

EXPERIENCES OF ASIAN AMERICAN WOMEN IN DISTANCE EDUCATION
DOCTORAL PROGRAMS: A TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

Cathy Vu

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

It is well documented that doctoral attrition is a concern, and research into subgroups of doctoral student populations is needed. Researchers have begun to examine the experiences of women in distance education doctoral programs, but the experiences of women from Asian backgrounds have not been the direct focus on any research to date. This transcendental phenomenological study described the persistence experiences of Asian American women pursuing distance education doctoral studies. Tinto's (1975) theory of student integration served as a foundation for understanding how an individual's academic and social integration affects persistence. In addition to Tinto's theory of student integration, Berry's (1980) theory of acculturation provided a lens to explore how changes in cultural attitudes, values, and behaviors impact academic endeavors. The participants in the study were women ($N = 11$) in the United States with Asian descent who shared the educational journey of completing a doctoral degree through distance education within the last ten years from an accredited university in the United States. Data was collected through a demographic survey, Distance Doctoral Program Integration Scale (DDPIS), timelines, and one-on-one interviews. The qualitative analysis indicated that determination, serving as a role model, ethnic background and cultural influences, and support from faculty, peers, and family were all contributing factors in the persistence experiences of Asian American women in distance education doctoral programs. Data analysis indicated that level of satisfaction from institutional factors such as the faculty integration, student integration, and curriculum integration from their doctoral programs, also contributed to the persistence experiences of Asian American women in distance education doctoral programs.

Keywords: doctoral student persistence, Asian women, culture, distance education, women in higher education, acculturation, enculturation

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to Asian American women across the United States. Thank you to all the participants who have played an integral role in sharing their stories and who have showed us that through self-efficacy, determination, and hard work, you too can persist. I am so proud to be part of this community of Asian Americans who had the opportunity to immigrate to the United States. I am thankful for the cultural values instilled in me by my parents. I am very blessed to have met so many people along my journey in my personal, professional, and educational life. I have learned so much from all those who have taken the time to instill in me the importance of integrity, honesty, and always being humble. This is dedicated to all the participants who have made a significant contribution in my study and who have reminded me of the difficult journeys you all have faced and the determination you all had to achieve such recognition. I am very appreciative for your time and the lessons you have taught me.

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I want to thank my family and friends for always believing in me and standing beside me. I want to acknowledge my parents who have made sacrifices to provide a future for me. I cannot thank you enough for everything you have done.

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List of Abbreviations

Distance education (DE)

Distance Doctoral Program Integration Scale (DDPIS)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Information and communication technology (ICT)

Computer-mediated communication (CMC)

United States (US)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The attrition of doctoral students is a perennial challenge for higher education (Caruth, 2015). In a study conducted by the Council of Graduate Schools, an investigation of over 33 doctoral programs across multiple disciplines showed that the completion rate across ten years of study of doctoral degrees was only 57% (Sowell, 2008). Further, while attrition in higher education has been a problem documented across decades and disciplines, attrition rates reported in distance education (DE) programs are higher than attrition rates for traditional/residential programs (Li & Wong, 2019). Over the past two decades in the United States, the percentage of women who enrolled in graduate programs has been above 50%, yet women account for only 44% of PhDs awarded (Schmidt & Umans, 2014).

Researchers have begun to examine the experiences of women in distance education doctoral programs, but the experiences of women from Asian backgrounds, within this heterogeneous group, has not been the direct focus in any research found to date. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the total number of Asian women in the U.S. was 11,874,906 (2020). While Asian Americans, ages 18 to 64, comprise about 4.9% of the U.S. population, they are well represented in higher education. For instance, while the percentage of doctoral degrees conferred by females was 45% in 2019, Asian women earned 11% of all doctoral degrees (National Science Foundation, 2019). Based on the total number of Asian women in the U.S. in comparison to all females completing a doctoral degree, the Asian American population is under-represented.

Higher education for women is empowering, giving women more options, choices, and control of their lives (Amin, 2018; Malhorta, Schuler, & Boender, 2002). Prior to the onset of

distance education, many women needed to make the difficult decision to either relocate to access doctoral studies or give up on the dream of a terminal degree to avoid disrupting their role in the family unit. Distance education doctoral programs open unique opportunities for women to access higher education while maintaining familial roles and responsibilities they seek to continue. The purpose of this study was to explore Asian American women's persistence experiences in distance education doctoral programs in the United States. Asian American women are defined as any woman in the United States of Asian descent. The American Psychological Association (2010) defines "Asian" or "Asian American" to be a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or Indian subcontinent.

Background

Doctoral programs are inherently different compared to undergraduate and graduate programs when considering academic culture, environment, student expectations, and the challenges doctoral students face during their educational studies (Shareinia, Jahani, Rahati, Sokouti, Mohammadian & Najafi, 2018). Doctoral students experience a unique set of challenges and demands during their personal educational journey (Braxton & Baird, 2001; Callary, Werthner & Trudel, 2012). Research on student retention has been shaped by theories of student retention, theories largely targeting the institution's perspective (Tinto, 2017). Tinto stated that students do not seek to be retained, but they seek to persist, which emphasizes the importance of understanding student academic and social integration, as well as personal factors (i.e., cultural background, familial support) and how all these factors influence student persistence (Hodgson & Simoni, 1995; Tinto, 2017; Wao & Onwuegbuzie, 2011).

Historical Significance

Nearly 50% of students in the United States who enroll in doctoral programs leave the program prior to earning a degree (Burkard, 2014; Cakmak, Isci, Uslu, Oztekin, Danisman, & Karadag, 2015; Caruth, 2015; King & Williams, 2014). Research on student retention served to reinforce how important student contact and involvement impacts student outcomes (e.g., Astin, 1975, 1984; Endo & Harpel, 1982; Pascarella, 1980; Pascarella & Chapman, 1981; Pascarella & Ternzini, 1980; Terenzini, Lorang, & Pascarella, 1981). Early retention research focused primarily on residential programs and students of majority backgrounds, overlooking students from different types of institutions, two- or four-year universities, and students of different gender, race, ethnicity, income, and orientation (Tinto, 2006-2007). Tinto (2017) described persistence as the motivation and determination to complete a degree when faced with challenges. Persistence is also considered a measure of higher education program effectiveness (Bowen, Rudenstine, 1992; National Science Foundation, 2009; Nettles & Millet, 2006; Rockinson-Szapkiw, Spaulding, & Spaulding, 2016).

Distance education has evolved through the years with significant growth in online learning platforms compared to the traditional brick and mortar classroom. Distance education may seem like a new way of teaching, but it has been around since the 18th century and has only grown in popularity into the 1990s (Kentnor, 2015). Initially, distance education was not as well received with concerns from employers, institutions, and accrediting agencies with regard to the quality distance education would offer. However, multiple studies suggest that distance education (regardless of the delivery medium) is just as effective as the traditional brick and mortar classroom (Baker, 2014; Russell, 1999). Bernard et al. (2004) compared distance education and traditional courses and found no difference in student achievement. In 2010, a

report that was published by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development showed that in over one thousand online learning studies from 1996 to 2008, students found that online learning programs provided better results than those of face-to-face students. Therefore, the delivery method or medium is not the determining factor in proving educational effectiveness (Baker, 2014).

Distance education is delivered in several forms but is defined as the method of teaching where the student and the teacher are physically in different locations (Kentnor, 2015). Changes in the different methods of distance education came in the age of advanced technology and delivery methods including: correspondence courses, physical mail, audio recordings, television and/or video recordings, and online communications (asynchronous and synchronous) (Hiltz & Turoff, 2005). Technology itself has transformed higher education, challenging the traditional face-to-face format that colleges have known for so long. Despite the evolution of distance education, the overall high student attrition rate remains high, and universities still struggle with student persistence (Li & Wong, 2019).

In 1970, 1.4 million Asian Americans comprised of .7% of the total U.S. population and were the fastest growing population next to only Latinos (Brown, 2014; Mishra, 2018). Between 2000 and 2019, Asian Americans represented the fastest population growth rate, at 80% across the racial and ethnic groups in the U.S. (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021). In recent years, there has been an increase in enrollment and number of doctoral degrees earned including those earned by a racial/ethnic minority and female doctoral students (Arocho, 2017). It is important to understand the persistence experiences of Asian American women in distance education doctoral programs, through both personal factors and institutional factors.

Social Significance

Student experiences relating to satisfaction, integration, and retention have been analyzed based on the relationship of cultural backgrounds for ethnic students, campus racial climate, diversity, and students' sense of belonging or validation (Maton, Wimms, Grant, Wittig, Rogers, & Vasquez, 2011; Rodriguez, Guido-DiBrito, Torres, & Talbot, 2000). Cultural norms and values vary amongst different ethnic groups, with individuals being largely influenced by their upbringing, family, neighborhood, community, school, and overall environment. These key factors help shape children, and in turn impact their academic and social attainment. When studying these influences, it becomes apparent that culture has an impact on high-achieving versus low-achieving minority students' educational experiences (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Familial involvement and cultural values that emphasize hard work, effort, and achievement tend to be tied to strong parental influence and outlook. The degree of familial emphasis on education becomes evident when one examines a child's grades, attendance, and study habits.

Cultural traditions are very important to Asian families, especially with the children, who are often expected to respect the wishes of their elders and participate in the maintenance of the household (Fuligini et al., 2002). For example, Chinese families tend to emphasize family respect, support, and assistance when socializing their children (Fuligini et al., 2002; Ho, 1981), referred to as *filial duty*, where parents ask their children to contribute to the maintenance of the household and retain a strong sense of obligation to their family (Fuligini et al., 2002; Shon & Ja, 1982; Uba, 1994). It is important to understand how Asian American women's experiences and cultural backgrounds impact their studies, and the factors that influence their program decisions (e.g., residential or distance learning programs). Education is an important part of society and learning, inquiring knowledge regardless of society, organization, or individual (Aparicio,

Bacao, & Oliveira, 2016). Distance education has afforded Asian American women the opportunity to pursue their educational dreams without sacrificing filial duties.

Specifically, during the worldwide pandemic of COVID-19, online education became even more necessary and predominant as institutions switched from the traditional model of residential learning to navigating an online format (Schwartz et al., 2010). The findings generated from this study examining the persistence experiences of Asian American women in DE programs hold even greater significance under the current context of COVID-19.

Theoretical Significance

Attrition and persistence studies with doctoral students have generally been focused on doctoral students in residential programs (Rockinson-Szapkiw, Spaulding, & Spaulding, 2016). Theories of persistence explore the factors that contribute to the persistence of doctoral students, distance education, acculturation, and individualism and collectivism. In 1975, Tinto identified key characteristics related to persistence and attrition of students related to precollege factors such as socioeconomic status, positive school achievement, and strong family support (Barbatis, 2010). Tinto (2017) stated that persistence is another way of speaking of motivation. A student who has the mindset of enrolling in a school and has a determination to reach his or her goal will put in the effort to do so. The student's expectations about self can affect performance, in this case, academic performance (Ramos-Sanchez & Nichols, 2007). Further, individuals who have a high self-efficacy will be more likely to overcome obstacles and persist because they are willing to put in the effort to keep moving forward (Bandura, 1994). Conversely, someone with a low self-efficacy will often do just the opposite and be unwilling to face the challenges, will get discouraged, and will withdraw when obstacles challenge him or her. The concept of acculturation, first introduced by Berry (1980), explores the concept of individuals' ability to

adapt and change their behaviors to a new cultural group. Culture itself plays a significant role in Asian cultures as their values and belief system can have an impact on their external goals (i.e., education).

Situation to Self

I was interested in describing the cultural challenges and supports in the educational perseverance of Asian American women enrolled in distance education doctoral programs in the United States. As the human instrument in this qualitative study, it was important for me to relate my personal experiences and connection to this research topic as an Asian American woman doctoral student in a distance education program.

I came to the United States when I was only six, along with my parents and my younger brother. We escaped Vietnam and went to a refugee camp in Malaysia for a year before being sponsored to the United States by a Catholic church. Due to the hardship of leaving our country, my parents wanted my brother and myself to have a bright future and live the American dream of getting a good education and promising careers. Having an opportunity to have a better future is important because my parents sacrificed so much in order for my brother and me to have a future. Although education is something that is heavily emphasized in our culture, there is still the traditional mentality where boys will grow up to be a doctor or lawyer and girls grow up to have families, and if possible, get an education so that they can become a nurse or a teacher. When I started my education pursuit, I never imagined I would fall in love with education as much as I did and that I would continue to further my education to the point where I am today.

When I first pursued my doctoral studies, I ran into several roadblocks. Several programs interested me, but many schools at the time did not offer a lot of alternatives to attending school residually. Several determining factors were important in my decision of where to attend,

including the cost, the distance, and the program of interest. The decision to choose which school was difficult because I was a young mother, trying to balance school, work, family, and my extended familial obligations. The thought of studying via distance education (DE) was still too new of a concept, but this choice gave me several options, including staying at home, taking care of my family, saving money while living near family, and allowing a flexible schedule. I chose to conduct research on this topic of doctoral persistence of women in the United States with Asian descent because many women like myself share these same obstacles and challenges. I believe that through my research, these women's stories will give voice to encourage other Asian doctoral students through their educational journey and provide them a sense of shared experiences that will help them realize they are not alone.

Philosophical Assumptions

As the human instrument, conducting the interviews with the participants in the study, it was important for me to articulate the paradigm through which I analyzed the data, as well as the philosophical assumptions I brought to this study. From an ontological assumption, it was how I may have viewed reality and the characteristics that surrounded reality. I was able to embrace the multiple realities of each individual person, and on an individual, family, and group level, I took into consideration the diverse cultural background and viewed their experiences differently (Moustakas, 1994). In this study, the exploration of the experiences Asian American women faced during their doctoral journey were examined similarly to those of my personal experiences and journey. With epistemology assumption, I acknowledged that in qualitative research, the participants' experiences were based on their individual views; this is how knowledge is known and I relied on their words to be accurate. The focus of my research was to have the participants share their experiences; this study gave voice through axiological assumption. I positioned

myself by identifying my social position (e.g., gender, age, race, immigration status), my personal experiences, and my professional beliefs.

I believe that my research has a social constructivist view, when it comes to following the proper steps in conducting my research and the systemic data gathering from the participants (Creswell & Poth 2018). From an axiological perspective, I value education and wanted to describe the academic, social, and personal experiences Asian American women faced during their doctoral journey. This value played a large role in my decision to conduct a qualitative study giving a voice to Asian American women persisting in distance education doctoral programs. In terms of rhetorical assumptions, I sought to relay participants' views and share their voices. The more open-ended questions from my interviews allowed the participants to construct the meaning of the experiences which allowed for an understanding of the historical and cultural settings influencing their persistence (Creswell, 2018). I also utilized bracketing to reflect on my own experiences and set them aside to allow for the voices of the participants to be heard. I focused on the experiences of the participants and described these experiences through the lens of the participants. Lastly, my methodological assumption followed the qualitative research, the collection and analyzing of the data was inductive, emerging and shaped by my experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The data gathered from the interviews with the participants in my study used an inductive logic, which materialized and emerged with what already was presented about persistence.

Problem Statement

Fewer than half of all students who enter a doctoral program actually finish, with about half of those students completing all program requirements except the dissertation (Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992; Council of Graduate Schools, 1991, 2006; Davis & Parker, 1997). Cited

reasons for dropping out are stress, social isolation, and lack of university support (Ali & Kohun, 2007; Jariram & Kahl, 2012; Trout, 2018). In 2018, there were over 25,368 female doctoral recipients in the United States and of this total number, approximately 3,305 (5%) were awarded to women who identified as Asian (National Science Foundation, 2019). Asian American women who are earning doctoral degrees have increased compared to 2,612 in 2009 (National Science Foundation, 2019). Even though we are seeing an increase in Asian women attaining doctoral degrees from 2009, it is evident that there is a sharp decline in attaining degrees from their Bachelors, with a total of 27,720, to a Master's, with a total of 12,130 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020).

Theorists assert that ethnic identity correlates with expected achievement (Miller-Cotto & Byrnes, 2016; Sellars, Chavous, & Cooke, 1998; Sellars, Smith, Shelton, Rowley & Chavous, 1998). The factors that impact the persistence of doctoral students include but are not limited to cultural background, personal worldview, gender norms and roles, and educational format (e.g., residential, and online). When considering Asian Americans on an individual, family, and group level, diversity is often overlooked, and they are treated as a homogenous entity in research (Hasnain, Fugiura, Capua, Bui, & Khan, 2020). It is important to acknowledge the diversity among Asian American woman and the various cultural backgrounds based on differing countries of origin within the group. This study examined the social, personal, and academic barriers encountered by Asian American women and their conviction to persist in their doctoral studies in DE programs. The problem is there is little research giving voice to the persistence experiences of Asian American women in DE doctoral programs.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore Asian American women's persistence experiences in distance education doctoral programs in the United States. Persistence is defined as students completing educational goals through course credits, career progression, achievement of new skills, or academic and social integration (Tinto, 1993). For this study, persistence experiences of Asian American women in distance education doctoral programs are defined as a multi-faceted phenomenon that leads to completion of an online program of study (Hart, 2012) leading to the conferment of a doctoral degree. Moustakas's (1994) transcendental phenomenology is focused less on the interpretations of the researcher and more on a description of the experiences of participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study will provide a description of the experiences Asian American women face during the doctoral journey. Distance education has afforded the opportunity for Asian American women to further their education while maintaining their cultural identity and familial roles. The power of furthering the education of Asian American women gives voice to other women who may feel that tradition and cultural practices overshadow their ability to be empowered through discovering their self-worth and identity. The theories that guide this study are Tinto's (1975) theory of student integration and Berry's (1980) theory of acculturation. These theories serve as the foundation for understanding and describing the participants' doctoral persistence experiences.

Significance of the Study

The current study has significance as the persistence experiences of Asian American women in distance education doctoral programs were previously unknown. While women tend to have higher graduation rates than men, this tends to stop at the master's level; fewer women

complete doctoral programs in comparison to men (Castro, Garcia, Cavazos Jr, & Castro, 2011; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2009a, 2009b). In the United States, the percentage of women who complete doctoral degrees is 46% and research primarily focuses on examining attrition and persistence of doctoral students enrolled in residential programs (Golde, 2005; Lovitts, 2001; Rockinson-Szapikiw, Spaulding & Spaulding, 2016). There is an increasing concern about the persistence problem in doctoral studies across multiple disciplines, in both residential and distance education. As discussed below, this study has the potential to make empirical, theoretical, and practical contributions to the field.

Empirical

The current study has empirical significance as it will contribute to the literature and description of the experiences of Asian American women enrolled in distance education doctoral programs. The clash between traditional cultural values and contemporary Western values for doctoral women of many ethnical backgrounds is an important concept to investigate (Carter, Blumenstein, & Cook, 2013). There is little empirical research that is available describing the persistence experiences of Asian Americans, specifically the experiences of women in distance education doctoral programs.

Cultural theorists emphasize that cultural values, beliefs, and behavioral patterns may differ in comparison to the mainstream paradigm (Paik, Rahman, Kula, Saito, & Witensten, 2017). Additional research on Asian women can provide clarity into acculturation, the process of adapting and assimilating to a new culture. The concepts of individualism and collectivism are important to examine when discussing the persistence experiences and personal factors that influence student persistence during doctoral studies (Mishra, 2018). The term individualism focuses on an individual's specific goals, whereas collectivism elevates the goals of the group

above that of an individual. In addition to individualism and collectivism, the gender expectations within a culture also play a significant role. For example, cross-cultural gender bias starts during early childhood and is just one factor that that may impact the educational setting (Harvey, Parahoo, & Santally, 2017). This study will give voice to Asian women and contribute to the field a description of the factors that affect their persistence experiences in distance education doctoral programs.

Theoretical

Two theories were selected to inform the framework for this study and provide a lens for analyzing the data. Tinto's (1975) theory of student integration serves as a foundation to gain insight into student persistence by examining the individual's academic and social integration in higher education institutions. With undergraduate students, Tinto (1993) posted that students must detach from their home communities and successfully transition into the higher education environment in order to successfully persist (Museus, Shiroma, & Dizon, 2016). While doctoral study is inherently different than undergraduate studies, doctoral students need to develop a sense of belonging in the program, the school, and in their selected field of study. Tinto (1993) described persistence at the doctoral level as heavily shaped by the personal and intellectual interactions within and between the students, as well as the faculty and the communities of the university.

While helpful for examining persistence experiences, Tinto's (1993) theory explaining the importance of social and academic integration does not, however, specifically address Asian women and their distinct values and beliefs. As such, acculturation theory (Berry, 1980) will also be utilized to explore the processes in which individuals adapt and change in attitude and behavior to a new cultural group. Acculturation can have an effect on the individual's cultural

patterns (i.e., practices, values, and identities) and their psychological well-being and social functioning (Ward & Geeraert, 2016). Culture plays an integral role amongst Asian women, along with their values and beliefs. The balance of home and school life proves to be challenging for Asian women and gaining an understanding of the internal and external factors that impact students' persistence, motivation, characteristics, family, and culture is needed.

Practical

Although the study groups Asian American women into a homogenous group, it is important to recognize that this is a heterogenous group and experiences may differ from woman to woman. Having knowledge and understanding of factors that contribute to student persistence may help meet the needs of distance education students, improve their academic experiences, and thus, increase their persistence and retention (Ivankova & Stick, 2007). There has been a tremendous growth rate of online enrollments in higher education (Allen & Seaman, 2007). The research findings will provide insight into how personal and cultural factors, alongside social and academic integration, lead to persistence for Asian American women pursuing their doctoral degree through distance education. With knowledge of the factors identified that contribute to persistence and the lived experiences of each Asian American woman, institutions can effectively reallocate resources to support the population. The results of the study can provide Asian American women with experiences they can relate to and lessons they might integrate into their own persistence strategies. This study provides insight and coping mechanisms that they can adopt, along with the reminder that they are not alone, and that they too can experience hope, comfort, and embrace their personal journey through their educational endeavors.

Research Questions

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to describe Asian women's persistence experiences in distance education doctoral programs in the United States. The research questions driving this study were designed to explore the relationship among academic and social integration as well as how culture influences persistence experiences in completing their doctoral studies. The research questions were designed to reveal doctoral students' experiences through in-depth interviews. The research questions provide insight about the positive and negative experiences during the student's educational journey. The following central research question and five sub-questions are explained below.

Central Research Question

What are the persistence experiences of Asian American women in distance education doctoral programs in the United States? According to Tinto (2017), students have to want to persist when they are faced with challenges and obstacles. Female doctoral students were faced with an intersection of their personal academic identity, their core sense of self and other identities (e.g., mother, wife, professional) during their studies (Rockinson-Szapikiw, Spaulding, & Lunde, 2017). Creswell (2013) described the phenomenological theory that focuses on the lived experiences of a person and their evolving experiences. The focus of the study was on the personal doctoral persistence experiences of the Asian women themselves.

Sub-Question 1

What experiences motivate Asian American women to pursue doctoral studies through distance education programs? The differences in the character and the goals of the student will vary, and motivations in their pursuit of going to college may also be affected by their experiences in college (Guiffrida, Lynch, Wall, & Abel, 2013; Tinto, 2017). The question seeks

to understand specific positive and negative experiences to the academic success of Asian women.

Sub-Question 2

What personal factors contribute to the persistence experiences of Asian American women enrolled in distance education doctoral programs? Tinto (2017) stated that self-efficacy is the foundation of a students' persistence, and their sense of self-efficacy also promotes goal attainment. A person's personal belief to succeed is manifested on how one perceives him or herself through personal experiences and interactions; it is learned and not inherited (Bandura, 1977, 1994). The purpose of this question was to explore the personal factors influencing Asian women's doctoral persistence in DE programs.

Sub-Question 3

What cultural factors influence how Asian American women experience persistence in distance education doctoral programs? In many cultures and ethnicities, the family connections are important (Andrade, Miller, McArthur, & Ogden, 2020; Dutta et al., 2019; Hurtado et al., 1996; Strayhorn, 2017). For some, social support is important to their persistence, to feel that they are a member of a community and to feel like they belong (Tinto, 2017). This question examines the cultural factors Asian women attribute to their persistence experiences in DE doctoral programs.

Sub-Question 4

What institutional factors influence the persistence experiences of Asian American women enrolled in distance education doctoral programs? Higher education institutions in the United States have reflected a negative history when it comes to meeting the needs of women; there are documented sociocultural policies and practices from researchers that encourage the

separation of the existence of academic and mother identity (Brown & Nichols, 2012; Lapayese, 2012; Rockinson-Szapkiw, Spaulding, & Lunde, 2017). Academic integration is a vital component in persistence and student retention (Tinto, 1993), and this research question examines institutional factors influencing the integration and persistence experiences of Asian women in DE doctoral programs.

Sub-Question 5

What do Asian American women experience upon persisting to completion of a distance education doctoral degree? There are some conflicts that may arise during persistence for women who are mothers with “primary responsibility for anticipating the needs of (her) children, a task which can be psychologically and physically consuming” (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2014, p. 247). Online students are faced with obstacles and challenges such as family roles, economic barriers, and balancing personal work and academic life (Parker et al, 2016). There are some women who may experience negative consequences and conflict between personal and academic work (Trepal, Stinchfield, & Haiyasos, 2013; Yakaboski, 2010), while others identify the balance and can successfully move through their journey of completing their doctoral degrees (Rockinson-Szapkiw, Spaulding, & Lunde; 2013). The purpose of this final question was to describe what Asian women experience at doctoral degree attainment.

Definitions

The following is a list of terms relevant to the study:

1. Academic integration - an interaction among students and faculty within a formal academic domain, as well as relating to how a student feels how he or she fits into the academic life of an institution (Tinto, 1993).
2. Acculturation – adoption of dominant host cultural norms (Zhang & Moradi, 2013).

3. Asian or Asian American – referred to the older term “Oriental” but to provide more specificity, the term “Asian origin” provides more of a breakdown of by region: East Asia (includes China, Japan, South Korea, North Korea, Taiwan, and Vietnam), South Asia (includes India, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan), and Southeast Asia (includes eastern parts of India, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines) (APA, 2020).
4. Attrition – defined by Tinto (1993) as students who withdraw from a program or do not successfully complete an educational goal or advance in their academic career.
5. Collectivism – pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive ingroups, which throughout people’s lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (Hofstede, 1991, p. 51).
6. Culture – shared knowledge, values, beliefs, and practices among a group of people living in geographical proximity who share a history, a language, and cultural identification (Brumann, 1999).
7. Divestiture - involving the loss of the sense of self, leaves many students feeling as if being a student is their life or that the academic rigor of the program has changed the person they are (Haynes, Bulosan, Citty, Grant-Harris, Hudson, Koro-Ljungberg, 2012).
8. Enculturation – adoption of heritage cultural norms (Zhang & Moradi, 2013).
9. Ethnic identity - an aspect of acculturation. Acculturation concerns itself with changes in attitudes, values, and behaviors which are the result of direct contact between two different and distinct cultures (Phinney, 1990).

10. Individualism – pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose; everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family (Hofstede, 1991, p. 51).
11. Retention and Persistence – terms used interchangeably by Tinto (1993) defined as students completing educational goals through course credits, career progression, achievement of new skills, or academic and social integration.
12. Social identity - defined by Tajfel (1981) as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his[/her] knowledge of his[/her] membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership." (p. 255).
13. Social integration – refers to the quantity and quality of social interaction between faculty and students outside the formal academic form (Tinto, 1993).

Summary

Framed by Tinto's (1975, 1993) theory of student integration and Berry's (1980) theory of acculturation, this transcendental phenomenological study examined the persistence experiences of Asian women in distance education doctoral programs in the United States. Student persistence is related to the individual's academic and social integration and ability to acculturate in distance education doctoral programs.

There are several social and academic challenges encountered by Asian women that are impacted by their cultural backgrounds. Asian women often have a dual responsibility of maintaining domestic responsibilities while investing in academic pursuits. While maintaining tradition, Asian women are able to step out by furthering their education through distance learning with minimal disruption to the home life. The ability to pursue their education, which

provides Asian women with the opportunity to determine their own path, have control of their life, and gain self-worth, is empowering in itself.

In addition to providing helpful information for doctoral program faculty and administrators, this study may help other Asian women envision the possibility of furthering their education through distance education. The cultural values that will be shared may also help to explain and provide key indicators of Asian women's persistence throughout their educational journey. There is very limited research that provides insight into the personal journeys and experiences Asian women face during their distance education doctoral programs.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The literature review provides discussion of the theory on educational persistence and acculturation as well as related literature on Asian women persisting in their doctoral studies through distance education. The literature provides insight into the challenges associated with persistence, family obligations, cultural background, and upbringing. Concepts and phrases such as learning outcomes, assessment, and evaluation are used to gauge how students experience college and the nuanced experiences that shape the racial realities of college life (Patton, 2016).

The pandemic with COVID-19 has had a major impact on society, and not just on higher education (Blankenbeger & Williams, 2020). What is evident is that technologies that support online learning have become more prominent as more students are dependent on taking courses through distance education (DE). Technology has been supporting DE for many years, but only with the recent pandemic has the acceptance and acceleration of implementation become more immediate. In the Fall of 2018, there were over 6.93 million students enrolled in distance education courses (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020).

For years, student persistence has been shaped by theories that view students and their persistence through an institutional lens, but it is time to take a deeper look into why and how students from different cultural backgrounds persist in higher education. The focus of this study is on Asian women who are enrolled in distance education doctoral programs, the challenges they face, their family obligations, their cultural values, and how they balance their personal commitments to persist in their educational pursuit. The experiences examined in this study provide insight into the choices Asian women made in continuing to pursue their educational dreams and how distance education allowed them to maintain their personal familial and cultural

obligations. In this chapter, the theoretical framework that was employed in this study is described, and the history of Asian Americans, the educational paths historically taken by women in higher education, the concepts of motivation and strategies doctoral students utilize to persist, and the experiences of underrepresented groups of Asian women in doctoral programs are examined.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this qualitative study provides a roadmap to investigate the experiences of Asian women in distance education doctoral programs in the United States. The study examines how family of origin, culture, immediate family, and life experiences impact Asian women's decisions to pursue and persist in a distance education doctoral program. Given the focus of the current study, ethnicity and personal beliefs may influence how these women persist. Berry's (1980) theory on acculturation provides the lens for understanding the cultural context that shapes these women's lives and the role of distance education in allowing them to maintain their cultural norms while pursuing higher education.

