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Professional Identity Development of Asian American & Pacific Islander AANAPISI Staff

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PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT OF ASIAN AMERICAN & PACIFIC

ISLANDER AANAPISI STAFF

A Dissertation Presented

by

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ABSTRACT

PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT OF ASIAN AMERICAN & PACIFIC

ISLANDER AANAPISI STAFF

May 2022

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In spite of a swiftly growing AAPI undergraduate student population, higher

education staff remain predominantly White with AAPIs significantly underrepresented

within the field. The underrepresentation of AAPI professional staff is a problem not only

because it may represent a lack of a career pipeline for AAPIs entering the workforce, but it

also negatively impacts the large population of AAPI students who struggle to access and

succeed in higher education. Contrary to prevalent stereotypes and misconceptions, many

AAPI undergraduates are first-generation college students, come from low-income

backgrounds, and struggle to obtain bachelor's degrees (Maramba, 2011).

Although AAPIs in predominately White fields face myriad racialized barriers, those

who have developed a strong sense of professional identity may be better able to persist in

spite of obstacles. Professional identity is when an individual perceives themselves as

valuable and competent member of their profession (Auxier et al.; 2003; Ewan, 1988; Slay &

Smith 2011). Doing so allows an individual to perform better professionally and to develop

feelings of well-being and belonging in their workplaces and professions overall (Roberts et

al., 2014).

This study uses the theoretical frameworks of Slay and Smith's (2011) theory of

professional identity development for People of Color (POC) and Museus et al.'s (2012)

theory of ethnic campus subcultures to examine how and why the experience of working for

AANAPISI programs may be impactful for AAPI staff and their professional identities.

Initial findings suggest that during their time working for AANAPISI programs, (a) AAPI

staff experienced a simultaneous redefinition of their racial and professional identities, and

(b) this redefinition took place through the process of cultural integration and validation that

staff experienced working for AANAPISI. Like Slay and Smith (2011) suggest, my findings

suggest that AAPI staff experience identity redefinition as their self-perceptions as higher

education professionals and as AAPIs shift as they engage in AANAPISI work. The fact that

these twin processes of redefinition take place simultaneously is no coincidence. Instead,

participants' redefinition of their sense of self as higher education professionals and as

AAPIs were mutually reinforcing processes.

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INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) make up a quickly growing portion of the United States' undergraduate student body. Between 1990 and 2017, the number of AAPI undergraduates increased by more than 200%. In 1990, the U.S. higher education system enrolled 500,500 AAPI undergraduates. By 2000, this number had increased to 845,500 and to 1,067,500 (6.9% of total undergraduate population) in 2017 (Snyder et al., 2019).

In spite of a swiftly growing AAPI undergraduate student population, higher education staff[1] remain predominantly White with AAPIs significantly underrepresented within the field. In 2017, White individuals made up 66% the nation's higher education staff while AAPI staff made up a mere 4.6% (Snyder et al., 2019). Even in areas of the country with the largest and oldest AAPI enclaves, such as those in California, New York, and Hawaii, AAPI staff are underrepresented relative to the makeup of local college and universities' undergraduate student bodies. For example, in 2018 the California Community College System undergraduate student body was 14.1% AAPI, however, AAPIs made up

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[1] For the purposes of this study, the term "staff" refers to employees of higher educational institutions categorized by the National Center for Education Statistics' as working in "student and academic affairs and other educational services."

only 8.8% of the system's staff (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2018). The numbers of higher education staff of other racial groups demonstrate that, while the nation's higher education staff and students are becoming more diverse, not all communities of color are adequately represented amongst staff (Jackson, 2003; Snyder et al., 2019). For example, the nation's percentage of Black higher education staff (12.8%) approximates Black student enrollment (13.5%), but Latinx staff representation (9.5%) lags far behind that of the Latinx student body (20.2%) as does AAPI staff representation as mentioned above.

      The underrepresentation of AAPI professional staff is a problem not only because it may represent a lack of a career pipeline for AAPIs entering the workforce, but it also negatively impacts the large population of AAPI students who struggle to access and succeed in higher education. Contrary to prevalent stereotypes and misconceptions, many AAPI undergraduates are first-generation college students, come from low-income backgrounds, and struggle to obtain bachelor's degrees (Maramba, 2011). Certain Southeast Asian American and Pacific Islander ethnic groups obtain bachelor's degrees at rates as low as 4% (Micronesian) and 10% (Samoan). Compared to the national average of 28%, these figures reveal a glaring educational inequity (Museus & Vue, 2013). AAPI undergraduates are scattered across a wide range of institutional types but remain in the minority across all sectors of postsecondary education (Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2020). Many enroll at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) and experience dissatisfaction with campus racial climate, racial prejudice, and other racialized barriers that have been associated with lower rates of persistence, sense of belonging, and institutional attachment (Museus & Truong, 2009). Institutions must provide AAPI students with targeted support in order to reverse this trend of educational inequity. Research demonstrates that the presence

of faculty and staff who share students' racial and ethnic backgrounds may be one way to create more positive outcomes for these students (Cole, 2008; Davis, 2007; Guiffrida, 2005; Kendricks et al., 2013; Museus & Mueller, 2018). For example, Museus and Mueller's (2018) study found that having access to Southeast Asian American staff and faculty had numerous benefits for Southeast Asian American students, including increased motivation, greater willingness to take advantage of leadership opportunities, and a deeper understanding of how to navigate the college experience. Given the importance of AAPI staff and faculty to the success of AAPI students, it is imperative to deepen our understanding of strategies that may mitigate the trend of AAPI staff underrepresentation.

The underrepresentation of AAPI staff is also problematic because it may result in a self-perpetuating cycle that excludes AAPIs from positions of key influence in the nation's higher education system. Individuals in staff positions play key roles in determining and executing institutional policy (Gin, 2013). Staff make up over 71% of the nation's college and university employees (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Given their ubiquity on college campuses, staff play key roles establishing the campus climate that affects faculty, staff, and students alike. Moreover, literature on career choice and the importance of same-race role models to aspiring AAPI professionals (Gin, 2013; Hu, 2009; Ibarra, 1999; Markus & Nurius, 1986; Wang & Teranishi, 2012) suggests that when AAPI students do not see AAPI higher education staff on their campuses, they are less likely to pursue similar roles themselves. Therefore, AAPI staff underrepresentation may have ripple effects that will perpetuate a lack of AAPI leadership, voice, and presence in the U.S. higher education system for future generations to come.

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Scholarship on the underrepresentation of AAPI higher education staff is limited. In fact, few studies address the experiences of AAPI staff. A significant body of literature on an adjacent topic explores the career journeys of AAPIs who overcame numerous barriers to obtain college presidencies or other senior leadership positions, roles in which AAPIs are most severely underrepresented (Adrian, 2004; Adrian et al., 2018; Hu, 2009; Irey, 2013; Neilson, 2002; Reeves, 2014; Somer, 2007; Torne, 2013). Other studies address the underrepresentation of AAPIs in other fields such as doctoral studies, counseling, or the private sector and how they negotiate their professional identities in the workplace (Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017; Luke & Goodrich, 2010; Motoike, 2003; Ramanathan, 2006; Roberts et al., 2014; Varma, 2004; Xin, 2004). A common focus of these literature areas is how AAPIs in predominately White fields and workplaces experience racialized stereotyping and discrimination and how these experiences function as barriers in their work lives and career journeys. Findings often outline how individuals may or may not make use of various strategies to combat these obstacles. While these studies contribute important knowledge about how individual AAPI professionals in predominately White fields such as higher education draw support from their mentors, communities, and families to persist in spite of obstacles, much remains to be known about how programmatic and organizational interventions can provide similar support to AAPI staff.

Importance of Professional Identity Development for AAPIs and Other POC in Predominately White Fields

Although AAPIs in predominately White fields face myriad racialized barriers, those who have developed a strong sense of professional identity may be better able to persist in spite of obstacles. Professional identity is when an individual perceives themselves as

valuable and competent member of their profession (Auxier et al., 2003; Ewan, 1988; Slay & Smith, 2011). Professional identity development is neither linear nor static and constantly evolves throughout one's life depending on numerous factors including one's workplace environment and one's own sense of self. It is a continual cycle of learning, practice, and feedback (Dollarhide et al., 2013).

For many People of Color (POC), racial and ethnic identity also factors into professional identity development (Slay & Smith, 2011). POC can face racialized barriers such as racism and microaggressions that can cause them to internalize a sense of inadequacy that detracts from self-perceptions of competence and value. For example, POC college and university librarians in Damasco and Hodges' (2012) study reported being stereotyped by colleagues as "diversity hires" implying that they were not hired on merit and that their expertise was less valuable than that of their White colleagues (p. 298). In many cases, librarians internalized this stigma and felt belittled in their professional roles. However, other studies provide examples of how POC's racial and ethnic identities as assets that allow them to bring unique life experience and cultural understanding that help them to do their jobs effectively. This framing can shape professional identity development by leading POC to view their racial and ethnic identity as a part of the value that they bring to their jobs instead of something to be ashamed of or stigmatized. For example, the Black journalists in Slay and Smith's (2011) study viewed their racial identities as assets that allowed them insight into stories on Black communities that their White colleagues would not have.

POC who develop a sense of professional identity benefit from being able to bring one's whole self to work, including racial and ethnic identities. Doing so allows an individual to perform better professionally and to develop feelings of well-being and belonging in their

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workplaces and professions overall (Roberts et al., 2014). This type of professional identity development is crucial for communities of color that are underrepresented in any given profession such as AAPI higher education student support staff. AAPI staff who do not have the opportunity to develop a professional identity that supports their racial and ethnic identity may be less likely to remain in the field. For the AAPI community, attrition of student support staff represents not just a "loss of talent and training in the field" (Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008), but also a missed opportunity to mitigate the trend of underrepresentation.

Developing Professional Identities at Asian American Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs)

Asian American Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI) student support programs are uniquely situated to foster the professional identity development of their AAPI staff, and therefore, may offer a potential model for programmatic and institutional interventions to address the problem of AAPI staff underrepresentation. Since 2008, AANAPISI student support programs have been established using federal AANAPISI grant funding at institutions across the country that meet the U.S. Department of Education's requisite quotas for AAPI enrollment and low socioeconomic status student enrollment. Meeting these quotas establishes an institution as a federally designated Minority Serving Institution (MSI) and eligible to apply for AANAPISI funding. However, it should be noted that AANAPISI-eligible institutions are distinct from other MSIs such as Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) that were established with the mission to serve students from their respective community of color. AANAPISIs, on the other hand, are former PWIs that became MSIs as a result of demographic shifts over the past few decades and many

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maintain the institutional structures and cultures established to benefit White students from middle and high socioeconomic status backgrounds (Nguyen et al., 2018). For example, Nguyen and Nguyen's (2019) piece on the experiences of AANAPISI program directors (2019) found that just because an institution was designated as an AANAPISI did not necessarily mean that it was committed to serving AAPI students nor understanding of their needs and experiences. AANAPISI designation does not require an institution to incorporate any particular focus on AAPI communities or histories into its mission, curricula, or professional development nor does it require AAPI representation amongst faculty, staff, or senior administration. Therefore, AANAPISIs may remain culturally White despite their AANAPISI status.

Despite these challenges, student support programs funded by AANAPISI grants within these institutions may represent highly relevant interventions to the problem of AAPI staff underrepresentation for two reasons. First, AANAPISI programs tend to hire staff who identify as AAPI. As I was not able to locate summary demographics of AANAPISI staff, I consulted the websites of the 23 institutions receiving funding as of 2020 (see Appendix A) and, through a review of institutional staff directories, estimate that approximately 88% of staff working in AANAPISI programs identify as AAPI. Second, AANAPISI program leadership dedicate funding and attention to the development of their program staff. A portion of AANAPISI grants can be directed specifically to funding professional development opportunities for AANAPISI program staff, such as participation in skill building trainings and conference attendance (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Moreover, studies by M. Nguyen (2019) and Hartlep and Antrop-Gonzalez (2019) find that AANAPISI programs place a deliberate focus, including a commitment of grant funding,

time, and encouragement, on opportunities for staff to hone professional skills and further their careers. Some examples of these opportunities include course development and teaching, conference attendance and presentations, pursuit of advanced degrees, and development of cross-campus junior staff networks.

Research Questions and Overview of Study

In sum, AAPIs in predominately White fields may experience myriad racialized barriers such as microaggressions, tokenism, and discrimination (Nadal et al., 2015; Sue et al., 2009). Therefore, professional identity development is crucial for AAPIs working in predominantly White fields such as higher education because having a sense of professional identity has been shown to support persistence and job satisfaction in spite of barriers (Hirschy, et al., 2015; Roberts et al., 2014; Tull et al., 2009).

This study utilized a phenomenological method of inquiry to explore how AAPI professionals working in AANAPISI student support programs may experience professional identity development. AANAPISI programs offer a promising view into AAPI professional identity development because they tend to hire AAPI staff and are equipped with federal funding specifically dedicated to staff development activities. Phenomenological studies are able to highlight aspects of a particular experience that are complex and not easily quantified or observed, such as identity development (Creswell, 2014; Wilding & Whiteford, 2005). Therefore, a phenomenological design offered particularly deep insight into the highly subjective and internal processes of professional, racial, and ethnic identity development of AAPI AANAPISI staff members.

Data were collected through interviews with AANAPISI staff who: (a) identify as AAPI, (b) work or worked in a professional staff role in an AANAPISI student support

program, and (c) have worked or worked in that setting for a minimum of four years. The reason for seeking participants who have worked in an AANAPISI program for at least four years was to ensure that participants had been in their professional roles for enough time to experience any potential influence on their professional identities. Studies indicate that professional identity development for higher education staff tends to be shaped by factors such as relationship building and progress towards long-term goals – both of which take time to occur (Hirschy et al., 2015; Pittman & Foubert, 2016; Trede et al., 2012). Therefore, individuals who had worked for an AANAPISI program for less than four years may not have had adequate time to experience the professional identity development that they might have, given more time in their roles.

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How does working in an AANAPISI program shape the professional identity development of AAPI staff, if at all?

Existing literature finds that professional identity development of POC differs from that of White individuals because professionals of color experience the impact of their personal identities, such as racial and ethnic identity, on their work lives in ways that White professionals tend not to (Locke, 2017; Motoike, 2003; Ranz et al., 2017; Slay & Smith, 2011). For example, some POC may experience their racial and ethnic identity as assets in their work. Others may have experienced them as detriments or some combination of both. This study sought to explore how this issue with the following question:

2. How do AAPI staff members experience their personal identities, such as race, ethnicity, and cultural background impacting their work in AANAPISI

programs? How does this experience shape staff members' professional identity development?

Origin of the Study

This study was inspired by my experience working with my colleagues, Frances and Pratna, and mentor, Dr. Patricia Neilson, in the University of Massachusetts Boston's (UMass Boston) AANAPISI program, the Asian American Student Success Program (AASSP). Frances, Pratna, and I began working for AASSP around the same time and have worked together for almost a decade now. Although our backgrounds, educational experiences, and personalities are quite different, I see many similarities in our experiences working for AASSP. One common theme we've discussed is that we came to work for AASSP as a result of happenstance without necessarily intending to embark on careers in higher education. In my case, I came to UMass Boston to pursue a master's degree in American Studies. At the time, my long-term goal was to pursue a PhD and then a tenure-track faculty position. I was active in the Asian American student community at my undergraduate institution and sorely missed those spaces and connections when I became a graduate student. I sought out an Asian American student community at UMass Boston and was eventually connected to AASSP. Like Frances and Pratna, I was introduced to AASSP through a series of happy accidents in our early 20s, and I do not think any of us imagined the ways that we would grow and learn and that we would be here leading the program together.

The experience of working with AASSP has changed us all both personally and professionally. Much of this impact has to do with the caring mentorship that we were lucky to receive from the leaders of the program especially the program's founding director, Dr. Pat

Neilson. These mentors invested in us by providing us with opportunities, support, and room to make mistakes. It would have been far easier for Pat to hire experienced, well-groomed higher education professionals to staff AASSP, but she took a leap of faith by hiring three inexperienced rookies and gave us room to grow and learn. All three of us have stuck around. Much of that has to do with the unique office culture that Pat created. She encouraged us to take opportunities that seemed scary and pushed us out of our comfort zones because she was always there to support us.

We invested in the program because the program invested in us, and I see the ways that Frances and Pratna are passing the benefits of the mentorship that we received from Pat and others on to the students we have worked with, including our two newest staff members, Karen and Erica. Both Karen and Erica were involved with AASSP as students and were hired in the past couple of years as full-time professional staff members after receiving their undergraduate degrees. Like Frances, Pratna, and I, neither of them entered college with any intention of starting a career in higher education, but we are very lucky that they have ended up with us. It has been a pleasure to watch them grow to meet each challenge and gain more confidence each time. Seeing Karen and Erica transition into staff roles has convinced me that what Frances, Pratna, and I experienced was not a coincidence. Working with AASSP has impacted all of us in transformative ways. I have heard similar stories from other AANAPISI staff at national AANAPISI convenings. Working for these programs is a powerful experience. AANAPISI programs are diverse in terms of organizational structure, student demographics served, and initiatives offered, but anecdotal conversations as well as my own experiences have convinced me that these programs support staff in unique ways. My hope with this study was that to parse out how and why that might be.

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Significance of the Study

Findings related to how working in an AANAPISI program may or may not shape the professional identity development of AAPI staff are important for research, theory, and practice. The field of research on AANAPISIs is small but growing. Recent contributions have revealed important findings about how AANAPISI programs are supporting the college access and graduation rates of AAPI students across the country (Museus et al., 2018; National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education [CARE], 2013, 2014; Nguyen et al., 2018). While a handful of newer studies focus on the experiences of the practitioners working at AANAPISI programs (Alcantar et al., 2019; Nguyen et al., 2019; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2019; Nguyen, 2019), they are few and far between. More often, studies focus on the experiences of students or program and institutional leadership (Martinsen, 2017; Park & Chang, 2010; Teranishi et al., 2018). Given the direct role that practitioners play in the oversight and provision of AANAPISI services, researchers need to know more about their experiences in order to more fully understand the role that AANAPISI programs can play in creating change for AAPI students. Additionally, the short lifespan of AANAPISI grant funding means that staff are in AANAPISI programs for a limited time before moving on to subsequent jobs. Therefore, understanding how AANAPISI programs may foster AAPI staff members' professional identity development is important in that it can offer insight into the unique strengths and skills that former staff may bring to their next roles.

This study also makes theoretical contributions to scholarship on professional identity development for AAPI professionals. Existing studies have explored the ways that racial and ethnic identities may impact the professional identity development of groups, such as Latinx

social workers, counseling professionals, and language teachers (Leyva, 2011; Locke, 2017; Nelson & Jackson, 2003; Velez-Rendon, 2010); African American academic librarians and journalists (Gonzalez-Smith et al., 2014; Slay & Smith, 2011); and Jewish social workers (Ranz et al., 2017). However, the racialization of AAPIs in this country is unique and theories developed based on studies of other communities of color may not necessarily pertain to the experiences of AAPIs. Pervasive stereotypes of AAPIs as perpetual foreigners, model minorities, and honorary Whites mean that AAPIs are often perceived differently than other POC (Wu, 2002). Therefore, this study builds upon this field by contributing to professional identity development theories based specifically on the experiences of AAPIs.

From a practical standpoint, this study's findings may be useful to federal policymakers and stakeholders at AANAPISI-eligible institutions. Findings indicate that working in an AANAPISI program supports the professional identity development of AAPI practitioners. Therefore, policymakers must take this realization into account and include a greater emphasis in calls for grant proposals and program evaluation on the use of AANAPISI funds for staff development. Stakeholders at AANAPISI-eligible institutions could use potential study findings to make the case that their campuses should put together a grant application. Finally, campus stakeholders could use findings to demonstrate that AANAPISI programs have unique benefits for AAPI staff as well as students and may align with existing institutional goals of diversifying faculty and staff.

Definition of Terms

This section provides definitions of terms commonly used throughout this dissertation in an effort to ensure that the study's intents and findings are as clearly understood by the reader as possible.

Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI)

AAPI is a racial categorization that is made up of two racial sub-categories: Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. According to the U.S. Office of Management and Budget's (1997) most recent revisions to the racial and ethnic classifications used to collect federal data, Asian Americans are defined as individuals who have "origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam," and Pacific Islanders are defined as individuals who have "origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands…includ[ing] the following Pacific Islander groups reported in the 1990 Census: Carolinian, Fijian, Kosraean, Melanesian, Micronesian, Northern Mariana Islander, Palauan, Papua New Guinean, Ponapean (Pohnpelan), Polynesian, Solomon Islander, Tahitian, Tarawa Islander, Tokelauan, Tongan, Trukese (Chuukese), and Yapese" (p. 58786).

Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity refers to an individual's sense of membership within a group of people who are thought to share a common culture, geographic origin, and history. Vietnamese, Tongan, and Korean are examples of ethnic identities. However, ethnic identity is socially and politically constructed notion and varies widely depending on individuals' perceptions and contexts (Dhingra, 2007).

People of Color (POC)

People of Color refers to non-White individuals, including Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and AAPI-identifying people. The term was developed in the 1960s by Black American leaders to draw attention to racial and ethnic disparities experienced by members

of these groups and the role of White supremacy in instituting and perpetuating these inequities (Perez, 2020).

Professional Identity Development

Professional identity is when an individual perceives themselves as valuable and competent member of their profession (Auxier et al., 2003; Ewan, 1988; Slay & Smith, 2011). The development of professional identity is neither linear nor static and is constantly shifting throughout one's life. It is a continual cycle of learning, practice, and feedback (Dollarhide et al., 2013). For many People of Color (POC), racial and ethnic identity also factor into professional identity development (Slay & Smith, 2011). POC may face racialized barriers such as racism and microaggressions that impact their professional identity development by leading them to feel less competent or valuable in their professional roles. Individuals who have developed a strong sense of professional identity benefit from being able to bring one's whole self to work, including racial and ethnic identities. Doing so allows an individual to perform better professionally and also to develop feelings of well-being and belonging related to their job (Roberts et al., 2014).

Racial Identity

Racial identity refers to an individual's sense of membership within a group of people who are distinguished from others on the basis of supposedly common physical traits. AAPI is an example of a racial identity. Like ethnic identity, racial identity is a socially and politically constructed notion and varies widely depending on individuals' perceptions and contexts (Dhingra, 2007).

Staff

Staff refers to employees of higher educational institutions categorized by the National Center for Education Statistics as working in "student and academic affairs and other educational services."

Organization of the Dissertation

The subsequent chapters of the dissertation proceeds as follows. Chapter 2 contextualizes the study of AAPI AANAPISI staff members' professional identity development within existing literature. Chapter 2 closes by presenting the study's conceptual framework as informed by work from Slay and Smith (2011) and Museus et al. (2012). Chapter 3 describes the study's phenomenological design, including procedures for sampling, data collection and analysis, trustworthiness, and limitations. Chapter 4 describes my relationship to the phenomenon of AAPI professional identity development as an AAPI AANAPISI staff member before providing contextual information regarding the eight study participants and an analysis of the interview data using Moustakas' (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method. Chapter 5 continues the analysis to identify overarching themes to inform composite and structural descriptions of the phenomenon before ultimately describing the phenomenon's essence. Chapter 6 provides an interpretation of findings through the lens of my conceptual frameworks and considers the implications of study findings for practice, policy, and research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter explores how the study of AAPI AANAPISI staff members' professional identity development fits within existing knowledge and theory. The chapter reviews literature on the following three topics: (a) AANAPISI grant-funded programs, (b) experiences of higher education staff, and (c) professional identity development. Together these bodies of literature suggest that AANAPISI programs across the country are developing new and innovative ways to support AAPI student success, create more inclusive institutional cultures, and support AAPI staff development. Moreover, AANAPISI program staff roles may be an example of higher education student support work that, through the marrying of ethnic and racial identity support with more traditional academic support functions, could foster professional identity development by encouraging staff to draw upon their life experiences and cultural knowledge as AAPIs as assets in their work with AAPI students. The notion that AANAPISI programs may support AAPI staff professional identity development is crucial given the importance of professional identity development and the wellbeing of higher education staff of color including AAPIs. Although AAPIs may face myriad racialized barriers in their workplaces, professional identity development may be one way for individuals to feel a sense of belonging and desire to remain in their profession. Chapter 2 concludes with Slay and Smith's (2011) theory of professional identity

development for People of Color (POC) and Museus et al.'s (2012) theory of ethnic campus subcultures, which inform the conceptual framework for this study. As literature on professional identity development suggests, AAPIs and other POC may experience professional identity development differently than White individuals. Therefore, a model that is specifically designed for POC is needed to understand the professional identity development of AAPI AANAPISI staff members. Museus et al.'s (2012) theory of cultural integration in campus subcultures helps to parse out how and why the experience of working for AANAPISI programs may be impactful for AAPI staff and their professional identities.

AANAPISI Grant-Funded Programs

In order to understand how AANAPISI programs may shape the professional identity development of AAPI staff, I first develop a deeper understanding of AANAPISI programs, the legislation that funds them, and the outcomes they have for their students and institutions. A deep understanding of AANAPISI programs helps contextualize the experiences of AAPI AANAPISI staff and examine how these experiences may or may not facilitate professional identity development. Therefore, this literature review section describes the national AANAPISI program landscape and some of the outcomes that have been reported as a result of these programs.

Current AANAPISI Program Landscape

The federal AANAPISI grant program is one of the four main Minority Serving Institution (MSI) grant programs, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) (Samayoa & Gasman, 2019). In order to qualify for an AANAPISI grant, an institution's undergraduate degree-seeking student body must be made up of: (a) at least 10% AAPI

students and (b) at least 50% students eligible for need-based federal financial aid programs such as Pell Grants, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG), and work study (U.S Department of Education, 2016).

The first AANAPISI grants were awarded in 2008, and as of 2020, approximately 190 institutions are eligible to receive funding. Thirty-five of the 190 eligible institutions have received grants (APIA Scholars; M. Nguyen, 2019). Public two-year schools make up the largest sect of grant-eligible institutions (50%) while public four-year schools and private not-for-profit schools make up 26% and 21% respectively (M. Nguyen, 2019). The majority of grant-recipient institutions, in accordance with AAPI population concentrations, are located in the Western region of the country. However, the Pacific region of the country, which includes Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, the Marshall Islands, and Northern Mariana, is home to the largest concentration of grant-eligible institutions as a result of the high population of low-income Pacific Islander communities (CARE, 2013).

Although the stated purpose of the federal AANAPISI grant program is broad, institutions tend to use the money to fund three main types of initiatives. All grant proposals must "enable [the institution] to improve and expand their capacity to serve Asian American and Native American Pacific Islanders and low-income individuals" (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). According to Teranishi (2011), most AANAPISI grant-funded programs attempt to do so by using their grant funding to support: (a) academic and student support services such as "academic counseling, learning communities, financial aid counseling, and tutoring programs," (b) leadership and mentorship opportunities that "increase academic and social engagement among AAPI students," and (c) research and resource development "to improve the quality of statistical information on AAPI students" (p. 153).

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Outcomes of AANAPISI Programs

The body of research on AANAPISI programs reveals myriad positive outcomes that AANAPISI programs have had for AAPI students and their institutions. The following sections explore these outcomes and the role that staff may play in facilitating them.

Outcomes for Students. Existing research on students involved with AANAPISI programs focuses on both short- and long-term measures of student success as well as the role that program staff may play in supporting those outcomes. Reports by the National Commission on Asian American & Pacific Islander Research in Education (CARE; 2014) define short-term measures of success as "transition from developmental to college level courses, credit accumulation, and course performance (i.e., grade point average)," and long-term measures of success as "persistence from one academic term to the next, degree attainment, and transfer from two- to four-year institutions" (p. 3). For example, CARE (2014) found that AAPI students who participated in an AANAPISI-funded program at South Seattle Community College were far more likely (83.2%) to pass developmental English reading and writing coursework and transition into college-level English classes than AAPI students who did not participate (37.5%). Similarly, AAPI AANAPISI program participants at DeAnza College were far more likely to successfully earn their associate's degree (18.8%) than non-participants (4.1%) (CARE., 2014).

