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A Path to Visibility and Leadership: How Mentoring Relationships Impact Career Advancement
in Student Affairs for Asian American Women

By

Erica Alcantara Aros

Claremont Graduate University and San Diego State University

2022

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Approval of the Dissertation Committee

This dissertation has been duly read, reviewed, and critiqued by the Committee listed below, which hereby approves the manuscript of Erica Alcantara Aros as fulfilling the scope and quality requirements for meriting the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education.

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Abstract

A Path to Visibility and Leadership: How Mentoring Relationships Impact Career Advancement
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Erica Alcantara Aros

Claremont Graduate University and San Diego State University: 2022

Asian American women who choose a career in student affairs within the field of higher education are severely underrepresented in both staff positions and top officer/administrator positions compared to White women and other women of color. As the Asian American college student population continues to rise and women make up the majority of undergraduate students in the United States, institutions of higher education must address the need for student affairs staff and administrators to proportionally represent their diverse student bodies. Unfortunately, with an average of 2% of the roles of higher education administrators filled by Asian Americans, few Asian American women are available to mentor and encourage other Asian American women through career advancement in student affairs. This dissertation study examines the mentoring relationships of Asian American women in student affairs and how those relationships impact career advancement within the context of multiple layers of culture. A qualitative biographical narrative inquiry approach and semistructured interviews provided story narratives as data, which were analyzed through open coding and categorization. The findings of this study revealed that mentoring relationships do in fact support Asian American women in student affairs as they navigate their careers, build professional networks, strengthen their skills, and pursue advanced degrees. This study also challenges the application of Kochan's (2013) cultural

framework for mentoring to Asian American women in student affairs, thus resulting in the creation of a multi-layered cultural framework for mentoring Asian American women in student affairs which expands Kochan's framework.

Dedication

To my immediate and extended family for all the love and support that has sustained me throughout this important journey. To my husband Andy, who always cheers on my enormous dreams and is a true partner in parenting our beautiful children, Alana Reese and Ashton Miles, especially during the many hours I was in class or needed to study. To my mom Ruby, who I take after in most traits and characteristics, especially in balancing work and personal life. Mom, thank you for also being my motivation for finishing my dissertation as fast as possible. To my mentors and mentees, our relationships are what sparked my passion in researching mentoring in student affairs because I would not be successful in my career without you. To my fellow Asian American women in student affairs—past, present, and future—this is for us. Let’s rise into leadership with each other’s support! Finally, I could not have done this work without my faith in God and the peace of knowing that everything is connected and meant to be. My faith helped me get through the most difficult parts of the journey, to which I would say:

Day by day, and by the grace of God.

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I truly believe that if every woman had the professional support that I had during my doctoral journey, there would be many more of us out there.

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To the 15 Asian American women participants in my study: your stories, motivation, and passion for serving students in higher education inspire me to keep researching and leading in our field. This work is for us!

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Chapter One: Introduction

We must remember that one of the most insidious ways of keeping women and minorities powerless is to let them only talk about harmless and inconsequential subjects, or let them speak freely and not listen to them with serious intent.

We need to raise our voices a little more, even as they say to us “This is so uncharacteristic of you.” To finally recognize our own invisibility is to finally be on the path toward visibility. Invisibility is not a natural state for anyone. (Yamada, 1983, p. 40)

Overview and Statement of the Problem

These words of Mitsuye Yamada, a second-generation Japanese American woman, appear in an anthology of short works, titled *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings By Radical Women of Color* and edited by Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga (Yamada, 1983). Yamada was a faculty member teaching English at a California community college at the time. Nearly four decades later, Asian American women working in higher education still feel invisible (Maramba, 2011; Roy, 2019). Not only are Asian American women practically invisible in research literature (Museus & Kiang, 2009; Roy, 2019), they are also severely underrepresented in higher education senior administrative positions. According to the American Council on Education, in 2017, Asian Americans made up only 2% of chief student affairs officers and 2% of chief academic affairs officers in the United States (Espinosa et al., 2018). Asian Americans are also reported to be disproportionately underrepresented among student affairs staff professionals (3%) in relation to Asian American students (6%) in the United States. More, Asian American women are the most disproportionately underrepresented student affairs top officers in relation to Asian American students compared to White American, Black/African American, and Hispanic/Latinx American student affairs top officers (Pritchard & McChesney,

2018). The experiences of Asian American women in the workplace are further complicated by the model minority myth, which is the misconception that Asian Americans are high performers and do not require a lot of help or resources, and racial gender stereotypes that promote the idea that Asian women are meek, silent, and conflict avoidant. The combination of these prejudices often results in Asian American women being perceived as a group that does not require a lot of attention—they do their work well and do not make a fuss about anything. Hence, the idea of invisibility is perpetuated.

Asian Americans in general have rarely been the subject of research, let alone Asian American women (Museus & Kiang, 2009; Roy, 2019). Yakaboski and Donahoo (2011) argue that “the lack of a research focus on women in student affairs administration is one way that this population continues to be marginalized and pushed to the periphery within the higher education community” (p. 270). The very limited research on Asian American women in the field of student affairs has revealed that feelings of invisibility are a common thread, and perhaps it is for that very reason Asian American women are difficult to find in senior-level positions on college campuses (Blackhurst, 2000b; Espinosa et al., 2018; Pritchard & McChesney, 2018; Roy, 2019). Who is in their corner? Who is encouraging them, motivating them, and propelling them into opportunities for career advancement? If Asian American women are to succeed in student affairs, where they contribute to the diversity of higher education and serve as role models to the growing Asian American student population (Maramba, 2011), it is of importance and urgency to identify who they have found to be their most influential mentors, and furthermore, what they need in mentoring relationships in order to advance toward leadership.

While the topic of mentoring relationships for Asian American women in student affairs has not been well researched, there is a wealth of published literature on mentoring in general, mentoring for women of color in academia, and organizational culture.

Mentoring

Empirical studies show that “people who received mentoring had greater career satisfaction, career commitment and compensation, and had a higher number of promotions than people who did not receive mentoring” (Maccombs & Bhat, 2020, p. 31). Additionally, mentoring relationships benefit the mentee’s career functions (career advancement, coaching, exposure, and visibility) and psychosocial functions (enhancement of competence, identity clarity, acceptance and confirmation, and friendship) (Jean-Marie & Brooks, 2011).

Mentoring for Women of Color in Academia

Blackhurst (2000b) asserted that “women of color did not appear to benefit from their mentoring relationships in the same ways as White women” (p. 582) but that women of color who did not have mentors experienced higher levels of role ambiguity, more gender discrimination, and lower levels of organizational commitment. Therefore, we know that women of color in academia need mentoring to combat negativity, microaggressions, tokenism, deprofessionalization, and so on, in the higher education environment (Chang et al., 2014; Crawford & Smith, 2005; Maramba, 2011; Young, 2021). We also know that women of color seek mentorship outside of the workplace, such as from their family, friends, churches, and communities (Chang et al., 2014; Crawford & Smith, 2005; Duran, 2016; Enomoto et al., 2000; Tran, 2014) because women of color in higher levels of leadership who can serve as mentors are few and far between (Brown & Irby, 2009; Chang et al., 2014; Roy, 2019; Turrentine & Conley, 2001).

Impact of Organizational Culture on Mentoring

Kochan (2013) analyzed the relationships between organizational culture and mentoring and concluded that “the context of mentoring includes the cultural mores of the individuals involved and the cultural aspects within the organization and society in which they are functioning” (p. 412). Using this lens to examine mentoring for Asian American student affairs professionals, it is apparent that the impacts of mentoring on career advancement heavily depend on the culture of their higher education institution, the culture of the student affairs profession, and the society in which they live. Therefore, it is understandable that Kochan et al. (2015) call on administrators, supervisors, and trainers to take on the responsibility of creating a high-trust environment in which mentoring relationships can exist.

The topics listed above are explored in depth in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, but existing published literature lacks extensive research on Asian American women working in the field of student affairs and their mentoring experiences within the field. Most of the articles I found were centered on faculty experiences with mentoring in academia.

Purpose of the Study

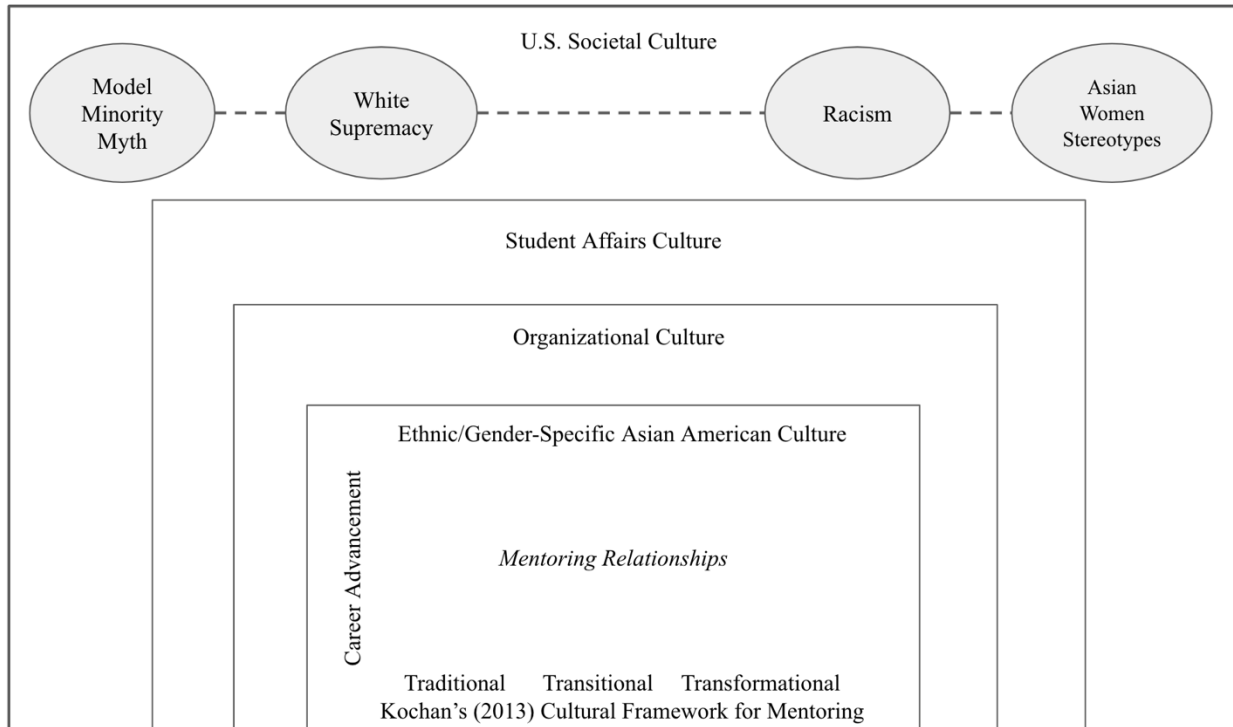
The purpose of this study is to address that Asian American women are more underrepresented in student affairs top officer positions than women in other race groups (White, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latina) by examining the types of mentoring relationships they engage in and the impact of those relationships on career advancement opportunities. The theoretical framework used to guide this research is the cultural framework for mentoring (Kochan, 2013), which identifies three types of mentoring within a culture: traditional, transitional, and transformative. For each type of mentoring, the intentions of the relationship are specific and unique to that method of mentoring. Most importantly, Kochan (2013) created this

framework to integrate organizational culture into the idea of formal mentoring. Kochan (2013) describes organizational culture as “framed by the history, goals, norms, rules, policies, and practices within which they operate, as well as by the leaders who direct them, the individuals within them, and the interactions between and among them” (p. 413).

This dissertation study will explore how Kochan’s (2013) types of mentoring impact career advancement for Asian American women in the context of multiple layers of cultures (see Figure 1). The broadest layer of culture is U.S. societal culture as it relates to Asian American women, in which paradigms of racism, White supremacy, Asian women stereotypes, and the model minority myth exist. Within U.S. societal culture is the field of student affairs in higher education and its culture, where professionals are dedicated to the academic success and personal growth of postsecondary students. Within the culture of the student affairs field is the organizational culture of the specific higher education institution, which is influenced by geographical location and the demographics of the area. The last culture examined in this study is the ethnic- and gender-specific culture Asian American women experience in the context of all the layers previously mentioned. Ethnicities will be specified because using the pan-ethnic term “Asian American” perpetuates the idea of homogenization and monolithic Asian identity, which can result in the misunderstanding of Asian cultures.

Figure 1

Framing of Dissertation Study



Research Questions

Kochan's (2013) philosophy on mentoring is that culture must be considered in the implementation of mentoring programs for them to be successful. Without the integration of culture in mentoring, Kochan warns that the mentor and mentee will likely be misunderstood. Adopting this theory, along with the research that shows significant underrepresentation of Asian American women in higher education administration (Blackhurst, 2000b; Pritchard & McChesney, 2018; Roy, 2019), the research questions for this study focus on the impact of mentoring relationships on career advancement using Kochan's (2013) three types of mentoring through the context of U.S. societal culture as it relates to Asian American women, student affairs culture in higher education, organizational culture of specific higher education institutions, and ethnic-specific Asian American woman identities.

The following research questions guide this study using a narrative inquiry approach:

RQ1: What types of mentoring relationships have Asian American women in student affairs participated in, and how have these relationships positively or negatively impacted their career advancement?

RQ2: Who do Asian American women in student affairs identify as their most influential mentors, and how do those mentors help them navigate the field of student affairs and their institution's culture?

RQ3: How, if at all, are ethnic and gender identity addressed in mentoring relationships with Asian American women in student affairs when discussing workplace interactions and career advancement?

Definitions of Key Terms

Cultures, whether societal, organizational, or identity related, have their own language of terms. Those terms may be commonly recognized in a broad sense but may have different meanings that are specific to the cultural context. It is common for student affairs practitioners to joke about student affairs language being half-occupied by acronyms that are easily understood by those in student affairs but are obscure to those outside of the field. The following terms are key to this research study and, therefore, require defining for a full understanding of the study's design.

Asian American

The term *Asian American* is a pan-ethnic racial identifier that was “developed largely during the political awakenings of the Civil Rights era” (Park, 2008, p. 542). The term *Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI)* will not be used in this study even though this expanded pan-ethnic term that includes Pacific Islanders in the Asian American population is commonly used in research publications. AAPI is the “U.S. government's amalgamation in 1977 of these two

distinctly racialized groups in data enumeration” (Poon et al., 2016, p. 471), and because I believe that Pacific Islanders have their own distinct experiences in student affairs that are different and separate from Asian Americans, they will not be included in this study.

Career Advancement

Carmeli et al. (2007) define organizational *career advancement* as an “objective assessment of an employee’s career movement, either via hierarchical advancement or horizontal mobility” (p. 192). For the purpose of this study, hierarchical advancement is defined as promotions that have been secured (as opposed to offered but not taken) either by appointment or formal recruitment, and horizontal mobility includes salary increases and/or the assignment of higher-level job responsibilities.

Ethnic/Ethnicities

The term *ethnic* or *ethnicities* in this study refers to the different groups that make up the Asian race category in the United States. As of 2019, the U.S. Census names 21 ethnic groups under the Asian race category (U.S. Census Bureau). The ethnic groups, which are used in this study’s demographic questionnaire (see Appendix A), are Asian Indian, Bangladeshi, Bhutanese, Burmese, Cambodian, Chinese, Filipino, Hmong, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Malaysian, Mongolian, Nepalese, Okinawan, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Taiwanese, Thai, and Vietnamese.

Mentor/Mentoring

When referring to the term *mentor* as a noun, this study considers that individual to be “someone whose advice [a mentee] seek[s] and value[s], or someone who offers [the mentee] advice and suggestions which [the mentee] believe[s] are beneficial to [the mentee’s] academic, career, or personal life” (Mertz, 2004, p. 542). For the term *mentoring*, this study will use

Kochan's (2013) definition of successful mentoring, which is "two or more individuals willingly forming a mutually respectful, trusting relationship focused on goals that meet the needs and foster the potential of the mentee, while considering the needs of the mentor and the context within which they both must function" (p. 414).

Student Affairs Professionals

Student affairs professionals are those who work in the field of higher education and are "dedicated to supporting the academic and personal development of individuals attending college or university" (Best College Reviews, 2021). For the purpose of this study, the criteria for eligibility to participate as a student affairs professional is to occupy a position within a college's or university's student affairs division and to be in a classification (staff or management) that directly provides or oversees student support services or student development initiatives. Most student affairs professionals pursue a master's degree in higher education administration, counseling, or a related field.

Woman/Women

The term *woman* in this study refers to an individual who self-identifies as a woman, womxn, or trans woman. The term *women* in this study refers to a group of individuals who self-identify or have been identified by others as a woman, womxn, or trans woman.

Workplace Interactions

For the purpose of this study, *workplace interactions* refer to networking, professional and personal relationship building, verbal and written communication, and other types of connecting with any individuals or groups affiliated with the institution.

Significance of Study

The intended audience for this study is primarily student affairs administrators and senior leaders in higher education who have the ability and responsibility to implement effective practices that will promote the success of Asian American women in student affairs professions. This study will aid in the understanding of how Asian American women experience mentoring relationships within the context of student affairs culture and the organizational culture of their higher education institution, and as a result, inform student affairs leaders of how mentoring initiatives can be designed to encourage the career development of Asian American women. This study may also suggest who the most impactful mentors are to Asian American women in student affairs and the types of mentoring relationships (traditional, transitional, or transformative) that will impact their career advancement.

Another important group who will benefit from this study are those in the student affairs profession who mentor Asian American women or will do so in the future. The findings of this study will hopefully inform mentors on how to provide effective guidance as it relates to organizational culture as well as how to ensure that racial and gender identity conversations and considerations are integrated into the mentoring relationship. This type of mentoring, called *culturally congruent mentoring*, would serve as a resource for Asian American women to “effectively address pressures of the model-minority stereotype and other aspects of [work] life (Kim et al., 2001, p. 2421). This is especially important because acknowledging the impacts of the model minority myth within the safety of mentoring relationships may assist Asian American women in student affairs with dealing with the complexities of the myth and then be empowered to work beyond it.

Research Design Overview

I used a narrative inquiry approach in this study to understand the mentoring needs of Asian American women in student affairs. Narrative inquiry uses “stories as data, and more specifically, first-person accounts of experience told in story form having a beginning, middle, and end” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 34). To analyze the story data, I used a biographical narrative inquiry approach, in which “the story is analyzed in terms of the importance and influence of gender and race, family of origin, life events and turning point experiences, and other persons in the participant’s life” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 35). This approach allowed for better understanding of the lived experiences of Asian American women in student affairs through in-depth qualitative interviews. Narrative inquiries often use unstructured interviews (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), but because I wanted to ensure that my research questions were fully addressed in regard to societal, student affairs, and organizational culture of each particular higher education institution and the cultures’ influence on mentoring relationships, I used a semistructured interview format to allow the participants’ multiple stories to answer my research questions. This approach also left room for follow-up questions and casual conversation to strengthen the connection between myself and the participant.

Since the research–participant relationship is vital to the process of narrative inquiry (Wang & Geale, 2015), my positionality is important to share here. I identify as an Asian American (Filipino ethnicity) student affairs career professional who has advanced to management/administrator roles after 7 years of being in entry-level and intermediate-level student services staff roles. At the time of this publication, I have been a professional in the field of student affairs for about 15 years. My parents are Filipino immigrants who moved to California in the 1970s to build a better life for themselves. I believe my positionality provided

my study with an advantage in that I was able to directly relate to the participants that I interviewed.

The sample population consisted of Asian American women working at 4-year higher education institutions in the field of student affairs for at least five years in a full-time capacity. They must also have engaged in a mentoring relationship with a mentor in the field of education. My research design of setting these particular criteria of eligibility for my sample population, along with the research questions that focus on various cultural contexts, allowed me to lessen the gap existing in published research literature—by placing a spotlight on an underrepresented group of student affairs professionals and their experiences with whether mentoring relationships have impacted their career advancement.

The semistructured interviews were conducted via Zoom video conference software due to the COVID-19 global pandemic and were recorded with the participants' consent. The recordings were transcribed and coded through NVivo qualitative data analysis software. The data were reviewed using narrative analysis and were grouped into themes.

Summary

This study strives to increase positive visibility of Asian American women in the field of student affairs. While the limited studies conducted on Asian American women in student affairs reveal that they mostly experience invisibility, in contrast, some women have expressed experiencing hypervisibility at the same time because they are often the only Asian American woman at the table (Maramba, 2011). Through a framework that integrates culture and mentoring, this study used a qualitative biographical narrative inquiry approach, which uses participant stories as data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), to examine the experiences of Asian American women in student affairs, specifically, how mentoring relationships have impacted

their ability to navigate their organization's culture, whether their mentors have helped them connect their racial and gender identities to how they work and interact with others in the field, and whether their mentoring experiences have resulted in career advancement. Perhaps through this opportunity to share their stories, Asian American women in student affairs will "raise their voices a little more" in a field that often regards them as invisible.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Overview of the Literature

The topic of mentoring experiences for Asian American women in student affairs is very much a niche concept, so it was unsurprising that I found very few sources on this topic. Because the student affairs profession has only recently become a subject of interest for researchers, much of the existing literature on mentoring for women of color in higher education have focused on faculty experiences. Even more challenging was finding any literature on the experiences of Asian American student affairs staff, or even Asian American faculty in higher education.

In order to provide a basis of understanding for Asian American women in student affairs, this literature review will first summarize the existing literature on women of color in higher education, then move into a review of the little research that exists on Asian American women in higher education and the challenges they experience in the workplace.

Mentoring is arguably a universal practice and is used in a wide range of career fields, but for this study, the literature reviewed will focus on the field of education from secondary to postsecondary education settings. Though a single widely agreed-upon definition of mentoring does not exist, this literature review will attempt to describe mentoring from a traditional, formal, and informal perspective. Lastly, the existing literature on mentoring experiences for women of color is organized in this review by answering the questions *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why*, and *how* in order to provide a comprehensive picture of the importance of mentoring and how it has benefited women of color in higher education.

Women of Color in Higher Education

The collective literature on educators who are women of color made it apparent that women of color are underrepresented in the field of education. The percentages of women of

color in faculty or administrative roles in education are far smaller than the percentages of White women who work in education (Brown & Irby, 2009; Chang et al., 2014; Duran, 2016; Enomoto et al., 2000; Maramba, 2011; Pritchard & McChesney, 2018; Tran, 2014; Valverde, 2011).

Overall, American universities do not come close to reflecting its racial diversity through faculty and administrators (Chang et al., 2014; Crawford & Smith, 2005).

A national report in 2010 revealed that “minority women represent only 3% of Full Professors, 7% of Associate Professors, 10% of Assistant Professors, and 10% of Instructors (non-tenure track) [and that] similar patterns are found in the representation of administrators in higher education” (Tran, 2014). More recently, according to the research report *Focus on Student Affairs, 2018: Understanding Key Challenges Using CUPA-HR Data*, “both Hispanics and Asians are underrepresented in student affairs. Hispanics make up 17% of students, but only 8% of student affairs professionals. Similarly, only 3% of student affairs professionals are Asian, compared to 6% of students. White males are slightly underrepresented among all student affairs professionals, accounting for 20% of student affairs positions compared to 24% of students” (Pritchard & McChesney, 2018, p. 7).