There is a growing body of literature addressing doctoral persistence, with many studies examining student attrition at the undergraduate through doctoral educational experiences. Although there is a clear difference between the undergraduate and doctoral educational experiences, Tinto's (1975) theory of student integration provides the foundation for considering doctoral persistence in Asian women. The background characteristics (e.g., social status, high school experiences, community of residence, and individual attributes such as ability, gender, race, and ethnicity) are important in understanding student persistence. Further analysis of expectational and motivational attributes, such as career and educational expectation and the levels of academic motivation for achievement, is warranted.

Theory of Student Integration

Tinto's (1975) theory of student integration explains student persistence as a result of an individual's academic and social integration in higher education. Individuals enter institutions of higher education with a variety of attributes (e.g., ability, gender, race) and family backgrounds (e.g., social status, value climates, expectational climates), all of which have both direct and indirect impact on their performance in college (Tinto, 1975). The individual's background and characteristics are related to the individual's academic and social integration into higher education.

Tinto (1975) first created the theory on student dropouts, focusing on higher education, seeking to explain why and how individuals leave institutions where they first began their studies. When Tinto (1975) created his theory of student departure, he based his assumptions on Durkheim's (1951) study of suicide in human societies. Durkheim (1951) claimed that suicide surfaces when an individual is unable to connect with communities of a society. Tinto (1975) applied Durkheim's' concepts of social and intellectual integration into his model of institutional departure. Durkheim's (1951) theory of suicide provided the foundation for Tinto's (1975) inclusion of academic and social integration in his model. Tinto (1975) focused much of his initial research with first year undergraduate experiences with universities and colleges, generating the theoretical proposal that social and academic integration have a profound impact on student persistence.

Academic integration refers to integration of coursework and the institution, also known as formal integration (Aypay, Sever, & Demirhan, 2012; Trout, 2018). Social integration exists in the student's network of peers, family and friends who are considered the support providers (Trout, 2018). Tinto (1975) observed that students who are integrated into both the academic

and social systems of an institution are more inclined to persist, and as a result, more likely to reach their goal of graduation.

Tinto's (1975, 1993) theory of student integration emphasizes the role of academic and social integration in persistence in higher education. Tinto (1993) described persistence as the individual's motivation at the doctoral level as being shaped by the personal and intellectual interactions within and between students, faculty, and the communities of the university. Support from peers provides encouragement, an avenue to process frustrations experienced during the educational journey, and the benefit of shared experiences through doctoral studies. Family and friends provide the individual with emotional support from home, celebration of achievements, and a source of continuous encouragement. Students seek support from their peers, family, and friends as a coping mechanism (Byers, Smith, Hwang, Angrove, Chandler, Christian, Dickerson, McAlister-Shields, Thompson, & Denham, 2014). Though more distinct for undergraduate students, academic and social integration are considered more closely aligned with academic experiences for graduate students (Maton, Wimms, Grant, Wittig, Rogers, & Vasquez, 2011; Tinto, 1993). Tinto (1993) recognized academic and social integration needed to be discussed further through the three stages of the doctoral program. Stage one is the initial stage in which doctoral students attempt to integrate into the academic and social communities within their program. This period lasts for one to two years (Tinto, 1993). The second stage occurs when the academic and social communities become intertwined during the comprehensive examination. (Holmes, 2020; Tinto, 1993). The final stage is during the candidacy through the dissertation defense, and at this stage, the faculty member has a strong influence on the student's persistence (Tinto, 1993).

There are still inconsistencies with how doctoral students study at a distance and the connection with the satisfaction of their academic program. There will continue to be inconsistencies in research findings when it comes to defining and measuring the elements of doctoral student integration (i.e., academic integration and social integration) (Strevy, 2009). According to Holmes (2020), academic integration and social integration are important factors for the doctoral student integration and are related with student persistence. Therefore, Holmes' (2020) research on doctoral students in DE programs that focuses on the necessity of doctoral students' academic integration and social integration in DE programs. The instrument designed by Holmes identifies the elements of academic integration and social integration that are important to understanding the distance doctoral program integration scale (DDPIS) (Holmes, 2020). The DDPIS 32-item instrument is used to measure three factors: faculty integration, student integration, and curriculum integration (Holmes, 2020).

Doctoral students need to have a sense of belonging to an institution as well as the field they are studying (Trout, 2018). Students who face persistence struggles and challenges while in the doctoral program may struggle with motivation, which can be enhanced and diminished during the student's experiences while in college (Tinto, 2017). As previously mentioned, challenges can either motivate a student to create a positive drive to push forward and persist or cripple their determination and commitment to persist. While Tinto's (1975, 1993, 2017) work provides a valuable framework for examining persistence experiences, given the focus of this study, it is also important to have a theoretical lens to examine the cultural factors influencing doctoral persistence experiences of Asian American women in the United States.

Theory of Acculturation

The concept of acculturation was first introduced by Redfield, Linton, and Henskovitis (1936) as “those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent change in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups” (p.149). As a result, individuals who are exposed or submerged into cultures that are different than their culture of origin may sometimes lead to adaption or rejection of the new culture as it depends on the individual’s personal belief.

Berry (1980) first proposed the theory of acculturation on the basis that an individual can attach to two cultures - his or her culture of origin and second culture. Berry explained that there are four possible acculturation outcomes: (a) integration, (b) assimilation, (c) separation, and (d) marginalization. *Integration* occurs when an individual maintains both cultures - the indigenous and their culture of origin. *Assimilation* occurs when an individual accepts only their culture of origin and disregards the indigenous culture. *Separation* occurs when the individual accepts the indigenous culture and rejects their culture of origin. Lastly, *marginalization* occurs when an individual rejects both cultures.

In 1967, Graves defined the term *psychological acculturation* as changes in attitudes, values, and identity an individual experiences resulting from direct contact with other cultures (Kim, Soliz, Orellana, & Alamilla, 2009). In relation to acculturation, the concept of *enculturation* emerged, defined as the process of socialization to and maintenance of the individual’s culture of origin, including the values, ideas, and concepts (Herskovitis, 1948).

Criticism arose when the majority of research on acculturation focused on Latinos and African Americans, while little research included Asian Americans (Iwamasa & Yamada, 2001). Research on acculturation later expanded into various populations in the United States, including Asian and Asian American populations relating to behavioral, attitudinal, and psychological

characteristics (Miller, 2007; Zhang & Moradi, 2013). The concepts of enculturation and acculturation are important to understand when seeking to better understand the experiences of Asian Americans either born in the United States or whom have been submerged into the U.S. culture after immigrating. According to Kim and Abreu (2001), *enculturation* is used to describe the process of an individual maintaining his or her culture of origin, while *acculturation* is used to describe the adaption to the U.S. culture. Further exploration of acculturation and enculturation into the lives of Asian women will provide a better understanding of the balance between their culture of origin and the U.S. culture, and how this balance influences doctoral persistence in the context of higher education.

Related Literature

There are many factors that influence student persistence, and five main themes have been recognized that are relevant: students' research training, chair and student expectations, the chair-advisee relationship, interpersonal difficulties in the advising relationship, and social support (Burkard, Knox, DeWalt, Fuller, Hill, & Schlosser, 2014). Over the past 10 years, there has been a significant growth in institutions offering distance education degrees (Allen & Seaman, 2017; Natal, Jimenez, & Htway, 2020). According to Gardner (2009), there have been a greater number of part-time students entering doctoral programs in comparison to the traditional full-time students, which clearly shows that the profile of doctoral students has shifted. There are several benefits in distance education degrees including flexibility, asynchronous learning, and no geographical boundaries (Ames, Berman, & Casteel, 2018; Natal, Jimenez, & Htway, 2020). However, while distance education has become an integral part of higher education and provided increased access to higher education for non-traditional students, students in distance education programs are at greater risk for departure before completion

(Allen & Seaman, 2013; Bryd, 2016; Holmberg-Wright & Wright, 2012; Lin, Lin, & Laffey, 2008; Nguyen & Zhang, 2011). While access to doctoral programs is increasing, doctoral attrition remains a concern and a focal point for researchers examining why some of the most capable students are leaving their programs before they obtain their degree (Bair & Haworth, 2004; Devos, Boudrenghien, Van, Azzi, Frenay, Galand, & Klein, 2017). There is much to be understood about the challenges doctoral students face that hinder them from obtaining their degrees.

According to Natal et al. (2020), many universities go through huge recruitment efforts seeking qualified ethnically and racially diverse doctoral students who are representative of the demographics. According to Wu, Garza, and Guzman (2015), ethnically and culturally diverse student populations are vital in higher education as they bring distinct perspectives and worldviews. As distance education learning options increase, there is also an increase in the number of women obtaining their doctoral degree, from 42% in 1998 to 46% in 2018, an increase of 4% (National Science Foundation, 2019). According to the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics (2012), for the first time in history, in 2001 there was an increase in females graduating from doctoral programs and also a significant increase in doctorates awarded to minorities (West, 2014). Further investigations into the experiences of minority women completing their doctoral degrees indicate there are greater obstacles to doctoral educational attainment than with non-minority peers (Castro, Garcia, Cavazos Jr., & Castro, 2011; Gardner, 2008). This study investigating the doctoral persistence experiences of Asian American women is significant because little is known about the persistence experiences of minority students, particularly Asian women, in higher education (Zorlu, 2013).

Doctoral Student Persistence in Distance Higher Education

Earning a doctoral degree involves conducting research, preparing the dissertation, and contributing to the body of knowledge (Callary, Werthner, & Trudel, 2012; Caruth, 2015). Tinto (1975) suggested that not only is the student's background important to his or her persistence, but motivational attributes also contribute to persistence. Academic integration and the perception of one's academic abilities can have an impact on students' experiences. Their academic performance in both high school and college are considered predictors that can be significant to college persistence (Allen, Robbins, Casillas, & Oh, 2008; Hoffman & Lowitz, 2005; Andrade, Miller, McArthur, & Ogden, 2020; McGrath & Braunstein, 1997; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Reason, 2003; Stewart et al., 2015). According to Leeds et al. (2013), online courses had 20% higher drop rates than traditional courses. Understanding students of different backgrounds (e.g., cultural, economic, social and institutional) can provide insight into factors that impact student persistence and retention (Allen, 1992; Bennett & Okinaka, 1990; Berger, 2001; Braxton, Bray, & Berger, 2000; Clewell & Ficklen, 1986; Fleming, 1985; Christie & Dinham, 1991; Hernandez, 2000; Herndon, 1984; Hurtado, 1994; Hurtado & Carter, 1996; Johnson, et al. 2004-2005; Murguia, Padilla, & Pavel, 1991; Nora, 1987; Rendon, 1994; Richardson, 1987; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Thayer, 2000; St. John, Cabrera, Nora, & Asker, 2000; Thompson & Fretz, 1991; Torres, 2003; Zurita, 2005). Other reasons for higher attrition rates have been attributed to the weakness of the distance education environment as well as poor medium and student fit (Baker, 2014). There has been some focus on the influence of social, cultural, and institutional factors during the doctoral experience, as well as the likelihood that the student will successfully complete his or her doctorate in a timely manner (Cantwell, Bourke, Scevak, Holbrook, & Budd, 2015). Poor familial relationships can attribute to the

doctoral students' attrition from the doctoral program (Lovitts, 2001). Therefore, it is important to engage family members in helping to understand the doctoral process and the necessary balance of education and personal life in order for the doctoral student to persist (Hyun, 2009; Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012). Other demographic variables such as age, gender, ethnicity, and marital status also influence persistence (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012; Strayhorn, 2005; Wao & Onwuegbuzie, 2011).

From Tinto's (2017) perspective, persistence is more than just the student behavior, but importance is also placed on the student's sense of belonging and his or her perception of the value of the curriculum in relationship to personal and professional goals. Understanding a student's perspective and the meaning they attribute to their experiences allows for deeper understanding of the roles social and academic integration play influencing the student's motivation to persist in higher education. Tinto (2017) underscored that different factors such as income, race, and gender can influence student persistence.

Support Systems

Support systems such as peer relationships, mentoring, and support from family and friends are influential during doctoral studies (Burkard, Knox, DeWalt, Fuller, Hill, Schlosser, 2014; Cao, 2001; Flynn et al., 2012; Lenz, 1997). Emotional support from friends and peers can help mitigate the feelings of isolation that occur during the dissertation process and may aid in the progression towards completion (Burkard et al., 2014; Delamont et al., 2000; Pauley, 2004). Socialization is an important factor in student persistence. Socialization is defined as the process by which one learns the social skills and behaviors needed to adjust to a new environment and to integrate into a doctoral program (Caruth, 2015). Social integration can be fostered through activities, and peer group associations. Interaction with faculty and administrative personnel can

build rapport, a support system, and bridge the communication gap (Tinto, 1975). Socialization is similar to the concept of acculturation in which individuals need to adapt and change their behavior to a new cultural group. Culture plays a part in this adaptation, especially amongst Asian American women especially when they are balancing home and school life. Parental socialization focused on race and ethnicity is meant to promote pride, to prepare their children for bias they may face, and is a protective factor that they instill starting at a young age (Choi, Park, Lee, Yasui, & Kim, 2018). A lack of integration into the social system during the educational journey can lead to low commitment and increase the probability that students will decide to leave college (Tinto, 1975). Baker (2014) indicated that having a personal connection, regardless of the delivery method, and communication with faculty should be part of the doctoral journey.

There are many challenges for doctoral students during their first years, including integrating and adapting to the rigor and expectation of the doctoral program (Trout, 2018; Wao & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). Caruth (2015) noted that doctoral student attrition rates could be a result of personal and social factors that students face during the doctoral process. Students could also drop out of their doctoral studies due to the high level of stress, social isolation, and lack of academic relationship/support (Ali & Kohun, 2007; Trout, 2018). Dropping out causes undue hardship, student disappointments, financial burdens, and apprehension of professions (Caruth, 2015). Kong et al. (2013) found that family interaction, academic guidance, classmate collaboration, and university inaction can influence the decision as to whether a student will choose to continue with or quit his or her doctoral studies.

Students who become engaged and come to see themselves as a member of a community with other students, academics and professional staff tend to have a greater sense of belonging.

According to Tinto (2017), the result of this sense of belonging is expressed through commitment, which equates to students being more likely to persist to completion. While believing that one can succeed at a university is an essential part of persistence to completion, it does not in itself ensure it (Tinto, 2017). Doctoral students need to evaluate their doctoral programs, understand the required assessments, know their own potential, and manage their own standing (Caruth, 2015). It is essential that doctoral students take steps during the early stages of their doctoral journey and recognize the stakeholders involved in their studies (e.g., students, faculty, administrators, peers). Doctoral students should also have a realistic perspective of professional work, especially as they near the completion of their dissertation (Burkard et al., 2014; Smith, Brownwell, Simpson, & Deshler, 1993).

The deficiency of earned doctorates has had a significant impact on institutions and has created not only financial burdens, but also long-term damaging consequences such as student disillusionment. Doctoral education is a growing topic of importance, with more researchers examining factors associated with program effectiveness, degree completion, costs, and equity and diversity (Brailsford, 2010; Council of Graduate Schools and Educational Testing Service, 2010; Doan, Nathans, Anderson, & Bial, 2013; Golde & Walker, 2006; Labi, 2010; National Science Foundation, National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, 2015; Pifer & Baker, 2016). Further, environmental factors such as the students' external support or background can either enable or inhibit the student's intent to persist. These can also have an effect on their academic and social realm (Garza & Fullerton, 2018).

Distance Education

The growing presence of distance learning has changed the landscape of education (Miller, 2000). However, distance education (DE) was not always favorable; it faced criticism

because DE historically reported lower completion rates than that of residential education (Qayyum, Zipf, Gungor, & Dillon, 2019). DE would not be where it is today if the United States Senate had not amended the federal financial aid law where colleges were not allowed to enroll more than 50% of their students through distance education (Carnevale, 2003; Mayadas, 2001; Miller, 2000). The program that was first introduced was called the Distance Education Demonstration Program, and it allowed institutions that once were prohibited from enrolling more than half of their students at a distance or more than half of the courses offered via distance education (Carnevale, 2003) to enroll more than half for DE. Financial aid included grants, scholarships, and loans that would help students fund their educational expenses and came from several sources including state and federal governments, educational institutions, financial institutions, private foundations, and corporations (Qayyum, Zipf, Gungor, & Dillon, 2019). Today, distance education exists in most higher education institutions across the United States. The progression of distance education evolved from five generations, shaped by how technology has played a big part in the delivery of instruction. The first generation was defined by correspondence using print media, leading to the second-generation using audio and videotapes along with computer-based learning (Baker, 2014). Evolving into the audio teleconferencing and videoconferencing of the third generation and into the fourth generation, flexible learning models incorporating multimedia, online resources, and the computer communication were then utilized. The fifth generation is currently being used with an intelligent flexible learning model with online portals to manage the distance learning experience (Baker, 2014; Taylor, 2011).

Distance education offers a flexible approach to education, offering open content and resources, and promoting connectivity, access, and contribution to shared workspaces at any time (Barak, 2017; Cacheiro-Gonzalez, Medina-Rivilla, Dominguez-Garrido, & Medina-Dominguez,

2019; Moreira, Henriques, Guolao, & Barros, 2017). Online education is defined as a form of distance education that incorporates the use of computers and internet as the delivery method, and the content is then delivered online (Allen & Seaman, 2008; Kentnor, 2015; Shelton & Saltsman, 2005). The traditional brick-and-mortar institutions have existed for many decades, and now from the classroom to the faculty, online education has changed the way we provide education.

Distance education has taken on a transformative role in students' self-regulated learning strategies and in many cases has become the foundation for new generations of learning and the center of university life (Scoppio & Luyt, 2017; Zimmerman, 1990). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, more students are forced to go online, and institutions are needing to adjust to the growth in online education (Blankenberger & Williams, 2020).

Distance education may be offered through asynchronous and synchronous delivery methods. Asynchronous communication is the more typical and preferred approach to distance education and may be accessed at any time and does not require simultaneous access (Johnson, 2006; Johnson & Aragon, 2003; Oztok, Zingaro, Brett, & Hewitt, 2013). Asynchronous learning environments can foster deep and more meaningful learning in the presence of adequate cognitive, social, and teaching presence (Oztok et al., 2013). Synchronous communication involves real time communication between the student and teacher (Johnson, 2006; Oztok et al., 2013). According to Oztok et al. (2013), synchronous chats/discussions offer a sense of continuity and convenience, sustained regular contact, and creates a sense of immediacy and urgency. Distance learning, whether asynchronous or synchronous, offers a flexible delivery model to meet the needs and learning preference of diverse populations of learners (Erichsen, Bollinger, & Halupa, 2014). Distance learning has also allowed for students to live at home

while pursuing their educational journey and has allowed them to save on tuition, rent, utilities, and commuting expenses (Garza & Fullerton, 2018; Turley, 2009). The relationship between familial interactions with doctoral students, on top of distance education, can be rather complex (Rockinson-Szapkiw, Sosin, & Spaulding, 2018). Prior to distance education, there were several obstacles that prevented women from pursuing their doctoral programs, the limitations of relocating, work, and family, but the flexibility of distance education has opened many opportunities with limited constraint.

Women in Higher Education

Distance education has afforded many women the opportunity to integrate their roles and responsibilities as mothers, daughters, and wives with that of being doctoral students, when historically they may not have had the opportunity to do so (Rockinson-Szapkiw, Sosin, & Spaulding, 2018). The role of education has been underscored by the claims of mobility and equity (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Schultz, 1963), especially with women's educational experiences in higher education (Jayaweera, 1997). In the United States, gender is a factor that has been documented that influences the doctoral students' experiences, interactions, and challenges (Barnes & Wells, 2009; Erickson, 2012; Haynes, Bulosan, Citty, Grant-Harris, Hudson, & Koro-Ljungberg, 2012; Pifer & Baker, 2016; Sallee, 2010). According to Weiler (1989), an exploration into women's history in education reveals that women had to fight for their right to attain doctoral degrees in all fields. Higher education can provide women with opportunities to improve their lives as well as empower them. Women were limited because higher education courses did not offer the flexibility of attending school while managing a family. Distance education has minimized these barriers, allowing women, including ethnic minority women, the opportunity to pursue their educational studies while remaining close to

home to attend to their familial duties.

A typical doctoral student is expected to achieve personal maturity and development once they enter this level of their educational status (Backlund, 2017; Franke & Arvidsson, 2011). The current doctoral population is generally over 30 years old, married, has children, and has additional family roles (Offerman, 2011; Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2019). Typically, graduate students are nontraditional students; they tend to persist in higher education due to their demographics, their academic background, and their personal situation (Ellis, 2019; Markel, 2015). Carter, Blumenstein, and Cook (2013) highlighted the way gender causes stress to women because of the expectations of carrying additional responsibilities for domestic and family duties, despite the second-wave feminist ideals of women's right to centralize their own well-being and ambitions. Spaulding and Rockinson-Szapkiw (2012) examined factors associated with doctoral persistence and stressed the importance of personal factors (e.g., motivation for pursuing the degree, reasons for persisting, strategies for dissertation completion) and experiences (e.g., personal sacrifices, delayed expectations, dissertation challenges). Other factors that could play a role in women's persistence and overall commitment include family background, individual attributes, and pre-college schooling experiences (Braxton, Milem, & Sullivan, 2000). Ivankova and Stick (2007) stressed the importance of doctoral students' self-motivation beyond social and academic factors. Sometimes women themselves may not recognize or identify with reasons why women struggle during their doctoral studies (Carter, Blumenstein, & Cook, 2013).

Further, difficulties are faced by female students due to management of time between their doctoral studies and the family commitments (Aitchison & Mowbray, 2013). There are fewer female students enrolled in doctoral programs due to balancing family and work

responsibilities while in school, which also result in postponing matriculation (Caruth, 2015). Both Wall (2008) and Brown and Watson (2010) feel that these obstacles create contradictory emotions during their doctoral experience; these feelings can lead to feelings of guilt and frustration and have an indirect impact on their studies (Aitchison & Mowbray, 2013). Although there are obstacles and challenges to persisting in college, it is important to empower women through education, not only to expand their options, choices, control, and power, but also to create the opportunity or perhaps a need to re-create their own identity (Amin, 2018). In addition to their educational pursuits, women must also maintain a balance and strong connection with their families because this is very important to their individual autonomy in order for them to grow and develop in their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (Rockinson-Szapkiw, Sosin, & Spaulding, 2018). In a study of 3 doctoral student mothers in the United States, Lynch (2008) found that roles were typically in conflict and negatively impacted attrition. Sometimes transformations in thinking during studies can impact home life and family relationships (Goodall, Huggins, Webber, & Wickett, 2017). Family value of the degree, family support, family adaption, and clearly negotiated roles are essential to development and persistence (Rockinson-Szapkiw, Sosin, & Spaulding, 2018).

According to Amin (2018), women are embedded in contexts where the ambitions and actions of empowerment are outside statistical and social norms and the act of pursuing their education may result in a displacement and a disruption to their self-narratives. Female departures from education are more determined by social forces rather than academic (Tinto, 1993). Many women do not expect the drastic difference in their experiences with the demand of the doctoral work in comparison to the undergraduate and/or postgraduate experience (Carter, Blumenstein, & Cook, 2013). There should be more emphasis on research focusing on factors

that are vital in the academic success of female doctoral students (Gardner, 2008), instead of resilience traits relating to the academic success of college students (Castro, Garcia, Cavazos Jr, & Castro, 2011; Cavazos, Johnson, Fielding, Cavazos, Castro & Vela, 2010; Zalaquett, 2006).

Asian American Women in Higher Education

The clash between cultural values and today's contemporary Western values is especially significant for doctoral women of various ethnicities (Carter, Blumenstein, & Cook, 2013). There are cultural challenges in the academic environment which cause a conflict between values of collectivism, humility, cooperation, and their emotional expressiveness to that of individualism, emotional detachment, and direct communication (Natal, Jimenez, & Htway 2000; Ramirez, 2014). In the United States, degree granting institutions have seen an increase in Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, Black, and American Indian/Alaska native students at all degree levels (Snyer, de Brey, & Dillow, 2018).

The first Asians arrived in America in 1795, and Asian Americans are now the fastest growing population in the United States (Mishra, 2018). The term Asian refers to people of Asian ancestry from Asia who live in Asia and Asian American is used for those of Asian ancestry who live in the United States (APA, 2020). Many Asians immigrated to the United States to seek a better future for their children, with opportunities for brighter careers, a better life, and to attain an education. Asian Americans comprise one of the largest ethnic groups in the U.S. The broad term "Asian/Asian American" refers to a variety of subgroups; many of these heterogeneous groups are referred under the homogenous term, "Asian American" (Gall & Gall, 1993; Leong, 1993). There are over 30 different Asian ethnic groups in the United States subgroup: Chinese, Vietnamese, Japanese, Korean, and Pakistani to name a few (APA, 2020). Theorists such as Sellars and colleagues (1998), believe that there is a correlation between

stereotype and academic achievement. Despite the positive stereotype of Asian Americans, this stereotype can also be damaging and can lead to presumed academic achievement and an unrealistic standard for success.

A value on higher education is deeply rooted in Asian Culture (Yang, 2015). An increased academic effort may be tied to cultural beliefs that emphasizes that there is a strong link between achievement and effort (Chen & Stevenson, 1995; Hsin & Xie, 2014). Asian Americans graduate from college at higher rates in comparison to other groups, as well as meeting or exceeding the educational outcomes of their parents (Lee & Zhou, 2020). Some scholars speculate that these cultural beliefs are rooted in the teachings of Confucianism which emphasize the balance of human beings through education and self-cultivation (Stevenson & Stigler, 1992). Research findings also suggest that the influence of families, cultural values, acculturation, occupational stereotyping, and gender socialization in Asian Americans also are prevalent in women's career choice, decision making, and their goals (Hui & Lent, 2018; Leong & Chou, 1994; Tang, Fouad, & Smith, 1999). Educational attainment is important for Asians, but there is a difference between males and females. Gender bias starts during childhood and is one factor that impacts achievement in the educational setting (Harvey, Parahoo, & Santally, 2017; Mishra, 2018). In Bhopal's (2008) research in Asian women in higher education, it appears that a sense of community, as well as strong communities of practice, were extremely significant in terms of their success, but that these communities of practice are complex. Motivation is an important focus because of the intrinsic goal in achieving their degree. While women are involved in their studies, they are setting an example in their home life, creating an adjustment to their environment and home setting.

The older stereotype portrays Asian women as feminine, domestic, and submissive (Tsai, Przymus, & Best, 2002); however, in Western society, modern Asian American women are presented as individuals who are more focused on their careers than on their families (Mishra, 2018). While this is an interesting point of view, there are many Asian women who are still culturally influenced, and although they may have individualistic goals of educational attainment, they still retain their collectivist views. While this may be a contradiction to the cultural norm, Asian women are still very grounded in their cultural background. Asian women are primarily responsible for taking care of the children and household chores (Craft & Maseberg-Tomlinson, 2015) and education is not the priority. There are distinct roles in Asian households for the mother and father when it comes to child upbringing (Pho & Mulvey, 2003). Typically, fathers guide their children in planning for their education and careers, while mothers provide nurturing, support, and behavior management. Children learn these distinct roles, and as they get older, sons are encouraged to get an education and pursue a career (Pho & Mulvey, 2003), while daughters follow in their mothers' footsteps and are encouraged to become the nurturers and caretakers of the family (Cho, McLean, Armonpipat, Chang, Hewapathirana, Horimoto, Lee, Manikoth, Othman & Hamzah, 2015). There is some consideration into the socioeconomic status which can influence the social status and in turn can have an impact on the student's academic success as well as their ability within the doctoral level of education (Crumb, Haskins, Dean, & Avent Harris, 2019; Tokarczyk & Fay, 1993; Warnock & Appel, 2012). There is a need for further investigations into the demographics of women who complete doctoral degrees, specifically with minority women representing a small percentage of those who complete doctoral degrees. Women, especially minority women, have greater obstacles to attaining doctoral completion (Castro, Garcia, Cavazos, & Castro, 2011; Gardner, 2008).

Academic Factors

Empowering women through educational attainment allows them to have options, choices, and to create their own identity (Amin, 2018). Their role is often limited by their own sense of self-worth. To some degree, women are able to step outside their cultural norm and change the traditional framework in which they were brought up, to build upon the importance of continuous education allowing for growth. Changes to women's identity can be attributed to transformative changes including their self-confidence, autonomy, status, and a greater sense of purpose (Biesta et al., 2011; Edwards, 1993a; Merrill, 1999; Parr, 2000; Pascall and Cox, 1993; Schuller et al., 2004; Webber 2015). These outcomes not only benefit women, but it has a direct impact on their families as well. Tinto (1975) emphasized the importance of the role of the family in determining the child's educational performance and the impact it has at the college level.

Today, Asian American women cope with and integrate themselves into a new society, adapting to the dominant American culture (Pho & Mulvey, 2003). Even with the adaption, many still embrace their traditional norms and values, including respect for authority, perpetuation of ancestral lineage, hard work, family loyalty, restraint, and discipline, valuing education, respect for elders, cooperative and harmonious family relations, family status in the community, the family's belief that the past is more important than the future, seeking out new experiences, and securing a comfortable life (Pho & Mulvey, 2003). Asian American women sometimes feel torn with their sense of obligation to the older generation for their sacrifice and hard work and their own personal individualistic "American" mindset and values (Giuffrida, Kiyanna, Waterman, Museus, 2012; Samanta, 2018). Regardless of where they live, how they are brought up, and the values instilled in them, these traditions often still remain. Pressure is

felt by Asian American students who have close family members who have educational degrees and feel the pressure to succeed in the respectable professions (Natal, Jimenez, & Htway, 2020). They feel a sense of duty toward their family to attain a good profession. Women merely adapt to their new surrounding without losing what is most valuable to them, tradition. Asian women can still be independent, pursue their education and career, but one thing that is not forgotten is remembering where one comes from and not forgetting foundational values about tradition. Empowering education for women provokes the familial tradition, community, and state and enables women to expand their own choices, options, control, power, opportunity and to create their own identity (Amin, 2018). According to Garza and Fullerton (2018), increased distances between living at home and college helps students minimize obstacles that can hinder the ability for the student to achieve levels of social, academic, and cultural integration which affects their academic success. Thus, while distance education makes attaining a doctoral degree more accessible for Asian American women, there are added challenges with earning the degree while maintaining existing roles and responsibilities, as there is no distance between home and school. Dedicating the necessary time to doctoral work can be challenging while maintaining existing familial roles and responsibilities.

