

Chapter 31

Challenges for Asian American and Immigrant Asian Women in the U.S. Higher Education Administration

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ABSTRACT

In spite of this rising presence and educational attainment, Asian American and immigrant Asian women are notably underrepresented in academic leadership roles. Asian American women fall far behind White females in leadership positions in higher education, especially in community colleges that are assumed to be more liberal in acceptances than four year universities while nurturing women in administrative positions. Only nine Asian American women held presidential positions in community colleges in 2010. There was no immigrant Asian woman who reached the supreme leadership position. This chapter explores the question: Why are Asian American and immigrant Asian women, in spite of their rising presence in academia, severely underrepresented in leadership roles in academic administration? This is the point of focus this chapter engages to study from existing research.

INTRODUCTION

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

In 1969, the total number of foreign-born faculty was 28,200 (10% of the total) increasing to 126,123 in 2007 (Marvasti, 2005; Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006). From 2004–2014, 70% of the doctorates awarded were to temporary visa holders, and the top three countries that accounted for more than half of the doctorates were China, India, and South Korea. In 2014, Asians (Permanent residents and citizens) were

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the largest U.S. minority population to earn doctorates. Between 2010-2014, 3,539 Asians were awarded doctoral degrees. In fall 2013, of a full-time faculty at degree granting postsecondary institutions, 4 percent were Asian/pacific islander females. Among full-time professors, only 2 percent were Asian/Pacific islanders. On the other hand, according to Planty et al. (2009), from 1998-2007, Asian American women obtaining doctorate degrees increased by 107%. In spite of this rising presence and educational attainment, Asian American and immigrant Asian women are notably underrepresented in academic leadership roles (Chen & Hune, 2011; Huang & Yamagata-Noji, 2010; Digest of Education Statistics, 2009). According to Opp and Gosetti (2002) and Chen and Hune (2011), Asian American women fall far behind White females in leadership positions in higher education, especially in community colleges that are assumed to be more liberal in acceptances than four year universities while nurturing women in administrative positions (Eddy & Cox, 2008; Tedrow & Rhoads, 1999; Valverde, 2011). According to Huang and Yamatata-Noji, (2010), only nine Asian American women held presidential positions in community colleges in 2010. There was no immigrant Asian woman who reached the supreme leadership position. In Washington State in 2011, only 2 Asian American women held presidential positions out of 34 community colleges. In 2012, the number dropped to one. In spite of being the “model minority” in academia and holding the topmost position among immigrants for terminal/doctoral degrees, Asian Americans and immigrant Asians remain an understudied community in higher education research, and the issues behind their underrepresentation remain invisible (Suzuki, 2002). Due to multiple intersections of gender and racial stereotypes, Asian American and immigrant Asian women face challenges while climbing leadership positions. According to Hune (2011), Asian American women faculty are “differently raced, gendered, and deemed foreign” by whites. McIntosh (2008) argues that while gender discrimination might be posed against both white and Asian American women, racial discrimination prevails and White women are preferred over Asian American women for leadership roles. Chou and Feagin (2008), Berdahl and Min (2012), and Yamatata-Noji (2011) find that due to cultural barriers Asian Americans do not find appropriate mentors in order to develop leadership efficiencies. Therefore, attaining the leadership positions remains almost impenetrable for them.

Objectives of This Chapter

This chapter explores the question: Why are Asian American and immigrant Asian women, in spite of their rising presence in academia, severely underrepresented in leadership roles in academic administration? This is the point of focus this chapter engages to study from existing research.

BACKGROUND

Who Are Immigrant Asians?

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

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