Qualitative studies find that AANAPISI program spaces and the staff who run them support an increased sense of belonging for AAPI students (CARE, 2013; Martinsen, 2017; Nguyen et al., 2018). In their case study of three AANAPISI programs, CARE (2013) found that AANAPISI program spaces were staffed by culturally competent and caring professionals and became important spaces where students felt "welcomed," "supported,"

and "understood" (p. 12). Moreover, program offices were spaces where students had access to academic and social services administered by staff who "were perceived as trusted points of contact" and functioned as "a 'bridge' to other services and resources and campus" for academic, social, and personal needs (p. 12).

In addition to staff support, the Asian American Studies curricular content that many AANAPISI programs infuse into their programming is also effective in promoting AAPI students' sense of belonging (Catallozzi et al., 2019; Kiang et al., 2019; Nguyen et al., 2018). Nguyen et al. (2018) found that the incorporation of Asian American Studies curricular content into AANAPISI program learning communities exposed AAPI students to curricula that center and value the experiences and histories of their communities. This is a significant experience for many students who, as first-generation college students from low-income families of color, may struggle to see themselves as worthy of belonging in college; not only does this validate their racial and ethnic backgrounds, it positions them as knowledge producers in the academy (Nguyen et al., 2018).

Outcomes for Institutional Culture. In addition to the benefits that AANAPISI programs have for AAPI students, research also finds that AANAPISI programs positively impact the larger institutional culture of their campus by creating greater opportunities for AAPI staff to educate their colleagues on the existence and experiences of the large population of low-income AAPIs at their institution (Alcantar et al., 2019; CARE, 2013).

Existing research demonstrates that the first step in creating an institutional culture that is conducive to the success of students of color is raising awareness of this demographic's needs (Garcia, 2016, 2017). Although AAPIs staff, faculty, and students may be aware of the struggles for educational attainment that their communities face, non-AAPIs

may believe in the "model minority myth" that AAPIs tend to be academically successful. Alcantar et al.'s (2019) critical ethnographic case study of two community colleges found that the establishment of AANAPISI programs on these campuses provided AAPI AANAPISI staff members' work with an air of legitimacy and importance that was highly effective in convincing non-AAPIs about the importance of advocating for the needs of AAPI students. For example, in an effort to raise faculty and staff awareness of issues facing the local Pacific Islander community, an AAPI AANAPISI staff member named Letau worked with faculty members to help them integrate issues and examples relevant to AAPI communities into their syllabi. Although non-AAPIs on campus were initially resistant to the notion of AAPI-focused student success programming, Letau used these faculty development initiatives to correct faculty misperception of AAPI students as "model minorities" who do not need educational assistance.

Alcantar et al.'s (2019) study uses Moll et al.'s (1992) "funds of knowledge" framework to describe how AAPI practitioners' personal experiences and cultural knowledge work in combination with skills gained through professional and academic training to effectively advocate for AAPI student success. Unlike their non-AAPI colleagues, AAPIs are intimately aware of the educational challenges that many AAPI students and communities face. They may have experienced similar challenges themselves firsthand or know those in their families or social circles who have had such experiences. The researchers argue that it is this personal connection to AAPI student success work that, in conjunction with relevant professional and academic training, allows AAPI practitioners to effectively educate colleagues about AAPI students on their campuses. This raising of awareness is an integral step in creating an institutional culture that is more conducive to AAPI student success.

Summary and Gaps

As the youngest MSI grant program, the body of research on AANAPISIs is far smaller than on other MSI grant-funded programs and institutions. However, this nascent body of work reveals that AANAPISI student support programs effectively create positive change for their students and institutions. Nevertheless, much remains to be known about AANAPISI programs, particularly about the individuals who staff the programs. For example, little is known about the motivations and experiences of individuals staffing AANAPISI programs. While scholarship suggests that AANAPISI program staff are a crucial part of what makes the outcomes of these programs possible, little is known about the professional identity development of these individuals. What impact does working in an AANAPISI program have for AAPI staff and their professional identity development? How do AAPI staff make sense of their work in AANAPISI programs? Do they see their identities as AAPIs influencing their professional work as AANAPISI staff? And if so, does this influence factor into their professional identities as AAPI higher education staff?

Similarly, existing research on the outcomes of AANAPISI programs has revealed the positive impact that programs have for AAPI students and larger institutional culture. However, a gap in the literature exists on the topic of outcomes experienced by the AAPI staff employed by AANAPISI programs. Do aspects of AANAPISI programs, such as a culture of care and support and infusion of Asian American Studies pedagogies impact AAPI AANAPISI program staff and their sense of professional identity in the same way that they have been shown to impact students and institutional culture?

The empirical studies examined in this literature area were almost exclusively case studies. While some researchers chose to examine a single case study site (Catallozzi et al.,

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2019; Nguyen et al., 2018) and others worked with multiple sites (Alcantar et al., 2019; CARE, 2013, 2014; Mac et al., 2019; Museus et al., 2018), most collected data through interviews and document analysis. Furthermore, interview participants tended to be faculty and senior administrators as opposed to direct student support staff. While the viewpoints of faculty and senior administrators are crucial to developing an understanding of AANAPISI program characteristics and outcomes, program staff may offer a unique perspective given that they directly administer AANAPISI-funded services and programming. Therefore, studies that focus specifically on the experiences of AANAPISI program staff are needed to shed light on all aspects of AANAPISI initiatives.

Studies in this literature area used a variety of theoretical frameworks, but theories related to organizational culture and racial formation were most prevalent. Research by Alcantar et al. (2019) and Nguyen et al. (2018) drew heavily from theorists such as Tierney (1998, 2008) and Hurtado et al. (2012) to examine how forces, both internal and external to the organization, shape that organization's norms and values. Park and Teranishi (2008) and Gutierrez and Le (2018) utilized Omi and Winant's (1994) theory of racial formation to describe the significance of AANAPISI programs as "racial projects" (p. 56) that reshape prevailing understandings of existing racial categories by refuting the model minority myth and emphasizing the experiences shared by AAPI communities and other communities of color. While theories related to organizational culture and racial formation are useful for making sense of AANAPISI programs in relation to institutional change and national policymaking, they do not adequately speak to the ground-level dynamics that take place in the lives and experiences of individuals, including AAPI AANAPISI staff, that is, the people who carry out these programs. Moll et al.'s (1992) "funds knowledge" theory that Alcantar et

al. (2019) use in their study allows for a deliberate focus on individual staff experiences. However, this theory is more concerned with how and why the unique knowledge that staff of color bring to their roles makes them more effective workers and less with the ways that staff of color make sense of their professional and personal identities. Therefore, additional theoretical lens must be applied to the study of AANAPISI programs in order to highlight the ways that AAPI AANAPISI staff may experience professional identity development.

Experiences of Higher Education Staff

In order to understand how working for an AANAPISI-funded student support program may foster the professional identity development of AAPI higher education staff, I first locate the experiences of AAPI staff within the larger context of higher education professional staff experiences. Professional higher education staff play an essential role on our nation's college and university campuses. The individuals in these roles make meaningful contributions to the multiple goals and missions of their institutions. Despite the impact and ubiquity of these roles, literature on the experiences of higher education staff is limited (Gander et al., 2019; Mullen et al., 2018; Rosser & Javinar, 2003). The experiences of faculty and students tend to be more common subjects of study leaving a gap in knowledge regarding the experiences of staff (Garcia, 2015; Hirt et al., 2011; Mayhew et al., 2006). Therefore, the following literature review section opens with an overview of studies on the experiences of higher education staff and how these experiences may be affected by various social identities, such as race, gender, culture, and sexual orientation. The next section explores the experiences of AAPIs working in higher education and other professional fields. There is scant literature on the experiences of AAPIs working in higher education specifically, so I broadened my scope to also examine studies related to AAPIs in

other fields. The literature review section will close with a discussion of scholarship on the experiences of AAPI staff at AANAPISIs.

Social Identities and Staff Experiences

Higher education staff are the subject of few studies relative to faculty and students. However, the studies that do exist offer insight into the ways that social identities such as race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc. may affect staff experiences. By considering the body of literature as a whole, one can get a sense of how staff experiences may be similar or different across various social identity categories.

Differences in Experiences. One area where staff experiences tend to differ based on social identities is in perceptions of campus climate. Mayhew et al.'s (2006) survey-based study of 437 professional staff members at a midwestern Predominately White Institution (PWI) indicates that while some factors cut across demographics, the ways that staff perceive the diversity and inclusiveness of their campus climates tends to vary based on race and gender. In response to a series of survey questions focused on their perceptions of institutional and departmental climate for diversity and inclusiveness, participants who identified as women and/or People of Color (POC) tended to rate both the institution and their home department as less inclusive and less supportive of diversity than men and White participants did. The researchers also point out that these findings are consistent with those from similar studies of faculty and students.

Other areas where staff experiences differ by race and gender are job satisfaction and morale. Job satisfaction refers to how an employee feels about their individual job while morale can be understood as how an employee feels about the larger organization that they work for (Johnsrud & Edwards, 2001). Rosser's (2004) nationwide survey-based study of

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4,000 randomly selected midlevel higher education staff members found that POC reported consistently lower overall levels of morale than White participants. However, morale did not differ significantly between women and men. Smerek and Peterson's (2007) study of approximately 2,500 staff members at a large, public research university revealed similar findings in regards to race but not gender. POC participants in this study were significantly less satisfied with their jobs than White participants based on survey responses related to various aspects of job satisfaction. For example, POC were significantly less likely to perceive opportunities for advancement, effective senior management, and positive relationships with colleagues. Women reported higher levels of job satisfaction than men and reported more positive experiences than men on almost all aspects of job satisfaction. In particular, women perceived substantially greater opportunities for professional growth and satisfaction with benefits. The one exception was that women participants were significantly less satisfied with their salaries than men participants.

Similarities in Experiences. In contrast to the studies above that point out how staff experiences differ based on social identity, other studies reveal certain experiences to be common to staff across social identities. The importance of relationship with colleagues is one factor that seems to hold true across different demographics of staff. For example, Rosser and Javinar's (2003) survey-based study of approximately 1,200 student affairs staff, the majority of whom identified as White, found relationships with colleagues to be one of the most important work life factors for participants. In fact, staff reported that the opportunity to build relationships with other staff members, in their department as well as in other organizational areas, was more important to their work life than other traditional professional benefits such as access to parking and retirement plans. The high value placed

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on forging relationships with colleagues reported by this study's predominately White participant pool is echoed by Henry's (2010) study of African American women student affairs staff. Henry (2010) found that factors that positively influenced participants' professional success and work lives were all related to interpersonal relationships and interactions with colleagues, mentors, and supervisors. Participants reported that the support and care that they experienced from other staff made them happy in their jobs and had also helped them to succeed professionally.

Another aspect of staff experiences that cuts across social identities is the importance of an immediate workplace culture that is supportive of one's social identities such as race, gender, and sexuality. A supportive and accepting culture in one's individual department had a significantly larger impact on staff members' reporting of a positive work life than the overall institution's culture. Johnson's (2009) nation-wide survey-based study of 624 LGBTQ professional staff members found this to be the case. An immediate workplace environment that was accepting of their sexuality was found to be one of the most significant factors in the job satisfaction of LGBTQ staff. Johnson (2009) also found that how LGBTQ staff rated the cultures of their workplace environments varied between functional areas. Staff working in departments focused more on holistic student development, including certain student affairs departments such as residence life, academic advising, and academic support services, tended to describe their workplace cultures as more supportive of LGBTQ identities and also tended to report a higher sense of overall job satisfaction. Mayhew et al.'s (2006) findings also emphasize the importance of an accepting and supportive workplace culture. Individuals who perceived their immediate workplaces to be non-racist, non-sexist, and non-homophobic were overwhelmingly more likely to have the same perception of their

larger institutional culture. Henry's (2010) findings take this notion a step further and imply

that a positive culture in one's immediate workplace environment may serve as a buffer for

racism, homophobia, or other identity-based stigma that may be present in the larger

institutional culture. For example, African American women staff in Henry's (2010) study

were frustrated by being constantly challenged by members of the campus community due to

their racial and gender identities. However, the women also reported overwhelmingly

supportive and positive climates in their individual departments. Participants felt that

colleagues in their immediate workplace environments respected them and that their

supervisors invested in their development. In spite of the challenges posed by the larger

institutional environment, the women reported being happy and content with their jobs.

Studies on the experiences of higher education staff demonstrate a number of trends

and gaps. For one, the majority of studies on the topic tend to be based on large quantitative

survey studies. While the findings of these studies contribute important knowledge on the

topic, the depth to which survey-based research is able to explore participants' experiences is

limited. Instead, qualitative interview studies are needed to capture the nuances and

complexities of staff experiences. Additionally, few studies deliberately examine the

experiences of AAPI staff and the impact that racialized and gendered dynamics have on

their experiences. Studies on the experiences of staff of color tend to draw from Black and/or

Latinx communities with little attention paid to AAPIs. Like higher education staff of other

racial and ethnic groups, AAPI staff play an integral role in our campus communities and

therefore their experiences warrant further investigation.

Experiences of AAPI Higher Education Staff and Other Professionals

The previous section provided an overview of literature focusing on higher education staff experiences across social identities such as racial identity, gender, and sexual orientation. This next section delves more specifically into the experiences of AAPIs working in higher education staff roles and other professions. Literature specifically on AAPI higher education staff is scant, so this literature review section is also informed by studies on the work experiences of AAPIs in other professional fields. This body of literature reveals that many AAPI higher education staff and other AAPI professionals face a number of race-related challenges in the workplace and that individuals employ diverse strategies in response to these barriers.

Challenges Faced. One common theme in literature on the work experiences of AAPIs in higher education and beyond is that many AAPI staff and professionals face discrimination and bias in their workplaces due to colleagues' stereotypical beliefs about AAPIs. Participants in Neilson's (2002) interview-based study of the career journeys of 10 AAPI senior higher education administrators reported that at certain times in their careers, they faced a lack of professional opportunities due to stereotypical assumptions that as AAPIs they were unassertive, antisocial, and lacking in qualities typically associated with leadership such as charisma and gregariousness. Suga's (2012) survey-based study of 37 early career AAPI higher education staff echoes this challenge. AAPI staff reported that colleagues and supervisors' stereotypical perceptions of AAPIs as submissive and lacking in leadership and communication skills hindered their career advancement.

These experiences are not exclusive to AAPIs in higher education staff roles. Varma's (2004) work on barriers to Asian American career advancement and Xin's (2004)

survey study comparing supervisors' perceptions of White and Asian American employees provide similar findings. Varma (2004) argues that a number of deeply engrained structural barriers exist for AAPI professionals across fields and disciplines. Most notably, managers tend to prefer to interact both formally and informally with those who share similar backgrounds as themselves. In White dominated professional fields, this can result in AAPIs being excluded from informal networks of communication and other "old boys clubs" that can be key to receiving promotions and other professional advantages (p. 302). Xin's (2004) study reinforces this notion with the finding that White managers tend to perceive both their formal and informal relationships with their White employees as higher quality than those with their Asian American employees regardless of either group's job performance or employees' individual efforts to build the relationship.

Strategies to Address Challenges. However, literature also suggests that AAPI higher education staff and other AAPI professionals are cognizant of these challenges and deliberately employ strategies to overcome them. For example, Tingson-Gatuz's (2012) study on AAPI student affairs professionals found that although many AAPI higher education staff suffer from a lack of role models and feel isolated on their campuses, involvement in professional organizations for AAPIs and/or staff of color is one way that staff address these barriers. Involvement in these professional organizations provides staff with a sense of connectedness to others that they may not receive on their campuses. This involvement also connects staff with role models and peers who can provide inspiration and support that allow staff to feel a renewed sense of optimism and motivation to continue their work on their individual campuses.

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Moreover, work by Gin and Gin (2012), Suga (2012), and Wong (2012) suggests that AAPI staff members also respond to career barriers by being deliberate about creating opportunities for other AAPI staff, especially those who are their supervisees or juniors. AAPI staff are cognizant of the ways that AAPIs working in higher education in years past have paved the way for their careers and hope to do the same for future higher education leaders (Gin & Gin, 2012; Suga, 2012). Staff do so by ensuring junior staff in their divisions have the experiences and opportunities that they need to advance in their careers. They pay attention to the development of their junior AAPI staff and students to best prepare them to step into leadership roles when the time comes (Wong, 2012). This sense of legacy passed down from previous generations and urgency to prepare a new generation of leaders is a key motivator for AAPI staff.

Dhingra's (2007) interview study of 70 Korean American and Indian American professionals across various fields from medicine and engineering to education and small business provides key findings about how AAPI professionals navigate issues of race, ethnicity, and culture throughout their careers. This study's findings depart from literature that characterizes AAPI professional experiences as an ongoing clash of AAPI cultural expectations with those of the Western workplace. Instead, Dhingra (2007) argues that AAPI professionals are aware of the ways that they are racialized in their workplaces and use this to their advantage, depending on the situation, to align themselves with or differentiate themselves from their White American colleagues and clients. For example, an Indian American participant does not drink alcohol due to his practice of Hinduism. However, when he visits the homes of White clients, instead of explaining his religious affiliation to his clients, he accepts a drink along with everyone else for appearances but does not consume it.

Another participant reported that he tries to accentuate his racial identity at work in an accounting firm by wearing glasses, even though he wears contact lenses at all other times, because he believes that his colleagues conflate his East Asian American identity with being good with numbers and competent at his job.

Experiences of AAPI Staff in AANAPISIs

The previous section explored the experiences of AAPI higher education staff and AAPI professionals in other fields. This section narrows further in focus to explore literature on AAPI staff working for AANAPISI student support programs. In order to understand how working for an AANAPISI student support program may foster the professional identity development of AAPI staff, I first examine what is already known about the experiences of AAPI staff working in these roles.

Challenges Faced. AAPI practitioners working for AANAPISI grant-funded programs face unique obstacles. AANAPISI grants are awarded through a competitive process in which only a fraction of applicants receives funding. Furthermore, funding is intended to be development money used to pilot innovative programming with the object of transitioning onto institutional funding once the five-year long grant cycle ends (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). B. Nguyen's (2019) study on the experiences of two AANAPISI program directors found that the five-year grant cycle created a challenging timeframe. Five years was simply not enough time for AANAPISI program leaders to hire staff, develop programming, attend to substantial federal reporting and grant management tasks while simultaneously strategizing for the long-term sustainability of these initiatives (B. Nguyen, 2019). The time constraints of the funding cycle posed a significant challenge for program leaders.

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Another obstacle that AANAPISI staff face on their campuses is a lack of knowledge and support for the needs of low-income AAPI students. As a result of the model minority myth, many faculty, staff, and administrators, even at AANAPISIs, are unaware of the struggles for higher education access and attainment that many AAPI communities face (M. Nguyen, 2019). Therefore, AANAPISI staff often find themselves needing to constantly educate their fellow staff, faculty, and administrators about the experiences and needs of AAPI students (B. Nguyen, 2019; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2019). Not only does this take additional time and energy out of the workday, it is a disheartening experience to have one's role on campus continually called into question by colleagues (Adrian et al., 2018).

Opportunities Experienced. Although AAPI AANAPISI program staff face a variety of challenges in their roles, literature also demonstrates that these positions may offer some unique opportunities. For example, AANAPISI staff often benefit from a deliberate and intentional focus on personal and professional growth on the part of their supervisors. Hartlep and Antrop-Gonzalez (2019) argue that AANAPISI program leadership intentionally foster this "growth mindset" among staff, encouraging them to learn and grow outside of their comfort zones. For example, a principal investigator in one study describes how she makes every effort to pay attention to individual program staff members' development and provide opportunities to take on more responsibility (M. Nguyen, 2019). In many cases, this approach is in response to the harsh reality that AANAPISI funding is soft money and program staff may be out of jobs at the end of the five-year funding cycle. Supervisors are cognizant of this fact and do their best to provide opportunities for staff to build the skills and experience to prepare them for their next career moves.

Similarly, M. Nguyen's (2019) dual case study of two AANAPISI campuses found that, while AANAPISI programs are focused on providing resources and opportunities to serve AAPI students, they also invest significantly in resources and opportunities for program staff. For example, one program provides funding for staff to develop and teach Asian American Studies courses – a role traditionally held by faculty not often offered to staff. Instead of exclusively targeting faculty for this opportunity, program staff with Asian American Studies backgrounds are given the chance to build their professional repertoires by developing and teaching courses themselves. Similarly, program staff are provided with encouragement, training, and funding to prepare and deliver workshops and panel presentations at national conferences. The opportunity to present at national conferences provides staff with valuable professional development and networking experience.

Another benefit reported by some AAPI AANAPISI program staff is the opportunity to work with POC practitioners who share their values and backgrounds. This is especially crucial at PWIs where the institutional leadership and culture may not prioritize serving their students of color. Even if the larger institution may not share this value, working for an AANAPISI grant-funded program institution enables AAPI practitioners to find others who share their commitment to creating more equitable outcomes for AAPI students. M. Nguyen's (2019) research emphasizes this finding for AANAPISI program staff at the two institutions examined in his dual site case study. Racial justice-oriented programming was a large component of these AANAPISI programs. AAPI staff often worked collaboratively to develop and implement these programs. Staff reported that this work provided a unique opportunity to engage in conversations about race and identity with other AAPIs staff. They

were able to deepen their critical consciousness by learning from AAPI peers. In this manner, staff benefitted from the programs they developed much like their students.

Literature on the experiences of AAPI AANAPISI program staff outlines some of the challenges and opportunities that staff experience in their roles. Findings from these studies suggest that AANAPISI programs, in addition to having an impact on their institutions and the students they serve, may also offer positive benefits to AAPI staff. The impact that working in an AANAPISI program had on AAPI staff is an area that needs further investigation. In particular, research is needed to examine how, if at all, the experience of working for an AANAPISI program may shape the professional identity development of AAPI staff. Given the underrepresentation of AAPI higher education staff and the positive association between professional identity development and commitment to professional field, any programmatic initiatives that support professional identity development of these individuals would be important knowledge.

Summary and Gaps

Literature on higher education staff experiences employs diverse methodologies and theoretical frameworks. Studies ranged from large national survey-based studies to small qualitative interview studies and autoethographic pieces. Survey studies tended to draw from theoretical frameworks such as institutional diversity climate and job satisfaction models (Johnson, 2010; Mayhew et al., 2006; Rosser & Javinar, 2003). Qualitative interview studies were more apt to utilize theoretical frameworks focused on social identities such as Black Feminist Thought, racial identity theory, and racial/ethnic identity management (Dhingra, 2007; Henry, 2010; Neilson, 2002; Suga, 2012; Turner & Grauerholz, 2017).

This diverse body of literature is revealing of higher education staff experiences across a variety of social identity demographics. However, studies tend to focus on identity-based discrimination such as racism and homophobia that individuals face in their career journeys and the strategies that individuals use to overcome these obstacles. While the emphasis on individuals' agency to persist in spite of barriers is a welcome step beyond deficit-based studies, research is are needed to explore larger programmatic and structural solutions to the discrimination that higher education staff face in their professional fields.

Professional Identity Development

Studies on the professional identity development of higher education staff show that a strong sense of professional identity promotes a positive work life and commitment to remain in the field (Clarke et al., 2013; Pittman & Foubert, 2016; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008; Trede et al., 2012; Weidman et al., 2001). Therefore, the development of professional identity among higher education staff may be an effective way to combat the staggering rates of attrition observed in higher education staff (Hirschy et al., 2015; Tull et al., 2009). Professional identity is of particular concern regarding AAPI higher education staff given that AAPIs remain significantly underrepresented in higher education staff roles. Moreover, it is crucial to develop a deeper understanding of AAPI professional identity development as it may be one way to prevent attrition of AAPI staff, thereby addressing the problem of underrepresentation.

Defining Professional Identity

Literature defines professional identity in a number of different ways. Earlier studies use the term to refer to static and deeply held beliefs, values, and motivations that an individual holds related to their professional role (Schein, 1978). However, more

contemporary studies acknowledge that professional identity evolves over time and continues to shift and change throughout an individual's lifetime (Dobrow & Higgins, 2005; Ibarra, 1999). Other researchers critique earlier conceptions of professional identity that were concerned with skill building and pride in one's work (Gibson et al., 2015; Reid et al., 2008). I draw from various scholars' conceptions to create a definition of professional identity that I find most useful for this study.

I define professional identity as a self-perception of oneself as a competent and valuable member of their profession (Auxier et al., 2003; Ewan, 1988; Slay & Smith, 2011). For many People of Color (POC), racial and ethnic identity factors into professional identity development (Slay & Smith, 2011). POC may face racialized barriers such as discrimination and microaggressions that can cause them to internalize a sense of inadequacy that detracts from self-perceptions of competence and value and inhibits professional identity development (Slay & Smith, 2011).

Although there is little literature on the professional identity of AAPIs specifically, there is a small but informative body of literature on the professional identity development of POC. Not all of these findings on the professional identity of POC may be applicable to the experiences of AAPIs specifically. However, an exploration of this literature provides useful information on the ways that AAPIs and other POC may experience professional identity development. The following literature review section first discusses the conditions that support professional identity development before discussing barriers that may prohibit POC from experiencing these conditions. The section concludes with an overview of strategies that POC may employ to overcome these barriers and develop a strong sense of professional identity.

Factors That Support Professional Identity Development

Studies find that an individual develops a strong sense of professional identity when they have opportunities to feel that they bring expertise and value to their work (Collins, 2009; Dollarhide et al., 2012; Gibson et al., 2010). Mentorship often plays a crucial role in creating these opportunities. For example, a study by Gibson et al. (2010) on the professional identity development of 21 graduate student counselors-in-training (CITs) found that faculty can help CITs form a strong sense of professional identity by encouraging them to connect with and seek guidance from others in their larger professional community. This allows CITs to perceive themselves as being connected to others in their profession and receive mentoring and role modeling to build confidence to in their own professional practice. A study by Hirschy et al. (2015) on the professional identity development experiences of early career higher education staff found that professional identity development was supported when individuals had mentors who listened to and validated their concerns and insecurities. These discussions assured staff that the struggles they were encountering early in their careers were normal and that staff would eventually overcome them and become experienced and respected higher education professionals. According to these studies, professional identity development takes place when individuals are encouraged by mentors or role models to perceive themselves as valued and competent members of their profession.

However, missing from these studies' findings is any mention of race and ethnicity as crucial factors that shape how people are treated and perceived in their professional lives. A number of studies explore the role that validation of one's personal identities supports professional identity development, this scholarship uses the term, "personal identities" to refer to "values, morals, [and] perceptions" (Gibson et al., 2010, p. 21; Tull et al., 2009; van

der Zwet et al., 2011) as opposed to racial and ethnic identities. Similarly, discussions of "multiple identities" and their impact on professional identity development tend to refer to identities based upon the academic or professional roles an individual holds such as being both a professional counselor and doctoral student (Dollarhide et al., 2013, p. 137). Some studies integrated a discussion of gender and how women may experience professional identity development differently than men (Cheng et al., 2008) but little mention of how race and ethnicity may or may not play a role in professional identity development.

This omission of racial and ethnic identity corresponds with these studies' theoretical frameworks and methods. In addition to professional identity development theories, most studies on the topic drew from social constructivist theory (Gross & Hochberg, 2016; Hunter et al., 2007; Pratt et al., 2006; Strayhorn & Johnson, 2014) in lieu of any identity theory or racial and ethnic identity theory. In terms of study design, the vast majority of study participants were White. The few studies that did include a minority of POC participants failed to include any mention of participants' racial or ethnic identity in their findings. The absence of any discussion of racial and ethnic identity in these studies cannot be taken as proof that these factors do not play a role in professional identity development. Instead, this omission suggests that when researchers do not utilize study designs and theoretical frameworks that incorporate the role that race and ethnicity play in individuals' lives, study findings will not adequately address the experiences of POC.

Role of Racial and Ethnic Identity on Professional Identity Development

Although some literature fails to take into account the influence that one's racial and ethnic identity may have on professional identity development, other studies delve directly into this topic. These studies also find individuals who perceive themselves as bringing

expertise and value to their work experience a myriad of benefits related to a strong sense of professional identity, including being able to be their authentic self in their workplace and enhanced overall life satisfaction (Cheng et al., 2008; Darling et al., 2008; Roberts et al., 2014; Slay & Smith, 2011).