In leadership positions, however, some of these patterns differ. For top officers, White men (33%) and Black men (8%) are overrepresented compared to the student populations (24% and 5%, respectively)” (Pritchard & McChesney, 2018, p. 7). These data show an imbalance of representation between student affairs professionals of color and the populations of students of color, specifically for Hispanic or Latinx and Asian student affairs professionals. This is an issue of growing importance due to the rise in the enrollment of students of color in higher education, who benefit from seeing faculty, staff, and administrators who look like them supporting them in their academic journeys (Chang et al., 2014; Maramba, 2011; Pritchard & McChesney, 2018). If

students of color benefit from seeing and interacting with professionals of color, and more than half of the national college student population are women (Pritchard & McChesney, 2018), it is even more imperative that women of color are recruited and retained in higher education positions. However, the underrepresentation of women of color in professional academic roles means that there is also a lack of mentors who can share common experiences with the women of color we should be retaining (Chang et al., 2012; Enomoto et al., 2000; Holmes et al., 2007; Maramba, 2011; Tran, 2014). This disparity in same-race, same-gender mentoring relationships for women of color results in a wide array of unique mentoring experiences for women of color in academia.

Asian American Women in Higher Education

As enrollment numbers of Asian American students at colleges and universities across the nation increase, Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) women faculty, staff, and administrators are severely underrepresented (Blackhurst, 2000b; Maramba, 2011; Roy, 2019). This is cause for concern because, for decades, female students have made up the majority of undergraduate enrollment (Hussar et al., 2020), and without comparable representation of Asian American women on faculty and staff, the likelihood is minimized that Asian American female students will have student affairs professionals and faculty on campus to relate to and interact with. Roy (2019) reports that “Asian American women fall far behind White females in leadership positions in higher education, especially in community colleges that are assumed to be more liberal in acceptances than four-year universities while nurturing women in administrative positions” (p. 106). This is an example of how different higher education institutions do not share the same profile and organizational culture. It is important to distinguish these differences when considering the experiences of Asian American women. Maramba’s (2011) study revealed

that having representation of AAPI women in student affairs benefitted AAPI students because they served as role models and mentors for them.

To better understand possible reasons for the lack of Asian American women in faculty and staff positions, it is important to point out some of the barriers and challenges Asian American women in higher education face. Unfortunately, research on Asian Americans in general is scarce (Museus & Kiang, 2009; Roy, 2019), and research on Asian American women in student affairs is more so. My search for publications on the experiences of Asian American women working in higher education resulted in limited resources. From the literature I did reviewed, I concluded that the major issues Asian American women in higher education experience are the model minority myth, Asian women stereotypes, hypervisibility, and invisibility.

Model Minority Myth

Museus & Kiang (2009) defined the model minority myth as “the notion that Asian Americans achieve universal and unparalleled academic and occupational success” (p. 6), and Kim et al. (2001) defined the myth as a “stereotype [that] implicates all Asian American students as high achievers” (p. 2419). This paradigm not only has negative consequences for Asian American college students who are often overlooked as recipients for grants and other well-funded resources meant for underserved students (Chin & Kameoka, 2019; Museus & Kiang, 2009) but also affects Asian American faculty, staff, and administrators in higher education because it results in a lack of understanding about the issues they experience, such as racism and microaggressions in the workplace (Chin & Kameoka, 2019; Maramba, 2011; Roy, 2019). Roy (2019) referenced the model minority myth by stating the irony that despite Asian Americans being labeled as the model minority and holding the most terminal/doctoral degrees among

immigrant groups, they remain understudied in research for higher education. Kim et al. (2014) discussed concerns about how the model minority myth has led Asian American students to “assimilate to the mainstream culture at the cost of their ethnic identity” and how “53% of Asian Americans in a study reported preferring to be in another ethnic group if they had a choice” (p. 2420). However, the misconceptions about Asian Americans caused and perpetuated by the model minority myth are only one facet of the complexities of the myth.

Poon et al. (2016) provided a critical review of how the model minority myth has been researched in academia. The researchers also provided a stronger definition of the myth that incorporates the origin of the term: “This racial stereotype generally defines AAPIs, especially Asian Americans, as a monolithically hardworking racial group whose high achievement undercuts claims of systemic racism made by other racially minoritized populations, especially African Americans. . . . As a tool of racial wedge politics, the stereotype has assisted in the advancement of a color-blind racist ideology and agenda” (p. 469). By addressing the origins of the model minority myth, Poon et al. have called forward the problem with researchers simplifying the implications of the model minority myth. When simply countering the model minority myth by showing data that Asian Americans do in fact struggle and need help (Chin & Kameoka, 2019; Kim et al., 2001), researchers frame Asian Americans under a deficit-thinking mindset (Poon et al., 2016), which can be equally harmful for Asian Americans.

Asian American Women Stereotypes

Asian American women in student affairs have shared their internal conflicts in dealing with stereotypes about Asian American women being docile, nonassertive, submissive, and nonthreatening while trying to gain respect in the workplace (Maramba, 2011). The participants in Maramba’s (2011) study explained that being aware of such stereotypes has influenced the

way they interact with others in the university setting. Chin & Kameoka (2019) also referenced similar stereotypes of Asian Americans being quiet and quoted a Korean American administrator at a community college who said that people are always surprised that she talks a lot in meetings (p. 339). Another stereotype of Asian American women is the belief that they are socially inept, are deemed foreign, and do not speak English (Chin & Kameoka, 2019; Roy, 2019). In terms of leadership potential, Chin & Kameoka (2019) report that “Asian Americans are assumed to have lower leadership potential than White candidates with identical qualifications, and although Asian Americans comprise 6% of college students in the United States, they are only 2% of college presidents, and Asian American leaders at the highest level across the board in such institutions are even more uncommon” (p. 338). Because of these stereotypes about Asian American women, it is difficult for them to advance to leadership roles in higher education, therefore resulting in few Asian American administrators available to mentor Asian American women.

Invisibility and Hypervisibility

Asian American women and other women of color have described their experiences in higher education settings as reflecting both invisibility and hypervisibility. Faculty and staff who are women of color explain their invisibility to be a result of the lack of physical representation of other women of color on campus such that they are often unacknowledged in large meetings and forums, or their voices are ignored (Maramba, 2011; Roy, 2019; Young, 2021). In contrast, AAPI women experience a simultaneous sense of hypervisibility, meaning that they sometimes feel singled out when they are the only AAPI representative in the room (Maramba, 2011). Further, Duran (2016) described the notion that women of color often feel the need to combat

institutionalized or covert racism when there are no others in the field of higher education who mirror them.

While many AAPI women have experienced the issues mentioned, the lack of literature and research on AAPI women in higher education workplaces suggests that many more issues are to be discovered and explored. This dissertation attempts to add to the literature about Asian American women in student affairs so that they can be better understood and feel motivated to continue on in their student affairs careers, especially in serving AAPI students who will benefit from their presence at their institutions. Duran (2016) stated the following about women of color in faculty positions: “The process of supporting women of color in higher education does not end in women filling positions. To move institutions into spaces that value and support the advancement of women faculty of color, colleges and universities must implement resources and support systems such as mentorship, and spaces that validate voice and experiences of women of color” (p. 117). I suggest that the same applies to women of color in student affairs.

Overview of Mentoring

Mentoring, a concept derived in Homer’s *The Odyssey*, in which the character Mentor looks after Odysseus’s son, Telemachus, is a practice that is being more widely used in the field of higher education (Watkins, 1998). Peer mentoring programs are implemented in many student affairs departments to provide underrepresented college students with guidance and encouragement. For example, first-generation college students might be assigned a peer mentor who can help them apply for scholarships, teach them time management skills, and improve their study habits. In fact, mentoring and its many aspects are becoming increasingly studied by social science researchers (Blacknall & Coles, 2011). However, no clear universal definition of mentoring exists, and no models for mentoring in the field of education are widely accepted,

which makes it difficult for researchers to measure the success of mentoring (Girves et al., 2005; Watkins, 1998; Wyre et al., 2016), which perhaps explains the lack of research on mentoring for professionals in higher education (Watkins, 1998).

In exploring the various definitions of mentoring in a 2004 article, Mertz chose to reference McCarthy and Mangione's (2004) inclusive definition of mentoring, which is "someone whose advice you seek and value, or someone who offers you advice and suggestions which you believe are beneficial to your academic, career, or personal life." Traditionally, mentors are thought of as senior to the mentee or protégé, whether that be in age, rank, or years of experience. Mentees are generally thought of as younger, inexperienced, and in need of guidance and training from a mentor who is wiser, and these descriptions of mentors and mentees are how higher education faculty and staff mentorships are often posed for study (de Janasz & Sullivan, 2004; Zhao & Reed, 2003). Yet, when exploring mentoring relationships for women of color in higher education, Crawford and Smith (2005) found that African American women in administrator roles were unable to experience this type of traditional mentorship because African American senior leaders were rare or nonexistent. Therefore, their families, friends, and communities played a significant role in their career success instead. This is one of the many reasons why a larger representation of women of color in senior-ranking positions in higher education is vital.

To explore the concept of mentoring for women of color in higher education, the remainder of this literature review will feature studies that examine organizational culture as it relates to mentoring, formal mentoring programs, informal mentoring, and mentoring applied specifically to women of color.

Formal Mentoring Programs

For the purpose of this dissertation literature review, formal mentoring programs refer to mentoring relationships that are arranged by a department or institution, have a program goal, aim for intended outcomes, and/or follow a mentoring curriculum. For example, Dawson (2014) described a mentoring program for university teachers called “The Peer Assisted Teaching Scheme (PATs).” This mentoring program not only has a formal name and acronym but it also has specific participation guidelines, such as regular meetings, workbooks, a peer review process, and other improvement exercises. Another example of a formal mentoring program is the McNair Scholars Program, one of many TRIO programs funded by the Department of Education. Wyre et al. (2016) described the program’s mentor competencies, which are believed to be necessary for successful mentorships and mentor goal achievement. According to the results of their study on the McNair program, there was a positive correlation between mentor competencies and student success, therefore, not establishing mentor competencies can result in ineffective mentoring in formal mentoring programs.

Though research on formal mentoring programs highlights their benefits, other researchers have found that formal mentoring programs can be detrimental to the participants. Watkins (1998) believed that formal mentoring relationships are forced and could hurt the protégé’s development or make the protégé feel as if being intruded upon by the mentor. Jean-Marie & Brooks (2011), who examined mentoring for women of color in faculty positions, wrote that the formal mentoring relationship is “hierarchical and positions the protégé as only the benefactor” and warned that many myths and assumptions exist about formal mentoring programs, such as ideas that any senior leader can mentor any junior person, that having formal meetings are the only commitment necessary, that faculty of color can be mentored only by

faculty of color, and that the mentor's and mentee's research interests must match (p. 96). One formal distance mentoring program ("distance" meaning the participants were not located in the same area) in Australia proved to be ineffective when most of the participants were unable to dedicate their time to the program. Only two of eight mentoring pairs reported having a successful mentorship, and they had already known each other before participating in the mentoring program (Chesterman, 2003). Despite these negative views of formal mentoring programs, some argue that institutionalized mentoring can be successful when the leaders at the institution, such as department heads, are committed to the idea of a mentoring culture and work to promote mentoring within their environment (Gibson, 2006). Crawford and Smith (2005) asserted that mentoring cannot be "dictated or prescribed" but that it must be "personally valued and personally espoused."

Informal Mentoring

Informal mentoring relationships are those that come together organically or are mutually established by the mentor and mentee. Maccombs and Bhat (2020) provided a clear definition of informal mentoring in a higher education environment: "Informal mentoring relationships are not managed by larger organizations and occur spontaneously, generally when a mentee is drawn to a specific mentor or vice versa. . . . Informal mentoring relationships are generally considered to be more accessible, meaningful, comfortable, individualized, effective, and long-lasting" (p. 31). One scholar described this type of mentorship as "an unspoken, natural, and harmonious admission and agreement in our hearts," writing about her graduate advisor while in a doctorate program (Zhao & Reed, 2003). She pointed out that they never formally agreed that they be mentor and mentee but that their mentoring relationship had guided her toward research and becoming an academic. Enomoto et al. (2000) wrote about a mentorship between two African

American women who served as principals in the same school district. Being two of only a few people of color in the district, they naturally built a friendship that continued even after the mentor retired and moved out of the state. Another typical way mentors and mentees find themselves in a mentoring relationship within the field of education is when the person who eventually becomes the mentor recognizes potential in another professional, who becomes the mentee (Enomoto et al., 2000; Watkins, 1998; Zhao & Reed, 2003).

The Five Ws of Mentorship for Women of Color

To organize the many angles and components of mentorship for women of color, I use existing literature to answer the five Ws (who, what, where, when, and why) of mentorship in an order that is easy to follow conceptually. *Why* do women of color in academia need mentors? *When* are women of color most in need of mentorship? *Who* are mentoring women of color in academia, and *where* do they come from? *What* does mentoring look like for women of color? Lastly, I answer the question of *how* women of color use their mentoring relationships to succeed or advance in their careers in academia.

Why Do Women of Color in Academia Need Mentors?

Women of color in academia need mentors because higher education workplaces can be difficult for them to work in, and having mentors to guide them in navigating workplace challenges may encourage them to persist and advance in their careers. Aside from the fact that women of color are underrepresented in higher education, studies show that women of color on faculty and staff experience negativity or hostility in their work environments as microaggressions, tokenism, deprofessionalization (devaluing based on role or credentials), hypervisibility, or even invisibility (Chang et al., 2014; Crawford & Smith, 2005; Maramba, 2011; Young, 2021). Smith, Yosso, and Solórzano (2006) defined microaggressions as “layered

insults based on race, gender, class, sexuality, language, immigration status, phenotype, access, or surname” (p. 212). An example of a microaggression experienced by many women of color in education is being mistaken for a person in a subordinate position in their schools or offices, for instance, the secretary instead of the boss (Enomoto et al., 2000).

Not only do women of color in higher education express feeling isolated or being treated like outsiders (Tran, 2014), supervisors and administrators have also admitted that they have noticed acts of racism and discrimination directed toward the women of color they oversee (Enomoto et al. 2000; Holmes et al., 2007). Women of color in faculty and staff roles are sometimes presumed to lack the competence needed to adequately do their jobs or advance in their careers (Chang et al., 2014; Valverde, 2011) and the legitimacy of their work or presence is discounted by others at their institutions (Turner, 2002; Chang et al., 2014). Enomoto et al. (2000) states plainly that “the double jeopardy of being a woman of color takes its toll in terms of an individual’s self-esteem as a leader” (p. 572). This idea seems understandable when women faculty of color also report feeling the sense that White women have fared and continue to fare better than them (Turner, 2002).

Young (2021) revealed that women of color in higher education have also been experiencing gender fatigue, which is described as women striving to mentally navigate workplaces as gender neutral, though there continues to be evidence of systemic gender discrimination that is difficult to change. For instance, Hispanic women in student affairs have the “the lowest pay ratios of any sex-ethnicity combination (\$0.92 for frontline, \$0.94 for leadership)” (Pritchard & McChesney, 2018, p. 8). Though Asian Americans in student affairs are highly compensated as frontline staff, their salaries fall short of the equity line when they move on to leadership roles (Pritchard & McChesney, 2018, p. 9). Women of color in student

affairs need mentors who have experienced and navigated these issues, or who are in a position to support women of color through such obstacles.

When Are Women of Color Most in Need of Mentorship?

Women of color on faculty and staff have discussed benefitting from or needing mentorship during doctoral programs or while entering the field as a new or young professional (Chang et al., 2014; Holmes et al., 2007; Turner, 2002), during a challenging time or crisis (Enomoto et al., 2000; Holmes et al., 2007; Tran, 2014), or when experiencing discouragement and lack of support not only from the school system but perhaps also from their home or family (Enomoto et al., 2000). They have also actively sought mentors when looking to achieve their professional goals or hoping to learn about advancement opportunities (Chang et al., 2014; Tran, 2014).

For new professionals entering the field, learning the culture of student affairs can be overwhelming. Many who decide on a career in student affairs may remember what it is like to be a college student served by advisors, financial aid counselors, and student support professionals at their alma mater, but as a new student affairs professional, they may realize that the job is not just about planning students' course plans toward graduation or helping students prepare for job interviews. Wilson et al. (2016) examined three dimensions of professional identity for student affairs professionals: career contentment, community connection, and values congruence with the profession. The authors expounded on professional identity as a concept, building on the work of Bragg (1976), who wrote that professional identity is "the internalization of the norms of the profession into the individual's self-image . . . [and] the acquisition of the specific competence in knowledge and skill, autonomy of judgment, and responsibility and commitment to the profession" (p. 11).

Among the norms of the profession are positive norms, such as autonomy, a caring workplace, highly involved coworkers, promotion of staff diversity, and a sense of duty or “calling” to promote student learning and development (Boehman, 2007; Turrentine & Conley, 2001; Wilson et al., 2016). The student affairs profession is known to have some negative aspects as well: feminization of the profession that is linked to professional devaluation (Blackhurst, 2000a), a culture of overworking, low pay, personal sacrifices (Boehman, 2007), and high turnover rates (Wilson et al., 2016). Women of color who are new professionals and graduate students preparing for a career in the field would benefit from having mentors who can help them navigate a balance of the positive and negative norms of the profession.

Who Are Mentoring Women of Color in Academia, and Where Do They Come From?

Women of color on faculty and staff report that their mentors are often their supervisors or high-level administrators who have recognized their potential and are willing to invest in their success (Chang et al., 2014; Enomoto et al., 2000). However, same-race and same-gender mentoring relationships are difficult to arrange when many institutions lack other women of color in faculty and staff positions who can serve as mentors (Jean-Marie & Brooks, 2011; Turner & González, 2015). Black women working in higher education have found mentors in other Black women who are colleagues on their campuses, but because there are limited possibilities of finding Black women in the same functional area, they have connected across areas or divisions (Brown & Irby, 2009). However, Brown & Irby (2009) stated that “Black women may also benefit from forming mentoring relationships with individuals outside of their race” (p. 10), and the same idea about women of color having different-race and different-gender mentors is supported by other authors as well (Enomoto et al., 2000; Jean-Marie & Brooks, 2011; Maramba, 2011; Tran, 2014). Some articles have pointed out the benefits of cross-cultural

mentorships, such as demonstrating cultural sensitivity between two participants of different races, learning about each other's ethnic heritage, and developing an appreciation for differences (Girves et al., 2005; Jean-Marie & Brooks, 2011; Turner & González, 2015). However, those articles also warn of the issues of cross-cultural mentoring, such as women of color feeling “uncomfortable with the concept of being groomed or cloned fearing they must give up their own identities [or] feeling awkwardly around mentors who are different from them” (Girves et al., 2005, p. 455). Women of color may also sense an imbalance of power, paternalism, distrust, and acknowledged and unacknowledged racism (Espino & Zambrana, 2019; Jean-Marie & Brooks, 2011). Perhaps because of these negative aspects of cross-cultural mentoring and the lack of same-race, same-gender mentors in the field, the literature also showed that women of color consistently seek mentorship outside of the workplace—through their family, friends, communities, and spiritual settings (Chang et al., 2014; Crawford & Smith, 2005; Duran, 2016; Enomoto et al., 2000; Tran, 2014). Enomoto et al. (2000) and Tran (2014) both encouraged the effectiveness of having multiple mentors in order for women of color to receive multiple perspectives or support for different situations; the rest of the relevant literature suggested that women of color already do report having multiple mentors.

As mentioned previously, mentors and mentees may discover each other through formal mentoring programs. However, much of the literature on mentoring among professional women in education describes more instances of informal mentoring than formal mentor–mentee pairing. Crawford & Smith (2005) explained that the ethnic background of the mentor is an important factor in a woman of color choosing a career in higher education, as such a relationship would promote a positive self-identity for the mentee. In Maramba's (2011) study on AAPI student affairs professionals, one of the participants shared that two of her mentors were also AAPI and

that they provided impactful modeling of how to communicate, develop relationships with students, and respond to conflicts in the field. Similarly, Enomoto et al.'s (2000) study showed that women of color preferred mentors who were similar to themselves in race and gender because it allowed for easier communication and understanding.

A fascinating concept of informal mentoring pairing is that of *signaling*, which is a tactic used either knowingly or unknowingly by individuals looking for mentorship (de Janasz & Sullivan, 2004). Mentors and protégés signal their identity, performance, and social capital to each other, which is received and interpreted through the lens of their own experiences. Signaling as a way of finding mentoring relationships likely results in stronger mentoring matches. This is perhaps how women of color find mentoring partners who are similar to them in race and gender. However, Enomoto et al. warned that the mentee's desire for same-race or same-gender mentors are not always possible because of the low representation of women of color in administrative roles in higher education, though Mertz (2004) suggested that race and gender are not necessary factors for defining mentoring relationships. Additionally, some researchers have found that having multiple mentors of different race and gender identities, inside and outside the field of education, is beneficial to women of color. Multiple mentors provide guidance and advice for the many different aspects of a woman's career (de Janasz & Sullivan, 2004; Enomoto et al., 2000).

What Does Mentoring Look Like for Women of Color?

Women of color experience mentoring in different ways, so it would be inaccurate to say that it looks the same for everyone. However, the literature shows that mentoring can be experienced in personal or professional contexts. Personal relationships through mentoring mean that friendships are formed (Chang et al., 2014; Enomoto et al., 2000; Zhao & Reed, 2003), ideas

related to both personal and professional development are shared (Brown & Irby, 2009), and the mentor and mentee may build a long-term relationship that persists throughout and beyond the boundaries of their careers (Enomoto et al., 2000; Holmes et al., 2007; Tran, 2014). Mentorships that focus on professional development may support women of color by identifying strengths and weaknesses, encouraging participation and engagement in activities that could result in advancement, and imparting advice and wisdom (Chang et al., 2014; Tran, 2014). Enomoto et al. (2000) described the concept of *privileging*, which is when a mentee benefits from the mentor in the form of access and privilege, which can increase in complexity when the race and gender identities between the two individuals are different.

Beyond the idea of personal and professional mentorships is the notion that mentorships are multidimensional and can be enacted in every direction. Women of color on faculty and staff not only receive mentoring but also support and help develop their mentors and colleagues while in mentoring relationships (Crawford & Smith, 2005; Holmes et al., 2007; Tran, 2014). With mentoring, both the mentor and mentee can benefit from each other and see each other as equals (Chang et al., 2014; Enomoto et al., 2000; Holmes et al., 2007), though Mertz (2004) cautioned that such relationships could have varying results of satisfaction, dysfunction, and in some cases, even harmful effects. In addition, Mertz (2004) used a conceptual model to show that not all types of supportive relationships should be considered mentoring relationships.

