Presumed Incompetent

The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia

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CHAPTER 7

NAVIGATING THE ACADEMIC TERRAIN

The Racial and Gender Politics of Elusive Belonging

Linda Trinh Võ

When considering whether to write this chapter, I had all the reservations so eloquently articulated in the introduction to this book, cognizant that I should be spending my time laboring on that single-authored book that will contribute to my next promotion.[1] However, reflecting upon the journey that led me to a life in the academy and the opportunity to make the path more welcoming to a future generation was too inviting to pass up. Women of color, like most who attend graduate school hopeful of achieving faculty status, are motivated by lofty goals to make a contribution to some original form of knowledge.

Growing up, I had no aspirations to become an academic since I did not know that this was a profession and had no contact with professors. The high school teachers I knew well discouraged me from the teaching profession since they disliked the stressful conditions they endured in an underfunded district with one of the lowest college attendance rates in California. At my large public university, the books I devoured captivated my imagination, and the research papers I wrote inspired me to query my professors about their career choice. Having labored at minimum-wage jobs, I was persuaded by the fact that being a faculty member meant you had flexible hours and did not have to wear a uniform or clock in, so I idealistically entered graduate school. In those early years, I received little mentorship and busied myself with adjusting to the mechanics required of my coursework, so it was not until later that I truly became aware of the competitiveness, elitism, and cronyism embedded within the academy and had to seriously contemplate if I belonged or wanted to devote my life to this profession.

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[1] I thank Yolanda Flores Niemann for encouraging me to write this chapter and for her incisive comments on an earlier draft.

I know women of color, full of self-confidence, who have forged successfully ahead in their careers and encountered few glitches. I have not lived that life. My mother, like so many rural women displaced by the violence of war in Vietnam, was forced to leave her children behind to be raised by relatives while she gravitated to urban areas to find employment. In her case, she worked as a maid for US government employees, one of whom became my stepfather and whom I met when I was five. We moved to a different country, mainly in Asia and Europe, almost every other year, and this augmented my intellectual curiosity as a scholar and forced me to adapt quickly and blend into my new schools and surroundings. Growing up in a multiracial, multicultural family in various countries presented some interesting challenges and definitely contributed to my endurance in the academy.

As a child, I was puzzled by the socioeconomic inequalities that surrounded me and have always been curious about the enormous expenditure of energy and the vast consumption of resources needed to establish and maintain entrenched racial, class, gender, and sexual hierarchies, even when common sense indicates that eradicating such systems of inequalities are more productive and fruitful. I am still perplexed by the way academic institutions, which can claim some significant gains in advancing diversity, continue to create an inhospitable environment for white women and men and women of color. In this chapter—drawing from research as well as personal experiences and observations—I intend to analyze institutional barriers that persist, evaluate reactions and decisions, and explore viable strategies that can make the academy a more accommodating and welcoming place. I will examine racial and gender discrimination and obstacles, focusing especially on hiring, mentoring, and promotion processes. In the last couple of decades, the demographic transformations in this country, along with the accompanying changes in the university population, make it imperative for universities, both private and public, to reconsider and adjust their policies and practices if they want to remain relevant and meaningful to the communities they serve (D. G. Smith 2000). This is the larger context in which I constructed this chapter and the spirit in which I hope it is read.

Learning Promotional Skills

Academic institutions are not neutral racial and gender spaces, and female and male faculty of color experience them differently from their white counterparts (Garcia 2000). For example, studies show that females are hesitant to exercise self-promotion, a necessary skill set to advance in the profession (Winkler 2000). Women of color have to learn the skill of self-promotion and also become comfortable with being boastful, flaunting our accomplishments, and ensuring we receive due credit for our work. For some this means having to overcome the fear of being perceived as arrogant, egotistical, self-serving braggarts and being able to ignore the negative labels associated with “aggressive” women. There are countless instances where I have observed women in positions of power undermine their authority or expertise by prefacing their opinions, suggestions, or ideas with “I’m not sure if this makes sense” or some similarly dismissive remark, only to follow it with a brilliant thought. This is hardly a statistically significant observation, but it does indicate we need to be conscious of the way we are socialized and its influence on gendered behavior patterns.

Studies show that the salary differential between men and women is not solely a result of employers purposely being discriminatory; it exists because men are more forceful in negotiating their salaries (Brown 2003). It appears that men automatically believe they deserve the job and negotiate harder based on their assumed worth. It seems women are just so thankful to land a job that they fail to negotiate sufficiently before they accept their positions. Although I may be speaking from limited administrative experience, I have observed this gender disparity in action. Most noticeable is that women seem more hesitant to go on the job market to acquire counteroffers than their male counterparts, and this seems to play a role in the salary differential. At many institutions, much of the negotiation process is cloaked in secrecy with various factors being considered, such as salaries, research funds, teaching load, and other resources, so women of color have to be astute enough to be informed about the variables. Male colleagues seem more adept at this entitlement game and as a result advance in their careers and also are more generously rewarded. We need to overcome our reservations about negotiations, recognizing that our base salary is the foundation for future incremental increases and, if it is too low, this disparity can add up to a sizeable share of lost income during a career.