These studies used different theoretical frameworks and study designs than those that neglected racial and ethnic identity as a factor in professional identity development. Instead, these studies included POC participants from various professional fields such as Asian American journalists (Roberts et al., 2014), African American academic librarians (Damasco & Hodges, 2012; Gonzalez-Smith et al., 2014), and Latinx counseling doctoral students (Locke, 2017). In addition to professional identity development theories, these studies drew from racial identity theory and Critical Race Theory (CRT) to explore the ways that race and ethnicity influence POC's professional experiences. Racial identity theory explains "the process of development by which individual members of the various socioracial groups overcome the version of internalized racism that typifies their group in order to achieve a self-affirming and realistic racial-group or collective identity" (Helms & Cook, 1999, p. 84). CRT is based upon the assumption that racism is pervasive in U.S. society and that race is a socially constructed tool used to categorize groups of people. These categorizations are not static and shift depending on the need and context. Both racial identity theory and CRT are useful theoretical frameworks for understanding the ways that racial and ethnic identity impacts the professional identity development of POC.

For example, Locke's (2017) study used CRT to analyze the experiences of Latinx students in a predominately White counseling graduate program to reveal the ways that race-related systems of power and privilege were inextricably woven into students' professional

identity development processes. Findings revealed that the eight participants faced racism and microaggressions but that negative experiences did not lead them to negate their racial and ethnic identities. Instead, the students responded to the discrimination they faced by coming to see their racial and ethnic identity and professional work as mutually beneficial. They took pride in flouting expectations as successful Latinx counselors in a predominately White graduate program and professional field, so being one of the few Latinx counselors pushed them to be better counselors by motivating them to study hard and achieve academic success. Simultaneously, their professional counseling work strengthened their sense of Latinx identity when they realized that their credentials would allow them to fight for more equitable mental health outcomes for Latinx communities. The students realized that being a Latinx counseling student allowed their racial and ethnic identity and professional work to mutually benefit each other. This realization led the students to develop a sense or professional identity by showing them the unique value and competence to they brought to the field as a Latinx counseling student.

Gonzalez-Smith et al.'s (2014) study of professional development experienced by academic librarians of color used racial identity and ethnic identity theories to examine the various ways that participants navigate instances of racism their predominately White workplaces. Similarly, the librarians in the study came to see how their racial and ethnic identity and professional work were mutually beneficial. As POC, their racial and ethnic identities allowed them access to professional organizations for librarians of color that provided a small but tightknit network that provided support and career advancement opportunities. They took pride in the how their professional work as academic librarians positioned them to mentor other POC interested in following in their footsteps. The academic

librarians developed their professional identity by realizing the unique value that they brought to their profession as a librarian of color.

Attention to racial and ethnic identities and their impact on professional identity development is crucial to understanding how AAPI AANAPISI program staff may develop professional identity. As mentioned in previous literature review sections, the majority of AANAPISI student support programs incorporate discussion of AAPI racial and ethnic identity into their student programming. Previous studies demonstrate that the process of planning and implementing this identity-based programming, leads AAPI AANAPISI staff to be cognizant and reflect regularly on the ways that racial and ethnic identity affects the experiences of their students as well as their own educational and professional trajectories (Gutierrez & Le, 2018; M. Nguyen, 2019; Park & Teranishi, 2008). Given the substantial role that AAPI identity plays in AANAPISI staff members' day-to-day work, it would be plausible that racial and ethnic identity may factor into the professional identity development of AAPI AANAPISI staff. Further research is needed to examine what this relationship looks like and what it reveals about AAPI professional identity development.

Overcoming Barriers to Professional Identity Development for POC

Regardless of race or ethnicity, individuals develop a strong sense of professional identity when they have opportunities to feel that they bring expertise and value to their work (Collins, 2009; Dollarhide et al., 2012; Gibson et al., 2010). However, POC may not always have access to these opportunities given the pervasiveness of racism and discrimination in their professional lives (Leyva, 2011; Locke, 2017; Motoike, 2003; Slay & Smith, 2011). Nevertheless, studies demonstrate that POC successfully develop a strong sense of professional identity by finding various ways to refute race-based barriers and maintain a

positive image of themselves as skilled and valuable workers. For example, POC may experience identity "redefinition," (Slay & Smith, 2011, p. 100) in which POC develop their own set of professional goals and values rooted in a positive sense of racial identity as opposed to continually reacting to White expectations (Leyva, 2011). The notion of identity "redefinition" contrasts with earlier research that suggests that POC must find success and acceptance in predominantly White professional spaces through identity "adaptation," in which they downplay their racial and ethnic identities in order to in order to assimilate and succeed amongst White colleagues (Ibarra, 1999, p. 4). Identity adaptation suggests that POC's racial and ethnic identity is mutually exclusive with professional success in predominately White fields. POC must choose one or the other and cannot have both. Identity redefinition, on the other hand does not require POC to change or sacrifice their racial and ethnic identity or professional goals. Instead, POC are able to develop feelings of competence as a professional and pride in their racial and ethnic identity.

Slay and Smith's (2011) study of Black journalists provides a useful example of identity redefinition as a way to develop professional identity in spite of racism and discrimination by understanding one's racial and ethnic identity and professional role as mutually beneficial. The Black journalists in the study wrote for publications with predominately White staff and often faced racism from their colleagues and supervisors. For example, the journalists report that they were passed over for assignments that their White colleagues desired and instead were only assigned stories that took place in Black communities or involved Black people. White reporters did not want to cover these stories because they perceived them as less interesting and prestigious. Instead of internalizing their own professional value as less than, study participants used the assignments they were given

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to tell stories of Black communities that "dispelled stereotypes [and] made readers privy to [positive] sides of Black life that they had never witnessed" such loving and supportive Black families and successful Black small businesses giving back to the community (p. 100). The journalists were able to portray the nuances and realities of Black communities in ways that their White colleagues most likely would not have been able to even if they had wanted to cover the stories. Although many reported that it was not easy to be one of the few Black people in their organization, many journalists came to view their cultural knowledge and experience as Black Americans as an asset in their work. Likewise, their role as a journalist made them an asset to their local Black community by allowing them to create more positive portrayals of Black communities in the media.

The Latina faculty in Gonzalez et al.'s (2014) study provide another example of identity redefinition as a strategy to develop professional identity. Like the Black journalists in Slay and Smith's (2011) study, the 10 women participants in this project reported experiencing discrimination due to their racial and ethnic identities such as not receiving the same funding or opportunities as their White male colleagues. Faculty dealt with this discrimination by finding a community of other Latina faculty that provided peer support to make sense of and combat the discrimination they faced. They came together to reflect upon their collective knowledge and journeys to become tenure-track faculty members as first-generation college students from immigrant families. Participants found these conversations to be refreshing and grounding. They reminded them how far they had come and how much they had achieved in their careers to be at the table as faculty at a prestigious research university. Study participants developed a sense of communal pride as a group of Latinas in the academy. Instead of internalizing the racism and discrimination they faced as Latina

faculty, they felt proud to be successful Latinas in academia. The faculty shared stories about facing racism but also about how the strength of their immigrant mothers inspired them to persist through difficult times. The faculty came to view their Latina identities as sources of strength that allowed them to achieve the level of success that they had. These informal peer support groups allowed Latina faculty to view their racial and ethnic identities and professional roles as mutually beneficial assets that gave them unique value and competence as Latinx faculty in academia.

Summary and Gaps

These findings on professional identity development of POC—when viewed in conjunction with literature demonstrating the connection between professional identity development, positive worklife, and commitment to professional field (Hirschy et al., 2015)— speak to the importance of professional identity development for POC, especially in predominantly White fields where POC are underrepresented. More studies on the professional development experiences of POC are needed, especially given that the majority of literature on the topic focuses on the experiences of White individuals. Furthermore, studies must use theories and methodologies that are attentive to the experiences of POC and the ways that their professional development experiences may be different than those of their White contemporaries. Study designs that center the voices of POC are essential.

The gap in research on the professional identity development of AAPI AANAPISI staff is particularly troubling given the underrepresentation of AAPIs amongst the nation's higher education staff. If this problem of underrepresentation is to be addressed, more must be known about how different interventions and environments, including AANAPISI programs, may create conditions that support the professional development of AAPI higher

education staff. The literature discussed above outlines some strategies that individual POC can use to develop a strong sense of professional identity in spite of myriad challenges, but it is unjust to place the onus to create these conditions on POC themselves. In order to create more equitable experiences for POC, more must be known about how organizations can create the conditions to support the professional identity development of their staff. Therefore, a study of how conditions created in AANAPISI programs shape professional identity development for AAPI staff may offer some useful findings.

Conceptual Framework

Professional identity refers to an individual's perception of their own competence and value in their profession (Auxier et al., 2003; Ewan, 1988; Slay & Smith, 2011). For many POC, racial and ethnic identity also factor into professional identity development (Slay & Smith, 2011). POC may face racialized barriers such as discrimination and microaggressions that can cause them to internalize a sense of inadequacy that detracts from self-perceptions of competence and value and inhibits professional identity development (Slay & Smith, 2011). However, existing studies find that developing a sense of professional identity may have the potential to combat these barriers by promoting a positive worklife and desire to remain in one's professional field (Hirschy et al., 2015). Therefore, professional identity development may be one way to address the underrepresentation of POC in predominately White fields.

In order to make sense of how AAPI AAANAPISI staff may experience professional identity development, this study was guided by Slay and Smith's (2011) theory of professional identity development for People of Color (POC) and Museus et al.'s (2012) theory of cultural integration and campus subcultures. As literature on professional identity development suggests, POC, including AAPIs, experience professional identity development

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differently than White individuals. Therefore, professional identity development models based on the experiences of White people may not offer adequate insight into the professional identity development of POC. Slay and Smith's (2011) model was designed specifically for POC and provides a lens to understand the professional identity development of AAPI AANAPISI staff members. Museus et al.'s (2012) theory of cultural integration in campus subcultures helps to parse out how and why the experience of working for AANAPISI may be impactful for AAPI staff and their professional identities.

Slay and Smith's (2001) framework was developed from a narrative study of the professional identity development journeys of Black journalists. The theory builds off of Ibarra's (1999) theory of professional identity development. Ibarra (1999) argued that individuals develop a strong sense of professional identity by observing role models and experimenting with various behavioral styles until they find one that is in line with the expectations of their workplace while also being authentic to their personal values and preferences. Slay and Smith (2011) expand upon Ibarra's (1999) theory to account for the ways that racial and cultural identities influence the professional identity development of POC.

Slay and Smith (2011) contend that POC, especially those in predominately White professional fields, face racialized obstacles to professional identity development such as tokenism, discrimination, and social isolation. The authors agree with existing literature on the topic that professional identity development is facilitated when individuals perceive themselves as competent and valued in their profession (Auxier et al., 2003; Ewan, 1988; Slay & Smith, 2011). However, POC in predominately White professional fields may not have the opportunity to feel this way. Given that existing power structures in their

workplaces and fields were built by and for White professionals, POC in predominately White fields often experience racism, discrimination, and feelings of being an outsider. These negative experiences detract from self-perceptions of value and competence and inhibit professional identity development. Although AAPIs are not explicitly mentioned in this study, these findings are echoed in existing literature that AAPI professionals experience racism and discrimination in predominately White fields (Cheng et al., 2008; Darling et al., 2008; Dhingra, 2003).

Slay and Smith's (2011) theory departs from existing literature (Alba, 1985; Alba & Nee, 1997; Glazer & Moynihan, 1963; Ibarra, 1999) arguing that POC should "adapt" their identities to be accepted in White workplaces by downplaying their racial and ethnic identities (p. 100). Instead, they argue that POC can "redefine" their sense of self as POC and as members of their chosen profession by developing professional goals that support a positive racial and ethnic identity (p. 100). Oftentimes, this shift in thinking is brought about by a "transformative experience" that demonstrates to the individual that they can and should be afforded respect and opportunity in their careers (p. 95). This experience can be a significant professional success or a particularly meaningful relationship or interaction with another person. This notion of identity "redefinition" versus "adaptation" is of particular salience for AAPIs, especially East Asian Americans, who have been long accused of striving for acceptance by White Americans by attempting to shed racial and ethnic markers to fit in as "honorary Whites" (Pyke & Dang, 2003; Tuan, 1998, p. 30). The "honorary White" stereotype is analogous to the concept of identity "adaptation" since it suggests that AAPIs unanimously seek to downplay their racial and ethnic identities in an effort to conform to White expectations and values. Unfortunately, this stereotype is perpetuated in

scholarship and popular media images of AAPIs (Tuan, 1998). Slay and Smith's (2011) theory offers an alternative way to understand AAPI experiences that refutes the "honorary White" trope by offering identity "redefinition" as a model for understanding how AAPIs may view their racial and ethnic identities and professional roles as mutually beneficial assets.

Unlike identity "adaptation," Slay and Smith's (2011) notion of identity "redefinition" does not force POC to choose between their racial and ethnic identities and career goals in predominately White fields. The Black journalists in the study did not need to negate their Blackness to find success in their workplaces even when faced with discrimination and racialized barriers. Instead, they were able to embrace their Blackness to write stories that they were proud of. For example, Black journalists were able to find a niche reporting on stories in Black neighborhoods that allowed them to publish prolifically while also dispelling harmful stereotypes of local Black communities by creating more nuanced and positive coverage. Similarly, Slay and Smith's (2011) notion of identity "redefinition" offers a way to understand how AAPIs perceive their racial and ethnic identity in relation to their work and professional identity.

In addition to Slay and Smith's (2011) theory of professional identity development for POC, this study also utilized Museus et al.'s (2012) theory of cultural integration and campus subcultures to understand how the experience of working in AANAPISI programs in particular may or may not impact the professional identity development of AAPI staff. Museus et al.'s (2012) theory is based on the experiences of undergraduate students of color studying at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs), but this study applies this theory to the experiences of AAPI staff working at PWIs. Although this Museus et al.'s (2012) theory was

developed from student experience, I argue that it is also applicable to the experiences of higher education staff because, like students of color, staff of color at PWIs must also navigate institutional cultures that are based upon the values of White Western values and are often unwelcoming to POC. Undoubtedly undergraduate student and staff roles are quite different, but this is one overlapping factor that unites the two experiences when in the context of PWIs. Moreover, Museus et al.'s (2012) theory provides a useful pairing with Slay and Smith's (2011) theory. Although one theory is based on the experiences of students versus professionals, both theories deliberately push back on existing theoretical frameworks (Ibarra, 1999; Tinto, 1987, 1993) that suggest that POC must shed allegiance to racial and ethnic communities and assimilate into the cultures of their predominantly White organizations.

Museus et al.'s (2012) theory provides a framework for understanding the ways that AAPI higher education student support staff may experience AANAPISI programs as ethnic subcultures much like students of color at PWIs benefit from ethnic subcultures such as racial and ethnic affinity-based student support programs, ethics studies programs, and student organizations. According to this framework, ethnic subcultural spaces on college and university campuses support the success of students of color at PWIs. An ethnic subculture is defined as "a distinct system that is developed by a subset of members of an institution and consists of specific norms, values, beliefs, and assumptions that differ from the dominant culture of the campus and guide the behavior of its group members" (p. 107).

AANAPISI programs fit Museus et al.'s (2012) definition of an ethnic subculture. As explained in the first section of this paper, AANAPISI institutions, unlike the majority of other Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), are former PWIs that became MSIs as a result of

demographic shifts over the past few decades. Therefore, institutions that house AANAPISI programs often maintain the institutional structures and cultures established to benefit White students from middle and high socioeconomic status backgrounds (Nguyen et al., 2018). Conversely, ANAAPISI programs are deliberately designed by program leadership to be spaces that support AAPI students by validating the experiences, cultures, and histories of AAPI communities. As such, AANAPISI programs may function as ethnic subcultures that represent markedly different values and norms than the larger institutional community (Museus et al., 2018).

Museus et al.'s (2012) theory builds upon the work of others (Guiffrida, 2003; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Kiang, 2002, 2009) who cite the importance of ethnic subcultures for promoting the success of students of color at PWIs by fostering a sense of belonging on campus and by providing safe havens for students of color that serve as a respite from the unwelcoming or hostile experiences that students of color often experience at PWIs. Museus et al. (2012) take this notion further by suggesting how ethnic subcultures accomplish this. The researchers argue that ethnic subcultures support the success of students of color by providing spaces for students to experience cultural integration: the bringing together of students' academic, social, and cultural spheres. Cultural integration is not something that students of color often have the chance to experience at PWIs where students are often expected to assimilate into the predominant culture of White norms and expectations and shed the values and life experiences they bring from their racial, cultural, and familial backgrounds. This expectation creates a dissonance and tension between students of color's home and campus cultures that has been shown to have a negative impact on educational outcomes.

On the contrary, ethnic subcultural spaces support cultural integration by providing communities of peers, mentors, courses, and activities that reflect and validate the ways that students experience the academic, social, and cultural aspects of their lives. Museus et al. (2012) argue that ethnic subcultures promote cultural integration in the lives of students of color by providing: (a) culturally validating physical and epistemological spaces, (b) engagement with culturally validating curricula, and (c) motivation and ability to create positive change within campus and local communities.

Much like students of color on PWI campuses, AAPIs working in the predominately White field of higher education student support may face pressure to conform to hegemonic White norms and downplay their racial and ethnic identities (Hartlep & Antrop-Gonzalez, 2019; Teranishi et al., 2018). This pressure may come from being repeatedly passed over for leadership opportunities that are instead given to White employees, being excluded from informal rapport amongst White colleagues, and other microaggresssive and racist actions (Xin, 2004). Existing literature demonstrates that faculty of color at PWIs involved in Ethnic Studies departments and faculty of color mentoring programs benefit from a greater sense of belonging (Murakami & Nunez, 2014; Tingson-Gatuz, 2012). This finding suggests that faculty and staff of color may benefit from environments where they interact with and work alongside others who share a similar racial and ethnic identity, cultural background, and lived experiences. Museus et al.'s (2012) theory of ethnic subcultures and cultural integration provides a framework to interrogate how AAPI staff may benefit from working in AANAPISI programs - spaces that are deliberately designed to value the identities and experiences of AAPIs.

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This study explores how aspects of AANAPISI programs that promote the cultural integration of their students may also support the professional identity development of their AAPI staff. As mentioned above, Museus et al. (2012) outline three ways that ethnic subcultures support the cultural integration of students. The section below applies each of these three aspects to the experiences of AAPI AANAPISI staff and outlines how each may impact staff members' professional identity development.

Culturally Validating Physical and Epistemological Spaces

Existing research on AANAPISIs and professional identity development for POC suggests that the culturally validating physical and epistemological spaces that ethnic campus subcultures offer may be just as impactful for AAPI staff as they are for students. This research also suggests that POC experience cultural validation in workplaces that allow them to see their racial and ethnic identities as assets that help them to do their job well. These spaces allow POC professionals, like Slay and Smith's (2011) Black journalists, to view themselves as competent professionals with unique insight to contribute to their work – thus supporting professional identity development. Existing literature suggests a strong sense of professional identity may counter the negative impact of discrimination and microaggression that POC may face in predominately White workplaces (Roberts et al., 2014).

AANAPISI programs may support professional identity development by validating AAPI staff members' racial and ethnic identities as professional assets. The nature of AANAPISI programming relies on staff drawing from cultural knowledge and lived experiences as AAPIs. AANAPISI programming and initiatives tend to focus heavily on positive AAPI racial and ethnic development (CARE, 2013; Kiang et al., 2019; Teranishi, 2011). AANAPISI staff engage their own stories and community connections to develop and

implement this programming (B. Nguyen, 2019). Therefore, the knowledge and relationships that they bring to their roles as a result of their AAPI identity becomes a valuable tool that allows them to create innovative programming for their AAPI students that non-AAPI staff might not be able to. Their AAPI identity may function as professional assets in other ways. Being AAPI means that AANAPISI staff often share a racial and/or ethnic background with their students. This may allow AAPI staff to provide support to AAPI students in uniquely effective ways. For example, an AAPI student may not feel comfortable filling out her FAFSA with a non-AAPI financial aid counselor because a portion of her family's income comes from gambling. In many non-AAPI cultures gambling is seen as a vice and an irresponsible use of money. This same student might feel more comfortable seeking assistance from an AAPI AANAPISI staff member whom she can safely assume will understand that gambling is an important aspect of many Asian elders' social and cultural lives. An experience such as this provides validation of the AAPI staff member's cultural identity by demonstrating that their cultural identity functions as an asset in their professional roles. Moreover, it communicates to AAPI staff that their cultural backgrounds allow them to bring a certain unique expertise and value to their organizations. Thus, their professional identities are bolstered as they feel skilled and competent as a higher education student support professional.

Engagement With Culturally Validating Curricula

Another aspect of AANAPISI work that may support the professional identity development of AAPI staff is the opportunity to engage with culturally validating curricula. Nguyen's (2019) study of AANAPISI programs notes that AANAPISI programs are deliberately designed to provide students with culturally validating curricula and pedagogy

that are often drawn from the field of Asian American Studies that highlight the voices and experiences of AAPI students, their communities, and their families. This finding builds upon other studies that speak to the value and transformative power that the culturally validating Ethnic Studies curricula can have for AAPIs and other students of color (Kiang, 2002, 2009; Sleeter, 2011). As the individuals in charge of the hands-on design and implementation of AANAPISI programming, AANAPISI staff having the opportunity to engage deeply with this curriculum and pedagogy.

Like having access to culturally validating physical and epistemological spaces, engaging with culturally validating curriculum and pedagogy may support the professional identity development of AAPI AANAPISI staff by engaging their racial and ethnic identity as a professional asset. AAPI AANAPISI staff are uniquely situated to design culturally validating curricula for their AAPI students because of the cultural knowledge and life experiences that they bring to their work. Although this knowledge may not be valued by others in their institution or in the predominately White field of higher education students support, AANAPISI programs are one place where staff members' AAPI identity functions as a crucial asset and source of professional expertise. By demonstrating that the cultural knowledge and life experiences that AAPI AANAPISI staff bring to their roles are professional assets, engagement with culturally validating curriculum and pedagogy may support professional identity development (Auxier et al., 2003; Ewan, 1988; Slay & Smith, 2011).

The Motivation and Ability to Create Positive Change Within Campus and Local

Communities

Lastly, working for an AANAPISI program may also support the professional identity of AAPI AANAPISI staff by providing them with the motivation and ability to create positive change within campus and local communities. Mac Fallon's (2020) work on AANAPISI institutional identity found that staff, faculty, and administrators who were involved in AANAPISI projects saw their work as a concrete way to address systems of oppression that marginalize AAPIs both on and off campus. Study participants reported that their commitment to equity and positive change for AAPI communities was reified as a result of their AANAPISI work. Additionally, the experience of working for AANAPISI also helped them to feel a sense of kinship with others while working together towards a larger goal of creating positive change for AAPIs.

Literature on professional identity development emphasizes that an individual's ability to see themselves as active contributors to their professional field is a key aspect of professional identity development (Auxier et al., 2003; Ewan, 1988; Slay & Smith, 2014). In other words, professionals who feel as if their work is making a difference will be more apt to develop a strong sense of professional identity development. As mentioned earlier, AAPI higher education student support staff may face discrimination and racism from colleagues and supervisors and therefore may feel disempowered and devalued in their workplaces (Mayhew et al., 2006; Rosser & Javinar, 2003). Therefore, any opportunity that AAPI staff have to participate in work that makes them feel motivated and able to create positive change is crucial. Mac Fallon's (2020) findings suggest that working for an AANAPISI program may be one way that AAPI staff are able to access this opportunity given the finding that

AAPI AANAPISI staff view their work as a way for them to create greater equity and outcomes for AAPIs both on and off of their campuses.

In tandem, Slay and Smith's (2011) theory of professional identity development for POC and Museus et al.'s (2012) theory of cultural integration and campus subcultures offers a potential framework for understanding the professional identity development of AAPI AANAPISI staff. Slay and Smith's (2011) model provides a useful framework for understanding how AAPI AANAPISI staff may experience professional identity development working in the predominately White field of higher education student support. The model suggests that AAPI AANAPISI staff may form professional identities by developing a sense of pride in their racial and cultural backgrounds and the unique skills and competencies that they bring to their work as a result of these identities. With Slay and Smith's (2011) contributions, Museus et al.'s (2012) theory of cultural integration in campus subcultures helps to parse out how and why the experience of working for AANAPISI programs may be impactful for AAPI staff and their professional identities. Museus et al. (2012) describe three key conditions that create impactful ethnic campus subcultures for students of color at PWIs: (a) culturally validating physical and epistemological spaces, (b) engagement with culturally validating curricula, and (c) motivation and ability to create positive change within campus and local communities. I used this framework to suggest that AANAPISI programs function as ethnic campus subcultures that provide AAPI staff with the three conditions mentioned above and in doing so support the professional identity development of these individuals.

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CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore the ways that working in an AANAPISI student support program may shape AAPI student support staff members' professional identities. As I noted in Chapter 1, this study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How does working in an AANAPISI program shape the professional identity development of AAPI staff, if at all?

2. How do AAPI staff members experience their personal identities, such as race, ethnicity, and cultural background impacting their work in AANAPISI programs? How does this experience shape staff members' professional identity development?

The study used a qualitative phenomenological methodology with data collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed according to Moustakas' (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method. In this chapter, I describe and provide rationale for these methodological choices. Then, I describe the strategies that I utilized to strengthen the study's validity and trustworthiness. The chapter closes with a discussion of the limitations of the study design.

Rationale for Qualitative Research Design

A qualitative research design was selected for this study for several reasons. One reason was the nature of the research questions guiding the study. According to Creswell (1998), the choice to pursue qualitative inquiry depends on the research question that the study seeks to address. Qualitative studies are often guided by research questions that begin with *how* or *what* and seek to describe what is going on in regards to a phenomenon of interest. In contrast, quantitative studies are often guided by research questions that begin with *what*, *do*, and *to what extent*. Given that this study's intent was to understand the professional identity development experiences of AAPI AANAPISI staff and was less concerned with finding a relationship between specific variables, a qualitative research design was most fitting.

Another reason that a qualitative design was selected was there are no existing studies on the topic of AAPI AANAPISI staff professional identity development. Creswell (1998) also notes that researchers often choose a qualitative study design if little existing research has addressed the topic of interest and an initial exploration is warranted (Creswell, 1998). The research topic might be newly emerging in academic discourse or it might be one that researchers have paid little attention to in the past. In this situation, a researcher would likely have little access to existing theories or descriptions of variables that may be at play in regards to the phenomenon of interest. Without an idea of existing variables or theories, a quantitative study would be difficult to perform, and a qualitative study design to conduct an initial exploration would be a more fitting choice. Although the field of research on AANAPISIs is growing, very few studies address the experiences of the individuals who staff the programs. Given this dearth of existing knowledge and theories related to that AAPI

AANAPISI staff experiences, a qualitative study was the most logical study design to begin to explore this understudied facet of AANAPISI programs.

Lastly, a qualitative research design was fitting for this study given its focus on the development of an individual's identity. This study delved deeply into individual AAPI AANAPISI staff members development of professional identity and racial and ethnic identity in order to describe the phenomenological essence of professional identity development experienced by AAPI staff while working for an AANAPISI program. Although specific aspects of identity development may be quantified, achieving a deeper understanding of holistic individual development may be difficult to achieve though a quantitative study. Therefore, I chose to use a qualitative study design.

Rationale for Phenomenological Approach

In addition to a qualitative design, more specifically, this study followed a phenomenological approach. Phenomenological studies seek to describe the essence of a particular phenomenon as described by individuals who have experienced that phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). Phenomenology has roots in philosophy and psychology and is focused on understanding of human consciousness and lived experiences (Creswell, 1998). Phenomenological research explores the ways that individuals who have experienced a particular phenomenon make sense of that lived experience (van Manen, 1990). In the case of this study, the phenomenon of interest was professional identity development experienced by AAPIs while working as AANAPISI program staff members. Through a detailed examination of the lived experiences of AAPIs who have worked for AANAPISI programs across different institutions and geographic regions, I developed a description of the essence of this phenomenon.

A phenomenological approach was appropriate for this study given its focus on AAPI AANAPISI staff members' professional, racial, and ethnic identities and how they may influence and shape each other. According to work by Creswell (2014) and Wilding and Whiteford (2005), a unique aspect of phenomenology is the ability to highlight aspects of a phenomenon that are complex and not easily quantified or observed. Professional, racial, and ethnic identity development are highly subjective and internal processes (Iwamoto et al., 2013; Clarke et al., 2013). Therefore, phenomenology offered particularly deep insights into the professional, racial, and ethnic identity development of AAPI AANAPISI staff members.

