that a characteristic of a good leader is having the ability to ignite and build on the passion of each individual. “Someone who could actually bring out the leader of everyone in the institution, that’s the empowerment part of it.” For her, a good leader is one who will set high standards and high expectations for the institution. Someone who could move the institution physically and move the people as well, that’s the heart part of it, ”because it’s not about making headlines, it’s about connecting heart.”

President 3 is the first Asian woman to be appointed as a college president in California. She was born and grew up in Taiwan and came to the United States during the middle of her teenage years as an international student. Those years were the hardest years of her life, but as it turned out as she observed in retrospect, “it was probably the best years because it helped me to be so strong.” She learned many life lessons that were both enlightening and enriching. She understood, firsthand, how the material world is less significant, because they had so little growing up, yet she gained so much spiritually: “There’s just no correlation whatsoever. We had so little but we really had -- we were given a lot in many different ways.” Her cultural background as Chinese played a key role in her career choice to enter the education industry, because educators are highly revered and respected in the Chinese culture. Accordingly, she had the approval from her family to pursue this path. President 3 earned two bachelor’s degrees, one in math and the other in

psychology, her master's is in personnel counseling, and her Doctor of Philosophy degree is in international/intercultural education.

President 3 is married with two adult children. Several times during the interview she mentioned how supportive her husband has been throughout her career and since she became president. She was very clear in the interview that, even though she struggled to find the balance between her family and career, her family always came first: "When I was going for my doctorate, I told my family you know if this doctorate is going to come before me and you, I know which one to give up. I don't need a doctorate but I want to have a family. And if the job is costing me my marriage, I know which one is not worth it – it's the job." She sacrificed some time with her children as they grew up, but the way she made it up to them was to be there for them 100% while she was with them.

President 4

Being a college president is like being a mother... "They blame you for everything when things go wrong and seldom get credit, but they respect you if you are fair (President 4).

President 4 leads a large urban community college with more than 11,000 students. She has served as president for eight years. Prior to her presidency, she took an active role in several organizations that were serving a Chinese group in her community. She has always kept in mind that "this country is competitive, speak up for your own group but do not treat others unfairly." She came from a background in student services and teaching. The roles she held before her presidency include: Interim President, Vice President of Student Services in two different colleges, Dean of Student Learning and Development, and Dean of Admissions and Records. She worked for five different colleges and one private university. President 4 taught part-time for 17 years in the subject areas of human and career development, Chinese language, literature and culture, and ESL.

She went through no fewer than five presidential searches before she was appointed as college president.

In the interview, President 4 attributed her success to the family support she has received throughout her career. She considers her husband as a very supportive mentor, as has been the case with her mother and father: “We Asians have good support from the family.” She calls her mother every Sunday to talk about personal and professional matters. One of her mentors who is also a minority woman has encouraged her along the way and saw something in her that showed she is “president material.” The leadership style of President 4 is very collaborative and participatory. She keeps everyone in the loop and she uses a consensus-building approach. She noted that it was very important to listen and be patient, but, at the end of the day, she would make the decisions while keeping everyone’s perspective in mind. For President 4, “Good leaders can work with people, are change agents and are very patient. It took me two years to bring the campus together.” President 4 is the first Asian woman to be named as president in her college and the second Asian woman college president ever appointed in California.

President 4 was born and raised in Taiwan. Her father is a military general and her mother is a school teacher. Her family had always valued education, so she developed a passion for education: “Education is natural to me; I just know I have to go to school.” President 4 was always at the top of her class from first grade to her senior year in high school. She was disciplined, and learning in school came naturally to her. She spoke a lot about her training and her exposure to and application of Confucius’s teachings and considers it as a chief asset. President 4 received her bachelor’s in western languages and literature, her master’s in guidance and counseling and her Doctor of Education in

institutional management in higher education focusing on community college administration.

President 4 is married with two adult children. For six years she stayed home to raise her children. Both of her children are fluent in Chinese and both have received their undergraduate degrees from Harvard University and both have attended Yale Law School. She is the only participant in this study who left the job market to care for her children at one point. She mentioned throughout the interview that her husband was very supportive throughout her career. He retired from his job after she was appointed as college president.

President 5

Well I love it because there's such variety. Being a president is a lifestyle; I have no control over my schedule. Obviously if I'm a change agent, I like change, I don't like consistency. I love the idea that every day is a different day...I like the fact that I'm able to represent the college with the community. I love the community work. I love meeting people from different walks of life and I love being able to speak on behalf of the college because I feel so passionate about what we do (President 5).

President 5 is a nationally-recognized advocate of community college education. She worked 35 years in the community college system at five different colleges. President 5 currently leads a medium sized community college in a rural area with more than 4,500 students. She was the only participant who was in her second presidential appointment. The previous college she led, located in the Midwest, was larger and in a suburban area with more than 10,000 students. She held her first presidency for four years. The position President 5 held prior to assuming her first appointment as President was Chief Academic Officer or Provost. She attributed her success to four main factors: being in the right place at the right time; her "can do attitude"; having mentors; and networking. In her interview, President 5 said she believed timing was very important and that one should seize opportunities as they come along. She was never afraid to try new things and was always

willing to challenge herself. Furthermore, she was not afraid to fail: “What’s the worst that could happen if I don’t like it or I failed?” She spoke about the support she had received from her mentors, especially from former bosses who were strong and very successful educators. She noted that networking through conferences and training was a key component to her success since in that way she built a great network of people to whom she could reach out for information, advice, and support.

The leadership style of President 5 was very collaborative. She emphasized the use of collaboration with colleagues during challenging situations where problem solving was needed and when decisions needed to be made. She did not always have all the information she needed. Therefore, she depended on the people around her to help close the information gap or her decisions would be made without input from others: “I think part of it, I mean if you want to call it cultural, because in our culture as Asian woman, we are not told to be visible, bold and ever present. In fact, we’re taught to be fairly invisible and I think part of that is reflected in my leadership style because I’m not a dominant force.” She said she believed that good leaders model behaviors for others to exhibit and that they are willing to share the responsibility in making good and bad decisions and the outcomes that go with it. Good leaders need to be able to take risks, “being able to recognize when it’s important to be bold and upfront in making those decisions and when to appear to be more part of a collective team...the balance between the two.” President 5 talked about planning for leadership succession as part of a good leader’s responsibility and about taking time to grow and support other leaders.

President 5 has always identified herself as Japanese-American. She is a 3rd generation Japanese-American who was born and raised in Hawaii. She believed that growing up in Hawaii gave her a different experience in comparison with those from the

“mainland” continental United States during World War II. She considered that background as an advantage throughout her college years, because she was seen as an islander associated with the beauty of the islands of Hawaii, hula girls and the idea of paradise, rather than being identified as a Japanese-American, many of whom had been put into concentration camps during the war. She grew up in a middle class family that valued education. Her mother was a nurse, and her father was an accountant who owned a pineapple farm. She attended public schools throughout her elementary and high school years but always longed for a private education. Therefore, for her undergraduate degree, she attended a private liberal college in the Midwest. President 5 received her bachelor’s degree in Anthropology, her master’s in instructional design and technology and her Doctor of Education in community college leadership. She is the only participant in this study who almost received two doctoral degrees. She was in her dissertation-writing stage, when she had to leave her first doctoral program due to the death of her major advisor and changes in her circumstance with her minor advisor, along with other family-related reasons.

President 5 is married with two adult children. She noted the timing of her career took into account her family’s ability to move and her children’s lives. She stayed in one of the colleges for 12 years since her daughters made her promise not to move until they finish high school “because they could not see breaking that stage and all their friends...so I made that commitment to them.” Throughout the interview, President 5 acknowledged how supportive her husband was of her career and that he took on more time in raising their children, because his schedule was more flexible than hers.

Findings: Research Question 1

The first research question in the study was: *How have Asian American women college presidents navigated their career path in higher education?* This question sought to understand the major decision-making junctures each president faced along her career path in higher education, the personal and professional reflections that helped them advance in their careers, and who and what supported their successes. The major themes that emerged from the data collected were “Sustained Career Growth” and “Varied Administrative Experiences and Family Sacrifices and Support.”

Sustained Career Growth and Varied Administrative Experiences

When reflecting on their previous work experiences that helped them in their journey to their presidential roles, all participants believed that all their positions in higher education had helped them grow professionally and had contributed to their success. In reviewing each participant’s resume and *curriculum vitae*, it was seen that their career pathway reflected career growth and advancement from each of their previous professional roles. For instance, President 4 commented, “All of the positions I have held prepared me very well, I am like a sponge.” President 3 expressed a similar sentiment:

I used to wonder, what the necessity is in my naïve days. Was the necessity of everybody had to sit through this chair that chair that chair? I didn’t understand that until I gone through all the chairs. And there’s definitely value and there’s value in staying in the chair long enough to understand that position to make some changes...from the chair in which you sit. So every position, every institution that I’ve been absolutely contributed to the breadth and depth of my job. It’s as like everything is cumulative. One builds on the other. (President 3)

President 2 believed all her previous experiences counted because she uses many aspects of what she learned from her previous roles. President 1 characterized her pathway that incorporated a variety of jobs and functions in the same institution as being amazing to

her: “I mean I was able to have a lot of different jobs without ever leaving the job I had. So the familiarity with some of the more operational issues that my own administrators and staff deal with really again, made for that empathy that might not otherwise be there.” President 1 noted that her varied administrative experiences gave her a broad global perspective and allowed her to appreciate the implications of certain policies for college operational matters.

In most instances, advancement opportunities were offered to the participants based on their hard work, sustained good performance reviews, being at the right place and at the right time, and their ability to seize opportunities when they arose thus expanding their portfolios. President 5 specifically commented:

Being at the right place and the right time is a key...timing. I happen to be at places where there are opportunities that open up. Coupled with – I’ve never been afraid to try something different. It’s like, what do I have to lose? So let me be the Vice President. That wasn’t something I was thinking of, it wasn’t part of my career map but because those opportunities came about, it was an attitude of “why not? What’s the worst that could happen if I don’t like it or I failed? (President 5)

President 2 spoke about when she learned early on in her career path that it was not the type of positions and titles that matter most. Rather, it was being able to be open to learn new things and take on a leadership role no matter what position she had:

“You’ve got to do as much as you can if you want to really make a name for yourself or build a reputation for yourself...do not let the title define you.” President 1, who has a strong student services background, shared with the interviewer an experience she had that was very beneficial for her when she was asked to join the budget committee in her college:

When I think about being asked to be on the district budget committee, I don’t have any sort of financial background, there I was... I was a student services dean at that time for heaven’s sake...why would she get the director of budget to do that but you know there was confidence in me and I welcome the opportunity to do something so different. So when I applied for the presidency position...I can

talk about what have I done in student services, what have I done in instruction, what about business services, what about personnel relations, and things at the state level, the work on advisory boards that are local (President 1).

The majority of the participants believed that it was very important to have varied administrative experiences and to have worked for different institutions. President 5 mentioned that her work experience in various environments and colleges helped her a great deal. She believed that the value of having a varied set of administrative experiences and having worked with different types of institutions provided her the ability to be able to offer a varied approach to situations and and to offer resolutions. President 4 exemplified the importance of this in her extreme commute of 135 miles from her home to work in order to sustain her career growth and to be able to work in a different institution to expand her perspective. President 3 worked for various institutions to expand her experiences and skills as well; to do so, she commuted from thirty minutes to one hour in order to get to her job. She believed that each position built on the other. She did not support the idea of skipping in-between positions to obtain a top seat. She believed that a leader must continue to collect tools such as knowledge, skills and abilities even when they reach the presidential position. “It’s a continuous process that accumulates overtime.”

Overall, each president spoke about how important it was for them to have continuously expanded their experiences and skill sets, to have gone above and beyond their current job duties, to have seize opportunities, and to have had a willingness to take risk in learning something new, including working for different types of institutions in different functions within the same organization. If this meant a new opportunity resulted in a commute or even uprooting their families to move and giving up their comfort zones,

they all had made those very important decisions at some point in their pathways to the presidential role.

Family Sacrifices and Support

In the interviews, the majority of the participants shared information about their family sacrifices and the family support they received when they navigated their careers in higher education. Four out of the five participants spoke about the long hours, late nights, and, at times, the need to work on weekends and holidays in order to meet the demands of their positions and to continuously expand their scope and thereby move up the career ladder. President 3 acknowledged that being in high level positions required a large time commitment, so that when she went home she made a point not to take any work home. Once she was home, she tried to commit 100% time to her family.

I think particularly, at the personal level is working, working double, triple hard... No one asked me to, but I felt a sense of pride in doing good work and that's like the most important thing... Being the best you know how to be and that's the challenge, because there's always a price to pay right? So part of it is not being able to spend as much time as I wanted to perhaps with my family. You know I work long hours. (President 3)

President 3 planned her career advancement around the ages and stages of her two daughters. She strongly believed timing was a key factor in order for her to balance her career and family life. With strong family values as her anchor, she decided and prioritized early on that her family would always come first. This college president had more time with her kids while they grew up. She planned to take on higher positions as her kids got older and planned on being a president after her kids were out of high school. The plan did not quite work out as expected because she became president in the last two years of high school of her youngest child. In the interview, President 3 shared that her kids will forever remember the moment when she had to turn down a job -- a promotion opportunity for her at that time -- because they asked her to work evenings. This was

during her doctoral program as well, so the timing was not the best: “I turned it down and actually shed some tears...my kids were there, and they said why are you crying? I said because I turned down a job. I turned down a job because it would take me away from being with you at night.” Rather than pursue her career, she chose not to sacrifice her time with her family in order to uphold her strong cultural sense of family values.

The balance is would you give up your job or would you give up your family? Which is more important? When the rubber hits the road, it’s going to be the family, and do they know that? So have I sacrificed time with my children? Absolutely! How do I make up for it I guess is by being 100% there for them for the time that I am there...And when I was going for my doctorate, I told my family you know if this doctorate is going to come before me and you, I know which one to give up. I don’t need a doctorate but I want to have a family...And if the job is costing me my marriage, I know which one is not worth it – it’s the job. (President 3)

At the same time, President 3 believed she could not have had the same success in her career without the support of her family -- specifically, the strong support she received from her husband who helped her maintain the balance she wanted between family and career. “He understood but I try to find that balance...by not taking work home, so when I walk into the house, I’m 100% there.”

President 5 held the same basic family values as President 3 in as much as her career pathway was shaped around the lives of her daughters. Her daughters made her promise not to move until they had finished high school in order for them to have a stable environment and not to have to break their established friendships. President 5 made this commitment to her daughters and stayed in the same place for 12 years, the longest time she had ever stayed in the same institution. President 5 mentioned that one of the challenges she had as she moved up through the ranks was the inability to have a lot of time with her family. She felt lucky and appreciated that her husband’s profession as an elementary teacher allowed him a more flexible schedule to have more time with their

children. The fact that her husband loves being with kids and did not mind being at home with their daughters was a real plus with regards to her being able to eventually become a college president.

I mean the kids grew up with babysitters, a part of me feels guilty, that I didn't spend as much time with them. I could've spent more quality time with them. I could've been the mother that had all their albums with the pictures of their birthdays, but I don't! They're all empty. They're all here in my mind. So yes, I mean it's primarily guilt. I guess, but it became a way of life for them. I mean yes; they always said I wish I had a mom who can take me to school every day. Well come on, get real. I'm just sort of like; it's not going to happen! But you know, it's just they learned to accept it. And they're really quite resilient about it all while they're young. (President 5)

President 5 noted her marriage would not have lasted if her husband was not laid-back and willing to relocate. She always felt that he was being supportive. During her first presidency, she was living alone in a different state in the country and did not have family with her due to timing and an unexpected turn of events within her family. During that time, one of her dear friends passed away and left two kids without a suitable caretaker, so President 5 and her husband decided to raise them as their own children. Moving to a different state during this transition with four children was not something they wanted to tackle. Thus her husband and the kids stayed behind so she could better focus on her job of being a college president. However, she later pursued another presidential appointment closer to her family: "So when it was time for our contract renewal, I just couldn't sign another contract that said I was going to be gone for another three years."

President 4 is the only participant who left the job market a period of time (six years) to stay home with her kids. She took pride in the stellar academic achievements of her kids in their ability to graduate from one of the top five universities in the nation and that both of her kids are fluent in Chinese. Throughout her career in higher education, her

husband was very supportive and she noted in the interview: “We Asians have good support from the family.” She considered her parents and husband as her main mentors and source of support as she navigated her career path in higher education while catching up from the years she lost from choosing to stay home with her kids. President 4 felt lucky to have experienced good timing in her career; she did not need to sacrifice a lot of time away from her kids while they were younger as she moved up through the ranks. For President 4, it was a challenge to “have a very strong family value and work ethics, whether you like it or not you have to spend a lot of time at work...If my children were young, then I will feel very guilty...Everything happened for a reason.” When President 4 was asked what her advice might be to Asian Americans who aspire to attain high executive positions in higher education, one of her main responses was the need to have family support.