How Do Women of Color Use Their Mentoring Relationships to Succeed or Advance in Their Careers in Academia?

Women of color on faculty and staff have identified ways in which mentoring has helped them advance in their careers. Many have reported that their mentors have either provided them with promotional opportunities or have steered and pressured them toward advancement (Brown

& Irby, 2009; Chang et al., 2014; Crawford & Smith, 2005; Enomoto et al., 2000; Holmes et al., 2007; Maramba, 2011; Tran, 2014). Doors have been opened for networking opportunities and entrance into organizations through mentoring (Brown & Irby, 2009; de Janasz & Sullivan, 2004; Enomoto et al., 2000; Turner, 2002). Mentors also have guided women of color in navigating the professional challenges and politics of higher education (Chang et al., 2014; Duran, 2016; Enomoto et al., 2000). On a personal level, mentors have provided emotional, spiritual, and social support to women of color and have served as motivators, role models, and nurturers toward success (Brown & Irby, 2009; Chang et al., 2014; Crawford & Smith, 2005; de Janasz & Sullivan, 2004; Duran, 2016; Enomoto et al., 2000; Tran, 2014; Valverde, 2011).

Mentoring benefits specific to women of color in student affairs are “reducing role ambiguity by helping women learn the informal, unspoken rules for organizational behavior that often exist in historically male-dominated institutions” (Blackhurst, 2000b, p. 575), “coaching, protection, exposure-and-visibility, and challenging work assignments” (Jean-Marie & Brooks, 2011), career satisfaction, career commitment, compensation, and a higher number of promotions (Maccombs & Bhat, 2020).

The research shows that mentoring for women of color on faculty and staff can support retention and advancement in higher education. Perhaps through the promotion of mentorship programs, institutions can lessen the disproportional percentages of staff and faculty of color to students of color in an effort to increase student success.

Organizational Culture and Mentoring

Kochan (2013) posited that mentoring programs have very little chance of success if culture (i.e., organizational or societal culture) is not factored into the program’s design. I will

provide a more in-depth review of Kochan's (2013) cultural framework for mentoring at the end of this literature review, as it will serve as the framework for my dissertation study.

Specifically for higher education organizational culture—that is, the culture of a college institution—other researchers studying mentoring have validated the claim that organizational climate plays a significant role in mentoring and that those individuals in the institution who develop programs to support women's career advancement must address organizational issues (Dawson, 2014; Gibson, 2006). According to Boehman (2007), who has written about affective commitment among student affairs professionals, organizational culture is described as being made up of deeply patterned behaviors. He argued that “organizational support is a reflection of an organization's culture” and that “organizational support is conceptualized as an environment where the needs of the employees take on an equal importance to the goals of the organization” (p. 310).

This concept of organizational support reminds me of the institution I worked for as a graduate assistant in an office of residential life. At our resident advisor selection meeting, which is where the resident directors choose their student staff for the upcoming academic year, our director and associate directors made it into a sports team game. We all dressed in our favorite sports jerseys, painted black lines under our eyes, and walked into a large room as loud rock music played on the speakers. As staff members “competed” against one another to “win” a student onto their teams, whistles were blown and yellow cloths were thrown into the middle of the room to call a “foul” if the competition became too intense. Staff members howled with laughter throughout the meeting, and I was blown away by the theatrics of it all. When I asked why they make selections this way, an associate director told me that this meeting used to be tense and stressful for everyone each year. The leadership team decided to make a better

experience for all by creating a fun theme and allowing everyone to enjoy themselves. To me, this is a great example of how strong and thoughtful leadership can represent organizational culture.

Another aspect of organizational culture is the day-to-day expectations of communication, presentation of members to others, and interactions that can be political in nature. Crawford and Smith (2005), who have investigated the importance of mentoring in African American women's decision to choose a career in higher education, wrote that organizations have certain norms, such as communication, dress, and behavior, that employees are expected to follow and that women and men of color must spend time learning these norms before they are able to follow their career aspirations. Therefore, to succeed, people of color need mentors who will quickly socialize them into the organization's culture. Gibson (2006), who has examined the role of organizational politics and culture in the mentorship of women on faculty, explained that institutional politics can result in unsupportive and even detrimental environments to their success but that a mentoring culture between senior and junior faculty can have a strong impact on the achievement of women in faculty roles.

Theoretical Framework - Cultural Framework for Mentoring

Theoretical frameworks are important for providing a foundation to a new study because they are rooted in existing theories and provide a basis for interview protocols and analysis of data results.

This study on Asian American women in student affairs and the impact of mentoring experiences on their career development was conducted using Kochan's (2013) cultural framework for mentoring as its theoretical framework. Kochan (2013) discussed the importance of understanding culture in an organizational and societal sense. She reviewed the two sides of

culture: the visible part of culture and the hidden part of culture. The visible side includes the physical elements of a culture, such as “artifacts, clothing, food, and art,” while the hidden side includes “that which is hidden beneath the surface, understood by those within the culture, but often unnoticed or misunderstood by those outside of it” (p. 413). Examples of the hidden side of culture are “beliefs, norms, values, and basic assumptions” (p. 413). Kochan posited that when culture is misunderstood within mentoring relationships, it is likely that challenges and difficulties will arise within those relationships.

When considering Kochan’s discussion of culture in the student affairs context, it is important to consider that student affairs is typically a division within the larger institution’s organizational structure. For example, a president of a university oversees a number of divisions at the institution—typically, student affairs, academic affairs, and business affairs, among others. While an institution’s student affairs division may have its own distinct culture that is different from the other divisions, it is likely that the institution’s culture as a whole impacts a student affairs professional more so than the division’s culture. A university’s workplace may have visible cultural aspects, such as expectations for attire (e.g., business wear or casual wear), statues or buildings on the campus that signify a long-standing history and foundation of the institution, and so on. A university’s hidden culture may include the belief that social justice is important and guides the university’s practices and work. There may be norms such as student affairs staff working over 40 hours per week on a regular basis, or student affairs professionals being perceived as less respectable among faculty circles because the work of student affairs is considered nonacademic. All these visible and hidden aspects of organizational culture are potentially strong factors in the success of Asian American women in student affairs. The hope is

that their mentoring relationships allow for organizational culture to be part of the guidance process.

Kochan (2013) also has acknowledged demographic cultural factors that contribute to diversity in mentoring relationships. The researcher found that they are not of significant importance in matching mentors and mentees in some situations—that same-gender or same-race mentorships are not always successful. Kochan’s main point is that culture (organizational and/or societal) must be considered and applied to mentoring relationships for them to be successful. First created by Kochan and Pascarelli in 2012, the cultural framework for mentoring outlines three forms of mentorships that can be signed with organizational culture in mind: traditional, transitional, and transformative (Kochan & Pascarelli, 2012).

Traditional mentoring mirrors the teacher–student relationship with the purpose of the teacher transmitting visible and hidden culture to the student. In the student affairs professional context, a senior student affairs professional would teach a newer student affairs professional how to dress, how to communicate with colleagues on campus, or how to promote school pride to students. In traditional mentoring, the institution’s culture is preserved by the mentor teaching the mentee, with the mentee eventually mentoring a newer mentee in the same way.

Transitional mentoring partners the mentor and mentee so that both learn from each other, mutually bridging gaps in knowledge to encourage each other’s growth. At a university setting, an example of this is two professionals with a generational age difference. The mentor might be wise about navigating campus politics, but the mentee might have a strong tech-savvy skill set to share with the mentor. The exchange of ideas and skills between the two could benefit both in a successful mentoring relationship.

Transformational mentoring occurs when the ultimate goal of the relationship is to create institutional change and innovation with new discoveries. The mentor and mentee roles are fluid and could involve multiple individuals. Participants in this kind of mentorship are willing to let go of past knowledge and explore new ways of thinking and being. In a university context, an example of this type of mentorship is an identity-based interest group working together, sharing knowledge, and discovering new outlets that can serve the community that shares their identity. Professional status and years of experience in the field are not factors for leadership in these groups as it is in traditional mentoring. An example of transformational mentoring is demonstrated by Hartlep and Antrop-Gonzalez (2019), who in their work discussed the need for change at a university that is federally designated as an Asian American Native American and Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI). Although the institution had prided itself on being antiracist, Hartlep’s narrative story in their article gave criticism to the lack of leaders and deans of color, which was further complicated by the demands of time required to “work all day and teach all night.” Hartlep stated the need for mentoring to combat this organizational culture: “How can department chairs and deans of color be mentored in ways that lead them not to become burned out, and also so that they are brave enough to speak up and against White supremacy? I am writing this chapter with dismantling White supremacy in my head and heart” (Hartlep & Antrop-Gonzalez, 2019, p. 189). He later called for upper administration to institute mentoring and to provide financial resources toward the goal of diversifying the institution. In this example, the authors have proposed a mentoring initiative aimed at creating cultural change at their institution, and it will require the involvement of multiple agents of the university—not just a mentor–mentee pair.

Using Kochan's cultural framework for mentoring, I have identified with this dissertation study which of these types of mentoring relationships Asian American women in student affairs are participating in and also determined if their needs specifically as Asian American women are sufficiently addressed with the forms of mentoring they receive.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Overview

This chapter provides an overview of this study's research design and justification for the methods used to guide and analyze the research. First, I will identify the research questions for this study and the rationale behind them. Next, I will explain my positionality as the researcher and how my identities and upbringing impacted the way in which I interacted with my participants, as well as how my biases may have impacted my analysis of the data. I will then provide some insight into my philosophical perspective and explain how my theoretical framework, Kochan's (2013) cultural framework for mentoring, guided my research. I will also describe my data sources, determination of participant eligibility, recruitment strategies, method of collecting data, and analytical techniques. The chapter will close with the acknowledgement of the limitations of my research.

Research Questions

The following research questions provided me with a clear guide in determining my interview protocol and the way in which I analyzed my data. Following each research question is the justification for why each particular question was established.

Research Question 1

What types of mentoring relationships have Asian American women in student affairs participated in, and how have these relationships positively or negatively impacted their career advancement?

Since Asian American women in higher education leadership are underrepresented (Espinosa et al., 2018; Maramba, 2011; Pritchard & McChesney, 2018; Roy, 2019), it is important to determine if mentoring relationships impact their career trajectories. Using

Kochan's (2013) three types of mentoring (traditional, transitional, and transformational), the purpose of this question is to help us understand whether one of these mentoring types are more likely to positively impact career advancement.

Research Question 2

Who do Asian American women in student affairs professionals identify as their most influential mentors, and how do those mentors help them navigate their institution's culture?

It is important to understand who Asian American women in student affairs are seeking advice and encouragement from, because institutional leaders who create mentorship programs cannot assume that the most effective mentors for Asian American women must share similar identities (i.e., be a woman and/or Asian American). Existing literature has shown some benefits to cross-cultural and cross-gender mentoring relationships, but there is a stronger argument for the benefits of same-race and same-gender mentoring relationships. My preinterview demographic questionnaire (see Appendix A) was used to collect preliminary data on the participants' most influential mentors and the mentors' demographics. The data from the questionnaire allowed me to ask questions about mentoring relationships specifically in regard to the mentors they identified.

I also wanted to explore Kochan's (2013) framework, which emphasizes that incorporating organizational culture is essential for mentoring relationships. Therefore, I also used my preinterview questionnaire to ask the participants about their institution's profile as well as the culture of their student affairs division. Research Question 2 allowed me to ask the participants for stories about how the identities of their mentors relate to the mentors' ability to aid the participants in navigating their institution's culture.

Research Question 3

How, if at all, are racial and gender identity addressed in mentoring relationships with Asian American women in student affairs when discussing workplace interactions and career advancement opportunities?

The purpose of this question is to examine whether effective mentoring has a racial and/or gender identity component or whether mentoring women in student affairs has more to do with the identity of being a student affairs professional in higher education. Since my preinterview demographic survey (Appendix A) included questions about the participants' most impactful mentors and their mentors' race identities, I was able to surmise the likelihood that their mentors discussed complex race issues, such as the model minority myth and Asian American stereotypes.

Positionality

It is important to identify ways in which I, the researcher, may have affected the interview process and data analysis of this study due to my identities and experiences. I identify as a Filipina American woman who has worked in the field of student affairs for about 15 years. At this time, I hold a director position at a large public 4-year institution. I consider myself to be part of the Asian American community and am one of very few administrators who presents as Asian American out of a large number of administrators in the student affairs division. The percentage of Asian Americans on our student affairs leadership team is more than 50% lower than the percentage of the Asian American student population (Analytical Studies & Institutional Research, 2021). This lived experience as an Asian American leader in student affairs informs my work.

While collecting data, I was aware that my administrator position may impact (either positively or negatively) my interactions with the Asian American participants I interviewed who may have struggled to advance in their careers. Therefore, I did not disclose my role unless I was asked. Surprisingly, only one participant asked what kind of work I do. Perhaps because I am a graduate student, they didn't think to ask. Additionally, I recognize that I come from a privileged background in which my parents, who immigrated from the Philippines, had successful careers in the United States. My father served in the U.S. Navy and retired in a high-ranking enlisted position, and my mother was a civilian working at a Navy hospital as a health professional. Without a doubt, my siblings and I were the recipients of excellent benefits and resources, which allowed us to pursue college degrees, including advanced degrees, with more than sufficient food, shelter, and simple luxuries that members of underrepresented racial and ethnic groups (including Filipinos) may not have had or experienced. As I conducted my research, I was mindful that some of the participants' experiences did not always mirror my own, and that the challenges and privileges that have impacted their career trajectories are valid and significant.

To my satisfaction and benefit, I felt that there was a level of trust during the interviews that allowed participants to open up about challenging experiences as an Asian woman, especially since I was able to agree with them and sometimes share similar experiences in response. There was also a palpable sense of excitement and hope in our interviews as we talked about the future, knowing that this research, and hopefully further research on topics similar in nature, could change our career experiences for the better.

Philosophical Approach

For qualitative research, it is necessary to establish a philosophical perspective that influences the way in which a study is conducted. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) described this

perspective as “what one believes about the nature of reality (also called ontology) and the nature of knowledge (epistemology)” (p. 8). The positioning I used for this study is interpretive research, which “assumes that reality is socially constructed, that is, there is no single, observable reality” (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, p. 9). For this study, I believed that each participant had their own unique narrative and perspective about their mentoring experiences and career advancement journey, and some of those perspectives and experiences might have been first realized by the participant during our interview session. By helping participants think about the impact of their mentoring relationships and by guiding the interview to connect those experiences with the institutional and mentor profiles they provided me in the preinterview demographic questionnaire, I was able to “construct” knowledge, as put by Merriam (2009), about the relationship between mentoring and organizational culture for Asian American women in student affairs. I anticipated correctly that the collective group of mentors that were described by the participants had various demographic backgrounds and approaches to mentoring. However, what I had aimed to tease out of the data is how those different types of mentoring relationships, using Kochan’s (2013) cultural framework for mentoring types (traditional, transitional, and transformative) in the context of student affairs culture and their specific institutional culture, had positively or negatively impacted the career advancement of Asian American women. My goal for this study of interpretive research is to contribute to the knowledge of the experiences of Asian American women in student affairs and amplify their voices to make Asian American women more visible in higher education.

Guiding Theoretical Perspective

My theoretical framework, which is Kochan’s (2013) cultural framework for mentoring, insists that culture be considered in mentoring relationships. While Kochan emphasized

organizational culture, which in my study referred to the college or university at which the participant worked, I also incorporated student affairs culture and U.S. societal culture as they relate to Asian Americans. My interview protocol (see Appendix B) was designed to address these layers of cultures and tie them to the different mentoring relationship types (traditional, transitional, and transformational) outlined in Kochan's (2013) cultural framework for mentoring in order to analyze how Asian American women in student affairs experience mentoring and career advancement. To address how the participants navigate their identity as Asian American women in their roles and at their institutions, I asked them questions about Asian American stereotypes and whether those topics were a part of the conversations with their mentors. Lastly, I asked questions about career advancement and the degree to which their mentors influenced career advancement opportunities.

Kochan's (2013) cultural framework for mentoring, the model minority myth, and the existing literature regarding student affairs culture, career advancement, and the storytelling method of narrative inquiry together guided my interview protocol by allowing me to organize my questions into blocks that aligned with the definitions of mentor and mentoring, organizational and societal culture, Kochan's types of mentoring, and career advancement.

Participant Eligibility Criteria

Data collection for this study was through semistructured interviews conducted via Zoom video conferencing. Though narrative inquiry often results in unstructured interviews (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), I conducted semistructured interviews instead to ensure that all components of my theory and frameworks were addressed. My unit of analysis was women who work in student affairs at 4-year colleges and universities. For my study, the participants had to meet the following eligibility criteria: (a) identify as an Asian American woman, (b) work as a full-time

student affairs or student services professional (staff or manager/administrator) in the division of student affairs at a 4-year college or university in the United States, (c) have worked in student affairs for a minimum of 5 consecutive years, and (d) have engaged in a mentoring relationship with a mentor in the field of education.

Participant Sample

Because of the low percentage of Asian American women working in student affairs (Espinosa et al., 2018; Pritchard & McChesney, 2018), I had predicted the number of women who would agree to participate in my study would be relatively low. Knowing that qualitative studies that use interviews to collect data require the researcher to keep interviewing new participants until saturation or redundancy is reached (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), I had aimed to recruit 15 to 20 participants. Women who were interested in participating in the study were directed to fill out an online participant interest form via Google Forms (Appendix C). The interest form gathered their contact information and screened them for eligibility criteria. The submission page of the interest form prompted respondents to click on a Calendly.com hyperlink, which allowed them to schedule an interview with me based on my availability. I set my Calendly.com account to automatically send them a confirmation email of their interview appointment with the meeting Zoom link, as well as the link to the preinterview questionnaire (Appendix A). I also had automated emails sent to the participants from Calendly.com to remind them of their interview and the need to complete the preinterview questionnaire at least 24 hours prior to their appointment. Having everything automated removed the need for me to tediously follow up manually at every step of the scheduling process, which helped to prevent poor follow-through on the participants' end. I was able to meet my participant sample target, having 20

women who completed the interest form, and of those interested, 15 followed through to the end of the process and completed the interview.

The goal for this study was to discover and understand the mentoring experiences of Asian American women in student affairs, so I used nonprobability and purposeful sampling as opposed to probability sampling, in which the purpose is to make generalizations about a population (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The type of purposeful sampling I planned to use was snowball sampling, in which I would identify and interview a few individuals who meet the criteria and then ask them to refer me to other participants within their network who also meet the study's criteria (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

I used the following strategies to gain access to Asian American women in student affairs. I contacted my own professional network via email (Appendix E) and promoted my study on Facebook community groups that were likely to have members who met the criteria, such as Student Affairs MomS (SAMS) and Asian Pacific Americans in Higher Education (APAHE). I encouraged them to identify Asian American women in student affairs who work in various geographic areas so as to include perspectives from different organizational cultures. For Facebook community groups, I created a post (Appendix D) with general information about the study and included a link to the participant interest form (Appendix C) that also served as a screening tool. Although there were no monetary incentives for participation in this study, I highlighted the importance of participants' contribution to the study and advancement of Asian American women in student affairs.

Participant Demographics

Fifteen self-identified Asian American women who work in the field of student affairs fully participated in this study. Table 1 lists all demographic information collected from the

preinterview demographic questionnaire (Appendix A). Nine participants were ages 30–39 years, making up the majority of the participants at 60%. Three participants were ages 40–49 years, two participants were under 30 years, and one participant was 50 years or older. Filipina women were the most represented group in the study (5 of 15). The other ethnicities represented (along with the correlating number of participants in the study) were Chinese (3), Indian (2), Vietnamese (2), Japanese (1), Chinese/Thai/Vietnamese (1), and Hmong (1). Of the 15 participants, three identified as half White or biracial. For the highest degree completed, ten of the 15 participants had earned a master’s degree, four participants had earned a doctorate degree, and one participant had earned an education specialist degree. Eight participants were single (seven were never married, and one had divorced) and seven participants were married. Seven participants had children, and eight participants did not have children.

Table 1

Demographics of Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Ethnicity	Highest degree completed	Marital status	Children
Amelia	50+ years old	Chinese, biracial	Master’s	Single, divorced	Yes
Ashima	Under 30 years old	Indian	Master’s	Single, never married	No
Bree	30–39 years old	Chinese/Thai/Vietnamese	Master’s	Single, never married	Yes
Charlotte	30–39 years old	Chinese	Master’s	Single, never married	No
Irene	Under 30 years old	Hmong	Master’s	Single, never married	No
June	30–39 years old	Filipino	Master’s	Married	Yes
Karina	30–39 years old	Filipino	Master’s	Married	Yes

Kim	30–39 years old	Japanese, biracial	Educational specialist	Married	No
Kristen	40–49 years old	Filipino	Doctoral	Single, never married	No
Laurel	40–49 years old	Filipino	Master’s	Married	Yes
Lily	30–39 years old	Vietnamese	Master’s	Married	Yes
Michelle	30–39 years old	Vietnamese, biracial	Master’s	Married	No
Rem	30–39 years old	Filipino	Doctoral	Married	Yes
Sam	40–49 years old	Chinese	Doctoral	Single, never married	No
Shilpa	30–39 years old	Indian	Doctoral	Single, never married	No

Participant Career Status

The preinterview demographic questionnaire (Appendix A) asked participants information about their institution of work, type of position, and number of years of service in student affairs (see Table 2 for details). Eleven participants were working at a public institution, and 4 participants were working at a private institution. Ten participants described their institution as large, with over 15,000 students enrolled; four participants, as medium, with 5,000 to 15,000 students enrolled; and one participant, as small, with fewer than 5,000 students. The majority of the participants (10 of 15) were working in the Pacific West region of the United States. Other regions represented were the Pacific, West South Central, Mid-Atlantic, Northeast, and Mountain West—each represented by one participant. Most of the participants (8) described themselves as “mid-level professional,” which was defined in the questionnaire as a supervisor/manager with a master’s degree or higher. Four participants selected “senior student

affairs officer/administrator,” which was defined as overseeing multiple departments. Three participants selected “intermediate” to describe their position.