Self-aggrandizement is an acquired habit for those who have been socialized to be nurturers and are unaccustomed to being the center of attention. It is inaccurate to assume that Asian American women share some kind of common culture or characteristic when we have such diverse histories and backgrounds. Broad generalizations about ethnic or racial groups should be avoided; rather, the focus should be on the intersection of varying factors, ranging from Asian cultural expectations and US cultural norms that shape our lives to the context of structural barriers and constraints that impacts the pragmatic personal decisions we are forced to make. Over the years, I have watched as promising women of color, including Asian Americans, abandon their professional ambitions to defer to the careers of their male partners, some whom are academics, while others accept non-tenure-track positions.

We may be averse to taking risks because of familial expectations and economic predicaments that make it more difficult for us to pursue prestigious fellowships in other locales or vie for enviable positions that require relocation. Some Asian American women from low-income immigrant families financially support their parents and, at an early age, assumed adult responsibilities because their parents spoke limited English, and they continue to shoulder these burdens as graduate students and faculty. For those of us who are immigrants or whose family members are recent immigrants, strong cultural expectations dictate that we defer to and respect our elders (Eng 1999).

Although some of the countries from which we immigrated had or have female rulers (e.g., India and the Philippines), there is still a gender and age hierarchy that assumes that females will be subservient to males and to their parents.[2] The gendered culture in the United States also reinforces traditional roles associated with marriage and motherhood, even though increasing numbers of women are in the workplace and single, female-headed households are commonplace. Being nurturing and humble does not translate well into the competitive academic cultural environment, so adapting mandates some cultural retooling for many of us.

At the beginning of my career, I lacked the confidence that I saw in my classmates. This self-doubt was compounded by the fact that I was conscious that my parents had only finished grade school and also because there were so few faces of color, particularly female ones, in any graduate program on my campus. Compared to the majority of graduate students of color, who were often first-generation college attendees, I noticed that a number of my white classmates had close or distant relatives who were scholars, so these peers appeared rather comfortable around academics and savvier about university culture. Regardless, graduate school and the stressful tenure process can generate incredible self-doubt, even shattering the confidence of some of the smuggest scholars. At the time, there was one token female representative from each group—Native American, African American, and Latina—in my graduate program, and I recall them struggling as well, but because we were in staggered cohorts and vastly different stages of our education, we could only support each other from afar.

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[2] From my cursory conversations with female faculty members in Asia and my own observations visiting their institutions, I know they face incredible barriers in the academy.

Post-tenure status and the academic freedom that accompanies it, as well as becoming an administrator, changed my level of confidence to some extent. As I was finishing my dissertation, I eyed a prestigious fellowship but thought I would never be selected, so I procrastinated in completing the application and turned it in at the post office only five minutes before closure on the day it had to be postmarked. I received this career-changing fellowship, and it helped to ease some of my lagging self-doubt about becoming an academic. I can now appreciate my contributions to the academy and the community, ones I could not imagine myself making as a young graduate student. My confidence still wavers at times, and I still encounter instances when others question whether I belong. However, I no longer dwell on these drawbacks; rather, I focus on my capacity to improve the academic environment and strengthen its institutional promise.

Tackling the Job Market

Faculty hiring is one of the crucial areas where we can transform the academy, yet given the entrenchment of academic practices, it is one of the most contentious aspects to change (D. G. Smith et al. 2004; D. G. Smith 2000).[3] On one search committee, we were discussing the candidates so we could compile a short list of people to invite for a campus visit. I found noticeable the ways that the weaknesses of a male candidate's file were perceived as permissible in comments such as, "That's something he could learn on the job," or "Well, that is counterbalanced by his other qualifications." At the same time, the strengths of a female candidate's file were overlooked or belittled: "Well, that experience would be irrelevant to the job," or "That's really unimpressive." At one point, most of the senior voices on the committee took turns dismissing a candidate's qualifications until one of them, in closing the discussion, commented that including a woman and a minority member would make the pool look diverse. He implied that it would be a positive reflection on the committee to include her. The other males agreed, and she was added onto the short list. I articulated that she was a strong candidate from the beginning and deserved a campus visit, and now she was only included as a token in the short pool of candidates. Consequently, I was extremely uncomfortable with their justification to include her. As the only face of color in the room and the most junior member of that committee, I said nothing in those few seconds, in part because of the shock of what was transpiring.

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[3] There are all kinds of misperceptions—some that are contradictory—that do not withstand the empirical evidence, such as there are no diverse faculty available or they have all been hired.

I have been that token minority candidate before, a position where you know from the initial meeting that the committee members have another candidate in mind and are merely going through the motions of interviewing you. During your campus visit, you meet with the few graduate students of color in the program, who inform you quite bluntly that you are not a serious contender since the department would never hire a woman of color whose specialty is on "race." After describing their personal experiences encountering racial bias as graduate students in the program, they further inform you that, in recent history, the department has failed to tenure any faculty of color. I have actually experienced versions of this scenario more than once. In one memorable interview, I learned that several Latino faculty members had just left and were filing discriminatory grievances against the department and institution. A white faculty member, in charge of diversity in the department, earnestly informed me that the African American students in his classes just could not learn, no matter how much time he devoted to them. Other faculty members, including a senior female, asked me questions about my age, the number of children I had, and my marital status, all inappropriate and illegal questions for interviews. There are instances where the token candidate is offered the position for one reason or another; however, being associated with this distinction is an inauspicious beginning for any faculty member.