President 2 was a single mother and had a different experience from the other college presidents interviewed. When she was given a chance to expand on one of her positions, requiring a lot of time and long hours at the job, she noted “my kids usually never saw me during the day...I used to leave my house at 7:30 in the morning and not come home until 9:30 at night, then I had work to do...So my kids were pretty much, they were latchkey kids, those were some of the sacrifices.” (Latchkey kids come home to an empty house with little or no parental supervision.) President 2 did not think she had a “normal” family life because she was a single mother, which further limited time with her kids. When asked about having work-life balance, President 2 strongly disagreed with that notion since balance means 50/50, and, based on her experience, that was not possible or even thinkable. She believed “integration” was a better word rather than “balance”. Reflecting back, President 2 did not recommend being a single mother with

latchkey kids as she moved up the ranks, but she felt very lucky that her situation worked out for her family. As a single mother, she faced different challenges and had more limited choices in comparison to the other participants in the study. Her family support consisted of help from her mother and sister while she went through a divorce after four years of marriage and their help caring for her two kids as they were growing up. When she got divorced, she knew she would need to get a job to provide for her kids.

I was a single mother and so luckily I had my mom. I think this was where the background of being Filipino, being Asian and in case being Filipino because although we didn't have a lot of money, I had my sister, and I had my brother at the time. I had my mom that helped me with my kids as I was looking for a job. (President 2)

Two out of the five presidents spoke about their choices and sacrifices they had made to commute to their jobs in order to provide financial stability for their children's environment, schools and circle of friends. President 3 commuted to most of her previous jobs, some up to an hour's drive, for this reason. President 4 commuted about 135 miles one-way for one of the positions she held throughout her career. That involves being on the road for about 4-5 hours each day. She spoke of leaving her house very early in the morning to beat traffic and managing her schedule to make sure she was home in time to be with her children before their bed time.

Responses were consistent throughout the interviews and among all the presidents who had children that sacrificing time with their families was something they all had experienced as they navigated their career paths in higher education, especially while they were moving up the ranks. The need to work long hours and nights and weekends did not allow them to have well-balanced work and family life, especially time with their children, for which three of the presidents shared their feelings of. With one exception,

the participants pointed out the importance of the family support they received from parents and spouses as having been a key factor in their journey to the top.

Summary of Research Question 1 Findings

The first research question in this study sought to understand the major decision points the college presidents faced along their career paths in higher education, the personal and professional reflections that helped them advance in their careers, and who and what supported their eventual successes. All of the presidents believed that all their previous administrative experiences had helped them through their career advancement in higher education. Based on all the earlier positions that they held in higher education, they all reported a sustained and steady career growth. They all spoke about the importance of seizing opportunities, willingness to take on new duties, taking risks and, especially, doing a great job in every professional role they ever had. The majority of the presidents spoke about the need for flexibility and an openness to be able to move to a different institution in order to achieve a higher position or expand their experience.

Four out of the five presidents spoke about the sacrifices they had made regarding having time with their family, specifically quality time with their children. All the presidents with children noted that their journey would not have been possible without the support they received from their spouses and immediate family members such as mother, father, brothers and sisters. All the presidents with children had to make tough family decisions such as whether to commute long distances to their work or risk uprooting their families. All the presidents were in agreement that there is no such thing as work-life balance. Basically, their life balance was determined situation-by-situation and the best decisions they were able to make at the time based on family priorities, family situation, and the level of support and understanding from everyone involved.

Findings: Research Question 2

The second research question in the study was: *What strategies and sources of support have Asian American Women College presidents used to overcome barriers and challenges in their pathway to college presidency?* This question sought to understand the challenges and barriers the presidents experienced in attaining the presidency role and how they confronted and addressed them. The major themes that emerged from the collected data on strategies the presidents used were “Academic Credibility,” “Documented Accomplishments,” “Contributions and Leadership Roles,” “Strong People Skills: Dealing with Politics,” and “Selection Process: Importance of Fit.”

Academic Credibility

All of the presidents in this study followed an administrative path to their current roles, and the majority of them came from the student services. None of the presidents in this study pursued the traditional academic path of being a tenure track or full-time faculty member; although, they all shared the importance of understanding the academic field, of having teaching experience and thus having greater credibility with the faculty.

President 2 believed it was ideal for a president to have a teaching background and to have earned a doctorate degree. She believed that going through a doctoral program is the best professional development an aspiring college president can have. She noted that she had only taught part-time and wished she had been able to plan better at an early point in her career to have had the chance to teach full-time or be a tenure track faculty. She believed that having more and longer teaching experience gives a college president a better understanding of the academic field and gives them greater credibility with the faculty with whom they must work collaboratively.

I think it’s still the truth. I mean the most powerful group in a college or university is the faculty. And they want somebody who believe – they believe

understands them. So to understand them, you have to have walked in their shoes. And so I think it is a harder climb for those who have taken the administrative route – I mean, there are more and more presidencies that are coming from other fields, not just student services. They are also coming from finance and financial services, especially now. But for the most part, it's still instruction and you're still – if they had choices, I think that would still be the number one choice, because really the heart of the institution, whether you like that word or not, is instruction (President 2).

Based on her own experiences, President 2 believed the skill, the knowledge and the background of having had teaching experience was very important for others who might be considering a presidential role in higher education. President 3 echoed this view by stating that having a doctorate degree and teaching experience are a must: "I highly recommend for others who are aspiring to attain executive positions to have a teaching experience. It doesn't mean that if they don't, it's not an absolute but that will be a barrier so it is best to remove that barrier." Likewise, the other participants shared President 3's conviction of the importance of having an earned doctorate and some teaching experience. Indeed, all the women in this study have done both things as can be seen in Table 2 in which the academic credentials and teaching experiences of the presidents are summarized.

Table 4: Academic Credentials and Teaching Experience of Participants

Participant	Earned Doctorate	Discipline	Teaching Experience
President 1	Ed.D.	Organization & leadership	Yes
President 2	Ph.D.	Education	Yes
President 3	Ph. D.	International/Intercultural education	Yes
President 4	Ed.D.	Institutional management in higher education	Yes
President 5	Ed.D.	Community college leadership	Yes

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resident 1 felt fortunate in having been able to leap from student services to instruction without being a full-time or tenure track faculty. The teaching experience that President 1 currently has acquired is through her volunteer efforts.

[But] the fact I did teach and have guest-lectured and I've done a ton of faculty evaluation...For a while, I thought there was no better job than the VP of instruction because I loved working with the faculty and the fact that I would do tenure evaluation for the entire faculty in the process. I loved that. I mean I got to know them so well and got to build really strong connection with the faculty.

President 4 has behind her a solid 17-year part-time teaching experience in six different educational institutions in which four are in higher education. In the interview, she said she believed her teaching experience helped her gain credibility with the faculty. President 5 held faculty positions but was never on a tenure track appointment.

Four of the participants acknowledged the importance in attaining their presidencies of having an earned doctorate degree. The exception, President 5, thought an earned doctorate was not that important when compared to having a passion for

education and a strong administrative and leadership background. However, she acknowledged that having it does give someone a greater chance to be considered. All of the participants earned their doctoral degrees in part-time graduate programs while working full-time. What was consistent across all the interviews was the importance laid on having teaching experience, including part-time, and of earning a doctoral degree in order to establish academic credibility while moving up the career ladder and pursuing a presidential role.

Documented Accomplishments, Contributions and Leadership Roles

The majority of the presidents noted that having varied experiences and steady career growth as administrators is not necessarily enough to move up to higher ranks, especially to a college presidency or chancellorship. They all believed that documented accomplishments and their contributions and leadership roles both internally on campus and with professional organizations were of great importance. In reviewing the participant's resumes or *curriculum vitae*, it was found that they each had highlighted accomplishments and contributions they achieved after each position they held in their academic careers. The leadership roles they held were highlighted along with the committees of which they were members and organizations to which they were affiliated, both locally and nationally.

You just have to demonstrate that you're a lifelong learner and I think if there is a particular position that you've really set your sights on such as... 'I really want to be a president', then I think it's so important to think about what needs to go on your resume, are there organizations that you need to join,...what's that body of work and education that you put on the table before the committee and to plan ahead for that. (President 1)

President 3 advocated taking on leadership roles outside of one's institution in order to broaden and improve one's leadership skills and understanding of national educational issues and concerns. She shared an example from when she became the first

Asian woman board chair of a national organization whose primary members were all college presidents. This meant that, in her role as the chair of the board, she lead and facilitated discussions with her fellow presidents/ “It is not easy to lead a group of presidents...but this experience has really contributed to my success as an educational leader.” President 3 noted:

I think the experiences are not enough as much as the accomplishments because the leadership role that I’ve played, I think I always try to go beyond what the position called for. So when I was president, I focused on being the best president I know how to be one. So it’s beyond my institution. I try to take my institution to the state level – to the national level, so when I was a president that’s when I became the chair of American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). (President 3)

President 5 spoke about her involvement in national organizations such as the AACC and the ACE as having been a strength she can bring to any institution she leads.

I think the national, the national exposure I have and the context I have. You know if we need something, if we need information, if we need references, I know who to call. And if that person can help me, they can give me that, the information of someone else. And that’s really important to me. (President 5)

President 5 believed that being involved in national organizations broadened her perspective and her network which, in turn, benefited the institution she led because of the availability of information and resources that was helpful and relevant to addressing current and future issues. When President 2 and 4 were asked what their advice would be to aspiring Asian American leaders who would want to move up to an executive position, specifically the college president in higher education, both singled out being a part of and taking on leadership roles in local and national organizations in higher education and professional leadership organizations. Once President 2 and 4 were appointed as presidents of their colleges, they became more aware of the importance of their involvement and participation in local and national organizations. They both said they believed that their participation broadened their leadership skills and was a way for them

to give back to their communities and to reach out and develop future leaders and, specifically, that it aided in advancing Asian women in executive level positions in higher education. All of the participants in this study believed that having documented accomplishments, contributions and leadership roles both internally and externally of their colleges helped them advance in their careers and reach their presidential roles.

Strong People Skills: Dealing with Politics

All the presidents in the study highlighted having strong people skills -- which was also translated as dealing with college politics -- as being very important as they moved up the ranks, specifically as they became presidents. President 1 described her community college presidency as a very unique experience in as much as the environment was politically-charged and a highly regulated education system. The presence of collective bargaining groups in both faculty and classified staff and a high regard for shared governance made having strong people skills and dealing with politics a must. When President 1 was asked what skills or strengths were particularly important for her, she spoke about having sympathy and empathy while she considered and dealt with tough decisions and her commitment to never lose sight and a sense of feeling for the other person or persons involved. Similarly, President 3 noted:

I think the top skill would be capital P - People skills. The people skills are extremely important. If you can't work with people, how can you lead? Because a leader is only a leader if they have followers. So if you look around and there's nobody around, you can't really take the institution. So the skills that I have in working with people are probably the most important one in carrying me through. (President 3)

President 3 believed that people skills were all encompassing -- relating to an ability to work with people, inspire people and create a calm working environment where others can be productive and thrive. For President 3, creating this calm working environment was the prime foundation of the job of a good leader: First calm that water

so the boat can really sail smoothly.” President 3 said she believed that inspiring people to think bigger, do more and accomplish more was about creating unity and an internal passion: “You can’t beat it into them and you can’t drag them. You’re only one person. They have to want it themselves.” President 3 was able to achieve this kind of unity by appealing to the spiritual side of people, not through the “nuts and bolts” side of management. Although she acknowledged that management was a very mechanical process, leadership was really about the people side of the business. Particularly in higher education, which is usually non-profit, people are the main capital and resource. For President 3, things happened by design:

Even when you build a house, you have the architect to have that blueprint, so is the saying, when working with people. So how do you move people and inspire people? It’s by design. By that I mean understanding people’s strengths, look at the strength of spirit of people and then you say, this is how we can build a team together... And it has to stand together. That’s like the first ingredient for me in inspiring people because if they – if they’re at odds with each other, you can’t have a team. So that’s always things that I pay attention to first. (President 3)

President 4 mentioned having a lot of patience in dealing with complicated situations, having good interpersonal skills, and having great listening skills as the skills that were very important for her in dealing with people. She noted she was very fortunate to be able to continuously practice her listening skills in working with colleagues at her college.

When each president was asked what type of strengths and skills current leaders needed in order to make it to the college presidency, all their responses were related to having people skills in terms of supporting people, having a love for people, having patience in dealing with issues and problems, understanding how people function, building relationships, facilitating discussions, valuing participatory governance, not taking things too personally and the notion of having a “thick skin.” President 2

mentioned that as people moved up the ranks “it’s not so much about the technical aspects of the job. You still need to know it but at the end, it’s about people. You need to really be good with people.” President 2 spoke about the need to learn how to confront problems as they occur and of being politically savvy. She defined politically savvy as being very good with people, meaning not being judgmental and too self-righteous, since she believed people made the politics happen.

President 5 spoke about being able to build relationships as a key skill for college presidents: “People relationships are so important in terms of getting things done in the right way and manner.” President 3 noted in her interview that people skills were the main skill leaders need to acquire as they move up the ranks. “They need to have the heart, the passion, and the desire to support people’s success because at the end of the day. I think that’s what our job is as college president -- is that how do I best support the people who are working toward supporting students.” President 3 spoke about being able to take care of the “two layers” in an organization; at the center, a leader with the ability to build and encourage the capacities of the administrative people around her, those who would be working directly with the people who would be helping the students. If the first layer was built strongly with good leadership, then there would be a positive domino effect for the students to receive the service and support they deserve and need.

At the end of the day, it’s all about – it’s a business of people. We’re not producing manufacturing gadgets. So the challenge of leaders today especially is helping people to be strong but also I see leaders having issues and problems with the politics. People say, oh politics. The politics, it’s still the word that starts with a “P.” And that “P” still related to people...People are politics. It’s synonymous. That’s why I say if you understand what politics is, it’s just a mapping of people coming together and how the gaps works- how decisions get made and what decision and which way does it go – the coordinates are – every coordinate has people in it. (President 3)

President 4 spoke about the importance of understanding and valuing participatory governance as a key skill to acquire. President 3 noted that the skills to truly understand what participatory governance is lay in understanding how to facilitate the process: You can't really facilitate something successfully if you don't truly believe in it and if you don't understand how people function." President 1 and 2 spoke about the importance of having stamina, persistence and having a "thick skin" in order to make it to the college presidency. President 1 believed a college president needed to know how to lead people to consensus, as opposed to having people only speak their minds. She spoke about being able to ask people difficult questions to gain an understanding of their views and to articulate the rationale behind the decisions she ultimately makes to move the college forward.

I think as a President, you have to take a strong stand because you're always going to have critics. And that just goes back to moral compass that I think I need to operate by. Regardless of everything that's being said around me, I need to listen and I need to consider all those opposing views and they're probably going to be as many opinions as there are persons but then at the end of the day, I really need to sift through all of that and say, what would be in the best interest of the college and our students. What is going to contribute to teaching and learning and are there deal breakers that are a part of – or tie breakers – that are a part of one solution versus another. President 1

President 2 spoke about being able to not take things personally and having thick skin. "As a president, you can't aspire to be loved, or to be popular because in the end if things go well, you may not deserve the commendations but you will get it. If things don't go well, it may not have been your fault but you will own it." This highlights the high visibility of the presidential position and further supports that having people skills along with being able to deal with politics are the top skills that are needed to become a successful college president. President 2 acknowledged this realization as a challenge for Asian Americans due to their focus in having harmonious relationships, therefore,

avoiding conflicts and the idea of being able to go “against the grain.” All of the presidents in this study were able to break this stereotype of Asians by being successful in using people skills to move their colleges forward.

Four of the presidents mentioned their ability to manage change as an important aspect of having people skills. President 5 said it was very important for her to be a successful agent for change. She was the type of leader who did not like the *status quo* and the idea of maintenance, but she also acknowledged that it took strong people skills to implement positive and sustainable changes. She said she became easily bored but acknowledged and respected her institution’s history. President 5 embraced change and was willing to take risks and do something different for the sake of innovation. President 3 referenced Kotter’s change model as something she used and strongly believed in. The model consists of an eight-step process for leading change: Establishing a sense of urgency; Creating the guiding coalition; Developing a change vision; Communicating the vision for buy-in; Empowering broad-based action; Generating short-term wins; Never letting up; and, Incorporating changes into the culture. President 3 believed that if a leader skips a step they will have some set-backs, “the faster you want to move, the slower it would actually be. You may find yourself creating your own obstacles by your lack of patience and understanding of how people functions in these processes. And that takes skills and patience.” President 2 acknowledged that “education is very slow to change,” and that it is also true for people for whom change is not always welcomed very well. President 2 noted:

I’m quite good with change and I get bored actually without change but it’s not true for other people. And so how do you move people to do that? How do you work with them to welcome change? That’s the question... This is a time when you actually see whether you are a good leader or not – it’s during times like these. President 2

President 4 emphasized that a good leader is someone who “can work with people, be a change agent and patient.” President 4 noted that it took her two years after her appointment to bring her campus together.

In conclusion, all of the presidents agreed that having people skills is essential to the success of a leader along with being able to deal with politics whether environmentally or people related issues. Four out of the five participants believed that having patience in dealing with people and managing change is very important as it relates to people skills, coupled with not taking things personally.