Table 2

Participant Career Status

Pseudonym	Type of Institution	Size of Institution	Region	Years in Student Affairs	Type of Position
Amelia	Public	Large	Mountain West	21+ years	Senior student affairs officer/administrator
Ashima	Private	Medium	Mid-Atlantic	5–10 years	Intermediate
Bree	Public	Large	Pacific West	5–10 years	Mid-level professional
Charlotte	Public	Medium	Pacific West	5–10 years	Intermediate
Irene	Public	Large	Pacific West	5–10 years	Mid-level professional
June	Private	Large	Pacific West	11–20 years	Mid-level professional
Karina	Public	Large	Pacific West	11–20 years	Mid-level professional
Kim	Public	Large	Pacific West	11–20 years	Mid-level professional
Kristen	Private	Medium	Pacific West	21+ years	Senior student affairs officer/administrator
Laurel	Public	Large	Pacific West	21+ years	Intermediate
Lily	Public	Large	Pacific West	5–10 years	Mid-level professional
Michelle	Public	Medium	West South Central	11–20 years	Senior student affairs officer/administrator
Rem	Public	Large	Pacific	5–10 years	Mid-level professional
Sam	Private	Small	Northeast	11–20 years	Mid-level professional
Shilpa	Public	Large	Pacific West	11–20 years	Senior student affairs officer/administrator

Mentor Demographics

Each participant was asked via the pre-interview demographic survey (Appendix A) to name between 1-3 individuals who they consider to be their most impactful mentors. Altogether, there were 43 mentoring relationships identified (Table 3). Participants were asked to provide demographics for each of their mentors, based on their perceptions--meaning, these demographics may not be completely accurate and true, but these descriptors are how the participants perceive their mentors. Out of the 43 most impactful mentors identified by the participants (up to three mentors each), 69.8% are perceived by the participants as female and 30.2% are perceived as male (see Figure 2). The percentages of perceived race are 39.5% White, 27.9% Asian, 16.3% Black, 7% Asian Biracial, 7% Latinx, and 2.3% non-Asian woman of color (see Figure 3). 95.3% of the mentors are perceived by their mentees as older, while 4.7% of the mentors are perceived as younger (see Figure 4).

Table 3

Mentor Demographics

Participant Pseudonym	Mentor Pseudonym	Perceived Gender of Mentor	Perceived Race/Ethnicity of Mentor	Perceived Mentor Age in Relation to Participant
Amelia	Amy	Female	Chinese/White	Older
	Enrico	Male	Mexican	Older
	Sal	Male	Chinese	Older
Ashima	Mark	Male	Black	Older
	Angelica	Female	Latina/Filipina	Older
	Rose	Female	Asian Indian	Older
Bree	Owen	Male	Black	Older
	Nina	Female	White	Older
	Maria	Woman	Latina	Older

Charlotte	Patty	Female	Black	Older
	Earl	Male	White	Older
	Sally	Female	White	Older
Irene	Spencer	Female	Asian	Older
	Aaliyah	Female	Cambodian	Older
	Emily	Female	Non-Asian Person of Color	Older
June	Bianca	Female	Latinx	Older
	Zoey	Female	Black	Younger
	Corrie	Female	Asian	Older
Karina	Joy	Female	Filipino	Older
	Essence	Female	Black	Older
	Mia	Women	Filipino	Older
Kim	Janet	Female	White	Older
	Jackie	Female	White	Older
	Pat	Female	White	Older
Kristen	Gina	Female	Black	Older
	Sylvia	Female	White	Older
	Kent	Male	White	Younger
Laurel	Maya	Female	Filipina	Older
	Greg	Male	Caucasian	Older
	Justin	Male	Filipino	Older
Lily	Cherrie	Female	White	Older
	Tom	Male	White	Older
	Trevor	Male	White	Older
Michelle	Chad	Male	White	Older
	Susan	Female	White	Older
Rem	Kat	Female	Japanese	Older
	Angel	Female	Filipina/Japanese	Older
	Don	Male	Chinese	Older
Sam	Heather	Female	White	Older

	Nancy	Female	Asian/White	Older
Shilpa	Hayley	Female	White	Older
	Elisha	Female	Black	Older
	David	Male	White	Older

Figure 2

Gender of Participants' Most Impactful Mentors

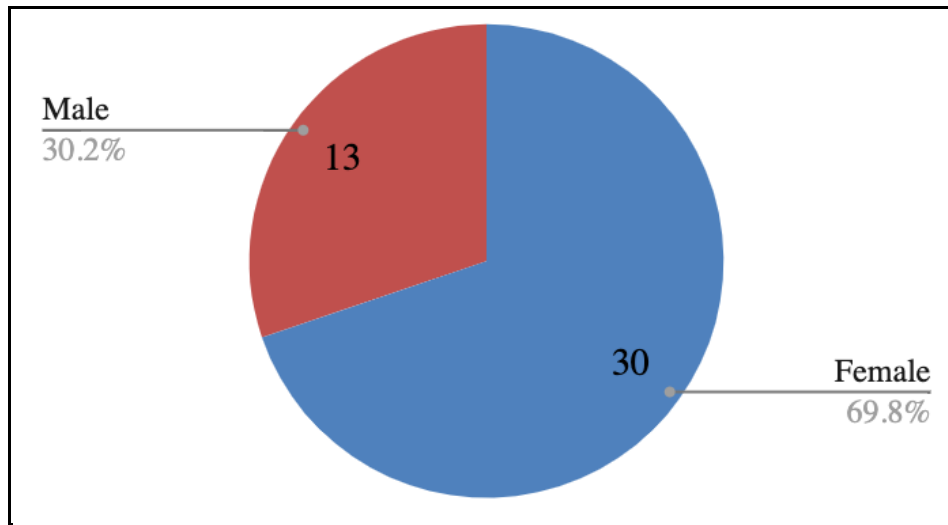


Figure 3

Perceived Mentor Race

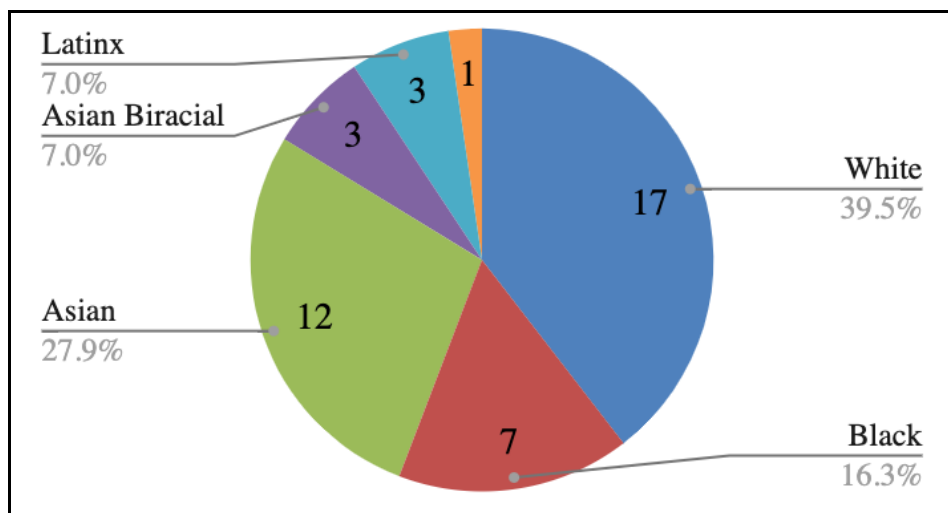
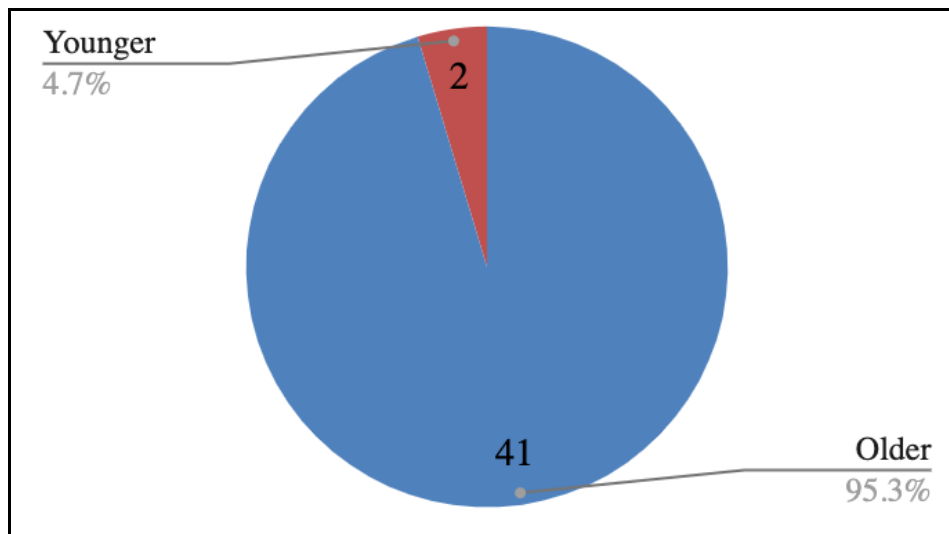


Figure 4

Perceived Age of Mentor Compared to Participant



Data and Data Collection

I used a Qualtrics pre-interview demographic questionnaire (Appendix A) to collect preliminary data from interested participants. The questionnaire also served as a screening tool to ensure that all participants met the study’s eligibility criteria. The questionnaire had a total of 27 questions organized into the following categories: (a) demographics of the participant, (b) overall profile of participant’s institution and student affairs division, (c) establishing impactful mentors, and (d) demographics indirectly related to the study.

In the section about the demographics of the participants, I asked for respondents’ name, age, and whether they identify as an Asian American woman. This section also asked them to report their ethnicity or ethnicities. With a response of “no” to identifying as an Asian American woman, the survey was terminated with a thank you statement, letting them know they were not eligible for the study.

In the section regarding the overall profile of the participant’s institution and student affairs division, I asked the respondent to confirm that she was working full-time in student

affairs at a 4-year institution. I then asked the name of the institution, whether the institution was public or private, and the size of the student population. The section continued with questions about the participant's perception of the racial diversity of the student population and of the student affairs employee population. Next were questions asking how often senior leaders at the institution talked about diversity, equity and inclusion, and career advancement. The section ended with questions about the length of time the participant had been working in their current position and in student affairs.

The next section guided the participant through identifying impactful mentors. The terms "mentor" (Mertz, 2004) and "successful mentoring relationships" (Kochan, 2013) were defined before asking if the participant has engaged in at least one successful mentoring relationship. The participant was then asked to complete a question grid to provide information about one to three of her most impactful mentors.

The next section requested data about demographics indirectly related to the study, including marital status, whether the participant had children, and the highest level of education completed. The data collected here allowed me to compare differences between those with children and those without, those who have romantic partners and those who do not, and other factors that may have contributed to the career path of the participant.

My interview protocol was developed specifically for this study and was not an adaptation of an existing protocol. In the spring semester of 2020, I conducted a pilot study in which I explored how Latina and Asian American women in student affairs use social capital to navigate their careers. Through those interviews with four Latina women and one Asian/Filipina American woman, I found that mentoring relationships had the most profound effect on how the women navigated their careers. Therefore, for my dissertation study, I chose to focus solely on

mentoring relationships and how they impact career advancement opportunities. I also learned from my pilot study that my interview protocol had many unnecessary questions that detracted from the main points I wanted to cover. Therefore, for this study, I made certain that my demographic questionnaire asked questions that were pointed and easy to answer.

The interview protocol for this dissertation study was based on a different framework than the one I used for my pilot study, which was Yosso's (2005) framework on community cultural wealth. The questions for this study were created in alignment with Kochan's (2013) idea of organizational culture and the three types of mentoring outlined in the cultural framework for mentoring (traditional, transitional, and transformational), a combination of definitions for "mentor" and "mentoring relationships," issues surrounding Asian Americans in the workplace, and career advancement.

The categories of the interview protocol were (a) background in student affairs, (b) identity as an Asian American woman, (c) mentoring relationships, (d) organizational culture, (e) Kochan's (2013) types of mentoring relationships, and (f) impact of mentoring on career advancement. I heavily drew upon each participant's submitted preinterview demographic questionnaire to customize the interview for that participant. For information on their background in student affairs, I asked participants to tell me the story of what had led them to a career in student affairs and what positions they had held in the past. I began the interview in this manner to get the participants into storytelling mode.

Next, we revisited the definition of a mentor and mentoring relationships. We then reviewed their list of impactful mentors from their preinterview questionnaire responses. For each mentor, I asked them to tell me the story of how they met and how each person came to be

their mentor. I also confirmed whether the mentoring relationship was part of a formal mentoring program or an informal mentorship.

The third section covered their identity as an Asian American woman. I confirmed the ethnicity they chose in the questionnaire and asked them how they see themselves as part of the broader Asian American community. I also asked how aware they are of their Asian American identity as they interact with others at work.

When examining organizational culture, we began with a definition of organizational culture that then led participants into answering questions about their mentors' knowledge of their institution's organizational culture, the mentors' involvement in student affairs culture, knowledge of and application of societal culture to the mentoring relationship, the mentor's familiarity with Asian American culture and being a woman in student affairs, and whether the participant ever had discussions with their mentors about the model minority myth and Asian American stereotypes.

Starting with a review of Kochan's (2013) three types of mentor relationships (traditional, transitional, and transformational), I then asked the participants to identify which type of mentoring each of their mentors had utilized with them and whether they think those styles of mentoring were effective in helping the participants have a successful career in student affairs.

Last, I asked a series of questions to address the impact of mentoring on the participants' career advancement. Questions included whether their mentors discussed pathways for advancement with them, encouraged them to apply for promotional opportunities, or assisted them in securing salary increases, acquiring higher level job responsibilities, and pursuing a

higher educational degree. This section of the interview ended with discussing their student affairs career goals and whether their mentors had influenced those goals.

The participants were interviewed during the months of July and August of 2021. This timing worked out well because student affairs professionals usually have more meeting availability in the summer, making them more likely to be responsive in scheduling interview dates.

Data Analysis

To analyze the qualitative data from the interview sessions, I used a biographical narrative inquiry approach, which is described as using stories as data and analyzing them within the context of gender, race, family, life events, and other considerations. (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I thought that hearing their voices through narrative was especially appropriate considering Asian American women have reported feeling invisible (Maramba, 2011), and this study will allow for visibility in the literature as it relates to higher education.

As is appropriate with many qualitative research studies, I used the constant comparison method of data analysis, which “involves comparing one segment of data with another to determine similarities and differences” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This process required the use of coding software, and I chose the program NVivo. I used open coding, the act of assigning notations to interview data while being open to possibilities for potential themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I also followed the practice of taking memos—the jotting down of key words, observations, and personal notes on a notepad (Saldaña, 2011), and on printed pre-interview questionnaires that were completed by each participant, throughout my data collection and analysis processes. For example, I noted each time participants said they were not sure about pursuing senior leadership roles, because I was surprised that I heard it so many times. I also

noted the types of mentoring the participants experienced with their mentors to make it easier to recall the information for the mentor demographics chart. While reviewing these memos during analysis, I thought about possible emerging themes and realized there were going to be significant findings that fall outside of the research questions. Open coding allowed me to begin constructing categories or themes, which Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated is a highly inductive process, meaning I was “clustering units of data that seem to go together, and then I ‘named’ the cluster” (p. 210). This eventually led to a shift toward a deductive mode of analysis, which means having some categories established and determining if the new data fit or did not fit into those established theme categories. Once my data reached saturation, or redundancy, I was comfortable with closing my search for participants. Since my study researched a niche population—Asian American women in student affairs positions—and how mentoring relationships impact career advancement in the context of layered cultures, I believe this was the appropriate data analysis method to use, as the very specific components of the study allowed my data to reach saturation after interviewing 15 participants.

Open coding, constant comparison, and deductive mode of analysis methods are preferred and typical for qualitative research because the data collected are in the form of personal narrative, which can vary greatly from one participant to another. Themes are not established prior to the collection of data, so they must be formed as the data is reviewed and coded. NVivo coding software allowed me to upload interview transcripts as well as any other document files, such as memos, demographic questionnaire data reports, and relevant published articles. After uploading all the documents, I highlighted the text data to assign codes. The codes I created were automatically listed on a panel in the NVivo application, and I was able to drag and organize the codes into categories and themes.

These analytical techniques were useful in my study because all of my participants identified as Asian American women and there were similarities in their experiences as student affairs professionals. Existing literature already had revealed that Asian American women in higher education feel invisible and that stereotypes of Asian American women work against them in the workplace (Maramba, 2011; Roy, 2019). This study's data revealed the same sentiments, and it was unsurprising to find that participants had experienced the same invisibility.

Limitations

Because this study was a qualitative biographical narrative inquiry, one limitation was that the findings cannot be generalized for all Asian American women in student affairs. Asian ethnic cultural differences exist throughout the United States that are not reflected in this study, which featured Filipina, Chinese, Indian, Vietnamese, Japanese, Thai, and Hmong women. Because the number of Asian American women in student affairs is lower than other race groups (Pritchard & McChesney, 2018), I was not able to gather a sample large enough to provide recommendations that will serve all ethnicities of Asian American women in student affairs.

Narrative inquiry qualitative studies capture the stories of individual participants, but each participant has a background and upbringing that is unique and different from one another. While I was able to collect background information on why participants experienced mentoring and career advancement as they did, I am not able to generalize my findings to all Asian American women in student affairs.

I also acknowledge that my participants work in different parts of the country, and the experience of an Asian American woman at a Southern California institution is likely much different than an Asian American woman at an institution located in Alabama. Societal and

geographic cultural differences undoubtedly shape the experiences of Asian American women in student affairs, and because I was not able to interview an Asian American woman from every geographic location in the United States, some voices and perspectives are missing from this study.

Another potential limitation is that because the participants varied in age, there may be generational differences in the participants that may have affected their outlook on organizational culture and mentoring. According to Wilson et al. (2016), “Millennials are more likely to change jobs and switch careers than members of older generations” (p. 559). Therefore, the younger participants may have reported more instances of career advancement than the participants older in age because they were more willing to leave a position for new opportunities as opposed to remaining in a position for a long period of time.

The final limitation for this study is that I had to aim for a small sample size of 15–20 participants because Asian American women are already known to be an underrepresented group (Espinosa et al., 2018; Museus & Kiang, 2009; Pritchard & McChesney, 2018). Until student affairs divisions together recruit more Asian American women to match the growing Asian American student population, there will not be enough voices to provide a robust picture of Asian American women’s experiences within the field.

I hope this study will provide meaningful and new information to add to society’s knowledge of Asian American women in student affairs, amplifying their voices by quoting their lived experiences with mentoring relationships. My findings, which will be discussed in the next chapter, will reveal the stories (using the narrative inquiry approach) of Asian American women in student affairs and detail how their mentoring relationships impacted their career development and advancement.

Chapter Four: Findings

Overview of Findings and Themes

The three research questions for this study were answered through semi-structured interviews with fifteen participants. After using open coding, constant comparison, and deductive mode of analysis methods, I was able to answer the three research questions directly. However, the most significant findings of this study were found in the peripheral of the research questions-meaning, the experiences the participants shared in between the moments of directly answering the questions in the interview protocol. The research questions that were directly answered through the interviews were:

RQ1: What types of mentoring relationships have Asian American women in student affairs participated in and how have these relationships positively or negatively impacted their career advancement?

RQ2: Who do Asian American women in student affairs identify as their most influential mentors and how do those mentors help them navigate the field of student affairs and their institution's culture?

RQ3: How, if at all, are ethnic and gender identity addressed in mentoring relationships with Asian American women in student affairs when discussing workplace interactions and career advancement?

Summary of RQ1 Findings

The data revealed that the participants mostly engaged in informal mentoring relationships and that all three types of Kochan's (2013) mentoring types were experienced by the participants with their most influential mentors. When asked what type of mentoring they thought would be the most effective for career advancement, all participants answered with

either transformational, transitional, or a blend of the two. None of the participants preferred traditional mentoring. When analyzing how mentoring relationships impact career advancement for the participants, discussions about pathways for advancement and pursuing advanced degrees or certifications were experienced by all fifteen participants in their mentorships. There were also two significant negative impacts on career advancement as a result of mentorships: discouragement from pursuing senior leadership positions in student affairs and the observation of adversarial workplace politics. Emerging from the participant stories were other lessons learned from mentors that did not fall into the technical categories of career advancement, as defined in this study. One of those lessons was how to mentor the next generation of student affairs professionals.

Types of Mentoring Relationships

Formal vs. Informal Mentorships

During the semi-structured interviews, the participants and I discussed each of their pre-identified most influential mentors at length. Participants were asked to provide descriptions of up to three most impactful mentors in the pre-interview questionnaire. For each impactful mentor, participants were asked to share the story of how they met and how the mentoring relationship developed. The aggregate data of 43 mentorships described showed that 41 were developed informally and only two were established through a formal mentoring program. Sam, one of the participants who identifies as a Chinese American mid-level professional, explained that while there is encouragement within the student affairs field to ask someone to be your mentor, she felt that mentorships become apparent when you realize how much you lean on them for support.

I think nowadays we talk a lot about how people should ask people to be their mentors or

formalize their mentoring relationship, which I think is lovely--I've had people do that with me, which is great. But I think at that point it was like yeah, you're totally a mentor because every time I have a problem, I turn to you. Every time I have a question about, like, what about this and this, or this job and that job, I turn to you. How do I prep for this interview--I turn to you, because I feel like you've done it [...] I think, to answer your question, I think it was more... I guess people call [the mentor relationship] organic.

Another participant, Amelia, who is biracial Chinese/White and a senior-level student affairs professional, shared that one of her mentorships started as her just observing him and being put on a committee that he was in.

And so that relationship was also informal. I kind of just observed him more than saying, "Oh, will you be my mentor?" It was kind of a more informal thing because I really respected what he did and how he interacted as a leader [...] so he became my mentor more unofficially and he probably wouldn't even say he's my mentor, but he is.

Both examples above are similar to what many other participants said of their mentoring relationships.

Two participants described having impactful mentorships that were assigned through formal mentoring programs. Irene, who is Hmong and a mid-level professional, recalled her experience with participating in a formal university mentoring program.

Faculty and staff are paired up together, so I decided to--you know, I've never really formally done this process--let's go check it out to see what it's like. I've crossed paths with Dr. Emily in the past, so we were acquainted and whatnot, but we've never worked together on a project [...], so I decided to participate in this mentoring program. I remember meeting her officially in a shared space through speed dating. So they had all

the mentees speed date and meet the mentors. They did three to four rounds, so I spotted her in the room, and I just knew--because I had really great conversations back in the day when she was an academic advisor and I was a student seeking advice during my undergrad, so I knew that I wanted to just be in meaningful conversations with her. I remember spotting her and we had less than a minute to engage in conversation, so after that we got to choose our top three and then the program will do its best to match you, hopefully with your number one person. Coincidentally, we both chose each other as our number one, so it was so good that--you know, I feel so blessed that I got her. And that's how we formally became paired as mentor-mentee.

The other formal mentorship was experienced by participant Ashima, an Indian American and intermediate-level professional, through the NASPA Undergraduate Fellowship Program (NUFP), which is a national mentoring program for undergraduate students who are interested in a career in student affairs. Despite some minor criticisms on how hard her mentor pushed her to be aggressive with her student affairs career, Ashima described this mentorship as overall positive and impactful.

Other participants indicated that formal mentorships are well-meaning, but awkward and transactional. Participant Sam said:

I'm not a big fan of those. It's awkward! And I feel like it's someone that doesn't know you, some random--it could be an [artificial intelligence] who's matching you based off of some arbitrary things. Mentoring involves a trust and a seeing of oneself in the other.

While only two participants had identified impactful mentors that were established through a formal mentoring program, other participants mentioned trying formal mentoring, but those formal mentors were not remembered as their most impactful mentoring relationships.