Transforming the hiring process means reeducating our colleagues about the hostile climate they create, whether intentionally or inadvertently, for women of color. In the example I described, I am still unsure in hindsight if my silence was the right choice. I could have protested the process at the risk of eliminating her from the pool, as well as alienating potential allies, but I was more intent on opening the door to the possibility of a woman of color being hired. As a faculty equity advisor, a part-time administrative position, I tried to counter that experience by working proactively to implement new hiring and recruiting policies with the intention of altering entrenched attitudes, which contribute to academic departments being complacent about their hiring practices.[4] It was challenging the first year to instruct colleagues on best practices to increase their applicant pool, seriously consider how they could diversify the short list of candidates that came for campus interviews, and create a more hospitable environment for these candidates. As expected, some senior colleagues vehemently protested what they charged was intrusive oversight and changing traditions. It became easier with each successive year as faculty became accustomed to the new procedures or practices and some of the most resistant departments became more responsive.[5]

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[4] I shared this funded position with a white woman faculty member for the first year and for a year and a half held this position by myself in conjunction with my chair responsibilities. The mission statement reads: "The UCI Advance Program carries out the campus commitment to gender equity and diversity in the professoriate." A National Science Foundation Institutional Transformation Award originally funded the program in 2001 to increase women in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields on campus; then the executive vice chancellor and provost institutionalized the UCI Advance Program and extended its mission to include diversity in July 2006. More information is available at UCI Advance Program for Faculty Equity and Diversity at http://advance.uci.edu//.

[5] There is now national racial and gender data on the availability of new PhDs and tenured faculty in a wide range of disciplines, and administrators of the UCI Advance Program make this annual data available to all search committees. Faculty are required to attend workshops on strategies for creating search committees, planning outreach efforts, composing a short list, arranging campus visits, and making the final selection. While there are still areas we

Finding Mentors and Building Networks

A crucial strategy women of color faculty should adopt early on is avoiding becoming isolated and staying in our silos. Graduate school is supposed to prepare us to be scholars, namely to conduct research and publish.[6] If we are fortunate, graduate school provides us with some training to teach. However, it often fails to prepare us for many aspects of our careers. Consequently, we find ourselves stumbling along as faculty members and, later, as administrators. There is often a steep learning curve for new faculty members. The anxiety is reduced if you have supportive colleagues who protect you from burdensome committee work, present you with suitable teaching assignments, and genuinely support your research agenda. Yet there are cases where colleagues, for a wide range of reasons—for example, you were not their candidate of choice for the position—treat new arrivals as rivals and attempt to sabotage their careers. A good mentor can help you navigate the political landmines, and studies consistently find that well-planned mentoring correlates with the success of female and male faculty of color (Turner, González, and Wood 2008).

However, advocating for mentorship programs for faculty can be controversial. At an administrators' meeting when my colleague and I announced a new mentorship program we planned to institute, a senior white faculty member near retirement dismissed the idea. We suspect that he was hostile because our program not only targets retaining all junior faculty but was especially created to support women faculty and faculty of color. He stated that our program was useless since mentors can misdirect junior colleagues, and he elaborated that new faculty should know what to do; otherwise they should not have been hired. We defended the program and, fortunately, we did not need his approval to implement it. The program pairs junior faculty members with a senior mentor outside their department. We developed this external mentoring program to supplement the support junior faculty were supposed to receive from departmental colleagues. However, it is difficult to trust colleagues in your department when they are the reason for your grievances. I have been able to observe the way direct and indirect intervention and assistance from senior mentors has helped to contest the unfair treatment of junior colleagues, especially in egregious merit and promotion cases.

When I found myself at a large campus in a rural location, I was fortunate to have the chance to participate in a support group for junior women of color faculty. Since we came from different disciplines, our focus was not on reading or critiquing each other's work, a practice that I had engaged in at other institutions. We just gathered over delicious meals (you are compelled to learn how to make your favorite ethnic foods in these locations) and shared stories about overcoming isolation. We shared advice on campus policies, networking opportunities, and the promotion process. It was one of the few opportunities I have had to participate in a sustained effort to

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can improve to diversify the faculty, it may be difficult to demonstrate a direct correlation between these policies and the hiring of diverse faculty. The program has made faculty more aware of best practices in terms of equity and transparency. This program has also implemented changes to career advancement by including recognition of diversity activity in research, teaching, and service in the merit and promotion review.

[6] Faculty are expected to provide feedback to students on their projects or dissertations, but only some take the time to offer any substantial guidance about the intricacies of applying for jobs, negotiating job offers, publishing their research, presenting at conferences, etc. Preparing white female graduate students and male and female graduate students of color for their faculty careers should be specifically tailored.

bring junior African American, Asian American, Latina, and Native American faculty women together. There was only a handful of us on campus, and although we came from different backgrounds and fields, this was one of the few spaces where we felt we belonged. We made considerable effort to create a productive and collegial group, which counter to some assumptions, does not automatically occur when women of color come together.

Additionally, in the early stages of my career I attended professional conferences and made a concerted effort not just to present my research or serve on committees but also to find peers and mentors, predominantly women of color, from various institutions and academic levels. I was fortunate to find people willing to share advice about ways to manage the job market, publish a book and prepare for tenure, balance a career and family, and deal with racial and gender discrimination. It is to these friends that I still turn for encouragement, wisdom, and emotional replenishment as I continue to advance in my career since each stage brings new challenges.