Selection Process: Importance of Fit

All the presidents, except for one, talked about the importance of “fit” to the institution as they sought their presidential positions. President 1 went through a presidential selection process twice. She did not get the first presidency she for which she applied and noted in that regard:

I think maybe even a sense of that you may have all the qualifications to do a job and you do everything that you think now gets you ready to do it but I think you have to put in perspective that not every position is right for everybody who applies. I think it's about finding the right fit and it could be about the kind of institution, the scale, the values of the institution and the location, whatever might be important. (President 1)

President 1 liked and appreciated the open forums held during the selection process. She particularly enjoyed meeting the administrators, students, faculty and classified staff. She also attended a community breakfast and met the chancellor's cabinet and the chancellor. Overall, she thought the open forums, meetings and breakfast was a good way for her to get to know the community better and determine if it is the right fit for her.

President 2 had always been a perfectionist and, therefore, found it challenging to know when the right time was for her to apply for a presidential position. She felt that as

a woman and, specifically an Asian woman, she needed to be “perfect;” she needed to have everything they were asking for and more before she could confidently apply.

I think when you’re a perfectionist, sometimes you fear failure. You don’t want to try it – I don’t want to try it unless I have 100% chance I’m going to get it. But there’s no such thing...because you may be the most qualified candidate but you may not be the best fit for the institution, so you won’t get it, not because you’re not the most qualified, you’re just not the best for the institution. President 2

President 2 held the Vice President of Student Services position for five years at her prior institution where a presidential selection process took place when the past president retired. She was interested in applying, but, knowing the culture of the campus community, she felt that they were looking for someone who had a strong academic or instruction background. At that time, the current Vice President of Instruction seemed to be a better fit and had been part of the college community longer than President 2. She decided not to compete with the current VP of Instruction out of respect and knowing what the community was looking for. She came to the realization that it was time for her to move on and leave her current institution in order to get a presidential position somewhere else. “I knew I needed to leave anyway too, so as it turned out, I was lucky. It was the first presidency I applied for and I got it.” The selection process that President 2 went through was very simple and straightforward. She put in her application, was interviewed twice by the board of trustees including the chancellor and was then offered the job. Unlike with President 1, there were no open forums and other meetings that she was asked to attend during the recruitment process as that was not how it was done in that particular institution.

President 3 had a similar situation as President 2; the first presidency for which she was interested in applying was within her current institution. The difference was that President 3, even though knowing at that time that she might not be a good fit as the

president to the institution, put in her application to make a statement that she was ready for a presidential role and to prepare herself for her next step. In doing so, she knew that she would have to leave her current institution in order to move up and be able to get a presidential position.

I have nothing to lose by applying at my own institution but I had all the things to gain because first of all, it tells people they may not have perceived me as Asian woman president. It's not usually having that perception but so I'm making a statement about yes, I am interested in being the president. Secondly, it gave me a wonderful opportunity to practice, because it's a process that could be very intimidating. It's different from any other position that you're applying for. So having gone through that gave me a ton of confidence for the presidency that I was seeking. (President 3)

The unique position, the Vice President of Economic and Community Development, that President 3 held at her current institution gave her a huge advantage in obtaining her first presidential appointment at another college. That institution valued her most recent experience in academic technology and her entrepreneurial skills. Having this institutional fit benefited both President 3 and the institution and the students they served.

President 4 went through five different presidential selection processes. Finally, when she got her first presidency, she thought she was the right fit because of her cultural background as Asian. The institution had a high Asian population, particularly Filipino. "We know that the Asian population will continue to grow. I would assume that one of the reasons why I was selected for my current position is because ethnically I am a better match for the institution." President 4 was appointed as an interim President at one of the previous institutions she worked for, and, typically, as interim, she would be strongly considered for the permanent position. However, this proved not so in her case. Her previous institution had a rule or policy that interims could not apply for the permanent position. Similar to President 2 and 3, she knew she needed to move out of her current institution to move up and obtain a presidential position, and that is what she did.

Overall, four out of the five participants believed it was very important to have institutional fit in the presidential position. Being a college president is an enormous job and a huge responsibility; therefore, it needs to be more than just the position. A person needs to have a calling to make a difference in becoming a president. It also came through in the interviews that the majority of the participants had to move out of their most current institution to obtain their presidential positions. Moreover, none of the participants were able to become the presidents of the institutions where they had served their Vice Presidencies.

Sources of Support

The major themes that emerged on sources of support from the collected data were Important People: Mentors and Role Models, Important Groups: Networks and Support Groups, and Cultural Background: Taking the Challenge to Lead.

Important People: Mentors and Role Models

All the presidents in this study spoke of and credited mentors and role models who believed in their talent, skills and abilities as leaders and who all had been instrumental in enabling them to make their journey to the presidency role. President 1 had two mentors who were both critical to her presidential role path because both of them believed in her and guided her throughout her journey. President 1 talked specifically about one of them, who she mentioned had hired her new fewer than six times through the initial hiring process, reorganizations and interim appointments – the sixth hire being her appointment to a presidency. President1 observed that she models her style from this mentor “because she’s just amazing, she’s just an incredible human being and a leader... She always stopped to talk to people, she would know who their families were, she would know if babies were being born or if somebody was getting married or someone was

retiring.” President 1 said this mentor was a good role model for her because she made everybody feel important and was a critical contributor to the institution she was leading.

President 2 was a strong believer of mentorship and had benefitted from lots of mentors along her journey to the presidency role. She believed she was mentored by one of the greatest leaders in the community college system. President 2’s leadership role model had a lot of similarities with President 1’s role model. They were both extroverts. President 2 described her role model as knowing everyone on campus and talking to every custodian. “She knew them by name. She was comfortable, very down to earth, you know very modest individual. She connected me with a lot of people, introduced me.” The main lessons she took from her mentor were to not take things personally and how to confront problems as they occur. President 2 modeled her leadership style after her mentor in being collaborative with high expectations yet very supportive of President 2’s direct reports.

President 2 noted that her main mentor was also her leadership model whom she admired and highly respected. She described her as a real genius, classic scholar, intellectually superb and someone who really understood education. Her main mentor and role model was the first African American woman college president ever appointed in the United States. She was always her point of comparison... “She was very good...She took the time to really connect me with leadership programs and was very helpful... Just modeling...Just seeing her – she was more of a perfectionist than I was. So if I pushed myself, she’d push me even further, but she was always there, I knew that she was always looking out for me and wanting me to grow.” President 2 was introduced to her mentor’s network “so I got a chance to meet a lot of presidents who kind of brought me around their arms and really considered me, they were all rooting for me...So 15 years ago they

were already rooting for me to become president and I was probably became a disappointment [since her mentors expected her to be a president sooner].” President 2 pointed out that not wanting to let her mentors down was one of her main motivations in pursuing the presidency role. With internal barriers from feeling that she was not ready for the presidency role and with her perfectionist mindset, President 2 felt lucky to have had mentors believing in her and pushing her to take that next step up the ladder to the top.

Unlike the other presidents, President 3 did not specifically identify an individual mentor or role model, but “I learned a lesson early on in my career to stick with successful people...so all those who have been successful have actually provided a lot of mentoring, modeling, friendship and so the people who I have learned from contributed to my success.” President 3 noted she had a lot of mentors who helped her along the way and that all her mentors were college presidents. “I think I have learned a long time ago how they – what their thinking is at that level, what the challenges that they talk about their challenges because the mentor relationship is always a give and take. I talk about my experience and they talk about their experiences...And their leadership styles have been various types.” Being blessed and lucky to have been mentored by college presidents, President 3 was able to emulate the strengths and copy great leadership styles from her successful mentors giving her a huge advantage in the field. “I think copycats are perfectly okay. I have no shame. If it works for them, I’ll try it. If it works for me, that’s great.” Her mentors consisted of men and women and of different cultural backgrounds, but she acknowledged that she more were people of color. President 4 spoke of three specific individuals who were significant for her in her pathway to a presidency. She learned a lot from one of the previous presidents to whom she reported in

terms of knowledge, skills and leadership style. One of her mentors believed in her leadership potential. “He saw something in me, that I’m a President Material.” This imprinted in her and inspired her to see it through. Her role model was the youngest community college president in California appointed in the late 1980’s. That role model’s driving passion was student success and was known for his extensive record of innovation. President 4 emulated the strengths of her mentors and has been continuously inspired by the work of her role model.

President 5 noted that she had a lot of people, most of them “former bosses I had reported to that were strong educators who in their own right were very successful” who helped her along the way. Nevertheless, when it came to identifying a mentor, one person flashed clearly in her mind. The person whom she considered her mentor was one of her former bosses about whom she was very clear to state that “I don’t want to be like him.” (She considered him her mentor since he gave her lots of opportunities to grow but she did not necessarily agree with his leadership approaches.) Her mentor was a Caucasian male whom she also considered her advisor, counselor and friend. Their families knew each other and she confided in him about both professional and personal situations.

He certainly was a great mentor and taught me a lot about leadership ...who didn’t have it all that easy either but learned from those lessons and was able to tell me the kind of mentorship he provided me was he supported me, gave me opportunities when I was his underling. To grow professionally, to attend professional workshops or conferences to assess leadership positions and as I grew in my position and became almost as an equal, we were Vice Presidents at the same time, he would do things like, [President 5] do you really want to - Do you really want to spend your time fighting this? Just let it go and move on. Yes, so he was truly my mentor (President 5).

All of the presidents in this study strongly believed that everyone needs a mentor in every stage in their careers, even at the presidency level. President 2 thought it was

best if one finds a mentor within their own institution for accessibility and being in the same environment. President 2 was a 100% believer in mentoring. “I think every good leader, even at the place where I am, needs a good mentor.” President 1 echoed that belief stating that the importance of mentors cannot be understated. When the presidents were asked what contributions, based on their experiences, they might be able to give to address the under-representation of Asians in college presidencies, all five of them said they believed that mentoring other leaders was one of the main things they could provide. President 4 believed it was important for her to “continue to encourage others, provide support and mentorship to move up in higher education.”

All the presidents believed that mentoring was one of their duties as current leaders; to give back and help others to move up. President 5 noted it was very important for leaders like her to be available to people like the researcher and others “who are either looking for mentors or assistance...Or to help in one little step...Reaching out to people and being always willing to help them.” President 3 believed that an aggressive outreach is needed to other Asian professionals because of the danger of it becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. She strongly believed that the current American society does not see Asians as leaders; therefore, Asian professionals “don’t have this concept that they see themselves as leaders. It’s like a reciprocal thing. Others don’t perceive them so they fulfill that.” To prevent this, President 3 believed that it was a duty to all current Asian American leaders to encourage and validate the leadership capacity of others of Asian backgrounds.

Sometimes people don’t believe it until someone else come and tell them that. And they have an awakening, really? You see me as a leader? Yes! I do. I see all the characteristics there. It’s like you see the gem that’s inside. You just need to shine, polish a little bit here and there. Right, but they don’t see themselves, they don’t see that. I think that’s a very important contribution that Asian American leaders can and should do, and try to be their mentors (President 3).

All the presidents benefited from their mentors on their pathway to their presidential roles. Despite feeling a particular responsibility to other Asians, the respondents were consistent throughout the interviews not to limit one's mentor to only Asian Americans. They believed having mentors outside of one's group is an advantage. They also noted it was very important to have as many mentors as one could have.

Important Groups: Networks and Support Groups

The presidents spoke about the importance of having networks and support groups as they were building their careers and how they utilized that while they were in their current roles. President 2 noted she felt very lucky to having been introduced to the network of the person she thought was the greatest leader in community colleges. In that network, she got a chance to meet a lot of college presidents who recognized her talents and believed she had what it took to lead a college someday.

They were all rooting for me. So 15 years ago they were already rooting for me to become president and I was probably becoming a disappointment – that was one of the motivation right or wrong for me to pursue a presidency because I felt that I was letting a lot of people down. But you know, having said that, I always just felt like I wasn't ready. (President 2)

For President 2, “network is really important.” Having this Asian stereotypes network helped President 2 in taking the leap to apply for a presidential role. As she stated, “right or wrong,” pleasing and fulfilling the expectations of her network pushed her to confront her feeling of not being ready enough. As a perfectionist who felt that she had to have all of the requirements and more in order to be considered for a presidential role, having this network was essential to her decision to try for the top of her profession.

As president 5 became more engaged with her professional development, she noted she loved going to conferences, not necessarily for the content but for the purpose of networking, “I pick up a lot of ideas but it was to network. The networking piece really

helped me, because I still have a very active network and that I continue to use it for myself or for other people.” President 5 was a strong advocate for mentorship and networking; she was very open and willing to share her networks with her mentees and colleagues for the purpose of career development. Through her networking, president 5 learned of an important national organization; she joined as a member and eventually became the organization’s president representing her institution. President 1 was very fortunate in having an advisor who previously advised four past United States Presidents. President 1 expressed her belief that “it is very helpful to have people who understand the peculiarities of a presidency and can offer advice.”

The majority of the presidents shared the same sentiment. The presidents told the interviewer that their networks included other college presidents who understood the challenges they faced and who helped them develop solutions. President 3, in particular, spoke about the importance of having mentors and others who have had the same experiences as a strategy she used in overcoming personal and professional challenges.

Like when I was struggling with decisions about jobs and things like that well, those who have been there and done it like other woman presidents, who can put it into perspective could help me reflect about the situation with a little bit of different thinking. That was helpful. Finding other women and women of color in particular because they understand my plight. A Caucasian woman is not enough to know all of the things that I confront as a woman of color. So I don’t know if that helps and if it is enough...If I would talk to an Asian woman college president, now that’s even better because she would understand as an Asian woman what is it that we may most likely share in common. It’s like okay, without words, we can be on the same page very quickly. We’ll get to that place. So that really helps a lot. (President 3)

President 1 commented on having other presidents as friends “because it’s so nice to be able to talk to somebody who can totally relate to what you’re saying.” She further noted that as a college president, “as much as other people love you and hold whatever

other positions, being a California community college president is a unique experience for a whole bunch of reasons.”

In addition to serving as their advisors, persons in the presidents’ networks and support groups also helped them with their career advancement. Three of the presidents were recruited or referred to their current roles by someone else in their network. In one of the presidential searches that President 5 went through, she noted she had heard about it from one of her colleagues and that she had received and collected most of the information she needed about the job and the institution through her network. Her network and other colleagues were able to give her information about the reputation of the college, its culture, and current challenges, which are all important for her to consider while she was going through the recruitment process. President 1 commented that one of her greatest mentors hired her six times. President 1 moved up the ranks and got to perform varied administrative roles from being the dean of matriculation, dean of student services, provost of arts, letters and social sciences, dean of academic services and the vice president of instruction. When her mentor, the college president to whom she reported at that time, went on a sabbatical, she was appointed as Interim President for a year, which ultimately led to her first presidential role. “The sixth time was choosing me as the permanent president of the other college in the district.” President 1 appreciated her mentor by distancing herself during the search process to maintain the integrity of the process:

I applied in December and the first round of interviews were in – I think January with final interviews in February and then it didn’t go to the board until April because they were doing all the checking and so again that was so odd because there was, [Omitted Name] as the chancellor and I was going to all these meetings with her and we didn’t sit by each other, we didn’t talk, we had no dinners together. So I think again, [Omitted Name] great integrity made it not even the hint that there would be anything that would be rigged on my behalf. (President 1)

Likewise, President 2 heard about her first presidential appointment through her network. She knew that one of her mentors was the chancellor of the district and would be the hiring manager for the position. However, she made it a point not to make contact before and during the recruitment in order to preclude bias in the process.

When president 4 was asked about what her advice might be to current Asian Americans who aspire to become executives or college presidents in higher education, she strongly recommended joining professional organizations for networking to establish a group to which one could turn. President 5 advised someone like that to “take advantage of your network, be involved in a network...do not be afraid to ask for help.” In reflecting on her journey, she observed that asking for help was not something she never did and, in retrospect, it could have helped her even more. Overall, all the presidents in this study believed that building a broad network and having specific support groups were important to their own and others’ career success and progress up the professional ladder, both through advising and professional development.

Cultural Background: Taking the Challenge to Lead

The consciousness of the dismal representation of Asian Americans in higher education, specifically in the top leadership positions, strongly influenced the career pathways of two of the participants in this study. Early in her career, President 3 mentioned that she considered leaving higher education to pursue her personal passion of entrepreneurship, but changed her mind after she attended a workshop that provided her statistics on the dismal number of Asian Americans in higher education.