Kochan's (2013) Three Types of Mentoring

As part of my interview protocol, I reviewed Kochan's (2013) cultural framework for mentoring and provided a brief description of each type of mentoring relationship: traditional (mentor is the teacher and the mentee is the learner), transitional (mentor serves as a guide and encourager, but can also learn from the mentee), and transformational (those in the relationship work together with no established roles to create change in the organization). I then asked each participant to reflect on what type of relationship they had with each of their most impactful mentors. Table 4 below shows the breakdown of the types of mentoring experienced by the participants with their most impactful mentors. Transitional mentoring, in which "the mentee is seen as someone who may have perceptions and understandings that the mentor needs to comprehend in order to succeed [...] and the mentor is viewed as a guide and a listener, but also as a partner" (Kochan, 2013, p. 418), was the type of mentoring most experienced by participants (12 mentorships were identified as transitional). Some participants indicated that their mentoring relationships were both transitional and transformative, either because it progressed from one to the other or that it went back and forth between the two. There were nine mentoring relationships described in this way. Seven relationships were identified as traditional because the mentors were more like teachers to the participants, passing down information on how to navigate student affairs and/or the institution and therefore preserving organizational culture. Transformative mentoring was also identified seven times to describe the type of mentoring received by the participants. Transformative mentoring "strives to move to the future [...] and] those involved seek to create a new culture" (Kochan, 2013, p. 419). The role of mentor and mentee is fluid and changing in transformative mentoring. Four relationships were described as a blend of traditional and transitional mentoring, and three mentorships were a progression of all three types of

mentoring throughout the span of the relationships. One participant struggled to identify what kind of mentoring relationship she had with her mentor because the relationship started after her mentor left the university and the participant did not feel that institutional culture was applicable to the mentoring experience.

Table 4

Types of Mentoring Experienced by the Participants

Type of Mentoring	Aggregate Number of Mentorships
Transitional	12
Blend of Transitional and Transformative	9
Traditional	7
Transformative	7
Blend of Traditional and Transitional	4
Progression through all three types	3
Not Applicable	1

After the participants indicated which mentoring types they had with their impactful mentors, I asked them which mentoring type they think works for them in being successful in their student affairs careers. It is important to point out that no one chose traditional mentoring. Table 5 indicates the preferences of the 15 participants, as well as their position level within the university. In the Pre-interview Questionnaire (Appendix A), participants answered the question “Which one of the following best describes your position in your student affairs division?” and their answer choices were a) Entry-level, b) Intermediate, c) Mid-level professional (i.e., supervisor/manager and has a master’s degree or higher), or d) Senior student affairs officer (i.e., oversees multiple departments). Of the 15 participants, three described themselves as intermediate, eight were mid-level professionals, and four were senior student affairs

officers/administrators. The data regarding mentoring type preference varied between the different position levels, showing that preferences may not be tied to the level of position they hold. However, most of the participants preferred either transformative mentoring or a blend of transitional and transformative. Only one participant preferred transitional mentoring and one participant preferred that her mentorships be a progression of all three mentoring types. Ashima, an Indian American intermediate-level professional, explained why she prefers a blend of transitional and transformative mentoring.

I need a little bit of transitional and transformative, just because I feel like, let's say you enter a new environment, you may not know everything, and I feel like it's going to take you some time to kind of understand how that place works and how you fit in and how you want to change things, or you know, blend yourself in. Then I also feel like at some point I have experienced transformative mentorship more so when I've been the mentor to my own students and then I feel like it transitioned into moments where I felt like they were teaching me things and I never knew that could happen, and when it did I was very changed by that.

June, a Filipino American mid-level professional in the study, said about her transformative mentoring preference:

I think, for me it would probably be the transformative, at least in this current juncture in my life because I've been in student affairs for about ten-plus years now. I think I'm kind of past the traditional, past the transitional, I think I'm more into transformative... I just kind of want to crack the whole thing open and just figure out a new way of doing stuff.

When considering what types of mentoring relationships the participants experienced with their most impactful mentors in Table 4 and what their mentoring preferences are (Table 5), there are

some things to consider when thinking about how student affairs professionals should engage in mentoring relationships with Asian American women in student affairs. Traditional and transitional mentorships were among the types most experienced by the participants, but they were not the preferred mentoring types.

Table 5

Mentoring Preferences by Position Level

Position Level	Mentoring Type Preference
Intermediate	Blend of transitional and transformative
Intermediate	Blend of transitional and transformative
Intermediate	Transformative
Mid-level professional	Blend of transitional and transformative
Mid-level professional	Blend of transitional and transformative
Mid-level professional	Blend of transitional and transformative
Mid-level professional	Blend of transitional and transformative
Mid-level professional	Progression through all three
Mid-level professional	Transformative
Mid-level professional	Transformative
Mid-level professional	Transformative
Senior student affairs officer/administrator	Blend of transitional and transformative
Senior student affairs officer/administrator	Transformative
Senior student affairs officer/administrator	Transformative
Senior student affairs officer/administrator	Transitional

Positive Mentoring Impacts on Career Advancement

For the purpose of this study, career advancement is defined as hierarchical advancement in the form of promotions that have been secured (as opposed to offered but not taken), and horizontal mobility, which includes salary increases and/or the assignment of higher-level job responsibilities.

Advancement Opportunities

Nine participants reported through their stories that one or more of their most impactful mentors were responsible for them getting a job promotion, either because the mentor hired the mentee, or the mentor put in a good word for the mentee to the hiring manager. One of the

participants, Irene, who is a mid-level professional and of Hmong ethnicity, shared the story of when a mentor took a chance in hiring her.

I emailed the director and asked, “Is it okay if I volunteer? I just want to get a feel for it.”

And she took a chance on me, and I started as an intern, and then a few years later a position opened up. I applied, got hired, and I started working there as an academic coach. So that’s where I first started my professional career in student affairs.

Irene was given the opportunity by who would be her future mentor to take on an internship position while she was in graduate school, and it eventually led to a professional position. Kim, a biracial Japanese/White participant, who is a mid-level professional, credits her mentor Janet for her getting a job after being unsuccessful during a previous job interview with Janet's department.

My first meeting with her was at an interview for [a different] position. I did not get that position, but I got an email about a month later from one of the supervisors in her department, who said that they had an opening in their area and had talked to Janet and said that she had recommended me. So they said, “You should apply.” It wasn't a guarantee of course, but they said, “Go ahead and apply, and if we select you to interview, we'll see what happens,” [and of course, I got the job]. But that was honestly something that stuck in the back of my head. I'm like, wow I must have said something in my interview that she liked enough to pass along to somebody else, because I don't think I've ever had that happen previously and I don't know a lot of people that have had that happen. I was impressed by the fact that she remembered me enough to pass along my information, which worked out well because six months later, she became my direct supervisor.

Kim felt that if Janet, who was the director of the department at the time of Kim's interviews, had not asked the hiring manager to invite Kim to apply for the second open position at Janet's department, she may not have applied and gotten the job. Kim also pointed out that she was an external candidate, which was even more of a reason she was grateful that Janet remembered her from the previous recruitment process. Another participant, Amelia, who is a biracial Chinese/White senior-level professional, said that her mentor created a position for her during a time Amelia was in jeopardy of becoming unemployed. "When [my position at that time] was not renewed, she opened up a position [for me], and so within her office, I was able to advance. She kind of made it happen." Amelia's mentor, Amy, made sure that Amelia was able to stay at the institution by providing her with an opportunity to continue working in student affairs, which ultimately allowed Amelia to continue in her career advancement.

Salary Increases

Eight participants credited their mentors for helping them get salary increases, either because the mentor was also a supervisor and put in the request for the mentee to receive a salary increase, or the mentor coached the mentee on how to negotiate salary when accepting a new position. One of those participants, Kristen, who is Filipino American and senior-level student affairs administrator, said that her mentor, Kent, helped her learn how to negotiate her salary.

When I applied for the job at [another institution], he helped me to think through how I negotiate my salary and I straight up said to him, "I need your skill as a White man. How do I negotiate my salary?" because I didn't feel as though I did a good job negotiating it at [my other institution]."

Participants Irene, Michelle, and Ashima all confirmed that at least one of their mentors coached them on how to negotiate their salaries during job searches.

Participants Shilpa (Indian American), Charlotte (Chinese American), Rem (Filipino American), and Lily (Vietnamese American) all told stories about how their mentors, who were also their supervisors, advocated for them to receive salary increases. Lily said, “Cherrie has always pushed for me to have more [...], she would go to HR and fight for me to make more than the average counselor with my years of experience because she saw my potential and how I was doing a lot.” These participant stories demonstrate that there are different ways mentors can support mentees in setting themselves up for higher salaries.

Higher-level Job Responsibilities

Ten participants shared that one or more of their mentors provided opportunities to have higher-level job responsibilities as a way of providing professional development for eventual career advancement. Kristen, who is Filipino American and a senior-level professional, provided examples of how her mentor, Gina, was very intentional about the higher-level responsibilities she assigned to Kristen.

I feel like Gina was really purposeful with me. She assigned me projects that were outside of my comfort zone because those were the gaps in my experience. So, for example, if I'm going to be [Vice President] of student affairs at some institution, Athletics reports to the VP of student affairs. I didn't have any of that in my portfolio, so she made me the chair of the task force on the student athlete experience, and that was really purposeful. And she gave me stretch assignments to really build my portfolio and my competence for being an actual executive leader.

Similarly, participant Irene's female mentor and supervisor, Spencer, knew that Irene (who is Hmong American) wanted to advance from an entry level position, so they had conversations

about what it means to have additional assignments that make Irene feel fulfilled and that provide growth opportunities.

Lily, who is Vietnamese American and has been in the field of student affairs between five to ten years, said that all her mentors allowed her to take on additional responsibilities when she asked for them. “They never said no. They were like ‘This is your job--you make it what you want it to be.’”

Another positive impact mentors made for the participants were having conversations about pathways for advancement, which ten participants reported experiencing. These conversations involved mentors asking their mentees about their career goals and suggesting next steps to reach those goals. June, a Filipino American mid-level professional, recalled when her mentor, Zoey, who was also a friend and colleague, reminded her that there are multiple pathways for advancement.

For me, she's the one that has kind of told me, “Don't restrict yourself to just this pathway to presidency. You could do this; you could do that...” So I think my relationship with Zoey was more [about] opening my eyes to different ways of being.

Michelle (biracial Vietnamese/White senior-level professional), who experienced traditional and transitional mentoring with her most impactful mentors, said her discussions with mentors about pathways for advancement were more prescribed. “Most of those discussions around pathways for success in student affairs centered around building networks and professional organizations and getting a PhD.” This example of advice about pathways for advancement is a contrast from June’s example, in which her transformational mentorship with Zoey was more fluid than prescriptive.

Advanced Degrees

Lastly, all fifteen participants were encouraged by their impactful mentors to pursue advanced degrees, whether it be a master's degree, which is typically required to go into a student affairs career, or a doctorate degree. Participants Laurel (Filipina American), Amelia (Chinese American), June (Filipina American), Lily (Vietnamese American), and Ashima (Indian American) were all told by their mentors that they should seriously consider getting a master's degree if they wanted to go into the field of student affairs. June, who did not know what she wanted to do after graduating with her bachelor's degree, took a teaching job overseas. Her mentor visited her abroad and proposed to June a career in student affairs.

[My mentor] visited me and we're just talking about life and she's like, "Well, have you ever thought of student affairs as a job?" and I was like no. And so, she [said], "You know, that could be a career. You can apply for a master's program." So, when I got back [to the United States], I started applying to a bunch of master's programs.

Many participants were also encouraged to pursue doctoral degrees while in their careers in student affairs. Charlotte, who identifies as Chinese American, and her mentor Earl often had conversations about education.

He has been one of my biggest supporters. I view him as a mentor because I've also picked his brain about a lot of different things, especially when it comes to education. I've talked to him about possibly going for an Ed.D. because he got his, and so I had talked to him about it, and he gave me some names [of programs].

In Charlotte's case, she considered going for a doctorate degree because her mentor supported her and often discussed it with her. Other participants who were encouraged by their mentors to pursue a doctoral degree were Laurel, Kristen, Rem, Shilpa, and Michelle.

Negative Mentoring Impacts on Career Advancement

Unfortunately, participants observed some behaviors within the student affairs field as a result of their mentoring relationships that negatively impacted their motivation to advance in a student affairs career.

Discouragement from pursuing senior leadership roles

The most significant finding is that 14 participants were discouraged from pursuing senior leadership roles because of the politics that surround administrators and how demanding those roles were for their mentors.

Workplace Politics. Some participants shared that what they observed of their mentors and how they had to navigate challenging workplace politics, influenced how they felt about advancing in student affairs. Kristen, who is Filipina American and is in a senior student affairs role, questioned whether she wanted to move up any higher because of what she noticed from her mentor and other women of color at her institution.

When she was Vice President, and we also had a female president at the time, I saw the scrutiny that they were under and the kind of criticisms they got for anything that went wrong--mistakes that they made--and I felt like [those criticisms were] gender-based and I felt like, if it were men in these positions they wouldn't be scrutinized in this way or asked to explain themselves in the same ways that [the women were] being asked to explain themselves. And so that caused me to kind of think through [whether] I want to be in that position--a position of power where I'm not just a woman, but I'm a woman of color.

Kristen points out very clearly here that being a woman of color would add a layer of challenges in a high-level senior leadership position. June, a Filipina American mid-level professional,

shared the following about her take on the political climate in student affairs and what she witnessed her mentor Bianca go through:

I do know there's a lot of politics, and I think that's one thing that makes me a little wary sometimes about working in higher ed, and the higher up you go there's more politics, and so I think her attitude of being unapologetic worked for her because there's going to be times where you do have to be bold and just say, "This is my decision" and just stick to it. My personality is not like that, so I think that's what I admired so much about her, and she was very like, take-no-prisoners kind of approach, but for me, I'm still very mindful and I absorb a lot of people's judgments or perceptions of who I am. I don't know if that's just from my upbringing, or just being an Asian woman, but I'm very hyper conscious of that, so I think that part of working in student affairs and in senior leadership or higher leadership roles-- that's kind of what makes me a little bit wary of going higher or even persisting, because of having to deal with that so much. I see from [Bianca], having worked with her, how she's had to handle things, but she has to kind of have that approach because there's going to be people who are going to try to bring you down. So I think, for me, I don't know if I have that thick skin yet, but I think that's one thing that makes me a little bit wary about staying in student affairs or going higher in leadership.

June explained how she feels wary about advancing in student affairs because of the politics her mentor, Bianca, had to navigate through. When asked how being Filipina American impacts her career advancement in student affairs, Karina, one of the participants who is a mid-level professional, had a political-based reason for being unsure about advancing.

I think about the glass ceiling if I were to progress, and if I were to pursue those roles, [I

ask myself] what is the campus wanting? What is senior leadership wanting in these positions? Where I am right now, classification-wise, the next role up [for me] would be director positions, which there are very few and far between and then even more so as an assistant vice chancellor, but I don't know if I'm interested in the AVC kind of position. I don't know if I want that pressure. I think I want to be able to make change on a very systemic level like an AVC level, but then I also don't want to be that tokenized person where [they say] "Now that we've hired [a woman of color], these issues will be resolved." That often happens the higher you go up. Like [they say] "Well, [so-and-so] is a person of color, right?"

Karina felt that the advancement of folks in student affairs is all about what campus leadership wants, and while she wants to be able to make an impact at the assistant vice chancellor level, she wonders if senior leadership would have other motivations for having her in that role--for optics purposes of having a woman of color in a leadership position.

High Pressure and Stress. Laurel, who is Filipina American and an intermediate-level role, but has previously been in a mid-level management role, recalled the times she would witness her mentor, Maya, working at all hours of the day and night, and how influential Maya's role modeling was on her:

I remember getting email responses from her at three in the morning and so I started recognizing--wow, this is the life she has and I remember she told me that she would get sick and still go to work-- she only needed three hours of sleep. So I started thinking, do I only need three hours of sleep? I mean seriously, when I became director, I kind of thought about Maya and how she only needed three to four hours of sleep, so maybe I only need three to four hours of sleep, you know, which wasn't really healthy if you think

about it. I remember as a mentee, looking at the modeling and observations, and at the time 20 years ago I didn't really process it the way I can now, but back then I would absorb everything that [she] did because I wanted to be [her] one day. Because in my 20s, that was my goal back then, and she was Assistant Dean going to the Dean position next, so I would do everything that Maya did because she's awesome, she's pretty, she has it all, and those were my check marks--my check boxes. So, that was the part that discouraged me, seeing all the political pieces and I didn't really see her have a balance with her with life and work, and just not having time.

Laurel's experience in observing her mentor caused her to believe that she also needed to work after hours and get less sleep if she was to be in a higher-level position.

Life Balance. Lily, a Vietnamese American mid-level manager with children, expressed how being a woman in leadership does not seem appealing to her, especially now as a mother, and how her mentor Cherrie--who does not have children--did not model work and life balance.

Women in leadership positions in general, I feel, are a lot angrier or lonelier and bitter and we typically don't have families. And if we do, or we're going through doctoral programs or whatever, it makes our personal life struggle. It feels like you need to sacrifice something and then on top of that, being a mother, you have to come to terms with the fact that you always have to ask the question, "Do you have anything after 5pm or on weekends?" And it's like that mom-guilt. And then it's the long hours-- I think I saw [my mentor Cherrie] in the office sometimes until like seven or eight at night, and I would stay with her because I didn't have anything else to do. Maybe it was just like a couple times I'd be like, I don't have anything else, let me help you. I saw a lot of stress on her face.

The three examples above represent many of the sentiments the other participants shared about their concerns of advancing into higher levels of leadership in student affairs.

Lesson of Mentoring the Next Generation

Other themes of lessons learned through mentorship emerged as the participants shared stories about their most impactful mentors. One of those themes was how to mentor the next generation, which seven participants spoke about. When I asked participant Amelia, a Chinese American senior-level administrator, to share one of the biggest lessons she learned from her mentor, Sal, she said,

Share your story. Tell whoever you're mentoring what your experiences are. That is the best piece you can give to a mentee who's struggling maybe with the same issues. And again, in a very safe environment to be able to release, talk. Also, when I did well, [Sal] was there during my accomplishments and when I was struggling, he was there during my depression [...] I think I've learned from him the importance of also mentoring young people and underserved populations.

Another participant, Karina, said that the biggest lesson she learned from her mentor, Joy, was to cherish the people around you, engage more, and network with each other's mentees to create generational mentoring. Mentorship relationships, according to the participants, were not meant to be one-time and one-way experiences, but rather, they should be a continuum of people connecting with others in multiple directions.

The following sections will review the findings pertaining to RQ2, such as who the participants identified as their most influential mentors and how those mentors helped them navigate the field of student affairs and their institution's culture.

Summary of RQ2 Findings

For RQ2, the data showed that the participants were generally mentored by those who had a shared race and/or gender identity. The mentors also tended to be supervisors or senior administrators, friends or colleagues, and many participants met their mentors during their undergraduate experience. The most common traits mentors had were being available and accessible to their mentees, as well as being authentic and honest. Through the interview discussions, many of the participants indicated that they would like to have mentors who share the same identity, preferably Asian women. In regard to how mentors guided the participants through the organizational culture of the institution, they did so by stressing the importance of networking or modeling effective networking, as well as how to navigate institutional politics. On navigating student affairs culture, most of the participants were encouraged by their mentors to get involved in student affairs associations, both national and regional, whether it be attending conferences, presenting at conferences, or becoming a committee member. Participants also talked about the issue of work and life balance as something that is difficult to navigate.

Who are mentors to Asian American women in student affairs?

In Chapter Three, Table 3 shows the demographics of the mentors described by the participants. Of the 43 most impactful mentors identified by the participants the majority of mentors are perceived by the participants as female/women (the choice of identifiers were transferred directly from the preinterview demographic questionnaire). White women made up the largest group of mentors at 39.5% (Table 3).

Mentors' Roles at the Institution

Ten participants reported that one or more of their most impactful mentors also served as supervisors to them at some point in their career and eight participants said one or more of their

mentors were senior administrators. Eight participants shared that they were colleagues with their mentor when they began the mentoring relationship. Nine participants met one or more of their mentors on campus while studying as undergraduate students.

Mentor Trait of Being Available and Accessible to the Mentee

The most common mentor trait that eight participants used to describe their mentors was being available and accessible for them when they needed help or advice. Kim, who is Japanese American, said that even though her mentor, Janet, is no longer her supervisor, she wouldn't have a problem calling her. "She's always been pretty responsive about [me calling], so that's definitely something I've appreciated, even though she's no longer my supervisor for the past year." Similarly, Ashima, who identifies as Indian American, still texts her mentor, Angelica, whenever she needs career advice.

Sometimes I text her randomly about different career questions I have because I really value her perspective. I think, in general, she always has great advice, so I do reach out to her and she always responds to me. So, she's still really important in my life.

Mentor availability made a strong impact, especially considering that many of the participants brought up how busy their mentors were.

Desired Mentors

Through the interview discussions, some participants talked about who they prefer mentors to be, or that they were seeking certain mentors throughout their careers. The common theme among ten of the participants was that they wanted mentors who shared their identity. Figure 3 shows that only 27.9% of the participants' most impactful mentors are Asian, while White mentors make up the highest percentage (39.5%). I asked Amelia, who identifies as

Chinese American, if she had difficulty finding mentors and whether her identity had anything to do with that experience, and she shared:

I was very conscious because I wanted to see someone who looked like me and had the same interest. And not to just focus on Asian issues, but diverse issues. So I mentioned earlier that I, you know, paid for myself to go to NCORE. I was looking for a mentor and I remember sitting in--one of the authors, a very well known author--I remember going to her session, and I was just so inspired, but I thought, wow she's national-- there's no way she's going to mentor me. I did bring up the courage to go up and talk to her and say, "I really did appreciate your talk." I've read her books and all that, so I was consciously looking for a mentor.

While Amelia's experience with the author did not lead to a mentorship, two of Amelia's most impactful mentors shared her Chinese ethnicity (a female Chinese/White mentor and a male Chinese mentor). Another interesting discussion I had was with Lily, who identifies as Vietnamese American and has all White mentors. I asked her if she has reflected on the fact that her most impactful mentors are all White.

I wish I had an Asian American mentor. I came close with an AVP-- she just retired, by the way, so she's no longer with the campus. But there was just something about maybe how we were never direct reports [...] that we never got to that level. [...] I remember thinking about how a lot of my mentors don't understand my family upbringing and the way that I see things and how sometimes Asians are kind of seen in a certain way by White people. And I've wished for an Asian American mentor and I remember talking to one of my colleagues, and she was telling me--Oh, I have a friend, she's Asian, she is a leader at some hospital doing HR and you would love her and she has heard so much

about you and she would love to meet you-- and I was thinking, oh my gosh--maybe this is it. But because it's not my contact, I couldn't reach out and initiate anything further, so it kind of never came to fruition, but I think there's been an absence of Asian American leadership in my life that I could call mentorship in our field.