Yet I have seen numerous instances when competitive graduate students of color dissociated themselves from other minority students to distinguish themselves or purposely avoided working with faculty of color or women. They consider it more advantageous for their careers to have white, male faculty endorse them and their research, even when these individuals are poor mentors or only marginal experts in their area of study. They will replicate this pattern as faculty members, disassociating themselves from certain kinds of graduate students. It is ironic when some later face racial or gender barriers in their careers, despite employing “strategic gender and racial avoidance” tactics. Many of us know women of color or white female faculty who, once they have advanced, exclude other women from entering their domain. They fear that these newcomers will become their competitors or feel that because they advanced in a harsh environment, others should endure similar struggles to prove themselves. Some do not want their male colleagues to accuse them of favoritism, so they go out of their way not to intervene on behalf of female colleagues.

In contrast, I have also been at institutions with white women presidents, one who sponsored informal gatherings at her residence for women faculty of color to network and to provide input on how to make the campus culture more supportive of their needs. I have also worked with white males who signed up for administrative responsibilities to diversify the gender and racial composition of the faculty. I have not always agreed with their tactics, yet I recognize that they possess certain forms of privilege that can be crucial to the tasks at hand. In reality some women of color faculty advocate to implement race- or gender-neutral plans and prefer the status quo. So, as a pragmatist, I recognize that allies should not be measured simply by their race or gender. We simply cannot assume that other women of color will unite with us, and it is essential that we create possibilities for new alliances.

Contending with Criticism

It is easy to obsess on our disappointments in the academy. However, rather than dwelling on the number of jobs we felt we deserved, publications that should have been accepted, grants we should have received, or awards where we were overlooked, it is more productive to consider what we have accomplished in spite of the barriers. It is worth pausing to recognize that there is room for improvement and consider what you can learn from each experience, but the quicker you can move on, the better. Now that I have been on a number of hiring, promotion, award, and fellowship committees, I realize that political wagering takes place in all these situations: a fair amount of subjectivity taints many decisions. Dwelling on the negative and trying to figure out if our ethnic, gender, class, or sexual orientation led to the rejection can be counterproductive. Not only is it difficult to ascertain the reasons, but it also wastes precious time.

Blatant incidents of racism and sexism or other personal affronts can be devastating, yet if we allow the anger to eat away at us and force us to leave the academy, then institutions will conclude that we are incompetent, even if this is irrational. Without a doubt, I have had moments when I thought if I quit or failed at a particular task, then people would assume that other Asian American women would behave similarly, justifying our exclusion in the future. In some cases, I was motivated to prove them wrong. This was a reaction I had throughout graduate school when a number of faculty in my department expressed skepticism that my dissertation on such an obscure topic as Asian Americans would earn me an academic job or a publisher. I ignored their comments and found support from faculty and graduate students on other campuses who shared my research interests.

Being sensitive to criticism does not produce a good academic. I remember one time in graduate school when a male committee member critiqued one of my oral exam papers and asked me to rewrite it and, to my embarrassment, I began crying. I took his criticism personally, rather than professionally. After reflecting on this incident, I realized that such criticism is harsher for those of us who experience marginalization to contend with because it is compounded by covert and subtle messages we receive that convey that we do not belong and should leave the academy. I do not always agree with critiques of my work and now am more astute at dismissing misguided feedback, but I also have developed thicker skin and am grateful when a scholar is willing to take the time to read my work and provide me detailed and thorough feedback. In addition, I have been on the other side, serving as a reviewer for manuscripts as well as a series editor for a university press, and know how time consuming it is to provide meticulous and constructive feedback on manuscripts, sometimes even on multiple drafts, rather than spending time on my own publications.

Achieving Tenure

Over the years, I have become familiar with numerous cases of white female faculty and male and female faculty of color who have faced major obstacles at their institutions, with some finding new opportunities at other universities or leaving academia altogether. I have known faculty who have committed suicide or been homicidal, battled alcohol and drug addiction, struggled with mental illness, or faced debilitating health problems. Some of these afflictions were inherited or triggered by personal problems, but many were aggravated or brought on by their academic careers. These problems may be similar to what happens in other professions, but it seems in many ways that academics have ideal careers with flexible hours, opportunities for lifelong learning, and the cliché of making a difference, which should lessen these problems. It is difficult to determine the reasons for the problems, but it seems that considerable attrition occurs along the way and the tenure period is the crucial time when problems are likely to arise (Cooper and Stevens 2002).

Each tenure case varies: some colleagues sail through while others encounter major obstacles. The tenure experience depends on the faculty, the department, the higher levels of reviews required, and the year a person goes up for review. Some institutions are notorious for denying tenure to faculty of color, particularly women. As a graduate student, I was keenly aware of the reports that Asian American women were the least likely to receive tenure and their absence was noticeable at the professional conferences I attended (Hune 1998). Over the years, I have listened to stories about tenure struggles, read about the legal battles many fought to gain tenure, and signed petitions or written letters of support for those denied tenure.[7] Almost every year in my discipline, Asian American faculty, mainly women, have been denied tenure. My last letter of support was for an Asian American woman faculty member denied tenure at a prestigious private institution. This woman had a forthcoming book from a university press, was honored with teaching and service awards, and received prestigious grants, but that was not enough to gain her tenure.

I watched many scholars leave the academy, both of their own volition and involuntarily. The mantra that people of color have to work twice as hard as their white, male colleagues to prove themselves has stuck with me. At times, even against my better judgment, I have furiously tried to live up to this maxim. I definitely have become more adept at multitasking over the years, but the result can lead to unnecessary anxiety and unhealthy working hours. The expectations for tenure become too overwhelming for some, and this can affect their ability to focus on their publications. They withdraw because they are reluctant to seek advice or ask questions that may make others perceive them as incompetent.