I didn’t realize that I was that small number. I was in higher education and I said oh wow, there aren’t that many like me because I was so new in the system. And I thought to myself, if I leave, the numbers get smaller. I felt there was a purpose for staying. So I stayed. I kind of got rid of this idea about leaving so I stayed in the system and once you stay one year and another year . . . that just continues.
(President 3)

President 3 took the challenge very seriously and decided to push forward. She served the community college system for over 30 years in various roles and then, after retirement, has taught in a four-year university and continues to actively mentor and advocate for future Asian American leaders in higher education. She has fulfilled her purpose and opened up many doors and guided pathways for so many Asian Americans and other aspiring leaders in higher education. President 2 came from a Filipino family and was raised as a perfectionist, having a good work ethic and the mentality of a high achiever. These personality traits limited her confidence in rising through the collegiate ranks, specifically to the presidential role. She always felt that she needed to do more or meet every single requirement of the job before she could apply and be considered. She wanted a 100% guarantee that she would get the job, but came to realize that there was no such thing:

The presidency is something that has always been on my mind. I never was fully sure I wanted it. I felt a sense of obligation and responsibility to do it because I had been mentored by a lot of people and when I did my dissertation specially, I felt I had that obligation because I knew there weren't very many presidents.
(President 2)

In reality, President 2 only had to apply to one presidential position when she got her first appointment. Reflecting back on her experiences, she has concluded that she would probably have been ready sooner than she thought. President 2 felt very lucky to have been mentored by someone who pushed her to confront issues as they came up and to break with the stereotype of Asians as being conflict avoiders and having to keep relationships harmonious.

The other three participants utilized the information as a reference and for guidance on their next leadership focus by increasing the outreach to Asian Americans to seriously consider leadership positions in higher education. They conclude that it is

important to increase the awareness of board of trustees, recruitment committees and consultants of the availability and value of Asian American leaders in higher education. The stereotypes and the model minority concept need to be broken. Three of the presidents in this study spoke about the need to address and break the stereotype that Asians are too soft, passive, quiet, and avoids conflict. President 1 spoke about her expectations of an administrator as someone who is assertive and forthcoming. She noted that Asians are not typically seen this way and will have a problem if this stereotype is not broken as they move up through the ranks.

I think a cultural stereotype is that Asians are not forthcoming in talking about their strengths. And so even though that may be the way we've been raised, that you don't talk about yourself, you got to get over that, because to be competitive, and as hard as that may be on occasion, that's a part of the way the game is played. And if Asian Americans don't step up to talk about their strengths in a much more confident, straightforward way, the fear is, everyone is going to have your lunch. (President 1)

President 4 also pointed out the stereotype that "Asian people do not like being aggressive, but we have great ideas. There is this perception that we are weak." In acknowledging this stereotype, President 4 gave some solid examples of the professions to which Asians ordinarily are drawn, such as being restaurateurs and shop owners, doctors and lawyers, in order to avoid or limit confrontation and conflict. President 2 observed that there are "more than 4000 higher education administrators in the United States and only four percent of those are Asians," and that, knowing the dismal number of Asian leaders present now in higher education, it becomes all that more important for current Asian leaders to reach out and build the "bench strength" and a "pipeline" for future Asian leaders in higher education.

President 5 was very troubled by these kinds of statistics, and, as a result, she made it a point to be aggressively involved in outreach to potential and future Asian

leaders in higher education. She joined and formed groups and coalitions in the hope of improving on this dismal percentage. She noted that she had reached the peak of her career in her second presidency and that her next focus was to help others realize their full potential by being a mentor, providing leadership trainings, and being active in professional organizations that help advance Asian Americans in higher education leadership roles -- specifically in becoming college president².

Four of the participants in the study spoke about education as being a “natural” expectation from the Asian culture. They noted that education was highly regarded in their families and they were expected to go to college. This natural expectation gave them an advantage in pursuing graduate level degrees with ease. In achieving and earning their doctoral degrees, they were able to take on the challenge to lead with a more competitive edge. Overall, their awareness of the dismal number of Asian American leaders in higher education has inspired and pushed the participants to take on the challenge of leadership and to break with some of the prevailing Asian stereotypes in positive ways.

Summary of Research Question 2 Findings

The second research question in the study sought to understand the challenges and barriers the presidents experienced in attaining the presidency role and how they confronted and addressed them. The findings were separated and presented into two sections: strategies and sources of support. One of the main strategies that most of the presidents used in advancing was making sure that they had teaching experiences and an earned doctorate degree. The majority felt it was critical to have an earned doctorate and a teaching experience in order to get the respect and support from faculty.

All of the study’s participants believed documented accomplishments, contributions, and leadership roles were as important as having a sustained career growth

and varied administrative experiences. The majority of their resumes and *curriculum vitae* were formatted to highlight accomplishments and contributions from each position they held along with the various leadership roles they had with committees and other professional organizations. The presidents in this study believed that having and cultivating people skills was the number one skill they needed to be successful as a college president. Four out of the five presidents spoke about the importance of “fit” – i.e., fit with personal values or institution culture -- during the selection process for their presidential positions..

In regards to important sources of support, all of the presidents in this study spoke of and gave credit to mentors and role models for their career successes. The majority of the participants were given great opportunities by their mentors who perceived their talents and potential in becoming a college president someday. Their mentors made sure they were on the right track. In most cases, their mentors became their role models. The presidents in this study also cited that building a broad network and forming support groups of their own were essential in their career progression and in addressing challenges as they moved up and while they were in their presidential roles. Their networks consisted of varied groups to whom they could turn for advice, support, information and a different perspective. Being aware of the dismal number of Asian American leaders in higher education inspired and pushed the participants to take on the challenge of leadership and to break some of the Asian stereotypes in positive ways that would open doors for other Asian Americans.

Summary

Chapter 4 has presented the findings of the two research questions that guided the study. Data from interview transcripts were analyzed to identify key themes and were supported by presidential resumes or *curriculum vitae* and biographies and public announcements from the colleges. Chapter 4 also provided an overview of each of the five participants. The first research question sought to understand the major decision points the president faced along their career paths in higher education, the personal and professional reflections that helped them advanced in their careers, and who and what supported their successes. The major themes that this research revealed were having sustained growth and varied administrative experiences and family sacrifices and support.

The college presidents in the study universally believed that all their previous administrative experiences had helped them through their career advancement in higher education. All of the presidents had experienced a sustained steady career growth based on all the positions they have held in higher education. One role built on the other, and they made a point to make sure they had varied administrative experiences through positions they held or through the committees they served in on campus.

The majority of the participants took away lessons learned from their previous roles and experiences that broadened their knowledge of higher education and improved their leadership skills. They all spoke about the importance of seizing opportunities, willingness to take on new and perhaps unfamiliar duties, taking risks, and especially always trying to do a great job in every role they ever held. All of the participants started and built their careers in higher education. The majority of the presidents also spoke about the need for flexibility and openness to be able to move to a different institution in order to obtain a higher position or expand their experience.

Four out of the five presidents spoke about the sacrifices they made regarding being able to spend time with their family, specifically quality time with their children. (Only one was divorced without children.) Three of the presidents who were married with children spoke about the many long hours put in as they were climbing the ranks or given opportunities to do more than what their current positions called for. They all shared the feeling of guilt of not spending more time with their children. They all noted that their journey would have not been possible without the support they received from their spouses and immediate family members such as mother, father, brothers and sisters. One of the presidents was divorced and was a single mother while she was building her career. Consequently, she had a more challenging situation regarding spending time with her children. Being a single mother who was on a track to a college presidency, she appreciated all the family support she received, mainly from her mother.

All the four presidents with children had gone through a decision about whether to commute long distances to their work or to uproot their families by relocating. Most of them decided to do the longer commute in order to provide stable environments and social experiences for their children. Some even consciously decided not to look for better and higher level opportunities until their children were ready for a move. Responses to the interviews were consistent that there was no such thing as a work-home life balance. Basically, balance was determined situation-by-situation and the best decision at that time based on overall priorities, the family situation and the level of support and understanding from everyone involved.

The second research question in the study sought to understand the challenges and barriers the presidents experienced in attaining the presidency role and how they confronted and addressed them along the way. The findings were separated and presented

into two sections: strategies and sources of support. The themes revealed regarding the strategies they used were “Academic Credibility,” “Documented Accomplishments,” “Contributions and Leadership Roles,” “Strong People Skills: Dealing with Politics,” and “Selection Process: Importance of Fit.” One of the strategies that four out of the five interviewed presidents used was making sure they had teaching experiences and an earned doctorate degree. Three of the presidents earned a doctorate in education and the other two earned a doctorate in philosophy. The majority felt it was critical to have an earned doctorate and a teaching experience in order to get the respect and support from faculty. Moreover, it was through teaching experience that they could learn how to reach their main constituents, the main group why higher education exists in the first place – namely the students.

All the participants believed that having documented accomplishments, contributions and leadership roles were as important as having had a sustained career growth and varied administrative experiences under their belts. It is noteworthy that the majority of their resumes and *curriculum vitae* were formatted to highlight the accomplishments and contributions from each career position they have held, along with the leadership roles they had with committees and other professional organizations. This included being a board member, chair of the board, president of an organization and committee chair.

The presidents in this study believed that having strong people skills was the number one skill a leader needs to have to be successful, especially as a college president. People skills was translated into dealing with “politics,” with two of the presidents noting that people were the ones that created the politics. Having people skills involved knowing how to support, develop, mentor, encourage, and motivate people. It was having the

patience to create inclusion and uphold the value of shared governance. The majority of the presidents also observed that managing and implanting change is part of exercising a top college administrator's people skills. Each president noted in her interview that, as she moved up, she had had to learn how to not take things personally, to always see things in a bigger picture, and to always put the situation in perspective. As college presidents, they were not necessarily there to be liked and loved. They were there to lead and to make the tough decisions for the common good.

Four out of the five presidents spoke about the importance of appropriate "fit" during the selection process for their presidential positions. All the presidents commented that being a college president was a huge job and needed to be more than just about the position itself. None of the presidents in this study became a president at the institution where they held their most recent vice presidencies. They all had to move to a different institution to become a college president because internal promotion at this level was very limited. This was both good and bad. It was good in a way that institutions would like to have fresh eyes to be their leaders, someone who can see things in a different way, and that is why internal recruits in this level is not encouraged. On the other hand, they could be losing as well since there is a lack of continuity and a loss of institutional knowledge. It really depends on the situation as well as the appointed leader.

In regards to sources of support, all of the college presidents in this study spoke highly of and credited mentors and role models in their career successes. The majority of the participants were given great opportunities from their mentors who, early in their careers, saw their talents and potential in being a college president someday. Their mentors believed in them and made sure they were on the right track. In most cases, their mentors became their role models. They modeled their leadership styles and approaches

after them. Two of the presidents spoke about learning from their previous bosses and other mentors, taking in the good and replicating best practices in leadership styles. Three of the five participants had college presidents as their mentors early in their careers. Responses were consistent throughout the interviews that mentoring was one of the things they could do to give back and develop other aspiring leaders in higher education.

The presidents in this study also cited that building a broad network and forming support groups were essential in their career progression and in addressing challenges as they moved up and while they were serving in their presidential roles. Their networks consisted of varied groups they could turn to and from which they could get advice, support, information and a different perspective. Most of their support groups were fellow college presidents, both men and women. One preferred to have a specific network of Asian women college presidents. A challenge was the dismal number of members in this group severely limiting the outreach ability.

Those who participated in this study were identified based on their gender and on their ethnic identification as Asian. The consciousness of the dismal number of Asian American leaders in higher education inspired and pushed the participants to take on the challenge of leadership and to break some of the Asian stereotypes in positive ways. Knowing this information provided inspiration and support to the participants to pursue leadership roles in higher education. Two of the participants spoke about changing their career paths from higher education to follow another passion early in their careers. But when they learned about the small number of Asians in higher education, they consciously made the decision to stay to make a difference in this regard. One of the presidents later became the first-ever Asian woman college president in California and, eventually, became the first-ever Asian woman chancellor in California. Four of the five

presidents, in reflecting upon their academic journeys, commented that, coming from an Asian family where education is highly regarded, their academic journeys were somewhat smooth and enjoyable.

The following and final chapter will provide a discussion of these various findings, including conclusions and implications. Recommendation for future research and recommendation for practice will be offered, along with some concluding thoughts.

CHAPTER V DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of undertaking this study was to investigate the factors surrounding the slow progress and under-representation of Asian Americans, with the focus on women, in attaining presidential positions in higher education and to explore their career and leadership experiences. Further, this study investigated the enabling factors for Asian American women college presidents in attaining their current leadership positions; the barriers and ongoing challenges they encountered in the pursuit of leadership positions and in their current roles; how they perceived the presidential search process; and how they define good leaders and their leadership styles; It also sought to document their recommendations for any policy or institutional changes to increase the participation of Asian American women in college presidential roles. Scholarly literature on the concept of the glass ceiling and the critical race theory served as the conceptual frameworks for the study. The two frameworks informed the interview questions posed by the researcher and facilitated the identification of basic themes that emerged from the collected data.

Five community college presidents participated in interviews and generously shared their thoughts and experiences regarding the topics identified in this study. From data collected on interviews and supporting documents, themes emerged related to each of the two research questions. The previous chapter provided a profile of each of the participants and detailed the themes and findings that were uncovered. This chapter will present a discussion of the findings, followed by a discussion of the implications and conclusions to be drawn from those findings along with some recommendations for

future practice and future research. The researcher will also provide some concluding thoughts of her own.

Discussion

Data collected from the interviews and supporting documents were presented in Chapter Four. The beliefs and experiences that were found to be shared by the study's participants in relation to the two research questions that framed the study will provide the basis of the following discussion. The major themes for each of the research questions that emerged from the data will be discussed.

Research Question 1: Career Path

The first research question posed to the college presidents who participated in the study was: *How have Asian American women college presidents navigated their career path in higher education?* The participants reflected on their own journeys to the presidency and the factors that influenced them along the way. Two major themes emerged from the data: First the participants discussed how important it was to have a sustained career growth, to be able to broaden and expand their scope of responsibilities, and to have varied administrative experiences. Second, the participants discussed the support they had received from their family and spouses and reflected on the sacrifices they made in order to keep advancing in their careers and continuously expanding their experiences. Most of the participants highlighted that coming from an Asian family, this was something that was expected from their families, which was a fact much appreciated.

Sustained Career Growth & Varied Administrative Experiences

When reflecting on their previous work experiences that helped them in their journeys to their presidential roles, all participants were convinced that all their positions in higher education had helped them grow professionally and contributed to their success. In reviewing the participant's resume and *curriculum vitae*, it was seen that their career pathways reflected career growth and advancement from each of their previous roles. According to the *On the Pathway to the Presidency Study* (2008), a collaborative effort of the American Council on Education (ACE) and the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR) focusing on the different points of entry to the college presidential position and also highlighting the current pipeline addressing both gender and racial minority, only 13 percent of presidents came directly from a position outside academe. The report also references the faculty as primary point of entry to the presidential career pathway with almost 70 percent of presidents having served as faculty members at some point in their academic careers, (p. 1). In that light, it is important to note that all the participants in this study, all presidents of community colleges, took the administrative route to the presidency -- although, all of them taught at least some at the college level. The American College President Study (2007) found the two most common paths to the presidency are through the positions of chief academic officer (33 percent of presidents came from this position) and senior academic affairs officer (21 percent of presidents) (p. 7), and indeed four of the five participants in this study came from positions as Vice President of Student Affairs.

None of the participants in the study had the goal at the beginning of their professional careers with becoming a college president. This finding is consistent with other studies of female college presidents (Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006; Whittier, 2006).

Nonetheless, it is important to note that all of the studied presidents' careers started in higher education and their careers consisted of longevity in the community college system. The majority of the participants believed that it was very important to have varied administrative experiences and having worked for different institutions. President 5 mentioned that her work experience in various environments and colleges helped her a lot. She believed that the value of having varied administrative experiences and having worked with different types of institutions provide individuals with the ability to offer different approaches to situations and resolutions. This is in alignment with the fact that none of the participants in this study became presidents in the institutions where they served their vice presidencies. They all had to go elsewhere to attain the presidency position.

Much of the scholarly literature that has explored career paths pursued by women describes their trajectories as being non-linear and as somewhat unplanned (Madsen, 2008; Somers, 2007; Thomas et al., 2004). The women in this study did not begin their career with the goal of becoming a college president; rather they pursued opportunities that emerged successively as their careers progressed through the guidance and help of their mentors and role models. In most instances, opportunities were offered to the participants based on their hard work, sustained good performance reviews, and being at the right place at the right time. Seizing hold of opportunities that came up enabled them to expand their portfolios. President 5 specifically commented:

Being at the right place and the right time is a key...timing. I happen to be at places where there are opportunities that open up. Coupled with – I've never been afraid to try something different. It's like, what do I have to lose? So let me be the Vice President. That wasn't something I was thinking of; it wasn't part of my career map but because those opportunities came about, it was an attitude of "why not? What's the worst that could happen if I don't like it or I failed? (President 5)

Madsen (2008) reported that opportunities arise when women are high performers, which was true for the participants. President 2 spoke about when she realized early on that it was not the type of positions and titles that mattered to her most but being able to be open to learn new things and take on a leadership role no matter what position she had. “You got to do as much as you can if you want to really make a name for yourself or build a reputation for yourself . . . do not let the title define you.”