Social Factors

According to Anderson and Mietzitis (1999) and Johnson et al. (2008), social supports are an integral part of a student's well-being in graduate school that help alleviate stress (Haynes, Bulosan, Citty, Grant-Harris, Hudson, & Koro-Ljungberg, 2012). Studies document that students of color experience the campus environment as less supportive than their White peers (Loo & Rolison, 1986; Pascarella, Edison, Nora, Hagedorn, & Terenzini, 1996; Schwitzer, Griffin, Ancis, & Thomas, 1999) and are less likely to persist to graduate (National Center for

Education Statistics, 1995; Education Trust, 2004b). Neuman (2012) stated that the age, gender, social background, and negative influences play a role in graduate students' persistence in their educational goals. Students who are socioeconomically disadvantaged tend to benefit while living at home. The importance of living at home or close to family while also being enrolled in college is deeply rooted in the students' family roots and cultural norms (Desmond & Turley, 2009; Garza & Fullerton, 2018; Guiffrida, 2005; London, 1989). However, students who live at home also experience a sense of academic detachment from their peers (Christie, Munro, & Wager, 2005; Garza & Fullerton, 2018), which per Tinto (1993, 2017) may negatively influence social integration and persistence.

During the 2000 and 2010 academic years, Asian undergraduate students had the highest persistence rates compared to White, Black, and Hispanic students (Payne, Slate, & Barnes, 2013). Racial cultures and backgrounds vary amongst different ethnic groups, but emphasis is placed on their upbringing, family, neighborhoods, communities, schools, and outside environments. These core factors help shape the individuals starting at an early age and in turn impact their academic and social attainment. Socioeconomic status has also been found to be related to students' dropout rates (Astin, 1964; Eckland, 1964; Lembesis, 1965; McMammon, 1965; Panos & Astin, 1968; Sewell & Shah, 1967; Tinto, 1975; Wegner, 1967; Wolford, 1964). What becomes apparent is how culture relates to high-achieving versus low-achieving minority student educational experiences (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Schneider and Lee (1990) found that on average, White parents did not place the same emphasis on high academic achievement as Asian parents but expressed their satisfaction across several areas: the school, sports, music, or other extracurricular activities.

It is disheartening, but a mindset of success and failure is embedded in children at an early age. Furthermore, home life is pertinent to the perception of successful educational persistence. Additional research has indicated that several factors, such as the quality of relationships within the family and the interest and expectations parents have for their children are associated with family background (Tinto, 1975). The parental levels of expectations may have as much influence upon the child's persistence into college as the child's own expectations for themselves (Hackman & Dysinger, 1970; Tinto, 1975).

Self-Efficacy. Self-efficacy is defined as a person's belief in his or her ability to succeed in specific situations or tasks (Bandura, 1997, 1994). Self-efficacy also influences how an individual will perceive themselves and their capabilities; it is a learned trait. Asian American self-worth and self-identity is often tied to familial cultural values and family achievements (Fernandez, 1988; Kitano & Matsushima, 1981; Tomita, 1994). Due to cultural beliefs surrounding gender, research shows that female students are less confident and identify themselves as less competent in comparison to male students (Correll, 2001, 2004; Mykelbust, 2019; Ridgeway, 1997).

The concept of self-identity implies the act of creating one's own narrative about identity which challenges the structures of tradition (Amin, 2018). The tendency for children to live up to parents' expectations relate to the pressure and/or support from parents and their expectations, career interests, and self-efficacy (Hui & Lent, 2018; Shen, Liao, Abraham, Weng, 2014). According to Amin (2018), change is typically contested, and the consequences of resistance and change are borne by the individual resisting the status quo. Amin went on to say that the ramifications for other family members is that they are seen as being responsible for a woman's behavior and that she is viewed as the carrier of family honor. Today, Asian women cope with

and integrate themselves into a new society, adapting to American culture (Pho & Mulvey, 2003). Even with the adaptation, many Asian women still follow their traditional norms and values, including respecting authority, perpetuating the ancestral lineage, seeking salvation, working hard, maintaining family loyalty, exercising restraint and discipline, valuing education, respecting their elders, maintaining cooperative and harmonious family relations, keeping family status in the community, believing that the past is more important than the future, seeking out new experiences, and securing a comfortable life (Pho & Mulvey, 2003). Regardless of where Asian women live, how they were brought up, and the values instilled in them, these traditions are largely consistent across Asian cultures. Asian women merely adapt to their new surroundings without losing what is most valuable to them, tradition. Asian women can still be independent, pursue their education and career, but continue to remember where they came from and the traditions that their culture embraces. By empowering education for women, it enables women to create their own identity and expand their choices, options, and opportunity (Amin, 2018).

It is the individual's own beliefs through determination and willingness to take control and persist no matter the obstacles.

Culture

Culture is characterized by shared values, beliefs, behaviors, and styles of rituals, stories, symbols, and world-views (Swidler, 1986; Warikoo & Carter, 2009). Goodenough (1961) described a society's culture as consisting of whatever it is that one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to others; it is not a material phenomenon, and does not consist of things, behavior, people, or emotions. Culture can enhance or alleviate the association between an individual's behavior and perception (Bandura, 2002). In

other words, the association between culture and how an individual may act, or view things can be directly tied to their culture. Culture is defined as people who share a history, language, and cultural identification and have shared knowledge, values, beliefs, and practices with others who live close to them (Atran, Medin, & Ross, 2005).

Cultural theorists emphasize that cultural values, beliefs, and behavioral patterns are formed from the immigrant family's homeland, and stress how these values and practices fit into the mainstream society of the U.S. (Paik et al., 2017). The term ethnic socialization refers to the direct and indirect messages that parents communicate to children about their ancestry and cultural background as well as adapting with society (Kiang, Tseng, & Yip, 2016). According to Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph, and Nickerson (2002), evidence shows that the incorporation of ethnic socialization has a positive influence on children's ethnic identity.

Cultural traditions have a direct link with Asian families, especially with children, who are often expected to respect the wishes of their elders and participate in the maintenance of the household (Fuligni et al., 2002). For example, Chinese families tend to emphasize family respect, support, and assistance when socializing their children (Fuligni et al., 2002; Ho, 1981). Asians who hold strongly to traditional cultural values and beliefs emphasize the importance of education starting at a very young age. Asian families value grades and attendance to be very important and encourage their children to go to college (Nettles, 1990). At an early age, education is emphasized in the household, especially among parents who have immigrated to America to seek a better future and attain a good education for their children. Furthermore, home life is pertinent in the perception of successful educational persistence. The family's cultural values, beliefs, and traditions directly influence their decisions and impact their actions. More than ever, distance education plays an integral role in living at home or close to the family

while women are pursuing their educational studies; it has allowed them to remain connected to their family roots and cultural norms (Desmond & Turley, 2009; Garza & Fullerton, 2018; Guiffrida, 2005; London, 1989). Although there are some challenges with distance education, when the challenges are minimized, they are less likely to hinder students' level of social, academic, and cultural integration, translating into academic success (Garza & Fullerton, 2018).

Challenges faced by parents with a history of immigrant experiences include adapting to the mainstream environment while considering their ancestry, heritage, and values to be passed down to their children (Jambunathan, Burts, & Pierce, 2000; Kiang et al., 2016). Acculturation is the "the process by which individuals change, both by being influenced by contact with another culture and by being participants in the general acculturation changes under way in their own culture" (Berry, 1989, p. 204). Ochocka and Janzen (2008) believed that during the process of acculturation, parents may feel a sense of losing their heritage values, such as their parenting beliefs, in order to adapt to the mainstream culture. In a handful of studies, Asian Americans who retain some of their ethnic identity or heritage had a more positive association with their environment (personal and social) and less impact on the acculturation strategies in family processes (Choi et al, 2017b, 2018; Dinh & Nguyen 2006; Tseng & Fuligni, 2000). These family processes may include values, behaviors, and parent-child relationships (Choi, 2018). Padilla and Perez (2003) described the different ways people acculturate, including family structure and function, personal values, traditions, religious beliefs, and personality conflicts in their child's upbringing. Keesing (1974) noted that cultural systems may have adaptive consequences, such as in controlling population, maintaining the ecosystems, and contributing to subsistence. These consequences sometimes create conflict because of different views such as individualism and collectivism.

Individualism tends to lean towards the individual and one's personal freedom, valuing self-reliance. Asian cultures typically embrace more of a collectivist perspective because the community and family are held in high regard. Because the Asian value of collectivism stresses that an individual is interdependent with family and community, collectivism likely plays an influential role on the individual's career choices (Kantamneni, Dharmalingam, Orley, & Kanagasingam, 2018; Lowe, 2009). At a young age, attitudes toward and expectations about family, marriage and living arrangements vary significantly by race and ethnicity (Britton, 2013; Crissey, 2005; Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999; Harris & Lee, 2006; South, 1993). Important Asian cultural values and beliefs include conformity to norms, deference to authority, emotional self-control, family recognition through achievement, filial piety, humility, hierarchical relationships, and avoidance of shame (Kim, Atkinson, & Yang, 1999; Nettles, 1990). It is important to also acknowledge how external expectations of standards especially from the family, can have an impact on the psychological state of Asian individuals (Wang, Wong, & Chung, 2018). Asian Americans may prioritize family harmony and family tradition rather than individual goals or interests (Leong, Kao, & Lee, 2004). Asians are very close to their families and tend to live in closer physical proximity to each other even as they get older. Asian Americans' collectivist values and commitment to family and community may influence them to pursue a career path that ensures financial security, prestige for family, and service to others, rather than fulfillment of intrinsic or personal needs (Leong & Gupta, 2007). Parents instill in their children the strong family bond by remaining close to home. Families are able to depend on each other because they are so close and have a tight community. Although education and career goals are emphasized heavily in the Asian culture, parents pressure their children to start looking at getting married and having children. Shared cultural orientation toward collectivism helps to explain the education

outcomes of Asian Americans and why racial and ethnic minority young adults, including Asian Americans, are more likely to live with their parents (Britton, 2013; Hsin & Xie, 2014; Lee & Zhou, 2015). Families remain close by, living nearby so that they can keep family ties and not grow apart. As children get older and start making plans for college, Asian families typically prefer that they go somewhere near home. Girls play a larger role in family assistance and support than boys (McHale et al., 1999), and have greater involvement in family life (Fuligini et al., 2002). Asian females are typically close to their parents, who expect them to grow up, get married, and raise a family. Education is not something that is typically considered for Asian females; the traditional mindset is that the husband gets a job and supports the family while the wife stays at home and takes care of the family and the home. Because of these responsibilities, if Asian women do decide to pursue a degree, they have to find a way to balance their education with their family home life.

Asian American cultural values are viewed as less autonomous and more dependent and obedient which may affect individuals' self-efficacy and outcome expectations in career-related activities (Leong & Gupta, 2007; Leung, Ivey, & Suzuki, 1994). Asian parent behaviors may be viewed as more controlling and expressed in terms of being closely monitored, with high family obligation, and academically oriented (Chao, 1994; Choi, 2018; Fuligni, 2007; Garcia Coll & Pachter, 2002). This is also applicable to educational achievements (Kim, Atkinson, Umemoto, 2001). It is also not uncommon for Asian parents to set unrealistic high standards for their children which sometimes can attribute to undue pressure (Castro & Rice, 2003, Oishi & Sullivan, 2005; Wang, Wong, & Chung, 2018), and Asian American women may struggle with self-doubt and feelings of selfishness in prioritizing their educational pursuits. Research is sorely needed to understand the persistence experiences of Asian American women in distance

education doctoral programs in the United States. Findings may provide valuable persistence strategies for other Asian American women, while also informing higher education faculty and administrators about the supports that foster doctoral persistence in this double minority population.

Summary

Utilizing Tinto's (1975) theory of student integration provides a framework to understand a student's background and characteristics, and a student's ability to persist through school, and predicts whether he or she is likely to graduate. It is important to understand how female Asian Americans persist in a distance education doctoral program and successfully navigate the conflict between how they define themselves as women and their emerging identity as scholars (Cobb, 2004; Rockinson-Szapkiw, Sosin, & Spaulding, 2018). Acknowledging the challenges women face from the academic to the social expectations and demands can help further empower them to achieve their doctorate degrees (Carter, Blumenstein, Cook, 2013).

Asian women understand the value of education, but historically, accessing higher education, specifically doctoral education may disrupt family roles and impact familial responsibilities. This conflict may impact Asian American women's ability to persist. Asian women place a strong value on education as well as the importance of family bonds due to their cultural backgrounds. For Asian American women, distance education not only allows them more options, choices, control, and power, but also allows them the opportunity to shape their own identity while maintaining their family connections and obligations. There is still much to understand regarding what makes an Asian American woman persist in her educational goals regardless of the obstacles that may be present, such as home life, competing cultural values, beliefs, and traditions, which all directly influence her decisions and impact her actions. These

important cultural values and beliefs include acculturation, collectivism, conformity to norms, deference to authority, emotional self-control, family recognition through achievement, filial piety, humility, hierarchical relationships, and avoidance of shame (Kim, Atkinson, & Yang, 1999; Nettles, 1990). Distance education has given Asian women the opportunity to maintain their cultural norms while pursuing their educational dreams. Again, distance education provides Asian women the opportunity to maintain their residence while working on their doctoral degrees; this also allow them to maintain a strong support system with friends and family (Rockinson-Szapkiw, Spaulding, & Spaulding, 2016). While there are varied challenges for Asian women, the tension between academic and familial demands and responsibilities is significant (Carter, Blumenstein, & Cook, 2013). It is important to acknowledge the challenges that Asian American women face and respect the balance of these dual demands in order to further empower them to achieve their doctorate degree.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe Asian American women's experiences in distance education doctoral programs. Distance education has afforded the opportunity for Asian American women to further their education while maintaining their cultural identity. The study provides an understanding of the challenges' Asian American women faced during their doctoral journey. The balance between domestic and academic life while maintaining harmony of cultural tradition is a theme that was explored throughout the course of the study. This chapter describes the research design utilized for the study. It also provides a description of the research questions, setting, participants, procedures, role of the researcher, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and concludes with a chapter summary.

Design

Qualitative inquiry uses an emerging approach, and the collection of data takes place in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher describes the participant's perspectives, experiences, and the meaning they ascribe to them. Since qualitative inquiry is emergent, it requires the research to not be tightly prescribed, as the phases of the process may shift (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I chose a qualitative research design because it allows me the opportunity to give a voice to the perseverance experiences of Asian American women who attended distance education doctoral programs. The best qualitative design for my research was a phenomenological study as the purpose of phenomenology is to focus on what is experienced and how it is experienced (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

Transcendental phenomenology was utilized in the study to examine the experiences and perceptions of the Asian American women participants. Husserl's transcendental phenomenology is bound in the concept of intentionality (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenological studies attempt to illuminate the specific experience of the phenomenon by the individual or group (Husserl, 1973, Moustakas, 1994). The lived experience of each participant was used to describe the essence of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Given my own experiences with the phenomenon, I chose this design because "in transcendental phenomenology, epoché was used to indicate the act by which the natural attitude of taken-for-granted beliefs and the attitude of science are suspended" (Van Manen, 2016, p. 215), and to set aside personal biases, prejudgments, and ideas (Moustakas, 1994). Through reflective journaling, I set aside my personal lived experiences and recognized the different groups' Asian American backgrounds. I chose this design because it provided a process to systematically bracket my own personal experiences from the analysis to ensure I tell my participants' stories, rather than my own. I like to also recognize that there are very heterogenous experiences of each Asian American woman and they each have a distinct story to tell. According to Moustakas (1994), the meaning of the study is derived from the consciousness of the participants, and while personal biases or preconceptions have been bracketed out of the data collection (Husserl, 1973; Moustakas, 1994), they are shared in this chapter because they still influence how I as the human instrument approached the study. I was interested in understanding the lived experiences of Asian American women who persevered through their doctoral studies, how cultural background impacted their studies, and why distance education was the choice for them.

Research Questions

In this transcendental phenomenological study, the theory of student integration by Tinto (1975) was used in understanding the students' persistence and motivation as well as how their cultural background had an impact on their outcomes. The purpose was to explore Asian American women's persistence experiences in distance education doctoral programs. The following central question and five sub-questions were proposed:

Central Research Question: What are the persistence experiences of Asian American women in distance education doctoral programs?

Sub-Question 1. What experiences motivate Asian American women to pursue doctoral studies through distance education programs?

Sub-Question 2. What personal factors contribute to the persistence experiences of Asian American women enrolled in distance education doctoral programs?

Sub-Question 3. What cultural factors influence how Asian American women experience persistence in distance education doctoral programs?

Sub-Question 4. What institutional factors influence the persistence experiences of Asian American women enrolled in distance education doctoral programs?

Sub-Question 5. What do Asian American women experience upon persisting to completion of a distance education doctoral degree?

Setting

The sample population consisted of graduates from distance education doctoral programs across the United States. Graduates could be from any discipline, but the university must be accredited by the U.S. Department of Education and located in the United States. Doctoral programs were considered distance education (DE) if at least 80% of the program was delivered

from distance methodologies (Allen & Seaman, 2016). While I live in the southeastern United States, the study was largely completed remotely through online conferencing systems and written correspondence. The participants participated from many locations from the west, central and east coast across the United States where they had internet access.

Participants

It was essential for all participants to have experienced the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative purposeful sampling was used to emphasize the in-depth study and understanding of information-rich cases where the researcher could learn about the phenomenon (Patton, 2015). New participants were added to provide enough sufficiency and so data saturation could be reached (Seidman, 1991). In the phenomenological study, the sample size ranges between three to 15 participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Sampling ceased when data saturation was achieved, meaning no new findings were identified with the inclusion of new participants. For the purpose of this study, there was a minimum of 10 participants which provided a sufficient amount of textual and structural description of the experiences along with common experiences of the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The participants selected for the study were women in the United States with Asian descent who shared the experiences of persisting to completion of a doctoral degree in a distance education program in the United States within the last ten years. *Asian descent* was defined as persons having origins in any of the original peoples of East Asia (includes China, Japan, South Korea, North Korea, Taiwan, and Vietnam), South Asia (includes India, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan), and Southeast Asia (includes eastern parts of India, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines) (APA, 2020). Although the study grouped the participants into a homogenous group under the term Asian American, it is recognized that there were very heterogenous groups

within and the experiences of each woman were captured as they each had a distinct story to tell.

Doctoral completer was defined as having successfully persisted across all three doctoral stages: transition, development, and research stage to doctoral completion (Ampaw & Jaeger, 2012; Sverdlik, Hall, McAlpine, & Hubbard, 2018). For the purpose of this study, distance education (DE) was defined as the use of computers and the internet as the delivery method with at least 80% of the course delivered online (Allen & Seaman, 2011; Kent, 2015; Shelton & Saltsman, 2005). Initially, 10 participants were selected, and then one additional interview was conducted to confirm the theme saturation. After interviewing the 11th participant, no new themes were added to the data analysis after reviewing the transcripts, providing the completion of the data collection.

Sampling began with purposeful convenience sampling, beginning with individuals in my personal and professional networks who met the study criteria. Potential participants were invited directly through email, social media, and a combination of methods of communication. Each potential participant was sent a Recruitment Letter (see Appendix B) along with the Informed Consent Form (see Appendix C), Demographic Survey (see Appendix D), and Distance Doctoral Program Integration Scale (DDPIS) (Appendix E). The participants were selected with consideration to age, marital status, degree program, institution, and geographic location in order to achieve maximum variation and increase transferability of findings (Creswell, 2013). In qualitative studies, purposeful sampling is utilized for the selection of individuals with experiences central to understanding the study phenomenon (Creswell, 2015). Individuals were selected and identified who were knowledgeable and experienced with the phenomenon, which was important in purposeful sampling (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, & Hoagwood, 2015) and ensuring that they were

willing to communicate their experiences for the study (Spradley, 1979). From the initial participants, snowball sampling was utilized, where each research participant was asked to identify other potential research participants who had the identified inclusion characteristics (Christensen, Johnson, & Turner, 2011).

Participants varied in their demographic regions, ethnicities, marital and family status, age, degree types and school. Pseudonyms were provided to all participants to protect their identity. The description of the participants along with their pseudonyms and demographic data are provided below.

Table 1

Description of Participants

Pseudonym	Age Range	Country of Origin (Family)	Marital Status	Number of Children	Degree Type	Program Type
Mary	55-64	Vietnam	Married or domestic partnership	None	Ph.D.	Organizational Management
Lisa	35-44	Vietnam Hmong/ Thailand	Married or domestic partnership	None	Ed.D.	Leadership for Change
Sophia	25-34	Laos	Single, never married	None	Ed.D.	Educational Leadership
Mia	35-44	Philippines	Single, never married	None	Ph.D.	General Psychology
Emily	45-54	Laos	Married or domestic partnership	4	Ph.D.	Health Administration
Grace	45-54	Philippines	Married or domestic partnership	3	Ph.D.	Industrial/Organizational Psychology
Leah	45-54	Vietnam	Divorced	None	Ph.D.	Human Services
Elena	45-54	China	Divorced	None	Ph.D.	Business Psychology
Anna	45-54	China/Japan	Married or domestic partnership	4	Ed.D.	Educational Leadership
Lily	35-44	Philippines	Married or domestic partnership	2	Ph.D.	Nursing Education
Jade	45-54	China	Married or domestic partnership	2	Ed.D.	Educational Leadership

Procedures

The first procedural step was to apply and receive permission through the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB, Appendix A) before conducting the research study. Once IRB approved the IRB application, qualitative inquiry approaches were used to collect data from personal affiliations, in-depth interviews, open-ended questions on surveys, postings in social media, and direct observations in the field. The recruitment letter (Appendix B) and informed consent (Appendix C) were sent out to invite individuals to participate in the study. The informed consent outlined the purpose of the research, the timeline, and the study procedures. Once the informed consent was received from the participants, they were asked to complete a two-part questionnaire with a general demographic survey (see Appendix D) and the Distance Doctoral Program Integration Scale (DDPIS) (Holmes, 2020) (Appendix E). The method of data collection from participants who experienced the phenomenon focused on in-depth interviews, and providing detailed timelines of the participants' personal, social, and academic experiences. (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Timelines were then sent to the participants requesting they map the important events that occurred in their lives in order to provide a comprehensive view of their life history. Each participant was contacted to schedule a time to interview that worked best with their schedule through Microsoft Teams. The in-depth interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The participants provided detailed experiences about their educational pursuit of their doctoral degrees in distance education programs.

During the interviews, reflective journaling was conducted where significant statements were identified and recurring patterns were noted. After all the interviews were completed, copies of the transcribed interviews were then forwarded to the participants to complete a member check and confirm accuracy and for them to provide any feedback or additional

information. Once the interviews were completed, the interviews, timelines, and DDPIS data (see Appendix L) were formally analyzed in accordance with Moustakas' (1994) procedures for transcendental phenomenological studies.

The Researcher's Role

In a qualitative study, the researcher collects data through examining documents, observing behavior, and interviewing participants using open-ended questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It was important as the researcher that I separated my personal experiences and journey in the doctoral program through distance education and bias in order to minimize my influence on the study. I became interested in the topic of distance education doctoral persistence as I reflected on my own personal experiences with this phenomenon. I am an Asian American woman with a family and enrolled in a DE doctoral program. This qualitative, transcendental phenomenological study would explore the experiences and perseverance of Asian American women such as myself, as the participants must have completed their doctoral program via distance education within the past 10 years. The intent of the study was to gain insight into the experiences of each of the participants to describe the essence of the phenomenon of persisting to doctoral completion in a DE program.

The primary reason that led me to enroll in a DE program was the flexibility of the program and the limited residency requirements, which aligned with my personal, social, and institutional attributes. My personal factors that allowed me to enroll and persist in a DE doctoral program were intrinsically motivated. The social factors involved my family and friends, who were supportive in my decision to return to school and encouraged me to follow my passion. I cannot say that this was an easy journey, but both my personal and social factors became vital as I progressed through my program. The most important factor for me was the

academic factor. I had professors who encouraged me throughout the process, especially when I got closer to writing the prospectus. I was discouraged, felt lost, and I did not feel I had the resources to be successful, but my professors were always there to give me insight and support. Although these were my personal experiences, I believe that these types of personal, social, and academic factors provide students with the key to success. As a researcher, I engaged in self-understanding and differentiated my personal experiences from the study in order to eliminate bias, and not impose my own values and experiences on this qualitative research study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). See Appendix L for excerpts from my reflective journal.

Data Collection

The approval to conduct the study was granted from the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix F) and the data collection was initiated. Next, the participants were recruited and sent the informed consent (see Appendix C) to participate in the study. After completing the informed consent, participants completed a demographic survey (Appendix D) and the Distance Doctoral Program Integration Scale (DDPIS) (Appendix E). The DDPIS was used to measure integration, specifically academic integration, and social integration factors of doctoral students in distance education programs (Holmes, 2020). Following the completion of the DDPIS, participants were asked to complete a timeline of key events in their educational journey, followed by in-depth individual interviews, the primary data collection method for this qualitative study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Demographic Survey

Once the participant signed the informed consent form, a link to the demographic survey and distance doctoral integration scale was then emailed to the participant. The purpose of the demographic survey (see Appendix D) was to gather the demographic data to ensure the

potential participants met the criteria for the research study (i.e., completed a doctoral degree through a DE program and identify as Asian American) and to ensure maximum variation in the sample in terms of country of origin, age, marital status, and degree/discipline. Potential participants were asked questions regarding gender, ethnic origin, age, marital status, years to degree completion, and method of delivery (online or residential) for type of degree received. Upon completing the demographic items, the participants were presented with the DDPIS items.

Distance Doctoral Program Integration Scale

The DDPIS (see Appendix E) measures integration, specifically academic integration, and social integration factors of doctoral students in distance education programs (Holmes, 2020). The set of 32 items is comprised of three program integration factors – (a) satisfaction with faculty integration, (b) satisfaction with student integration, and (c) satisfaction with curriculum integration (Holmes, 2020). According to Holmes (2020), the DDPIS may also be used to providing in forecasting persistence along with time-to-degree of doctoral students in distance education. Holmes (2020) used Cronbach's alpha for internal consistency and utilized Pearson's r (test-re-test) for further reliability. The results of the faculty integration factor was .937, .957 for the student integration factor, and .899 for the curriculum factor, which indicated that all factors had good reliability for Cronbach's alpha. The faculty integration factor in the Pearson's r for the DDPIS was $r(107) = .855, p < .01$ two tailed), curriculum integration factor was $r(107) = .842, p < .01$ (two-tailed), and the final the student integration factor was $r(107) = .810, p < .01$ (two-tailed), and the (Holmes, 2020). Given its emphasis on doctoral integration, the DDPIS served as a valuable tool to generate descriptive information about the participants' persistence experiences, information that was further explored qualitatively through interviews.

Timeline

After completing the DDPIS, the participants were asked to create timelines to reflect on the experiences and events that contributed to their educational journey (Creswell & Poth, 2015). Timelines (see Appendix G) are derived from the participants' life events that are sorted by chronological arrangement of significance and meaning events (Berends, 2011; Kolar, Ahmad, Chan, & Erickson, 2015; Patterson et al., 2012). According to Monico et al. (2020), timelines are linear representations of time that place these life events in chronological order. Each participant was asked to detail significant life history events and experiences throughout their personal and educational journey. Timelines capture the richness of the participants' journey and can provide increased data quality because of the in-depth account of the participants' perception and experience (Berends, 2011). The analysis of individual timelines in combination with the DDPIS findings and interviews provided a more holistic understanding of the overall doctoral persistence experience (Berends, 2011; Kolar, Ahmad, Chan, & Erickson, 2015). According to Berends (2011), timelines provide a focus on reflection and decision making and can sometimes be used as a therapeutic tool, though for the purpose of the study the timeline would provide a concrete way for participants to represent large amounts of data and provide a mechanism for participants to identify key events, which in the interview they could articulate the meaning they ascribed to each event (Becker, 2007; Berends, 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

Interviews

The open-ended individual interviews (see Appendix G) were conducted to capture the participants' personal experiences and journey during their educational pursuit of a distance education doctoral degree. In-depth interviews with the participants allowed them to tell their life stories and share their lived experiences prior to and during the doctoral journey. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

To begin, the participants were emailed a meeting invite indicating a mutually agreed upon date and time. The interview began with general questions, followed by more specific questions highlighting the participants' lived experiences as Asian American women persisting through distance education doctoral programs. Interviews were conducted by asking open-ended questions which allowed for the discovery of patterns that were hidden in the details and also helpful for uncovering unanticipated consequences (Patton, 2015). The open-ended questions allowed the participants to voice their experiences without constraint (Creswell, 2015). The advantage to the one-on-one interview was that it allowed the participant the space to speak freely and allowed for a comfortable space to speak (Creswell, 2015). According to Van Manen (2016), the phenomenological interview serves the very specific purpose of exploring and gathering experiential narrative material, stories, or anecdotes to develop a richer and deeper understanding of a human phenomenon. All interviews were conducted in person and via videoconferencing, which were recorded for verbatim transcription and data analysis. The following details the interview guide for the semi-structured interviews with participants.