This behavior is counter to the notion that self-advocacy is necessary for survival. If, for example, you have colleagues purposely attempting to undermine your promotion, you must be proactive and vocal, find allies, and do your research so you are familiar with university policies and the parameters available to defend yourself. As the faculty equity advisor, my responsibilities included providing faculty with advice on procedures, directing them to available resources and, at times, advocating on their behalf with administrators. I found that in the cases where faculty contending with problematic colleagues or chairs, contentious merit and promotion cases, or other inequity issues contacted me early on, prior to the situation becoming too contentious and the participants becoming too embattled, I was able to intervene and strategize with them more effectively, and we were more likely to reach a satisfactory outcome.

I am the kind of person who always asks “what if” questions. I like to be equipped with multiple scenarios when plans A and B do not come to fruition. I was a postdoctoral fellow, a visiting assistant professor, and an assistant professor at two institutions, so I took a circuitous route not addressed in the faculty manuals about the typical timeline for tenure. I had to make sure I was familiar with all my options for promotion, including going up for early tenure or requesting an accelerated review or discovering how much progress faculty members actually have to make on a second book project. I sought advice from my mentors and chair but also contacted higher-level administrators and staff who handle faculty promotion files, and I continue to advise others to do the same since both formal and informal policies can change in such a subjective evaluation process. What I learned over the years is that ours is a mobile profession: faculty and administrators change positions and universities, so institutional memory can be fleeting. Those in positions of authority or who are gatekeepers may be unfamiliar with intricate policies, rules, or precedents, such as stopping the tenure clock or postponing the tenure process, so it is incumbent on faculty to advocate for themselves.[8]

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[7] Don T. Nakanishi (1993) discusses one of the major tenure battle cases that address some of the obstacles that remain today.

Contesting Gender and Sexual Harassment

Power comes in various forms in the academy, and even in places that are supposedly governed by egalitarian principles, there are cases of gender and sexual harassment. For example, women of color may experience gender harassment from colleagues, but it can manifest itself in the classroom setting as well (Stanley 2006b). I have seen the way teaching obstacles affect the morale of some of my colleagues as well as the emotional costs of teaching controversial materials and theories, distracting them from their publications and delaying their promotions, or derailing their careers altogether. I understood this predicament when I faced difficulty teaching ethnic studies to a mainly white student population who had little exposure to communities of color. At my previous campus, I had won teaching awards, but at this one, I had to prepare myself mentally for the hostile teaching environment I faced every time I walked into the lecture hall. Those who were antagonistic made their opposition clear from their body posture to the blatantly racist comments they made in class, greeted by other students clapping and cheering in agreement. They did not bother to hide the fact they resented being taught American history by a "foreigner" or "refugee," even if I spoke English without an accent. I was the first Asian American many of these students had ever encountered, especially a female in a position of authority, and hostile students labeled even white colleagues teaching ethnic studies as "race traitors."[9] Other women of color faculty teaching more race-neutral classes, such as economics, also encountered nonverbal and verbal challenges to their authority in the classroom.[10]

It is disheartening to hear about the number of cases where female graduate students and faculty have had to contend with severe forms of sexual harassment or naïvely submit to compromising relationships that became detrimental to their careers. I have had male graduate students and faculty make inappropriate sexual statements and advances toward me, and I know I am not alone. These are difficult cases to prosecute, and all too often, institutions fail to educate faculty about proper conduct, enforce appropriate punitive action, or provide support or resources for those who come forward. Avoiding male colleagues who are notorious for making female colleagues uneasy or making sure you meet with them in public spaces are precautionary tactics. However, I recognize that there is often nothing we can do to ward off unwanted sexual advances if the perpetrator is intent on making them. We are all too familiar with female students who come to us distraught about our male colleagues who have made inappropriate advances to them or who ask us quite innocently, "Is it normal for a faculty member to invite a student to his house for a private dinner to discuss her research paper?" We are also aware of cases when untenured female faculty members intervened on their students' behalf only to have their own careers disrupted.

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[8] This is especially true of department chairs, where there is usually high turnover. In some cases, there is conflicting information, so it is incumbent on faculty to check on the accuracy of the advice they receive.

[9] At the time, my perception in the classroom was compounded by the racial incidents and hate crimes that occurred on campus and in surrounding towns, which were havens for white supremacists.

[10] In the years I taught there, I broadened my pedagogical approach, taking into consideration the background of the student population by reframing the theories, using new readings and videos, and experimenting with discussion formats in the classroom and online; without a doubt, those approaches expanded my teaching skills. I also focused on the students who were intellectually engaged with the material and found sustenance working with the diverse student organizations on campus. When I left the lecture hall, I felt assured that I had done my best and did not dwell on the rough teaching days; I moved on to other tasks at hand, such as my research and publications, and that sustained me.