Much of the available literature that has already explored the reasons why women seek career advancement included the goal of providing for family and risk-taking for the sake of their children (Steinke, 2006, Neilson, 2002). In contrast, none of the participants in this study mentioned this as a factor. Three of the participants in the study purposely and willingly postponed their career advancement by taking their children’s situation into consideration. One of the participants even declined a promotion because the timing of the position was not right based on her current family situation. All the presidents spoke about how important it was for them to continuously expand their experiences and skill sets, to go above and beyond their current job duties, to seize opportunities, to have a willingness to take risk in learning something new and to work for different types of institutions or different functions in the same organization. If new and available opportunities that came up meant they had to commute far distances or even uproot their families to move, thus giving up their comfort zones, they all made those decisions at some point in their pathways to the presidential role. This is in accord with the findings of Madsen’s (2008) study where it was suggested that women in general benefit from new challenges and opportunities and that having credible experiences would be important in enabling women to achieve their leadership goals.

Family Sacrifices and Support

Family support and culture go hand in hand. Culture helps determine the values that families and individuals have. Asian cultures place a high value on family (Kane, 1998). The majority of the participants in this study shared information about their family sacrifices and the family support they received as they navigated their career pathways in higher education. Four out of the five participants spoke about the long hours, late nights, and, at times, the need to work on weekends and holidays in order to meet the demands of their positions and to continuously expand their scope to move up.

Three of the five participants are currently married with grown children. One of the five is a divorced single mother with grown children, and one is divorced without children. For those with children, responses were consistent throughout the interviews that sacrificing time with family was something they all had experienced as they navigated their career paths in higher education, especially while moving up the ranks. The need to work long hours, nights and weekends did not allow them to have well-balanced work and family life. Three of the presidents shared that they felt guilty when they sacrificed time with their family, especially time with their children, to the needs of their careers. This finding is in alignment with a study conducted by Wilking (2001) who did a narrative inquiry with five Asian American women who were chief executive officers in higher education. Wilking found that one of the challenges faced by these women administrators included balancing work and home.

According to Wilking (2001), one of the positive influences in these women's lives included a willingness to take on family support. The majority of the participants gave thanks to the family support they received from parents and spouses as having been a key factor in the success of their career journeys. President 3 was emphatic that she

could have not been successful in her career without the support of her family, specifically the strong support she received from her husband. “He understood but I try to find that balance...by not taking work home, so when I walk into the house, I’m 100% there.” Two of the participant’s husbands were willing to follow wherever their wives’ careers happened to take them. This meant being willing to relocate. A study by Steinke (2006) also found that female presidents cited supportive spouses as an important element in their ability to attain a college presidency. President 5 noted that her marriage would have not lasted if her husband was not laid-back and willing to follow her. She always felt his support. During her first presidency, she was living alone in a different state and did not have family living with her due to timing and an unexpected turn of events in her family.

Two out of the five presidents spoke about having to make hard choices and sacrifices to commute to their jobs in order to provide stability to their children’s environment, schools and circle of friends. Asian family values and practices include the instilling of guilt about parental sacrifices and the need to fulfill obligations to family members (Asakawa & Csikszentmihlayi, 1998). President 3 commuted to most of her previous jobs up to an hour drive one-way to provide stability to her kids as they were growing up. President 4 commuted about 135 miles to work for one of the positions she held throughout her career. That involved being on the road for about 4-5 hours per day. She spoke of leaving her house very early in the morning to beat traffic and managing her schedule to make sure that she was home in time to be with her children before their bedtime. President 4 was the only participant who left the job market for six years to stay home with her kids. She took pride in the high achievements of her kids being able to have graduated from one of the top five universities in the nation and for both her kids

being fluent in Chinese. Throughout her career in higher education, her husband was very supportive, and she noted, “We Asians have good support from the family.” She considered her parents and husband as her main mentors and main sources of support as she navigated her career path in higher education and while catching up from the years she stayed at home with her kids and was out of the workforce.

Research Question 2: Strategies and Sources of Support

The second research question was: *What strategies and sources of support have Asian American women college presidents used to overcome barriers and challenges in their pathway to college presidency?* The participants in the study reflected on both the strategies and the sources of support that were important to them through their journeys to the college presidency. The major themes that emerged from an analysis of the strategies they employed were: “Academic Credibility,” “Documented Accomplishments,” “Contributions & Leadership Roles,” “Strong People Skills: Dealing with Politics”; and, “Selection Process: Importance of Fit”. The major themes on the sources of support that emerged from the data collected were: “Important People: Mentors and Role Models,” “Important Groups: Networks and Support Groups,” and “Cultural Background: Taking the Challenge to Lead.”

Academic Credibility

It is very important to note that, even though all of the presidents in this study did not follow the traditional path through academia in their journey to becoming president, all of them followed an administrative path to their current roles with the majority of them coming from student services -- all of them earned a doctorate and taught at the college level. This may perhaps be a reflection of the fact that due to the traditional respect for education found widely in Asian American cultures, APAs tend to attain

higher educational goals than the general population. In a 1994 survey by the U.S. Census, 41% of Asian Americans had four year college degrees, compared to 20% for the general population, and about 18% of Asian Americans hold doctoral or professional degrees in comparison to only 9% of the general U.S. population. Twenty-three percent of Asian American workers are professionals, including nearly 11% of the nation's practicing physicians and 7% scientists and engineers (Ong, 1994).

Other studies have reached similar conclusions regarding the importance of academic credibility to the achievement of top college leadership positions. Leatherwood and Williams (2008) found that the women in their sample of community college presidents believed strongly that it was important to earn a doctorate. (Interestingly, the men in their sample did not perceive that to be a critical step to becoming a president.) The female presidents in Steinke's (2006) study discussed the need to obtain a terminal degree and also suggested that this was likely to be more important for women than for men. For these studies, as well as from this one, it would appear that women, who remain a minority of college presidents, are more sensitive to the need for academic credentials.

Madsen (2008) found that presidents believed an academic pedigree was necessary to understand the important role that faculty play in academic institutions. Further, Madsen's participants suggested that teaching was a way to interact with the most important constituency on campus, the students. In addition to earning a doctorate, all the participants in this study also commented on the importance of teaching. President 2 believed that the skill, knowledge and the background of having teaching experience was very important for those who are considering the presidential role in higher education. President 3 echoed her by stating that having a doctorate degree and teaching experience are a must: "I highly recommend for others who are aspiring to attain

executive positions to have a teaching experience. It doesn't mean that if they don't, it's not an absolute but that will be a barrier so it is best to remove that barrier." The other participants shared President 3's belief in the importance of having an earned doctorate and teaching experience, and all the women in this study have in fact done both at some time in their academic careers. All of the participants pursued and earned their doctoral degrees in part-time programs while working full-time. Responses were consistent across all the interviews in the current study about the importance of having teaching experience, including part-time, and earning a doctoral degree in order to establish academic credibility while moving up and pursuing a presidential role.

Documented Accomplishments, Contributions & Leadership Roles

Four of the five presidents noted that having varied experiences and a steady career growth were not enough for administrators to move up to higher ranks, especially the college presidency or chancellorship. They all believed that documented accomplishments, contributions and leadership roles internally on campus and with outside professional organizations were very important. In reviewing the participant's resumes or *curriculum vitae*, it was found that their format was constructed in a way that highlighted accomplishments and contributions they achieved after each position they held in their academic careers. The leadership roles they held were also highlighted in these documents, along with the college committees of which they had been a part and the professional organizations with which they were affiliated both locally and nationally.

You just have to demonstrate that you're a lifelong learner and I think if there is a particular position that you've really set your sights on such as... 'I really want to be a president', then I think it's so important to think about what needs to go on your resume, are there organizations that you need to join,...what's that body of work and education that you put on the table before the committee and to plan ahead for that. (President 1)

President 3 advocated taking on leadership roles outside of her institution in order to broaden and improve upon her leadership skills and her understanding of national educational issues and concerns. All of the participants in this study believed that having documented accomplishments, contributions and leadership roles, both internally and externally of their colleges, had helped in the advancement of their careers and in their ability to reach the presidential positions that they had attained. In support of this study's finding in that regard, Somers (2007) in her qualitative narrative inquiry exploring the experiences and perspectives of five Asian American females who sought presidencies and or vice presidencies at community colleges also found that earned leadership positions is one of the themes faced by Asian American females seeking promotion in higher education.

Strong People Skills: Dealing with Politics

All the presidents in the study highlighted that having strong people skills, which was also translated as dealing with "politics," was a very important quality as they moved up the ranks, specifically as they became presidents. President 1 described the community college presidency as a very unique experience in as much as the environment is a politically-charged and highly-regulated educational system. With the presence of collective bargaining groups in both faculty and classified staff and a high regard for shared governance, strong people skills and dealing with politics is a must for any college president. When President 1 was asked what skills or strengths were particularly important for her in her position, she spoke about having sympathy and empathy when she considers and deals with tough decisions and about her commitment not to ever lose sight and a sense of feeling for the other person or persons involved. Very much along

the same lines, President 3 noted, “I think the top skill would be capital P - People skills.”

When the presidents were asked what type of strengths and skills in their opinion current leaders need in order to make it to the college presidency, all their responses were related to having people skills in terms of supporting people, having love for people, having patience in dealing with issues and problems, understanding how people function, building relationships, facilitating discussions, valuing participatory governance, not taking things personally and having a “thick skin.” The majority of the participants believed that having patience in dealing with people and managing change was very important as it relates to people skills, coupled with not taking things personally. President 2 mentioned that as people moved up the ranks “it’s not so much about the technical aspects of the job. You still need to know it but at the end, it’s about people. You need to really be good with people.” President 2 also spoke about learning how to confront problems as they occur and being politically savvy. She defined “politically savvy” as being very good with people, meaning not being judgmental and too self-righteous since she believed people made the politics.

According to Hofstede (1981), people who believe in collectivism make greater distinctions between in-groups and out-groups, and their concept of the “other” is stronger and more diverse than that of the individualist. These persons place great value on community, groupness, harmony, and maintaining face. In these cultures individuals expect loyalty to be given in exchange for commitment to group norms. All the participants in this current study exhibited these same characteristics as they discussed having people skills and being politically savvy as the main skills an effective college president needed to possess. President 3 noted people skills as the main skill leaders like

her need to have as they move up the ranks. “They need to have the heart, the passion, and the desire to support people’s success because, at the end of the day, I think that’s what our job is as college president- is that how do I best support the people who are working toward supporting students.” President 3 spoke about being able to take care of the “two layers.” The first layer was leadership, building the capacity of the administrative people around her at the center, and, in the second layer, those who will be working directly with the people who will be helping the students. If the first layer, leadership, is built strong, then there will be a positive domino effect in order for the students to receive the service and support they need and deserve (and have paid for!).

President 1 and 2 spoke about the importance of needing stamina, persistence and a “thick skin” in order to make it to the college presidency, as she had. President 1 believed a college president needed to know how to lead people to consensus as opposed to just having people speak their own minds. She stressed that it is necessary for a successful college president to be able to ask difficult questions for people to understand their views and to be able to articulate the rationale behind the decisions that she ultimately makes to in order move the college forward.

I think as a President, you have to take a strong stand because you’re always going to have critics. And that just goes back to moral compass that I think I need to operate by. Regardless of everything that’s being said around me, I need to listen and I need to consider all those opposing views and they’re probably going to be as many opinions as there are persons but then at the end of the day, I really need to sift through all of that and say, what would be in the best interest of the college and our students. What is going to contribute to teaching and learning and are there deal breakers that are a part of – or tie breakers – that are a part of one solution versus another. President 1

According to Wu’s (1997) typology, all the participants in this study can be classified as “Progressivists/Altruist” individuals. These types of APA individuals are described as acculturated to the dominant American culture but at the same time tend to

maintain elements of their own ethnic culture. They are assertive, capable, conscientious, charismatic, outgoing people who have a strong interest in social causes and humanity. As described by Wu (1997), these type of APAs tend to have a positive self-concept and are willing to “play the game” in order to transform the social setting of the workplace (p.33). This characterization, I believe, captures all the participants in this study. All of the presidents focus on the common good and are great in dealing with politics in the workplace through having strong people skills and being able not to take things personally. These characteristics need to be explored further in regards to leadership development and training.

Selection Process: Importance of Fit

The participants were asked about their experience regarding the selection process they went through in their presidential appointment. All the participants, except for one, talked about the importance of appropriate “fit” to the institution as they sought their presidential positions. The participants discussed fit on multiple levels, such as fit between institutional needs and presidential skill sets, fit between campus culture and presidential personality, and fit with respect to their cultural background as Asians. This current study corroborates what Leatherwood and Williams (2008) have discussed about the importance of fit between skills and experiences of presidential candidates and the needs of the institution. President 1, for example, went through a presidential selection process twice. She did not get the first presidency for which she applied and observed:

I think maybe even a sense of that you may have all the qualifications to do a job and you do everything that you think now gets you ready to do it but I think you have to put in perspective that not every position is right for everybody who applies. I think it's about finding the right fit and it could be about the kind of institution, the scale, the values of the institution and the location, whatever might be important. (President 1)

According to the *Broadening the Leadership Spectrum: Advancing Diversity in the American College Presidency* report (2008) produced by the American Council on Education, one of the main reasons for stalled progress of women and candidates for color in the presidential position is not having a “Construct Equitable Search Processes.” According to the interviews conducted for this study, many women who were presidential candidates believe that the search process itself disadvantaged them. A common perception found by the researchers is the feeling that women of color were scrutinized far more heavily than their white or male counterparts. More probing questions were asked, more references are contacted, and more officials visit candidate’s campus. “People of color are filtered through a different lens,” said one minority president. “Sometimes the search process is very, very painful. The scrutiny is extensive.” In some ways, candidates who appear to be most out of line with traditional perceptions draw the greatest scrutiny.

In contrast to what that study found, most of the selection process the participants went through in this current study was smooth, simple, enjoyable and straightforward. The selection process that President 2 went through was very simple and straightforward. She put in her application, was interviewed twice by the board of trustees including the chancellor and then was offered the job. There were no open forums and other meetings she had to attend during the recruitment process, which was how it was done in that particular institution. President 3 went through a similar less-stringent and stressful process. President 1 found the open forums in her selection process enjoyable; she noted that “it was a great way to know the campus community.”

President 4 went through five different presidential selection processes and, when she finally got her first presidency, she thought it was because she was seen as the right

fit due to her cultural background as Asian. The institution where she currently serves as the college president has a high Asian population, particularly Filipino/ “We know that the Asian population will continue to grow. I would assume that one of the reasons why I was selected for my current position is because ethnically I am a better match for the institution.” President 4 was appointed as Interim President at one of the previous institution she worked for and, typically, interim presidents like her are highly considered for the permanent position. But such was not the case for her due to on an internal policy where the interim cannot be considered for the job. Overall, the majority of the participants believed it was very important to have an institutional fit or match in the presidential position. Being a college president is a big job and a huge responsibility; therefore, it needs to be more than just the position.

It also came through clearly in the interviews that the majority of the participants had to move out of the institution where they currently worked to obtain their presidential positions elsewhere. None of the participants became presidents of the institutions where they served their Vice Presidencies. They all had to move to a different institution to become a college president. This meant internal promotion at this level was very limited. The existing body of scholarly literature of Asian American administrators in higher education suggests that a glass ceiling and subtle racism may be potential barriers to advancement for these leaders. In addition, Sugimoto's study (2000), of California community college boards provides a potential explanation for the lack of Asian American presidents in the California community colleges system. While the shared decision making process employed at college's may create a level playing field for positions at California community colleges below that of President, the inclusion of board of trustees members in the hiring of a President may bring the subjective concept of "fit"

into the hiring process. Moreover, Viltz's (1998) study of African American women California community college presidents suggested that perceptions of African American women and other women of color often act as barriers to career advancement. On the other hand in this current study, some of the participants noted either their mentors who are women of color or particularly Asian were in the selection committees where they were hired as presidents. Based on Sugimoto's study, I believe this played a huge advantage for some of the participant's appointment to the presidential position. With women and people of color in the selection committees, especially as members of the board of trustees, one of the main reasons for stalled progress in the presidential position, "biased perceptions" about women of color, as identified in the *Broadening the Leadership Spectrum: Advancing Diversity in the American College Presidency* report (2008) conducted through the American Council on Education, can be eliminated.

Important People: Mentors and Role Models

All the presidents in this study spoke about and credited mentors and role models who believed in their talent, skills and abilities as leaders and who were all instrumental in their journeys to the presidency role. Whittier (2006) and Steinke (2006) also found that mentors played an important role in the career progression of their study's participants. In this current study, the mentors and role models of the participants were undoubtedly important in their successes in attaining their presidential positions. All of the presidents in this study strongly believed that everyone needs a mentor in every stage in their careers, including at the presidency level. President 2 thought it was best if one found a mentor within their institution for accessibility and being in the same collegiate environment. President 2 was a firm believer in mentoring, "I think every good leader, even at the place where I am, needs a good mentor." President 1 echoed that belief stating

that the importance of mentors cannot be understated. When the presidents were asked what they themselves could contribute to help address the under-representation of Asians in college presidencies, all five asserted that mentoring other leaders and potential leaders was one of the main things they could provide. President 4 believed it was important for her to “continue to encourage others, provide support and mentorship to move up in higher education.”