Table 2

Interview Questions

Interview Questions		Related Research Question
1.	Please tell me about yourself and your current family situation.	CRQ, SQ5
2.	Where were you born?	SQ3
3.	If born outside of the United States, how long have you lived in the United States?	SQ3
4.	What is your first language? What language do you primarily speak in your home?	SQ3
5.	Who is the first generation in your family to move to the United States?	SQ1,3

- | | | |
|-----|--|------------|
| 6. | What do you do for a living? How long have you been in this position? What other positions have you held in your past? | CRQ, SQ1,2 |
| 7. | What doors were you hoping or are you hoping a doctoral degree might open for you? | SQ1 |
| 8. | Tell me about your life. Walk me through your journey both personally and educationally from childhood to now. | SQ2,3,4&5 |
| 9. | Let us talk about your timeline: what events would you say were significant? Why were they significant? | CRQ, SQ1-5 |
| 10. | Is there something else you would like to add to your timeline that you have not already written down? | SQ5 |
| 11. | What was the reason(s) you chose to attend your particular university? | SQ2,3,4 |
| 12. | Let us talk about your educational experiences prior to your doctoral program. What experiences would you say were significant? Why were they significant? | SQ2,3,4 |
| 13. | Walk me through your educational journey in your doctoral degree. What was your motivation and reasons for pursuing your doctoral degree? | SQ1,2,3,4 |
| 14. | What factors impacted your decision to pursue this program? | CRQ |
| 15. | What made you choose distance education versus a residential program? | CRQ, SQ5 |
| 16. | Tell me about your experiences with distance education, specifically, experiences during coursework, and then the dissertation phase of your degree. | CRQ, SQ5 |
| 17. | What were some factors that you felt played a role in your success in your education? | SQ1,2,3,4 |
| 18. | What were your relationships with your faculty members? | SQ4 |
| 19. | Tell me about your relationships with your peers/colleagues. | SQ4 |
| 20. | Let us talk about your personal and academic experiences, what would you say were significant? Why were they significant? | SQ2,4 |
| 21. | What role did your family have in supporting you through your doctoral studies? | SQ1,2,3 |
| 22. | Tell me about your relationships outside of your doctoral studies. Let us talk about your relationships in your home. How did your spouse (or children) play a role in your doctoral studies? How did your parents (or other family members) play a role in your doctoral studies? | SQ1,2,3 |

- | | | |
|-----|--|----------|
| 23. | Are there any values that you bring to the doctoral process based on your Asian heritage that you feel helped you in the process? Are there any values or expectations that you feel possibly hindered your persistence experiences? | CRQ, SQ5 |
| 24. | If you were an Asian American male, do you feel your persistence experiences would have differed? Why or why not? | CRQ, SQ5 |
| 25. | Is there anything else you wish to share about this topic, or anything else you would suggest I ask individuals participating in the study? | CRQ, SQ5 |
-

Once the one-on-one interviews were completed, the recorded interviews were then transcribed verbatim, and the participants were informed that all measures were taken to maintain confidentiality. The interviews allowed for isolation of the experiences of participants, and appropriateness of data forms and procedures for information collection were considered. The in-depth narrative interview touched on some sensitive topics which required the development of rapport between the researcher and participant (Kolar, Ahmad, Chan, & Erickson, 2015). The transcriptions and digital files were stored in secure locations and participants were provided a pseudonym. In order to have a better understanding of the experiences of each of the participants, it was important to dive deeper through the one-on-one interview questions of their personal and educational journey.

Data Analysis

According to Moustakas (1994), evidence from phenomenological research is derived from first-person reports of life experiences. Data collection of these first-person reports were included: a demographic survey, the DDPIS (Holmes, 2020), a written life timeline, and an in-depth one-on-one interview. Prior to interviews being conducted, the participants' responses from the demographic survey and the DDPIS were analyzed and personalized follow up

questions were identified in order to prepare to triangulate the data sources and explore the phenomenon in great depth.

Distance Doctoral Program Integration Scale (DDPIS)

The participants' responses on the DDPIS were transferred to a spreadsheet and analyzed on an individual basis. Each item response from the DDPIS produces a numerical score to measure satisfaction (5 = very high, 4 = high, 3 = medium, 2 = low, 1 = very low; Holmes, 2020). The overall satisfaction score of the participant was calculated by averaging the numerical scores from the total score from the DDPIS. The three factors in DDPIS that were measured in the level of satisfaction in each area were separated into: (a) faculty integration, (b) student integration, and (c) curriculum integration (Holmes, 2020). Analysis of the DDPIS informed the individual interview with participants. Individual mean scores below 3 indicate low levels of satisfaction, scores that range between 3 and 4 indicate medium levels of satisfaction, and scores above 4 indicate high levels of satisfaction (Holmes, 2018). For example, with the goal of triangulating data sources, participants were asked to elaborate upon or explain their selection of different response items on the DDPIS. See Appendix E for the overall scores for the DDPIS.

Timelines

Timelines were introduced to participants providing a brief description of the timeline as a tool for the researcher to have a better understanding of important life experiences of the participant (Kolar, Ahmad, Chan, & Erickson, 2015). Timelines can take many forms and there are no specific ways of creating a timeline; this provides more freedom for the participant and builds rapport between the participant and interviewer, similar to that of the participant engaged in the life-story approach (Kolar et al., 2015). Prior to the individual interviews, the participant

created timelines were studied, and highlighting key events for the participant to elaborate upon and ascribe meaning to in the interview (see Appendix M)

Interviews

The interview process provides an attempt in understanding the world from the participants' point of view while unfolding the meaning of their experiences (Kvale & Brickman, 2009). The approach of the interviews with the participants was to remain open-minded and consciously set aside personal biases and prejudgments through ongoing reflection and journaling (Moustakas, 1994). Epoché is a term described by Husserl to represent this goal of being free from suppositions (Moustakas, 1994). Epoché represents the researcher's goal to set aside any judgement, biases, and preconceived ideas (Moustakas, 1994). This is an important step as the researcher needs to come into the research study with an open mind and with being present. In epoché, the researcher must be focused on the person, issue, and situation so that he or she is present and authentic during the interview with the participant. I began the research process by reflecting on and articulating personal motivation for the research and personal connection to and experiences as an Asian American woman persisting in a distance education doctoral program.

In phenomenological reduction, bracketing is utilized to help bring focus on the research process where the topic and questions are placed into brackets. Bracketing is often used to mitigate the potential for causing harm relating to the research (Tufford & Newman, 2012). Bracketing is a scientific process in which the researcher sets aside his or her biases, assumptions, and previous experiences to describe a phenomenon (Tufford & Newman, 2012). I engaged in a self-reflective process of bracketing with an open mind with the participant and set aside any prior knowledge and assumption (Starks & Trinidad, 2007; Tufford & Newman,

2012). Acknowledging the researcher's personal beliefs early in the research study allows the participants to freely reflect on social, cultural, and historical experiences (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Tufford & Newman, 2012). Participants may not always be aware that they themselves sometimes bracket during their interview with the researcher (Crotty, 1996; Tufford & Newman, 2012). Bracketing is useful for the researcher as it helps maintain focus on the research questions during the data collection and analysis phase. The researcher utilizes bracketing to make notes and comments following findings in the interviews that may not always correspond with the researcher's personal thoughts and feelings. During qualitative research, the different perspectives can open new explorations of a particular phenomenon. According to Morse (1995), the ability to explore different perspectives is based on the openness from the researcher with the participants' responses (Tufford & Newman, 2012).

Throughout the data collection and analysis, I intentionally bracketed "out the world and presuppositions to identify in pure form, uncontaminated by extraneous intrusions" (Patton, 2015, p. 575). Personal thoughts were documented throughout the interviews through memoing and reflexive journaling (see Appendix J). Journaling is an effective method to document specific experiences and associated feelings (Hayman, Wilkes, & Jackson, 2012; Smith & Hunt, 1997). The act of memoing and journaling are an extension from the interviews through the researcher's reflection and thinking process of the data (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). There are two ways that journaling can be utilized: data collection that allows for recorded information to be gathered and analyzed at a later date (Välimäki et al, 2007) and documenting and reflecting on the practice of research (Banks-Wallace, 2008). In reflexive journaling, the data collected is a direct reflection of interview content and of personal thoughts (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Reflexive journaling allows the researcher to have a conscious awareness of

personal position, how this relates to participants, and how it can influence the data. Reflexive journaling also allows the researcher to reduce bias, to deeply think about and question any personal assumptions, values, and beliefs to help reduce the researcher's bias (Creswell, 2007). Throughout the data collection and data analysis process, thoughts were documented that were identified as influenced by personal experiences and beliefs. I was cognizant of personal influences during and after the interview.

Edmund Husserl is recognized in his development of the philosophic system in subject openness (Moustakas, 1994). Husserl believed that "Essence provides on the one side a knowledge of the essential nature of the Real, on the other, in respect of the domain left over, knowledge of the essential nature of the non-real (*inreal*)" (1931, p. 45). Transcendental phenomenology is about intent, the act of consciousness (Moustakas, 1994). It is important that intent is present during the research study.

Alongside bracketing, the next step is phenomenological reduction, where the quality of the experience is the focus. This requires the researcher to describe in textural language *what* is seen, the experience, rhythm, and relationship of the phenomenon and self (Moustakas, 1994). In transcendental phenomenological reduction, each experience is considered in and for itself, a complete description of thoughts, feelings, sounds, and perceptions (Moustakas, 1994). Husserl (1970a) commented that "we naturally carry out the Epoché and the Reduction from our own vantage point, for ourselves, from our own original self-evidence and consciousness of life-world" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 253).

Next, the process of horizontalization allowed every statement made by each participant to be treated as if it had the same value, and significant statements (Appendix P) were identified in order to tell how participants experienced the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Each

participant's transcribed interview was printed, read multiple times, and every statement that was judged significant highlighted. Next, phenomenological reduction was employed to remove any statements that were vague, repetitive, or overlapping. Horizons only were left, statements that have textural meanings of the phenomenon. Next, the horizons were clustered into themes (see Appendix N) the horizons were organized into textural descriptions of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Once phenomenological reduction was completed, the next step was imaginative variation. Imaginative variation is seeking the meanings through the use of imagination. Husserl (1931) stated that, "every imaginable sense, every imaginable being, whether the latter is called immanent or transcendent, falls within the domain of transcendental subjectivity as the subjectivity that constitutes sense and being" (1977, p. 20; Moustakas, 1994). In the world of imaginative variation, everything disappears, and everything becomes possible (Moustakas, 1994). In imaginative variation, many possibilities may emerge that are intimately connected with the essences and that there is not a single truth.

Textural descriptions describe *what* is being experienced by the participant, while structural descriptions describe *how* the phenomenon is being experienced (Moustakas, 1994). The final step was the intuitive integration and synthesis of the textural and structural descriptions into the essence of the experience of the phenomenon as a whole (Moustakas, 1994). The essence of the phenomenon is that which is common or universal across participants. The fundamental textural-structural synthesis is the essence which takes place at a particular time and place from the researcher's point of view which follows an exhaustive imaginative and reflective study of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Trustworthiness

To establish trustworthiness of a study, credibility, authenticity, dependability, transferability, and confirmability need to be considered (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Authenticity is creating the balance between the perspectives of a balance of views, bringing the level of awareness of the participants, and the ability of inquiry to lead to action of the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Authenticity exists in qualitative inquiry to share the experiences of a phenomenon of the research study. Qualitative researchers emphasize credibility, dependability, and transferability in their research outcomes to be conceptually sound, enabling other researchers to assess their value (Carcary, 2020).

Credibility

Credibility is defined as an internal validity that focuses on establishing the participants' realities represented by the researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Sinkovics, Penz, & Ghauri, 2008). Eisner (1991) stated, "We seek a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility, that allows us to feel confident about our observations, interpretations, and conclusions" (p. 110). In order to establish credibility, the following data sources were triangulated: a demographic survey, the DDPIIS, life timelines, and an in-depth one-on-one interview. In addition, the interview transcriptions and recordings were used to confirm the collected oral interviews and timelines provided by the participants. Credibility targets the confidence in the truth of the study's findings, which is the most important criterion (Polit & Beck, 2014). Credibility was also enhanced by providing participants the opportunity to member check their transcripts as well as the final conclusions generated from this study. The participants were provided a copy of the findings for review and to solicit their feedback (see Appendix Q).

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability is referred to as the stability of the data over time and the conditions of the study (Polit & Peck, 2014). A dependability audit focuses on processes of how the data was collected, analyzed, and the interpretations that were made (Akkerman et al., 2006; Carcary, 2020). In order to instill confidence in this research through the process of phenomenological analysis, an audit trail was created focusing on the process of the data collection and analysis. The steps of this research study were documented so that the chair and committee could review the audit trail to ensure the stated procedures were followed and to confirm that the findings are supported by the data collected (Cohen, 2006).

Confirmability establishes the value of the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018), and the use of establishing an audit of the research process. A confirmability audit focuses on ensuring that there is supporting data of every description and that the descriptions made are consistent with the available data (Carcary, 2020). Researchers demonstrate that the data and interpretations are coherent and logically assembled and not from the researcher's imagination (Ghauri, 2004; Sinkovics, Penz, & Ghauri, 2008). An auditor or second party who became familiar with the study, methodology, findings, and conclusions audited the research and the processes in order to confirm the findings (Carcary, 2020). A carefully constructed audit trail details how the study was carried out, distinguishes researcher's interpretations, and determines how the findings and conclusions were drawn, increasing the study's dependability and confirmability (Bowen 2009; Carcary, 2020). Six of the 11 interview transcripts were returned back with the feedback, revisions, eliminations, redundancies, and edits (see Appendix Q: Member Check).

Transferability

Transferability is established by generating a rich, thick description of the participants' experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The selection of the participants varied depending on their backgrounds, discipline, distance education doctoral programs they were enrolled in, geographic locations, and profiles. Transferability deals with the issue of generalization in terms of case-to-case transfer because it is concerned with providing sufficient information ensuring that the process is logical, traceable, and documented (Patton, 2015). While participants were delimited to Asian American women completing DE doctoral programs, diversity was sought in the sample based on age, marital status, degree program, institution, and geographic location. This variance in the sample increased the transferability of findings.

Ethical Considerations

The code of ethics has five basic moral principles when conducting research with human participants: respect for persons and their autonomy, beneficence and nonmaleficence, justice, trust, fidelity, and scientific integrity (Christensen et al., 2011). In order to protect the confidentiality of participants in the research study, the participants and associated sites were given pseudonyms. An additional step to protect the information gathered from written interview transcripts, the DDPIS, and timelines ensured that electronic data were password protected and physical materials were stored in a locked cabinet.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the research design used to conduct this study investigating the persistence experiences of Asian American women completing distance education doctoral programs in the United States. The data collection methods from the transcendental phenomenological approach included a demographic survey, DDPIS, timeline,

and open-ended interviews to gather rich descriptions of the participants' experiences in order to give voice to Asian American women in distance education doctoral programs. All measures of trustworthiness and ethical considerations were followed accordingly as set forth in this chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore Asian American women's persistence experiences in distance education doctoral programs in the United States. A total of 11 participants were selected to represent the perspectives of various female demographics within the Asian American society. The central research question was: What are the persistence experiences of Asian American women in distance education doctoral programs? The sub-questions were: Sub-Question 1: What experiences motivate Asian American women to pursue doctoral studies through distance education programs?; Sub-Question 2: What personal factors contribute to the persistence experiences of Asian American women enrolled in distance education doctoral programs?; Sub-Question 3: What cultural factors influence how Asian American women experience persistence in distance education doctoral programs?; Sub-Question 4: What institutional factors influence the persistence experiences of Asian American women enrolled in distance education doctoral programs?; and Sub-Question 5: What do Asian American women experience upon persisting to completion of a distance education doctoral degree? This chapter begins with a brief description of the 11 participants. This chapter introduces the results from the study through demographic surveys, timelines, and interviews, presenting the emerging themes in the research questions, aligning with the theoretical framework in the study. The summary provides the textural descriptions and structural descriptions of the experiences of how Asian American women persisted in their distance education doctoral programs.

Participants

The study included 11 diverse Asian American women from different Asian ethnicities and language backgrounds who share the common experiences of pursuing the doctoral degrees through distance education. The participants were recruited from purposeful sampling followed by snowball sampling. Each was willing to participate and met the following eligibility requirements: 18 years or older, identified as Asian American female, and completed their doctoral degree through distance education (80% or more online) in the last 10 years.

Participants included Asian American female participants between the age ranges of 25-64 years old. Three participants were Filipino, one was Hmong, one was Laos, three were Vietnamese, two were Chinese, and one was Chinese/Japanese. Seven participants completed Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degrees, while the other four participants completed Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) degrees. The participants were from different backgrounds having various socioeconomic history and heritage, providing diverse insights into the phenomenon. After completing the demographic questionnaire and Distance Doctoral Program Integration Scale (DDPIS), participants elaborated on their experiences through timelines and interviews. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to protect her identity. Eight of the eleven participants confirmed the accuracy and completeness of the transcripts. The participants' quotes were taken directly from their timelines and interviews and are presented verbatim.

Mary

Mary was a 55–64-year-old Vietnamese American female who was born in Vietnam and after graduating high school, she lived in a refugee camp in the Philippines for 18 months before immigrating to the United States. She had lived in the U.S. for over 30 years. She was married with no children. She completed her Ph.D. in Organizational Management in three years.

Based on Mary's responses from the DDPIS, she experienced a medium level of overall satisfaction with her program integration ($M = 3.66$). Mary's DDPIS scores indicated the highest level of satisfaction with faculty integration ($M = 4.83$), followed by curriculum integration ($M = 4.31$). However, her faculty and curriculum integration scores were on the high levels of satisfaction. Her lowest level of satisfaction was with student integration ($M = 2.77$).

Mary described how when she was younger, she was not allowed to go to the university, which was a sad moment for her. During her Ph.D. studies, her mother passed away. Her husband was very supportive of her throughout her doctoral journey. Mary described her motivation in the following way: "getting a Ph.D. is not only for myself but also for my whole family, I want to make my parents proud." Mary worked full time in a private equity investment firm, taught online as an adjunct faculty member, and was also a member of a foundation, where she mentored students.

Lisa

Lisa was a 35–44-year-old Vietnamese American female who was married with no children. Lisa was the second eldest of eight children. Her parents immigrated from Vietnam to Hong Kong before being sponsored to immigrate to the United States. When she was in elementary school, Lisa experienced discrimination from other kids. Later, she decided to change her first name to an "American" name but changed it back in high school when her mom made her. At the time of the interview, Lisa served as a director for a school district. Lisa had a lot of pressure on her from her parents, stating, they "want us to do well" but "they want us to be successful." She received a scholarship to go to graduate school and earn her doctorate. She received her EdD in Leadership for Change.

Based on Lisa's responses from the DDPIS, she experienced a high level of overall satisfaction with her program integration ($M = 4.66$). Lisa's DDPIS scores indicated the highest level of satisfaction with faculty integration ($M = 5.00$), followed by student integration ($M = 4.69$). Her lowest level of satisfaction was with curriculum integration ($M = 4.67$). Overall, the curriculum, student integration, and the faculty integration scores were all high levels of satisfaction.

She attributed her motivation to her desire to "make sure that I'm taking my family out of this cycle of poverty" as having a role in her success in her education. Lisa described values from an Asian heritage as "work ethics and trying to work hard" and that was something that she carried with her. Discussing the doctorate, she stated, "I knew that that was really important I'm not letting my parents down too."

Sophia

Sophia was a 25–34-year-old Hmong American female who was single with no children. She was born in the United States and was a middle child. She was very close to her family, but she recently had moved to another state for her job as an Associate Dean at a college. She noted that there were not a lot of Asian people where she was currently working. She was teaching previously and felt that earning her doctorate would open more doors for her. She received her EdD in Educational Leadership. She mentioned support and she stated, "to be successful, we all find success in each other, especially in our community or in our family and so that's really what pushed me."

Based on Sophia's responses from the DDPIS, she experienced a medium level of overall satisfaction with her program integration ($M = 3.50$). Sophia's DDPIS scores indicated the highest level of satisfaction with curriculum integration ($M = 4.62$), followed by faculty

integration ($M = 4.50$). However, her curriculum and faculty integration scores were in the high levels of satisfaction. Her lowest level of satisfaction was with student integration ($M = 2.15$).

Mia

Mia was a 35–44-year-old Filipino American female who was single with no children. She was born in the United States after her parents immigrated from the Philippines. Growing up as an Asian, Mia learned at a young age that people were treated differently. She stated, “people look different, act different, and are treated differently. Growing up in the South, you learn the differences between people,” Mia worked full time as a care advocate, had a private practice, and also taught online as a professor of graduate studies. She pursued her doctorate hoping to “get her foot in research.” She completed her PhD in General Psychology in four years.

Based on the responses given by Mia from the DDPIS, she experienced a high level of overall satisfaction with her program integration ($M = 4.63$). Mia’s DDPIS scores indicated the highest level of satisfaction with faculty integration ($M = 5.00$), followed by curriculum integration ($M = 4.92$). Her lowest level of satisfaction was with student integration ($M = 4.54$). Overall, her faculty, curriculum, and student integration scores fell in the high levels of satisfaction.

Emily

Emily was a 45–54-year-old Laos American female who was married with four children. She was born in Laos and lived in a refugee camp for five years before immigrating to the United States. She worked in a community-based organization in the program accreditation department. Emily stated that,

they always look down at my dad because they feel that because he has so much daughter that he his life will not be as good as them. He believed in me that he you know he was. He allowed me to do the things that most fathers or parents would not allow their daughters to do during that time.

Her father believed in her and when he passed away, it gave her hope because he always wanted her to continue her schooling and go back and finish her doctorate degree. She mentioned that at one point she supported her husband for four years. She received her PhD in Health Administration. She chose a distance education doctoral program because she was working full-time, going to school full-time, and managing a family.

Based on Emily's responses from the DDPIS, she experienced a medium level of overall satisfaction with her program integration ($M = 3.56$). Emily's DDPIS scores indicated the highest level of satisfaction with faculty integration ($M = 4.00$), followed by curriculum integration ($M = 3.85$). Her lowest level of satisfaction was with student integration ($M = 3.38$). Overall, her faculty, curriculum, and student integration scores all fell within the medium to high levels of satisfaction.

Grace

Grace was a 45–54-year-old Filipino American female, born in the United States. She was married to her college sweetheart and had four children. She worked in higher education and was very much involved in the Filipino community. Grace doubled up her courses in her doctorate program and finished all her coursework in one and a half years and wrapped up her dissertation in nine months. She pursued her doctorate because the university she worked for was affiliated with another university and she received tuition reimbursement. She received her PhD in Industrial/Organizational Psychology.

Based on Grace's responses from the DDPIS, she experienced a medium level of overall satisfaction with her program integration ($M = 3.59$). Grace's DDPIS scores indicated the highest level of satisfaction with curriculum integration ($M = 3.92$), followed by student integration ($M = 3.69$). Her lowest level of satisfaction was with student integration ($M = 3.50$). Overall, her curriculum, student, and faculty integration scores fell in the medium to high levels of satisfaction.

She stated that "there was a turning point because she was pre-med, she changed to communications studies and loved it." Grace had a very strong support system, her husband, children, and great faculty members. Her father passed away a long time ago. She described her mother as being a disciplinarian who always saw her as "a little girl who didn't know how to do things." She described how for "Asian cultures, psychology was very taboo, like we don't go there. We don't talk about our feelings."

Leah

Leah was a 45–54-year-old Vietnamese American female who was divorced with no children. She was born in Vietnam and was adopted when she was only three months old by a Polish-German Christian family in the United States. At the time of the interview, Leah worked as a CEO of a county, taught online, and served as a fellow at two universities. Her parents adopted her when they were in their 30s and already had three children. At 15 years old, she had a life changing experience where she did mission work over the summer in Russia which she described as "really helped me be independent and give me a drive." Both Leah's adopted parents passed away and she cared for both while they were ill. She also went through a personal traumatic experience with having breast cancer and serious complications from her mastectomy.

Leah loved the dissertation stage of the journey, relating that it was fun and the one thing she loved about her doctorate. She received her PhD in Human Services. Based on the responses from Leah on the DDPIS, she experienced a high level of overall satisfaction with her program integration ($M = 4.28$). Leah's DDPIS scores indicated the highest level of satisfaction with curriculum integration ($M = 4.77$), followed by student integration ($M = 4.23$). Her lowest level of satisfaction was with faculty integration ($M = 4.00$). Overall, her curriculum, student, and faculty integration scores fell in high levels of satisfaction.

Elena

Elena was a 45–54-year-old Chinese American female, divorced with no children. She was born in the United States. She described how her parents introduced her and her brother as “he’s a doctor and then this is my daughter.” She experienced workplace bullying but did not recognize it. She described Asians as responding with a higher degree of deference to people in perceived authority positions. This may have been a factor that made her more vulnerable to relational dynamics with her boss and workplace bullying experience. It occurred to her that she was being bullied at work; this topic was very important to her, so she focused her dissertation on the topic of bullying. She received a scholarship to pursue her doctorate.

Elena earned her PhD in Business Psychology. She described support from her family as directionally supportive, though they did not understand psychology as a doctorate. Based on her responses on the DDPIS, she experienced a high level of overall satisfaction with her program integration ($M = 4.03$). Elena's DDPIS scores indicated the highest level of satisfaction with student integration ($M = 4.92$), followed by curriculum integration ($M = 3.69$). Her lowest level of satisfaction was with faculty integration ($M = 3.17$). However, her student integration scores were in the high levels of satisfaction.

Anna

Anna was a 45–54-year-old half Chinese/half Japanese American female who was married with one child and three stepchildren. She was born in the United States and her family had been in the United States since the 1900s. At the time of the interview, she was an adjunct professor at a state university. She received her EdD in Educational Leadership. She received a fee waiver to do her Ph.D. program online because her daughter was still young. She described herself as being competitive and “I have to be the best.” She and her friend both decided to do the Ph.D. program together.

Based on her responses on the DDPIS, Anna experienced a medium level of overall satisfaction with her program integration ($M = 3.44$). Anna’s DDPIS scores indicated the highest level of satisfaction with curriculum integration ($M = 3.85$), followed by faculty integration ($M = 3.50$). Her lowest level of satisfaction was with student integration ($M = 3.31$). However, her curriculum, faculty, and student integration scores were all in the medium levels of satisfaction.

Lily

Lily was a 35–44-year-old Filipino American female who was married and had a son and stepson. She was born in the Philippines and her family immigrated to the United States. She served as an Associate Dean at XYZ University. She received a full ride scholarship for her doctorate. She found herself thinking “how can I stay in healthcare and teach at the same time?” This struggle was why she chose her Ph.D. in Nursing Education with an emphasis in education.

Based on the responses from Lily on the DDPIS, she experienced a high level of overall satisfaction with her program integration ($M = 4.03$). Lily’s DDPIS scores indicated the highest level of satisfaction with student integration ($M = 4.54$), followed by faculty integration ($M = 4.33$). However, her student and faculty integration scores were in the high levels of satisfaction.

Her lowest level of satisfaction was with curriculum integration ($M = 3.69$). The program was five years, which helped solidify her understanding of higher education. Her family was very supportive. She met and married her husband towards the end of her dissertation.

Jade

Jade was a 45–54-year-old Chinese American female and was married with two children. At the time of the interview, she was an Executive Director for a center for engagement service and the public good and had been in her role for over seven years. She was born in the United States. She stated, “I think that even though my parents were first generation, I had a very untraditional Asian experience growing up.” She explained that she did not have the pressures from her parents to do extremely well and it “wasn’t the stereotypical Asian child’s relationship.” However, she did not feel that her family was supportive because “they didn’t understand it.” She described,

So, they still expected, you know, the same level of mom no matter what my schedule might have been, and I think that women kind of do a disservice to themselves in many ways because we are so used to handling it all and doing it all. And we juggle and we don't complain, and we just do it.

She didn’t have a lot of support and was “very much kind of on [her] own.” She received her EdD in Educational Leadership.

Based on the responses from Jade on the DDPIS, she experienced a medium level of overall satisfaction with her program integration ($M = 3.56$). Jade’s DDPIS scores indicated the highest level of satisfaction with both the curriculum and student integration ($M = 3.69$), followed by faculty integration ($M = 3.50$). Overall, her curriculum, student, and faculty integration scores all fell in the medium levels of satisfaction.

Results

This study was guided by one central research question and five sub-questions that were designed to examine the experiences of Asian American women in distance education doctoral programs. The data analysis included in the transcendental phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and the synthesis of both the textural and structural descriptions. The participants completed demographic surveys, the DDPIS, timelines, and one-on-one interviews. Triangulation of data sources across participants generated the themes describing the participants' shared experiences.

Theme Development

The themes were generated from a triangulation of the quantitative data generated from the DDPIS and qualitative data produced from participant timelines (see Appendix G) and one-on-one interviews (see sample interview Appendix I).

Distance Doctoral Program Integration Scale (DDPIS)

The results of the Distance Doctoral Program Integration Scale (DDPIS) aligned with the interviews and timelines. Overall, the participants expressed high levels of satisfaction with their interactions with their faculty and their peers. Of the 11 participants, five participants experienced high levels of overall satisfaction with their program integration while the remaining six participants experienced medium levels of overall satisfaction with their program integration. The participants' results on the DDPIS are outlined in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Participants' Distance Doctoral Program Integration Scale Results

Participant	Faculty Integration	Student Integration	Curriculum Integration	Overall Integration
Mary	4.31	2.77	4.83	3.66

Lisa	5.00	4.69	4.67	4.66
Sophia	4.62	2.15	4.50	3.50
Mia	4.92	4.54	5.00	4.63
Emily	3.85	3.38	4.00	3.56
Grace	3.92	3.69	3.50	3.59
Leah	4.77	4.23	4.00	4.28
Elena	3.69	4.92	3.17	4.03
Anna	3.85	3.31	3.50	3.44
Lily	3.69	4.54	4.33	4.03
Jade	3.69	3.69	3.50	3.56

Note: All columns represent mean scores.

Timelines

All 11 participants were sent the timelines prior to the interviews, however only nine of the 11 participants returned the timelines. Seven of the nine timelines were received prior to the interview so that additional questions could be asked from the timeline. These participants took the time to expand on their timeline on specific events that were significant during the interview. Seven of the nine participants referenced their undergraduate degree during the educational journey while the majority highlighted their master's degree. The timelines were also used as a talking point for the interviews focusing on specific time periods in the participants' lives (see Appendix M for each participant's full timeline).

Interviews

The individual interviews were conducted through video conferencing utilizing Microsoft Teams and ranged between 45 minutes and 90 minutes. Each interview was followed up by a

structured interview guide (see Appendix G) along with probing questions based on analysis of the participant's DDIS results and timeline data. All 11 participants completed the interviews and were enthusiastic and supportive.

The transcripts from the one-on-one interviews were reviewed multiple times in order to identifying significant statements (see Appendix P) and themes (see Table 4 below and Appendix N). Data collection and analysis continued until the perspectives of the phenomenon were exhausted, evidenced by data saturation, meaning no new themes were emerging with the addition of new participants by the 10th and 11th participant.