While campus workshops or presentations by performance troupes that traverse college campuses to educate staff and faculty about sexual and gender harassment can be effective, they can also be improperly implemented. I attended presentations on sexual harassment in the workplace at large public campuses that intermix all ranks of faculty and staff, as well as ones specifically for supervisors across the campus, from faculty in charge of large laboratories to those managing facilities maintenance staff, and found a number to be ineffective. Attendees select from a choice of time slots for generic workshops, rather than occupationally specific ones tailored to their respective roles.[11] There is such variation in the responsibilities associated with these roles, and these mandatory workshops fail to address this with any diligence. One workshop I attended on improper behavior seemed more like a comedy show, I assume to bring some levity to a serious topic, but when significant time is spent catering to an older, white, male attendee, who was defending what was obviously depicted as offensive behavior in the skit as benign, there are definitely drawbacks to this format. Universities should take more preventative measures, which include providing formal and informal guidelines about unacceptable behavior, making sure all new graduate students, faculty, staff, and admistrators are aware of these at their orientations, and reinforcing them by detailing some of the legal cases individuals and institutions face regarding sexual harassment or gender discrimination. Training needs to be conducted in a serious manner and with attention to differences within units and diverse populations on campus.

Ideally, we should not have to worry about being harassed in the workplace by our colleagues or forced to take action, but the reality is that gender and sexual harassment in both mild and severe forms occurs much more often than is officially reported. I say this because I know the number of anecdotal stories women have shared with me, but they have never officially filed grievances, acknowledging that the repercussions would be more damaging to them. These situations occur too frequently for these women even to consider pressing charges and many fear that the university would not protect them.[12] How should you react when a male faculty member chairing the search committee informs you that he is the primary decision maker and pressures you to have a cocktail with him at the hotel bar after the official job interview dinner has ended and the other colleagues have gone home? The simple answer is to say no and consider that, if you are offered the position, this may not be an ideal job if he will be your senior colleague. Of course, this choice is based on the assumption that we have options in an extremely competitive marketplace.

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[11] Some years, I choose to attend the workshops in lieu of completing the timed online tutorial. California State Assembly Bill 1825 (AB1825) is the first sexual-harassment law of its kind to actually detail the requirements for effective compliance training, setting the standard for not only California but the rest of the country as well. All supervisors, including all faculty members, are required to complete two hours of sexual harassment prevention training every two years with the first deadline in December 2005. The challenge has been figuring out ways to conduct this training en masse with limited resources.

[12] I realized how ill prepared universities can be at dealing with both gender and sexual harassment when I saw firsthand in two separate incidents the way those in positions of authority handled the cases improperly and ineffectively. In the gender harassment case, the male chair informed me that he had taken care of the problem and that I had to excuse the behavior of the male minority faculty member since he had been working long hours. The

I acknowledge that same-sex harassment can occur, as well as females targeting males, but it is not the sexual orientation or gender that matters as much as the power relationship: those who are harassed usually have less power in these situations. This is compounded by the fact that women of color are newer populations in the academy, so they are most likely concentrated in the lower ranks. The preponderance of sexualized and racialized stereotypes about Asian Americans and other women of color can make us vulnerable targets. The converging perceptions of Asian American woman as exotic and docile "model minorities," who are less likely to file a complaint, increases the chances of us becoming victims of "racialized sexual harassment" (Cho 1997).[13] Without becoming overly paranoid, we must take preventative measures, be aware of those who have been repeatedly accused of improprieties, and continue to work toward contesting these inequities, whether it is to create effective policies to curtail this behavior or take appropriate punitive action.

Changing Policies

Academic careers can be taxing, as the narratives in this book reveal. In retrospect I survived the harsh academic terrain because of sheer luck, determination and, most importantly, carefully selecting which battles I am willing to entangle myself in, constantly weighing the potential gain versus the likely career repercussions and personal costs. Faculty can tackle a plethora of meaningful causes or institutional transformations. For example, some transformations involve committee work while others include confronting administrators. There is no formula about whether it is best to speak up or stay quiet, but evaluating the energy we have to expend and the viability of a satisfactory outcome is crucial. On a pragmatic level, we may make some allies in the process, but we also have to weigh the number of individuals we might anger and their ability to retaliate.

Even though universities are places of learning and enlightenment, there are times, unfortunately, when they can be reactionary and entrenched. At a large public university where I was employed, I distinctly remember my reaction when I opened up a printed copy of the university directory and saw my home address and phone number listed next to the generic information about faculty. I immediately contacted the office that had compiled the directory and was told that they included personal information unless faculty members went into the computer system, used

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chair also told me that he had recommended to the faculty member under duress to "go see a movie or go to a bar to relax." This was after a police report had been filed, and I learned campus specialists were contacting him to offer counseling, but no one contacted me to offer assistance or follow up. I left the institution shortly thereafter.

[13] Cho explains that "military involvement in Asia, colonial and neocolonial history, and the derivative Asian Pacific sex tourism industry established power relations between Asia and the West which in turn shape stereotypes of Asian Pacific women that apply to those in and outside of Asia" (167).

their passwords, and requested to have it removed. I explained that as someone who teaches large lecture classes, often ones that fulfill general education requirements on topics of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality, I have taken precautions to acquire an unlisted phone number and home address. I am comfortable with intellectual debates in the classroom, but when an aggressive student threatens you over a grade or is using misogynist or racist language to argue that sexism and racism do not exist, you hardly need to be reminded that you are vulnerable. The supervisor dismissed my suggestion to have their policy reversed and instead have faculty request to have their personal information included.