The *Broadening the Leadership Spectrum: Advancing Diversity in the American College Presidency* report (2008) also focused on the different ways the search for talent could be expanded in order to better address the stalled progress of women and people of color in the presidential position. In order to expand the search for talent, the researchers highlighted six things for current leaders and recruitment committees to keep in mind as they go through the presidential search for their institutions. The third one of these things is to be able to “Attend to the Pipeline.” In other words, an essential part of widening and deepening the pool of potential talent is to persuade more women and minorities to pursue the job (p. 10). All the presidents in the current study believed that mentoring was one of their duties and also that they ought to give back and help others to move up, too. President 5 noted it was very important for leaders like her to be available to people like the researcher and others “who are either looking for mentors or assistance...Or to help in one little step...Reaching out to people and being always willing to help them.” President 3 believed that an aggressive outreach was needed to other Asian professionals because of the notion of self-fulfilling prophecy. She strongly believes that the current American society does not see Asians as leaders; therefore, Asian professionals “don’t have this concept that they see themselves as leaders. It’s like a reciprocal thing. Others don’t perceive them so they fulfill that.” To address that problem and break the vicious cycle,

President 3 advocated that it was a duty of all current Asian American leaders in education to encourage and validate others' leadership capacity, and the following statement by her could just as easily have been made by any of the other four women who were interviewed for this study:

Sometimes people don't believe it until someone else come and tell them that. And they have an awakening, really? You see me as a leader? Yes! I do. I see all the characteristics there. It's like you see the gem that's inside. You just need to shine, polish a little bit here and there. Right, but they don't see themselves, they don't see that. I think that's a very important contribution that Asian American leaders can and should do, and try to be their mentors (President 3).

One of the five main reasons reported in the scholarly literature for the stalled progress of women and people of color is "inadequate leadership development for female and minority talent" (ACE, 2008). It was through being mentored that the participants in the current study learned about the leadership training they needed in order to become strong future candidates for college presidencies. This clear finding of the study ought to be considered by current leaders in academe as a possible means to prepare more women, especially women and people of color, to become presidents by having a formal mentorship program.

Important Groups: Networks and Support Groups

The presidents all spoke about the importance of having networks and support groups as they built their careers and how they continued to utilize it while they were in their presidential roles. For President 2, "network is really important." Having this network helped President 2 in taking the leap to apply for a presidential role. As she stated "right or wrong," pleasing and fulfilling the expectations of her network pushed her to confront her feeling of not being ready. As a perfectionist who felt that she had to have all of the job requirements and more in order to be considered for a presidential role, having her network was essential in her decision to move up. As president 5 became

engaged with her professional development, she noted she loved going to conferences not necessarily for the content but for the purpose of networking, “I pick up a lot of ideas but it was to network. The networking piece really helped me, because I still have a very active network and that I continue to use it for myself or for other people.” President 1 observed that “it is very helpful to have people who understand the peculiarities of a presidency and can offer advice.” Most of the other presidents interviewed expressed the same sentiment.

The presidents shared with the interviewer that their networks included other presidents who understood the same challenges they faced and helped them to develop solutions. President 3 spoke about the importance of having mentors and others who had the same experiences which whom to consult as a strategy she used in overcoming personal and professional challenges. President 1 commented on having other presidents as friends “because it’s so nice to be able to talk to somebody who can totally relate to what you’re saying.” She further noted that as a college president, “as much as other people love you and hold whatever other positions, being a California community college president is a unique experience for a whole bunch of reasons.”

According to Cote’s (1985) extensive list of college presidential roles, maintenance of a self-developed network of outside contacts and informers who can provide favors and information is top of the list., This is validated by the findings of this current study concerning the extensive use of networks and support groups by the current participants. In addition to serving as advisors, people in the presidents’ networks and support groups also helped their career advancement. Three of the presidents were recruited or referred to their current roles by someone in their network. In one of the presidential searches that President 5 went through, she noted she had heard about the

opening from one of her colleagues and that she received and collected most of the information she needed about the job and the institution through her network. President 1 commented that one her greatest mentors hired her six times. President 1 moved up the ranks and performed varied administrative roles from being the dean of matriculation, dean of student services, provost of arts, letters and social sciences, dean of academic services and the vice president of instruction. When her mentor, the college's president, went on a sabbatical, she was appointed as the interim president of her college for a year and, ultimately on the sixth occasion becoming the president. President 1 showed appreciation for her mentor by distancing herself during the search process to keep the integrity of the process.

President 2 heard about her first presidential position through her network. She knew that one of her mentors was the chancellor of the district and would be the hiring a manager for the position, but she made a point of not making contact before and during the recruitment to eliminate bias in the process. When president 4 was asked what her advice might be to current Asian Americans who aspire to become executives or college presidents in higher education, she strongly recommended joining professional organizations for networking to establish a group to which to turn for help when the need arises. President 5 noted that an aspirant should "take advantage of your network, be involved in a network...do not be afraid to ask for help." Overall, the presidents in this study were convinced that building a broad network and having specific support groups were important to career success and progression up the career ladder both through advising and professional development.

In addition, "Uncertain times, uncertain leadership" has been identified as one of the main reasons for the stalled progress of women and people of color in attaining the

college presidential position in the *On the Pathway to the Presidency* study conducted by ACE (2008). This points in the direction of having a broader pool of candidates through university boards and campus search committees focusing more on identifying the requisite talents and capacities needed to successfully execute the duties of presidential roles and with less focus on making sure candidates have fulfilled a list of previous experiences that are not always needed to carry out the job. This is not to diminish the power and importance of having accumulated experience; all college leaders need the knowledge and skills gained from undergoing certain experiences. However, ignoring the presence of transferable skills gained through activities that do not conform to the standard expectations of presidential candidates may further shrink the pool of available talent. It may be that candidates of color who are connected to nontraditional networks or who have demonstrated the ability to succeed cross-culturally are more highly skilled at making those connections than candidates without such experience (p. 8). It is very clear from the experiences in the use of network and support groups by the current study's participants that they were able to benefit greatly from being part of networks directly related to higher education and including current and past college presidents and senior executive leaders. Some of the participants considered this as having been lucky that they were able to seek out and surround themselves with successful people who had "made it" already as they undertook the journey to the college presidency.

Cultural Background: Taking the Challenge to Lead

All the participants in this study were aware, concerned and troubled with the dismal and limited number of Asian American college presidents. The aforementioned ACE study (2008) focused on the different points of entry to the presidential position and also highlighted the current pipeline with respect to both gender and racial minority

status. With respect to gender, women are much more likely to serve in senior leadership roles other than the presidency: 45 percent of senior administrators are women, compared with 23 percent of presidents (p. 3). But in terms of race, one important exception exists: Six percent of college faculty is Asian American, but Asian Americans represent only two percent of Chief Academic Officers (CAOs) and other senior academic administrators and only three percent of deans. A pool of potential leaders is available, but institutions must do a better job of attracting Asian-American faculty into the administrative ranks (p. 5). The data collected in this study confirms the underrepresentation of Asian Americans in the college presidency position, but it is contrasted with the availability of Asian Americans residing in the academic ranks and that all the participants in this study came through the administrative pathway, particularly through the Vice President of Student Affairs position. The data from the ACE study (2008) also suggests that there is a significant pool of white women in senior administrative roles who could rise to the presidency but that there is not a significant number of minority candidates, both men and women (p. 6).

As we have seen, the consciousness of the dismal representation of Asian Americans in higher education specifically in the leadership positions has strongly influenced the career pathways of two of the participants in this study. President 3 mentioned that early in her career she considered leaving higher education to pursue her personal passion of entrepreneurship, but changed her mind after she attended a workshop at which she learned about and was shocked out of her complacency by statistics on the dismal number of Asian Americans in higher education.

I didn't realize that I was that small number. I was in higher education and I said oh wow, there aren't that many like me because I was so new in the system. And I thought to myself, if I leave, the numbers get smaller. I felt there was a purpose for

staying. So I stayed. I kind of got rid of this idea about leaving so I stayed in the system and once you stay one year and another year . . . that just continues. (President 3)

President 3 took very seriously the challenge of doing something about those dismal numbers as she served the community college system for over 30 years in various roles. She is now retired, is teaching in a four-year university, and is still very much active in mentoring and advocating for future Asian American leaders in higher education. President 2 came from a Filipino family who was raised as a perfectionist, having a good work ethic and the mind-set of a high achiever. All this packaged together limited her confidence in rising through the ranks specifically to a presidential role. She felt, she needed to do more than meet the requirements of the job before she would apply. She wanted a 100% guarantee that she would get the job if she applied, but realized there was no such thing in the real world.

The presidency is something that has always been on my mind. I never was fully sure I wanted it. I felt a sense of obligation and responsibility to do it because I had been mentored by a lot of people and when I did my dissertation specially, I felt I had that obligation because I knew there weren't very many presidents. (President 2)

Wu (1997) predicted that, although the culture of the American workplace continues to change and Asian Americans are becoming more culturally savvy and sophisticated, the majority of the APAs will probably continue to find themselves employed in non-managerial positions (p.85). More than half of the people interviewed for Wu's study on Asian Americans in the workplace, whether Southeast Asian Americans or East Asian Americans, confessed that they could not see themselves becoming an upper level manager of a large corporation or organization. Wu's findings hold true for this current study as well, in as much as the study's participants took up leadership as a challenge that they had to overcome rather than as a natural or planned path in their careers.

The current study's three other participants utilized the information about the dismal numbers as a reference and a guide for their next leadership focus by increasing their outreach to other Asian Americans to seriously consider leadership positions in higher education. It becomes important for boards of trustees, recruitment committees and consultants to be aware of the availability and value of Asian American leaders in higher education. President 5 was very troubled by the statistics. As a result, she made it a point to be involved in the aggressive outreach to potential and future Asian leaders in higher education. President 5 consciously joined and formed groups and coalitions to address this dismal number. She noted that she reached the peak of her career in her second presidency and that her next focus was to help others realize their full potential. By being a mentor, providing leadership training and being active in professional organizations she would help advance other Asian Americans in higher education leadership roles, specifically in becoming college presidents.

Based on the three typologies that Wu (1997) identified in his study, all the participants in this study can be classified as "Progressivists /altruists" – that is, as individuals who, typically acculturate to the dominant American culture but tend at the same time to maintain elements of their own ethnic culture. Similarly, the participants in this study are assertive, capable, conscientious, charismatic, and outgoing people who have a strong interest in social causes and humanity. All the participants in this study took the challenge of acting as a president for the common good, whether to advance higher education, serve the needs of the students or as a role model, breaking the stereotypes of Asian Americans and proving in particular that the model minority image is false. They have acted not for prestige, money or primarily to provide for their families' material wellbeing to but instead to be an inspiration for future leaders.

Furthermore, as Wu (1997) described “Progressivists/altruist” individuals who tend to have a positive self-concept and are willing to “play the game” to transform the social setting of the workplace, all the participants in this study possessed, as they identified about themselves, people skills and the ability to deal with politics, These were the top skills they needed and valued in their presidential roles.

Most of the participants in this study noted that the stereotypes and the model minority concept needed to be broken. Three of the presidents in this study spoke about the need to address and break the stereotype that Asians are too soft, passive, quiet, and tend to avoid conflict. Wong (2002) discovered subtle racism including the stereotype that, while Asian Americans are hard workers, they are not good leaders and that they are not interested in advancing in leadership roles. As a result, the administrators in her study felt they were rarely considered as potential candidates for senior-level positions and that they were often passed up for promotions. President 1 spoke about her expectations of an administrator to be assertive and forthcoming. She noted that Asians were not seen this way by at society at large and would have a problem if this stereotype was not broken as they moved up through the academic ranks.

I think a cultural stereotype is that Asians are not forthcoming in talking about their strengths. And so even though that may be the way we've been raised, that you don't talk about yourself, you got to get over that, because to be competitive, and as hard as that may be on occasion, that's a part of the way the game is played. And if Asian Americans don't step up to talk about their strengths in a much more confident, straightforward way, the fear is, everyone is going to have your lunch. (President 1)

President 4 also pointed out the stereotype that “Asian people do not like being aggressive, but we have great ideas. There is this perception that we are weak.” In acknowledging this stereotype, President 4 gave some solid examples of the professions to which Asians ordinarily are drawn -- such as being restaurant and shop owners,

doctors and lawyers -- in order to avoid or limit confrontation and conflict, which she acknowledged was indeed a part of the Asian cultural tradition.

Knowing the dismal number of Asian American leaders in higher education, it becomes even more vital for current Asian American in leadership positions to challenge the model minority theory. The model minority theory is the theory that, although Asians have experienced racism and discrimination, they have nevertheless managed to succeed academically, financially and socially (Shaefer, 2004). In other words, Asian Americans managed to obtain well paying positions, and higher socioeconomic statuses through education and hard work despite bigotry and racism (Wong, Lai, Nagasawa, & Lin, 1998). When negative racial conflicts occur with other minorities, the incidents are labeled racist; however, when actions or comments are made toward APAs the incidents are called satirical. More recently, racial comments or acts have occurred at Dartmouth College due to the recent hiring of the new college president, Dr. Jim Yong Kim who took office in July 2009. The president who is Korean was referred to as a "Chinaman" and was accused of taking another hardworking American's job in an email that was sent to students (Jan & Schworm, 2009). Evidently, racism currently exists for Asian Americans and the Model Minority theory remains a very problematic myth.

The current study supports the importance for current Asian American leaders to reach out and build the "bench strength" and pipeline of future leaders in higher education. Four of the participants spoke about education as a natural expectation stemming from the Asian culture. They noted that education was highly regarded in their families and they were expected to go to college. This natural expectation gave them an advantage and ability to pursue graduate level degrees with ease in terms of the academic expectation based on their early training and emphasis at home. Asian family values and

practices include success in education, achieving upward mobility, obedience to parents and elders, and instilling guilt regarding parents and family obligations (Chang & Li, 2005). In achieving and earning their doctoral degrees, they were able to lead with a more competitive edge. Lam's study (2002) of six APA California colleges or university presidents on their paths to CEOs revealed that education was highly valued. At an early age, each participant was strongly influenced by parents about the significance of obtaining an education, especially a college degree, was and this was also true of four of the five participants in this study. Consistent with the scholarly literature, in this study the participant's parents instilled in their children that they wanted the best for them. The parents reinforced that desire by stressing the importance of education. Four of the five presidents in this study stated that their parents showed support and gave guidance during their educational journeys.

Overall, their awareness of the dismal number of Asian American leaders in higher education inspired and pushed the study's participants to take up the challenge of leadership, break with some of the Asian stereotypes in positive ways and undo the model minority myth. Successful women and minority presidents not only advance their own institutions but also inspire other underrepresented candidates to follow in their pathways (ACE, 2008).

Conclusions

There are many contributory factors as to why women and minorities are underrepresented in college presidency positions. It is widely acknowledged that this underrepresentation must be addressed and transformed in a more positive direction. When focusing on Asian Americans, the numbers are even more alarming. According to the American Council on Education (ACE) report (2007), only one percent of college presidents are Asian Americans. This low number is especially troubling because Asian Americans have a strong representation in the academic and administrative ranks. Asian Americans are the only group that is not equally represented in senior leadership positions, especially college presidencies, commensurate with the available talent pool. This suggests that without direct and conscious intervention, the dismal representation of Asian American in the college presidency will continue unchanged.

In addition to focusing on Asian Americans, this study has narrowed down the research needed to consider gender and investigated how five Asian American women were able to attain college presidencies and the strategies and sources of support they used throughout their successful journeys. Previous research suggested that nonacademic presidents seldom lead doctoral institutions, which was certainly true in this study (Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001; Steinke, 2006). In this study, the women all took the administrative route, mostly through the student services area, and they led smaller, two-year community college institutions. None led land or research-intensive institutions. The latter type of universities, often perceived as the most prestigious, continue to be led primarily by men who pursued traditional academic career paths. Women who aspire to lead those types of institutions may be more successful if they earn Ph.D.'s and are able to progress through the academic ranks unlike the women studied here.

Persistent evidence suggesting that women face unique issues on campus due to gender must be acknowledged and addressed. The demands of family and the workload imbalance in the home between genders are keeping some women out of the leadership pool for practical as well as personal reasons. In contrast, the participants in this study acknowledged the support they received from their family members, especially the spouses of those who were married with children. The participants who were married with children acknowledged sacrificing the spending of time with their children but were thankful and appreciative that their spouses filled in and had shouldered more of the parental responsibilities to take care of the home. According to the findings of this current study, it would have been very difficult or impossible for the participants who were married with children to have attained the presidency if they did not have strong support from their spouses. These women noted they felt very lucky to have spouses who support their career advancement and was willing to take more responsibilities at home and raising their children. This is evidence that gender differences exist in terms of the experiences between male and female presidents.