Existing studies on the professional, racial, and ethnic identity development of other demographic groups have used a phenomenological design to provide deep and nuanced portrayals of these processes. For example, a study by Iwamoto et al. (2013) on the racial and ethnic identity development of second generation Asian Indian Americans utilized a phenomenological approach to explore how significant events, relationships, and other sociocultural factors impacted the 12 participants' racial and ethnic identity development throughout different stages of their lives. The researchers argue that a phenomenological approach allowed them to create an in-depth portrayal of the ways that participants' racial and ethnic identities were continuously shifting throughout their lives. Similarly, Nor's (2019) phenomenological study of the professional identity development of medical educators found that the process was highly complex and intertwined with personal identities in ways that would have been difficult to represent without the thick description that phenomenological study designs prioritize. Therefore, a phenomenological approach aligned with the focus of this study on the professional identity development of AAPI AANAPISI staff members and revealed findings that encompass the complexities of professional identity

development and the ways that factors such as racial and ethnic identity may shape that process.

More specifically, this study followed a hermeneutic phenomenological design. Although the two main strands of phenomenology, transcendental and hermeneutic, share philosophical underpinnings, key differences exist between the two as well. The development of phenomenology can be traced back to German mathematician and philosopher Edmund Husserl (Laverty, 2003). Husserl's transcendental phenomenology was developed in response to Cartesian ideas about the dualism of reality that suggested that reality was something that existed "out there" and was separate from the individual (Laverty, 2003, p. 5). Instead, Husserl believed that reality, as humans experience it, is a continuous process of co-construction and dialogue between the individual and the world. Moreover, he argued that humans are consciously aware of and in control of this process (Creswell, 1998). Another key tenant of Husserl's phenomenology is the concept of transcendental phenomenological reduction, or bracketing. In this process, an individual must intentionally bracket out the rest of the world, including one's own beliefs, biases, and experiences, in order to access the essence of a phenomena. Husserl believed that in doing so an individual could analyze and observe particular phenomena as they truly are (Laverty, 2003, p. 6).

Transcendental phenomenology as developed by Husserl was built upon by Martin Heidegger, Husserl's former mentee, into a newer form of phenomenology called hermeneutic phenomenology (Laverty, 2003; Wilding & Whiteford, 2005). Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology maintains aspects of transcendental phenomenology such as the primary concern with discerning the essence of human experiences as they exist in individuals' own subjective realities. However, unlike Husserl, Heidegger did not believe in

the need for a researcher to bracket out their beliefs and previous understandings of the world in order to arrive at this essence. In fact, Heidegger did believe that doing so was impossible to accomplish. Instead, in hermeneutic phenomenology the researcher is encouraged to acknowledge the beliefs and understandings that they carry since there is no way to completely remove them from one's consciousness. According to Heidegger, the presuppositions that the researcher brings to their work should not be viewed as bias or lack of rigor. Moreover, Heidegger argues that there is no such thing as true or unbiased interpretation because all interpretations are inherently filtered through the pre-understandings that humans carry, and therefore, all are valid as "plausible insights" into a phenomenon (van Manen, 1990).

I chose to employ a hermeneutic phenomenological approach for my study of AAPI AANAPISI staff members' professional identity development. This decision was influenced by a number of factors. For one, I share Heidegger's belief that it is impossible to completely disconnect oneself from the past experiences, beliefs, and assumptions that humans carry. Therefore, I am not convinced that the bracketing that transcendental phenomenology requires is feasible. Additionally, I am not convinced that attempting to bracket oneself out of a study is beneficial to the process of inquiry. On the contrary, my past experiences and knowledge as an AAPI AANAPISI staff member myself functioned as an asset to help me interpret the complexities of lived experiences of other AAPI AANAPISI staff. Although my findings stemmed from my participants' lived experiences and not my own, the lens that I brought to the interpretation of these experiences was a tool that may have allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the data. For example, as an AAPI AANAPISI staff member, I have first-hand knowledge of the national and regional AANAPISI staff communities that

have formed over the years as well as the federal policies and regulations that shape the day-to-day work of AANAPISI staff. Therefore, while other AAPI AANAPISI staff may have had very different experiences with these same communities and policies than mine, having a larger frame of reference in which to situate these lived experiences is an asset to create a deeper understanding of their perspectives.

Data Collection

Sampling

The goal for participant selection in phenomenological studies is to select participants who have experienced the particular phenomenon that the study is focused on. Therefore, I utilized a purposeful sampling strategy in order to select participants who can inform my particular study. Purposeful sampling is a core element of qualitative inquiry and allows the researcher to select information-rich cases to examine in depth. The deep examination of information-rich cases that purposeful sampling creates can reveal complex understandings of the phenomenon of interest as opposed to empirical generalizations (Patton, 2002).

Creswell (1998) recommends a criterion sampling approach to creating a purposeful sample for phenomenological studies. In other words, the researcher selects participants based on a list of criteria to ensure that individuals in the sample have experienced the specific phenomena being studied. Therefore, this study's sampling criteria required that participants: (a) identify as AAPI, (b) work or worked in a professional staff role in an AANAPISI student support program, and (c) have worked or worked in that setting for a minimum of four years.

The reason for seeking participants who have worked in an AANAPISI program for at least four years is to ensure that participants were in their professional roles for enough

time to experience any potential influence on their professional identities. Studies indicate that professional identity development for higher education staff tends to be shaped by long-term factors such as relationship building and accomplishment of prior goals that take time to develop (Hirschy et al., 2015; Pittman & Foubert, 2016; Trede et al., 2012). Therefore, individuals who worked for their AANAPISI program for fewer than four years may not have had adequate time to experience the professional identity development that they might have, given more time in their roles.

I collected data from eight participants. There are no definitive rules to how many participants should be included in qualitative research studies, and number of recommended participants for a phenomenological study can range from as few as a single participant to as many as 325 (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 1990; Terrell, 2016). However, I chose to abide by Creswell (1998) and Mertens' (1998) guidelines that suggest 6 to 10 participants as a good number. This number of participants was large enough to be able to achieve some variation in terms of demographic characteristics but small enough that I was able to analyze each participant's experience deeply.

I utilized a maximum variation purposeful sampling strategy. This strategy allows the researcher to describe outcomes that cut across diverse groups of participants. Although this is difficult to do in small samples, Patton (1990) suggests that a researcher can identify diverse characteristics, such as geographic location, and purposefully select participants from various locations to create some variation even in small sample sizes. M. Nguyen's (2019) findings on the characteristics of campuses with AANAPISI programs demonstrate that, as of the 2020 AANAPISI grant competition, the vast majority (19 out of 35 campuses: 54%) are located in the Western region of the country. This is significant given that the next most

AANAPISI populous regions (Eastern and Pacific) each contain a mere 6 out of 35 (17%) AANAPISIs. My sample consisted exclusively of participants from AANAPISIs in the Western region. While it made sense to have a majority of participants from the Western region, I had hoped to recruit a small number of participants from other regions but encountered difficulties doing so. After an exhaustive review of academic literature and other publications related to AANAPISIs, I was not able to locate any data on the demographics of AAPI AANAPISI staff in terms of gender identity age, professional experience, or ethnicity. However, my observations from gatherings of AANAPISI staff from across the country are that women make up a majority of AAPI AANAPISI staff. As such, women-identified individuals made up the majority (6 out of 8 participants) of my sample with men in the minority (2 out of 8 participants). Age, professional experience, and ethnicity were harder to determine observationally, so my sampling strategy was to aim for a diversity of representation. Therefore, my sample includes participants with Pacific Islander, East, and Southeast Asian ethnicity, as well as a wide range of ages and professional experience in higher education.

I also used a snowball sampling approach to identify a purposeful sample. Snowball sampling entails the researcher identifying an initial pool of participants and then asking those individuals to recruit other potential participants who might be in their networks. This sampling strategy is used by many qualitative researchers to identify participants who otherwise might have not been identified through other means (Terrell, 2016). The organizational structures of AANAPISI programs vary between institutions and some are quite complex with a combination of full-time professional staff, part-time staff who hold responsibilities in other departments as well as graduate student and temporary employees.

As a result, it might not be immediately obvious to me as an outsider who the individuals with experience most relevant to this study might be. Therefore, snowball sampling offered a way to connect with participants that I otherwise would not have been aware of.

Recruitment

In order to recruit study participants, I reached out via email to program directors of three of the longest running AANAPISI programs in the country. I have assigned these AANAPISIs the following pseudonyms: Pendleton State University, Raft Community College, and Hill Valley Community College. I described my study and requested that they pass my recruitment letter and demographic questionnaire (Appendix B) to any of their current or former staff who might fit my sampling criteria. My recruitment letter outlined the study's purpose, sampling criteria, data collection procedures, and compensation for participants' time. The short demographic questionnaire was to confirm that potential participants met the sampling requirements and to provide information for interview scheduling purposes. This recruitment strategy resulted in recruitment materials being distributed to ten current or former AAPI AANAPISI staff. Of these ten individuals, eight elected to participate in this study, yielding an 80% return rate.

Participants

The goal for participant selection in phenomenological studies is to select participants who have experienced the particular phenomenon that the study is focused on. As described in the previous section, a purposeful sampling strategy was used to select eight participants who met the following sampling criteria: (a) identify as AAPI, (b) work or worked in a professional staff role in an AANAPISI student support program, and (c) have worked or worked in that setting for a minimum of four years.

The participant pool was varied in terms of ethnicity, gender identity, age, and professional experience (see Table 1). In order to protect the confidentiality of study participants, pseudonyms were used in lieu of participants' names and home institutions. Per the study's sampling criteria, all eight study participants identified with an AAPI ethnic subgroup. The ethnic identities represented by study participants are Filipinx (4), Hmong (2), Samoan (1), and Chinese (1). Six participants identified as women and two as men. Although women make up the majority of this sample, this ratio approximates the ratio of women to men in the field of higher education student support as a whole. According to a 2018 analysis of data collected by the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources' data, approximately 71% of higher education student support roles are held by women (Pritchard & McChesney, 2018). The ratio of gender identities also corresponds with my observational estimates of AAPI AANPISI staff gender identity ratios as mentioned in a previous section.

Table 1

Study Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Gender Identity	Ethnic Identity	AANAPISI Program Pseudonym	Years of Professional Experience
Bernard	68	Man	Filipinx	Raft Community College	31
Daisy	62	Woman	Chinese	Raft Community College	36
Houa	27	Woman	Hmong	Greendale Community College & Pendleton State University	4
Jasmine	28	Woman	Hmong	Pendleton State University	5
La'ei	38	Woman	Samoan	Hill Valley Community College	10
Mahalia	30	Woman	Filipinx	Pendleton State University	7
Paco	40	Man	Filipinx	Pendleton State University	11
Rosamie	37	Woman	Filipinx	Pendleton State University & Greendale Community College	6

Note. * Refers to all experience working in higher education including but not limited to experience in AANAPISI programs

The eight participants fell into three general categories in terms of professional experience and age: early career - late 20s through early 30s (3), mid-career - late 30s through early 40s (3), and late career - 60s (2). No participant worked for an AANAPISI program for less than four years or more than six. This data demonstrates that none of the participants had significantly more or less AANAPISI program experience than each other, no matter how much professional experience they had overall. However, this data also reveals that participants embarked on their AANAPISI role at varying points in their career and lifespan. For many of the youngest participants, working for an AANAPISI program was their first full-time professional job out of school. For the eldest group, working for an

AANAPISI program was one of their last professional roles before retiring. I describe each participant in more depth in the next chapter.

AANAPISI Programs

The eight participants held student support staff roles in four different AANAPISI programs: Hill Valley Community College, Greendale Community College, Pendleton State University, and Raft Community College. All four AANAPISI programs are located on the West coast. Three of the four AANAPISI programs are in two-year community colleges. The fourth program (Pendleton State University) is in a public baccalaureate-granting state university.

Hill Valley Community College. Hill Valley Community College's AANAPISI program was founded in the Fall of 2011 and serves a large proportion of Pacific Islander (PI) students including students with Samoan, Native Hawaiian, and Guamanian ethnic identities. Other prominent ethnic demographics include Filipino and Chinese. Unlike many other AANAPISIs, Hill Valley also tends to serve a high number of student athletes and focuses on this experience by having specially focused student athlete events and academic advising. Hill Valley's program is focused on providing culturally sustaining programming designed to correspond with students' cultural identities and community contexts as well as more traditional student support such as academic advising, tutoring, and career counseling. Examples of culturally sustaining programming include fale fono (a Samoan term for house meetings) focused on different topics such as mental health and anti-Asian hate, speaking events with guests from the Filipino American National Historical Society, and a digital storytelling curriculum to highlight AAPI students' stories. Hill Valley's strong incorporation

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of Pacific Islander cultures and experiences is unique compared to other programs discussed in this study.

Greendale Community College. Greendale Community College's AANAPISI program was founded in the Fall of 2010. Vietnamese students make up the majority (72%) of Greendale's AAPI undergraduate student body and are the largest ethnic group served by Greendale's AANAPISI program. Many are recent immigrants to the U.S. and English language learners. Therefore, a large focus of the program is on supporting Vietnamese students' transition to from ESL to college-level coursework and eventually to complete an associate's degree (B. Nguyen, 2019). Examples of programming include a seven-level ESL curriculum, supplemental instruction in English, math, and science, peer mentoring, and a program for faculty and staff to mentor students. Of the AANAPISI programs discussed in this paper, Greendale's program has the heaviest emphasis on ESL curricula and programming.

Pendleton State University. Unlike the other AANAPISI programs mentioned in this study, Pendleton State University's program is located in a baccalaureate-granting university. Pendleton's AANAPISI program was founded in the Fall of 2011. Hmong and Filipino students make up the most predominately served ethnic groups. The program is focused on creating a pan-ethnic AAPI community with academic and social support opportunities seamlessly embedded. Examples of programming include culturally relevant learning communities anchored in Asian American Studies and Ethnic Studies courses and a culturally relevant leadership development program, as well as advising and career counseling support. Of the AANAPISIs mentioned, Pendleton's program seems to have the heaviest focus on Ethnic Studies and Asian American Studies curriculum.

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Raft Community College. Raft Community College's AANAPISI program was founded in 2008 after receiving funding in the very first AANAPISI grant competition. The predominant ethnic groups served are Chinese and Filipino students with smaller demographics of Pacific Islander and Vietnamese students. Like Greendale Community College, Raft's AANAPISI program has a strong focus on supporting English language learning students to transition from developmental to college-level coursework and eventually to complete an associate's degree. More so than any of the other AANAPISI programs mentioned above, Raft's program also focuses on faculty development with the goal of raising faculty awareness of the experiences, needs, and strengths of Raft's AAPI students through trainings, discussions, and reading groups.

Procedures

I collected data through long semi-structured interviews. According to Moustakas (1994), phenomenological studies tend to rely on the long interview as the primary data collection procedure. The "data" of phenomenology and other human sciences are human experiences (van Manen, 1990, p. 63). Therefore, in order to examine the nature of any given phenomenon, the researcher must ask people about their experiences. The interview is one way to do so by gathering narrative experiential data that can be used to create a rich and deep understanding of that phenomenon (van Manen, 1990).

All interviews took place via video conference as necessitated by public health travel restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes and were audio recorded with participants' consent. Recordings were transcribed using a professional transcription service. I wrote memos after each interview to reflect upon each interview process and to take note of any connections that I noticed emerging from the data.

All participants were given a $40 gift card as a token of appreciation for their time. The gift cards were sent via email after the conclusion of the interview. Interview transcripts were coded and analyzed using NVivo software according to phenomenological data analysis procedures as described in the following sections.

Instrumentation

Data collection was guided by a semi-structured phenomenological interview protocol that I developed (Appendix C). My interview questions were broad and focused on eliciting rich and detailed descriptions of participants' experiences. According to Moustakas (1994), the phenomenological interview consists of open-ended questions and is informal and interactive in nature. The interview protocol I developed contained three sections. The first section focused on the participant's experiences working in an AANAPISI program. The second explored the participant's background and identity. More specifically, this section explored any ways that the participant perceived their racial and ethnic identities playing any role in their professional lives. The third and final section focused on how the participant's experience working in an AANAPISI program may have impacted their professional identity development. The interview protocol was effective and was used throughout the eight interviews. However, small adjustments were made during some interviews depending on participants' reactions to various the questions or topics.

Although phenomenological interview questions tend to be general and broad in nature, the goal of the phenomenological interview is to stay close to the participants' lived experiences. Therefore, van Manen (1990) suggests anchoring the exploration of a participant's experience in initial questions that ask about the experience in concrete and specific terms. Asking about a specific event or person, for example, may be useful before

asking questions that build from those responses to explore the experience as a whole. Therefore, each section of my interview protocol began with narrowly focused questions before broadening to make connections regarding the ways their professional identity development may have been shaped by the experience of working for an AANAPISI program. For example, the first series of interview questions focused on participants' experiences working in their AANAPISI program opens with a concrete and tangible question asking participants to describe a typical workday: "Describe a typical workday as an AANAPISI [job title]." The subsequent questions become more abstract and incorporate participants' racial and/or ethnic identity: "Does your identity as [racial and/or ethnic identity] impact your work? How so?" The series of questions closes by asking participants to describe how the overall experience working for AANAPISI has shaped their sense of self as an AAPI: "Has working for an AANAPISI program impacted your sense of yourself as [racial and/or ethnic identity]?"

My interview protocol was informed by my conceptual framework of Slay and Smith's (2011) theory of professional identity development for People of Color (POC) and Museus et al.'s (2012) theory of cultural integration and campus subcultures (Appendix D). The first section consisted of questions regarding participants' experiences working for an AANAPISI program. Interview questions were based on Museus et al.'s (2012) theory that POC at PWIs are most apt to experience cultural integration when they have access to certain day-to-day conditions including culturally validating physical spaces and the opportunity to work with culturally validating curricula. As such, the purpose of this section was to illustrate the day-to-day conditions of working in an AANAPISI program and the degree to which participants may have experienced any of conditions that Museus et al. (2012) outline.

Questions in this section included: "Can you think of any experiences or relationships that were particularly impactful for you?" The second protocol section consisted of questions regarding participants' perceptions of the role, if any, that their racial and ethnic identities played in their professional lives. This protocol section was informed by Museus et al.'s (2012) theory that ethnic subcultures are uniquely apt to provide POC with the experience of cultural integration. The purpose of this section was to determine if participants had experienced any semblance of cultural integration and if so, what factors may have been at play. Questions in this section included: "Does your identity as [racial and/or ethnic identity] impact your work? How so?" Lastly, my third interview protocol section consisted of questions regarding how participant's experience working in an AANAPISI program may have impacted their professional identity development. This section leaned upon Slay and Smith's (2011) theory that POC in predominately White workplaces may experience professional identity development through the process of identity "redefinition" in which their perceptions of themselves shift to include a sense of pride in the ways their racial and ethnic identities benefit their professional work and vice versa. The purpose of this section was to flesh out how and why participants may or may not have experienced professional identify development and identity "redefinition." Questions in this section included: "Has working for AANAPISI impacted your sense of yourself as [racial and/or ethnic identity]?"

Data Analysis

Although numerous phenomenological data analysis procedures exist, Moustakas' (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method (Figure 1) is a frequently used strategy that offers a structured system of steps for phenomenological data analysis (Creswell, 1998). I utilized this approach to analyze the interview data I collected from my

eight participants. I offer a general description of analytic steps here. In Chapters 4 and 5, I

show how I engaged these steps with my data and I present the results of this process.

Figure 1

Moustakas' (1994) Modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen Method
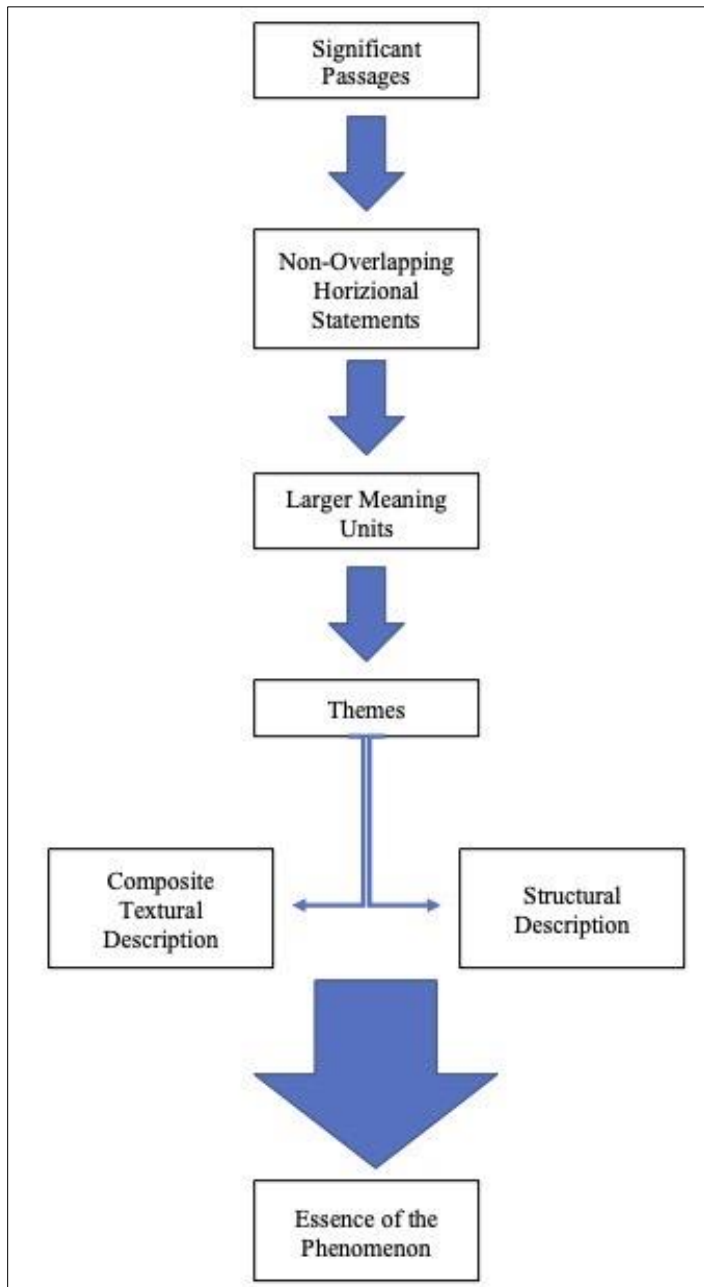
After obtaining transcripts of the interview audio recordings from a professional transcription service, I first studied each transcript thorough multiple reads. Second, I selected particularly significant statements or passages from each transcript. Depending on the interview, these statements may have related to participants' racial, ethnic, or cultural identities, their experience working in an AANAPISI program, or any professional identity development they may have experienced. Through the selection of these significant passages, I followed the process of horizlonalizing in that I treated each statement made by participants with equal worth and weight (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994). Third, I pared these statements down into a list of non-overlapping horizonal statements. Fourth, I organized these statements into larger meanings units. Fifth, I clustered these meanings units into even larger overarching themes. Sixth, I drew from these themes to write a composite textural description. This description highlighted the commonalities of participants' experiences working for AANAPISI programs and any professional identity development they may have experienced. In composing this composite textural description, I created a richly detailed portrayal of the experience of working for an AANAPISI program as an AAPI staff member. In other words, the textural description focused on *what* participants experienced. Seventh, I wrote a structural description of the experience in which I explored divergent perspectives and larger frames of reference in regards to the phenomenon. This description fleshed out the larger context that AAPI AANAPISI staff experience reside within. Instead of delving deeply into what that experience was like, this structural description focused on the larger contexts surrounding staff experiences (Creswell, 2014). Lastly, I drew from the textural and structural descriptions in combination to distill the essence of the experience and write an overall description of the experience. By bringing together the composite textural description

of participants' experiences with the structural description of the larger contexts that these experiences took place within, my overall description distills the essence of the AAPI AANAPISI staff experience.

Trustworthiness

The purpose of trustworthiness is to ensure the reader that a study's findings are "worth paying attention to, worth taking account of" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). In other words, study findings must be trustworthy for others to feel comfortable believing them and putting them into action to improve social conditions (Rossman & Rallis, 2011). Researchers use different terms and concepts to describe trustworthiness and validity (Creswell, 2014). Rossman and Rallis (2011) envision trustworthiness as three factors that all studies should be exemplify. These concepts are truth value (the accuracy of findings), rigor (the study's methodology), and generalizability and significance (the usefulness of study findings). Researchers can rely on many different strategies to enhance the trustworthiness of their studies. Creswell (2014) recommends the use of multiple strategies to help the researcher ensure the validity and trustworthiness of their findings.

To enhance the trustworthiness of this study, I employed the strategies of member checking, thick descriptions, and reflexivity. Member checking helps to hone the accuracy of a study's findings by asking study participants to review the report, in its final stage or while it is in progress, to ensure that they feel their perspective is accurately portrayed (Creswell, 2014; Terrell, 2016). I performed member checking by sharing with participants the significant passages that I pulled from their interview transcript that I hoped to use in the horizonalizing step of data analysis. I asked participants to review the significant passages to ensure that their perspectives were adequately portrayed. I incorporated participants'

feedback and made edits where requested. My participants were wonderful to work with and were cooperative and timely with their feedback. Edits were minimal and easy to incorporate.

Providing thick, rich descriptions was another strategy I used to bolster the trustworthiness of my findings. I attempted to provide as much detail and description when describing participants' experiences and the contexts in which they took place. By offering layers of description, a study's findings become more vivid and realistic to a reader. Therefore, the reader will have a better sense of the findings' transferability, or non-transferability, to other contexts (Creswell, 1994). While this study's findings suggest some overarching themes regarding professional identity development amongst AAPI AANAPISI staff, my hope is that by also providing details of each participant's experience, readers will understand that participants' experiences are not necessarily universal and were specific to their individual personal and professional life contexts.

Lastly, I also practiced researcher reflexivity. This process is an essential aspect of hermeneutic phenomenological research and requires that the researcher clarify at the outset of the study any past experiences, biases, or existing orientations that might shape their approach to or interpretation of the findings. Expressing these issues upfront helps the reader understand the researcher's positionality in relation to the study and helps the researcher be mindful of the particular lens that they bring to the study. My researcher reflexivity process consisted of reflective memo writing prior to data analysis, as well as the composition of the positionality statement in Chapter 4. The memo writing process prompted me to take a step back from the various steps of the research process and instead reflect more broadly upon my motivations for this study. I reflected upon my personal and professional relationship with AANAPISI programs and how various findings might impact that relationship. Memo

writing forced me to examine my own relationship to my topic and ways that this relationship may impact my perceptions of my study findings. The process of memo writing helped me to get clearer about how I felt about those issues.

Limitations

As Mertens (1998) reminds us, it is impossible to conduct a perfect research study. However, it is the researcher's duty to recognize and acknowledge a study's faults (Terrell, 2016). Therefore, the following section outlines some of the limitations that this study presents. One limitation is that findings do not inform any questions regarding the long-term process of professional identity development. Data collected only portray participants' perceptions of their professional identity development at a given moment in time. This only provides a snapshot of an individual's professional identity development which is always and evolving throughout one's life (Dollarhide et al., 2013). Therefore, any insight into participants' professional identity development experiences as shared with me during data collection cannot be generalized to form any longer-term conclusions. Years from now, participants will likely begin very different places terms of their professional identity development.

Another limitation that should be kept mind when considering this study's findings is that the sample is not representative of full diversity of the AAPI AANAPISI staff population. Although the sample met my goals in terms of achieving variation and representation of what I have observed to be the most prominent demographics amongst AAPI AANAPISI staff, certain aspects of the AAPI AANAPISI staff population were not represented. For example, none of my participants were from AANAPISI programs on the East coast or in the Pacific Islands. Similarly, none of my participants identified as multi-

racial or multi-ethnic. These geographic and identity-based characteristics likely influence AAPI AANAPISI staff members' professional identity development experiences. Although it would have been practically impossible to create a sample that was wholly representative of all AAPI AANAPISI staff, it is important to acknowledge whose voices and experiences were not represented.