Even as a new assistant professor, I was determined to change this policy regardless of the repercussions. I tried to recruit some colleagues to complain as well, but although they were sympathetic, they were unwilling to become involved. I then wrote a petition, and with the support of my chair, an African male, we sent it out to all the department chairs to distribute to their faculty. I was surprised by the high number of colleagues in the sciences who immediately sent back the signed petitions, compared to some chairs in the liberal arts who refused even to distribute it to their faculty. Some faculty contacted me, scolding me for trying to change a perfectly fine policy that allowed faculty to create a student-friendly environment in a college town and denying that any safety issues were involved. I sent the petition and signatures off to the administrators, and after some time, there was a public announcement that they would reverse the current policy, perhaps prompted by the safety and liability issues I had raised, but no one bothered to contact me directly. The lesson I learned was that even if the university has always enforced or implemented a certain policy, it can be reevaluated and changed as new populations enter the academy.

Although some may consider this a minor triumph, it is these small victories that make the academy more welcoming to diverse populations on campus. Studies indicate that female faculty members encounter more stress than their male counterparts in balancing parenting with their academic careers (O'Laughlin and Bischoff 2005). The workload for pretenure faculty at research institutions can be intense, and the pace of life does not accommodate women faculty who plan to have children. Developing family-friendly policies that allow modified teaching responsibilities and an extension on the tenure clock during pregnancy and after the birth or adoption of a child can relieve some of this stress.[14] Providing affordable and accredited childcare on campus is another accommodating measure. It is not uncommon for women as graduate students or early in their faculty careers to opt for non-ladder positions (lecturers, adjuncts, and part time faculty) or leave the academy because they cannot fathom balancing motherhood and a full time career (Mason and Goulden 2002). For women faculty of color, fears are compounded by the burden of contending with a racially uninviting institution.

At my own university, when I organized a campuswide workshop on family-friendly policies targeted to educate junior faculty on their options, led by staff whose job it was to assist faculty with things like requirements for requesting a modified teaching schedule or stopping their tenure clock, few people attended. I learned that some were afraid to attend: they did not want their colleagues to know they were planning to have children, instead of focusing on their publications. The two times I informed my department chairs, one a male and one a female, that I was expecting a child, their immediate reaction was to ask how my classes would be covered or which department tasks I would fail to complete with only begrudging words of congratulations afterwards, and these felt more like a scolding. Perfectly sound policies may be in place; however, there are problems if they are not widely advertised or employed. A stigma is still associated with utilizing these policies, and promotional-review committees must be educated on how to evaluate these files without bias, so in addition to revisiting formal policies, changing the academic culture is essential as well.[15]

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[14] For general resources on work and family, see American Association for University Professors at http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/issues/WF/ and the UC Faculty Family Friendly Edge at http://ucfamilyedge.berkeley.edu/ucfamilyfriendlyedge.html.

Becoming a Skillful Administrator

While undergraduate student populations are shifting, in some cases rapidly, across the country, the change among the faculty and administrative ranks is incremental or even stagnant.[16] Asian American undergraduate students make up close to half the population at many University of California campuses, yet the system, as well as many of the individual campuses, are unsure about how to handle these changing demographics. Some institutions treat these students as "model minorities" and consider them a good substitute for white students. Others are wary of the encroaching minoritization of their campus and have tried to curtail student admissions (Takagi 1992). When I walk around my campus, it is the norm to hear students speaking a range of ethnic languages mixed with English, which should be expected since the majority of Asian Americans are first- or 1.5-generation immigrants or the children of immigrant or refugee parents. We know from previous immigration patterns that heritage-language retention decreases with future generations, but the current younger generation also brings with them a diversity of cultures and customs. Even pronouncing their names produces tongue twisters, so they are definitely dissimilar from the college students of a generation ago.

The higher one advances in the academic hierarchy, the smaller the number of men and women of color. In the past two decades, the numbers of white women in academic administration have increased significantly, including those who are serving as presidents of research universities. However, the changes for people of color have been barely noticeable, and there is a paucity of women of color, including Asian American, in senior administrative positions across the country (Chan 2005).[17] My current campus has an African American male chancellor, one of the few in the country, and more than 50 percent of the students are Asian Americans; however, there are no senior Asian American administrators on campus.[18] There has been minimal to no concerted effort to increase the number of Asian American administrators at various ranks on the University of California campuses.[19]

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[15] In both public sessions and private conversations, I have heard women faculty express apprehension over utilizing family-friendly policies, such as modifying their teaching duties, since they are afraid that their peers will resent having to shoulder their responsibilities, which could lead to repercussions later. And if they extend their tenure clock, they are fearful that when they are evaluated for tenure, they will be expected to produce more publications, or that subconsciously, their colleagues will judge them more harshly since they received more time. From my experience as a mentor, and given what I do know about infamous cases across the country, I cannot say with conviction that the fears of these untenured female faculty are unfounded.

[16] "Although diversity of both the state college-age population and the national pool of doctoral candidates is increasing, the diversity of the UC faculty has remained flat" (Task Force 2006, ii). The report concluded that underrepresented minority faculty are concentrated in certain fields and departments with almost a quarter in just three areas—education, languages, and ethnic studies.

[17] Chan is one of the few Asian American women administrators from my discipline.