Lily expressed always wanting an Asian American mentor, but she also brings up the point that perhaps when you do not work directly with someone, it is difficult to start a mentoring relationship.

Navigating Organizational Culture

When asked in a straightforward manner whether each participant felt that their mentors knew how to navigate organizational or institutional culture, twelve of the participants said they believed so. Through their stories, the participants talked about how they learned the importance of networking from their mentors and how their mentors helped them navigate institutional politics.

Importance of networking

The participants had many discussions with their mentors about the importance of building networks, especially the importance of having positive and trusting campus relationships. The participants also felt that their mentors modeled good networking skills. Shilpa, who is Indian American and has been in student affairs for over fifteen years, felt that her mentors were very well connected.

All three of them [knew about the institution's culture], and the reason they did was because they had been on the campus for many years, and so they knew the key players, they knew the strengths and the strategy of interacting with individuals, and so I feel like at any point I could ask any of them--"Hey, I've got a meeting with so-and-so... do you

have any thoughts on how I can be strategic in this interaction?” [Hayley] empowered me to reach out to campus leaders, so that was really early in my career, so every campus that I've been to, I have always wanted to reach out to campus leaders.

Kristen, who is Filipina American and a senior student affairs officer, explained how one of her mentors helped her to understand how vital it was to get others in the institution to trust you.

There was a particular institutional culture where if you violated the norms early, you just didn't have a chance. No one was ever going to take you seriously, and so it was one of those places that you really have to navigate very carefully until you were known enough to be trusted by people, so it was really kind of like walking on eggshells for the first year or two that I was there and feeling like I really had to cultivate relationships in a particular way to almost protect myself from organizational harm.

Kristen benefitted from the warning of her mentor not to damage her career by going against the institutional norms, which is an indication of the presence of institutional politics.

Navigation of Institutional Politics

Eleven participants mentioned the political landscape of their institutions and how their mentors help to guide them through bureaucracy and working through challenging scenarios that involve important folks on campus. Irene, who is Hmong American and in a mid-level professional position, explained how her mentors understood how data drives decisions.

I think something that definitely was a takeaway for me under their mentorship was things like data. You want to make sure that data tells a story that really showcases the talent and the effectiveness of your program because, you know, data drives money. Data drives a lot of decisions. So as great as qualitative data is and the stories and the lived experiences of our students are, I remember it always seemed that our administration was

big on data--quantitative data--that tells an impactful story of your services. So I think, as I navigate my role, [...] I thought a lot about that, and used that to drive the ways that I led my own program at that time.

Shilpa (Indian American senior-level administrator) described how she would observe her mentor, Elisha, handle difficult situations.

I would observe her a lot and how she handled these situations [...] I got to observe people pushing back against her. I got to observe how she handled it. You know, when I mentor folks--I mentor a lot of women of color--and I always tell folks that White men really can go into meetings and curse and they're not punished or penalized for it at all. Women of color don't get to do that. And White men really get to do it and it's almost like, obviously that's the way they're talking, right, but they can go around and say, "Fuck this and fuck that, and this shit and bullshit" and it's the language, right? But I don't get to say that. One hundred percent, I don't get to say that. And [Elisha] handles everything with grace in public and she knows how to handle it, when she leaves and takes care of herself, and I think that that's really important. I think that's what I do. I just observed her all the time and how she would handle these difficult situations, and I mean, even little things like listening to the language that she used so that I would emulate her responses and stuff in difficult situations. She did lecture me once and she said that she heard that I cursed a lot (*Shilpa laughed*), and her only feedback to me was, "You better not be cursing out your staff," and I was like, "No, no, no, I don't curse them out (*continued laughing*)!"

Not only did Shilpa explain Elisha’s ability to handle diffusing situations and make sure she takes care of herself around politics, but also the inequity among men and women in the field when it comes to behavior and language.

Navigating Student Affairs Culture

Many who work in student affairs can recall the moment they decided to pursue a career in the field. Many of us have stories about “the talk,” which is when a student affairs professional you worked for or was connected to through undergraduate involvement asked you if you had ever considered going into student affairs. In many of our stories, their question prompted a response in us that was something along the lines of “What? I had no idea what you did was a career!” To my delight, almost all fifteen participants in my study were quickly able to recall their stories of “the talk,” and it is that shared experience that connects many student affairs professionals--the fact that most of us never dreamed of going into student affairs as a child, but happened to discover it, thanks to passionate professionals in the field who often recognize the potential in student leaders. Some of the strong cultural aspects of student affairs are involvement in student affairs associations and the struggle of balancing work and personal life.

Student Affairs Associations

Once introduced to the field, many new and aspiring student affairs professionals quickly learn about the national associations that are dedicated to higher education and student affairs professionals. The two largest associations are NASPA, formerly known as the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, but now rebranded as Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, and ACPA, formerly known as American College Personnel Association, but rebranded as College Student Educators International. Aside from

NASPA and ACPA, there are other associations that student affairs professionals can become members of or get involved in to enhance their professional career. Twelve participants in this study indicated that they had discussions with their mentors about getting involved in professional associations like NASPA and ACPA. Rem, who is a Filipina American mid-level professional working in the Pacific region of the United States, talked about how important NASPA is at her institution.

A lot of the people in student affairs here [...] are involved with NASPA, and so I kind of got into the fast lane of experience in higher ed, and so I was actually on the advisory board for NASPA my first year working in higher ed [...] I just drank the Kool-aid and I loved it.

Later in the interview, Rem went on to say that her mentor, Kat, was the one who made her “drink the Kool-aid,” though all three of her mentors were heavily involved in the association. Other participants said they were encouraged to attend or present at conferences.

Balancing Work and Personal Life

Eight participants expressed their thoughts and challenges of balancing work and personal life, as many positions in the field require staff to work during nights and weekends. Laurel, a Filipina American wife and mother, recalled the time she wanted to start a family, which meant she needed to switch to a different type of student affairs position. “[I did] student activities for two years, and then once I got engaged and was gonna start a family, I didn't want to do student activities anymore and went over to career services, because it's, you know, nine to five and no late nights.” Laurel also remembered witnessing one of her mentors, Justin, attempting to balance having a wife and children while also being involved in the NASPA community and engaging in cultural community work.

[His kids] were still young and so what I did learn was how much he valued [his wife]. I remember [him saying], "I'm going to a conference--I gotta go buy [my wife] some flowers," and you know, getting a teddy bear for [his daughter], because he was going to be at a NASPA conference. And that just stood out to me... to be able to give them something, but at the same time, I'm like wow, you have to give these gifts because [you're not] around either. So that was also something I found encouraging because he was giving some love and attention to his family, but also discouraging to see, well--how many times have you done this because you're out there, but also interacting with the Filipino community too and how he was going to all these meetings, [...] he's at this meeting, he's at that meeting--then I started noticing that [his wife] was now at the conferences just hanging out. So he's bringing them into the space where he's at. So, my lesson there was about the family piece and how to navigate and integrate that.

Kristen, who is also Filipina American, observed her mentors trying to balance their romantic relationships with advancing to higher positions during their careers.

[I'd witness] how, when Kent moved up, he left his partner behind. They had to negotiate this long-distance thing, but Sherrie had to do that, Sylvia's had to do that as well, so I think that's just a given in student affairs.

Kristen mentioned this a few more times in her interview, using the term "trailing spouse" to describe how partners of student affairs professionals either have to follow along to different geographical locations, or the relationship does not work out. Karina, a Filipina American wife and mother, gave her opinion about having to balance work and family life.

I also think about the continued stresses of-- I have a family and I love work but I'm not

going to become a student affairs martyr. I've seen it happen to other folks and that's just not my cup of tea so that's kind of where I am. I also feel like I'm on my journey of just trying to figure out--I love what I do but it's not my everything, which is interesting because there are other folks who are just like super gung-ho and they don't consider this to be work, and that's great for them. I know there are those people who have been wanting to become presidents [of a university] at some point.

Karina expressed that family comes first for her and while others may choose to put work first, she will not pursue higher positions if it means having to put work before family. Other participants felt the same way about potentially not pursuing higher positions in student affairs because of the desire to have life balance.

The remaining sections of this chapter correlate with RQ3, revealing how ethnic and gender identity is addressed in mentoring relationships.

Summary of RQ3 Findings

Seeking the answer to RQ3 yielded the most significant findings of the entire study because it was this portion of the data that told the stories of the participants' cultural backgrounds and how Asian American women experience student affairs differently than other race groups. Up until this point in the dissertation, readers might suggest that the findings have been race-neutral, in the sense that White women and other women of color could probably relate to much of the experiences shared by the Asian American participants. However, I urge readers to consider whole experiences and backgrounds of these Asian American women participants and hear their voices as their own—not anyone else's. Although the findings up to this point have not directly referenced Asian American identity, the participants shared their

career stories as Asian American women, and therefore their experiences do differ in nature from others.

Especially prevalent in the data was the fact that most of the participants felt there was not enough Asian representation either within their institution or within the field of student affairs. Each participant also talked about being a person of color, some identifying themselves as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color), and most of the participants expressed passion for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work. Lastly, participants discussed how they navigate society as an Asian American woman and whether their mentors have guided them in that respect. The participants shared with me their culture's norms and expectations of women, stereotypes they battle, and how Asian women are perceived in the workplace. Unfortunately, many of these experiences lead participants to develop a negative self-perception as professionals. The mentoring relationships have addressed these cultural experiences through having discussions about racism and microaggressions, the importance of belonging, and mentors encouraging participants to explore their cultural identities as part of personal and professional development.

Lack of Asian Representation within Institutions and Student Affairs

Pressure to Represent

Some of the participants felt the weight of responsibility in representing Asian students at their institutions. Laurel, who is Filipina American, talked about how she is hyper aware of her racial identity at work as the only Asian American in a student services department and how important it feels for students to see her as someone who looks like them.

In my department, I'm the only Asian. I see that I'm the only face that can represent the

Asian student voice and also the Asian lens. So, I feel a responsibility, like I'm the only one who can represent, so I'm very aware of that in my office. However, in the [larger] division, when I see [other Asian colleagues] then I feel in community and not alone anymore with my Asian identity.

Charlotte, who identifies as Chinese American, told me how she was placed in her role because she was the only staff member who could represent the Asian American student population.

When I got here [as a student], there was no Asian American Pacific Islander association. That started the year I graduated, and I was like, [now] I don't have time for this. I gotta focus on [graduate] school and finish and all that. There was no Asian American culture club here. And then I still remember this, too... so, part of the reason why I became the interim counselor was because they *did* need an Asian American representative there and we were doing campus-specific welcomes for certain cultures, and I got paid to lead it--the very first one for the Asian Americans--because I was Asian. That was the only reason why they had me do it, and they kept putting that on me for two years.

The theme of being the only Asian American at work was a common experience for the participants, which led to feelings of isolation.

Feelings of Isolation

More than half of the participants shared stories of when they were the only Asian American in the room, or how they are one of the very few Asian Americans within student affairs on their campuses. Kim, who is Japanese American and has worked at two large public institutions within the last ten years, still feels as though she has not had the opportunity to share her cultural experiences with others at work.

I feel like I've never had like a group of Asian American women in my field who I've been able to collaborate with, which is kind of sad because you don't have that shared background. And even things as simple as, if we have a staff potluck, there could be five types of one soup, all from a certain background [they all share], and they would all laugh and joke about it and it's great [they] all have this thing, and there would really only be one or two of us bringing in some Asian dish and everyone's like, "Well what's that?" So it's kind of awkward and you're like, oh, maybe I'll just bring rolls next time.

Michelle, a biracial Vietnamese American who works at a medium-sized institution, also discussed being the only person of color in her office.

For a long time, my office was only White women and me, and so I was very conscious [of my identity]. There's just a number of things, like I can't relate. We don't have the same values, the same hobbies, and like, I just don't understand how you're seeing the situation with the lens you have.

The feeling of being different, as Kim and Michelle describe, contributes to the feeling of isolation at work.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Work

All participants mentioned an interest or passion in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work, which involves serving as an advocate for a diverse, equitable, and inclusive educational community for people of color (some specifically used the term BIPOC--Black, Indigenous, People of Color), and other minoritized populations. Kristen, who identifies as Filipina American, described the time her mentor encouraged her to apply for an administrator position.

She said to me, "We need people like you in the leadership of student affairs. We need somebody with your equity mindset, and we need people who work towards social justice

and they can't just be diversity officers, they have to be the VPs, and they have to be deans.”

Karina, who also identifies as Filipina American, shared that social justice was a large part of the enjoyment of her career.

Working as a coordinator, I would oversee leadership development programs, and one of the programs particularly that I was tasked with was to create a leadership program focused on social justice, but that also provided mentoring for first-generation students, and so that's what I did for a few more years thereafter, and that became my bread and butter, of kind of merging some of the work that I did before, but also being in a position to train students in terms of their relationships [and] in terms of their equity mindedness.

These examples emphasize the importance of DEI as an institutional value, and how Asian American women gravitate toward DEI work.

Cultural Norms and Expectations Among Asian Ethnicities

Although my interview protocol did not directly ask about cultural norms, the majority of the participants shared with me the cultural norms and expectations of their families. Some cultural norms that were relevant for multiple Asian ethnicities were the expectation of pursuing a STEM career, marrying someone of the same ethnicity, keeping your head down and not speaking up or causing any issues, and having a collectivist mindset. More than half of the participants admitted to going against their family's cultural norms and expectations. Irene, who identifies as Hmong American, had a lot to say about the Hmong culture of patriarchy and how she was intentional about breaking out of that part of the culture.

I think that being Hmong women, we weren't ever supposed to step foot in a college

setting, you know, we weren't meant to be there whatsoever, so I think mentoring was so crucial to my success and just my existence. I just knew that I couldn't be another statistic--a Hmong woman who pursued her career or education, but didn't finish, ended up being a housewife--and there's nothing wrong with individuals who want that, or who aspire for that lifestyle--but I knew at a very young age that I didn't want that for myself and I knew those cultural barriers that we're coming up against me as I navigated higher ed and my professional career, so I just knew that I needed all the help that I can get, from especially from those who look like me. And that's probably why all my mentors are females. I think I intentionally, and maybe some unintentionally, chose women for that specific reason, it's because I just understood how patriarchy played a role in my upbringing and how much I didn't want my success to be reflected, as you know, "I got here because a Hmong man, or a man helped me get here." I wanted my journey to be a reflection of nothing but women.

Ashima, who identifies as Indian American, also explained the importance of having a mentor of the same culture who works in the field of higher education.

[Rose is] my lifelong mentor and I see her very much as an older sister. She is a professor of sociology and that was another thing that really set her apart, is that in the Indian community, like most Asian households, you have to be a doctor or an engineer or a lawyer. So her being a professor was just so unique in our community, and she had written a book and it had great reviews and people were really proud of her. And I think that's also what allowed me to also stay in touch with her, because she was very much an educator, not just like within Sunday school and teaching my classes, [...] and then

outside of that she teaches at a four year university. So I think I related to her in that sense, too, because I'm really interested in education.

Irene and Ashima's powerful stories are important examples of why Asian American representation among student affairs leaders is needed. There are strong cultural dynamics that Asian American women navigate that requires a mentoring connection so meaningful to their journeys.

Battling Stereotypes and Negative Self-Perception at Work

The participants had a lot to say about Asian American women stereotypes they must battle in the workplace, as well as how those stereotypes lead to negative self-perception in their professional career. Some stereotypes about Asian American women that they have had to contend with in the workplace are being quieter than others, being submissive and non-leader material, the idea that they must have done really well in academics as students, and that they have a hands-off approach to institutional politics. Laurel, who identified herself as Pinay (a woman of Filipino descent) a few times throughout the interview, expressed how having those stereotypes at the back of your mind, mixed with cultural upbringing, can negatively impact confidence and performance in the workplace.

I know being Pinay, one of the unhealthy toxic patterns is not feeling enough. Am I enough, am I doing enough? And then you layer that with the stereotypes of Asians-- being quiet and submissive, not saying anything, don't rock the boat--so, I think those pieces have impacted my student affairs journey, because many times I've doubted myself. Many times, I started thinking that it's my fault, like I'm pointing fingers at myself, when I don't [really] have to. I don't have to hear those toxic messages that I'm not enough or you're not good enough, or you're not smart enough, or you're not

competent enough. But my own internal messages before I started acknowledging that was, you know, stuck on the message that I heard from my Lola when I was six [years old]--that a 92% [grade in school] wasn't good enough. So then when I'm here as an adult [at work] and I didn't reach my strategic goal...like shoot, I'm supposed to get like 7300 [student] placements, but I got 7200. But then [my supervisor] was like, oh my gosh that's awesome--you're hitting 98% during a pandemic! But for me, [all I could think about was that] I didn't work hard enough, I should have done more surveys, I should have done more outreach or more emails, you know I mean? It didn't stop. So I think in my student affairs [career] I always feel like I have to be productive. So I think that unhealthy pattern was part of my flow, but now I'm acknowledging that no, I don't have to agree to that. I don't have to listen to that. I can put a boundary, parameter, and a border... I'm not going to let that define my worth anymore.

Kim, who is biracial Japanese American, explains the need to be cautious of how she presents herself at work while balancing Asian stereotypes.

You want to be aggressive, but you don't want to be seen as pushy. I feel like with Asian women, oftentimes, especially in media and things like that, [they're] demure and quiet, just kind of do what [they're] told. You're not the aggressive one. You might be the go-getter in terms of academics, but not necessarily in terms of a high-ranking position somewhere or a powerful front-of-the line position.

In both Laurel and Kim's experiences, the idea of Asian women stereotypes does affect how they feel about themselves in the workplace.

Some of the ways mentors have helped the participants navigate such complex identity issues are by openly discussing racism and microaggressions, creating a sense of belonging in

the workplace, and encouraging mentees (the participants) to continue exploring their cultural identities. Irene, who is Hmong American, recalled when her Cambodian American mentor, Dr. Aaliyah, checked in on her when there were many news stories about Asian hate in the United States.

During the time of COVID and the increase in Asian hate crimes, I remember she had pulled me aside and just asked, “How are you feeling? Are you okay? Are there things that you want to process together?” Just really creating space for me to feel safe to talk, and at that time I just didn't realize how needed it was. I think a lot of times I'm always on the go, so Dr. Aaliyah definitely took the time to just engage in conversations about current events that were going on.

While the following quote is not one of the many examples about a participant's mentor creating a welcoming environment, I want to highlight that anyone in the office has the power to create a positive environment. Ashima, who recently started a new position and moved to another state for it, pointed out that the only person who went out their way to welcome her onto the team was another woman of color who shared her Indian ethnicity.

When you enter a new space, you just don't know who you're going to connect with. In my current workspace, there is only one other Asian, who is Indian, on my team and she's been so awesome, always helping out and she's the same age as me. She's been in that job for three years, but I feel like she's reached out to me the most. She's checked in with me, like, “Hey how are you doing? How's this going for you? How's that going for you? How's moving going?” And I feel like I haven't really gotten that from anyone else. Sometimes I feel like Asian women and/or women of color are always the first to reach out, and I appreciate that. I don't necessarily look for it, but I think I really want that, but I

don't always seek it intentionally or openly, just because I feel like it hasn't always been available.

Ashima brought this up again later in the interview and expressed disappointment that in her experience, White colleagues have not been as welcoming or have not shown interest in getting to know her.

Lastly, many mentors encouraged the participants to start or continue exploring their cultural identities, or to unpack issues they might have with their culture. Amelia, who identifies as Chinese American, credited her mentor Enrico for challenging her to sort through her identity issues.

[When I first started my mentorship with Enrico], I was going through my identity issues and I remember him asking me...because I felt at the time you either embrace your whole culture, everything--good, bad, and otherwise--or you turned your back on it and say okay, I'm not Chinese. I'm just going to try to blend in. And I think I struggled with that, and because he was very heavily into the Chicano movement, he helped me kind of tease out that I could accept pieces of my culture and embrace them.

The data regarding racial, ethnic, and gender identity and how the participants integrate those identities into their student affairs careers are so significant to this study because the amount of data on these topics show that they need to be addressed at work--that Asian American women cannot separate these pieces of identity from who they are as professionals.

Other Findings

Another group of themes I was able to gather from the interview data was how mentorship was experienced by the participants outside of what was addressed in the research questions. While the following themes were not related to the research questions of this study, I

felt compelled to share them because they were experiences shared by all or the large majority of the participants. I found that 1) the relationships were mutually beneficial, 2) mentors were strongly admired by the participants to the extent that participants wanted to emulate them, and 3) participants considered their mentors to be like family.

Mutual Benefit

All fifteen participants felt that their mentorships were beneficial to both them and their mentors. Mentors were willing to open up with their mentees and vent about their own challenges in the field. Michelle, who is a biracial Vietnamese American, described how her mentoring relationship with Chad, her White male mentor, has changed over the years.

I would say now we can be more in conversation, which is nice, or we can talk more comfortably about bigger issues in the field, and he--especially over the last couple of years--is much more vulnerable about his own struggles in the field and his own frustrations.

Rem, who is Filipina American and has earned her doctoral degree, laughed about the fact that she and her mentor, Kat, have developed a very informal relationship over the years and she has been able to help Kat let loose more.

Now we can really joke around, we can make inappropriate jokes, we can cuss and it's not weird, so it's friendship and work. We know how and when to turn it on and turn it off. I'd like to think that I'm rubbing off on her to be less serious--because she's very serious--and just let her hair down. She never lets her hair down, she's always in a bun. To, you know, theoretically let her hair down and just relax. There's things that used to probably bother her that don't bother her anymore, and I think she's okay with just letting go of the things that she can't control.

Rem and Kat's mentoring relationship has evolved into a friendship where they are mutually benefitting from learning from each other. Other participants described their mentorships similarly, pointing out that they have become more like colleagues or friends with each other, rather than a mentor-mentee relationship.

Strong Admiration and Emulation

Twelve participants expressed strong admiration for their mentors, and six of the twelve went as far as to say that they wanted to be just like their mentor. Nine of the twelve participants also said that their mentors role modeled so effectively that they emulated their mentors in their own work and interactions with others. Kristen, a Filipina American senior-level administrator, shared how powerful her mentor Gina is, and how she wanted to experience the same level of authority as her.

Gina is tiny...like four-foot-eleven and a hundred pounds. She's tiny but she takes up all this space and she has such *presence*. When she walks into a room, she *commands* that room, and when she leaves a meeting she's like, (*Kristen gesturing and pointing around*) I need you to do this, I need you to do this. I mean, she's not messing around. And I want to be like that (*Kristen laughing*), I want to take up that kind of space! I want to have that kind of presence when I walk in the room where people are like, "Whoa, hey, she's in charge and she just started this meeting and whatever she says, that's what's going to happen." That's what I learned from Gina.

June, who is also Filipina American, shared specifics about how she has emulated her mentor, Bianca, who never hid the fact that personal life is important and not something you should have to hide at work.