The identified themes are organized according to each sub-question within the research that they relate (see Table 4). The research question, *what personal factors contribute to the persistence experiences of Asian American women enrolled in distance education doctoral programs* is answered by the following themes: (a) commitment to finish degree; (b) for personal goal attainment; (c) seen racism, bullying and discrimination; and (d) having the self-efficacy that they can. The research question *what cultural factors influence how Asian American women experience persistence in distance education doctoral programs* is addressed by the following themes: (a) ethnic background vs. cultural influences; (b) having high expectations as a minority; and (c) discrimination within the Asian community. The research question *what institutional factors influence the persistence of Asian American women enrolled in distance education doctoral programs* is answered by the following themes: (a) university being a good fit; (b) support from faculty and peers; and (c) residency was an important factor. The research question *what do Asian American women experience upon persisting to completion of a distance education doctoral degree* is explained by the following themes: (a) sense of accomplishment for attaining degree; (b) degree attainment provides opportunity for career options; and (c) break out

of the stereotype. Although participants came from a diverse Asian background, this study presented different experiences and perspectives which made their voice powerful and profound.

Table 4

Themes

Research Questions	Themes	Significant Statements
What experiences motivate Asian American women to pursue doctoral studies through distance education programs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accomplish getting a doctoral degree • Intrinsically motivated, wanting personal growth • Motivated to be a Role Model 	<p>“Go through doctoral was personal” (4)</p> <p>“Personal intrinsic satisfaction” (2)</p> <p>“Always interested in” (3)</p> <p>“I want to be a role model” (4)</p>
What personal factors contribute to the persistence experiences of Asian American women enrolled in distance education doctoral programs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to finish degree • For personal goal attainment • Seen racism, bullying and discrimination • Having the self-efficacy that they can 	<p>“I am setting a positive example” (3)</p> <p>“Being a perfectionist, a double-edge sword” (3)</p> <p>“Balancing family, school and work” (3)</p>
What cultural factors influence how Asian American women experience persistence in distance education doctoral programs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnic background vs. cultural influences • Having high expectations as a minority • Discrimination within Asian community 	<p>“Parents wanted me to become a doctor or lawyer” (5)</p> <p>“Don’t talk back to parents” (2)</p> <p>“Don’t ask for help” (4)</p> <p>“Being Asian, put your head down and do the work” (2)</p> <p>“Parents pushed education” (7)</p> <p>“Asians are seen as hard-working people” (8)</p>
What institutional factors influence the persistence of Asian American women enrolled in distance education doctoral programs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University being a good fit • Online format • Support from faculty and peers • Residency was an important factor 	<p>“University has a good structure program” (2)</p> <p>“Choosing a program that I will benefit the most from” (4)</p> <p>“Major factor was the required residency” (2)</p> <p>“Appreciated the professors, they were supportive” (6)</p> <p>“Having good relationship with peers” (3)</p> <p>“Chose distance learning because it was flexible” (5)</p>

What do Asian American women experience upon persisting to completion of distance education doctoral degree?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of accomplishment for attaining degree • Degree attainment provide opportunity for career options/advancements • Break out of the stereotype 	"Support from faculty and peers" (4) "College was a good fit" (3) "I want to make my parents proud" (3) "Model Minority or Stereotype" (4) "Wanting to help others" (3) "Wanting to help community" (3) "Asian to speak up and break out of the cultural habits that keep us from speaking up" (2) "Pride for their families in attaining degree" (3) "To be called Doctor" (4)
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*Note – the number associated with the quotes indicates the number of participants who indicated the same sentiment.

Research Question Responses

The themes and the significant statements aided in answering the central research question and five sub-questions. The central research question was: What are the persistence experiences of Asian American women in distance education doctoral programs in the United States? Participants completed the demographic survey, Distance Doctoral Program Integration Scale (DDPIS), timelines, and one-on-one interviews.

Sub-Question 1: What experiences motivate Asian American women to pursue doctoral studies through distance education programs?

The responses from the DDPIS, timelines, and the one-on-one interviews were utilized to identify motivational factors that attributed to the pursuit of doctoral studies through distance education of the participants. The themes identified that answer this question include (a) accomplish getting a doctoral degree, (b) intrinsically motivated, and wanting personal growth, and (c) motivated to be a role model. The characteristics and goals of the student vary depending

on her individual goals and motivations, which may also be affected by her experiences while in college (Guiffrida, Lynch, Wall, & Abel, 2013; Tinto, 2017). The factors also provide experiences both positive and negative to the academic success of the participants.

Accomplishment of Earning a Doctoral Degree. One of the factors that motivated the participants in accomplishing their doctoral degree was the simple fact that there was an interest in learning. Three of the participants expressed that in their careers, the doctorate was not necessary. Mary stated, “Getting my PhD was a significant point in my life. I was always interested in learning.” Leah expressed a similar sentiment regarding attaining her doctorate, “to be honest, I don't know how honest everybody is being with you, but I just wanted to be a doctor.” Mia also did not feel that she needed a doctorate and expressed, “I don't necessarily need a PhD. And there was still that piece in the back of my head, of my dad saying you have to be a doctor or something.”

Intrinsically Motivated, Wanting Personal Growth. Several of participants stated that they were intrinsically motivated to attain their doctorate. Anna stated,

I didn't do it with any kind of end goal of wanting to become some kind of administrator or anything, but I did figure that if I'm going to continue working in higher Ed, that education could be really a lifelong thing and you don't have to limit yourself just because of you think you're done with that part of your life.

For Mary, she explained that it was “more like my personal intrinsic satisfaction” and Jade took the opportunity to pursue her doctorate because “the opportunity to really have a largely free education, and our free doctoral experience. I couldn't turn it down. I would never turn down a free education.”

Motivated to be a Role Model. Several participants felt that it was important to set an example for their siblings and other family members; being a role model played a role in getting their doctorate. Mia spoke about her family,

They play a role because I was the oldest well, I consider myself to oldest because my brother is just so much older than me and I've kind of taken on that, I guess leadership role, but I wanted to be a good role model.

While Mia spoke about being a role model for her siblings, Lisa also felt that she was “trying to set an example for her siblings too.” Mary articulated the importance of being a role model by expressing,

I want to be a role model. For the next generation, like my niece and nephew, you know I don't have to be my own, but I want them to think about like there is someone in the family called doctor, so that's what my motivation too.

Emily echoed,

I made that decision to pursue higher education and you know, I pave the path for my sister and my niece. I'm like my own research or applied for my own, at least I could kind of like inspire kids, my niece and nephew you know to pursue higher education.

Lisa felt that it was important to set an example and described how she wanted to set a positive example for family and their family members.

Sub-Question 2: What personal factors contribute to the persistence experiences of Asian American women enrolled in distance education doctoral programs?

The themes identified that answer Sub-Question 2 were: (a) commitment to finish the degree; (b) personal goal attainment; (c) racism, bullying, and discrimination; and (d) self-efficacy, the foundation of a student's persistence and goal attainment (Tinto, 2017).

Commitment to Finish Degree. Participants indicated the importance of working hard and were committed to finish upon starting their doctoral program. Although commitment is a personal goal, several participants indicated the importance of finishing what they started as they persisted through the program. They also recognized that education is highly valued among Asian cultures, and they did not have the thought of not finishing. Lily described how as an Asian American, there was the “desire for excellence” and she stated,

persistence in recognizing that it takes time and effort and energy and hard work in order to complete something, and this is a very big project, completely dissertation doctoral program. It's not for the faint of heart and I think you know being Asian, it's just you put your head down. You get to, you know, do the work you work hard.

Lily also described Asian Americans as being perfectionists regarding their work: “There is a high regard for education and for accomplishment and recognizing the value in working hard.”

Mary described it:

In general, I would have to say Asians are hard-working people and I'm not the exception. Not to give up, sometimes, it was difficult, it's not always easy. But just stick with it and get it going. But what I have to say that sometimes, something about the Asian characteristic that sometimes hinder their study.

The concept of how the “Asian characteristic” can sometimes hinder their study may seem to contradict the commitment to finish, but in this statement, Mary was referencing the tendency for individuals to push themselves too hard. Lily echoed this thought, noting that the desire to do well “is a double-edged sword because on the one hand you know you want to do well, but on the other hand, you're your biggest critic.”

Personal Goal Attainment. Several participants expressed pursuing their doctoral degree for their own personal goal attainment. As the participants described the reasons why they wanted to get their doctorate, they pursued it for personal reasons. Lily stated,

My parents have always been very supportive of my education. I've been through school for many years, so they've always known that I've enjoyed going to school. My husband, you know, he was very supportive of my continuing my doctoral journey and finishing my degree.

Jade said that “so for me honestly, it was something that I wanted to do for myself.” This is important to recognize how the drive for a personal goal is powerful. Although, the reasons may be personal in attaining their degree, some participants felt that they needed to prove to themselves that they could accomplish receiving a doctoral degree, while others wanted to prove to their family that they were able to earn a doctorate.

Seen Racism, Bullying and Discrimination. The participants of the study described experiences where they were subjected to racism, bullying, and discrimination. Each participant experienced either racism, bullying and/or discrimination at different periods of their life, some from when they were attending school, some from within their own cultural circle, and even in the workplace. The participants did not allow these experiences to hinder their studies or prevent them from furthering their educational and career attainment. Lisa described how she was already facing discrimination in elementary school and at one point, she changed her name in middle school without her parents’ knowledge. She said that her mom found out and was not happy because “she emphasized the importance of your name and how we need to make sure that we’re honoring and respecting it.” Lisa did end up changing her name back in high school and kept it through college and beyond. She explained her choice to embrace her given name: “I built

more confidence within myself. It made me really think about my identity, understanding whiteness, and trying to be something that is different than what we were.”

Grace described how she was facing discrimination from her own community, explaining that “immigrants were discriminating against me.” She described how other Filipinos would say “you’re not one of us.” She had to defend herself because she had “Filipino blood but [didn’t] speak the language.” Grace further explained, “I have 100% blood like [they] do and they’re like, ‘but you don’t speak our language.’”

While discrimination occurred in school and within the community, Elena described a different experience which took place in her workplace. She described experiencing workplace bullying, stating,

In fact, I had actually never experienced childhood bullying, until these adult working experiences. I kind of kept on finding ways to cope, adjust or I go around or make excuses for what was happening at work or the reasons why I chose to remain in that that unpleasant situation.

Elena started studying more about workplace bullying, trying to understand what was happening to her at work. She said that “it’s not my expectation that that sort of behavior is going to be present in adult working situation.” The unfortunate aspect with her situation was that the organization was not receptive to the information she provided, and she thought that the “door would be open and that didn’t happen.” Elena’s motivation

to get this degree was so that no one could deny my expertise when I identified that I was being bullied. I felt that getting my PhD meant that I would have more credibility against constantly gaslit on my own perception of how I and my Asian women colleagues were being treated. However, the system of inequality had other strategies, after getting my

degree, they could no longer deny my credibility, but they could simply not ask my opinion.

Leah stated,

I never thought I experienced discrimination as an Asian woman until I got older. And now at, you know, at X years old I have, and I didn't realize it because it's so sneaky and invasive, and ingrained in what we tell our little girls. And especially what we tell our little girls who are not white.

The experiences of the participants with bullying, discrimination, and racism in their early childhood and into their adult lives did not prevent them from furthering their education and career. They persevered through the adversity to push themselves to attain their doctoral degrees.

Determination and Self-Efficacy. Several participants indicated that they felt that their determination and self-efficacy led to their success. According to Bandura (1997, 1994), self-efficacy is the individual's belief in his or her own ability to succeed. Mary attributed her success in education to her "determination" because she felt that it was hers and that this was the "biggest point in my life." Sophia described her big motivating factor was "just like if I can do it, just do it. Just get it."

Leah found that she felt a sense of lack of self-esteem even though her parents believed in her. She stated that "I still looked different, and I was still the only Asian in my school until high school, like preschool to 8th grade." She stated how she worked hard and overcame a lot of her personal issues, and described it as "my own impostor syndrome, my own lack of self-esteem." Anna said she felt

the sense of competitiveness that I have to be the best. I think it helped motivate me to make sure that I completed all my assignments, and I did a good job on everything.

Sense of pride. I felt like I had to continue in persistent and not fail.

Sub-Question 3: What cultural factors influence how Asian American women experience persistence in distance education doctoral programs?

Cultural factors are important in many Asian ethnicities and how they are perceived. The themes identified that relate to cultural factors are: (a) ethnic background vs. cultural influences, (b) having high expectations as a minority, and (c) discrimination within the Asian community. Depending on the student, social support is important to her persistence in order to feel like she belongs (Tinto, 2017). In many cultures and ethnicities, family connections are important (Andrade, Miller, McArthur, & Ogden, 2020; Dutta et al., 2019; Hurtado et al., 1996; Strayhorn, 2017).

Ethnic Background vs. Cultural Influences. Each of the participants shared how culture played a factor in their education journey. Mary, for example, was not allowed to go to a university and she “accepted the fate of having no future when she was in Vietnam.” Jade described how

women do a disservice to themselves in many ways because we are so used to handling it all and doing it all. And we juggle and we don't complain, and we just do it. And we're very good at it.

Many people do not realize the additional duties and responsibilities that women have in order to balance everything. Jade described how

my job is pretty intense and so the work would happen. You know, when the kids were asleep, you know, and I took all of the lead on the household management. You know at all the parent teacher conferences there was nothing that I missed.

Acculturation and enculturation are important to understand the experiences of Asian Americans either born in the United States or whom have been submerged into U.S. culture after immigrating (Miller, 2007; Zhang & Moradi, 2013). Eight of the eleven participants discussed how their ethnic background as well as how the cultural influences impacted them. Anna described what she was witnessing with some of the Hmong students she worked with, and she said,

most of them lived at home or because their parents wouldn't allow them to move away or just cultural value kind of thing. They felt like they had to work to help support the family, so they had a whole bunch of needs that nobody had ever talked about before.

Lisa remembered how when she went to her uncle's house for ceremonies, the boys always had the privilege to be the first one to burn the incense. She said that the females had to wait and burn incense afterwards. There were traditions that her family still followed while living in America. She stated that she

feel[s] like if I set an example for them, it would be very helpful for them to be able to see that, like if she's able to do this, we need to make sure we do that. It makes my parents proud.

She explained,

My dad was super strict, having seven girls and a boy. Of course, he wants to make sure that we're all very successful and that we were not going to get in trouble or not do anything to shame our family. I think my parents put a lot of pressure on me. I want to

say it's pressure as in, besides the fact that they want us to do well, you know like they want us to be successful, but it's really because I want to make sure that I'm taking my family out of this cycle of poverty. They always tell me, be happy, whatever you do, just be happy. In my mind, I'm like, I know you want me to become a doctor. They are like whatever you do, just be happy.

Mia described how her dad was also very strict where he did not allow her siblings out of the house. She stated that "we weren't allowed to talk about our feelings." She explained how Asians are very hard working, which she learned from her parents and

just being the perfect little Asian woman. You know, feeling like being a perfect person included not just exceeding in school but exceeding in career and social life. And it became just kind of difficult to balance all of that.

Mia believed that "perfection, it both helped me and hindered me. Just push through it. No emotion. Even though I did get emotional with it, it kind of hindered me from that."

Elena described "culturally, Asians respond to work or respond to authority. People, that I think they're like my bosses, my elders or people of respective position." This high level of respect for elders, bosses, or anyone in a respective role was a strong theme. Sophia described her family and culture, stating, "Growing up and culturally you know you don't. You don't talk back to your parents, and you don't say no, and you don't. If they have a wish, you really tried not to go against their wishes and so." Grace explained,

Hard work was a big thing. But then the hinder was, you know that we have a value that is all about meeting expectations so it would be like, the whole. There's shame, there's expectations. All of that. It's really tough, but then the hard work ethic and then it also strengthened my ability to be me through and through which is also part of my message.

Grace stated,

Filipino parents never say that you know, like 'just rest. Don't worry about your homework so much. You're pushing yourself too hard. Let's relax here today you know.'

Yeah, like we never said that, and I started crying because I'm like this is so true. So many people suffer because of the pressures of their Asian parents and to hear those words is just like painful because it's what you didn't hear.

Praise is something that is valued in Americans, but in many Asian cultures, praise is seen as damaging one's character and an unnecessary motivation (Henderlong & Lepper, 2002; Methikalam, Wang, Slaney, & Young, 2015). Therefore, praise or positive feedback are not typically provided to children for their achievements and leave them feeling that they are not living up to their parents' expectations (Methikalam et al., 2015).

Leah, who was adopted by a Polish German family who also had a daughter and son, explained how her situation was a bit different:

I've never really thought about it. But even though I wasn't raised in a traditional Asian home. I think knowing and I mentioned this before, knowing that it could have been so different. Knowing that where I came from. You know the place that I was born in Vietnam, had I stayed. I mean, I probably would have been fine. Many, many Asians are very hard workers. Through a heritage or through growing up in in that kind of background, I almost think it's in me. You know, I just know how to work hard and part of it was learning that from my family. My dad, my mom were hard workers too, but this sounds so racist and I'm so sorry but there's a different kind of hard work that Asians do. I can't explain it because I do it too. It's that hard work until you fall down like. That I'm sorry I've never seen other races do.

Sophia described her family as being very close, recalling that while “growing up, we were like forced to have family nights. Like it was so much so that we joke about it now that we had too many family nights, we still hang out a lot.” Although what motivated her was her family, she stated that “I just want them to feel like they were successful. The hard work ethic.” She explained how “Hmong people have because we are farm people. We have always worked hard for a living and growing up. You were expected to.”

Having High Expectations as a Minority. Seven of the eleven participants felt the pressure of expectations from their families to be successful in specific fields. Lisa described how she felt her parents wanted her to “become a doctor or lawyer.” Elena related the same thing about how Asians push academics, specifically “medical school, dental school, or pharmacy, which is like essentially, you're three things that you do. If you're a bio major.”

Although Grace pursued a doctoral degree in psychology, her family struggled to understand her motivation to pursue this field. She explained,

What is that program? Like that's not Medical. It's not that you're not an attorney, you know, it's like engineering. Then what's this? Psychology is like, oh, the Asian cultures. That psychology is very taboo. Like we don't go there. We don't talk about our feelings. Psychology was only accepted in the Philippines only and that I read something that said it was only in the last ten years or something that it started really being looked at.

Sophia's parents pushed education, but she stated that her mom specifically was very strict. She remembered when she got a spelling word wrong,

we'd have to practice our spelling every single night, which is great. But if you got it wrong, I had to write it 100 times. And I still remember having to sit there and write it and I don't know if I consider that traumatizing.

She described how “they're always like ‘you should be a doctor.’ So, it's not the doctor that they had imagined.” Mia focused her doctorate on General Psychology. Mia also described a similar aspect with her family,

I guess one stereotype you know, with Filipinos, you have to be a nurse or in some type of health care setting. I'd say middle school because it's just again a lot of the pressure to be the perfect Asian daughter. Dad, he just wanted us to be a doctor or be a nurse.

Jade described how she felt like there were still high expectations of the Asian culture that she had to be the good Asian daughter, so she applied to university and received her doctorate in Educational Leadership. Leah brought up this point to show that there were still some stereotypes or expectations of Asians, and one was what Leah described as “I think of all the Asian myths that we know are out there that we're all good at math primarily.”

Sub-Question 4: What institutional factors influence the persistence experiences of Asian American women enrolled in distance education doctoral programs?

This question examined institutional factors pivotal to the participants’ persistence experiences. The identified themes are (a) university being a good fit, (b) online format, (c) support from faculty and peers, and (d) residency was an important factor. According to Tinto (1993), academic integration is a vital component in persistence and student retention.

Based on the participants’ responses from the DDPIS measuring satisfaction with faculty, student, and curriculum integration for distance education doctoral students, each participant experienced medium to high levels of satisfaction with their integration into their programs (see Table 3).

Table 3

Participants’ Distance Doctoral Program Integration Scale Results

Participant	Faculty	Student	Curriculum	Overall Integration
	Integration	Integration	Integration	
Mary	4.31	2.77	4.83	3.66
Lisa	5.00	4.69	4.67	4.66
Sophia	4.62	2.15	4.50	3.50
Mia	4.92	4.54	5.00	4.63
Emily	3.85	3.38	4.00	3.56
Grace	3.92	3.69	3.50	3.59
Leah	4.77	4.23	4.00	4.28
Elena	3.69	4.92	3.17	4.03
Anna	3.85	3.31	3.50	3.44
Lily	3.69	4.54	4.33	4.03
Jade	3.69	3.69	3.50	3.56

Note: All columns represent mean scores.

The responses from the participants' DDPIS aligned with the responses from the participants' interviews. Overall, participants expressed medium to high levels of satisfaction with their interactions with their peers and faculty as well as the curriculum. She did not elaborate why, but Sophia was the only one that felt that the student integration was at a low level of satisfaction.

University Being a Good Fit. The data provided from the DDPIS above with the participants' levels of satisfaction in the institutional, student, and curriculum integration provides a better picture of what the participants experienced during their doctoral program. This data, triangulated with interview data, also provides insight on how the levels of satisfaction affected their persistence. Overall, five of the 11 participants experienced high levels of

satisfaction of program integration and the remaining six participants expressed that they had medium levels of satisfaction. Elena reported medium to high levels of satisfaction with the faculty and student integration, but she did not have as good of an experience, especially with the curriculum integration. She described,

my program was a brand-new program in on the campus. There's a lot of things that were really disjointed about the program. Your kind of like the Guinea pig as they're trying out new things. They may not have all their faculties. Cohort was very small.

Mary did extensive research before she found her university, which she felt was a “good fit” for her. Lisa emphasized how much she really enjoyed being able to research what she wanted at the university she attended. Mary’s DDPIS score of 4.83 and Lisa’s DDPIS score of 4.67 both reflect a high level of satisfaction with the curriculum integration. Lily described how it was important for her to find the right university given her specific emphasis, education. She also described how the university was “very encouraging of students, really examining self, examining their own careers and understanding.” She did make a valid point about how important online learning was and “is very dependent on the engagement between students and faculty, and when you don't have that happening, it becomes self-learning.” Lily’s DDPIS score of 4.03 reflected that her university did a great job with the student and curriculum integration.

Online Format. Four participants stated the importance of the program being offered in an online format. Participants described how the online program worked well with their schedule because it was flexible. Lisa and Lily stated that the flexibility was what attracted them to the university and Lisa described how she “was able to build [her] own schedule.” Mia reiterated that the flexibility was important, but she did not make the selection for the school, but

more for the “program;” her score of 4.63 displayed that she had high levels of the overall satisfaction of the university.

Support from Faculty and Peers. Six of the eleven participants described their faculty, chair, and committee as very supportive. Mia’s DDPIS score of 4.92 for the faculty integration supports how she felt and that her professors were supportive during her residencies. Leah described how her professors “opened themselves up to extra help. It was my committee that literally I could call.” Leah also had a high level of satisfaction with a score of 4.77 on the DDPIS. Grace’s DDPIS score for her satisfaction with the faculty integration was 3.92. Grace said that her faculty members were “always checking in on me, how's your dissertation going? Has your PhD going?” Lisa’s DDPIS score of 5.00 for faculty integrations displayed that she was very satisfied and felt that she was lucky to find people who would support her work and how “the professors are, they’ve been pretty motivating.” Jade’s DDPIS score of 3.69, reflected that a handful of faculty members were “really interested in that topic who wanted to support it. Support me with it.” Lastly, Sophia felt that the support was not just from her faculty, but also from her advisor. Her DDPIS score of 4.62 confirmed what she shared in her interview, that it was her “advisor who really pushed [her] to the end.”

Three participants explained how networking with their peers also contributed to their success. Jade stated that her relationships with her peers were helpful and most of them are “still in regular contact.” She stated the importance of having a “supportive structure within your colleague group as well as your peer group in terms of your cohort.” She explained,

Supportive faculty and supportive peers having a relationship with their peers, particularly in a very tight knit doctoral cohort, was very helpful because they challenge

you to really think differently, but also it made you want to go into the classroom and see what was happening in the dialogue.

Emily too affirmed that “having a good network, also help success” in her doctoral studies. She felt that she had a really good committee with the two faculty members on her dissertation committee. Her interactions with them during residency created a “relationship stronger by having that one or two weeks working one and one together in class.”

One participant noted that she automatically bonded with other Asians in her cohort, stating, “I think that there are some things that are just even unspoken that made it easier for us.” She also stated that they really supported each other throughout the process.

Residency was an Important Factor. Four participants made note of the importance of the residency courses completed on campus. Jade loved the “mandatory residency every summer,” as did Lily. Sophia also felt that she was drawn to attend every residency to meet everyone in person. Lisa stated that she “forced myself to go to the summer sessions because I wanted to make sure I’ve connected with people one-on-one but at the same time, I wanted to see my professors.” She stated that she wanted to see them in person so that she could “actually go to talk about my work.” The experience of attending face to face residencies allowed for time to connect with the chairs and have more interaction with their peers. Some of these relationships formed during the residencies continued throughout their doctoral studies and even after they graduated.

Sub-Question 5: What do Asian American women experience upon persisting to completion of a distance education doctoral degree?

The themes that surfaced from the interviews and timelines related to completion are (a) sense of accomplishment for attaining degree, (b) degree attainment providing opportunity for career options/advancements, and (c) breaking out of the stereotype.

Sense of Accomplishment for Attaining the Degree. Four of the eleven participants stated that it was important for them to attain a doctorate to make their parents proud. Mary explained that “getting a Ph.D. is not only for myself but also for my whole family. I want to make my parents proud.” Lisa felt that her work ethic and trying to work very hard, “that was something that I have always done just growing up and I knew that that was really important.” She stated that “I’m not letting my parents down too, so going through school and making sure that I do well, I’ve really tried to push myself to do that.” Sophia made a similar statement that “a huge motivation is that you just want them [parents] to feel like they're successful.” Jade said that although her parents were proud of her, she “knew for Asian parents. That's big.” She also noted that her parents did not usually say something like that to her. Mia explained how she did not need a PhD, but “there was still that piece in the back of my head of my dad saying you have to be a doctor or something.” This played a role in her decision to pursue her PhD; she wanted to make her parents proud. Emily described how she was working full time and supporting her family, she had family obligations, and would put in the time to write her papers when everyone was asleep.

Opportunity for Career Options/Advancements. Several of the participants pursued their doctoral degree to open doors for career advancement or other opportunities. Sophia stated that by having her degree, it could “open doors for me if I want to go teach at a university... different teaching jobs.” Sophia realized that her initial thoughts were to get into administration

with her doctorate, but she realized “halfway through” she didn’t think administration was for her. She was currently an Associate Dean at a college.

Lily and Mia looked towards research and how this would open additional opportunities into education and research for National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) or University of Michigan (UM). Leah felt that a Ph.D. would give her “some credibility.” She stated, “I’m going to change the world. I just wanted to do more now that I have that credential behind me. I wanted to do more.” Lisa described her perspective after finishing:

I think being part of the struggle growing up and then now being in education, and I’m definitely on the other side of that. I see you know that with our students and families. I am more empathetic and want to support them and do the best that I can to make sure that things are more equitable. And I think that’s probably one of the main reasons why I’m now working in the equity area of education too, is because of some of the experiences that I’ve experienced myself and then of course, looking at our own bias and some of the systemic racism that’s happening, right. Some of it, I faced and others, I was able to witness and see.

Breaking Out of the Stereotype. Asian Americans are referred to the model minority status of positive stereotypes as hardworking, industrious, and technically competent, but these stereotypes can also play a role in the attitudes toward Asians by other individuals (Kim, Block, & Yu, 2021). Although positive stereotypes are positive and can be beneficial to a target group, they are not viewed as being of concern (Czopp, Kay, & Cheryan, 2015; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002). Despite the positive stereotype, Asian Americans do not want to always be put in a box or labeled a certain way; therefore, it is important they break out of the stereotype placed onto them.

Grace felt that she “wanted to become a pioneer in advocating for Asians to speak up and to break out of the cultural habits that keep us from speaking up.” She described how

Asian culture, especially during this world of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), is so important so you can be a person who speaks on Asian culture and behaviors and how to bridge the gap between what's needed in Western society. There's the model minority myth that you bring that up in your thing and perpetual foreigner syndrome.

Leah described how the “American cultural view of Asians and Asian women as quiet and we giggle, and we put her hands over her mouth and we're very sweet.” She expressed how the American culture may view Asian American woman and portray them in a certain way.

Summary

This chapter provided a description of the persistence experiences of 11 Asian American women in distance education doctoral programs. The results of the study addressed the central research question and the factors that influenced the persistence of Asian American women in distance education doctoral programs. The analysis of the data collected from the participants DDPIS, timelines, and one-on-one interviews indicated that there were several personal, cultural, and institutional factors that influenced the persistence experiences of the participants. Based on the responses of the participants of the study, the participants reflected on various intersections of their educational experiences. All themes revealed that there were external and internal factors that impacted their experience, and each theme reveals how each Asian American woman overcame the adversity and persisted in attaining her doctoral degree. In addition, the participants provided feedback of the findings from Chapter Four (See Appendix Q: Summary of Chapter Four Feedback).

Despite the different personal, cultural and life circumstances, participants shared some commonalities in their experiences. Each woman effectively responded to adversity and challenges during her educational journey in a way that was personal and meaningful for her. On a personal level, the participants were motivated, driven, and determined to complete their doctoral degree despite having to overcome personal barriers, challenges, obstacles, and trauma. The participants shared their experiences of wanting to be an example and a role model, not just for their family, but for other Asian American women as well. They also shared that their belief in having a title of “doctor” gave them more credibility and gain respect in their society. Their ambition to succeed motivated them to persist and overcome challenges to push forward to attain their goal. Many of the participants also stated that the motivating factor to complete their doctoral degree was making their parents proud.

With regard to social factors, several participants received social support from their family and peers while persisting in distance education doctoral programs. Some of the participants described that although they knew their parents supported them, they did not receive the same emotional support as their “American” peers. Several of the participants shared that their support came from their spouses, other Asian American doctoral students (Asian Americans in general and not to a specific Asian country), and peers. Although socially they had the support, several participants faced racism, bullying, and discrimination through their personal lives, but these factors did not deter them, but rather motivated them to attain their doctoral degree.