Ideally, when someone accepts an administrative position, he or she should be a senior faculty member who is entering a workplace environment surrounded by supportive colleagues and being provided with an efficient bureaucratic structure and a robust budget. Instead, as an associate professor, I reluctantly assumed the chair in a period of departmental rebuilding after senior faculty members had to be removed for their administrative failings and the global economic downturn had decimated university budgets. Unsure if I had the ability to chair, I found the work manageable, although at times draining. I befriended supportive administrators on my campus, as well as other institutions, who generously provided me with guidance. As much as possible, I slowly learned not to take matters personally. I accepted the reality that being an administrator can make you unpopular, even among former allies. Educating myself about the formal policies, as well as informal rules, particularly learning who had real decision-making power and access to resources, was critical. I was often one of the few or the only woman or person of color in the room, which is something that I became accustomed to as I advanced in the academy. On the positive side, you can make a memorable impression on administrators because you do not blend in at meetings.

Leadership roles can be treacherous for women of color since their authority is often challenged more than that of white males or females (Turner 2002b). I was all too familiar with male and female faculty of color being removed from such positions early for political reasons or because they could not adjust to the responsibilities. In other cases, they found themselves unwilling to deal with the racism and sexism they experienced, with some stepping down because they became physically ill from the strain of the job. Asian American women still have to work against the prevalent stereotypes of them as submissive and subservient, which can undermine their authority and prevent them from being considered for leadership positions (Hune 1998). I can only speculate about the perceptions my colleagues have of Asian American women and was more intent on observing their behavior in dealing with the few women of color administrators on campus.[20] I am still taken aback by the level of incivility and disrespect female administrators experience, behavior that male colleagues do not seem to direct at male administrators. I can say that some colleagues are very supportive in offering advice and resources, while others are skeptical and wary and keep their distance. I can definitely attest that I improved my negotiation abilities, acquired diplomatic skills, and developed more patience. Being chair of a department, even a small one, is a risky venture, and I accepted the sacrifices to my research that resulted. I have yet to decide if this posed a worthwhile risk to my career in the long term.

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[18] I am considering administrators above the rank of department chair. Born in China, Chang-Lin Tien, a thermal engineer, was executive vice chancellor at the University of California, Irvine, from 1988 to 1990, and, to my knowledge, the last high-level Asian American academic administrator at my campus. He was appointed chancellor at the University of California, Berkeley, from 1990 to 1997, making him the first Asian American to lead a major research university in the United States *(*University of California 2002).

[19] Henry T. Yang, a mechanical engineer, was appointed the chancellor of the University of California, Santa Barbara, in 1994, and Steve Kang, an electrical engineer, was appointed chancellor of the University of California, Merced, from 2007 to 2011. For the most part, the faculty data on Asian Americans and Asian nationals, who often first are international students, is not disaggregated, and the majority of them are concentrated in the STEM fields. Data on underrepresented minority faculty (if Asian Americans are included) often lists them as the largest group, with Asian American men as the largest number of male faculty of color and Asian American women as second in size for female faculty of color. Richard Tapia (2007) and Jo Ann Moody (2004) discuss the difference between diversity and representation as it relates to ways to improve "domestic-minority representation" and the importance of disaggregating this data.

Conclusion

Institutions of higher education need to consider a holistic approach to hiring, retaining, and promoting diverse faculty, and this means reconfiguring institutional practices. Simply encouraging departments to diversify their recruitment process does not ensure that a wide range of faculty will be hired. If institutions encounter difficulty retaining diverse faculty, administrators need to determine if there is a pattern for these departures and this assessment should include a comprehensive evaluation of the workplace culture and environment at their institutions. A department or institution that acquires a reputation as a revolving door for white women and male and female faculty of color, especially those perceived as unfairly dismissed, can find it difficult to attract diverse candidates (Moreno et al. 2006). In addition, this reputation creates an inhospitable climate for diverse colleagues on campus. An institution that permits their colleagues to be mistreated instills doubt among faculty of color that they will be treated fairly when it is their turn to be evaluated.

Creating equitable policies, along with transforming a hostile workplace culture, benefits all faculty (Kerber 2005). Most university administrations espouse the rhetoric of diversity or multiculturalism, and some may have even set aside specified resources to support such efforts. Yet if these efforts at inclusiveness are tokenized or not enforced, they will fail to create equal opportunities or change the campus environment. As administrators and faculty, it takes courage and finesse to bring about meaningful, foundational transformation. It means knowing basics, such as ways to bridge differences, build unlikely coalitions, and take strategic risks. There are ways to institute change not only by taking punitive measures, but also by rewarding the accountability of administrators who are attentive to gender- and racial-equity practices and policies that foster a more supportive climate for faculty.

Lastly, institutions of higher learning cannot disassociate themselves from larger demographic and racial transformations in our society or remain complacent by resting on their laurels. California is now a “majority-minority” state, and more states will be following this pattern as well. Some whites are wary about what this will mean for institutions of higher learning in terms of the curriculum as well as the composition of the students, staff, faculty, and administrators. National political debates over affirmative action and immigration, which are explicitly about race, as well as policy reforms that are not about race per se but have been framed as racial debates, such as health care and welfare programs, can impact the way people of color are perceived and treated in the academy. As a democratic society, we are grappling with how to ensure that access, allocation, and distribution of limited resources are equitable, and these struggles over scarce resources are mirrored in the universities where we work. As renowned academicians who pride ourselves on research that hopefully will contribute to alleviating or resolving some of society's most complex problems, as well as shaping the minds of future generations of leaders, it seems our intellectual reputation depends upon us completing our "homework" first.

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[20] In academic affairs, there are a fair number of white women in full time, high-level administrative positions; however, there are few men and women of color or none at any given time.