Because of her I've also modeled a lot of my leadership after her, where even this past

year with COVID and the pandemic, I was like, I could be the strong leader and try to look like I got all my stuff together, or I could be vulnerable and say, “Hey I have two kids... I can't put on a strong face all the time.” So she was really like the starting point for me to embrace that human side of myself, because I [used to keep] work and my personal life very separate. She was a person who [didn't]. She was very upfront about her family, about her responsibilities and all that stuff, so I really modeled that after her, because she was unapologetic. She was very much like, “This is my life [and] I'm not gonna try to cover it up...this is just who I am.” So, I think that [made] a big impression on me. I don't have to look like I have it all together all the time.

The examples above stress how significant the impact is of mentor role modeling for Asian American women in student affairs.

Mentors Are Like Family

The last theme of significance is how mentors became like family to the participants. Twelve participants described a connection of family in some way when speaking about their mentors. Eight of the twelve participants mentioned becoming close to their mentors to the point of knowing each other's families and in some cases, creating relationships with each other's family members. Eight participants said that one or more of their mentors were close like family to them and that some of the mentors were like a parental figure or like siblings to them. Lily laughed when she shared that her mentor, Cherrie, hates that Lily thinks of her as a mom.

I kind of saw her as a mom--she hates that, she wants to be friends--but she gave me a lot of advice when I was dating my husband, when I was going off to get married, and when I started having kids. So, it just kind of came about through the progression of life and work.

Ashima, who shares her Indian American identity with her mentor, Rose, considers them to have a lifelong relationship and very much sees Rose as an older sister. Bree, who identifies as Chinese, Thai, and Vietnamese American, reflected on the fact that she often considers mentors as family elders to be respected because of her cultural background, which might be why she thinks of her mentorships as the traditional type, as opposed to transitional or transformative. This theme of mentors as family was an unexpected finding, but one that was endearing.

Conclusion

This chapter of findings focused not only on how the three research questions were answered, but also pointed out the themes that emerged through the participants' stories. Research questions 1 and 2 allowed me to tease out the technical aspects of mentoring for Asian American women in student affairs, such as the types of mentoring experienced, the positive and negative impacts of mentoring on career advancement, demographics of the participants' mentors, and how they have helped mentees navigate institutional and student affairs culture. Research question 3 went deeper into the experiences of the participants as Asian American student affairs professionals, and how their cultural and gender identities impact their professional lives, focusing on cultural norms, stereotypes, negative self-perceptions related to cultural identity, and how mentors have created a space to work through all those things as a professional.

The biographical narrative inquiry approach, which uses participant stories as data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), allowed additional findings and themes to emerge. Those themes, such as what Asian American women want in a professional mentor, the importance of mentor role modeling, and the familial aspect of mentoring relationships, are such significant findings to

help the field of student affairs better understand how Asian American women can be supported in their careers.

The next and final chapter will provide a discussion of the study's findings and how they relate to the existing literature outlined in Chapter Two, as well as my practical recommendations for institutions that want to create work environments that allow Asian American student affairs professionals to thrive.

Chapter Five: Discussion

This chapter will review the findings of the study and explain them within the context of the existing literature outlined in Chapter Two, while also recognizing the implications of this study and why the findings matter in the field of student affairs. The purpose of studying the mentoring experiences of Asian American women in student affairs and how they impact career advancement is to address the problem of there being a lack of representation of Asian American women in student affairs, especially in higher level leadership positions. As Asian student populations in higher education continue to rise, the underrepresented amount of Asian student affairs professionals is a concern, as studies show that students of color benefit from seeing faculty, staff, and administrators of color in the institution, supporting them through their academic experience (Maramba, 2011; Pritchard & McChesney, 2018; Chang et al, 2014). The following research questions guided my study to discover how Asian American women's most impactful mentors affected their career advancement in the field of student affairs.

RQ1: What types of mentoring relationships have Asian American women in student affairs participated in and how have these relationships positively or negatively impacted their career advancement?

RQ2: Who do Asian American women in student affairs identify as their most influential mentors and how do those mentors help them navigate the field of student affairs and their institution's culture?

RQ3: How, if at all, are ethnic and gender identity addressed in mentoring relationships with Asian American women in student affairs when discussing workplace interactions and career advancement?

The methodology for this study was a qualitative narrative inquiry approach, which used “stories as data, and more specifically, first-person accounts of experience told in story form having a beginning, middle, and end” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 34). The benefit of using this method for collecting data was that not only were the research questions answered, but the fifteen participants shared stories during semi-structured interviews that revealed other significant findings and themes. To analyze the data, I used the constant comparison method and open coding with NVivo software.

Summary of Findings

Fifteen Asian American women participated in the study. All of them identified 2-3 mentors who made the most impact on them, which resulted in a total of 43 mentoring relationships. The pre-interview questionnaire (Appendix A) and the interview protocol for this study (Appendix B) were structured in a way that allowed me to answer the research questions in a straightforward manner.

For RQ1, the data showed that all but two of the 43 most impactful mentorships were developed informally. The other two mentorships were established through formal mentoring programs. The most common type of mentoring experienced by the participants was transitional mentoring, which Kochan (2013) defines as a partnership between the mentor and mentee, guiding and supporting each other, and allowing them to bridge knowledge gaps. The participants experienced other types of mentoring as well, but they indicated that they prefer transformative mentoring or a blend of transitional and transformative mentoring. The data also revealed that mentorships positively impact the ability to obtain advancement opportunities, salary increases, higher-level job responsibilities for professional development, and encouragement to pursue advanced degrees. The negative impacts of mentoring on career

advancement was that participants felt discouraged about aspiring toward senior leadership roles because of how they observed their mentors battle through organizational politics, the demands and stress of their leadership positions, and their mentors' struggling to maintain work and life balance. Another finding was the importance of mentoring the next generation, which their mentors emphasized to the participants.

In response to RQ2, the study found that almost 70% of the participants' mentors are women and nearly 40% of the mentors were White. Only 27.9% of the mentors were perceived by the participants as Asian, and 95.3% of the mentors were older than their mentees. Mentors were typically also the mentee's supervisor or a senior administrator at their institution. More than half of the participants initially met their mentors during their undergraduate experience. The most common trait that was used to describe the mentors was being available and accessible. Participants felt that they can still call or text their mentors at any time for advice or to catch up. The participants shared what they were looking for in a mentor back when they were younger, and what kind of mentors they wished they could have now. The common theme of the kind of mentor they desire is someone who shares their identity, specifically shared racial identity or shared gender identity, such as an Asian American woman mentor. When discussing how mentors have helped them navigate organizational culture, the participants talked about learning the importance of networking and understanding institutional politics. Since the field of student affairs can seem like a small world compared to other professional fields, mentors emphasized student affairs associations like NASPA and ACPA to their mentees, encouraging them to attend and present at conferences and get involved on boards and committees. Participants also talked about the difficulty of balancing work and personal life in the student affairs profession,

referencing work requirements during late nights and weekends and how their mentors managed that.

RQ3 explored how ethnic and gender identity were addressed in mentoring relationships as they relate to workplace interactions and career advancement. All fifteen participants strongly felt that they have experienced a lack of Asian American representation at their institutions and within the field of student affairs. As a result, they have felt pressure to represent all Asian American students at their institutions, which caused them to feel as though they were hypervisible as Asian American women. Ironically, that hypervisibility did not mean they were often included and thought of in their workplaces. Many of the participants experienced feelings of isolation because they were one of the very few, or in some cases, the only Asian American in their department or student affairs division. The participants indicated that they were drawn to and passionate about work surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), but did not want to be limited to student affairs positions that only focused on DEI. They also described how Asian cultural norms and expectations weighed heavily on them as they journeyed through their careers, many of them reporting that their families didn't understand the work they do because it wasn't a lucrative STEM career, or that women were not supposed to become career professionals, but rather focus on raising families. The additional layer of contending with Asian women stereotypes, such as being quiet, submissive, non-leadership material, etc., altogether resulted in negative self-perceptions for some of the participants as they navigated through their careers.

Lastly, there were some significant findings that brought forth themes of mentorships being mutually beneficial to both the mentee and mentor, strong role modeling by mentors that

resulted in mentees admiring and emulating them as they strengthen their professional skills and leadership qualities, and finally, the idea that mentors were like family to mentees.

Implications for Supporting Asian American Women in Student Affairs

This section will discuss the implications of my study for supporting Asian American women in student affairs through mentoring. Through my interpretation of the data and findings, I will point out how my study supports existing literature on the mentoring experiences of women of color and how my study can contribute new knowledge to existing research. I will first posit that institutionalized mentoring programs are needed in student affairs. I will then introduce and go into an in-depth explanation of my revised framework for mentoring Asian American women based on my study's findings. The framework will discuss the different layers of culture that should be addressed in mentoring relationships, the idea of generational mentoring, career experience versus career advancement, and Kochan's (2013) types of mentoring and how they fit into the framework. I will also discuss other findings and their implications, such as the importance of role modeling with intention, playing the institution's political field, work and life balance, and my recommendations for further research.

Institutionalizing Mentoring Programs

Existing literature and my study's findings support the fact that formal mentoring programs often do not lead to impactful relationships for Asian American women. In fact, Watkins (1998) asserts that formal mentoring can be detrimental and intrusive for the mentee because the mentors essentially start off as strangers to mentees, yet they are expected to insist on making a connection for the sake of the formal mentoring program's requirements. This type of experience was somewhat demonstrated through my participant Ashima's NUPF mentorship with Mark. While their relationship was overall positive, Ashima repeatedly mentioned in her

interview how even from the beginning of their relationship, Mark pushed her hard to check all these boxes of career steps that he believed would advance someone in the student affairs profession. This is an example of how a mentor might fixate more on fulfilling mentoring requirements than cultivating an organic connection. The fact that only two out of 48 impactful mentorships highlighted in my study were developed formally tells us that informal or unstructured mentoring, as opposed to formal or formulated mentoring, is more likely to make a positive impact.

When seeking to uncover who are considered the most impactful mentors, my study revealed that supervisors and senior administrators made up the majority of the mentors identified by Asian American women mentees. This finding, which is reinforced by existing literature (Enomoto et al., 2000; Chang et al., 2014), suggests that higher education institutions that want to develop mentoring programs should focus on creating and implementing mentor training programs for supervisors and senior leaders. Such programs would build competencies that emphasize coaching and guiding, rather than managing and disciplining. Mentor supervisors would understand the value of investing in their team members both professionally and personally--learning what is important to their staff members and what their career goals are. Mentor supervisors would be trained to engage in discussions with their mentees about pathways for career advancement and create opportunities for mentees to grow the skill sets needed to reach the next level of their goals. They would learn the importance of alerting mentees when an advancement opportunity presents itself that the mentee has been waiting for, even if it would mean losing a valuable team member.

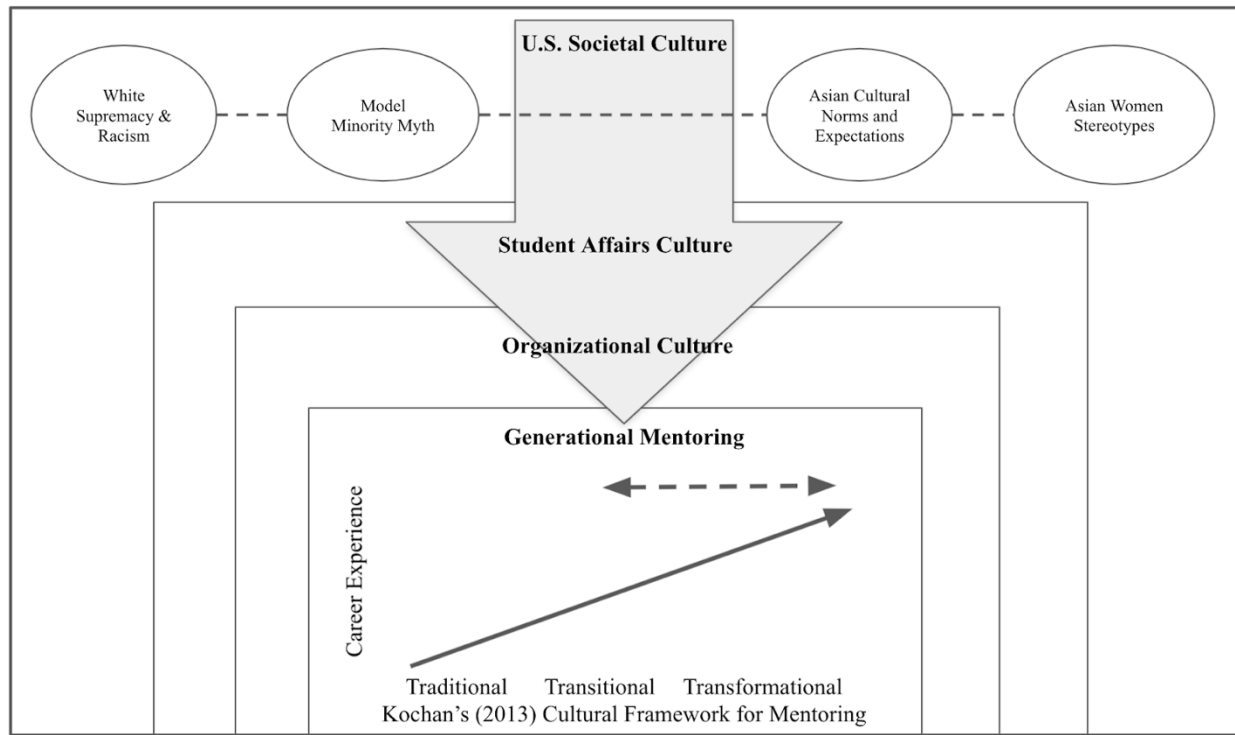
Cultural Framework for Mentoring Asian American Women in Student Affairs

My new framework (Figure 5), a cultural framework for mentoring Asian American women in student affairs, is an adaptation of Kochan's (2013) cultural framework for mentoring that incorporates student affairs culture and U.S. societal culture on top of Kochan's original context of organizational culture. Mentor training programs at the institutional level can use this cultural framework to acknowledge that mentoring Asian American women or other women of color has unique needs and considerations.

An institutionalized mentoring program would maintain structure *only* in its training program, but *formality* would not be seen or felt by the mentees. In other words, mentors would be trained with intentionality and structure, but when they implement mentoring with their mentees, the interactions would feel informal. In Chapter One, I proposed a framework of my dissertation study (Figure 1), incorporating Kochan's (2013) cultural framework for mentoring and expanding her idea of mentoring relationships within the context of organizational culture to also include additional layers of culture. My originally proposed framework aimed to study how Kochan's (2013) three different types of mentoring impact career advancement for Asian American women in the context of not only the institution's organizational culture, but also within the context of student affairs culture and U.S. society culture, in which racism, White supremacy, Asian women stereotypes, and the model minority myth exist. After conducting my study and discovering what types of mentoring relationships the participants experienced with their most impactful mentors and what type of mentoring they prefer now, I updated my original framework based on my findings. The following short sections will go into depth with an explanation of the new framework.

Figure 5

Cultural Framework for Mentoring Asian American Women in Student Affairs



Layers of Culture

U.S. societal culture includes White supremacy and racist norms that are not created for women of color, therefore leading to experiences of racism and exclusion (Hunter, 2002; Johnson-Bailey & Lee, 2005; Smith, 2016). Those experiences, along with the pressure of the model minority myth, Asian cultural norms and expectations, and the battling of Asian women stereotypes, are all topics that should be openly discussed in mentorships. Student affairs culture is a unique professional field, and because of the many facets of the culture, like the blurring of work and personal life, and the importance of getting involved in professional associations, impactful mentors should incorporate these topics into their discussions with mentees. Organizational culture in this framework is in reference to the culture of the institution or college that the mentee is navigating in their professional position. The fact that the participants in my

study provided examples of how their mentoring relationships helped them navigate organizational culture by role modeling effective interactions with others in meetings, and the importance of networking, my findings show that mentors should guide mentees on navigating the explicit and implicit cultural norms of the institution, including the political climate and importance of positive and effective networking across the campus.

Generational Mentoring

Another finding in my study that supports what existing literature says about mentoring is the idea of generational mentoring. According to the literature, mentorships are multidimensional and can be enacted in every direction. Mentoring roles do not have to remain fixed, but can be fluid as needed to mutually benefit the individuals participating in the mentoring relationship (Chang et al., 2014; Crawford & Smith, 2005; Enomoto et al., 2000; Tran, 2014; Holmes et al., 2007). In my study, some of the participants were taught by their mentors the importance of mentoring the next generation, which was indirectly implied by existing literature, but not a topic that was focused on. However, seven of the participants in my study shared stories and the importance of taking on mentees themselves, so I am highlighting generational mentoring in my study as an important component of the mentoring experience. If I were to define this idea of generational mentoring, it would be the passing on of lessons and relationship building from the mentor to mentees, who eventually become mentors to the next generation of mentees, thus creating an infinite network of knowledge, care, and support.

Career Experience vs. Career Advancement

My dissertation study surprisingly revealed that most of the participants were unsure about advancing further up the ladder in student affairs toward senior leadership roles due to what they observed of their mentors. Specifically, hostile political climate within student affairs

or at their institutions, as well as the struggle of balancing work and personal life were what many participants observed their mentors experience. Going into my interviews, I expected the conversations about career advancement to be about climbing the ranks in student affairs. Instead, some participants explicitly stated that they did not know if they plan to pursue senior-level leadership positions, but rather, they would focus on gaining more experience and skills. Laurel, one of the participants who is Filipino and holds an intermediate level position in student affairs and values family over career, explained that career advancement does not have to mean striving for senior level leadership positions.

It's interesting because I don't think my goal has to do with classification or promotion or a role. It's now my direction towards the type of work I get to do. [My mentor] Greg is always encouraging me to do the work that I want to do. You don't have to be a certain title or manager or admin to do it.

Because fourteen out of the fifteen participants shared that they were not sure about pursuing senior leadership, I switched out “career advancement” with “career experience” in my new cultural framework for mentoring Asian American women in student affairs (Figure 5). My original framework for my study (Figure 1) assumed that Asian American women would benefit from mentoring by advancing in their careers.

The Progression of Kochan's (2013) Types of Mentoring

My study has led me to challenge Kochan's (2013) cultural framework for mentoring by asserting that her framework does not fully apply to Asian American women as it was designed. Based on my study's findings, I recommend that the type of mentoring that is most effective for Asian American women in student affairs is in fact a progression through all of Kochan's types of mentoring. When a mentee is new to the student affairs career or new to an institution even as

a seasoned professional, (bottom of the y-axis in Figure 5), she would benefit from traditional mentoring, which involves the passing down of knowledge as if from a teacher to a student so that the mentee can learn the norms of the institutional and student affairs culture. As the mentee gains more experience in the field or at the institution, the mentorship becomes transitional--the relationship becomes more of a partnership in which the mentor and mentee can share ideas, guide, and support each other. When the mentee rises to the level of experience in which the mentor can consider the mentee a colleague, or both think of each other to be on equal footing in the field or at the institution, their mentoring relationship can become transformative.

Transformative mentoring is one that focuses on working together to create change and transform the organizational culture. The roles in a transformational mentorship are fluid and constantly changing (Kochan, 2013). The participants in my student largely preferred to experience transformational mentoring or a blend of transitional and transformational mentoring, which is why there is a second arrow at the top of the mentoring chart in the framework, dashed in appearance because there can be vacillation between the two types of mentoring once the mentee has become a seasoned professional or can easily navigate institutional culture. The time spent in each type of mentoring experience will vary based on the mentee's unique experience.

The cultural framework for mentoring Asian American women in student affairs (Figure 5) can be used by institutions to understand how Asian American women can be mentored effectively. As mentoring programs become institutionalized, my hope is that this model informs the process of developing mentoring programs, and perhaps with additional research, the model can be adapted for other identity groups by identifying U.S. societal norms that affect an identity group's ways of interacting with the various layers of culture and the people within them.

Role Modeling with Intention

The participants in this study expressed strong admiration for their mentors and they were significantly impacted by what their mentors role modeled, both the good and the bad. Mentees were able to strengthen their leadership skills and institutional political savviness by emulating how their mentors navigated supervision and challenging political situations. However, mentors also role modeled high stress and poor balance of work and personal life.

Playing the Political Game of Chess

Mentee participants like Lily, Kristen, and Rem expressed discouragement in pursuing senior leadership because of how often their mentors had to battle it out on the chess board, and in some cases, a wrong move resulted in getting “beat up” and knocked down, either by words, attitudes, or mistreatment. Perhaps one reason these observations impact Asian American women so much is the fact that some Asian cultures value collectivism (Chang, 2015; Power et al., 2010), which puts emphasis on the needs of the group versus an individualistic mindset of looking out for yourself, and yourself only. Michelle, who identifies as Vietnamese American talked about how her cultural upbringing of collectivism has hindered her career.

Collectivist ideals were really instilled in me. I didn't understand what those were until later in my career when I was like, “How come all these selfish jerks are getting promoted and getting all these opportunities, when the right thing to do is to be like, we're in this space together and we take care of one another” And sometimes that didn't pay off. Actually that's *never* paid off for me and my career.

When Asian American women engage and interact with others out of care and with a collectivist mindset, a cut-throat political environment is going to feel out of their league. So, that leads me to wonder if institutional cultures can turn around and abandon the battlefield of belittling one

another, throwing each other under the bus for professional protection or gain, and instead choose to become a culture of care and collectivism, where leaders look out for their colleagues and honor differing opinions.

Work and Life Balance

Many Asian cultures value family and hard work, and unfortunately mentees have observed from their mentors that the two don't mix well in the journey toward career advancement. The participants in the study expressed wanting to maintain the importance of family and cultural connection in their lives, but when they witnessed their mentors, who they respect, admire, and strive to emulate, struggle to maintain a healthy balance of work and personal life, mentees find themselves questioning if they would have to sacrifice what is most important to them if they were to pursue higher level positions. The added layer of Asian cultural norms and expectations of keeping your head down, following the rules, and not causing trouble, doubles down on the pressure to overwork, leading to burnout, and thus perpetuates a negative self-perception that they are not good enough to rise to higher levels, as exemplified by participants Laurel, Irene, Karina, and June. The concept of Asian women stereotypes leading to external perceptions of low leadership ability is supported by existing literature as well (Chin & Kameoka, 2019; Maramba, 2011; Roy, 2019).

Therefore, my study compels me to warn those in mentoring roles to be hyper aware of how they are modeling work and personal life balance, being mindful that mentees are watching carefully and emulating your professional lifestyle. If mentors demonstrate the value of personal life, so will they. If mentors demonstrate being too busy to have a life, so will they. But how do institutions foster and maintain a culture in which mentors feel safe to role model good balance without fear of professional repercussions? I believe it goes back to institutional mentor training,

in which supervisors learn how to clarify expectations of working hours and create a culture of boundary setting at work. It is especially important for mentor supervisors not to contribute to or perpetuate a culture of burnout and overworking habits, which can be detrimental to new and/or young professionals who are impressionable and working hard to prove themselves in the field, often over-volunteering to work after hours. And, unfortunately for them when they later in their career decide they want better work-life balance, they will find themselves fighting against a culture of burnout they helped create because they didn't know better.