Another limitation is that I did not have the capacity to disaggregate findings according to the diversity of participants' contexts. For example, the push to disaggregate data on AAPI individuals and communities based on ethnicity is driven by the fact that experiences and outcomes vary so widely across AAPI ethnic groups. In their interviews, participants spoke to the ways that various aspects of their background or life context played a role in their professional identity development. These factors were not limited to ethnic diversity which is usually the basis for most calls for AAPI data disaggregation. However, participants revealed how other aspects were also impactful including being growing up in a predominately White community or being raised in a polygamous household. For the purposes of this study, I did not have the resources to bring this level of analysis to my findings. However, this could be the basis for a future study.

CHAPTER 4

PHENOMENOLOGICAL REDUCTION

Interviews with AAPI AANAPISI staff revealed much about their experiences

working in AANAPISI programs and how these experiences shaped their professional

identities. Data collected through interviews with the eight participants addressed the study's

purpose to understand the phenomenon of professional identity development of AAPI

AANAPISI program staff. In this chapter, I provide some contextual information related to

the eight study participants and an analysis of the interview data using Moustakas' (1994)

modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method. Before doing so, I first share how my

position as an AAPI AANAPISI program staff member shaped my relationship to the

phenomenon of AAPI professional identity development.

Interrogating Self in the Study

Qualitative inquiry is interpretive research. Therefore, it is important that researchers

reflect upon any previous experiences with the research problem, setting, or study

participants as well as any aspects of their personal background, such as racial and ethnic

identity, culture, and socioeconomic status that may directly tie the researcher to the study.

Furthermore, the researcher should be explicit about the ways that these experiences or

backgrounds may shape their view of data and direction of the study (Creswell, 2014). In

particular, phenomenologists are deeply concerned with the ways that researchers' own

experiences shape phenomenological study. While some earlier phenomenologists believe that researchers should hold their personal life experiences, identities, and beliefs separate from their study (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), others believe that researcher subjectivity plays a crucial role in the phenomenological research process (van Manen, 1990).

My own thinking regarding my subjectivity as an Asian American AANAPISI program director with numerous personal and professional ties to this study's phenomenon of interest has been informed by the work of other Asian American phenomenologists doing research involving Asian American individuals and communities (Lee, 2018; Motoike, 2003; Yi Borromeo, 2018). In particular, I found Yi Borromeo's (2018) phenomenological work on the higher educational experiences of Southeast Asian Americans to be particularly compelling and helpful. As a Southeast Asian American, Yi Borromeo carries her own deeply personal experiences, beliefs, and questions regarding her study's phenomenon of interest. However, she is clear that although her interest in her study's topic was inspired by personal factors, this fact need not prohibit rigorous phenomenological analysis. Like other phenomenologists of color (Ortega, 2016; Villarreal, 2020), Yi Borromeo suggests that the phenomenological notion of truly neutral selfhood is rooted in hegemonic Eurocentric colonial thinking and is not a universal requirement of good research. While she acknowledges that her personal interest in her work may not allow her to approach it with a completely neutral perspective, she also pushes back on the idea of any truly neutral omniscient perspective and if it can exist in any study.

Like Yi Borromeo (2018), I have numerous ties to this study's phenomenon of interest. I identify as an Asian American and as a Korean American adoptee, and I have been involved with the University of Massachusetts Boston's (UMass Boston) AANAPISI student

support program, the Asian American Student Success Program (AASSP), for the past eight years. Over the years, my role and responsibilities with AASSP have shifted and changed. Most recently, I became AASSP's director after the program's founding director, Dr. Pat Neilson, retired in 2018.

I first connected with AASSP as a graduate student in the UMass Boston's American Studies Program. I worked with the program, first as a volunteer and then as a work study student. The AASSP staff were, and continue to be, important mentors in my life. I began working for the program in a full-time professional capacity after receiving my master's degree at UMB. I learned many personal and professional lessons under Dr. Neilson's skillful guidance. Working for AASSP also exposed me to the wider AANAPISI national scene. A number of national conferences have become de facto convenings of the nation's AANAPISI staff. Given our relatively small and tight knit community, it has been a pleasure to see the ways that programs and the individuals affiliated with them have grown over the years. Attending and presenting at these national conferences allowed me to see the diversity of AANAPISI programs and the impact that they have.

My experiences as an AAPI AANAPISI staff member mean that I may be considered an "insider" to the community that I sought to study. I have first-hand experience with some of the contexts and individuals that my study participants described in their interviews. Given that this study utilized a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology, I followed Heidegger's school of thought that suggests a researcher's previous experiences with a phenomenon can be an asset to a study if the researcher deliberately and transparently takes note of and questions the ways that their own subjectivity impacts and is impacted throughout the research process (Hopkins et al., 2016). Therefore, I was careful to disclose

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my positionality as an AAPI AANAPISI staff member and the director of UMB's

AANAPISI student support program at the beginning of all participant recruitment

conversations. By disclosing this information up front, I made sure that participants were

aware of my positionality in relation to the study and their professional contexts before

agreeing to share their experiences with me.

I believe that my positionality functioned as an asset that allowed me to make

informed sampling decisions, as well as gaining access to and building rapport with

participants. As an AANAPISI project director with existing connections to a number of

AANAPISI programs around the country, I was able to make sampling decisions that yielded

the variation that I sought. I knew who to reach out to in order to achieve sample variation in

terms of age, professional experience, and ethnicity. I was able to use existing connections

within the AANAPISI community to successfully recruit my desired number of participants

quite quickly. I was already familiar and friendly with those I was reaching out to and not

"cold calling." Lastly, I had previously met the majority of my participants and their

colleagues through national AANAPISI gatherings. Therefore, I was able to begin each

interview informally by asking how programs were running and how our mutual

acquaintances were doing. This allowed me to build rapport with participants and establish a

sense of ease before turning to the interview questions.

During the analysis phase of this project, my thinking around my positionality in this

study was heavily informed by Dwyer and Buckle's (2009) notion of researcher positionality

in "the space between" (p. 60). This idea challenges the dichotomy of researcher positionality

as either insider or outsider to the community that is being studied. Much qualitative research

is based upon the notion that human experience is complex, fluid, and multilayered.

However, the dichotomy of the researcher as either insider or outsider does not allow for this complexity. I will not experience my work as an AAPI AANAPISI staff member in the exact same way as another AAPI individual in the same role. Having certain shared experiences does not guarantee that I will have the same perceptions or reactions as other AAPI AANAPISI staff. This notion was helpful to bear in mind as I reviewed my data and began to realize that the professional identity developed experiences of the AAPI AANAPISI staff I interviewed in some instances were quite different than my own. It was a humbling experience to delve into data on a subject that I thought I knew so much about only to realize that participants' experiences in some cases completely contradicted my expectations. In sum, while I may have been an "insider" in the AAPI AANAPISI staff member community, I became increasingly aware that my professional identity development experiences as an AAPI AANAPISI staff member were not universal and that I could not presume to know what others' experiences were like.

Introducing the Participants

Bernard

Bernard is a 68-year-old Filipino American man. His parents immigrated from the Philippines before meeting and getting married in the U.S. Bernard's father was in the military, so Bernard was born on a military base on the West Coast. His family moved to the Pacific Northwest a few months after he was born, and he has spent most of his life attending predominately White schools. Bernard's parents were heavily involved in the Filipino community at a local Catholic church with his father founding and serving as the president of a Filipino community group. Bernard followed in his father's footsteps attending the United States Military Academy at West Point before embarking on a career in the military. The

military sent him to graduate school at a large state university on the East Coast where he earned a master's degree in English literature. After receiving his degree, Bernard returned to his childhood home, was hired as an English instructor at Raft Community College and took up his father's role as the leader of the Filipino group at his church. As the leader of this group, he organizes dinners for the whole congregation serving Filipino food, a Filipino choir, and traditional Filipino dance performances by local youth. He retired from Raft Community College at the end of 2020.

Daisy

Daisy is a 62-year-old Chinese American woman. Both of her parents were very involved in the Chinese community in the same region as Bernard. Her father worked with the state's governor to provide English interpretation and support for local families making funeral arrangements to mourn Chinese American families who died in World War II. Her grandfather started a Chinese grocery store in 1905 in the city where Daisy grew up, and her father took it over after he retired. She was raised in a family of educators. Daisy, her mother, and her sister all worked as ELL instructors. She became involved with Raft Community College's AANAPISI program at the invitation of Raft's Vice President of Student Services who had answered the U.S. Department of Education's first call for AANAPISI grant proposals in 2008. Raft received an award and the program was in need of staff. At that time, Daisy was a tenured faculty member in Raft's Basic Skills program. She stepped away from these duties to work in Raft Community College's AANAPISI program. At the time of her interview, she had worked in the program for four and a half years.

Houa

Houa is a 26-year-old Hmong American woman. She was born and raised in a city that is home to a large Hmong community in California. When she was growing up, a large influx of Hmong immigrants from Thailand and Laos settled in the area. Houa attended Pendleton State University and participated in their AANAPISI as an undergraduate. She was hired by the program to work as a Student Assistant and then as a Peer Mentor. After receiving her bachelor's degree in Film Studies with a minor in Asian American Studies, she pursued a master's degree in Higher Education at a large public university. While completing her graduate degree, one of Houa's mentors connected her to the AANAPISI program director at nearby Greendale Community College. She worked part time in Greendale's AANAPISI program while completing her master's degree, then was hired as a full-time staff member. After Greendale's AANAPISI grant cycle concluded, she moved back home and was hired to work full time at Pendleton State's AANAPISI program. Working at both Greendale and Pendleton State has allowed her to get an intimate view of the differences and similarities between two very successful AANAPISI programs.

Jasmine

Jasmine is a 28-year-old Hmong American woman. She grew up in a large Hmong community in the same area as Houa. She is the middle child in a family of 13 siblings and began working at the age of 15 to help support her family. She was the only sibling to attend college and continues to be the family's breadwinner. Jasmine earned a bachelor's degree in Ethnic Studies with a concentration in Asian American Studies. Before working for Pendleton State's AANAPISI program, she taught middle school students in after school and summer programs. Although she enjoyed the experience overall, it also made her realize that

she did not want to be a teacher. She began working with Pendleton State's AANAPISI program as an undergraduate student. During her junior year at Pendleton, the AANAPISI program sent her to a graduate student experience program at a large state school on the East Coast. She applied and was accepted to the program, so she moved cross country after finishing her undergraduate degree to pursue a master's degree in Higher Education. After graduate school, she returned to Pendleton to work full time with the AANAPISI program. She ended up deciding to leave her role with her AANAPISI program to accept another job at Pendleton as an academic advisor. She is also a new mom and looking forward to raising a family.

La'ei

La'ei is a 38-year-old Pacific Islander Samoan American woman. She was born in Independent Samoa and raised in California. Her passion for working with AAPI students became clear to her as an undergraduate student working in a college access program for Pacific Islander youth. She attended a community college before earning her bachelor's degree in southern California. As a product of community college herself, working at a community college became a goal for her early on in her career. She moved to the East Coast to attend graduate school and earned a master's degree in social work. She remained there for a few years working at a private four-year college before returning to California to pursue her career goal of working with AAPI students in a community college setting. Shortly after relocating, she was hired to work at Hill Valley Community College's AANAPISI program.

Mahalia

Mahalia is a 30-year-old Filipino Ilocano American woman. She began working with Pendleton State's AANAPISI program as an undergraduate student, serving as an

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instructional student assistant in the program's learning community. Prior to being connected to the AANAPISI program, she was very active with Pendleton's Ethnic Studies program. One of her Ethnic Studies professors who taught Asian American Studies courses in Pendleton's AANAPISI learning community introduced her to the program. After obtaining her bachelor's degree in Ethnic Studies with a concentration in Asian American Studies, Mahalia completed a master's degree in higher education at a large state school on the East Coast. During her time in graduate school, she knew that she wanted to work in higher education student support of some sort but was not sure in exactly what setting or role. However, when she returned to California after finishing her degree, Pendleton's AANAPISI program was hiring and she took on a full time role. At Pendleton, Mahalia has become involved with the AAPI Faculty Staff Association, serving on the group's leadership team. Her future goals are focused on developing her leadership skills and experience.

Paco

Paco is a 40-year-old Filipino American man. He graduated from a large state school in Northern California with a double major in Asian American Studies and psychology. During his time as an undergraduate, Paco became involved with community organizations in the local area and on campus. He also worked at a student-run recruitment and retention center that provided college access and support services for underrepresented AAPI students at local high schools and community colleges. He came to work for Pendleton State's AANAPISI program right around the time he was finished his master's degree in Counseling at Pendleton. As a part of that program, he completed an internship working with another program on campus with a similar focus on supporting underrepresented college students. He was looking for jobs and came across the AANAPISI job posting. It immediately attracted

him as someone with a strong background and passion for Asian American Studies and student support services. At the time of the interview, he had been working with Pendleton's AANAPISI program for 5 years.

Rosamie

Rosamie is a 37-year-old Asian American and Filipino American woman. Prior to becoming involved with either of the AANAPISI programs that she worked in, Rosamie worked at Pendleton State's health center running a suicide prevention program. She happened to deliver a workshop on mental health and suicide prevention for Pendleton State's AANAPISI staff. They were impressed with her work and the admiration was mutual. Shortly afterwards, a position opened up in the AANAPISI program and the program's director reached out to encourage her to apply. Rosamie got the job and worked with the AANAPISI program for two years while also pursing an Ed.D. at Pendleton. In 2018, she was invited to continue her studies in a Ph.D. program at a different institution. After some deliberation, she decided to make the move. Given that she was already well connected in the AANAPISI community after her time with Pendleton, she was familiar with Greendale Community College's AANAPISI program director. Greendale's director reached out to her while she was in the midst of moving and offered her a position on his staff.

From Individual Experience to Non-Overlapping Horizonal Statements

As I outlined in Chapter 3, I utilized Moustakas' (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of phenomenological analysis to make sense of the interview data gleaned from the eight participants. After multiple reviews of each transcript, I followed the process of horizonalizing in which I worked through each transcript to select particularly significant passages and pared these statements into a list of 13 non-overlapping horizonal

statements. This was the most daunting step of the analysis process. Although each step of

the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method requires that I group large amounts of data into smaller

categories, collapsing significant passages scattered throughout eight 25-page interview

transcripts into 13 single sentence horizonal statements required me to work with a much

larger volume of text than other successive steps. However, non-overlapping statements

began emerging in my mind even throughout the interview process. As I listened to

participants sharing their experience, I would recall connections to previous participants'

interviews. Memo writing was crucial in this step to keep this information organized. It

allowed me to start fleshing out similarities and differences between participants'

experiences and how I could work this information into the non-overlapping horizonal

statements. Here, I describe the 13 non-overlapping horizional statements, which I enrich

with data from participant interviews. Horizonal statements are listed in no particular order.

AANAPISI Program Positions Allowed Staff to Explore and Be Exposed to a Wide Variety of Roles and Functions

Instead of having a single job function like academic advisors and career service

specialists, AANAPISI staff do recruitment work in high schools, run programs with local

Asian community organizations, develop mentoring programs, and teach courses – all while

supporting students' academic planning and career development. As Houa noted, working in

Pendleton State's AANAPISI program mean that "[w]hen I graduated, I had so much

experience in higher ed." This wide breadth of experience allowed some participants to zero

in on specific interests to pursue in future roles. For example, Jasmine said,

> I did a lot of everything. We were teaching, I was doing recruiting, I was doing
>
> outreach, I was doing programming. I was doing all of these things. And what I got

out of that was [that] I realized that I really enjoyed academic advising, working with

students one-on-one, helping them figure out what schedule to choose for next

semester, and so on.

Others came to realize that their passions might lie outside of traditional higher education

roles such as community organizing and advocacy work.

Staff Experienced Holistic Mentoring From Other AAPI Staff and Supervisors Beyond Support Carrying Out Job Responsibilities

Mentors helped staff think more deeply about what it means to be AAPI, what it

means to be AAPI in the field of higher education, and what their true personal and

professional passions might be. Staff described how their mentors cared deeply about their

development as people and as fellow AAPIs, not just as employees hired to perform a job.

Moreover, staff reported that their mentors helped them to make sense of their identities as

AAPIs, first generation professionals, and individuals from underrepresented ethnic groups

working in the field of higher education. For instance, Houa said,

My supervisor, he was always really good at centering my identity with being a

student assistant and what that meant. And just bringing in things to talk about that

were happening in society. It was those interactions that helped me to really

understand my identity.

Staff Realized That if They Were Going to Encourage Students to Explore and Be Proud of Their AAPI Identities, They Had to Model This Themselves

Many AANAPISI programs include identity-based programming to help students

develop a positive sense of racial and ethnic identity as AAPIs. The experience of developing

and implementing these programs along with their AAPI AANAPISI staff colleagues was

impactful and led staff to explore their own AAPI identities. Moreover, staff saw it as their responsibility to be proud of their AAPI identities if that was what they wanted for their students. For some staff, identity exploration was something they had been exposed to through previous involvement in local AAPI communities, Ethnic Studies coursework, or participation in AANAPISI programs as students themselves. For others, this was new territory that was scary but transformative for AAPI staff members' sense of self. Regardless of previous identity exploration experience, AAPI AANAPISI staff saw racial and ethnic identity exploration as something that they wanted to engage in themselves so that they could model it for their students. As Paco said,

> I always believed in this idea that I can't take students where I want them to go unless I'm willing to go there myself… And if exploring personal identity or issues surrounding Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are things that we wanted to make sure that they engage in, then I had to constantly do that myself. And as a Filipino American, I dug deeper into this idea of Asia American and Pacific Islander. Am I Asian and Pacific Islander?

Staff Experienced Validation of Life Experiences Working With AAPI Colleagues and Supervisors

This was especially true for those who had previously worked in predominately White educational and professional settings and experienced painful dismissal of their life experiences. In contrast, AAPI staff reported feeling a sense of belonging in their AANAPISI workplaces that they had not in other roles. Unlike in predominately White spaces, they enjoyed being able to comfortably express their ideas and life experiences related to race, racism, and culture. As La'ei explained,

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working in a lot of White spaces, it's just like…"Where's the backup empirical data

for [what you are telling us about the experiences of AAPI students]?" And it's just

hard for me to be like, "Oh, well there's no data on it because it hasn't been studied

yet. There's no research on it. You're asking for me for my opinion and I'm telling

you my experience, but there's no research on it…

Now working in Hill Valley's AANAPISI program, she shared that, "it's sort of a relief

because [it's] like, "Ok, my experience was valid." For Houa, being a staff member in

Pendelton State's AANAPISI program, working with "peers who looked like[her]," was

culturally validating. She said,

I became more comfortable speaking Hmong. I remember my first time in a long time

wearing Hmong clothes to Hmong New Year because [the AANAPISI program] made

it a point to attend Hmong New Year. Just really celebrating the students and

celebrating with them.

Additional Validation Came From Other Members of the Larger Campus Community

The visibility of AANAPISI programs on campus meant that staff members'

work was often noticed by others on campus. Staff felt a sense of validation and pride

when others reached out to them to applaud their work. According to Rosamie,

[Pendleton's AANAPISI program] just had such an impact in the community and on

campus that you were just seen as sort of – I mean, this is sort of hyperbole – But like, I

just felt like everyone loved us so much! And I was overwhelmed by that level of love.

Because I was just literally doing my job, you know?

Mahalia was invited to introduce a speaker at Pendleton State's anti-racism convocation as a

representative of the institution's AANAPISI program. Her brief remarks captured the

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attention of an AAPI woman in a leadership role who sent Mahalia "a message right after saying 'Oh, you did such a great job!'" For Mahalia, getting these "short affirmation messages has been helpful."

Validation Also Came From Regional and National Networks

Working for an AANAPISI program allowed staff access to national networks such as APAHE (the Asian Pacific Americans in Higher Education national professional organization). These networks connected staff to supportive individuals and opportunities to share their successes on a large scale. This was the case for Rosamie who said that

> because of the [AANAPISI convenings that we participated in], specifically at APAHE, I was connected to so many folks that really cared about my trajectory as a professional…I developed so much friendship because of my association to [Pendleton State AANAPISI].

Paco likewise shared that

> at APAHE someone from the East coast told us, "Oh, you're [Pendleton State AANAPISI?! You're part of [that program]? I've heard about you!"…It's definitely validating. And yeah, I'm not gonna lie. It's a great feeling.

AANAPISI Programs Became Important Community Spaces in Staff Members' Lives

Staff described a feeling of community, family, and camaraderie shared among colleagues and students that they, in addition to their students, benefitted from. This feeling of connectedness ran deep and helped some staff to feel a sense of stability and rootedness in the face of other stresses and changes in their lives. For example, Paco reflected,

> It was great for me personally because I felt like I was part of a big family. Not just a community but a big family. We got our community but then my family was the

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program staff…We were fortunate enough to have our own space on campus and you had a lot of people constantly. The regulars were there and we would meet over there. When you're constantly seeing the people, that's part of that community. And I think it fosters it even more.

Staff Experienced Validation of Professional Skills and Empowerment in Their Work

Supervisors were supportive and respected staff members' experience and insight. They sought out staff members' insight when making decisions leading staff to feel as if their professional expertise was trusted and valued. Staff felt validated and empowered in their professional roles. Supervisors trusted staff members' abilities and sometimes pushed staff to take on opportunities outside of their comfort zone. They had faith that their staff would succeed and grow from the experience. La'ei recalled,

Coming into [Hill Valley's AANAPISI program], it was empowering. It felt different. When I first would say things and [my supervisor] was open and encouraging. Like, "Well, what do you think?"…Or I might have mentioned something in passing or have commented on an event or something saying, "Oh, I don't think they should do it that way, but that's fine." And she'll take that same conversation and she'll [bring me into conversations she's having with other department heads] saying, "Well, La'ei mentioned this, so I'm going to include her on this email so that she can explain what her experiences working with our students are." And I think that's definitely validating.

AANAPISI Programs Were Far From Homogenous and Introduced Staff to AAPI Experiences Unlike Their Own

Staff reported experiencing many cultural differences and disconnects with other staff and students that allowed them to appreciate the various divergences in AAPI cultures and experiences. For example, Pacific Islander staff learned about Southeast Asian cultural traditions that they had never encountered before and vice versa. According to Bernard,

> [Our program's Pacific Islander staff member] was bringing in [Pacific Islander speakers to give informational presentations to the students. One of group] was the Fa'afafine. They're a kind of third gender…[The presentation] was fascinating. The [audience] really wanted to know all about this and [that, but] the other Pacific Islanders [in the audience] could not understand this big curiosity because to them that was normal….So this was like 2010, 2011 before all the LGBTQ+ rights and transgender rights [movements]. But that's the beauty of what AANAPISI has done. It just brought in all of these types of things.

Reflecting on learning about AAPI cultures and experiences and developing "cultural competency," La'ei said it's about "understanding the spaces and the nuances." Her students played a significant role in teaching her about cultures other than her own as a Samoan Pacific Islander American. She illustrated this point with a story about trying to create graduation gifts for students that consisted of framed pictures that students and parents could sign. This project was abandoned when a Chinese American student noted that the framed photos looked similar to those that were displayed at Chinese funerals.

> One of our students… was just like, "Hey, I just want to say, in my background, having a frame like that the way it's looking right now, it looks like what we have at our

funerals." And we were just like, "Nope, ok scratch that idea! We have to think of

something else." So it's having our students chime in and understanding that there are

cultural nuances and we want to pay respect to that.

In addition to learning about various AAPI cultures, staff coming from more

socioeconomically and educationally privileged backgrounds learned first-hand from their

students about the poverty that exists in many AAPI communities.

The Experiences and Cultural Knowledge That Staff Brought to Their Jobs Were Assets

That Allowed Them to Be More Effective in Their Work

AAPI AANAPISI staff brought life experiences and cultural knowledge to their role

that functioned as assets in their work. For example, staff reported that the life experiences

and cultural knowledge as AAPIs allowed them to understand aspects of students' lives that

impacted their higher educational experiences such as cultural perception of finances or

familial obligations at home. Staff also reported that sharing an AAPI identity with their

students made students to feel more comfortable seeking out assistance. Staff from other

departments began to recognize the unique expertise that AAPI AANAPISI staff members

carried as skilled student support staff familiar with AAPI cultures and experiences. Some

participants reported that non-AAPI colleagues from other departments would reach out to

invite AANAPISI staff input on their projects. This became a point of pride for many

participants. Paco said,

> [P]eople would actually reach out to us like, "Hey, we're thinking of putting this
>
> [event] on. What do you all think? And I think that's the power of representation.
>
> Like, they want to make sure that they consult with or include you in the planning

process for whatever it is that they're thinking of to ensure that they're being inclusive of the AAPI population.

Working for AANAPISI Programs Pushed Participants to Appreciate the Importance of Their Existing Personal and Professional Connections to AAPI Communities

Staff were connected to AAPI communities to greater or lesser extents in their personal lives. Regardless of how involved participants were in AAPI communities, working for an AANAPISI program shaped their personal and professional connections to AAPI communities. For example, staff may have grown up attending community events with their parents but felt too "Americanized" to claim these spaces as their own. Working in an AANAPISI gave them a sense of legitimacy to see themselves as part of an AAPI community. For instance, Bernard shared,

> My parents had started a Filipino community here in [my hometown], and I'm the current president. When they passed on, my brother took it over. Then he left. He lives in Hawaii with his wife and they wanted to me to be the president. But back then it was like, "Why me?" I don't speak the language [like my parents and brothers did], so there are times that I feel like I'm a poser. But then I realized, "Well, I am who I am." Now I just embrace it, and all the stuff that I learned about [through my AANAPISI work] in terms of equity, diversity, and inclusion, I'm bringing it into my life in my connections [to the community].

Others were already confident in their place in AAPI communities, but the AANAPISI program work allowed them see their role in AAPI communities from a new perspective. As La'ei said,

Before [working in the AANAPISI program], I already had a sense of belonging and

rootedness within my own identity as a PI woman. [W]orking in the space, it just

validated what I already knew.

Staff Saw Their Work With AANAPISI as a Responsibility to Their AAPI Communities

As AAPIs with professional expertise navigating systems of higher education that are

often unwelcoming to AAPIs, staff felt that they owed it to their communities to give back by

using the privilege of their professional roles. This sense of responsibility was a motivating

factor for staff to continue doing AANAPISI work supporting AAPI higher education access

and success. La'ei noted,

[Working in an AANAPISI program was all the] more impactful knowing where I

stand with the next generation coming up whether it's PI students or AAPI

students…It's the future, right? It's everybody coming up. And so that to me already

having the sense of identity, it was also making me feel the responsibility…There

aren't a lot of AAPIs at a certain level of education and that makes me understand my

place in it…[H]ow do we encourage others to come into this space and encourage

them to find the responsibility, the identity, and the stuff that I have and I see as a

strength in myself?

Staff Members' Future Professional Aspirations Ranged Widely

Many staff mentioned wanting to advance into AANAPISI program director roles.

They were passionate about the impact they were making working in their AANAPISI

program and were driven to seek further experience and responsibility. Rosamie spoke to this

ambition.

Before [working for an AANAPISI program], I just wanted to be in this little corner

and I wanted to stay in it. I was like, "I'm just going to make money and be in this

corner and that's it." And then through engaging with the various networks that

[AANAPISI] exposed me to, met so many great people and they were teaching me so

many great things. I realized that I need to step away from this corner and venture

out. I think being in that type of environment for four years, you're just like, "I can do

more," and you start to believing in yourself.

However, for others, their professional futures did not include climbing a professional ladder

to advance into increasingly higher positions. These participants were motivated by values

other than professional advancement and were content where they were. They enjoyed their

current roles or felt that their current roles allowed them to focus on other aspects of their life

such as raising children. For example, Jasmine shared,

If you were to ask me five years ago my answer [about future career plans] would

have been so different. But now I really just want to start a family. And I want to

focus on that…I love AANAPISI. I would not be where I am without AANAPISI, but

I also made the selfish decision to leave the program for security for myself. When I

was working for [the AANAPISI program]…I just remember my partner was like,

"Jasmine, if you keep doing this, we can't start a family." That hit me really hard but I

understood what he meant. Like, "You can't keep working the way you do." It was

kind of like my reality check too.