The careers of the women in this sample were somewhat unplanned but consisted of sustained career growth and varied administrative experiences, as has been found to be the case in previous studies (Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006; Whittier, 2006). The women discussed the importance of opportunities that emerged during the course of their careers, mostly through the encouragement and influence of their mentors and role models, which allowed them to gain the necessary experience and expertise to become presidents. This suggests that it is important for existing senior administrators and presidents to identify talented women and give them opportunities to expand their skill sets and experiences and to serve as mentors and role models. Mentoring, networking, and having support groups

were identified as effective strategies and sources of support to help Asian American women in particular to advance to the presidency. Current presidents, whether male or female, white or minorities, might consider identifying talented women on their campuses who demonstrate leadership potential. Moreover, current leaders and offices responsible for leadership development and training might consider creating a formal mentoring, networking and support group program to strengthen leadership talents and, eventually, to increase the talent pool for promotion or hiring to presidential positions.

In addition, the current study makes clear that Asian American women who aspire to a presidency could benefit from actively seeking and participating in networking opportunities and creating a support group they could rely on when they need to make tough and difficult decisions about work and their careers. Further, it seems important that current presidents and senior administrators inform talented women that they could be presidents one day. The majority of the participants did not visualize themselves in a presidential role until it was suggested to them, even though they had already reached a senior level at their campuses. It appears that many Asian women do not naturally see themselves as leaders and many pursue presidencies only after it is suggested to them.

It is ironic that women may not see themselves as college presidents when they may be the best candidates for the role. Many of the issues that presidents have to address will require building consensus among many diverse constituencies. Bornstein (2007) has argued that women were well-suited to lead in the challenging environment facing higher education today because they tend to be collaborative leaders. Corcoran (2008) and Madsen (2008) have also suggested that women's empathy, listening skills, and collaborative nature make them excellent presidential candidates. Moreover, according to Hofstede (1981), Asians believe in collectivism and that their concept of the "other" is

more diverse, meaning they place greater value on community, groupness, harmony, and maintaining face. These characteristics can make for a great leader with strengths in having good people skills and being politically savvy. These were the very same top skills that all of the participants in this study mentioned as being very important in the college presidency.

The findings of this study also suggest that academic credibility and experience remains critically important for presidents, even for those who pursue administrative career paths. Though all the presidents were appointed to two-year community colleges, all of them earned doctoral degrees and had taught college-level courses. All of these presidents coming from administrative backgrounds discussed the importance of gaining experience that was deeply connected to the primary mission of colleges: teaching and learning. The female presidents in Steinke's (2006) study also discussed the need to obtain a terminal degree and suggested it was likely to be more important for women than for men. It appears that from this current study that women, who remain a minority of college presidents, especially Asian Americans, are more sensitive to the need for academic credentials. Women who aspire to the presidency would be well served to cultivate academic credibility by earning a doctorate and gaining teaching experience. The participants' mentors and role models rightly urged them to pursue a doctoral degree in order to eliminate a barrier in their journey towards a college presidency.

In regards to the selection process, strategies revealed by this study -- in particular, the generosity and willingness of current women-of-color college presidents in identifying and mentoring future talent -- while certainly helpful, are not sufficient. Concerted efforts are called for to seek out qualified, motivated, passionate potential college leaders with strong people skills and politically "savviness, regardless of their age,

gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or background. Board of trustees and recruitment consultants who are responsible in college president selection need to use diversity in their recruitment efforts to eliminate biases and stereotypes among minority groups and to be able to cast a wider net for talent. Diversification of leadership in higher education will positively influence and enrich the experiences of the students as well, who are in an increasingly diverse collegiate student body (ACE, 2008).

The theoretical framework used in this study was the “glass ceiling.” The glass ceiling is a global phenomenon whereby women are disproportionately concentrated in lower-level and lower-authority leadership positions than men (Powell & Graves, 2003). The metaphor of the glass ceiling, which implies an invisible but absolute barrier, still accurately describes the landscape for Asian women in higher education as can be seen from the findings of this study and due to the limited number of Asian women college presidents, especially their non-existence in four-year universities and land grant and doctoral granting institutions. In addition, scholarly and popular literature identified many challenges that women encounter in their careers, giving visibility to the issue of women professional advancement. In *Glass Ceilings and Asian Americans*, Woo (2000) argued that subtle racism and prejudice are often engrained into systemic aspects of an organization, however are difficult to trace back to particular individuals or specific policies. The glass ceiling metaphor was not highlighted and discussed by the participants in this study, perhaps because they were successful in attaining the presidency and they had been mentored and guided mostly by minority women leaders and college presidents. Through the mentorship and guidance they received, the glass ceiling was not an issue and a barrier to their progress. Yet, most of the participants shared comments they had heard or received from male counterparts, colleagues, and faculty regarding their gender and

ethnic backgrounds as they were moving along and up in their careers. According to the findings of this current study, it seems that Asian women can achieve presidential positions, but mostly in two-year community colleges and often by way of luck and nontraditional paths. Many pitfalls and unexpected detours continue to influence women in their career progression, and these will need to be addressed soon.

Teranishi (2007) has indicated the utility of Critical Race Theory as a lens to "problematize traditional notions of race by examining the intersections of ethnicity, social class, and immigration among the Asian American population" (p. 39). The participants in this current study were all aware of the current biased perceptions of Asian in stereotypes that prevent or limit the visibility of Asian leadership in higher education. The stereotype that Asians have language barriers, are non-confrontational, quiet and passive needs to be broken by highlighting the positive assets they bring to organizations, which are being collaborative, having great listening skills, and being able to focus on the needs of the collective group. The notion that Asian Americans are hard workers and are not management or leader material needs to be shattered. Current senior leaders, especially Asian Americans in all industries not just higher education, need to encourage other Asian Americans, both women and men, to take the challenge to lead. It needs to be highlighted that they bring unique skills, knowledge, and perspectives. This may not be recognized or valued in the traditional higher education culture just yet, but the more often the challenge to lead is taken up by Asian Americans will make what they have to offer eventually become an integral part of higher education culture.

The descriptors that the study's participants used when asked what it was like to be college presidents were: it is a privilege; it is an honor; it is like a conductor in an orchestra; it is like being a mother; and it is a lifestyle. They are the president day or

night, on duty around the clock, and represent their college wherever they are. Overall, the Asian American women college presidents in this study talked about how wonderful it has been for them to have had the opportunity, no matter how limited, to be agents of change in ways that render their institutional climates kinder and gentler learning and working environments for everybody under their charge.

Implications

Several implications can be drawn from the findings and conclusions of this study. First, there is a pressing need for more Asian American women to achieve college presidencies and serve as role models for other women of color, particularly Asian women, in higher education. It is possible that more Asian women would pursue the presidency if they saw a female with an Asian background president on their campus or in greater numbers nationwide. In order to build a pipeline and increase the number of Asian women in presidential roles, it will require current leaders' and administrators' active and targeted identification of talented Asian women candidates to develop and for whom to provide opportunities to gain necessary experience, training and credentials.

Second, it was clear in these research findings that Asian women presidents are nonexistent in four-year colleges. While all the Asian women in this study took the administrative route in their pathway to the college presidency, it is the case that four-year colleges still highly prefer their president to have gone through the academic route. This means there is much room for growth in diversifying the leadership in four-year institutions. Going beyond the current study, the career pipeline in four-year colleges also needs to be studied and analyzed for ways current tenure track Asian women can be encouraged or developed to pursue a presidential position.

Third, it is very critical for current leaders, recruiters, and board of trustees to recognize and value the leadership asset that Asian American women bring to a campus community. Organized consciousness-raising on the “biased perceptions,” appreciation of different styles of leaders, and understanding of the value of diversifying leadership in higher education is recommended for those involved in recruiting talent and appointment decisions. It is important to note that the goal is not to diversify higher education leadership for its own sake, but to add missing or underappreciated talent and abilities to institutions for the benefit and enhancement of the student college experience.

Fourth, it is very challenging for an Asian woman to break through the glass and bamboo ceiling and be able to live without guilt as they become wives and mothers. Work-life balance becomes nonexistent on the journey to and during the presidential position. The societal expectation of wives and mothers and their roles do not change as women progress in their careers. This may be more so in the Asian culture, where women were traditionally taught and trained to be invisible, a support role and a social entertainer. Therefore, it is important for families and spouses of Asian women leaders pursuing a college presidency to understand the implications and grasp their special role as the main base of support for these tenacious and accomplished Asian women.

Recommendations for Future Practice

Based on the findings of this study, the following are this researcher’s recommendations for those who aspire to the college presidency and for current leaders and governing boards of institutions in higher education:

1. Asian women who aspire to the presidency in a two-year college by way of an administrative path might consider attaining academic credibility, a variety of administrative experiences, seeking mentors and role models, and cultivating

networks. While the presidential role may not be particularly academic in nature, it is the Chief Executive Officer of an academic enterprise. As such, it is important for presidents to understand the academic culture and to gain academic experience. Earning a doctoral degree and teaching at the college level will likely continue, as it is now, to be important qualifications for presidential candidates, and an expectation of search committees and campus communities. Furthermore, it is very important for Asian women pursuing an administrative path to a presidency to have a sustained career growth and to gain a variety of administrative experiences, particularly in academics, administration and finance, student affairs, development and research. It is very important to take professional risks for advancement and to increase one's job scope. Asian women should identify and seek out successful presidents and senior administrators within their current institutions and beyond as their mentors, advisors, motivators and cheerleaders. It is also very critical to create a professional network that will support and enhance one's career journey.

2. Institutional leaders need to identify talented Asian women and give them opportunities to gain broad experience. If having more Asian women in presidencies is deemed important, as this researcher thinks, it is the role of current presidents and senior administrators to recognize Asian women with leadership potential and help them gain the critical, necessary and diverse experiences they will need to become competitive and strong presidential candidates. Moreover, presidents and senior administrators should consider communicating with and encouraging talented Asian women with whom they

come into contact as early as possible to aspire to college presidencies. This communication and encouragement can commence as they interact with talented Asian women students who belong to their own campus communities.

3. Search committees would be well served to evaluate the needs of their institutions and hire presidents with the skill and value-sets to address those needs. This would require governing boards and senior leaders along with the campus community as a whole to conduct a realistic assessment of the current state of the institution, identifying immediate and long-term challenges, and articulating the specific skill-sets that will be required to solve those problems and advance the institution. This type of assessment will enable search committees to distinguish the candidate who will be a good fit in skill, value-set, personality and leadership style. In addition, search committees need to seek out diverse candidates, including diversity of gender and ethnicity and previous professional experiences. Furthermore, the usefulness of an outside search consultant needs to be examined in order for the selection process to be in alignment with the institution's needs and to make sure the recruitment process is fair and looks in all the different places where suitable talent might be found.
4. For anyone who aspires to be a college president, it is critical to do preliminary research on the institution's history, values, culture and future aspirations in order to ensure a good fit with leadership style, values, purpose and personality. Although a perfect fit is nonexistent, it is very important to take the challenge to lead and take risks whenever an opportunity presents itself to serve the greater good.

5. For academic leaders and departments responsible for workforce development and training, it is recommended that they look into establishing a formal mentorship program as part of leadership development and training. Based on the findings of this study, mentors and role models play critical role in advancing Asian women towards the college presidency position. Being a mentor and role model needs to be one of the requirements for current college presidents and senior leaders both within and outside their institutions.
6. For higher education leaders, diversifying board members would ensure a wider pool of talent that could be seriously considered for the presidency. This will also help to lessen or eliminate false and misleading ethnic stereotypes regarding whether or not minorities or Asian American women can successfully act as leaders. Moreover, since being selected for presidency is only half the battle, the board members should dedicate time in fostering and ensuring the success of appointed college presidents.
7. Family members and spouses of Asian women who aspire to be a college president need to know they will be sacrificing a lot of personal time and care in order to support and ensure their loved one's success in taking the journey. Further, once they attain the presidential position, it is very important to note that it is more than a job; it is a huge responsibility that requires a lot of sustained time, commitment and dedication. Just like being a mother, it is an around the clock job; it becomes a lifestyle. Family members and spouses are a strong source of support and inspiration for Asian women who are currently college presidents and can also be for those who aspire to be one in the future.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study, like all scholarly research, uncovered many new questions during the research process. There are several ways in which further exploration of this topic could contribute to a more robust scholarly conversation about the nature of college leadership and, at the same time, could increase the number of Asian American women in presidential positions in higher education.

1. This study of Asian American women college presidents could be replicated with male participants and be expanded nationwide rather than limiting it to the Pacific Coast region. It is possible that men would have different experiences and understandings of their career paths, challenges and barriers, leadership styles, and the glass ceiling in higher education. Several other scholarly research studies cited in this study suggested that men approach careers differently and that the presidential role is different from a male's point of view. It would be beneficial if scholarly research were done to support or refute this theory using a comparative approach.
2. Future research could explore the history of Asian women in higher education purposely "opting out" or not seeking presidencies while they are appointed to Provost, Vice Presidential or Dean positions. It is important to understand why Asian women who reached the level of senior administrators decided not to continue on to become presidents -- whether their reasons were personal or related to professional-specific factors that caused them not to advance. This study focused solely on those few Asian women who succeeded in going all the way to the very top. A study of the barriers and challenges perceived and experienced by other Asian female senior administrators that prevented them

from aspiring to presidential roles would be helpful. By collecting data from Asian women who chose not to pursue or achieve presidencies, higher education practitioners might be able to consider changes that would make the role more desirable and/or attainable to increase leadership diversity.

3. Beyond what this study did with the women college presidents themselves, there is a need for a comprehensive exploration of the experiences and realities of Asian American men and women college presidents by collecting data from their families, mentors, direct reports, networks, community members and close friends. A large-scale qualitative study could provide the Asian community and other communities with a more accurate picture of the few who have taken up the challenge to lead colleges. This study could serve as an inspiration and motivation to others who aspire to become college presidents and could highlight even more the importance of having support from family, mentors, networks, friends and community members.
4. Future research for a comprehensive exploration of the college presidential role is needed with diversifying leadership in mind. A large-scale qualitative study could serve as a supplement to the quantitative survey data collected and analyzed by ACE (2010). Search committees, recruitment consultants, governing boards, and individuals from diverse backgrounds who aspire to the college presidency position could all benefit from a more robust understanding of what the position of president actually entails and which skills are required to be successful.

Concluding Thoughts

This study brought together the narratives of five Asian American women college presidents. While it is certainly true that their considerable insights and experiences cannot be generalized to all Asian women college presidents, because the findings concur with prior studies done some likely valid inferences can be drawn. Their generosity in sharing personal insights into the nature of their work and life experiences revealed a deep and sustained connection in each case with their personal values and beliefs and the institutions they serve, as change agents who advocate for all their constituents' benefits, especially the students.

While the number of women of color in administrative positions has increased over the years, it is important to still remember that very few Asian American women hold positions at the level of Chancellor and President in higher education. The few that are currently college presidents lead two-year community colleges and are non-existent in four-year colleges and doctoral granting institutions. Just as troubling is the fact that it is still seldom the case that one can find more than a single Asian American woman in college administration in large institutions. More often than not, when an Asian American woman does get the opportunity for an administrative position, there is a tremendous pressure to succeed. For Asian American women, being of two minority groups and the only group in higher education that is not equally represented in senior executive positions, documenting the strategies and sources of support used by those few who were able to break through both the glass and bamboo ceilings is very critical. This research study can definitely be said to have captured the successful journeys of, and drawn the broader lessons from, the experiences of five Asian American women college presidents.

It is very important to note that the presidents who were married with children received strong family and spousal support. They did not feel pressured regarding their traditional roles as wives and mothers. The participants in this study were also mentored and guided by successful women, mostly women of color presidents, in which, they benefited tremendously, by learning from their mentors and being given opportunities to expand their skill-sets and portfolios. I believe having these two main sources of support enabled them to make the most out of their experiences and greatly facilitated their successful career advancement. This combination of support needs to be explored further and studied to ensure that minority women, including Asian women, are better able to succeed in attaining college presidencies.

For the presidents in this study, the dismal number of Asian American women leaders in higher education was a major concern, and they make it a point to make sure to mentor and encourage others, including college students, to consider college presidency as something they should aspire to become. This research study has reinforced how important mentoring and networking in regards to career advancement and development to women of color and specifically to Asian American women.

As an Asian American woman administrator myself in higher education, having had the opportunity to conduct this study has been extremely enlightening and wonderful experience. As the researcher, I am extremely grateful to the participants' time and honored to have been able to interview them and their willingness to share their personal stories. I know that their personal stories and professional experiences will inspire others, especially Asian American women, to take up the challenge to lead in higher education.

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Appendix A

CONSENT COVER LETTER (research participant)

Winter 2011
President/Chancellor
College/University Name
Address

Dear President/Chancellor:

My name is Joan Torne and I am a doctoral student in the Leadership and Organization Department in the School of Education at the University of San Francisco. I am writing to ask you to participate in my dissertation research. I am interested in exploring the reasons of the dismal number of Asian American women presidents in higher education, their career paths and leadership experiences. My research questions are: 1) How have Asian American women college presidents navigated their career path in higher education? 2) What strategies and sources of support have Asian American women college presidents used to overcome barriers and challenges in their pathway to college presidency?