Recommendations for Further Research

While this study yielded so many findings and helpful information that could positively change the experiences of Asian American women in student affairs, there is an overwhelming amount of potential for research that can increase the visibility of Asian American women in student affairs. My recommendations for further research and the implementation of new practices at the institutional levels are below.

Higher education institutions should conduct surveys on their campuses on how Asian American women and other minoritized populations in student affairs experience mentoring. This is needed in order to create or adapt a mentoring framework (like the one I presented in this study) that is unique and specific to their institutional culture and each respective identity culture. The surveys should seek to understand who their current mentors are, who they themselves are mentoring (for the potential of promoting generational mentoring), what they are looking for in mentors, what their career aspirations are (not assuming that they would be upward career trajectories), and how they want to balance work and life in a cultural context. Mentoring is such an impactful practice for promoting career satisfaction and advancement that institutions should take care to do it right.

I also recommend future research on how Asian American women view student affairs senior leadership roles and how their perceptions affect their motivation to advance to higher level positions. The fact that all my participants shared their hesitation to consider senior leadership positions shocked me and discouraged me at the same time, considering my whole dissertation study was for the purpose of seeing more Asian American women in leadership in the future. The idea that Asian American women may not be coming up the ranks soon should be a concern for the student affairs profession, especially since research shows that students benefit from seeing leaders at the institution who look like them (Maramba, 2011; Pritchard & McChesney, 2018; Chang et al, 2014).

Lastly, another future study would be to look at women of all races and ethnicities in senior level positions in higher education and how they view institutional politics and the need for work life balance. Because we know that many impactful mentors for Asian American women are White women and other women of color, it would be important to do this study on women of various cultural backgrounds, as they will likely continue to be mentors for Asian American women who will observe their navigation of workplace politics and work life balance.

Conclusion

We started with the problem of Asian American women professionals being severely underrepresented in the field of higher education and student affairs leadership. This study journeyed through the mentoring experiences of Asian American women across the country and how those relationships have impacted their career advancement opportunities. Contrary to where I thought we would land (an understanding of how student affairs can use mentoring to advance Asian American women into senior leadership), we find ourselves in a reality in which mentoring relationships can hinder Asian American women from pursuing higher levels of

student affairs leadership. Institutional and student affairs cultures of political nature, role modeling of imbalanced work and personal lives, feelings of cultural isolation due to the lack of Asian American representation, are all contributing factors toward the problem.

However, there is light throughout the journey of discovery regarding Asian American women and how mentoring can shape their student affairs careers for the better. The positive takeaways from this study are that Asian American women in student affairs benefit from different types of mentoring as they navigate organizational and student affairs culture. Mentors teach them the importance and benefit of networking, they provide and encourage professional development opportunities, such as involvement in national student affairs associations and pursuing advanced degrees. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, they provide mentees with a sense of belonging, as they are often thought of as family--a parental figure, a sibling, or a friend, which can create feelings of belonging, trust, and support for mentees.

Addressing the issue of hesitance for advancing toward leadership roles, I will end by challenging institutions to consider assessing their workplace culture and determine if change is necessary to create environments in which Asian American women and other minoritized groups can thrive in their professional careers. If student success for underrepresented populations is of importance to higher education institutions, then institutions must serve those students by serving staff of color who are there to guide, support, and inspire students. Asian American women are severely underrepresented, but now we know more about how they can be supported in the student affairs field, so institutional change is needed, as well as mentoring practices from a cultural context.

There may still be a long way to go for us Asian American women in student affairs, who often serve ourselves last and give so much toward the collective community in our work, but I

believe we are on the path to visibility, and more representation at the leadership level, if only we are willing to “raise our voices a little more,” as Yamada’s quote at the beginning of this dissertation says (Yamada, 1983, p. 40) and recognize our potential for greatness in student affairs.

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Appendix A

Preinterview Demographic Questionnaire (Qualtrics)

Agreement To Participate in Mentoring Impact on Career Advancement in Student Affairs for Asian American Women (IRB # 3689)

You are invited to be interviewed for a dissertation study. Volunteering will probably not benefit you directly, but you will be helping us explore how mentoring relationships impact career advancement in student affairs for Asian American women. If you volunteer, you will complete a 10-15 minute pre-interview questionnaire and participate in a 60-90 minute online Zoom interview. Volunteering for this study involves no more risk than what a typical person experiences on a regular day. Your involvement is entirely up to you. You may withdraw at any time for any reason. Please continue reading for more information about the study.

Study Leadership: This research study is led by Erica Aros, a doctoral candidate of education at Claremont Graduate University and supervised by Dr. Dina Maramba, associate professor of education at Claremont Graduate University.

Purpose: The purpose of this qualitative research study is to examine the mentoring relationships of Asian American women in student affairs and how those relationships impact career advancement within the context of culture (Asian American culture, organizational culture of the institution they work in, student affairs culture, and U.S. societal culture).

Eligibility: To be in this study, you must self-identify as an Asian-American woman, currently work as a full-time student affairs professional at a four-year college or university, must have worked in student affairs for a minimum of five consecutive years, and must have engaged in at least one mentoring relationship with a mentor in the field of education

Participation: During the study, you will complete this 10-15 minute pre-interview questionnaire to collect preliminary information about you and your mentors. You will also be scheduled for a 60-90 minute online Zoom interview. In the interview, you will be asked about your background in student affairs, your identity as an Asian American woman, your mentoring relationships, your institution's organizational culture, and the impact of mentoring relationships on your career advancement. You will be asked for permission to be recorded during the Zoom interview. The Zoom cloud recordings will then be transcribed and the original data will be destroyed after the final dissertation is approved.

Risks Of Participation: The risks that you run by taking part in this study are minimal, which are likely to include inconvenience of scheduling time out of your day and minor discomfort from answering questions about your workplace institution and your identity as an Asian American woman. You may ask to skip questions you may not feel comfortable answering.

Benefits Of Participation: We **do not** expect the study to benefit you personally. This study will benefit the researcher by helping me complete my doctoral requirements and/or potentially

enabling me to publish the results in a scientific journal. This study is also intended to advance knowledge in the field of education and student affairs.

Compensation: You will not be directly compensated for participating in this study.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may stop or withdraw from the study at any time or refuse to answer any particular question for any reason without it being held against you. Your decision whether or not to participate will have no effect on your current or future connection with anyone at CGU.

Confidentiality: Your individual privacy will be protected in all papers, books, talks, posts, or stories resulting from this study. We may share the data we collect with other researchers, but we will not reveal your identity with it. In order to protect the confidentiality of your responses, I will secure data files and use pseudonyms in place of your name, your position title, and the institution name. Zoom recordings from your interview will be transcribed and recordings will then be destroyed.

Further Information: If you have any questions or would like additional information about this study, please contact Erica Aros at (619) 929-2555 or erica.aros@cgu.edu. You may also contact Dr. Dina Maramba at dina.maramba@cgu.edu. The CGU Institutional Review Board has approved this project. If you have any ethical concerns about this project or about your rights as a human subject in research, you may contact the CGU IRB at (909) 607-9406 or at irb@cgu.edu. A copy of this form will be given to you if you wish to keep it.

Consent: Your electronic signature, by typing your name below, means that you understand the information on this form, that someone has answered any and all questions you may have about this study, and you voluntarily agree to participate in it.

Please type your name in the text field below to provide your consent for participating.

1. Type Name

Demographics of Prospective Participant

2. First name
3. Last name
4. Email Address
5. Age
 - a. Under 30 years old
 - b. 30-39 years old
 - c. 40-49 years old
 - d. 50+ years old
6. Please select the Asian American ethnicities you identify as. (You may select one or more.)
 - a. Asian Indian
 - b. Bangladeshi
 - c. Bhutanese, Burmese
 - d. Cambodian

- e. Chinese
- f. Filipino
- g. Hmong
- h. Indonesian
- i. Japanese
- j. Korean, Laotian
- k. Malaysian
- l. Mongolian
- m. Nepalese
- n. Okinawan
- o. Pakistani
- p. Sri Lankan
- q. Taiwanese
- r. Thai
- s. Vietnamese
- t. Other Asian ethnicity (Please specify.)

Overall Profile of Participant's Institution and Student Affairs Division

7. What is the name of the higher education institution where you currently work?
8. Is your current institution public or private?
 - a. Public
 - b. Private
9. How large is your current institution?
 - a. Small: fewer than 5,000 students
 - b. Medium: 5,000 to 15,000 students
 - c. Large: over 15,000 students
10. How racially diverse do you consider the student population to be at your current institution?
 - a. Not at all diverse
 - b. Slightly diverse
 - c. Moderately diverse
 - d. Very diverse
 - e. Extremely diverse
11. How racially diverse do you consider the student affairs employee population to be at your current institution?
 - a. Not at all diverse
 - b. Slightly diverse
 - c. Moderately diverse
 - d. Very diverse
 - e. Extremely diverse
12. Do you consider Asian American student affairs employees to be proportionately representative of the Asian American student population at your current institution?
 - a. Not at all representative
 - b. Slightly representative
 - c. Moderately representative

- d. Very representative
 - e. Extremely representative
13. In the last 24 months, how often were you the ONLY Asian American woman in a student affairs-related meeting or work function?
- a. Never the only Asian American woman
 - b. Rarely the only Asian American woman
 - c. Sometimes the only Asian American woman
 - d. Often the only Asian American woman
 - e. Always the only Asian American woman
14. In the last 24 months, how often do you hear senior administrators at your current institution talk about diversity, equity, and inclusion?
- a. Never
 - b. Rarely
 - c. Sometimes
 - d. Often
 - e. Always
15. In the last 24 months, how often did your supervisor and/or senior leaders discuss career advancement opportunities either with you individually or as a staff team?
- a. Never
 - b. Rarely
 - c. Sometimes
 - d. Often
 - e. Always
16. How many years have you worked at the institution named above?
17. How many years have you worked in the field of student affairs? (You may include years worked in student affairs as a graduate student.)
18. What is your working title at your current institution? Your exact title will not be used in the dissertation paper and will be anonymized with a generic title.
19. Which of the following best describes your position in your student affairs division?
- a. Entry-level
 - b. Intermediate
 - c. Mid-level professional (i.e., supervisor/manager and has a master's degree or higher)
 - d. Senior student affairs officer/administrator (i.e., oversees multiple departments)
20. What department do you currently work in? Your department will not be used in the dissertation paper.
21. Which of the following best describes the work your department does?
- a. Academic services
 - b. Admissions, enrollment, financial aid, orientation
 - c. Alumni, Advancement/development
 - d. Athletics and recreation
 - e. Campus/student life
 - f. Counseling, health, and wellness
 - g. Career and employment services
 - h. Disability services
 - i. Diversity, equity, and inclusion
 - j. Multicultural, international services

- k. On-campus dining
- l. Residential services
- m. Student Conduct
- n. Other

22. Do you currently supervise full-time employees?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. No, but I provide nonsupervisory work direction to full-time employees.

Establishing Participant’s Impactful Mentors

23. For the purpose of this study, a mentor is “someone whose advice you seek and value, or someone who offers you advice and suggestions which you believe are beneficial to your academic, career, or personal life” (Mertz, 2004). A successful mentoring relationship is defined as “two or more individuals willingly forming a mutually respectful, trusting relationship focused on goals that meet the needs and foster the potential of the mentee, while considering the needs of the mentor and the context within which they both must function” (Kochan, 2013, p. 414).

- a. How many mentors in higher education have you had throughout your career?
- b. Think about your mentors who have had the most impact (positive or negative) on your career experience. For each mentor you have identified, please answer the questions in each column. Note: You are not required to identify three impactful mentors if you have less than three. Please only list your most impactful mentors, even if that is only one mentor.

	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Do you perceive this mentor to be older than you?	Was this a positive or negative mentoring experience?
Mentor #1				
Mentor #2				
Mentor #3				

Demographics Indirectly Related to the Study

24. What is your marital status?

- a. Single, never married
- b. Married
- c. Widowed
- d. Divorced
- e. Separated
- f. Domestic partnership
- g. I prefer not to answer.

25. Do you have children?

- a. No
- b. Yes
- c. I prefer not to answer.

26. What is your highest level of education completed?

- a. High school/GED
- b. Some college
- c. Associate's degree
- d. Bachelor's degree
- e. Master's degree
- f. Doctoral degree
- g. Other (Please specify.)

27. Is there anything more you would like to share with me as it relates to your mentoring relationship experiences in student affairs?

Submission Message:

Thank you for completing the pre-interview questionnaire! I look forward to meeting with you in our scheduled Zoom interview. I appreciate your time and willingness to contribute to this research study. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Erica Aros
erica.aros@cgu.edu

Appendix B

Dissertation Study Interview Protocol

Background in Student Affairs

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself and what led you to a student affairs career?
2. I see that your current working title is (refer to demographic questionnaire).
 - a. What other positions have you held in student affairs, and have any of them been outside of your current institution?
3. If you have previously worked at a different institution, what prompted you to leave?

Identity as an Asian American Woman

1. Let's talk a little bit about your identity as an Asian American woman. You marked (refer to questionnaire) as your ethnicity/ethnicities.
 - a. How do you see yourself and your ethnicity as part of the broader Asian American community?
2. How aware are you of your Asian American identity and ethnicity as you interact with others at work?
 - a. Can you tell me a specific story of when you felt really aware of your race/ethnicity?

Mentoring Relationships

1. We're about to take a look at your list of impactful mentors, but first let's revisit the definition of a mentor and mentoring relationships to provide us with context as we move through the next set of questions.
 - a. A mentor is "someone whose advice you seek and value, or someone who offers you advice and suggestions which you believe are beneficial to your academic, career, or personal life" (Mertz, 2004).
 - b. A successful mentoring relationship is defined as "two or more individuals willingly forming a mutually respectful, trusting relationship focused on goals that meet the needs and foster the potential of the mentee, while considering the needs of the mentor and the context within which they both must function" (Kochan, 2013, p. 414).
2. Thinking about Mentor #1 on your list, tell me the story of how you met and how Mentor #1 became your mentor?
 - a. Follow-up questions if not addressed in the story:
 - i. Did this mentoring relationship develop as a result of a formal mentoring program? If it was an informal mentoring relationship, at what point did you start to think of Mentor #1 as a mentor? Was there a particular moment that stuck out to you?
3. Repeat Q2 for all mentors listed.

Organizational Culture

1. Kochan (2013) describes organizational culture as "framed by the history, goals, norms, rules, policies, and practices within which they operate, as well as by the leaders who direct them, the individuals within them, and the interactions between and among them" (p. 413).
2. Did any of your mentors know a lot about your institution's organizational culture (i.e., how to communicate effectively, both verbally and written, with other staff, faculty, students to

accomplish certain goals; the institution's norms of attire, attitude, and negotiation; how to discuss issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion; how to collaborate with others in the institution to resolve a complex issue)? What makes you believe they do?

3. Did any of your mentors discuss with you ways to get involved in student affairs associations and the importance of networking across institutions? How so?
4. Did any of your mentors and you ever have discussions about countywide or citywide, nationwide, or global current events and issues and how they impact you personally? What were those discussions like?
4. Did any of your mentors have familiarity or direct experience with what it means to be an Asian American and (ethnicity)? What made you realize that they did or didn't?
5. Did any of your mentors show understanding of the challenges of being a woman in student affairs? What made you realize that they did or didn't?
6. Did you ever have discussions with any of these mentors about the model minority myth, Asian American stereotypes, and how they impact you in your career and interactions in the workplace? What were those discussions like? Did they make you feel more positively about your identity as an Asian American woman in student affairs, or more negatively?

Kochan's Types of Mentoring

1. Thinking about the stories you just shared, let's consider what type of mentor relationships you had with each one of your mentors. (Explain the three different types of mentoring relationships: traditional, transitional, transformational.)
2. Which of the three mentoring relationship types did you have with Mentor #1? Mentor #2? Mentor #3? Mentor #4? Mentor #5?
3. For each decision in #2, briefly explain what made you choose those mentoring types.
4. Do you think these types of mentoring styles with your mentors work for you in being successful in your student affairs career?

Impact of Mentoring on Career Advancement

1. Did any of your mentors discuss with you pathways for advancement in student affairs? What were those discussions like?
2. Did any of your mentors encourage or discourage you to apply for a position that would be a promotional opportunity?
3. Were any of your mentors directly responsible for you being promoted or not promoted into a higher level position?
4. Were any of your mentors directly responsible for your ability or inability to receive salary increases within your position?
5. Were any of your mentors directly responsible for you being assigned or not assigned higher level job responsibilities within your own position?
6. Did any of your mentors encourage and support you or discourage you from pursuing an advanced degree or certification program?
7. What are your goals for the future in your student affairs career?
 - a. Did any of your mentors influence these goals?

Is there anything else that I have left out that you think would be important for me to know about before we finish our interview?

Appendix C

Participant Interest Form

1. Email address (Required in order for prospective participants to receive a Google form receipt of submission)
2. First name
3. Last name
4. Do you identify as an Asian American woman, womxn, or trans woman?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Not Sure
5. Do you currently work as a full-time professional (staff or manager/administrator) in a student affairs division or student services department at a 4-year higher education institution?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Not Sure
6. How many years have you worked in the field of student affairs? (You may include years worked in student affairs as a graduate student.)
7. Of the years you reported in the previous question, were at least 5 of those years consecutive?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Not Sure
8. Have you engaged in at least one mentoring relationship with a mentor in the field of education? Description text: For the purpose of this study, a mentor is “someone whose advice you seek and value, or someone who offers you advice and suggestions which you believe are beneficial to your academic, career, or personal life” (Mertz, 2004). A successful mentoring relationship is defined as “two or more individuals willingly forming a mutually respectful, trusting relationship focused on goals that meet the needs and foster the potential of the mentee, while considering the needs of the mentor and the context within which they both must function” (Kochan, 2013, p. 414).
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Not Sure

Contact Information

When you submit this form, you will be prompted to select an interview time via a Doodle poll. You will also receive a receipt of your completed form, which will contain the Doodle poll link in case you need to access the Doodle poll again.

9. Phone number
10. Is it okay to text you to confirm, reschedule, or cancel our interview?
 - a. Yes

- b. No
 - c. Other
11. (Optional) Please describe any accommodations or accessibility needs that would allow you to fully participate in this study.
12. If you have any questions about the study, please ask them in the box below and I will answer them via email.

Submission Message for Those Who Do Not Qualify

Thank you for taking the time to complete this interest form!

Based on your answer to the previous question, you do not meet the eligibility requirements for this study. If you believe you may have answered the question in error, please click on your browser's "back" button to return to the question. If you answered the previous question correctly and are not eligible for this study, please close your browser and do not submit the form.

I sincerely thank you for your time.

Erica Aros
erica.aros@cgu.edu

Submission Message for Qualified Participants

Thank you for taking the time to complete this interest form!

Based on your answers, you are eligible for this study and I look forward to working with you! Please proceed to submit this form. The confirmation page will contain a Calendly link where you can schedule your interview day and time.

You will receive an email confirmation upon booking your interview slot, and I will follow up with an email containing a preinterview demographic survey via Qualtrics. Thank you for your time and willingness to contribute to this research study, and I am excited to meet you!

In case you miss the link after submitting this form, I am sharing it here so that your email receipt of this form submission will contain the link. However, please do not forget to submit this form so I can see your Google form answers.

<https://calendly.com/erica-aros/participant-interview>

Appendix D

Social Media Recruitment Tool

CLAREMONT GRADUATE UNIVERSITY & SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

Calling all Asian American women working in Student Affairs!

Your participation in this research study can impact career advancement for our community (see below for eligibility criteria).

.....

- You must self-identify as an Asian American woman
- Currently work as a full-time student affairs professional at a four-year college or university
- Must have worked in student affairs for a minimum of 5 consecutive years
- Must have engaged in at least one mentoring relationship with a mentor in the field of education

Title of Study: *Mentoring Impact on Career Advancement in Student Affairs for Asian American Women, IRB #3689*
This is a dissertation study conducted by Erica Alcantara Aros (erica.aros@cgu.edu), PhD candidate in the Joint Doctoral Program in Education at Claremont Graduate University and San Diego State University.

Please consider participating in the dissertation study *Mentoring Impact on Career Advancement in Student Affairs for Asian American Women* led by Erica Aros and supervised by Dr. Dina Maramba from the School of Educational Studies at Claremont Graduate University.

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to examine the mentoring relationships of Asian American women in student affairs and how those relationships impact career advancement within the context of culture (Asian American culture, organizational culture of the institution in which they work, student affairs culture, and U.S. societal culture).

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete a preinterview demographic questionnaire and take part in a Zoom interview, which would require 60 to 90 minutes of your time. During the interview you will be asked questions about your background in student affairs,

your identity as an Asian American woman, your mentoring relationships, your institution's organizational culture, and the impact of mentoring relationships on your career advancement. Any personal identifiers, such as your name, position, and institution will be coded in the study.

To be eligible to participate, you must:

- 1) Self-identify as an Asian American woman/womxn/trans woman
- 2) Currently work as a full-time student affairs professional at a 4-year college or university
- 3) Have worked in student affairs for a minimum of 5 consecutive years
- 4) Have engaged in at least one mentoring relationship with a mentor in the field of education

The time you commit to this study will be greatly appreciated! Since your involvement is entirely voluntary, you may choose to withdraw at any time for any reason. If you would like to participate in this study, please complete this [Participant Interest Form](#).

Once your interview is scheduled, I will email you the preinterview demographic questionnaire. If you have any questions, please contact me at erica.aros@cgu.edu.

Thank you!

Appendix E

Prospective Participant Recruitment Email

Dear Prospective Participant,

You are invited to participate in an interview for the *Mentoring Impact on Career Advancement in Student Affairs for Asian American Women* study led by Erica Aros and supervised by Dr. Dina Maramba from the School of Educational Studies at Claremont Graduate University.

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to examine the mentoring relationships of Asian American women in student affairs and how those relationships impact career advancement within the context of culture (Asian American culture, organizational culture of the institution in which they work, student affairs culture, and U.S. societal culture).

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete a preinterview questionnaire and take part in a Zoom interview, which would require 60 to 90 minutes of your time. During the interview you will be asked questions about your background in student affairs, your identity as an Asian American woman, your mentoring relationships, your institution's organizational culture, and the impact of mentoring relationships on your career advancement. Any personal identifiers, such as your name, position, and institution will be coded in the study.

To be eligible to participate, you must:

- 1) Self-identify as an Asian American woman
- 2) Currently work as a full-time student affairs professional at a 4-year college or university
- 3) Have worked in student affairs for a minimum of 5 consecutive years
- 4) Have engaged in at least one mentoring relationship with a mentor in the field of education

The time you commit to this study will be greatly appreciated. Since your involvement is entirely voluntary, you may choose to withdraw at any time for any reason. If you would like to participate in this study, please complete this [Participant Interest Form](#).

Once your interview is scheduled, I will email you the preinterview questionnaire. If you have any questions, please contact me at erica.aros@cgu.edu.

Sincerely,

Erica Aros