From Horizonal Statements to Larger Meaning Units

These 13 non-overlapping horizontal statements captures various aspects of AAPI

AANAPISI staff's professional experience. I found patterns and connections between them,

which allowed me to pare them down to six meaning units. Table 2 provides an overview of

how I grouped the individual horizonal statements together to make up each meaning unit.

Table 2

Movement from Horizonal Statements to Meaning Units

Non-Overlapping Horizontal Statement	Larger Meaning Unit
Staff experienced validation of life experiences working with AAPI colleagues and supervisors.	AANAPISI staff received positive reinforcement of their work through validation from various sources.
Additional validation came from other members of the campus community.	
Validation also came from regional and national networks.	
Working for an AANAPISI program pushed participants to appreciate the importance of their existing personal and professional connections to AAPI communities.	Working for an AANAPISI program provided staff with new motivation and reason to think deeply about their AAPI identities and connections with AAPI communities.
Staff saw their work with their AANAPISI program as a responsibility to their AAPI communities	
Staff realized if they were going to encourage students to explore and be proud of their AAPI identities, they had to model this themselves.	Staff experienced a greater sense of community and pride in their AAPI identities.
AANAPISI programs became important community spaces in staff members' lives	
Staff experienced holistic mentoring from other AAPI staff and supervisors beyond support carrying out job responsibilities.	Staff felt a sense of camaraderie and belonging amongst AAPI colleagues.
Staff experienced validation of professional skills and empowerment in their work.	
The experiences and cultural knowledge that staff brought to their jobs were assets that allowed them to be more effective in their work.	While staff shared some common experiences with students and colleagues, they learn about others.
AANAPISI programs were far from homogenous and introduced staff to AAPI experiences unlike their own.	
Staff members' future professional aspirations ranged widely.	Working for an AANAPISI program impacted participants' ideas about their professional futures.
AANAPISI program positions allowed staff to explore and be exposed to a wide variety of roles and functions.	

AANAPISI Staff Received Positive Reinforcement of Their Work Through Validation

From Various Sources

This validation came from within their own campuses from interactions with supervisors and colleagues and taking pride in their students' personal and academic growth. Validation also came from outside staff members' campuses from national and regional professional organizations.

Working for AANAPISI Provided Staff With New Motivation and Reason to Think Deeply About Their AAPI Identities and Connections to AAPI Communities

Staff came into AANAPISI work having explored their AAPI identities to varying extents. Additionally, some staff were confident in their acceptance in AAPI communities while others worried if they were belonged. However, a common finding across this variation was that the professional responsibility to empower AAPI students to take pride in their identities, histories, and cultures pushed staff to see their own AAPI identities in a new light. In many cases, this meant feeling a newfound sense of commitment and ability to give back to their communities.

Staff Experienced a Greater Sense of Community and Pride in Their AAPI Identities

Staff deliberately design AANAPISI program spaces to create a sense of belonging and communal pride for AAPI students. As those responsible for running and maintaining these spaces, AAPI AANAPISI staff spend a substantial amount time in these communal spaces themselves. Like their students, staff also reap benefits that AANAPISI program spaces provide for students including a sense of communal belonging and positive AAPI identity.

Staff Felt a Sense of Camaraderie and Belonging Amongst AAPI Colleagues

Having the opportunity to work in a space with predominately AAPI colleagues, supervisors, and staff was a powerful experience especially after navigating predominately White educational and professional spaces in the past. AAPI AANAPISI program staff often shared similar life experiences as children of immigrant families and among the first in their families to have graduate degrees and white-collar jobs. Staff felt as if their AAPI supervisors cared about them as the next generation of AAPI higher education professionals and that they took extra care to provide staff with professional opportunities and support. Staff mirrored that behavior by looking for opportunities to pass on what their experience and privilege to prepare other AAPIs for success in higher education student support roles.

While Staff Shared Some Common Experiences With Students and Colleagues, They Learned About Others

The AAPI umbrella category encompasses many cultures, ethnicities, and experiences. While AAPI AANAPISI staff often shared various experiences and backgrounds with their students and colleagues, their AANAPISI students and colleagues also introduced them to cultures, traditions, and experiences they were previously unaware of. This learning experience gave staff a new appreciation for their larger AAPI community and expanded their understanding of what it meant to be AAPI.

Working for AANAPISI Impacted Staff Members' Ideas About Their Professional Futures

For AAPI AANAPISI staff, working for an AANAPISI program exposed them to professional passions and ignited their ambitions to advance in their careers. On the other hand, some staff had no desire for career advancement in the traditional sense of climbing a professional ladder. Instead, they wanted to shape their future around different priorities such

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as having children or simply enjoying the work that they were doing in their current role. However, all participants expressed a desire to continue advocating for AAPI higher education access and success no matter what field or role they ended up in.

Summary

This chapter outlined the steps of phenomenological reduction that I undertook to analyze my data. First, I described my relationship to the phenomenon of AAPI AANAPISI staff members' professional identity development and what impact that may have had on the analysis process. Then I walked the reader through the reduction of my interview data into six larger meaning units. The meaning units were significant because they provided the foundation for a composite textural description, structural description, and eventually the essence of the professional identity development experience of AAPI AANAPISI staff, which I describe in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

TOWARDS THE ESSENCE OF AAPI PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN

AANAPISI PROGRAMS

According to Husserl, the essence of a phenomenon is a representation of its true

nature. The goal of phenomenological analysis is to examine individuals' lived experiences

of a certain phenomenon in order to describe the essence of that phenomenon (Neubauer et

al., 2019). Accordingly, the goal of this study was to examine the life experiences of AAPI

AANAPISI staff members in order to describe the essence of AAPI professional identity

development in AANAPISI programs. After determining the meaning units as described in

the previous chapter, the next steps of my analysis were to identify overarching themes to

inform composite and structural descriptions of the phenomenon before ultimately describing

the phenomenon's essence.

Moving forward from the six meaning units, I continued to identify similarities and

overlaps to coalesce the meaning units into three overarching themes that spoke to the ways

that working in an AANAPISI program shaped AAPI staff members' professional identities.

These analytic steps allowed me to compose a composite textural description and structural

description of AAPI AANAPISI staff members' professional identity development

experiences. These two descriptions differ in that the composite textural description identifies

the commonalities of participants' experiences working for AANAPISI programs and any

professional identity development that they may have experienced. In contrast, the structural description explores divergent perspectives and larger frames of reference in regards to the phenomenon. This description seeks to determine the various conditions, settings, and contexts that AAPI AANAPISI staff members' experiences took place within and how these contextual variations may have impacted participants' professional identity development (Creswell, 2014).

Overarching Themes

Three overarching themes emerged from the data as crucial aspects of staff members' experiences with professional identity development while working in AANAPISI programs. At this point in analysis, I became increasingly clear about how participants' experiences related to each other. I continued to see similarities that allowed me to collapse meaning units into themes, but I also began to see differences between individual experiences that informed the development of the structural description. These overarching themes reveal that AAPI staff members' time in AANAPISI programs impacted staff members' professional identities by: (a) validating their competence and value as AAPI professionals working to support the higher education access and success of AAPI communities, (b) helping them see that the experiences and knowledge that they carried as AAPIs were assets in their professional work, and (c) affirming their value and connectedness to AAPI communities in their professional and personal lives. These three themes are described in more detail next.

Validation of Competence and Value of Work

Staff received validation of their competence as AAPI professionals advocating for the higher education access and success of AAPI communities. This validation came from sources within their AANAPISI programs such as supervisors and students, as well as from

staff and administrators in other departments. Validation also came from national and local organizations.

AAPI AANAPISI staff members repeatedly mentioned their supervisors as key sources of validation for staff. La'ei reported that she was grateful for how her supervisor would defer to La'ei expertise in staff meetings and larger meetings with senior level administrators.

> It's empowering. It's advocating for us in these different spaces that we're in. [My supervisor] will always mention "I think my team should be in on this conversation because…they know the students better because they're the ones meeting with them day-to-day."

By publicly deferring to La'ei's knowledge of their students' experiences and going out of her way to pass her advice on to other departments, La'ei's supervisor validated her professional expertise. This was a new experience for La'ei whose previous experiences working in predominately White higher education professional settings were quite different. She described having her opinions ignored repeatedly in meetings before resigning herself to staying silent in meetings.

> [B]eing in [White professional] spaces and not feeling that my experiences or my opinion would be listened to or impactful in the space. So in…my other jobs, [I was] saying things and either they're just brushed aside….and then it just becomes like, "Well, I don't need to add anything to this conversation anymore…[T]here's no reason really for me to give input anymore. And then it just sort of creates [a pattern of behavior] like, I'm not gonna be inputting in this space or in the next one either.

Similarly, Daisy recounted how her supervisor validated her professional competence and ability when Daisy was convinced that she did not have the skills to facilitate AANAPISI faculty development events. Daisy came into her AANAPISI role as an experienced instructor and had no problem talking in front of students. However, she had never dreamed of telling other faculty how to teach how they should teach. She felt like she was unprepared and unqualified to speak in front of anybody besides students. Her supervisor assured her otherwise and her support played a crucial role in helping Daisy to succeed in her new role. Daisy recounted, "Oh my god! I'm thinking, I'm faculty but I'm not in the development part of it. What should we do? And [my supervisor] said, 'Just go ahead and try it.' As Daisy's confidence grew, she developed a proposal to hold a multi-day faculty development event. She brought it to her supervisor expecting to receive pointers and critique, but to her surprise, her supervisor enthusiastically supported the idea. Daisy remembers marveling with her AANAPISI colleagues who enjoyed similarly supportive relationships with their mutual supervisor.

> We were just talking about the fact that whatever we said or suggested, we were always supported…We had [our supervisor's] full trust and support…We knew that about AAPIs and the model minority myth. We're out there in the background and not really acknowledging who were are. But then we found ourselves empowered. All of the sudden, I found my voice. There was more confidence in it. Because I always got the support of the team.

The support that Daisy received from her supervisor shifted how she perceived her AAPI identity in addition to strengthening her confidence in her professional work. Before her AANAPISI role, Daisy internalized the model minority myth and believed that as a Chinese

American she was naturally submissive and often refrained from asserting her opinion. Her supervisor's faith in her input at work taught her that her opinions were valuable and would be appreciated by others if she shared them. As she began to be more assertive in her professional and personal life, she realized that being AAPI and being outspoken were not mutually exclusive. Her understanding of what it meant to be AAPI broadened and her confidence in herself at work grew.

In additional to supervisors, AANAPISI staff also received validation of their competence and expertise from other staff and senior administrators on their campuses. Mahalia mentioned that there had been several times when senior administrators reached out to her to express their admiration of her work.

Getting some of those short affirming messages has been so helpful…I've also gotten messages from our chief diversity officer where she's just reached out to me [to congratulate me on a successful event I held]…and it's been helpful because she's also a woman of color on campus in a leadership role…It shows me that folks are recognizing how important this work is.

Receiving positive affirmation of her work from women of color in campus leadership roles validated Mahalia's value as a professional. These congratulatory messages from women she admired reassured that she was doing a good job. Like many relatively early career professionals, Mahalia mentioned feeling anxious if she was supporting her students well enough. Mahalia was an undergraduate participant in Pendleton's AANAPISI program and found the experience to be overwhelmingly positive and transformative. Having such a meaningful experience in the program as a student led Mahalia to feel pressure to ensure that her students have a similarly beneficial experience. However, receiving these short but

powerful messages of affirmation helped her to quell these insecurities and feel confident

that she is indeed doing her job well.

Finally, validation came from sources off-campus such as receiving recognition and

accolades from professional organizations and research studies. In Paco's words:

> The campus was starting to recognize [our AANAPISI program] and then we were
>
> getting people coming over to do research and publish studies about the success of
>
> [the program]. I'm on some articles, I'm in some pamphlets. It's cool! Even like
>
> being invited across the nation. We attended a conference in New Jersey for the
>
> [Minority Serving Institution] programs.

Being recognized and applauded by strangers from across the country and being nationally

recognized for running an exemplar AANAPISI program were strong examples of validation

that Paco received. Understandably, after the hard work and dedication that Paco put into his

work with AANAPISI, these experiences were rewarding and reinforced his sense of value as

a professional.

Shifting Perceptions of Self in Relation to AAPI Communities

A second overarching theme that emerged from the data was that working for an

AANAPISI program shifted how staff saw themselves in relation to AAPI communities.

These shifts took on different forms for different participants. For example, some participants

went from feeling ashamed of belonging to an AAPI community to feeling a sense of pride or

from feeling disconnected to any AAPI community to realizing that they had grown up in

one all along. Houa noted that prior to her work in Pendleton State's AANAPISI program,

she carried internalized racism that caused her to distance herself from other Hmong

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Americans. She recalled avoiding any cultural markers that might associate her with other Hmong Americans.

> I didn't like speaking Hmong outside of my house or my family. There's Hmong New Year every year. It's just a gathering of folks in [my hometown]. We usually wear our cultural attire and I just remember never wearing any of that…I never wanted to wear the clothes. I didn't like how I looked in it. I just remember thinking that our culture just wasn't cool. It felt backwards to me.

After being hired at Pendleton, Houa began attending the local Hmong New Year festival with her students. Celebrating Hmong culture with her students and colleagues caused her to change her mind about her perceptions of her Hmong identity. She began to take pride in being part of the Hmong community. Houa attributed this shift in part to the mentoring that she received from her supervisor. Houa began working with AANAPISI in her early 20s and looked up to many of her more experienced colleagues. Even though many of them identified with AAPI ethnic groups other than Hmong, her colleagues were deliberate about bringing their Hmong American students to the New Year event to support the community. Seeing this enthusiasm from AAPI colleagues that she looked up as mentors and role models was a turning point for Houa:

> It was those interactions that helped me to really understand my identity...I became more comfortable speaking Hmong. I remember my first time in a long time wearing Hmong clothes to Hmong New Year because Pendleton State AANAPISI made it a point to attend Hmong New Year. Just really celebrating the [Hmong] students and celebrating [their culture] with them.

After growing up feeling ashamed and trying to distance herself from her Hmong community, working for an AANAPISI program brought about a drastic change and led Houa feel proud of being a part of the Hmong community. She noted that her identity as AAPI and Hmong American was a crucial part of her sense of self.

Other participants also noted how working for an AANAPISI program made them realize that exploring their AAPI identities would benefit others in addition to themselves. Identity exploration is often thought of as something an individual engages in to better themselves. However, staff re-envisioned identity exploration as a responsibility that they owed to others including their AAPI students and communities. For example, Bernard saw no reason to strongly identify as Filipino. Growing up, his father was a pillar in the Filipino community in Bernard's hometown, but Bernard saw his father's community work as separate and unconnected to his own life being born and raised in the U.S. and not the Philippines. His lack of affinity with any AAPI identity or community intensified during his time in the military. Bernard's military superiors downplayed racial identities and differences. In his words, "the only color we saw was the color of our uniforms. The Army was green, Air Forces blue, that type of thing." Initially, Bernard brought this color blind mentality into his next career in higher education. Unlike Houa, he did not feel shame around being AAPI or Filipino, but it did not seem relevant to his career and he did not feel the need to bring it into his professional life until a conversation with his sister-in-law:

> She visited me at my office and I was so proud to show her my office. She looked at it and she saw a picture of Shakespeare. She saw a picture of the kings and queens of England. I had pictures of Mark Twain. She then just very innocently but very straight and pointedly asked, "Where's your culture? Where's your background?"…I

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was a little shocked but I thought about it and I started bringing stuff that I had at the

house from the Philippines. Souvenirs and that kind of stuff. I had been stationed in

Korea, so I had a lot of stuff from Korea too. I started putting that up around.

Later on, when he began working with AAANPISI, Bernard began to see the larger

importance of taking pride in his AAPI identity, not just for himself but for his students:

And it was really AANAPISI that helped me to see the benefit and actually the need

for that type of stuff. You have to be a representative of Asians and Asian Americans

for the students. [I realized] how important it was for [my students, many of whom

where English language learners] to see [an Asian American educator].

Bernard realized that his AAPI identity allowed him to be and advocate and role model for

Raft's AAPI students. Therefore, embracing his racial and ethnic identity was something that

would positively impact his students and not just himself.

Other participants discussed how working for an AANAPISI program impacted their

AAPI identities by revealing the ways that their relative socioeconomic and educational

privilege set them apart from other AAPI communities. As a third generation Chinese

American, Daisy began to "wake up" to the reality of her privilege working in Raft

Community College's AAANPAISI program. Raft serves a substantial number of Pacific

Islander and undocumented students, many of whom come from communities struggling with

poverty and low rates of educational attainment.

Once you understand that you have privilege, use it to better the next group. Because

that's what was taught to me [in AANAPISI]. … [O]ne of my colleagues said,

"Daisy, you have privilege," and I said, "but I don't want it!"…And he says, "Well,

you got it. So you've got to do something with it. Why not try to better someone

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else."…I get it now. You have privilege so start using it strategically in a smart way

that not only helps yourself but helps others.

Her AANAPISI colleagues helped her go from being uncomfortable with her own privilege

to accepting it and making use of the advantages that she had to better the lives of other

AAPIs through education.

Working for an AANAPISI program made Paco realize that his own upbringing had

afforded him privileges many of his students did not have. Paco's educational background

was in Asian American Studies, so he was familiar with the inequities that many AAPI

communities face. However, working closely with AAPI AANAPISI students brought this

intellectual and academic knowledge to life.

One thing that really stood out to me was like, "Well, crap. I need to check

myself."…It helped me understand how privileged Filipino Americans are…That

stood out for me and has been helping me form my identity as a Filipino American in

relation to [my students]. I have to acknowledge that yeah, I am privileged but I can't

let this notion of me being privileged affect the way that I support [my students].

Paco's statement above demonstrates the fluidity of his AAPI identity. Seeing the struggles

that his students experienced made him realize his privilege relative to the AAPI

communities that Pendleton State's AANAPISI program worked with. His reminder to

"check himself," or correct himself when he made a mistake, demonstrates a commitment to

continual education and bettering of his own understanding and support of AAPI

communities.

Perceptions of AAPI Identity as Professional Asset

The third overarching theme that emerged from the data was that the experience of working for AANAPISI helped staff see that being AAPI is an asset in their work as higher education student support staff. Their life experiences, cultural background, and simply being an AAPI face on campus helped them connect and work with their AAPI students in ways that non-AAPI staff would not necessarily be able to. For Rosamie, the mentorship that she received from a Filipino American PhD student and lecturer working with her AANAPISI program encouraged her to see her Filipino American identity as an asset:

> [My mentor] highlighted my assets as a Filipino American. He said, "You know when a Filipino walks into a room, because they have such a big family, they know how to read the room."…I remember being so touched that somebody could notice that. Just hearing it and having him frame it in a distinct way about my culture and [Filipinos'] commonalities. And how those inform your assets as a professional but really also as a person….That's one really impactful thing that [he] did that I don't think any other person in my life has ever done.

Her mentor's message had a deep impact on Rosamie and how she saw viewed her racial and ethnic identity. She took pride in being Filipino and saw this identity as a positive aspect of herself as a professional but also in a more holistic sense as a person.

Jasmine's work with AANAPISI led her to see her AAPI identity as an asset that allowed her to build relationships with students in a way that non-AAPIs might not. She understood her students' experience and was able to make them comfortable seeking out her guidance and support:

With AANAPISI, I am my students. A lot of them identify with my experience, so we can have the same language and understand each other. I felt like my students felt comfortable to come talk to me. I felt like they really looked up to me as an older sister.

However, the commonalities that Jasmine saw between her life and her students' also created difficulties maintaining healthy work-life boundaries. She recounted,

I gave so much of myself because I saw so much of me in the students that I hit this brownout system. I always felt like I had to do more for the students…Finally, I was like, "Okay, I can't continue working this way."

This led Jasmine to leave her AANAPISI role for an academic advising job at Pendleton. However, the benefits that she noticed as an AAPI staff working with AAPI students also carried over into her new role:

Even now [that I'm not working for AANAPISI], when I talk with students, especially our Hmong students, I can still connect with them and understand where they're coming from.

In addition to being able to relate to students and understand their experiences, Jasmine's life experiences growing up in a Hmong household have also served her well in her professional role. She provided one example that illustrated how her cultural knowledge allowed her to understand the complexity of a student's situation in a way that her non-AAPI colleague was not able to:

I had a colleague reach out to me like, "We have a students whose parents aren't giving all [their financial aid refund money] to them. What do we do? Do we take legal action?" And I'm like, "Hold on. Let's take a step back." Because in the AAPI

community, some of the parents especially when students are like 17, 18, they're still

handling their money. If the parents are taking the money and not giving it to the

student, those are two separate situations.

Thankfully, Jasmine was able to intercept the situation from escalating because she

understood the nuances of her student's family dynamic. She realized that non-AAPI

colleague did not understand that, for some AAPI families, decisions about money are made

by the parents and this does not mean that the parents are behaving abusively or maliciously.

This situation is an example of a cultural norm that her colleague misinterpreted as a non-

AAPI. As an AAPI, Jasmine was able to understand the nuance of the situation and support

the student appropriately.

La'ei's experience provided another example of how AAPI identity may be an asset

in higher education student support work. Coming from a Pacific Islander (PI) community

allowed La'ei to understood the cultural nuances of her PI students' lives. This cultural

understanding meant that La'ei could hold her students accountable in ways that other non-

AAPIs might not be able to. As La'ei explained, "There's a different sort of respect that I

have from my students. They [understand] that we're coming from a place of similarity, so in

working with them, I'm able to ask different types of questions." For example, a group of her

students told their instructor that they were going to need to miss class for a funeral. The

instructor accepted this without asking further questions. However, La'ei had her other PI

AANAPISI colleague asked the students whose funeral it was because "as part of the

community we want to show our respect as well." The students were reluctant to say who

had passed away, which raised La'ei's suspicions. In PI culture, funerals are significant and

communities tend to be tight knit, so it seemed odd to her why they would not tell her whose

funeral they were missing class to attend. After pressing further, her students admitted that they had lied and that the funeral they were attending was not a family member's but Nipsey Hustle's, a popular rapper:

> Funerals happen a lot in our community and we understand that. We give grace for it. But after asking the right questions, we found out, "No, no you're just straight up lying." [The non-AAPI] instructor never would never have known. It's because of the relationships we have. [The students] understood that we wanted to pay our respects, so they knew that, "Okay, we can't lie to La'ei and say it's a family funeral."

The students were able to take advantage of their non-AAPI instructor's ignorance and lie to them, but for La'ei who understood the culture and significance of PI funerals, they knew they could not continue with the lie. La'ei's cultural understanding as an AAPI was what allowed her to hold her students accountable in ways that their non-AAPI instructor was not.

Composite Textural Description

After determining the three overarching themes that ran throughout my phenomenological analysis, I composed a composite textural description of the experience of working for an AANAPISI program from the participants' perspectives. In line with Moustakas' (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of phenomenological analysis, this description highlights the commonalities of participants' experiences working for AANAPISI programs including any professional identity development they may have experienced.

AANAPISI Programs Create the Opportunity for AAPI Staff Professional Identity

Development

      As outlined in previous sections, professional identity refers to one's own perception of their competence and value in their profession (Auxier et al., 2003; Ewan, 1988; Slay & Smith, 2011). Although participants' experiences as AAPI AANAPISI staff were diverse, one factor that all participants reported was that working in an AANAPISI program led them to appreciate the knowledge and value that they brought to their work as AAPIs working in student support roles.

      This study's findings demonstrate that the eight AAPI AANAPSI staff developed stronger senses of professional identity while working for an AANAPISI program. The relationships and communities that AAPI staff connected with as a result of their AANAPISI roles validated their expertise as AAPI higher education professionals supporting AAPI communities. This validation came from students, supervisors, others in the campus community, and external organizations. Validation often came in the form of a passing comment or single conversation. These positive interactions were deeply meaningful but may not have been notable to an outside observer. AANAPISI program work may lend itself to receiving validation from supportive communities or individuals for a number of reasons. First, the curricula and programming developed by the leadership of AANAPISI programs tend to be strongly focused on supporting students' success in academics, future careers, and wellbeing in a more general sense. Therefore, program leadership often carries this holistic developmental approach over to supervision of their staff who benefit from the supportive and developmentally-focused supervision style. Staff have the opportunity to explore

different projects and responsibilities with more freedom and less fear of failure, as compared to other direct student support staff in more traditional departments.

Second, AANAPISI programs bring temporary but substantial fiscal resources to their campuses, and as a result, programs tend to be quite prolific and visible. With substantial funding comes the freedom and power to develop relatively large-scale initiatives and events. AANAPISI teams also tend to be quite small, so individual staff members are recognizable and quickly known to the campus community. Therefore, AANAPISI staff may receive recognition and opportunities that direct student support staff in other departments might not. This factor is especially pronounced for younger and less experienced staff who in other departments would likely not have access to the opportunities and visibility of an AANAPISI staff role.

Racial and Ethnic Identity Development Accompanied Professional Identity Development

Another finding that the data revealed was that the professional identity development that participants experienced was accompanied by racial and ethnic identity development. As staff began to see the value that they brought as AAPIs to their work, they also realized how their work learning how to navigate systems of higher education made them an asset to their AAPI community. Moreover, the relationship between professional identity development and racial and ethnic identity development was mutually supportive. In other words, working for an AAANPISI program shaped the way that AAPI staff saw themselves as higher education professionals as well as how they saw themselves as AAPIs.

Working in an AANAPISI program led staff to realize that their life experiences and cultural knowledge as AAPIs were assets to their work as higher education professionals. Participants' perceptions of the relationship between their AAPI identities and professional

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work before coming to work for AANAPISI programs varied. Some felt ashamed of their AAPI identities, some experienced racism in previous jobs, and some simply felt that their AAPI identities were not relevant to their professional work. However, the common thread was that the experience of working for AANAPISI demonstrated that their AAPI identities could help them in their professional roles and allowed them to be effective in their jobs in ways that non-AAPIs might not be. Being AAPI allowed AANAPISI staff to better understand the cultural and familial contexts their students were coming from and to be more approachable to students who were more comfortable connecting with educators of their same racial and/or ethnic background.

At the same time, working in AANAPISI programs also helped staff realize how their expertise in higher education student support was an asset to the AAPI communities that they were a part of. Although many participants came into AANAPISI work with a strong sense of rootedness in AAPI communities as well as a desire to create a more equitable future for the youth of their communities, their growing sense of efficacy in supporting AAPI higher education access and success gave them a concrete tool to accomplish this goal. Participants began to see themselves as having a responsibility and ability to create more equitable futures for the next generation of AAPIs in their communities through their work in higher education. AANAPISI roles often led staff to feel a sense of responsibility to help the younger generation of AAPIs navigate higher education systems that were not created with the needs and strengths of AAPIs and other historically underrepresented groups in mind.

Structural Description

In addition to a composite textural description that highlights the commonalities of participants' experience of working for AANAPISI programs and any professional identity

development they may have experienced, I composed a structural description of the experience. This description explores divergent perspectives and larger frames of reference in regards to the phenomenon and description fleshes out the larger context that the richly detailed portrayal of the AAPI AANAPISI staff experience resides within.

Differences in Cultural Backgrounds

Although AAPIs are too often imagined as a monolith, AAPIs' experiences are diverse in all demographic areas including socioeconomic status, linguistic preferences, educational attainment rates, and cultural attitudes and perceptions. The eight study participants were no exception and differences in cultural background resulted in drastically varying attitudes towards work, gender, and professional success. These differences played a crucial role in how participants experienced their time with AANAPISI programs.

Participants had differing perceptions of professional success and goals. Many participants were eager to advance in the field of higher education and pursue roles of greater and greater responsibility and power. However, La'ei participant pointed out that in Samoan culture, group achievement is valued as a marker of success and for that reason she was less motivated to climb any professional ladder. Instead, she felt like she was currently in a position in which she could effectively contribute to the work of her AANAPISI program and their students. Therefore, she felt no need to strive or plan for any career moves.