The institutional factors that influenced persistence, as expressed by most of the participants, was faculty support, specifically from their chair and committee members. While the participants shared how the online program format was convenient and flexible, several

stated that the required residency also played an integral role in their successful program completion. Another statement that was vital was the option for participants to select the topic of research for their dissertation. Researching a topic of their choice played an integral role in the selection of the university and program.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the persistence experiences of Asian American women who completed doctoral degrees in distance education programs. Eleven participants were purposefully selected to represent the perspectives of a diverse Asian American population of women. This research study addressed a gap in the literature by exploring the persistence experiences of Asian American women in distance education doctoral programs. In the following sections, the discussion of findings, implications, and recommendations for future research are discussed.

Summary of Findings

The central research question for the study was “What are the persistence experiences of Asian American women in distance education doctoral programs in the United States?” The participants of this study persisted even when they faced challenges and obstacles during their academic and personal journeys. The majority of participants were motivated to attain their doctoral degrees and persisted as a result of Asian values, values they carried with them throughout their educational journey. Many were motivated to break out of the stereotype or the model minority. Yet, it was important for them to make their parents proud and have that sense of pride for their family regardless of what motivated them to attain their doctoral degree.

The first sub-question was, “What experiences motivate Asian American women to pursue doctoral studies through distance education programs?” As discussed in Chapter Four, six of the 11 participants expressed that their motivation to pursue their doctoral studies was for personal growth; they were intrinsically motivated. Although they were facing challenges and coping with trauma, they still persisted to completion of their doctoral studies. The participants

were also motivated by wanting to set an example and serve as a role model for both their family and for other Asian American women – they wanted to demonstrate that obtaining a doctoral degree was attainable. Another motivating factor was for the status of being called a doctor, as it gave them credibility.

The second sub-question of this research study asked, “What personal factors contribute to the persistence experiences of Asian American women enrolled in distance education doctoral programs?” Seven of the 11 participants explained their commitment to finish their degree was for personal goal attainment and completion of their doctoral degree. Many of them strived for excellence and their determination and self-efficacy, and their belief that they could succeed led to their success. This is not to say that they were confident throughout their academic journey, but they felt that it was a sense of pride and that they remained persistent – failure was not an option. Due to their own commitment to finish, some of the participants mentioned the perfectionist tendencies which they felt was a good value to have but was also what they called a “double-edged sword,” which sometimes hindered their studies because “you are your own biggest critic.” While some of the participants faced racism, bullying, and discrimination, they did not allow these factors to play a role in preventing them from persisting to completion of their doctoral studies.

The third sub-question was, “What cultural factors influence how Asian American women experience persistence in distance education doctoral programs?” Nine of the 11 participants revealed that their ethnic background and cultural influences were an important factor in their persistence. Many of the participants indicated that they were not held back from pursuing their education, but rather, their parents were strict with regard to encouraging them to focus on going to school. Culturally, several of the participants spoke about respecting their

parents, where they do not complain and do not talk back to their parents. Seven of the 11 participants felt pressure from their families to be successful in specific fields such as “being a doctor or lawyer.” Along with this pressure to be successful and do well in school, there was the expectation to maintain the family image by not bringing shame to the family. Another key statement was although there was support from their parents, but it was not spoken out loud.

The fourth sub-question of this study asked, “What institutional factors influence the persistence experiences of Asian American women enrolled in distance education doctoral programs?” Overwhelmingly, the participants described the convenience and flexibility of an online doctoral program allowed them to balance their work, school, and home life and enabled them to persist. Ten of the 11 participants expressed medium to high levels of satisfaction with their interactions with their peers and faculty as well as the curriculum. Several of the participants indicated that the university being a good fit and the inclusion of residency courses was important. Lastly, the support from their faculty, chair, committee members, and peers was pivotal in contributing to their ability to persist.

Lastly, the fifth sub-question was, “What do Asian American women experience upon persisting to completion of a distance education doctoral degree?” Some of the participants faced obstacles and challenges in their home roles trying to balance their expected responsibilities, work, and academic life. Aside from obtaining their doctoral degrees, many of the participants expressed how important it was for them to make their parents proud. A few of the participants pursued their doctoral degree because they felt that it would open the doors for career development and other opportunities. Lastly, an important statement made by some of the participants was that they wanted to break out of the stereotype and not be labeled or seen in a certain way especially for Asian women. Although Asian Americans are portrayed as

hardworking and have enjoyed the educational and professional benefits from their hard work ethic and values, the positive highlight of success can also inadvertently harm them (Ho & Jackson, 2001; Kim, Block, & Yu, 2021; Wong & Halgin, 2006).

Discussion

While there is a growing body of literature addressing doctoral persistence, there is still little known about the persistence experiences of minority students, especially those of Asian American women in higher education (Zorlu, 2013). The background characteristics (e.g., social status, experiences in high school, community, and individual attributes such as ability, gender, race, and ethnicity) are all important in understanding student persistence. Personal factors (e.g., motivation for pursuing degree, reasons for persisting, dissertation challenges) (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012); commitment, family background, individual attributes, and pre-college schooling experiences (Braxton, Milem, & Sullivan, 2000); and self-motivation beyond social and academic factors (Ivankova & Stick, 2007) all contribute to doctoral persistence. Prior research indicates that culture itself plays a significant role in Asian cultures as their values and belief system can have an impact on their external goals (i.e., education) (Berry, 1980). The contribution of this research study, added to the existing body of literature through exploration of the persistence experiences for female doctoral students who are Asian American and enrolled in distance education doctoral programs.

Discussion Related to Research Questions

The first research question explored the experiences motivating Asian American women pursuing doctoral studies through distance education programs. This study revealed that intrinsic motivation for personal growth provided these Asian American women doctoral students the motivation to keep pushing forward and to not give up. This finding affirmed prior research

indicating that mindset and determination to reach a goal by putting in effort to do so combined with their expectations about self, affects academic performance (Ramos-Sanchez & Nichols, 2017; Tinto, 2017). Further, when there are differences in the character and the goals in Asian American women due to their individual goals and motivations during their education pursuit, this may be affected by their experiences in college (Guiffrida, Lynch, Wall, & Abel, 2013; Tinto, 2017). Most of the participants described their studies as positive, contributing to their personal development and self fulfilment. The success of students depends on their own motivation, especially in the doctoral level; this is a critical element in the initiation and continuation of their doctoral studies leading to completion (Lynch, Salikhova, & Salikhova, 2018). Some participants also wanted to serve as a role model and wanted to set an example for their children and other family members. In addition, some participants wanted the status of being called a doctor because there would be more credibility.

The second research question explored personal factors contributing to the persistence experiences of Asian American women enrolled in distance education doctoral programs. Findings from this research study indicated that many of the participants were committed to finish their degree for personal goal attainment. While attaining a doctoral degree was for their personal goal, many of them expressed that their striving for excellence led to their determination for success. The participants' academic journeys were not an easy road, but they had a sense of pride and remained persistent. It was their own drive and determination that pushed them forward. As they pushed forward, their self-efficacy increased. However, they also felt that their own commitment to finish, due to their perfectionist tendencies was what they called a "double-edged sword," because they were their worst critic. Participants were expected to be high achievers from a young age, a finding that confirms prior research on Asian family

values (Missildine, 1963; Methikalam, Wang, Slaney, & Yeung, 2015). There are high standards for success which led the participants to a constant concern of not being able to live up to the individual or families' expectations, a finding Methikalam et al. (2015) also reported. In some cases, perfectionists not only strive for perfection, but are hard on themselves and can engage in excessive critical self-evaluations (Shafran & Mansell, 2001). This finding in the literature was also prevalent in this study.

Many of the participants also expressed how they experienced life challenges including health challenges, losing a loved one, and feelings of self-doubt during their doctoral process, but they still persisted and did not let anything stop them from achieving their goal. These findings are consistent with Spaulding and Rockison-Szapkiw's (2012) findings. While prior research on Asian cultural characteristics demonstrates that collectivism is evident when it pertains to academics (Rahman & Witenstein, 2014), the participants in this study displayed a more individualistic goal since their doctoral attainment was largely due to personal choice and not parental choice. Despite their parents wanting them to become "doctors or lawyers," participants chose a discipline of personal interest (e.g., leadership, psychology, education, human services, business, and management). Many researchers support the idea that the Asian cultural values surround collectivism because of the importance of the family and community (Methikalam et al., 2015, Triandis, 1995; Varghese & Jenkins, 2009). The findings suggest that the participants retained their cultural values while integrating into the United States and embracing an individualistic approach into higher education and their personal career path. Berry (1980) describes integration where individuals maintain both cultures, the indigenous and their culture of origin.

Female doctoral students' approach to life and relationships with the self-perception, personal expectations, and acknowledgement of their limitations or ability affects their overall well-being (Schmidt & Umans, 2014). Bandura (1994) described individuals who have high self-efficacy as more likely to overcome obstacles and persist because they are willing to put in the effort to keep moving forward. The participants' own personal belief in their ability to succeed came from their own personal experiences. Tinto (2017) stated that self-efficacy is the foundation of a student's persistence and that their sense of self-efficacy is what promotes goal attainment. While several of the participants experienced health challenges, loss, and self-doubt during the doctoral process, they did not allow anything to stop them from pursuing their goal. While balancing family, personal needs, career, as well as their education, they managed to put their efforts into accomplishing their goals.

Some participants experienced bullying, discrimination, and racism within their community as children; some also experienced this in their adulthood. Discrimination and stereotyping shape the social context for children, youth, and families (Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Kiang et al., 2017). Though the effects of these negative experiences were notable for the participants, they were motivated to transcend; their doctoral persistence was fueled by the goal of becoming role models for other women in their families and communities.

The third research question examined the cultural factors influencing how Asian American women's persistence experiences of Asian American women in distance education doctoral programs. Many of the participants expressed that their ethnic background and cultural influences were a salient factor in their persistence. Many of the participants indicated that they were not held back from pursuing their education; their parents were strict regarding focusing on

going to school. Whilst culture is important in overall persistence, factors that also influenced their ability as Asian American women to persist was that they displayed both the individualist mindset when it pertained to furthering their education and being more outspoken, but still kept true to their collectivist mindset, making their parents proud and desiring to not bring shame to the family. Pressure to be successful and do well in school was coupled with an expectation to maintain the family image and not bring shame to the family. Parenting practices in Asian families are usually more authoritarian in style with a strong focus on academic achievement and familial solidarity (Farver et al. 2007; Inman et al. 2007). Several of the participants spoke about having respect for their parents; they did not talk back to their parents or complain. The use of an authoritarian parenting style could be based on the adherence to the Asian cultural values (Park, Kim, Chiang, & Ju, 2010). Many of the participants also expressed the pressures they felt from their families to be successful in specific fields such as “being a doctor or lawyer.” According to Rahman and Witenstein (2014), parental influence on adolescents and young adults is strong.

Although the participants were adults, parental approval in career and education did play some part of their earlier education, confirming prior research on the topic (Ngo, 2006). A key statement made by several participants was about the support they received from their parents - although the support existed, it was more overt than covert. However, the participants did not allow the emotionless and authoritarian manners of their parents to slow them down. The results of the study revealed that culture had some impact in the trajectory of their ambition as far as persisting and furthering their education; however, the participants found their own path in pursuing education endeavors that fulfilled their own goals.

The fourth research question examined institutional factors influencing Asian American women's persistence experiences in distance education doctoral programs. Student integration serves as the foundation in understanding how students persist through the examination of their academic and social integration in higher education (Tinto, 1975). Today, distance education exists across the United States with technology playing an integral role in the delivery of instruction. Distance education offers students a flexible approach to education (Barak, 2017; Cacheiro-Gonzalez, Medina-Rivilla, Dominguez-Garrido, & Medina-Dominguez, 2019; Moreira, Henriques, Guolao, & Barros, 2017). In the asynchronous learning environments today, distance education can still foster deep and meaningful learning for adequate social, cognitive, and teaching presence (Oztok et al. 2013).

Overall, the majority of participants expressed medium to high levels of satisfaction with their interactions with their peers and faculty. The participants shared that the support they received from their faculty, chair, committee, and their peers was pivotal in their ability to persist. This finding confirms prior research suggestions that support from other doctoral students is highly valued; collaboration and support by others in the same position is associated with persistence (Schmidt & Umans, 2014). Findings from this study also support and confirm previous research indicating that faculty support (e.g., coaching, challenging, critical feedback for dissertation improvement, encouragement of productivity in presentation and publication), psychosocial assistance (e.g., counseling, being empathetic, role modeling), and networking (e.g., establishing students with connections in the field and serving as a professional reference) are all pivotal to doctoral persistence (Rockinson-Szapkiw, Spaulding, & Spaulding, 2016).

In addition to the support from peers and faculty members, several participants also indicated that overall, the university was a good fit. Prior research affirms the relationship

between institutional fit and persistence (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2021). Further, several participants stated the importance of the residency. Residencies serve as academic socialization where it provides students with the ability to have face to face interaction with their faculty and peers providing them with the necessary tools for their doctoral journey (Radda, 2012; Westbrooks, Guillaume, Jones, & De La Fosee, 2020). The inclusion of residencies in programs provide students with a sense of belonging to a community and is vital to persistence (Berry, 2017; Ke & Hoadley, 2009; Westbrooks et al., 2020).

Overwhelmingly, the participants felt that the university was convenient as well as flexible which allowed them to balance their work, home, and academic life unlike a traditional residential program which would have impeded their persistence. Because of the asynchronous format and the flexible delivery method, distance learning meets the needs of the diverse learner populations (Erichsen, Bollinger, & Halupa, 2014). This afforded the study participants with the ability to attain an education without leaving home. Distance education provides students with the opportunity to learn at their own pace, access to resources, and engage with students from different cultures (Appana, 2008; Harasism, 2000; Kim, Liu, & Bonk, 2005; Zhang, 2013). According to Hofstede (2001), cultural attributes may affect the students' experiences, expectations, and perceptions where they may experience a collective programming of the mind that distinguishes them from others. A comparison made by Hofstede compared Asian and American cultures that indicated that Asians tend to have a great power distance which Hofstede (2001) referred to how people deal with hierarchical society response to other individuals who hold either superior or inferior positions to their own.

Furthermore, the online format provides students a sense of anonymity which promotes an environment for students from different social and cultural backgrounds, allowing for

engagement in an equal environment (Chen, 2019; DiGiovanni & Nagaswami, 2001). Using anonymity in the online format, provides students the opportunity for them to not feel pressure or restrains. Anonymity is masking one's identity and gives the student the ability to be more involved within their online community and creating that safe space (Miyazo & Anderson, 2011). Anonymity can also reduce the barrier of speaking up and encourages students to engage in learning without the social pressures or fear of public disapproval or criticism (Chen, 2019; Chen & Goh, 2011, Domalewska, 2014).

The fifth research question explored Asian American women's experiences upon persisting to completion of a distance education doctoral degree. There were some participants who were faced with obstacles and challenges in their home roles while maintaining a balance of their expected responsibilities such as family roles, work, and academic life, while others were able to find balance and persist through their doctoral journey. Upon the attainment of a doctoral degree, many of the participants were able to express the importance of making their parents proud even if their doctoral journey was for their personal goal. For others, degree attainment opened doors for new opportunities and career advancement. Although the participants achieved their doctoral degree, several participants stated that it was important to break out of the stereotype and not to feel that they were labeled or seen in a certain way, especially being an Asian American woman. One stereotype is the *model minority*, which is the assumption that all Asian Americans are hardworking, problem-free, and perseverant (Kiang et al., 2017). This view can be damaging due to its inaccuracy, heightened pressure to achieve, pressure on relationships, along with other detrimental assumptions (Kiang, Huynh, Cheah, Wang, & Yoshikawa, 2017). However, the participants felt that the model minority is associated with a presumed academic achievement and that their socioemotional struggles and experiences

whether negative or positive, along with discrimination are sometimes overlooked. An overgeneralized view of Asian Americans as being the model minority can lead to inaccuracies which can be harmful. Wrongly assuming that all Asian Americans are high achievers may lead to some students to be negatively impacted by overlooking the provision of necessary resources or support, especially in an academic setting (Ho & Jackson, 2001; Ngo & Lee, 2007; Suzuki, 2002; Wong & Halgin, 2006; Wu, 2002). One of the pressures for Asian Americans is having to live up to the image which sometimes can lead to unrealistic expectations. Previous research suggests that the model minority stereotype can cause people to perform poorly and not meet the expectations because of the burden they face trying to meet that expectation (Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000; Kiang, Huynh, Cheah, Wang, & Yoshikawa, 2017). The model minority stereotype can create an unrealistic standard for success and may hinder Asian Americans who may otherwise benefit from support networks (Kiang et al., 2017).

Implications

The purpose of this section is to address the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications of the study.

Theoretical Implications

Tinto's (1993) theory of student integration was used as the lens to understand the persistence of Asian American women in distance education doctoral programs. Tinto (1993) theorized that persistence at the doctoral level is heavily shaped by the personal and intellectual interactions within and between students, faculty, and the communities of the university. The study confirmed that the interactions played an integral role in the participants' persistence. This study found that overall, the participants were satisfied with their level of student, institutional,

and curriculum integration. While Tinto's (1993) theory explains the importance of the social and academic integration in general, this study focuses on Asian American women persisting in a distance learning format. There are few, if any, studies specific to the online doctoral experiences of Asian American women.

The second theoretical implication is based on how cultural values and beliefs play a role in Asian American women's persistence. Berry's (1980) acculturation theory focused on how individuals attach to cultures, the culture of origin and the second culture. While acculturation explores the processes in which individuals adapt as well as change their attitude and behavior to a new cultural group, the participants still had a strong sense of culture of origin and were proud of where they came from. However, they diverged from a collectivist mindset and embraced a more individualist mindset by pursuing personal goals (rather than parental goals) and not allowing internal and external factors to impede their persistence in their doctoral journey.

Berry (1980) described the four possible acculturation outcomes: (a) integration, (b) assimilation, (c) separation, and (d) marginalization. Findings from this study show that the majority of participants integrated their cultures by maintaining both cultures. Several participants described balancing their cultural customs, speaking the dialect, being part of their cultural community, and having a strong sense of family.

Empirical Implications

While there is extensive literature with respect to Asian Americans and culture, there is little addressing the experiences of Asian Americans' cultural background relating to their persistence in higher education. Cultural theorists emphasize that minority cultural values, beliefs, and behavioral patterns may differ in comparison to that of the mainstream paradigm (Paik, Rahman, Kula, Saito, & Witensten, 2017). The concept of individualism and collectivism

can influence persistence, since individualism focuses on individual specific goals and collectivism focuses more on the goals of a collective group (Mishra, 2018).

This study provides research to address the gap in the literature describing the persistence experiences of Asian American women in doctoral studies. The study also provides insight into the following research questions and themes: what experiences motivate Asian American women to pursue doctoral studies through distance education programs (accomplish getting doctoral degree, intrinsically motivated, wanting personal growth, motivated to be a role model); what personal factors contribute to the persistence experiences of Asian American women enrolled in distance education doctoral programs (commitment to finish degree, for personal goal attainment, seen racism, bullying and discrimination, having the self-efficacy that they can); what cultural factors influence how Asian American women experience persistence in distance education doctoral programs (ethnic background vs. cultural influences, having high expectations as a minority, discrimination within Asian community); what institutional factors influence the persistence of Asian American women enrolled in distance education doctoral programs (university being a good fit, support from faculty and peers, residency was an important factor); and what do Asian American women experience upon persisting to completion of a distance education doctoral degree (sense of accomplishment for attaining the degree, degree attainment provides opportunity for career options, break out of the stereotype). Most important, Asian American women still value their cultural background and embrace their ethnic identity, an identity that they attribute to fostering their persistence.

The study further supports and adds to the literature the impact of institutional factors such as student integration, faculty integration, and curriculum integration contributing to doctoral persistence experiences. The research added to the existing literature in that it reflects

the importance of support for minority populations from all institutional factors – social and academic. The study also provided insight on how the residency was vital to the participants in regards to having the peer-to-peer support, especially within their cohort. Another important point is the importance of regular faculty support and communication in motivating the participants.

Practical Implications

There has been an enormous growth in online enrollments especially in higher education (Morris, Ivancheva, Coop, Mogliacci, & Swinnerton, 2020). In order to increase persistence and retention in higher education, it is important to recognize and understand the contributing factors of student persistence to meet the needs of distance education students and improve their academic experiences and outcomes (Ivankova & Stick, 2007). The study provides insight into the lived experiences of Asian American women as they persisted in their distance education doctoral journey. The participants shared their personal stories, challenges, obstacles, and their adversity as they pushed forward in their educational studies. The findings also provide insight into how their personal and cultural factors, along with their social and academic integration, led to their persistence.

Several of the participants expressed the importance of student integration, especially with the support of faculty, chair, committee, and their peers. Tinto's (1975) theory of student integration focused on the importance of student integration as a foundation of understanding how students persist in higher education. The university can help reinforce persistence with residency, as the participants were able to gain collaboration and support while meeting their faculty, chair, committee, and peers. The connection the participants gained from their peers became more than a group of students working toward a common goal, but many of them

developed a strong bond with each other and became a support group for one another during their dissertation journey.

Given the importance of social and academic integration for online doctoral students, it is important for universities to create opportunities for students to integrate academically and socially. Studies indicate that students feel isolated and disconnected from their faculty and peers during the dissertation stage (Lovitts, 2001, 2005; Rovai, 2002; Terrell, Synder, Dringus, & Maddrey, 2012). Also, Asian Americans are stereotyped or considered a model minority; they are often excluded from institutional and organizational activities and resources (Houshmand, Spanierman, & Tafordi, 2014; Kim, Block, Yu, 2021). The university setting can encourage more collaboration from academic advisors, mentors, and faculty mentors where they can offer support for their students. Faculty members and university administrators can still provide support even with the students' need for autonomy, competence, and fostering trust (Lynch, Salikhova, & Salikhova, 2018). Another determinant that needs consideration is identifying the crucial roles of faculty and students by aligning the department and discipline especially during exploration of the research topic (Gardner, 2008, 2010; Posselt, 2018).

Ensuring integration is not only the responsibility of faculty – doctoral students should also proactively seek opportunities to become more integrated with their peers and professors. For example, students should have open and honest conversations with their faculty members, especially in regards to support when it comes to selecting their topic, and more open and honest communication, having meaningful interactions and encouragement when there are doubts. While support is needed from faculty, students still need to have ownership and responsibility of their own academic outcomes as recent research suggests that there is an important link between having the experience of responsibility and the experience of freedom (Lynch, Salikhova, &

Salikhova, 2018; Sheldon, Gordeeva, Lynch, Osin, Rasskazova, & Dementiv, 2017). Instead of accepting the model minority stereotype, doctoral students need to acknowledge the dynamics and challenges they face as Asian Americans and seek the support and resources. The interpersonal relationship is an important concept in communication and interaction, especially for students with Asian backgrounds (Bian & Ang, 1997; Chen, 2019; Vanhonacker, 2004).

The majority of participants also indicated that the university's program overall was a good fit and emphasized the importance of the residency. When considering doctoral programs, Asian American women should consider programs that provide them avenues to foster relationships with their cohort members and collaborate with faculty members (Torres & Statti, 2018; Westbrook, Guillaume, Jones, & De La Fosse, 2020). By immersing themselves into the social interactions with other students and developing relationships with their faculty, students are able to feel more comfortable in reaching out when they need to seek assistance or advice. Students should seek integration with their peers in their cohorts, as these relationships will provide a support system outside their families as they persist through their doctoral journey. By understanding the ways that online students create community, and by identifying the resources for support, students can build their academic community to help them persist.

The findings also revealed that the participants were intrinsically motivated by their desire for personal growth and their self-efficacy to complete their degree regardless of the internal and external factors that may have affected them during their doctoral studies. Some participants also felt that although their academic journey was far from an easy road, their determination and personal drive confirmed Bandura's (1994) self-efficacy theory suggests that overcoming obstacles builds confidence and the motivation to keep persisting.

With regard to how culture played an impact, the values instilled in them from their Asian heritage provided the participants the ability to focus on academics at an early age, something they carried with them throughout their doctoral journey. Based on these findings, Asian American students should recognize that their families are an important contribution to their success, family integration is vital during the doctoral process to provide an understanding of level of commitment, expectations and the timelines (Author, 2014; Rockinson Szapkiw, Spaulding, & Spaulding, 2016).

The final implication is the negative impact of the model minority and the stereotyping the participants endured during their entire academic life. The model minority stereotype creates an image that is damaging due to its inaccuracy and the social pressure it places on minorities to achieve (Kiang, Huynh, Cheah, Wang, & Yoshikawa, 2017). Although the participants persisted and completed their doctoral degree, several participants stated that it was important to break away from the stereotype and the label. This stereotype may prevent other minorities from seeking and receiving necessary resources and support from their universities (Ho & Jackson, 2001; Ngo & Lee, 2007; Suzuki, 2002; Wong & Halgin, 2006; Wu, 2002). Many minorities may not speak up and ask for the help due to their cultural background and may be forgoing supports that may be essential to their persistence and wellbeing.

Delimitations and Limitations

The study was delimited to Asian American women in distance education doctoral programs who were also between the ages of 18 and 64 years old. This group was selected due to the gap in the literature that discusses the experiences of Asian American women in distance education programs. The participants selected represented students who needed the flexibility

and convenience of distance education in order to maintain family obligations, personal obligations, and careers.

With these delimitations stated, there were limitations to the study with a small sample and the distance education delivery method. The small sample consisting solely of doctoral degree completers was not able to express the many experiences of the diverse Asian American students who have may not have completed the program either through distance education or a doctoral program. Some of the Asian countries represented from the participants were from China, Japan, Vietnam, Philippines, Laos, and Thailand. The study was limited only to the handful of countries represented, but did not have representation from South Korea, North Korea, Taiwan, India, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Cambodia, and Indonesia.

A larger sample size or the inclusion of non-persisters may provide a more nuanced set of findings. While data saturation was achieved, the challenge of selecting participants who attended only distance education doctoral programs limited the number of qualified participants.

A limitation was that two of the participants did not submit their personal timelines. During the interviews, follow-up questions were not always asked when the participants discussed the impact their family of origin had on their doctoral persistence. There is, however, a possibility that there were undiscovered themes or significant results from the participants' backgrounds that influenced their persistence which was not originally revealed.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings of the research study, there were several recommendations for future research. The first recommendation is for future studies to focus on Asian American male students in determining factors that would impact their overall experiences and persistence in distance education programs and how it would differ based on the male status. Many of the

participants shared that education was heavily pushed onto them from their parents early on in their childhood. Some participants shared their experiences that culturally, education is very important and highly valued in Asian families. Some participants also stated parents pressured them to be either a doctor or lawyer. Future research should not delimit the study to Asian American women but open it to Asian Americans as a whole in order to compare genders to see if there would be differences in persistence experiences.

A significant factor in the persistence of Asian American women in distance education doctoral programs was the support and social connectedness amongst other doctoral students. It would be useful to conduct further qualitative research studies to explore if being in a cohort or non-cohort-based program impacts persistence and time to degree completion. This research would provide insight into the Asian American doctoral students' persistence experiences in their respective programs and the role of the program structure. Residency is also vital especially towards the end of the program or dissertation stage and by coming to the campus, students are able to reinforce social integration.

In addition, Asian Americans are not alone when it comes to research specific to persistence, additional research should be warranted to other minority groups, they should have the opportunity to share their experiences and have their voices heard. Researchers can expand to groups such as Hispanics, Native Americans, non-American and also international students who can shed some light into their persistence experiences in distance education programs.

Finally, future research studies should explore the role of parental support in the persistence of Asian American women doctoral students in distance education programs. In relation to this recommendation, several of the Asian American women in this study indicated that they experienced some level of discouragement in their persistence during their studies.

Some felt that they were balancing many responsibilities with their personal or familial roles, there were times some lacked confidence and self-efficacy. Although, this was not a primary focus of the current research study, there is a need for future research to further examine the topic of support for Asian American women doctoral students from their parents.

Summary

This phenomenological study gives voice to the persistence experiences of Asian American women who completed doctoral degrees through distance education programs in the United States. Personal, cultural, and institutional factors contributed to the persistence experiences of Asian American women in distance education doctoral programs. The experiences of the participants were gathered through a distance doctoral program integration scale (DDPIS), timelines, and interviews. Analysis and triangulation of data revealed personal factors such as self-efficacy in achieving their goal despite adversity, serving as a role model, and gaining the respect of having the title of doctor, were pivotal factors of their persistence. Results from the study indicate that social factors such as support from other Asian American persons who hold doctorates, and social relationships from their family and peers contributed to their persistence. Institutional factors such as anonymity in a distance education environment and the program being a good fit due to the university's flexible online program also were important.

The findings from the research study indicate that prior to enrolling, the selection of the university should be committed in assisting the students to goal attainment as well as the specific program of interest. In addition, personal and social support is vital to help facilitate while considering the pursuit of their educational endeavors. The balance between home, family, personal, career and academics should be taken into consideration.

Future research should focus on all Asian Americans rather than limiting to Asian American women. Further exploration of acculturation and enculturation of Asian women in the United States will provide a better understanding of the balance between their culture of origin and “American” culture, and how this balance influences doctoral persistence in the context of higher education. This research can also be delimited to residency-based programs and also different program levels (i.e., bachelors and master’s degrees). Overall, these research results and future research conducted will help in the narrowing of the gap of Asian American women’s pursuit of furthering their education through distance education. Attention should also be brought to the importance of social support concerning persistence.

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APPENDIX A: IRB PERMISSION REQUEST

Dear Liberty University IRB:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for an EdD degree. The title of my research project is “Experiences of Asian American women in distance education doctoral programs: A transcendental phenomenological study” and the purpose of my research is to explore the experiences of Asian American women’s perseverance in distance education doctoral programs.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research at Liberty University. Participants will be asked to complete the attached survey.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval.

Sincerely,

Cathy Vu

APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT

Hello,

As a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education degree. The purpose of my research is to explore the experiences of Asian American women who have persevered in distance education doctoral programs, and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

If you are 18 years of age or older, an Asian American female, you completed a doctoral program through distance education (80% or more online) within the past 10 years, and are willing to participate, you will be asked to do the following:

1. Complete a demographic survey and the Distance Doctoral Program Integration Scale (DDPIS) (approximately 15 minutes).
2. Complete a personal timeline that details significant life experiences and the doctoral journey (approximately 20 minutes).
3. Participate in a recorded interview (approximate time will be an hour) through videoconferencing. Once the interview is complete, you will have the opportunity to review the interview transcripts for accuracy.