Given my focus, I am requesting your help in two ways: 1) permission to interview you; and, 2) complete the attached demographic questionnaire. The interview will last about 2 hours. The interview will occur at your office at a mutually convenient time. I would like to tape the interview. If you agree to be in this study, you will complete the attached demographic sheet that asks about your cultural and educational backgrounds, and other demographic questions relevant to the research I am conducting before we meet for the interview. I know that your time is limited and very precious, but I appreciate you taking the time to help me in facilitating my learning and completion of my doctoral degree.

Participation in research may mean a loss of confidentiality. Study records will be kept as confidential as is possible. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. Study information will be coded and kept in locked files at all times. Only the researcher and study personnel will have access to the files. While there will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study, the anticipated benefit of this study are the following: It will add to the canon of knowledge regarding Asian American leaders in higher education; It will also add to the understanding on how Asian American college presidents attained their current positions, their experience during the selection process and their leadership styles; This study has the potential to inform current and prospective Asian American administrators about the challenges and successes they may experience in their career pathways toward a Presidency; This study will provide recommendations to educational leaders and policy makers about ways to diversify the population of College Presidents in California.

There will be no costs to you as a result of taking part in this study, nor will you be reimbursed for your participation in this study. If you have questions about the research, you may contact me at (408) 410-XXXX or by email at joan.torne@sjsu.edu. If you have further questions about the study, you may contact the IRBPHS at the University of San

Francisco, which is concerned with protection of volunteers in research projects. You may reach the IRBPHS office by calling (415) 422-6091 and leaving a voicemail message, by e-mailing IRBPHS@usfca.edu, or by writing to the IRBPHS, Department of Counseling Psychology, Education Bldg., University of San Francisco, 2130 Fulton Street, San Francisco, CA 94117-1080.

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. Thank you for your attention. If you agree to participate, please complete the attached demographic sheet and consent form and return it to me in the enclosed pre-addressed envelope. I appreciate very much your generosity and time in facilitating my learning more about Asian American Presidents in Higher Education. If there are ways I can give something back to you for the help you provide me, I hope you will let me know.

If you have additional questions about this study, please feel free to ask me (408)-410-XXXX. You may also call my research advisor, Dr. Patricia Mitchell, at (415) 422-XXXX.

Sincerely,

Joan Torne
Doctoral

Student

Appendix B

Researcher Developed Demographic Data Sheet

Participating College President/Chancellor Demographic Data and Consent Form
Fiscal Year 2011/12

1. Name: _____
2. Position title:
 - a. _____ President
 - b. _____ Chancellor
3. Phone: _____
 - a. Fax: _____
 - b. E-mail: _____
4. Date appointed to current position (mm/yy): _____
5. How many college/university presidency/chancellorship have you held prior to your current position? _____
6. Position held immediately prior to assuming current presidency/chancellorship assignment:
 - a. _____ President
 - b. _____ Chancellor
 - c. _____ Chief academic officer or Provost
 - d. _____ Other senior executive in Academic Affairs (including deans)
 - e. _____ Senior executive in Development
 - f. _____ Senior executive in Student Affairs
 - g. _____ Senior executive in Administration & Finance
 - h. _____ Chief of Staff

- i. ____ Senior executive in Athletics
- j. ____ Other: _____
7. Position held prior to the position described in item 6: _____
8. Please check all the degrees you have earned and enter the number of degrees earned
 - a. ____ Associate; How many? ____
 - b. ____ Bachelor's; How many? ____
 - c. ____ Master's ; How many? ____
 - d. ____ PhD ; How many? ____
 - e. ____ EdD ; How many? ____
 - f. ____ MD ; How many? ____
 - g. ____ Law ; How many? ____
 - h. ____ Other: _____ ; How many? ____
9. Indicate major field of study for your highest earned degree: _____
10. What is your Asian Cultural Background?

11. Marital Status: (1)____ Married; (2)____ Never Married;(3)____ Domestic Partner; (4)____ Separated; (5)____ Divorced; (6)____ Widower/Widow
12. Do you have children?(1) ____ Yes; (2)____ No
13. Have you ever altered your job circumstances to care for a dependent or spouse?
 - a. ____ Yes, left the job market
 - b. ____ Yes, worked part time/reduced schedule
 - c. ____ Yes, other
 - d. ____ No

- i. If yes, how many years did you alter your job circumstances? ____
14. How many years have you served as a full-time faculty member at a college or university? ____
15. Before your first presidency, in how many presidential searches were you invited for an interview? ____

Please make sure you have answered all of the above questions. I assure you that your responses will remain confidential and none of your personal demographic data collected on the sheet or during the interview process will be shared with anyone in your college or university. All files will be kept under lock and key at my home and after five years will be destroyed. All interviewees will be assigned a code, so that your name will never appear along side your data or interview. If at any time you decide that you would like to withdraw from participating in the interview, you may do so at any time.

Your voluntary participation in filling out this demographic sheet will assist me in gathering the data I will need to complete my research on Asian American Leaders in California: Their Pathway to Presidency/Chancellorship in Higher Education. I am most grateful for you taking the time to assist me in this project. Next, I will contact you to schedule our 1-hour interview preferably at your office.

Please print and then sign your name below to give your consent. Thank you very much.

I am volunteering to participate in a 1-hour interview: ____ Yes ____ No

Name: _____

Title: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C

Interview Questions

Research Question No. 1: How have Asian American women college presidents navigated their career path in higher education?

1. Could you tell me about your background and upbringing?
2. Could you describe your education and how it influenced you?
3. What do you think contributed to your success in attaining your current position?
4. Explain how your cultural background played a role in your life choices such as education, career and marriage?
5. What are the strengths and skills you bring to your current position?
6. What skills or strengths were particularly important for you personally?
7. What type of strengths and skills do current leaders need in order to make it to the college presidency?
8. Please describe and share your experience of the presidential search process?
9. Do you feel that the search process disclosed most or all of the information you need to know about the institution, the position, your spouse or domestic partner's role, the board's and the institution's expectations?
10. Were there any steps or requirements during the selection process that you perceived were not fair? Please explain your answer.
11. Based on your experience, what was the best part of the selection process?
12. Based on your experience, what was the most important part of the selection process?
13. Based on your experience, what was the least important part of the selection process?
14. What are some of your recommendations in order to improve the presidential search process?

15. What is your leadership style?
16. Define what it means to be a good leader.
17. What is it like to be a college president?

Research Question No. 2: What strategies and sources of support have Asian American women college presidents used to overcome barriers and challenges in their pathway to college presidency?

1. In your experience, what are the barriers you have faced as an Asian American woman leader in higher education?
2. In your experience, what are the ongoing challenges you have faced as an Asian American woman leader in higher education?
3. What were the challenges and barriers that were particularly significant for you personally?
4. What strategies have you used to address these barriers and challenges, and how successful were those strategies?
5. How do your previous work experiences help you in your current leadership role?
6. Who are your mentors and what are their leadership styles?

Miscellaneous Questions:

1. What advice would you give Asian Americans who aspire to be in high executive positions in higher education?

2. What contribution, if any, can Asian Americans who currently hold the position of college president make to address the under-representation of Asians in college presidencies?
3. Is there anything else you would like to share that we have not already covered?

Appendix D

Sample Interview Transcript

Date: mo/dd/yr

Time Length: 1 hour, 56 minutes, 44 seconds

5. What are the strengths and skills you bring to your current position?

The strengths and skills I brought to that position is I would say . . . my principles of building unity within an organization. Fostering collaboration. The other part is vision, having a vision, for the institution. I think that's critical for strong leaders and the ability to transform and as a chancellor is really managing the resources and not only maximizing existing resources but creating new resources. And the other part would be the skills in building trust because I think that's crucial. You can do all of the others but if you have no trust, it's just an empty foundation. You know the house doesn't stand. The institution whether in the structural way or the cultural way would not be able to sustain or accept, respect your leadership.

1. What skills or strengths were particularly important for you personally?

J: I know you spoke about having vision, fostering collaboration . . . maybe the top 2 or top 3 for you.

D: I think the skills would be capital P. People skills. The people skills are extremely important. If you can't work with people, how can you lead? Because a leader is only a leader if they have followers. So if you look around and there's nobody around, you can't really take the institution. So the skills that I have in working with people are probably the – the most important one in carrying me through.

J: And that's also you would say your strength?

D: Yes. Now people skill, it's all encompassing. It's related to exactly what I said for the previous question which is building that you work with people and how do you galvanize people? How do you inspire people? I mean we're not just talking about having people to work in calm that they're not into each other, they're not cutting each other's throat. That's the first foundation. But a leader has to have those kinds of skills to first calm that water so the boat can really sail smoothly. And so how do you create that kind of environment whether it's calm water or fertile ground for people to grow. So I think it was Maxwell who said that if you inspire people to think bigger – to think bigger and do more, accomplish more, then you are a leader so I think of myself as a leader with the ability to create the inspirations. To create that unity, to create the internal passion for the quality that they want to achieve. You can't beat it into them and you can't drag them. You're only one person. They have to want it themselves.

J: And how do you do that? Can you –

D: How do I do that? Very carefully because and I say that in a serious way because people are – we're human beings right? We're not wood or steel – made out of steel. We're made out of spirit. So it's really how do you go to the spiritual side of a person – not the mechanical side of managing people. Management is a very mechanical process but leadership is really about people side of the business. So and nothing happen by design. Even when you build a house, you have the architect to have that blueprint. And so is the saying, when working with people. So how do you move people and inspire people. It's by design. By that I mean understanding alright, if you have- Julie is this way- Julie's strength is here so you look at the strength of spirit of people and then you say, this is how we can build a team together. And it has to stand together. And that's like the first ingredient for me in inspiring people because if they – if they're at odds with each other, you can't have a team. So that's always things that I pay attention to first. And then the vision.

Inspiration. People are inspired by vision. If they don't see that vision, they don't know how exciting it is. What direction they want to go toward. But if I tell you about what it's like at the yonder where the rainbow is, and when you actually are able to articulate that vision clearly, they see the picture even though they are at the bottom rung of that ladder. You're standing on top of the ladder but if I could articulate that's where I see our

possibilities of going in that, and they understand it and they want to get there as quickly as they can themselves. So that vision is very important.

2. What type of strengths and skills do current leaders need in order to make it to the college presidency and then to the chancellorship? Maybe we do the two distinctions. . .

Well I would say - what types of strengths and skills? They need to have people skills. They need to have the love for people. They need to have the heart, the passion, you know and the desire to support people's success because at the end of the day, I think that's what our job is as college president- is that how do I best support the people who are working toward supporting students? So it's like the two layers. The first is you as a leader at the center, how do you support that first layer build the capacity of those who are going to be helping our students, right? So if you build them strong, then they are in turn going to have that domino effect in helping to support our students with their own strengths and skills.

And so it's – at the end of the day, it's all about – it's a business of people. We're not producing manufacturing gadgets. So the challenge of leaders today especially is helping people to be strong but also I see leaders having issues and problems with the politics. People say, oh politics. The politics, it's still the word that starts with a "P." And that "P" still related to people.

J: The people create the politics.

D: Well people are politics. It's synonymous. And that's why I say if you understand what politics is, it's just a mapping of people coming together and how the gaps works- how decisions get made and what decision and which way does it go and that map is – the coordinates are – every coordinate has people in it. High E.Q skills. There's no question about it to make it as a college presidency. IQ helps but EQ always the IQ part of it. When it comes to being a college president.

And the skills too particularly in CA but I think CA leads in that way because we have legislation that mandates your behavior as a participatory governance, right? But a leader

in CA and training in CA can probably function anywhere else because I think that is so important. So the skills to truly understand what participatory governance are about and how that person could facilitate that process. That leader needs to have that kind of skill. And you can't really facilitate something successfully if you don't truly believe in it and if you don't understand how people function.

So you may not have the patience for example when people aren't behaving and such or if people are behaving in this way in the middle of this process. It's like, why are these people asking questions? Why are – why are they – so you have these entire “why's.”.....change process. Like Kotter's change process takes 8 steps. So you need to – if you skip one step, you're going to have set backs. The faster you want to move, the slower it would actually be. And you may find yourself, you creating your own obstacles by your lack of patience and understanding of how people functions in these processes. And that takes skills and patience.

J: I know. Some people sometimes they go too fast and they get criticized in going too fast and then they go too slow and then they're too slow. So you have to find the right pace and you'll never know until the end.

D: It's always about balance.

J: Yeah, it's the product at the end.

D: It's always about balance.

3. Please describe and share your experience of the presidential search process? And maybe you can talk briefly too about the chancellor – how is it different with the process.

Yeah, the presidential search process was a little different because that was my second interview. The 1st interview, I went to _____ that was my first interview and I knew I wasn't getting that job and neither was I interested. It's hard. I understand it's hard but you've been at the institution.

J: Were you internal?

D: Yes, I was internal. And so . . . but I knew it was time to leave. So the safest is you apply internally. So I knew that was a safe bet. I have nothing to lose by applying at my own institution but I had all the things to gain because first of all, it tells people they may not have perceived me as Asian woman president. It's not usually having that perception but so I'm making a statement about yes, I am interested in being the president. Secondly, it gave me a wonderful opportunity to practice. Because it's a process that could be very intimidating. It's different from any other position that you're applying for. So having gone through that gave me a ton of confidence for the presidency that I was seeking at ____ So –

J: And what was your position before at _____?

D: Before _____? At _____? I was assistant superintendent vice president. In a single college. No that's why my career is very interesting because I wasn't interested in just the traditional VP position and at that time, that was very unique vice president position... And then I had the assignment to create virtual college so that's like the academic side, I got the community side . . . and then I have the grants under me. So I had a little hodgepodge of everything. Which made it very interesting for me and so that was my position before.

So as a president you are expected to be in a community and so I was already doing a lot of that vice presidency position so it made very natural and I had a track record working with community organizations and finding money is a thing they ask, right? They want to make sure you know how to find money. While I was in grant, I started with zero. So when I went to ask for a budget, I remember this vice – the budget director said, okay the president created your division, right? But it didn't give you many budget. Besides my position, that was it. So I started everything from ground zero. So in the budget committee is like, "okay which part don't you understand. $0 + 0$ is still 0. You have to go make your own money!" "Ohh. . .okay."

See for every obstacle, it always turns out to be a blessing because of that I had to go make the money. Grants and everything else. Contract. . .education. . .community service. . .the fee base. . .I had to go make the money. So I know everything about how to make money. And that was the entrepreneur. That was satisfying the entrepreneur

yearning. And I was very good at it. We build everything from ground up. So that record, there was no question about it.

And then for _____, it was like everything was always planned out divinely. I believe in that so strongly because, I mean, why would I have a virtual college to start? I mean the president didn't even know how to turn on the computer. I say that because I joke about him all the time in public. But he had a vision. A person does not have to know how to use a computer but he understood the vision of technology, where it's going. He's a _____ he used to have a virtual college, and he said, "I created this new area, we're going to put that in there...."

Appendix E

RESEARCH SUBJECTS' BILL OF RIGHTS**UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO
CONSENT TO BE A RESEARCH SUBJECT**

The rights below are the rights of every person who is asked to be in a research study. As a research subject, I have the following rights:

- (1) To be told what the study is trying to find out;
- (2) To be told what will happen to me and whether any of the procedures, drugs, or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice;
- (3) To be told about the frequent and/or important risks, side effects, or discomforts of the things that will happen to me for research purposes;
- (4) To be told if I can expect any benefit from participating, and, if so, what the benefit might be;
- (5) To be told of the other choices I have and how they may be better or worse than being in the study;
- (6) To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study;
- (7) To be told what sort of medical or psychological treatment is available if any complications arise;
- (8) To refuse to participate at all or to change my mind about participation after the study is started; if I were to make such a decision, it will not affect my right to receive the care or privileges I would receive if I were not in the study;
- (9) To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form; and
- (10) To be free of pressure when considering whether I wish to agree to be in the study.

If I have other questions, I should ask the researcher. In addition, I may contact the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS), which is concerned with protection of volunteers in research projects. I may reach the IRBPHS by calling (415) 422-6091, by electronic mail at IRBPHS@usfca.edu, or by writing to USF IRBPHS, Department of Counseling Psychology, Education Building, 2130 Fulton Street, San Francisco, CA 94117-1080.

Appendix F

January 25, 2012

Dear Ms. Torne:

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at the University of San Francisco (USF) has reviewed your request for modification of your human subjects approval regarding your study.

Your modification application has been approved by the committee (IRBPHS #11-115).

1. Approval expires twelve (12) months from the dated noted above. At that time, if you are still in collecting data from human subjects, you must file a renewal application.
2. Any modifications to the research protocol or changes in instrumentation (including wording of items) must be communicated to the IRBPHS. Re-submission of an application may be required at that time.
3. Any adverse reactions or complications on the part of participants must be reported (in writing) to the IRBPHS within ten (10) working days.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRBPHS at (415) 422-6091.

On behalf of the IRBPHS committee, I wish you much success in your research.

Sincerely,

Terence Patterson, EdD, ABPP
Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

IRBPHS – University of San Francisco
Counseling Psychology Department
Education Building – Room 017
2130 Fulton Street
San Francisco, CA 94117-1080
(415) 422-6091 (Message)
(415) 422-5528 (Fax)
irbphs@usfca.edu

<http://www.usfca.edu/soe/students/irbphs/>