Similarly, participants had different perceptions of work/life boundaries. Many participants mentioned how their AANAPISI programs were "like a family" and provided an important AAPI community space for them in their lives. Work-life boundaries were somewhat blurry, but for some that was okay or even desirable. For these individuals, their work took up a large part of their lives, but they enjoyed it. Working more than 40 hours or

attending evening or weekend events was not unusual, but some staff did not find the long hours to be overbearing nor overwhelming. However, Jasmine's experience was drastically different. In Hmong culture, women are expected to stay at home to raise children instead of working. This is what Jasmine's mother was pressured to do. Although Jasmine's mother had always wanted to work, she never had the chance to. Jasmine's sense of sadness and empathy for her mother made her feel deeply privileged and appreciative of her job. Without clearly set work-life boundaries, her deep sense of gratitude and privilege led her to stay in the office until late in the evening and run herself ragged attending community events all weekend. Her experience of the blurred work-life boundaries that often come with AANAPISI roles was negative. She burned out and realized that working for an AANAPISI program was not sustainable. She soon left her AANAPISI program for an academic advising job with more traditional and rigid work-life boundaries. In her new role, she was able to work eight hours and then go home without the pressure that she felt in her AANAPISI role to be constantly active in her job and community.

Different Points in Career and Lives

All eight participants' professional identity and racial and ethnic identities evolved during their time with AANAPISI programs. However, these shifts in identities were far from identical. A contextual factor that may have shaped participants' experiences was how advanced they were in their career before their AANAPISI work. At the time of data collection, the length of time that participants had worked in their AANAPISI roles was relatively uniform. None of the eight participants had worked for an AANAPISI program for less than four years or more six. However, the point in their lives and careers that these four to six years fell differed greatly. Three participants (Houa, Jasmine, and Mahalia) were in

their late 20s and relatively early in their careers. All three came to AANAPISI work shortly after completing their schooling. Three other participants (La'ei, Rosamie, and Paco) were in their late 30s and had several years of higher education student support experience before coming to AANAPISI. The remaining two participants (Bernard and Daisy) were in their 60s and brought 30 plus years of higher education work experience into their AANAPISI roles.

Not surprisingly, how participants saw themselves as higher education professionals and as AAPIs varied across age and career experience. For example, the eldest participants, Daisy and Bernard, came into their AANAPISI roles firmly established in how they saw themselves professionally. They had both been successful faculty members for decades and felt comfortable and established in those roles. While one might assume that Daisy and Bernard might experience less profound professional identity and racial identity development, this was not the case. While Daisy and Bernard were confident in their expertise as faculty members, prior to AANAPISI, they had never felt the same confidence in their AAPI identity. Both grew up without a strong sense of AAPI identity and community. Their AANAPISI work led them to take pride in their AAPI identities and how they benefitted from their professional work. They came to realize that their life experiences as AAPIs and ability to connect with AAPI students were just as crucial to their effectiveness as educators as was having a deep command of literature. Conversely, the younger participants came into their AANAPISI roles with a stronger sense of their AAPI identity and how their identity related to their work. However, they had less defined senses of themselves as professionals and less confidence in the value that they brought to their roles. Many sought mentorship and guidance from AAPI leaders at their institutions such as AANAPISI program directors, senior administrators, and instructors.

The fact that the younger AANAPISI staff tended to feel more connected to their AAPI identities than the eldest might be related to the different cultural contexts that participants were raised in as related to perceptions of race, ethnicity, and identity. The youngest study participants were in their late 20s and came of age in the mid-2010s. The oldest study participants were in their 60s and came of age in the early 1980s. The ways that race, ethnicity, and identity were imagined and discussed varied drastically between the two time periods. During the 1980s a neoconservative "colorblind" approach to racial difference was commonplace. In other words, acknowledgement of racial differences and identities was avoided in many spaces. Conversely, the 2010s saw the beginnings of the Black Lives Matter movement and more open acknowledgment by the general public of the ways that race and systemic racism have operated in the U.S. for hundreds of years. Additionally, the younger study participants mentioned involvement with Ethnic Studies coursework and AAPI youth organizing as young people. Both activities encourage one to consider the ways that race impacts the experiences of communities and individuals. Accordingly, the younger AANAPISI staff tended to be familiar with the ways that race, inequity, and privilege interact with systems of power including those that govern colleges and universities. As a result, the younger participants were more apt to see their professional work linked to their AAPI identities. Conversely, Daisy and Bernard began their AANAPISI work with the perception that being AAPI was something that was separate and unconnected to other aspects of their lives, including their professional endeavors. They saw little connection between their work as educators linking back to their AAPI identities or communities. Much of this difference in experience may have to do with growing up in different sociohistorical contexts.

Essence of the Experience

A phenomenon's essence describes the true nature of that phenomenon. In this study, the phenomenon is the professional identity development in AAPI staff in AANAPISI programs. At the point of composing the study's essence, I was several analytical steps away from my interviews with participants and I wanted to ensure that I was staying true to their experiences. I did not want the essence to dilute the rich and detailed stories that participants had shared. Therefore, I took pains to highlight the nuances that exist within AAPI AANAPISI staff professional identity development experiences.

Working in an AANAPISI program is a transformative experience for AAPI higher education staff and profoundly shapes an individual's perception of their professional identity as well as their racial and ethnic identity. This shift in perception includes a realization of the assets that AAPI AANAPISI staff bring to their work in higher education and also to the AAPI communities that they are a part of. AAPI staff come to work in AANAPISI programs from different walks of life. Their relationship to their identities as higher education professionals and as AAPIs differ depending on factors including their cultural background, age, and point in their career. However, one aspect of the experience that remains consistent is that staff members' professional and racial and ethnic identities shift in a mutually supportive fashion during their time working for AANAPISI.

This mutually supportive shift in perception takes place as AAPI staff in AANAPISI roles realize that the cultural knowledge and life experiences they bring to their work are assets that help them support students in ways that non-AAPIs might not be able to. Simultaneously, working in an AANAPISI program also helps AAPI staff realize that their expertise and knowledge of the higher education system make them uniquely qualified to

support their AAPI communities, especially those who have historically had lower rates of

educational attainment.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

My aim in this study was to better understand of how working in an AANAPISI

program might shape the professional identity development of AAPI higher education

student support staff. Professional identity is how one perceives one's competence and value

in their profession (Auxier et al., 2003; Ewan, 1988; Slay & Smith, 2011). I examined the

experiences of eight AAPI AANAPISI program staff to explore the nuances of AANAPISI

program staff work. I examined how staff members' personal identities such as racial and

ethnic background might impact their experience of AANAPISI work and how this

experience might shape staff members' professional identity development. In this chapter, I

place my findings from phenomenological interviews described in Chapters 4 and 5 into

conversation with my conceptual framework of Slay and Smith's (2011) theory of

professional identity development for People of Color and Museus et al.'s (2012) theory of

cultural integration in campus subcultures. Slay and Smith (2011) shed light on the ways that

AAPI staff members' professional identity development may be shaped by their personal

identities including racial and ethnic identity. Museus et al. (2012) guided my exploration of

how and why the experience of working for AANAPISI programs may be impactful for

AAPI staff and their professional identities.

My conceptual framework of Slay and Smith (2011) and Museus et al. (2012) was not fully formed until I began to delve into data analysis. Throughout preparing my dissertation proposal and data collection, I knew that Slay and Smith's (2011) theory on professional identity development for POC would be one aspect of the framework. However, as I began to analyze my interview data, I realized that I needed another framework to understand what, if anything, was unique about AANAPISI programs as sites for AAPI professional identity development. As I sought patterns between my horizonal statements, I noticed that the issues of AAPI identity validation and desire to give back to AAPI communities echoed throughout participants' experiences. An exploration of literature on cultural validation and community spaces led me Museus et al.'s (2012) theory of cultural integration and ethnic campus subcultures. The impact of cultural validation and the ability to create positive change in one's community are key aspects of this theory, so bringing in Museus et al. (2012) was a good fit. Together, Slay and Smith (2011) and Museus et al. (2012) provided a way for me to represent my data in a way that more accurately portrayed participants' experiences.

What the eight study participants shared provided many insights into the ways their professional identities were profoundly shaped during their time working for their respective AANAPISI programs. What I found in conducting this study was twofold. During their time working for AANAPISI programs, (a) AAPI staff experienced a simultaneous redefinition of their racial and professional identities, and (b) this redefinition took place through the process of cultural integration and validation that staff experienced working for AANAPISI. Figure 2 illustrates this relationship between the redefinition of AAPI AANAPISI staff members' professional identity and racial and ethnic identity that took place within the ethnic campus subcultural space of an AANAPISI program.

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Figure 2

Identity Redefinition, Ethnic Campus Subcultures, and AAPI AANAPISI Staff Experiences
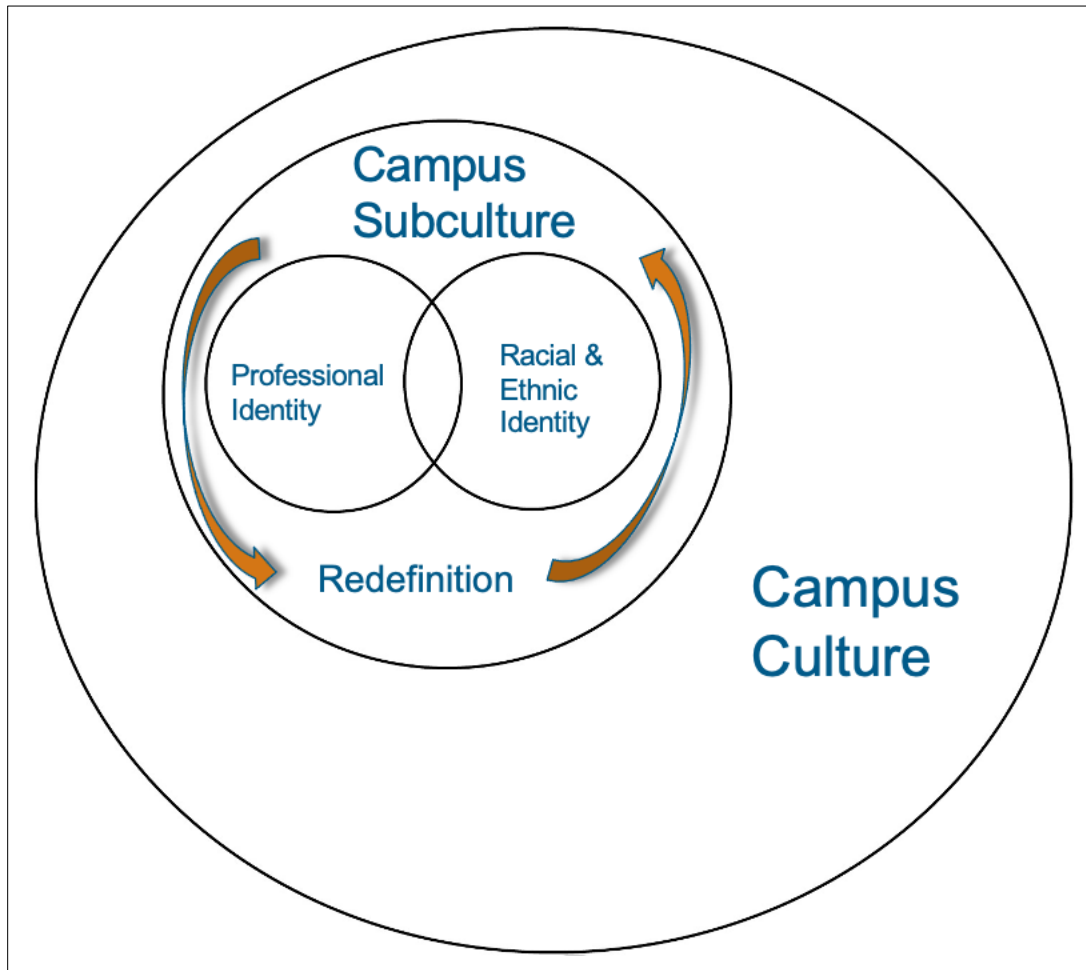
Simultaneous Redefinition of Sense of Self as a Higher Education Professional and as

AAPI

Although the eight participants' experiences of AANAPISI work were diverse in

many ways, one general commonality was that all experienced shifts in their sense of self as

higher education professionals and as AAPIs. Slay and Smith's (2011) theory of professional

identity development for People of Color (POC) refers to these simultaneous shifts as a form

of professional identity development called "redefinition." Slay and Smith contend that POC working in predominately White professional fields can instead experience a process of identity "redefinition" in reaction to racialized obstacles such as tokenism, discrimination, and social isolation. Identity "redefinition" is when POC refuse to emulate White cultural norms and instead develop their own sense of self through personal and professional goals based on a positive racial and cultural identity. In other words, POC do not need to choose between sacrificing the pursuit of their professional goals or their racial identity.

Like Slay and Smith (2011) suggest, my findings suggest that AAPI staff experience identity redefinition as their self-perceptions as higher education professionals and as AAPIs shift as they engage in AANAPISI work. The fact that these twin processes of redefinition take place simultaneously is no coincidence. Instead, participants' redefinition of their sense of self as higher education professionals and as AAPIs were mutually reinforcing processes. In other words, the redefinition of identity as a higher education professional was both supported by and a catalyst for redefinition of identity as an AAPI. For example, Houa's experience working in Pendleton State's AANAPISI program shifted how she saw herself as a Hmong American and as a higher education professional. She went from being ashamed of her Hmong heritage to proudly wearing her Hmong traditional garb with her colleagues and students. This shift in her identity as an AAPI was accompanied by a shift in how she perceived her professional work. As she began to take pride in her racial and ethnic identity, she also began to see the larger significance of her work as a way to give back to her community by supporting the next generation of Hmong American students.

Working for an AANAPISI program helped staff realize that the life experiences and cultural understandings they brought to their work were assets that allowed them to be

effective in their work in ways that non-AAPI professionals, no matter how experienced or skilled in higher education student support they were, would not be able to match. La'ei and Jasmine were able to hold students accountable to class attendance and provide financial aid support that their White colleagues could not. This realization, paired with validation from students, supervisors, others in the campus community, and external organizations, bolstered AANAPISI staff members' sense of efficacy and competence in their roles. The sense of support and care that Paco and Rosamie received from members of the Asian Pacific Americans in Higher Education (APAHE) professional organization functioned as pivotal sources of validation. Previous research has noted the ways that staff enjoy and benefit from the supportive and validating work environments created in many AANAPISI program spaces (Hartlep & Antrop-Gonzalez, 2019; M. Nguyen, 2019). However, this study takes these findings a step further and links this finding to professional identity development. The validation that Mahalia and Daisy received from senior administration and supervisors confirmed that they were doing valuable work and that they were capable and respected members of their profession – key factors to professional identity development. Numerous studies report that receiving validation of one's professional performance, especially early in one's career, is a crucial predictor of professional identity development (Gibson et al., 2010; Pittman & Foubert, 2016; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). This study found that the impact of validation on professional identity development was not exclusive to early career professionals but also those later in their career. Both Bernard and Daisy embarked upon their work with Raft Community College's AANAPISI program with decades of experience as higher education professionals. However, both expounded that working for Raft's AANAPISI program was the first time in their careers that they understood the importance

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that their racial and ethnic identities had to their work as educators. Together, these findings

suggest that AANAPISI programs may be uniquely situated to provide staff with professional

validation that is impactful for the professional identity development of AAPIs at all points in

their career.

The validation that AAPI AANAPISI staff receive from entities internal and external

to their institution (Figure 3) plays a crucial role to confirm that their work supporting AAPI

student success was making a difference in the lives of their students, in local AAPI

communities, and on their campuses.

Figure 3

Sources of Validation for AAPI AANAPISI Staff
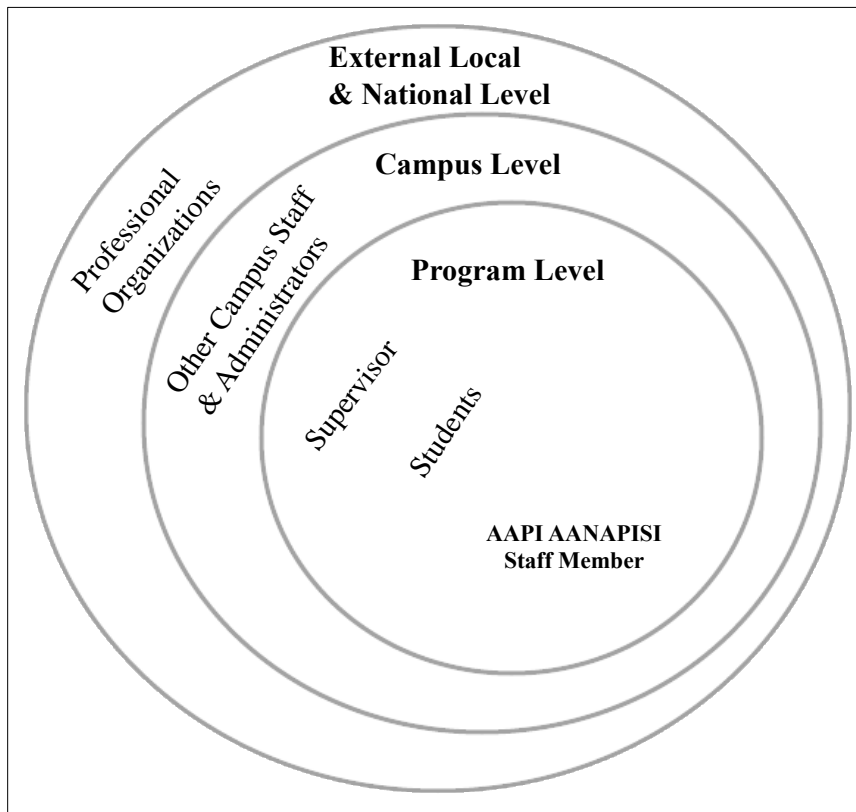
For example, the cultural and professional validation that Bernard received from various sources during his time in Raft Community College's AANAPISI program was a turning point in his personal and professional life. Previous to his AANAPISI work, Bernard never saw his work as being particularly beneficial nor related to the Filipino American community that was so important to his parents. His experience of AANAPISI work showed him that the expertise that he was building mentoring AAPI young adults in Raft's AANAPISI program was something that he could bring back to benefit his local Filipino church youth group. Although the assurance that one's professional work is having its intended effect may sound nominal, Slay and Smith (2011) make the point that many POC working in predominately White professional fields do not have the opportunity to experience this due to racism and stigma in their workplace. AAPI staff may encounter racism and discrimination at certain points throughout their careers. Therefore, the cultural and professional validation that their work is creating positive change for AAPI students and communities is significant for AAPI AANAPISI staff.

Moreover, my findings suggest that the cultural validation that AAPI staff receive within an AANAPISI program does not function just to make the individual staff member feel good but also provides that person with the ability to pass the benefits of cultural validation onto their AAPI students. One can imagine that individuals who do not feel a sense of pride and validity in their own AAPI identity might have a difficult time providing the supports and resources necessary for students to develop these same feelings for themselves. Therefore, the impact of the cultural validation and identity development that AAPI AANAPISI staff members experience is larger than just the individual staff member themselves and plays a crucial role in allowing that person to support the holistic

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development of their AAPI students. In turn, witnessing the personal and academic

development of their students was reported to be a key source of validation for the AAPI

AANAPISI staff in this study. Thus, the cultural validation of AAPI AANAPISI staff and

their students may function as a benevolent, self-perpetuating cycle that makes AANAPISI

programs uniquely impactful for both their staff and students (Figure 4). The validation that

staff receive from various aspects of their AANAPISI work as outlined earlier help staff with

effectively validating their students and supporting their development. Witnessing their

students' development, in turn, becomes an additional source of validation for AAPI staff.

Figure 4

Validation Cycle Between AAPI AANAPISI Staff and Students at the Program Level
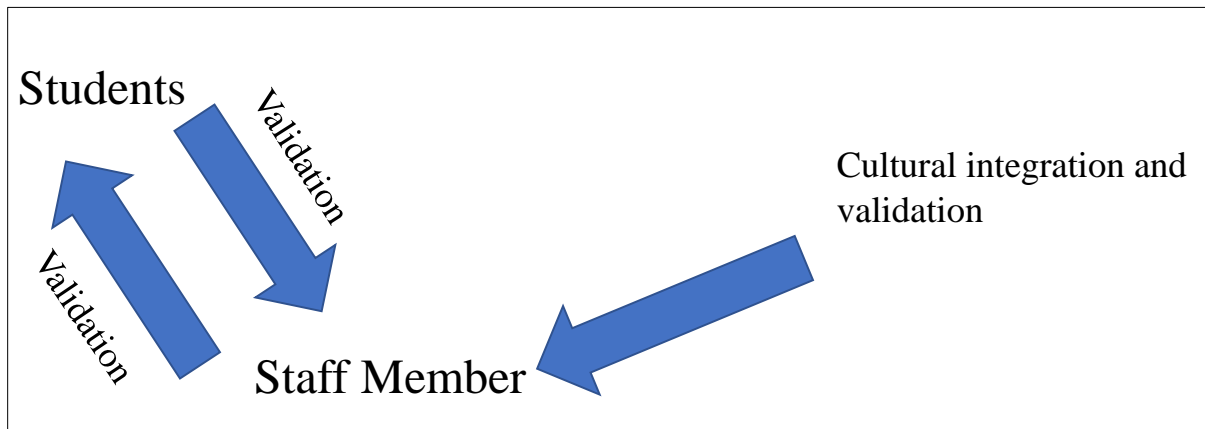
This study's findings suggest that the professional identity development experiences

of AAPI AANAPISI staff cannot be adequately explained by literature based on the

experiences of White professionals. The main argument of this literature is that professional

identity is developed when individuals have their professional expertise validated by others

and feel like they are contributing to their professional field (Collins, 2009; Dollarhide et al.,

2012; Gibson et al., 2010). However, this study's findings and Slay and Smith's (2011) theory suggest that professional identity development for People of Color is more complicated. AAPI AANAPISI staff professional identity development experiences were also significantly impacted by race and ethnicity. For AAPI staff, the assurance that their work was creating positive change in AAPI communities was as significant a factor in professional identity development as was validation of professional competence. In other words, AAPI AANAPISI staff were concerned with the impact that their work could have on AAPI communities and not just on the professional field of higher education student support. For example, Houa and Jasmine's professional identity development was supported by the assurance that their role as higher education professionals was positively impacting the local Hmong community and not just their institutions. The structure of AANAPISI programs encourages staff to make the connection between higher education work and support of AAPI communities. AANAPISI programs play a key role in supporting the college access and success of local AAPI communities, many of whom are historically underrepresented in higher education and often have low rates of educational attainment. AAPI AANAPISI staff bridge the gap that exists between many local colleges and universities and the surrounding AAPI communities. For many AAPIs from these communities, the system of higher education can be unfriendly, alien, and impossible to navigate. Having the cultural knowledge, language capacity, and/or simply looking like those who they are trying to support in college, AANAPISI staff take pride in and feel a sense of responsibility to bring their knowledge of higher education systems to AAPI communities. This finding is not new in AANAPISI literature. Previous studies have noted that AAPI AANAPISI staff find the opportunity to give back to AAPI communities to be a deeply rewarding aspect of their work

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(Alcantar et al., 2019; Gutierrez, 2018; M. Nguyen, 2019). This study builds upon those findings to interrogate how this sense of fulfillment in the work may then shape how staff perceive their own AAPI identities as individuals and in relation to AAPI communities. Findings suggest that AANAPISI staff begin to see themselves as positively contributing not only to their work on their campuses but also to the larger AAPI communities that they are a part of.

This realization often has profound impact on staff members' sense of self as AAPIs. AANAPISI staff come into their AANAPISI roles with a range of attitudes towards their AAPI identities depending on how, where, and when they were brought up. Some such as La'ei were confident and secure in their relationship to AAPI communities before their AANAPISI roles; however, others such as Bernard were unsure of how they fit into any AAPI community and may have internalized racism and feel a sense of shame and a desire to distance themselves from a certain AAPI community. That said, one key finding that emerged from this study was that AAPI staff members' connection to their AAPI identity and to AAPI communities was deepened by the experience of working for AANAPISI programs. For example, Houa's supervisor opened her eyes to the ways that her AAPI identity was connected to her AANAPISI work and to current events. Daisy came to see how her socioeconomic and educational privilege relative to the AAPI communities she worked with was not something to be uncomfortable about but instead was something she could use to create more opportunities for others. The impact that AANAPISI program involvement can have on how individuals view themselves as AAPIs and their role in AAPI communities has been discussed regarding the experiences of undergraduates (CARE, 2013; Martinsen, 2017; Nguyen et al., 2018), but had yet to be explored in relation to AAPI staff. This study's

findings suggest that staff members' understanding that their AANPAISI work is impactful and important to local AAPI communities provides them with a sense of connection to AAPI communities that many thought they would never feel as third or fourth generation AAPIs raised in predominately White neighborhoods. The demonstrated connection between AANAPISI work and AAPI communities encouraged others to feel proud of being AAPI instead of feeling shameful. AANAPISI work helped others see their AAPI identities and ties to AAPI communities as assets that benefitted them professionally and personally.

Redefinition Through Cultural Integration and Validation

In addition to Slay and Smith's (2011) theoretical contributions, Museus et al.'s (2012) theory helped me to make sense of how and why working for an AANAPISI program may encourage this professional identity development. The redefinition of identities and subsequent professional identity development that AAPI higher education staff experience while working for AANAPISI programs can be understood through the lens of Museus et al.'s (2012) theory of cultural integration in campus subcultures. As laid out in Chapter 2, this theory posits that certain Ethnic Studies programs, student organizations, and I argue, AANAPISI programs, exist as subcultural spaces within higher educational institutions. Unlike the larger campus culture, a campus subculture "is a distinct system that is developed by a subset of members of an institution and consists of specific norms, values, beliefs, and assumptions that differ from the dominant culture of the campus and guide the thought and behavior of its group members" (p. 107). Museus et al. (2012) argue that the value of campus subcultures is that they foster the integration of students' cultural backgrounds, identities, and communities with their academic and social campus life. Thus, validating the importance of students' racial and cultural identities is an important and relevant part of their educational

experience. These spaces offer a respite from a larger institutional culture that may not value the knowledge, culture, and experiences that students of color bring to their campuses. This institutional culture may be observed at Predominately White Institutions and Minority-Serving Institutions (including AANAPISIs) that enroll a large proportion of White students.

My study's findings suggest that AANAPISI program spaces function as campus subcultures for AAPI staff who run them. This phenomenon is similar to the role that campus subcultures such as Ethnic Studies programs and student organizations played for the students of color in Museus et al.'s (2012) study. Like students of color, AAPI AANAPISI staff also have to navigate institutional environments and a larger professional field – higher education student support – that caters to and is governed by White cultural expectations and norms that do not value the cultural understanding and experiences of AAPIs. AANAPISI programs represent campus subcultures whose expectations and values tend to be quite different from those of the larger institutions they operate within. As mentioned in previous studies on AANAPISI programs around the country, AANAPISI programs tend to focus heavily on positive racial and ethnic development that privileges the voices and histories of AAPI communities (CARE, 2013; Catalonia et al., 2019; Kiang et al., 2019; Teranishi, 2011). Existing studies have noted the positive impact that AANAPISI programming has on AAPI students (CARE, 2013; Martinsen, 2017; Nguyen et al., 2018). This study's findings build upon this research to explore how the work of developing and implementing AANAPISI programming impacts AAPI AANAPISI staff members. AANAPISI staff are responsible for developing programming that espouses the values of positive AAPI identity and empowerment. Notably, this work is not something that AANAPISI staff necessarily come into their roles comfortable doing. Many began their AANAPISI work without a strong

sense of pride in their AAPI identities or unsure of how their AAPI identities were relevant to their work in higher education. However, this study suggests that the process of supporting students' pride in their AAPI identities leads AANAPISI staff develop a similar sense of pride.

My study's findings suggest that AANAPISI programs function as campus subcultures that allow AAPI staff to experience what Museus et al. (2012) refer to as cultural integration. According to Museus et al. (2012), campus subcultures promote cultural integration by allowing students of color to experience academic, social, and cultural aspects of the college experience in one space. Campus subcultures do this by providing students with: (a) culturally validating curricula, (b) support and motivation for creating positive change within campus and local communities, and (c) connection to a cultural community. Instead of the three aspects that Museus et al.'s (2012) model suggests make up students' college experience, I envision two aspects of AAPI student support staff members' work experience: (a) professional and (b) cultural spheres. I argue that AANAPISI programs function as campus subcultures that allow AAPI staff to experience cultural integration by bringing staff to experience both spheres in one space. Like students of color, AAPI staff face institutional racism, negative perceptions and stereotyping of AAPIs, and microaggressions on their campuses (Neilson & Suyemoto, 2009; Yamagata-Noji & Gee, 2012). These race-based negative experiences can encourage Asian Americans to downplay or compartmentalize their ethnic and racial identities and cultures as aspects of their identity that they do not bring into their work life (Roberts et al., 2014). However, this study's findings suggest that AANAPISI programs are a campus subculture that supports the cultural integration of the professional and cultural aspects of AAPI staff members' lives.