Your name and other identifying information will be requested as part of your participation, but the information will remain confidential through the use of a pseudonym.

To participate, please click on the survey link provided below to answer screening questions and, if you meet the study criteria, complete the demographics survey.

A consent form is attached to this email, and the same consent information is provided as the first page you will see after you click on the survey link. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Please read the consent document and proceed to the survey if you would like to participate.

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Survey

Sincerely,

Cathy Vu

APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM

Consent

Title of the Project: Experiences of Asian American Women in Distance Education Doctoral Programs: A Transcendental Phenomenological Study

Principal Investigator: Cathy Vu, Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be 18 years of age or older, an Asian American female, and have completed a doctoral program in distance education (80% or more online) within the past 10 years. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to explore Asian American women's experiences in distance education doctoral programs in the United States. This study will provide a description of the experience's Asian American women face during the doctoral journey.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Complete a demographic survey and distance doctoral program integration scale (approximately 15 minutes for both).
2. Complete a personal timeline that details your doctoral journey (approximately 20 minutes).
3. Participate in a recorded interview (approximate time will be an hour), this will be through videoconferencing. Once the interview is complete, you will have the opportunity to review the literature transcripts for accuracy.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. The study benefits to society including providing a better understanding of the process of obtaining a doctoral degree through distance education by Asian American women.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report, I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. Any hard copy data will be stored in a locked cabinet. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and paper copies will be shredded.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

Should you choose to withdraw, please inform the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw-data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Cathy Vu. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

APPENDIX D: DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

1. Do you identify as an Asian American woman?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
2. Have you earned a doctoral degree?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
3. Was your doctoral degree completed online (i.e., At least 80% of the program was delivered from a distance and was online and was online and asynchronous)?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
4. Please indicate the number of years that have passed since you completed your doctoral degree.
 - a. 0-5
 - b. 6-10
 - c. more than 10
5. Please indicate your age.
 - a. 18-24 years old
 - b. 25-34 years old
 - c. 35-44 years old
 - d. 45-54 years old
 - e. 55-64 years old
 - f. 65-74 years old
 - g. 75 years or older
6. Please indicate your country of origin (family).
7. Please indicate the country where you were born, if you were not born in the United States.
8. Please indicate your birth order.
 - a. Oldest
 - b. Youngest
 - c. Middle
9. Please indicate your generational housing type.
 - a. One generation

- b. Two generation
- c. Multi-generational
- d. Other

10. Please indicate your marital status.

- a. Single, never married
- b. Married or domestic partnership
- c. Widowed
- d. Divorced
- e. Separated

11. Do you have any children? If yes, please indicate the number of children and age(s).

12. Please indicate if a dissertation was required as part of your doctoral degree.

- a. Yes
- b. No

13. Please indicate if you completed your doctoral degree in the United States.

- a. Yes
- b. No

Full Name _____

Email Address _____

Phone Number _____

APPENDIX E: DISTANCE DOCTORAL PROGRAM INTEGRATION SCALE (DDPIS)
(Holmes & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2020)

When completing the DDPIS, consider your previous distance education doctoral program. Please rate your level of satisfaction with each of the following items using the following scale:

Very High (5) High (4) Medium (3) Low (2) Very Low (1)

	Item	5	4	3	2	1
1	The sequencing of the coursework in your program.	3	5	3	1	0
2	The encouragement faculty members provided you.	5	5	1	0	0
3	The quality of academic-related interactions you had with other students.	3	4	3	1	0
4	The relationships you developed with at least one faculty member.	5	4	2	0	2
5	The quality of social interactions you had with your fellow students.	4	4	1	0	1
6	How using various distance methods to communicate (e.g., telephone, live video, online chat, email, and/or social media sites) helped you feel personally connected with other students.	3	6	1	0	0
7	The quality of academic support in your program (e.g., statistics assistance, writing assistance, and research assistance).	3	3	5	0	0
8	The quality of academic feedback provided by the faculty.	4	6	1	0	0
9	The enthusiasm faculty demonstrated for your academic work.	7	4	0	0	0
10	The quality of academic-related contact you had with faculty (consider all synchronous and asynchronous interactions).	4	5	2	0	0
11	How easily you were able to approach faculty members with your personal concerns.	5	3	3	0	0
12	The level of mutual trust among the students in the program.	4	3	4	0	0
13	The level of social support you received from fellow students.	4	6	0	1	0
14	The personal relationships you developed with your fellow students.	6	2	1	0	2
15	The level of cooperation with your fellow students when completing program requirements.	4	6	1	0	0
16	The timeliness of academic feedback provided by the faculty.	6	3	2	0	0
17	The amount of social interactions you had with your fellow students.	3	3	0	4	1

18	The willingness of students to provide academic-related help to other students.	3	5	3	0	0
19	How well faculty members fostered feelings that you personally belonged in this program.	2	7	2	0	0
20	The quality of instruction in your program.	5	2	4	0	0
21	The amount of constructive feedback you received from your fellow students.	3	2	5	0	1
22	The guidance faculty provided about the dissertation process in this program.	6	1	2	0	0
23	The availability of the faculty to discuss academic issues.	5	4	2	0	0
24	How you found the coursework in your program to be a good fit for you (e.g., there was good alignment with personal interests, application to future job goals, application to real life, or other similar reasons).	5	5	1	0	0
25	The sense of social connectedness between you and your fellow students.	4	2	4	1	0
26	How the coursework prepared students for the dissertation process.	2	6	3	0	0
27	The quality of the curriculum in your program.	3	5	3	0	0
28	The relevancy of the curriculum to your goals.	5	4	2	0	0
29	The opportunities you had to learn from your fellow students.	2	4	3	1	0
30	The frequency of academic-related interactions you had with other students.	2	4	4	0	1
31	How the faculty cared about you as a real person.	4	5	2	0	0
32	The amount of academic-related contact you had with your faculty (consider all synchronous and asynchronous interactions).	4	5	2	0	0

APPENDIX F: IRB APPROVAL

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

July 9, 2021

Cathy Vu
Lucinda Spaulding

Re: IRB Approval - IRB-FY20-21-943 Experiences of Asian American Women in Distance Education Doctoral Programs: A Transcendental Phenomenology Study

Dear Cathy Vu, Lucinda Spaulding:

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This approval is extended to you for one year from the following date: July 9, 2021. If you need to make changes to the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit a modification to the IRB. Modifications can be completed through your Cayuse IRB account.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

APPENDIX G: SAMPLE TIMELINE

Timelines are a map of important events that occur in your life that provide a comprehensive view of your life history. Please provide below, with dates and notes that are significant, life history events and experiences throughout your personal and educational journey.

Year 2009	Notes
	<p style="text-align: center;">2009-2010</p> <p>Begin higher education journey. I was completing a technical associates degree and taking full time classes at a University after, so mostly night courses. I was also working 18 hours a week on Saturday and Sunday.</p> <p>I successfully completed the technical associates degree with high distinction, but my university work suffered with a “C” in my first semester, this continued into my 2nd semester with more “C’s”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">2010-2011</p> <p>I started working full time and continuing to take university classes after the work day. While my parents continued to believe they were “modern” and gave me the support I needed to be successful, like giving me time to do homework etc. The expectations of a Hmong daughter were still prevalent. The pressures of both without acknowledgement that they had those expectations made it more difficult for me to be successful.</p> <p>By the end of the year I was on probation and after Spring, I was kicked out of the University.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">2011-2012</p> <p>I attended a community college to continue to take courses, get my GPA up, and work toward getting my bachelor’s degree. During this time, the courses were not challenging and I continued to work full time.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">2012-2013</p> <p>My last year of undergrad, I was accepted into a college aimed at adult learners and full time workers. I was able to complete my bachelor’s degree in the 4-year time that everyone hopes, even with all of the stumbles along the way.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">2015</p>

I accepted a position teaching at a community college, after my first semester, I had a great passion for education and applied for my master's program for Spring 2016.

Master's Program

In this program, I felt like I finally found my calling. Reading and learning was not a chore, but something I enjoyed doing. While I learned a lot, I did not feel like I received the feedback to be better. My papers always got most/all of the points, even my dissertation got little feedback. I do know that my classmates had to re-write some papers etc., so maybe I was just THAT smart 😊 but I learned a lot about education.

Doctoral Program

This was the same feeling of just the urge to learn more. The difference was that I was being challenged, given feedback, and supported through the process. I still was procrastinating, but I was always held accountable. There were consistent check-ins that kept me on track.

During the final stages of my dissertation, I felt defeated. I had 12 people respond back that they would do a focus group or interview but then when it came down to it no one was available or they did not show up when they said they would. This brought me to winter break, when contacting students and other gatekeepers was not easy to do. At the beginning of spring, I gave it one more go and was told by our TRIO program they were offering \$500 to students for participating in their research and they had 3 participants, this defeated me even more. I let a several weeks go by, but my advisor would reach out and I would get on it again. I finally decided to do an open-ended questionnaire and got the response I needed. Going through the analysis, trying to sort through the data, and finding I had some basic questions (like gender/sex) missing from my demographic survey were also some personal setbacks. I really attribute my completion with my advisor who kept me on track and didn't let me go too long without checking in. I have never had that accountability before.

I successfully defended my dissertation June 2, 2021.

APPENDIX H: OPEN-ENDED INTERVIEW

1. Please tell me about yourself and your current family situation.
2. Where were you born?
3. If born outside the United States, how long have you lived in the United States?
4. What is your first language? What language do you primarily speak in your home?
5. Who is the first generation in your family to move to the United States?
6. What do you do for a living? How long have you been in this position? What other positions have you held in your past?
7. What doors were you hoping or are hoping a doctoral degree might open for you?
8. Tell me about your life. Walk me through your journey both personally and educationally from childhood to now.
9. Let us talk about your timeline: what events would you say were significant? Why were they significant?
10. Is there something else you would like to add to your timeline that you have not already written down?
11. What was the reason(s) you chose to attend your particular university?
12. Let us talk about your educational experiences prior to your doctoral program. What experiences would you say were significant? Why were they significant?
13. Walk me through your educational journey in your doctoral degree. What was your motivation and reasons for pursuing your doctoral degree?
14. What factors impacted your decision to pursue this program?
15. What made you choose distance education versus a residential program?

16. Tell me about your experiences with distance education, specifically, experiences during coursework, and then the dissertation phase of your degree.
17. What were some factors that you felt played a role in your success in your education?
18. What were your relationships with your faculty members?
19. Tell me about your relationships with your peers/colleagues.
20. Let us talk about your personal and academic experiences, what would you say were significant? Why were they significant?
21. What role did your family have in supporting your through your doctoral studies?
22. Tell me about your relationships outside of your doctoral studies. Let us talk about your relationships in your home. How did your spouse (or children) play a role in your doctoral studies? How did your parents (or other family members) play a role in your doctoral studies?
23. Are there any values that you bring to the doctoral process based on your Asian heritage that you feel helped you in the process? Are there any values or expectations that you feel possibly hindered your persistence experiences?
24. If you were an Asian American male, do you feel your persistence experiences would have differed? Why or why not?
25. Is there anything else you wish to share about this topic, or anything else you would suggest I ask individuals participating in the study?

Once the interviews are completed, they will be transcribed from the recordings, and the participants will be informed that all measures will be taken to maintain confidentiality. The interviews will allow for isolation of the experiences of participants, and appropriateness of data forms and procedures for information collection will be considered. The

transcriptions and digital files will be stored in secure locations. In order to have a better understanding of the experiences of each of the participants, it is important to dive deeper through the one-on-one interview questions of their personal and educational journey.

APPENDIX I: SAMPLE INTERVIEW

Interviewer I would like to start by saying thank you for participating. So I have a few questions, so we're going to go through it and it typically takes about an hour. It depends on you. If you have additional questions or anything else you want to add to it. First question, is please tell me about yourself and your current family situation.

Participant Hi. I am an Asian American. I was born in XYZ in XYZ. My parents were immigrants from Vietnam. After the war, they decided to escape on my grandfather's boat. They escaped in the middle of the night. One of my cousins was left behind. There were about 50 people that ended up escaping. It took them 12 days instead of three nights to get to XYZ. They were in XYZ and stayed there for about nine months before getting sponsored by the XYZ Church in XYZ. At the time, they had my older sister with them and so she was born in Vietnam and came here. So I guess you can call her one and a half generations, right? My parents ended up having more kids because having a boy was very important. I was born in XYZ because my mom was pregnant with me when she was in XYZ. And then while we were in XYZ, my parents had two more daughters there, four girls in total before we ended up moving to XYZ before settling in XYZ. XYZ was where I ended up doing my K-12 education. My parents had more kids. We went from apartment to apartment. I went from school to school. We had a total of seven girls and one boy, so he decided to come out later and last. We eventually moved from an apartment into a 3-bedroom home and then moved a couple more times after that.

We were on public assistance, on welfare. My parents worked hard. My mom stayed at home until my brother was old enough and then she went back to work. She started working in the squid factory, and then in a kitchen at a Chinese restaurant. She ended up as a waitress.

My dad was a fisherman because that's what he did when he was in Vietnam.

When he came here, XYZ was way too cold, so he tried all the vocational types of jobs. When he came to XYZ, he was fishing for a little while until they ended up putting a cap on the number of fish that you can catch. He went into the furniture business and has been delivering furniture ever since. He still does that now, even though we want him to retire. He doesn't have a retirement. We are basically his retirement. My parents still live in a little apartment in XYZ. They still want to stay there even though the majority of us are up in the XYZ. And so they'll come up and visit. Or if my dad happens to be working in XYZ, he'll come up and stay at my place in XYZ with my siblings. I actually don't live there anymore. But he'll stay there during the weekdays and go home on the weekends. Whereas my mom took a break from work because of COVID, so we'll see if she does want to go back in and continue to waitress. Parents are super hard working. They definitely want all of us to graduate from college. We have 7 graduates from college and the youngest one is being super stubborn, so he's not quite there yet, and finishing up his degree. My parents pushed education as something that's really important. They didn't finish high school nor college or anything like that. My siblings and I were on scholarships, grants, or school loans, so that's how we ended up going through school.

I was able to receive 2 scholarships in high school to go to XYZ. So I received the Incentive Awards Scholarship as well as the XYZ Scholarship back then.

When I was in school, of course my parents wanted me to become a doctor or lawyer.

I ended up not going down that path. When I was in high school, I did really well. And so, when I went to XYZ, I did not do as well as I thought I would, and so it was definitely a lot of different pressures. I felt like I was lacking study skills and just trying to fit in and understand how to navigate school. I think eventually, I changed majors and took different classes. I found things that I really like to do and I was mentoring students in college. I ended up going on an education path, which is where I fell in love with education. I applied to the Credential and Masters Program at XYZ and went there as soon as I graduated in 2004 from XYZ. I called the scholarship and asked if they could also pay for the credential program since I was enrolled in a dual credential/masters program. They said, "Yes." I started teaching in XYZ city. I lived in XYZ for about six months then I decided to move to XYZ. And ever since I moved to XYZ, my siblings ended up following me. During that time, I decided to go back to school to get my credential and masters to go into educational administration. I had the same scholarship that would cover more of my masters portion of my scholarship so took advantage of that opportunity. I went to XYZ University and finished my credential and masters for administration in a year. I had taught 4th and 5th grades at an affluent school and decided that it was time to join a XYZ reintervention team at a Title One school in the same district. I wanted to make

sure I gained experiences in different areas if I wanted to get into administration. I was teaching at the reinvention school and the following year, an opportunity came up for instructional coaching. I decided that I wanted to stay in the classroom halftime and become an instructional coach, just to get my feet wet with that and work with adults. I started leading more professional developments for adults. I had deferred my scholarship for a few years. They said they'll pay for two more years of my grad school if I went back and got a doctorate, and so I ended up pursuing that. When I was instructional coach for that year, I was going to continue that a little bit longer just because I enjoyed working with adults. But then an opportunity came up the following year to become an assistant principal at a middle school. And so, I ended up interviewing and got the position and became an assistant principal at the middle school and also their instructional coach. I did that and really enjoyed the middle school experience. I decided to go back to school and put my dissertation on hold so I can pursue a single subject authorization to teach social science because at the time, I wasn't able to teach middle school, but I was able to teach elementary school, so I needed to do something different. So I did that, put my dissertation on hold, which I shouldn't have done, but I did. And then as soon as I finish those courses, I knew that I had to finish my dissertation in the last chapter, so that way I cannot pay all this money because I already used up all my scholarship and so I was paying out of pocket at that time were actually taking out school loans, and so I knew that that was something that I had to pay back. I finished up my dissertation in April of 2015. When I finished my dissertation that was at the end of my middle school

career as an assistant principal, I was only there for one year and an opportunity came up to become a principal in the district. I was a principal in the XYZ School District for five years at two elementary schools before I ended up moving to the XYZ Unified School District. Last year, I was a principal at one of the schools and then another opportunity came up to become a Director of Educational Equity.

In total, I've been in education for 17 years.

Interviewer Very nice, very nice. I think we're gonna skip so couple questions. You actually answered a few of them. So next question is where were your born? We know that one already, and then the next question is what was your first language?

Participant I spoke Vietnamese when I was growing up because my parents didn't know English back then. I think they definitely do speak a little bit more now and can totally understand English.

But growing up, Vietnamese was definitely our first language. I can speak conversationally as well as listen in that language. Not so much reading, writing, because that wasn't quite enforced; even though we did go to Vietnamese school when we were younger. So it's important, and I think that's why I really enjoyed working in San Jose because a lot of the families were also Vietnamese, especially within the district. It really helped to have conversations with families and just be able to like be part of the culture.

Interviewer Very nice. Skipping a few questions because a lot of what you said or answer a lot of the questions. Ok, next question is um, it's your workplace. I don't have

your timeline yet but what events would you say were very significant and why were they significant to you?

Participant I would definitely start in elementary school, facing some discrimination. I grew up in XYZ, which happens to be predominantly Hispanic. And so when I was there, being one of the very few Vietnamese families with a Vietnamese name, it's not an American name, I was made fun of. You know kids would say, "Hong Kong, King Kong, Ching Chong." So I made a decision without my parents knowing in middle school to change it to Anne. So, I changed it to Anne for two years in middle school just because I didn't want to have to deal with name calling and going through that with my peers and students at school. My mom found out about it and she was not very happy because she emphasized the importance of your name and how we need to make sure that we're honoring and respecting it. And so she made me change back. When I went to high school, I ended up changing it back to XYZ and had gone through school with that name in high school, college, and beyond. I'm glad I did that. I think by then I built more confidence within myself. It made me really think about my identity, understanding whiteness, and trying to be something that is different than what we were. And a lot of it was due to my understanding. I didn't quite understand my parents being immigrants. How come they came to this country and had so many kids? Why were we poor? It's just our upbringing was very different and my parents worked super hard. But I knew that I had lots of friends and lots of other families around us that did really well. I always questioned how come we struggled when we were growing up. Instead of focusing my dissertation on

education and schooling, I really wanted to find out more about my own family and their story. I wrote an autoethnography. It has a lot of vignettes and research based on those vignettes. I asked my parents a lot of questions. Some questions pertaining to their escape from Vietnam. How was it growing up here to America? What were some of their struggles? And so, I was able to have my parents answer a lot of those. While in XYZ, which is where we held my graduation, they actually had driven back to XYZ. They found some of our sponsored friends and had lunch, which was really nice for them. During my final oral review to defend my dissertation, my mom actually stood up and I had her speak to her experiences as an immigrant coming to this country and hear her story too, so that just sort of made it come full circle. My dissertation was really based on them.

I looked closely at the difference between first generation and second generation. There were some topics such as gender and skin color. I took ethnic studies, learned a little bit about our history and came to a better understanding of where I was from and the situation that they were in. I had a lot more appreciation for my family and my parents because of that.

Interviewer Thank you. My next question is, what was reasons you chose to attend your particular university?

Participant When I started teaching, I ended up buying a house at the same time. Being one of the first members in my family to be able to do so, I had a mortgage. I'll have to pay it and do not have anyone that can pay it for me. I looked into some graduate programs such as Berkeley and Stanford. I knew that I would have to

leave my job in order to attend some of these schools and I just knew that I couldn't do that. One of my professors at XYZ University, when I was going through the administrative program, had talked about how she had completed her dissertation and doctorate through XYZ University. She talked about how it was very flexible and you would be able to do your school while you're working. That really attracted me to the actual school. And when I talked to her a little bit more about that, she emphasized how much she really enjoyed being able to research what she wanted to research, and it was able to enjoy what she was doing. And so, I ended up going through and doing some orientations, finding out a little bit more about the program, and when I initially got into the program, ready from the get-go, it was about you and what you wanted to research, and so that definitely attracted me, because I knew I had a very different topic. I really wanted to write my dissertation on reflecting on my family. And is this something that I can do and at the time, I didn't know what an autoethnography was and so they started to explain that autoethnography piece to me and I found out later that this university was definitely one that allowed a lot of their students to write about what they felt like. The actual research was based on your own stories and being able to analyze that. And so I started to speak to my professors more and more about what I wanted to do. Once I honed into my actual dissertation topic, then we sort of went with it and it worked out.

Interviewer Very nice, let's talk about your educational experiences prior to your doctoral program. What experiences would you say were significant and why were they significant?

Participant I think for me, I'm going through elementary, middle and high school. I knew that I was not the smartest student. There was the Model Minority Myth. She's Asian, she must be really smart. I did go through school and I became valedictorian in high school. I would say that I became valedictorian in high school because I worked super hard. I did not do well on standardized testing. I took the SAT and scored the same score three times. I understood that testing was not a strength of mine, but I focused on school and I just made sure that I got good grades because that was expected of me. I also knew that I wanted to not be in the house because my dad was super strict, having seven girls and a boy. Of course, he wants to make sure that we're all very successful and that we were not going to get in trouble or not do anything to shame our family. And so for me, I was like, well, I'm going to get good grades, and I'm going participate in leadership and sports and work and volunteer. So I did everything that you needed to do. Check off that list that you're like an all around student. And so I went and I worked at the mall and ended up bringing paychecks home. That's going to help pay for our braces or to pay for like funds for school. And we want to go to school dances or whatever, or anything like that. Then we had to have our own money because our parents are not going to be able to support us with that and end up joining sports and did four years of sports when I was there. Volunteered at the hospital or did any volunteer work that was going to help support me and then also kept me busy when in leadership. I was asked to be president at school, you know my senior year, also and so I just did everything that I needed to do.

I was very involved within school. When I got to college, I was very much shocked by the lack of life study skills that I had. I was just struggling. I'm going through school and I tried to take biology classes cause my parents wanted me to become a doctor. So I tried to take math and all of those, and the coursework was so much harder than I had expected.

I thought it was so easy in high school and then got to college and it wasn't as easy as I anticipated. I found myself taking multiple choice testing and I was not very good at that and so didn't score as well. So, there were different things you know I felt like I was encountering and struggling through the first couple of years of school, and so my grades definitely suffered.

I had one semester where I was put on probation because of my grades. I think that was sort of a wake up call for me. I'm like do I want to get kicked out or am I going to have to do something different with my career. And I was like maybe going down the medical field, it's not going to work out this time and maybe I need to go back and revisit that at a later time. And so I think I decided that you know, I did so well in school. Why can't I get a 3.0 right now? My GPA is not quite a 3.0 and I was like and if I wanted to join a pre med, pre-health sorority, I needed to be above 3.0. So then I started taking classes that I was even more interested in like Asian American Studies and Sociology, and Ethnic Studies and Anthropology. So I took all these fun classes and some of them are more on the humanity side, but I really started getting more into school. I took a lot of education classes throughout the time. So I was mentioning, and I was just very

much into school more than I was before when I was taking a lot of the science class or math classes.

I felt myself feeling more positive about school and felt myself doing a lot better.

I think even just that transition of coming from high school where I was doing so well to a college where I had to really work even harder.

And noticed that my grades were suffering and in my experience were very different.

I think that was just an eye opener for me and so it made some transitions in and what I had to do too. Change my career, so I ended up going into education because of that and in the back of my head I always thought I was going to go back to school and get my premed requirements taken care of, and I never ended up doing that. I ended up going the other direction and got my dissertation or, you know, worked on my doctorate and got my doctorate degree from that instead. I would definitely say from high school to college and just my readiness for being in college was not what I was expecting.

Interviewer I think you answered this question, but then let's go ahead and ask it. Walk me through your educational journey in your doctorate degree. What was your motivation and what were your reasons for pursuing your doctorate degree?

Participant I think definitely the fact that I was on scholarship that really helped to have me pursue my doctorate degree and then the other fact is my parents wanted me to become a doctor. I told them I got into education, and they're like why did you become a teacher? I became a teacher for so many years. And then I started

moving up in education and going from teacher to instructional coach, to a principal. Now my parents, they're happy about it.

I wanted to make sure I finished my doctorate program as soon as possible because it was a distance learning program and because a lot of it was very independent and had to do a lot of it on my own.

The coursework was very easy. For me, it's just getting down and buckling down to prove it. Dissertation was the harder part and just finding the motivation because you're really in your own little silo and this, when you're doing this work and so we had a cohort because a lot of people are from all over the world that's working on the dissertation through this, and so I find myself always going back through the summer sessions and the summer sessions are not held in Santa Barbara, which is where the school is located. It's held somewhere else, and so I was able to spend three years going to XYZ, where they would hold the summer session. I would connect with people in person there. So then after those three years, they decided to XYZ and would do their summer sessions there and then they would move again eventually after three years. But because I forced myself to go to the summer sessions because I wanted to make sure I've connected with people one on one but at the same time, I wanted to see my professors. Besides seeing them on the screen or on the phone or whatever, I wanted to also see them in person, and they had different sessions there that I can actually go to talk about my work. I talked about my autoethnography and was a presenter. And so I really enjoyed that piece. But we also had a small group of us out in Point Richmond, where we would meet every other Sunday or so throughout our

process of getting the doctorate because we wanted to make sure everybody finished. There was a core group of us that would basically be each other's support.

Our topics were totally off, nobody had the same topics, but we would always meet together to either have somebody do a presentation or maybe we just needed to sit there, and everybody just needed to write. We would do that together. One of our professors would come out whenever we met up. For about four years, I had this group that I would actually go see on weekends and we would just sit there and have conversation and talk about our dissertation. We try to motivate each other and then we end up becoming each other student leaders for the actual dissertation itself. That was something that I think really pushed me and helped me to finish.

Just having that core group to work with and so you know, even now, once in a while, like on LinkedIn, you know they'll message me. It's just because we were able to have that space where we work together. Going to summer sessions and also having that core group see on the weekends helped.

Interviewer Wonderful, it's very rare to hear. That's wonderful.

Participant Yeah, it doesn't happen often. We had ours, but it was a very small group. So, it's really nice we had. We had a strong connection with everybody in that group. We're all done with our dissertation, so it was good for that purpose. It's wonderful.

Interviewer Thank you. The factors that impact your decision to pursue this program. Um, thank you for this answer. Next question, why distance education versus

residential? I think you answered that one. Um, tell me about your experiences with distance education. Specifically experiences during your coursework and then dissertation phase of your degree.

Participant I think with the coursework itself, because it was very interdisciplinary. You could go through courses that you wanted to take. Just make sure that you're meeting requirements. But then we also had professors that we could go to just to make sure that we were on course right. And so for me, going through the course work just because I think I had a good work ethic itself. That wasn't a problem. I really enjoyed being able to do some of the work. I did struggle during distance learning with my writing. I would have to get another student reader or just a friend to just proofread my work because I feel like maybe I wasn't going deep enough in terms of analyzing the materials or connecting it to that and so then I would find people. And luckily I was able to find people that would help support that work. Some professors did grade a little bit harder than others, which I appreciated because we just can't go through school having it too easy, right? And so, it was good when I was able to have conversations with the professors and they really dug a little bit deeper in the work and really questioned what I was doing. And so, there was times where I was just like, I wrote all this and then all of the sudden I have to start over and so I felt like you know, when that happens, you get a little deflated and you're like maybe I'll just hold off and not even do this right now and. Push that off until a little bit later and get that done. Depending on who you get and how the professors are, they've been pretty motivating. One of my professors ended up moving to another school down south

from XYZ. So I was able to come visit him there at the end of my dissertation.

So just even having those connections with people, they were really important.

But I would definitely say that you know through that experience, the coursework was a lot easier than just the writing of the dissertation. I think it's just finding the motivation, finding the structure, and making sure that you have an end point.

I knew that I had to write my last chapter.

And that took me the longest to do, and I had an idea of what I needed to do, but I think that pressure is like, if I don't finish it now, I'm going to have to pay more.

That really struck a chord and I knew I had to finish it. I had to get into the groove of certain things and then when you feel like you've sort of accomplished that piece of it already.

Sometimes I need a break. And sometimes with that break, that break takes a little bit longer and then all of the sudden you're like, oh wait, I haven't touched my paper.

Finding a routine and just making sure that we stick to it. And I always tell people now that they are getting their dissertation to get it done. The longer that you're in a program and you could only defer so much of it and I think I've exhausted all of those. I deferred it when I was writing my dissertation for about six months and did not pay anything. So I utilized that. But if I look back now, I should have completed my dissertation the summer that I walked in my graduation. I think that the writing of the dissertation and completing the last part was the hardest. Just have to make sure you push yourself to get to the point

and get through it and then really go through the motions once I get it done. Then I had to get somebody to proofread it.

So having a good friend that would be able to do that for you would be great.

And then just know that it does take a little bit of time for them to go through the whole approval process again. When I was almost done with my dissertation, I went through the approval process, then and when I took a hiatus and then came back to it, I had to go through the approval process again and that was another three months and so. I would say definitely get your dissertation done as quickly as possible.

Interviewer Good recommendation. What are some factors? Um, would you say that you felt played a role in your success in your education?

Participant I think my parents put a lot of pressure on me. I want to say it's pressure as in, besides the fact that they want us to do well, you know like they want us to be successful, but it's really because I want to make sure that I'm taking my family out of this cycle of poverty.

I feel like I have a responsibility to my siblings as well as my parents too. We're trying to accomplish or trying to do and I see my parents now. And you know, sometimes they do struggle, but luckily it's not like it was in the past. We can support them, right, if they happen to need something, we're like we can be there to buy that for them. Recently our parents were able to get two cars from us.