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Specifically, AANAPISI programs support the cultural integration of AAPI staff members' professional and cultural spheres by providing access to the three factors that Museus et al. (2012) contend make up an ethnic campus subculture: (a) culturally validating physical and epistemological spaces, (b) engagement with culturally validating curricula, and (c) support and motivation for creating positive change within campus and local communities.

Culturally Validating Physical and Epistemological Space

AANAPISI programs represent epistemological spaces where the knowledge that AAPI individuals and communities carry is valued. AANAPISI program leadership deliberately design their program spaces and initiatives to encourage AAPI students to take pride in the histories and experiences of their communities. The valuing of AAPIs' knowledge and perspectives carries over to the way that program leaders supervise their AANAPISI staff and shape the workplace culture. Daisy and La'ei noted the marked difference that they felt when beginning their AANAPISI work. Unlike in previous higher education roles they had held, they found that AANAPISI program leaders created a workplace culture that valued their cultural knowledge and life experiences and invited input on projects and initiatives that drew from this expertise. In addition to program leadership, working with predominately AAPI colleagues and students, typically in a shared program office, also created a culturally validating space that oftentimes became a close knit AAPI community that staff found welcoming and supportive. Rosamie and Paco referred to the Pendleton State AANAPISI program space as having a familial feel with students and staff sharing food and enjoying each other's company. These spaces provide a marked disjuncture from AAPI staff members' experiences in previous non-AANAPISI jobs where their

opinions were belittled. AANAPISI spaces engaged AAPI staff members' cultural and

professional knowledge and, as noted above, provided staff with the opportunity to receive

validation of this knowledge from multiple sources within their AANAPISI program, their

larger campus environment, and external professional organizations. As a result, staff felt a

sense of legitimacy in the knowledge that they carried as AAPIs and as student support

professionals. AANAPISI programs represent important and rare epistemological spaces for

AAPI staff.

Engagement With Culturally Validating Curricula

Existing studies have found that the opportunity to engage with cultural validating

curricula has a positive impact on the educational outcomes for students of color (Sleeter,

2011). This study's findings suggest that working with culturally validating curricula may

also have positive effects for AAPI AANAPISI staff. Instead of being taught the curricula,

AANAPISI staff design and implement the content. This study suggests that culturally

validating curricula can have a positive impact on POC regardless of whether the individual

is doing the teaching or the learning. Existing literature demonstrates that teaching content to

others is a highly effective way to learn content most deeply (Lewis, 2019). Some

AANAPISI staff find themselves in a blended role of both teacher and student. Not all

AANAPISI staff embark upon their roles with a strong foundation in Asian American

Studies, Asian American history, or local AAPI communities – some of the areas that

AANAPISI curricula might draw from. Therefore, these staff members found themselves

learning the curricular material along with their students.

AANAPISI staff engage with culturally validating curricula through the act of

curricular design and implementation. Depending on the AANAPISI program, some staff are

more involved with in-class instruction and curricular design than others. Even if they do not

incorporate classroom-based activity, the vast majority of programs focus on teaching

students about the histories and experiences of AAPI communities. In this way, AANAPISI

staff engage with culturally validating curricula through the facilitation of a majority of

AANAPISI programming, events, and initiatives.

The work that staff do designing AANAPISI curricula and programming requires that

they engage deeply with the culturally validating educational content they hope to impart

upon their students. For example, thoughtfully and deliberately designing AANAPISI

programming for his students was an impactful experience for Paco. Thinking of culturally

validating ways to encourage his students to explore their AAPI identities forced him to

examine his own Filipino identity. Houa's work coaching students to consider how their

AAPI identities informed their future goals led her to clarify the importance of her Hmong

American identity to her professional goals and values.

Motivation and Ability to Create Positive Change Within Campus and Local Communities

Lastly, AANAPISI programs support the cultural integration of AAPI staff members'

professional and cultural lives by instilling in them the skills and drive to better the lives of

other AAPIs. La'ei's experience in Hill Valley's AANAPISI program provided her with a

unique opportunity to follow her passion of creating positive change for Pacific Islander (PI)

students. She had a professional role that allowed her to focus her time and effort on

supporting AAPI students. She also had a supervisor who valued her cultural knowledge as a

PI and her professional expertise as an experienced higher education professional. These

conditions allowed her to deeply engage in the holistic and targeted PI student support work

with that she loved. Working for an AANAPISI program also provides AAPI staff with

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experience to navigate the bureaucracy of higher educational institutions with savvy. The holistic nature of AANAPSI roles means that staff may gain experience engaging with a wide variety departments and procedures. A single staff person might need to interface with entities from student affairs and enrollment management to academic support in order to provide student with the holistic support that they need. AANAPISI staff also may engage in other activities beyond direct student support such as teaching Ethnic Studies curricula and doing outreach in local communities. This wide breadth of functions means that AANAPISI staff quickly learn how to navigate their institutions and guide students through a variety of situations. For example, Houa noted that the multi-faceted nature of her AANAPISI role allowed her to gain a more well-rounded skillset than other early career staff whose roles were more traditional and narrower in scope such as academic advising or career counseling. These skills in combination with an understanding of how to navigate systems of higher education that are often unfriendly to POC, as well as the cultural competence to provide support in a culturally sustaining manner, mean that AAPI AANAPISI staff have the potential to impact the lives of many AAPIs and their communities. The knowledge, motivation, and skills that staff gain from working in AANAPISI programs position AAPI staff as effective agents of change for AAPI students and communities.

Their experience with AANAPISI work made AAPI staff increasingly motivated to create positive change for AAPIs on their campuses and in their communities by deepening staff members' understandings of the needs and experiences of AAPI communities. The AAPI staff I interviewed grew up involved to varying degrees in AAPI communities. As a result, some were quite aware about the inequities facing their AAPI communities while others were less informed. It is also important to mention the role that privilege plays in this

dynamic. Most notably, those from more affluent or otherwise privileged backgrounds were often more insulated and less aware of the struggles experienced by those less fortunate. For those who came into the work less informed about the struggles of many AAPI communities, their experience in AANAPISI programs was eye opening. Especially for those from relatively privileged backgrounds, the information they were learning was saddening and disappointing but also created a new sense of urgency behind AANAPISI work. For example, Paco had learned in Asian American Studies courses about the ways that poverty impacted Southeast Asian American communities. Seeing the reality of his students' experiences with poverty first-hand, however, led him to understand this issue on a level that went beyond the merely intellectual or academic. Moreover, regardless of how previously knowledgeable staff were, working for AANAPISI led them to feel a deeper and more personal stake in the condition of AAPI communities. Many AAANAPISI programs hire staff who come from the communities they serve. Therefore, these staff members often experienced many of the challenges that their students do. Staff identify with and understand firsthand what students are going through. A unique aspect of AANAPISI work is that the small community-centered program spaces that AANAPISI programs tend to function in allow for the formation of familiar and caring relationships between staff and students. Therefore, even staff whose own educational and life experiences do not align so directly with those of their students feel deeply the struggles and pain of their students. These findings coincide with those of Museus et al. (2017) whose study concluded that involvement in campus subcultures such as Asian American Studies programs and Asian American student organizations allowed AAPI students to better appreciate the needs and issues facing AAPIs both on their campuses and in local communities. This deepened understanding

caused many students to feel more inspired and motivated to create positive change for

AAPIs on and off their campuses. The same could be said of AAPI AANAPISI staff.

The Limits of Professional Identity Redefinition in AANAPISI Programs

It is crucial to emphasize that the experience of identity redefinition is not always an

entirely positive experience. Although the majority of my study participants did report

positive identity redefinition experiences, this may not have been the case had the study been

conducted using a different sample or different sampling criteria. As mentioned in Chapter 3,

this study's sampling criteria required that participants have worked in an AANAPISI

program for a minimum of four years at the time of data collection. This sampling decision

was based upon literature indicating that professional identity development for higher

education staff tends to be shaped by long-term factors such as relationship-building and

accomplishment of prior goals that take time to develop (Hirschy et al., 2015; Pittman &

Foubert, 2016; Trede et al., 2012). Therefore, individuals who worked for their AANAPISI

program for fewer than four years may not have had adequate time to experience the

professional identity development that they might have, given more time in their roles.

However, this sampling strategy also may have resulted in a participant pool that was more

representative of AAPI AANAPISI staff who had positive experiences than those who did

not. One can assume that staff members who made the choice to remain in their AANAPISI

jobs for this extended period of time, as opposed to seeking employment elsewhere, must

have done so because they experienced AANAPISI work and any identity redefinition that

came with it as a positive phenomenon in their lives.

Jasmine is one example of an AAPI AANAPISI staff member whose experience was

not entirely positive and changed over time. Her experience working for Pendleton State's

AANAPISI program led her to develop both her professional identity as well as racial and ethnic identity as a Hmong American student support professional, however this identity development came at a cost to her personal and family life. As the only one of her 13 siblings to attend college, Jasmine was painfully aware of the challenges that her students at Pendleton faced as low-income, first-generation students from ethnic groups historically underrepresented in higher education. She identified so strongly with her students and cared for them so much that she found herself working late into the evening each night and continuing that work on the weekends, to the neglect of her health and her home life. She explained, "I love AANAPISI and I would not be where I am without AANAPISI…I [worked myself to the bone] because these are my students. I did it because I really understand how they feel." However, she realized that she could not continue working this way and also fulfill her lifelong dream of raising children with her partner. She experienced many of the same conditions as other study participants but the costs of AANAPISI work began to outweigh the benefits. While she was pregnant, a health scare led her to re-evaluate her priorities and eventually to leave her AANAPISI job for an academic advising role at Pendleton that allowed her to emotionally separate her work life from her personal and family life. Jasmine is now raising two healthy and happy children with her partner.

Implications

This study has implications for the improvement of AAPI direct student support staff retention and professional development, the development of policy that better supports AANAPISIs, and the realization of future research on the professional identity development of AAPIs working in higher education and other predominately White professional fields.

Implications for Practice

This study's findings have implications for supervisors of AAPI student support staff as well as higher educational institutions overall.

Implications for Supervisors. As this study demonstrates, AANAPISI program leadership is doing something right in terms of supporting the development and wellbeing of AAPI staff. Therefore, supervisors of AAPI staff would benefit from adopting best practices of AANAPISI program leadership such as validating staff members' cultural and professional knowledge, providing opportunities to engage with culturally relevant content, and pushing staff out of their comfort zone in ways that engage their strengths. Findings suggest that the experience of working in an AANAPISI program tends to support the development of AAPI staff members' professional identities in a number of distinct ways. Moreover, they suggest that professional identity development does not take place in a vacuum and is influenced by various factors such as an individual's racial and ethnic identity. In other words, supervisors must realize that they cannot use a one-size-fits-all approach in supporting the development of their staff. In a predominately White field like higher education, the experiences of White staff dominate the knowledge of best practices on supervision and professional development.

Some examples of best practices that supervisors of AAPI staff should consider given the findings of this study include connecting staff with opportunities to get involved with AAPI professional organizations such as Asian Pacific Americans in Higher Education (APAHE). Organizations such as APAHE are important sources of validation and encouragement for staff. APAHE allows staff to develop and present panels and workshops on the programming and initiatives that they have worked so hard to develop. Showcasing

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their hard work to a national audience is often a rewarding experience for staff. Professional organizations also connect staff to larger networks of caring AAPI mentors who can provide guidance and support beyond their direct supervisor and colleagues. Supervisors should also allow staff the flexibility and creative license to incorporate their own life experiences and cultures into AANAPISI programming. Many initiatives that AANAPISI programs offer such as tutoring and peer mentoring offer this opportunity. For example, La'ei's supervisor was an enthusiastic supporter of the ways that La'ei was able to bring her Samoan culture into Hill Valley's peer mentoring program through the development of events like traditional Samoan house meetings called fale fono. AAPI AANAPISI staff bring a wealth of experience and knowledge to their programs and institutions, and supervisors would be remiss to not make use of this incredible resource.

Implications for Institutions. The adoption of best practices to support the professional identity development of AAPI staff is valuable not only to the direct supervisors of AAPI staff but also to institutional leadership invested in the diversification of their college and university staff. Recent decades have seen many institutional missions and strategic plans incorporate a focus on diversifying their faculty and staff rosters (Kayes, 2006). Literature on the topic demonstrates that professional identity development is a crucial predictor of retention for higher education staff (Renn & Hodges, 2015; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008; Rosser & Javinar, 2003). The attrition rates of higher education staff overall are startlingly high (Hirschy et al., 2015; Tull et al., 2009) and appear to have accelerated in recent years (Brown, 2022). Given the existing underrepresentation of AAPIs amongst higher education staff (Snyder et al., 2019), institutional leadership and senior administration should feel an urgency to discover any best practices that can support AAPI staff retention and

implement them institution-wide through strategic planning directives that call for more culturally sustaining campus environments, hiring practices that promote equitable representation of AAPI staff, and professional development trainings to educate the campus community about the experiences, histories, and cultures of AAPI communities.

This study's findings have specific implications for institutions that have AANAPISI programs currently established on their campuses. Once the five-year grant cycle ends, institutional leadership must decide how much funding, if any, they are willing to commit to sustaining the AANAPISI program and other initiatives (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Like other development grant programs, AANAPISI grants are intended to provide institutions with the seed money to design and pilot initiatives like the AANAPISI student support programs discussed in this study. Although studies have made a substantial case that AAPI students enjoy tangible benefits from participating in AANAPISI programs, including increased sense of belonging on campus and decreased time to degree completion (CARE, 2013, 2014; Nguyen et al., 2018), this study builds upon these findings to make the case that AANAPISI programs also have tangible benefits for AAPI staff. These findings are something that institutional leadership should take into consideration when making these crucial budgetary decisions. Institutions that do not commit to supporting their AANAPISI programs post-grant are making the decision to sacrifice these substantial benefits that will have an overall positive impact on students and their campuses.

Implications for Policy

This study's findings support the call echoed by many researchers and advocates of AANAPISI programs for increased federal appropriations for future AANAPISI grant competitions (Nguyen et al., 2020; Nguyen et al., 2019; M. Nguyen, 2019; Nguyen et al.,

2018). A research brief published in 2020 by the National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA) recommended that the Department of Education increase annual funding for AANAPISI grants from an average of $7.8 million to $30 million (Nguyen et al., 2020). Increased funding would allow a greater number of AANAPISI grant-eligible institutions to receive funding. As of 2020, AANAPISI grant competitions have provided awards to only a fraction of eligible institutions (approximately 20 of the 160) (Nguyen et al., 2020). The more institutions that receive AANAPISI funding, the more AAPI students will be able to benefit from AANAPISI programs. Existing studies clearly demonstrate the positive impacts that AANAPISI programs have for AAPI students (CARE, 2013, 2014; Martinsen, 2017; Nguyen et al., 2018) and this study suggests that AAPI staff may also benefit from participation in AANAPISI. Increasing federal appropriations would mean that the reach of benefits currently experienced by a fraction of AAPI students and staff could be scaled up to impact significantly more individuals.

Increased federal monies for AANAPISIs would also create a more equitable distribution of Minority Serving Institution (MSI) resources. AANAPISIs receive the least amount of funding per capita than all other MSI classifications. This inequity is clearly exemplified by shifts in federal funding for MSIs over the past decade. Between 2013 and 2020, funding for AANAPISIs rose by $1.4 million while funding for Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) rose by over $40 million (Nguyen et al., 2020). It is important to note that arguments for increased AANAPISI funding are not intended to pit AANAPISIs and other Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) who also rely on Department of Education funding against each other. Instead, increases in funding to AANAPISIs should be also applied across the board to all other MSI grant programs.

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Implications for Research

Given this study's findings on the key role that working for an AANAPISI program

has on the professional identity development of AAPI staff, more research is warranted to

explore if staff of color working in similar student support programs at other MSIs have

similar experiences. Existing research on MSIs tends of focus on the experiences of college

and university presidents and program leadership (Commodore et al., 2016; Freeman, 2014;

Palmer, 2019). However, the individuals who staff these programs are the ones directly

involved in the implementation of program activities and initiatives. Therefore, more

information about MSI staff experiences is needed to more fully understand the contributions

that MSIs are making to the nation's higher education landscape.

Additionally, future research should explore the application of Museus et al.'s (2012)

theory about the impact of ethnic subcultures on students of color on predominately White

campuses to the experiences of staff of color. This study provides an example of how

participation in ethnic subcultures, AANAPISI programs, benefit staff of color in similar

ways to how they benefit students. Therefore, the applicability of this theory to staff

experiences in other ethnic subcultures, such as multicultural centers and Ethnic Studies

programs, should be explored.

Lastly, future research should also explore professional identity development of

AAPI professionals in other fields. This study and many others make the case that POC

experience professional identity development in ways that are not reflected in general

literature on professional identity development (Gonzalez-Smith et al., 2014; Leyva, 2011;

Locke, 2017; Nelson & Jackson, 2003; Slay & Smith, 2011; Velez-Rendon, 2010). These

studies do not account for the crucial role that racism and discrimination plays in the lives of

POC working in predominately White fields and therefore cannot adequately explain their

experiences. Therefore, studies on the professional development of AAPIs in other

predominately White fields such as the arts, law, agriculture, and certain trades are needed to

further develop this understanding. Building stronger theory around the professional identity

development of AAPIs in predominately White fields may be a step in addressing the drastic

underrepresentation of AAPIs in these professional roles.

APPENDIX A

AANAPISI GRANTEES DURING DATA COLLECTION PERIOD (2019–2020)

1. American River College, CA
2. Bunker Hill Community College, MA
3. California State University, East Bay, CA
4. California State University, Sacramento, CA
5. Century College, MN
6. Coastline Community College, CA
7. Evergreen Valley College, CA
8. Highline College, WA
9. Hunter College, NY
10. Irvine Valley College, CA
11. Laney College, CA
12. Middlesex Community College, MA
13. Mission College CA
14. Mt. San Antonio College, CA
15. Northern Marianas College, Saipan, MP
16. Pierce College, WA
17. Richland College, TX
18. San Francisco State University, CA
19. University of California, Irvine, CA
20. University of Illinois, Chicago, IL
21. University of Massachusetts Boston, MA
22. University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, MN
23. University of Nevada, Las Vegas, NV

Recruitment Letter

Dear [Participant Name},

My name is Sara Boxell Hoang and I am a doctoral student in the University of Massachusetts Boston's College of Education and Human Development as well as the Director of UMass Boston's AANAPISI grant-funded student support program called the Asian American Student Success Program.

I am contacting you about an opportunity to participate in a research study aimed at understanding the experiences of Asian American and Pacific Islander staff working in AANAPISI grant-funded student support programs. As an AANAPISI staff member, your insights are integral to expanding the body of knowledge on AANAPISI programs. Although I hold dual roles as a doctoral student and AANAPISI program director, the purpose of this study is to inform the completion of my dissertation and is not directly affiliated with UMass Boston's AANAPISI program.

Participating in this study will involve sitting for an interview that will last approximately 90 minutes. Interviews will take place via Zoom or phone. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at anytime. I will take a number of steps to preserve your confidentiality. Your name, institution, and job title will not be included in data collection. In addition, final research reports will use pseudonyms in place of names and institutions as well and general job titles.

If you (a) identify as Asian American Pacific Islander, (b) work in a professional staff role in an AANAPISI student support program, and (c) have worked in that setting for a minimum of four years, then you are potentially eligible for this study.

If you meet the criteria above and are interested in being a part of this study, please fill out this brief survey: [link to Demographic Questionnaire below]. The survey should take five minutes or less. Selected participants will be notified via the email address provided in the questionnaire.

All study participants will receive a $40 Visa gift card as a token of appreciation for your time.

If you have any questions, please let me know at sara.hoang@umb.edu or 617-287-3241. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Sara Boxell Hoang
Doctoral Candidate
University of Massachusetts Boston
100 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, MA 02125

Demographic Questionnaire

Please respond to the following questions. You may leave responses blank if you prefer to not to answer a question. Your name and contact information are asked for scheduling purposes only and will not be included in data collection. Final research reports will use pseudonyms and general job titles only. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at sara.hoang@umb.edu or 617-287-3241.

What is your preferred full name?

What is the best email address to reach you?

Which of the following interview formats do you prefer? Select all that apply.

Zoom interview during the week of Monday, February xxth through Friday, February xxth
Phone interview during the week of Monday, February xxth through Friday, February xxth

Zoom interview after the week of Monday, February xxth through Friday, February xxth
Phone interview after the week of Monday, February xxth through Friday, February xxth

What are your preferred pronouns?

How would you describe your racial identity?

How would you describe your ethnic identity?

How long have you been working in your AANAPISI program?

Have you worked in any other AANAPISI programs? If so, for how long?

What is your current job title? Any job titles that you held previously while working for your AANAPISI program?

Before working for your AANAPISI program, how long had you worked in higher education?

Briefly describe your professional background prior to working for your AANAPISI program.

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Introduction

I appreciate you taking the time to speak with me today. My name is Sara Boxell and I am a doctoral student in UMass Boston's College of Education and Human Development as well as the Director of UMass Boston's AANAPISI grant-funded student support program called the Asian American Student Success Program. As I mentioned in my initial email, the purpose of this study is to inform the completion of my dissertation and is not directly affiliated with UMass Boston's AANAPISI program.

I have asked to interview you as a part of my study on the experiences of AAPI staff working in AANAPISI grant-funded student support programs.

Interview Goals

I have three main goals for this interview. First, I would like to learn about what your day-to-day work as an AANAPISI staff member looks like. Second, I would like to know how, if at all, your work has impacted the way you think about your racial and/or ethnic identities. Lastly, I would like to know how the experience of working in an AANAPISI program has influenced how you view yourself as a higher education professional.

Informed Consent

I sent you an informed consent form ahead of our conversation today. The purpose of this form is to outline your right as a study participant. I would like to reiterate three points. First, I will make every effort to keep your responses confidential and anonymous. Only myself and a professional transcriber will be privy to the audio recording of our conversation. I will use pseudonyms in interview transcripts as well as the dissertation itself to protect the confidentiality of all participants.

Second, I want to emphasize that your participation in this interview and the study itself is entirely voluntary. You can stop the interview at any time and you can also withdraw from the study at any time. You can also decline to answer any question or request any particular comment to be "off the record." This means I will omit the information from the transcript as well as the analysis.

Lastly, as I mentioned in the initial email invitation, you will receive a $40 Visa gift card as a token of appreciation for taking the time to participate in this interview today.

Timeframe and Questions

This interview should last approximately 90 minutes. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interview Questions

Experiences in AANAPISI

1. Describe a typical workday as an AANAPISI [job title].
2. How did you come to work for AANAPISI?
3. Does your identity as [racial and/or ethnic identity] impact your work? How so?
    1. Can you tell me about a time when you felt that being an AAPI was an advantage in your work? [Probe: Do you see any ways that being an AAPI has impacted your relationships with students? Your relationships with colleagues? Have your own experiences as an AAPI student played any role in these relationships?] [Probe: What about the ways that you approach your work? In general? Or are there specific tasks that come to mind?]
    2. Can you tell me about a time when you felt that being an AAPI was a disadvantage in your work? [Probes: Same as those above]
4. Has working for AANAPISI impacted your sense of yourself as [racial and/or ethnic identity]? [Probe: Before working for AANAPISI, what did it mean to you to be [racial and/or ethnic identity? What about now?]
5. Can you think of any experiences or relationships that were particularly impactful on your sense of self as a [racial and/or ethnic identity] higher education professional? [Probe: Relationships with supervisors? Colleagues? Students?] [Probe: Connections to AAPI communities? Ex. On-campus communities of AAPI students/faculty/staff such as Asian American Studies-affiliated groups or student organizations? AAPI-interest community organizations?]

Personal Identities and Background
1. How do you identify yourself in terms of race and/or ethnicity? [Note: In subsequent questions, use the terminology that they use. Ex. Asian American, Vietnamese American, Vietnamese, etc.]
    1. Has your sense of racial and/or ethnic identity shifted throughout your life? How so? [Probe: Can you think of an particularly significant experiences? Relationships?]
2. Core values are a set of beliefs and morals that inform how we conduct our lives, both personally and professionally. Are there any core values that you carry as a result of your AAPI identity? ...Probes: [From your family/cultural upbringing? From an AAPI community you are/have been a part of? From the experience of growing up and/or living as an AAPI in the US?

Impact of These Experiences on AAPI Professional Identity Development
    1. Has working for AANAPISI impacted your sense of yourself as a [racial and/or ethnic identity] higher education professional?
    2. How would you describe yourself as a higher education professional before working for AANAPISI? What about after? [Probe: Before working for AANAPISI, what would you say your greatest strengths and weaknesses as a professional were? What about now?] [Probe: Has working for AANAPISI impacted how you see what you can accomplish professionally? How so?]What are some of the biggest personal and professional lessons that

you've learned working for AANAPISI? [Probe: As a higher education professional? As a [racial and/or ethnic identity]?

3. Has working for AANAPISI impacted your future career plans/aspirations? How so?[Probe: Are there any future career plans/aspirations that you would not have had if you hadn't worked for AANAPISI? Please describe.]

4. Is there anything else that you like to share that we haven't discussed yet?

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me. Do you have any questions for me before we end? Thank you very much.

APPENDIX D

CONNECTING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS & PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

DEVELOPMENT THEORY FOR POC

1. How does working in an AANAPISI program shape the professional identity development of AAPI staff, if at all?

2. How do AAPI staff members experience their personal identities, such as race, ethnicity, and cultural background impacting their work in AANAPISI programs? How does this experience shape staff members' professional identity development?

Theoretical insight	Data collection
Cultural integration is supported when POC have access to: (1) Culturally validating physical and epistemological spaces, (2) engagement with culturally validating curricula, and (3) motivation and ability to create positive change within campus and local communities (Museus et al., 2011).	Describe a typical workday as an AANAPISI [job title]. Can you think of any experiences or relationships that were particularly impactful on your sense of self as a [racial and/or ethnic identity] higher education professional? [Probe: Relationships with supervisors? Colleagues? Students?] [Probe: Connections to AAPI communities? Ex. On-campus communities of AAPI students/faculty/staff such as Asian American Studies-affiliated groups or student organizations? AAPI-interest community organizations?]
Ethnic campus subcultures provide POC with the opportunity to experience cultural integration: the validation of their cultural/racial identities within their professional/academic spheres (Museus et al., 2011).	Does your identity as [racial and/or ethnic identity] impact your work? How so? Can you tell me about a time when you felt that being an AAPI was an advantage in your work? [Probe: Do you see any ways that being an AAPI has impacted your relationships with students? Your relationships with colleagues? Have your own experiences

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Theoretical insight	Data collection
	as an AAPI student played any role in these relationships?] [Probe: What about the ways that you approach your work? In general? Or are there specific tasks that come to mind?] Can you tell me about a time when you felt that being an AAPI was a disadvantage in your work? [Probes: Same as those above] Core values are a set of beliefs and morals that inform how we conduct our lives, both personally and professionally. Are there any core values that you carry as a result of your AAPI identity? [Probes: From your family? From an AAPI community that you are/have been a part of? From the experience of growing up and/or living as an AAPI in the U.S.?]
Slay and Smith's (2014) notion of professional identity development by identity "redefinition" shifts how professionals of color perceive themselves personally and professionally. They may realize that their racial and ethnic identities can be assets in their workplaces and may feel an increased sense of pride in their racial and ethnic identities in their personal and professional lives (Damasco & Hodges, 2012; Gonzalez-Smith et al., 2014; Leyva, 2011; Locke, 2017; Roberts et al., 2014).	Has working for AANAPISI impacted your sense of yourself as [racial and/or ethnic identity]? [Probe: Before working for AANAPISI, what did it mean to you to be [racial and/or ethnic identity? What about now?] Has working for AANAPISI impacted your sense of yourself as a [racial and/or ethnic identity] higher education professional? How would you describe yourself as a higher education professional before working for AANAPISI? What about after?

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