We were able to help support them in that way to buy them things that they probably wouldn't be able to buy for themselves. Right and so I think a lot of it

was just. My parents' cars broke down on the road and that is very unsafe and we cannot let that happen.

And so my sisters and I would come together and make it like a decision that we're going to do this. We're going to make some monthly payments and be that, and make sure that that's ok. We started saving for my parents because they don't have a retirement. They will never have a retirement. And so we started saving for them. So that way, in case they decide they need to go to Vietnam. Which every year you know, besides COVID. So COVID sort of helped. But whenever they decided to go to Vietnam, we're just like, ok. We need to somehow all like pitch in and fork up the money to give it to them so that they can go and you know donate it to family members or whatever.

I think a lot of it is just really trying to make sure that my parents are comfortable and really supporting them.

I think our next task in our journey is to buy them a house. You know, I mean, it's like that American dream trying to make sure that we do all these things for our parents and so I think that gives a little bit of pressure and wanting us to do well and then also on the back end.

Interviewer Let's look at your personal and academic experiences. What experiences would you say were the most significant, and why were they significant?

Participant I think growing up as a Vietnamese American. Being in a big family that had majority girls and our parents were really pushing us to go through and have a good education and knowing how we grew up in very much in poverty being on welfare, trying to like move from house to house like we saw that struggle and so

I think being part of the struggle growing up and then now being in education, and I'm definitely on the other side of that.

I see you know that with our students and families. I am more empathetic and want to support them and do the best that I can to make sure that things are more equitable.

Also I think having a different lens, you know. I feel like coming from an immigrant family and then having grown up in, you know, an area that is more impoverished, or even just having the experiences that I have experienced. I think a lot of educators may not have the same experiences. Everybody has a different story, and so I think just having that other lens to look at education has really helped me grow and be in this position.

And I think that's probably one of the main reasons why I'm now working in the equity area of education too, is because of some of the experiences that I've experienced myself and then of course, looking at our own bias and some of the systemic racism that's happening, right. Some of it, I faced and others, I was able to witness and see.

I'm going through and looking at data, some of the inequities are more relevant and so you know, I feel like now we have the job of making sure that we are supporting all of our students. I'm looking for where all the holes are and how we fill that to make sure that they're getting what they need.

Interviewer Thank you. Did your family or have they been supporting you through your doctoral studies?

Participant My parents definitely could not support me financially and they still can't handle it, but they let me know that they're there to support me. They always tell me, be happy, whatever you do, just be happy. In my mind, I'm like, I know you want me to become a doctor. They are like whatever you do, just be happy.

I'm just trying to be very positive. They feed me when they see me. They make sure to call me asking if I'm ok. They did that through my whole dissertation too. They're still focused on trying to work and make their own money so that way they can feed themselves and try to live a bit more comfortably. I appreciate that whenever I get those little messages or phone calls, but I think it's just their way of supporting me. They're getting older, so with age, they're not going to be able to work anymore. How do we set them up down the road? I need to look for a one story house for them. Who's going to live there? I think of my little brother taking care of them. They have someone that's there to be able to watch them or support them. Of course, they have grandkids that can help as well.

Interviewer Oh, that's good. Tell me about your relationships outside of your doctoral studies? Let us talk about your relationships in your home, um, any spouse or children play a role in your studies. You talked about your parents already.

Participants I am trying to set an example for my siblings too. I have, like I said, seven other siblings. Overall, they are doing pretty well. We do have to deal with mental health within the family, so that can be difficult. Some of them are having kids. One of my siblings has a kid with special needs. I have a brother that is in community college. I have a husband. He's Chinese, I would say very Americanized Chinese. His parents were born in Cuba and in XYZ. And so we

do have some struggles when we have conversations because I'm coming from a lens that I grew up in and it is very different from him. I need to support my family and he was like why can't they have a retirement. Why can't they just put money away? It is a very different mentality. We always have these discussions and sometimes debates about how we live and what people are doing. That's just their decision and so we have different perspectives for sure. I think it's just managing those perspectives when we're having these types of conversations. We don't have any kids, and so that was something that we always wanted to have and we just found out that we just can't. That changes our perspective and what the next steps in our lives are going to be. We discussed downsizing our house. Should we start thinking about traveling more. I think it's just now, at this point in our career in our lives, it's just reconsidering some things because we just thought that that was going to be our future and now it's not. I do come from a large Vietnamese American family with lots of cousins and lots of people that live around particular area that I can always check in on or see if they're ok. We also have a lot of family from Vietnam that have been sponsored here to America. It took one family 14 years after sponsorship to come here. I have cousins that are in the nail business, one of them actually owns a nail salon.

I do find that it's very interesting when I have those types of conversations about kids and school, they don't quite take my advice and listen.

Interviewer Alright, almost to the end. We have a couple more questions, three more. Are there any values that you brought to your doctoral process based on your Asian

heritage that you feel helped you in the process? And are there any values or expectations that you feel possibly hindered your persistence experiences?

Participant Work ethics and trying to work hard. That was something that I have always done just growing up and I knew that that was really important. I'm not letting my parents down too, so going through school and making sure that I do well, I've really tried to push myself to do that. It could also be a hindrance, in a sense, I'm always trying to make sure that you know my parents are going to be doing okay or my family members are going to be doing okay. If I'm so focused on these other areas, then I might not be able to support them in the way that I could now. But I feel like overall experience because it was distance learning program because it was so flexible and I was able to build my own schedule and that really helped a lot. And so I wasn't tied down to any one specific thing unless I had to go to a class at this specific time but because it was so flexible in that sense, I made it what I put into it. And so if I put in a lot of effort and time when I would be able to experience that. If I put in every little effort and time, then you know my experiences won't do that as good. I feel like I've exhausted what I needed to do in the program to build relationships and connect with. Professors and peers and have a group of friends from the program that I can call up if I really wanted to check on how they were doing, but that the program because of them allowing me to do the research that I wanted to research has really helped me to have some closure, but then at the same time, like more respect my own family and their experiences that we went through.

Interviewer Thank you. If you were an Asian American male, do you feel that persistence experiences would be differed? Why or why not?

Participant It would be different. I feel like with being a female in this role, I know for myself, I feel like I hold a certain type of responsibility on my family that they are reliant on me more so than if it was a male. Like if they had an eldest son. So I know that, I'm coming from a biased point of view because we've had so many girls in our family, so I've always, I felt like I bear that responsibility for my parents to make sure that you know our family is doing well. I'll probably end up doing that until I die. Being a girl, being that obedient one, making sure that I've always listened to my parents and or you know my dad gives me that look and then I was like, okay, I just need to make sure I listen. When we go to my uncle's house for ceremonies, the boys always have the privilege to be the first one to burn the incense. The females have to wait and burn incense afterwards. There are still traditions that we follow while living in America. My siblings are at that age where they're still trying to figure it out and make money. They try to support themselves and then if they have families, they're trying to figure out how to do the best to support their families. I feel like if I set an example for them, it would be very helpful for them to be able to see that, like if she's able to do this, we need to make sure we do that. I'm setting a positive example for them and their family. It makes my parents proud.

Interviewer Last question, is there anything else that you suggest I ask individuals participating in the study.

- Participant** Ask participants what their purpose is when they go to a distance learning program. Every program is different, but find a school that best suits you and what you want to research.
- Interviewer** And that's it. Thank you, thank you so much. I appreciate your time and a lot of stuff that you mentioned did hit a lot of areas.
- Participant** For the timeline template, you start putting things down and then when you start talking and going through the questions, you start expanding more to your timeline.
- Interviewer** Yes, that's why I just, it depends, and some people prefer to send the timeline in first and then as they talk about they're like, oh, I could have added that or something would wait til later. Then their timeline is very long. So yeah, so I always leave it open to you.
- Participant** When do you need the timeline by? I'm just working right now so if I can get it next maybe 2 weeks.
- Interviewer** And as I'm typing up the transcripts and then you can compare anything. I'll send you the transcripts so you can go through it and see if I missed anything, misspell anything. Hopefully I caught everything correctly and then you can review it and if it looks good, then I'll put all of it together.
- Participant** Ok, sounds good.
- Interviewer** Well thank you so much for your time again.
- Participant** Yeah, good luck with everything.

APPENDIX J: JOURNAL LOG

	Mary	Lisa	Sophia	Mia	Jade	Grace	Anna	Emily	Leah	Elena	Lily
Emailed participants	7/14/2021	7/29/2021	7/29/2021	8/25/2021	8/26/2021	8/26/2021	8/27/2021	8/31/2021	8/31/2021	9/7/2021	9/10/2021
Follow up questions					9/14/2021						
Sent link for consent/survey	7/14/2021	7/29/2021	7/29/2021	8/30/2021	8/26/2021	8/26/2021	9/10/2021	8/31/2021	8/13/2021	9/7/2021	9/12/2021
Re-sent link for consent/survey					9/18/2021						
Informed Consent Complete	7/15/2021	7/29/2021	7/30/2021	8/30/2021		9/2/2021	9/10/2021	8/31/2021	8/31/2021	9/9/2021	9/12/2021
Survey Complete	7/15/2021	7/29/2021	7/30/2021	8/30/2021		9/2/2021	9/10/2021	8/31/2021	9/7/2021	9/9/2021	9/12/2021
Sent Timeline	7/17/2021	7/30/2021	8/2/2021	8/31/2021		9/2/2021	9/10/2021	9/1/2021	9/7/2021	9/10/2021	9/12/2021
Re-sent timeline			8/19/2021								
Set-up interview	7/29/2021	8/9/2021	9/3/2021	9/10/2021	9/23/2021	9/6/2021	9/17/2021	9/8/2021	9/9/2021	9/16/2021	9/22/2021
Reschedule interview									9/19/2021		
Interview Complete	7/29/2021	8/9/2021	9/3/2021	9/10/2021	9/23/2021	9/6/2021	9/17/2021	9/8/2021	9/19/2021	9/16/2021	9/22/2021
Timeline Complete	7/25/2021	8/10/2021	8/30/2021	9/3/2021	9/18/2021	9/6/2021		9/1/2021	9/19/2021		
Sent interview transcript review	8/30/2021	9/12/2021	9/19/2021	9/20/2021	9/24/2021	9/20/2021	9/20/2021	9/20/2021	9/20/2021	9/20/2021	9/24/2021
Approved transcript	9/12/2021	9/27/2021	9/20/2021						9/24/2021		9/25/2021

APPENDIX K: PROCEDURAL LOG

7/09/2021	IRB Approval
7/12/2021	Emailed potential participants
7/14/2021	First participant responded, willingness to participate
7/15/2021	First participant completed informed consent and demographic survey
7/17/2021	Sent timeline to first timeline
7/24/2021	Posted research flyer in social media
7/25/2021	Completed first timeline
7/29/2021	Set up first interview
7/29/2021	Completed first interview
8/30/2021	Sent first interview transcript for participant to review
9/10/2021	Emailed last participant to participate
9/12/2021	First approved interview transcript from participant
9/12/2021	Sent last informed consent, demographic survey, and timeline
9/22/2021	Set up last interview
9/22/2021	Complete last interview
9/24/2021	Sent last interview transcript for participant to review
9/25/2021	Received final approved interview transcript from participant

APPENDIX L: REFLEXIVE JOURNALING - INTERVIEWS

Interview with Mary 7/29/2021

She was born in Saigon, Vietnam.

7/29/2021 - I reflect back and realize that during that time period, Saigon was still around before it became Ho Chi Minh City.

She brings up speaking only English in the household.

7/29/2021 - I look back and I do the same. I only get to practice speaking Chinese if I'm on the phone with my parents or eating out at a restaurant.

She brings up leaving Saigon at the age of 10 years old before coming to the United States.

7/29/2021 - I look back and remember my parents telling me how we left Vietnam when I was still young. I was only 5 years old.

She talked about having to escape Vietnam with her sister and living in the Philippines for 18 months as a refugee.

7/29/2021 - Since I left when I was only 5, I really don't have any memories. Our family (parents, brother, and myself) abandoned everything when we escaped from Vietnam. We left with only the clothes on our backs and escaped in the middle of the night. I remember when I was in the 5th grade when we watched the movie "The Killing Field" in class and I was crying. I came home and told my mom what a sad movie it was. My mom told me that I just don't have any memories and that I probably blocked it all out but she said this is how we escaped Vietnam. When we finally made it to Malaysia and lived there for one year as refugees.

She spoke of being a refugee and having to work, support herself and then support her family in Vietnam too.

7/29/2021 - My parents worked on getting both sides of our family sponsored to the United States. Later, my parents were able to sponsor the entire family over including my grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. We all lived close by. Since I was the oldest, I would be responsible to take all the kids to school. I think I was 11 when I was responsible for taking all my cousins to school and we would all come home together. Since both my parents both worked and left before we were up, I learned very quickly at a young age to cook for me and my brother and do the dishes. I remember being too small and always had to stand on a chair to cook and wash dishes, I think I was only 6). I would make dinner and have it covered up so that when my parents got home, they would have dinner.

She stated that she was always interested in learning

7/29/2021 - I completely understand, I feel like I can be a lifetime student.

She mentioned that getting her PhD was more fulfilling and more like my personal intrinsic satisfaction.

7/29/2021 - I completely agree with her and felt the same with pursuing my doctorate.

8/5/2021 – After reviewing what she stated about getting her Ph.D. was more fulfilling, I wondered how many more participants pursued their doctorate for personal goals as well.

During her PhD, her mother passed away.

7/29/2021 - This really was hard time for me when I was in graduate school and lost my grandfather.

Her bachelor degree was the hardest, because her English was not good enough and she was learning English at the same time

7/29/2021 - I remember coming to school and when I was in Kindergarten, I didn't have any help with school because my parents didn't speak English. I remember the school assigned a tutor to help me in class but I was Chinese and the tutor was Vietnamese. He got frustrated with me but we didn't speak the same language. So learning English was not easy but I was still young.

She brought up wanting her niece and nephew to know that there was someone in the family called doctor, so that was her motivation.

7/29/2021 - I feel the same, that's why I continue to go to school with having 3 masters and now working on my doctorate. I wanted to be the first in my family to be called a doctor.

Her relationships with her faculty member, she stated that she remembered a couple of them.

7/29/2021 - Thinking back, I don't remember too many faculty members throughout my education. I remember Ms. Lyons and Mr. Silva in high school. Then I remember Dr. Jill Jones, Dr. James Ellar, Dr. Ellen Black, Dr. Scott Watson, and Dr. Lucinda Spaulding.

When she talked about values that you brought to the doctoral process based on Asian heritage, she stated that Asian, are hard-working people, not to give up, it was difficult, it's not always easy but just stick with it and get it going. As far as Asian values that were hindering, she stated that growing up in Vietnam, she was not to talk back or to ask questions.

7/29/2021 - I can relate to her, it's considered disrespectful. We work hard, put our head down and keep to ourselves. We don't ask a lot of questions or say too much.

Interview with Lisa 8/9/2021

Lisa spoke about her parents being immigrants from Vietnam, decided that it was important for them to escape Vietnam on a family boat.

8/9/2021 - My family (parents, brother and myself) escaping Vietnam on a boat. This resonated with me personally because how we escaped Vietnam.

8/12/2021 - Reviewing her statement again and how this captured my interest and go back and review the participants and compare how many were immigrants and how many were born in the United States. Will this data impact their persistence or perception?

She mentioned how her cousins and family members were left behind and didn't make it out. My family had to leave behind both sides from my mom and dad's family behind too.

Her family escaped in the middle of the night before getting to Hong Kong where they stayed for about nine months before getting sponsored by a XYZ Church in XYZ.

8/9/2021 - My family left Vietnam and stayed in Malaysia for one year before we were sponsored to the United States by a Catholic Church.

8/12/2021 – Reviewing her statement again and wondered how many other participants immigrated to this country by a sponsor or lived in a refugee camp before coming to the United States.

Growing up, she spoke Vietnamese and her parents insisted on trying to teaching the kids to speak and listen to the language.

8/9/2021 - My parents, especially my grandparents only had us speak Chinese in the house so we understood Chinese but our family spoke several Chinese dialects in addition to Vietnamese. So I was exposed to several languages growing up.

8/12/2021 – This will be interesting to compare how many participants actually spoke their family dialect in addition to English.

She grew up being one of the very few Vietnamese families that actually have a Vietnamese name, so she was made fun of. She ended up changing her name in middle school without her parents knowing.

8/9/2021 - I remember this all through school too, kids would be very mean and so I just had my teacher call me by Cathy all through high school.

8/13/2021 – Don't know how many other participants changed their name from their birth name.

She stated that her parents pushed the kids to have a good education and how she grew up in poverty.

8/9/2021 - We came to America, my parents only had \$20 in their pocket, we didn't have anything and were poor. They always told us to push for a good education and career.

She talked about work ethics, work hard and not letting her parents down and trying to push herself.

8/9/2021 - I felt the same when she made that statement, I want to do this for me for I also want to make my parents proud because they worked so hard to have us come to America so that we would have a future.

She discussed how being a girl, being that obedient one, and making sure she's always listening to her parents.

8/9/2021 - I always felt the same especially in my culture and always listening to my parents, we never would raise our voices or argue with my parents even if we disagreed.

She brought up something very interesting about privilege of being the boy, carrying the last name.

8/9/2021 - This is really interesting, I didn't see this so much in my family but in the community, I definitely saw this. My parents have a small family business and I would spend times out there helping them and I always remember the older generation saying that the business should be taken over by the son and not the daughter. Boys were always put above the girls.

Interview with Sophia 9/3/2021

She described her new position where the company did a reorganization and didn't include the faculty, so when she was hired and introduced, many of them didn't say anything or even look at her. It was really hard because this was a new position and she was alone, the employees were not welcoming or kind.

9/3/2021 - I can completely relate, when I moved cross country to a new job with my family, I remember feeling the same way. It was really hard because people did not respect your position and undermined any attempts in helping the organization. I agree that this is very difficult when new employees are subject to cruelty, discrimination and demeaning behavior.

She mentioned going to work at a place where there were not a lot of Asian people.

9/3/2021 - I can definitely relate to that when I came to work at a few of my recent companies where there were only a handful of people working in the company.

9/7/2021 – After reviewing this statement again, do any of the other participants think of this at their place of employment or are more aware of their nationality since what's been happening with all the hate crimes.

She stated how her parent stressed the importance of education.

9/3/2021 - This is something that I have heard a lot of and can completely relate to. Go to school and get good grades.

She described how different it was from high school to college, how much harder it was and had to put more effort in studying. It's weird and hard to describe but it is very difficult and different. You almost feel as if you are on your own.

9/3/2021 - I went to community college and I can relate to how she was feeling.

She brought up feeling disappointed when her advisor did not provide any feedback when she submitted a paper other than it looks good.

9/3/2021 - I know I've been there and felt like I didn't get much out of some of the classes I was taking and I can understand why some teachers don't make an impression on education while some are so amazing and gives me critical feedback.

She described her motivation being her parents being a big part of that.

9/3/2021 - I feel that a big reason for me in going to school and getting the degrees I have is from my parents push for a good education.

She stated that her faculty and her advisor played a big role in her success.

9/3/2021 - I know that going through this program has been tough especially getting to the dissertation. My advisors have been very helpful in getting me registered but ultimately, my faculty have been the most impactful. Dr. Black always encouraged me when I was in her class during residency and she kept motivating and believing in me. She is very special. I remember taking a class with Dr. Ellar who just was so inspiring, I struggled before coming to his class and how he was so excited about my topic. The one person who made the most impact on me was Dr. Spaulding, from the first day we met, she was my strength. I had many moments where I struggled to move forward and I have to admit, I wanted to quit. I didn't have the time, there

was too much going on in my personal life and my career but through it all, she always pushed me and believed in me. I think sometimes more than me believing in myself. I just know that every time I hit that roadblock, I would just set up a call with Dr. Spaulding and all of the sudden, things started moving again. I can't describe that feeling.

9/7/2021 – this will be interesting to compare the DDPIS results to see if there were significant satisfactions with the institutional integration and faculty integration.

She described the values that was brought from her Asian heritage as hard work ethic. She talked about how Hmong people were farm people, worked hard for a living and growing up and as a girl, you have to help out like washing dishes. You couldn't sit around or you were called lazy girl.

9/3/2021 - I can relate to this, my parents embedded that in us, don't depend on other people handing you everything. If you want something, you have to work hard and earn it. As for the comment about the girls, it's so true. As a girl, you were expected to always help out, whether it was in your home or even when you went to other people's home. We always arrived early so that we can help out, helped with the preparation, cooking, and cleaning up after. We were not allowed to just relax and sit down; we were expected always to help out.

She mentioned face saving.

9/3/2021 - It's interesting but in Asian cultures, parents like to brag and compare their kids with other peoples kids. As far as face saving, we never want to give our parents a bad reputation. She stated that when she was starting the program, she had to finish. It matters so much because other people or even family members will always ask to see if you finished what you started. So, once we start something, we have to push to finish.

She stated that this same value also was a hinderance because, you feel that you are now obligated and you never say no to your parents.

9/3/2021 - This brings up sometimes where it is hard because traditionally, you listen to your parents and follow their wishes. I can feel that my parents are more relaxed but growing up, there was always this feeling that you had to do good or other people would look down at you.

Interview with Mia on 9/10/2021

She mentioned learning from a very young age that people were treated differently.

9/10/2021 - This brings up my childhood and all the way through high school, because I was Asian, I was treated differently. It was ok during my elementary school, I saw some differences and how people treated us. I can look back now and realize how different I was compared to my classmates. I saw the bullying and name calling in middle school and especially in high school. It was very evident there.

9/13/2021 – This would be interesting to go back and compare with the other participants, if they felt the same way growing up being a minority.

She brought up being put in a box, where you felt that you had certain careers to go into. She stated that it was Filipinos, you have to be a nurse or in some type of health care setting.

9/10/2021 - It's funny now that I look at it but it's so true, you were always stereotype as Asians being a doctor or lawyer or Asians were good in math and science. I remember being in high school, I think it was my general science class when I think there was like 2 Asians in my class and a Caucasian girl made the comment that Asians were stealing all the good grades and that was why she couldn't get an A. So it was hard.

She brought up the residency and how it allowed her to develop a couple of relationships with her cohort.

9/10/2021 - I can say the same thing that I was so glad I was able to attend my residency in person and to meet some wonderful classmates and teachers. It was a very memorable moment and being able to step foot at the Liberty campus and tour the campus.

She talked about not being an emotional person or crying but being around her cohort of people, who were going through the same things, same struggles, and not being a very emotional person, she allowed herself to cry.

9/10/2021 - I didn't quite feel this with my residencies but working on my dissertation and doing these interviews with the participants has allowed me to relate to them, connect with what they've gone through and how they are feeling, it has been very emotional. As I am doing my interviews and journaling, I can feel the emotions coming up and have cried. I just think back that maybe I never allowed myself to really feel all the things I was feeling or maybe I wasn't aware of it before.

Interview with Emily on 9/8/2021

She stated that she wasn't born in the United States but having to leave at a very young age and majority of her life was living her in the United States.

9/8/2021 - I left when I was very young too but I should have some memories since I was 5 and lived in the refugee camp til I was 6 before I came to the United States.

She mentioned how her dad was looked down upon for having daughters in comparison to her uncles.

9/8/2021 - I didn't see this too much within family but outside the family, we saw a lot of this in the community where they believed having boys were better. My parents have a business and the customers would always tell my dad that the business should be taken over by the son and not the daughter.

She described having to work full time and school fulltime, for four years to support her husband and she decided to go to school because the program was online.

9/8/2021 - I had to work full time, take a teaching position which also going to school. I supported my family and I remember how tough that was to try to balance family, work and school all by yourself.

She also brought up having family obligation and staying up really late.

9/8/2021 - I can relate to her with always being on the go and having little sleep because there is always work to be done, from either regular work to school to family so there is only time during the late hours to do your school work.

9/15/2021 – Taking another look into her statement, how many participants experienced the same thing. Did they cope with their family duties and obligations and carved out time for their personal educational goals so that it did not interfere with the day to day.

Because as woman, she stated that you had to be the mom, the daughter in law, the good wife to make our husband look good out there.

9/8/2021 - I do feel like this is something that is cultural that no matter what we do, you are judged and have to remember how important your decisions are. You try to always remain the “good” everything to everyone.

Interview with Grace on 9/6/2021

She mentioned Asians having to speak up and to break out of the cultural habits that keep them from speaking up.

9/6/2021 - I realized that she was speaking the truth because I fall into that category. I try to speak up but I stay quiet and take time to process the information. I found that I am speaking up more than I was before, as people have pointed out that I don’t speak up. This is really a cultural piece about respecting others but not having a place where we can stand and voice our opinions.

9/11/2021 – looking back at this statement, how many participants also felt this way because of their cultural upbringing.

She mentioned her role in where it was emotionally abusive.

9/6/2021 - I found that I can relate to her situation where the places I worked for was very hostile and abusive. Companies would have leaders yelling at their employees and have arguments in front of others with no regards to the employees. I always believed that as a manager, we still respect our staff and that when there are issues, it should be in a private place with a private conversation. It was so toxic, I remember leaving work and having to cry in the car and I would have to sit in the car for a while when I got home because I needed to have an emotional release. I can relate to her especially when it comes to bad work environment.

She stated that Asians had a strong work ethic, it also feeds our desire.

9/6/2021 - I feel the same way, I always think back to my parents and can hear it, just work hard. I think that’s what drives me, not to be better than anyone but to always work hard, I think that’s in my blood.

She started describing the model minority myth.

9/6/2021 - I have always felt that growing up. There’s been that stereotype that Asians are really good at school and get good grades. Another myth is that all Asians are good in math.

She started talking about doing what makes you happy, don’t care so much about what other people think, and how Filipino parents never say that.

9/6/2021 - I can completely relate when it comes to what she was saying because parents want us to be happy but they don't know how to relate it. Asian parents are emotionally detached when it comes to expressing their happiness or being proud of their children. I know that with my parents, they are not touchy feely kind of parents and they don't really express it. As I have gotten older, I am seeing that more but growing up, I didn't see it too much.

She talked about other family members, like the toxic aunts saying that she was not one of them because she didn't speak the language. She also started talking about how some discriminated against her.

9/6/2021 - I have felt this with some relatives and in the community as well. They are always comparing successes and accomplishments against their children and whose child is better, career, or school. It's really sad but within our own culture, either family or within the community, discrimination is really harsh.

Interview with Leah on 9/19/2021

She described being born in Vietnam and coming here when she was only three months old.

9/19/2021 - I can relate being born in another country and coming to the United States but I was much older, 5 and in the refugee camp for 1 year, 6 years old by the time I came to the United States. It's strange because I have no memories of Vietnam or Malaysia.

9/22/2021 – It occurred to me if any other participants remembered their time if they were born outside the United States.

Her first language was English.

9/19/2021 - I am so fortunate that my grandparents pushed us to learn to speak Chinese as well as picking up other dialects along the way.

She brought up growing up in a little town where everybody kind of knows everybody for a long time.

9/19/2021 - I didn't grow up in a small town but I can relate because we have a strong network within the community because I grew up in a heavily Asian community.

She brought up going to a quarter system school and she was taking 21 to 25 quarter units every quarter when she was only suppose to take up to 18.

9/19/2021 - This brought back some memories when I was going back to college, I took a few years off when I had my son but I always wanted to get back to school. I remember taking anywhere from 21-28 credits at 2 different colleges so that I could get done quicker. I felt like I had to catch up with all my classmates that went straight into college. I worked really hard trying to balance being a single parent, working full time and going to school fulltime. I would drop off my son at daycare and rush to take classes at Orange Coast Community College in the morning before work and then my parents helped out by picking him up. After work, I would drive out to Long Beach Community College and take night classes. I did this 5 days a week and then I would take a Saturday class if they offered it. It was so tough because I didn't see much of my son but I felt I needed to do this so that I can provide a better future for him.

She mentioned how she fell in love with Hospice when she was going through her experience with her dad. It wouldn't be hard to go into a field that is the closest to you.

9/19/2021 - I remember working as a massage therapist and how I always wanted to share with people on how to take care of their body, I guess that's how I got into teaching. I never thought it was something that I wanted to do as a career.

She brought up being diagnosed with breast cancer. The first thing that popped into my head was my cousin who passed away from breast cancer when she was only 45. She didn't tell anyone, the whole family kept it to themselves and we only knew about it after she passed.

9/19/2021 - I just can't imagine not having family to be there, to help and support her and her family emotionally. I remember being in Florida, she lives in California, when I got the call that she had just passed away and that they were holding her funeral right after, it didn't even give me enough time to get a flight to go back.

She talked about adopting her second little dog and how she's a rescue.

9/19/2021 - I think back at my little guy, cat, who is now 6 years old. They told me that he was the weakest in the litter and that he probably won't make it. I remember bringing him home and now I look at how happy and healthy he is.

She described how my research is going to be the light of a lot of Asian women who want to get their PhD's because I did the research. It meant so much to hear these words and how impactful my research will be.

9/19/2021 - Going into my dissertation, I wanted to just finish but after hearing these stories and talking to so many, I didn't think my research was going to make that big of a difference. I remember Dr. Spaulding telling me that after my dissertation, I needed to publish and speak on my topic. I guess she was right, I didn't think I wanted that but I feel that this is an important topic.

She made a comment how in the MBA, there's a lot of finance, and how she is the one Asian American that cannot do math.

9/19/2021 - I have to laugh because I can relate to her comment. I am not a math person as well. I use to tell my students that if they need tutoring help, my door is always open but if it's math, I won't be able to help them. We'll have to sit there and learn it together.

She mentioned working with her committee members and not know what they look like.

9/19/2021 - I think at how fortunate to live in a time where we can conference with our chairs and committee member and just not on the phone. I think that it's a different experience to actually see them and not just hear them on the phone.

9/23/2021 – Would this be something that would also be a similar experience for the other participants, how many of them were able to meet their chairs or committee members in person.

She describes her experiences with her colleagues/peers and how they remained close.

9/19/2021 - It's nice to hear, I have from time to time hear from some of my colleagues/peers but they have become somewhat distant.

She talks about how her mom is really supportive, her siblings seem to be proud of her in saying she's getting a doctorate.

9/19/2021 - It's nice to get that support, I think similar to her, my family understand that I'm going to school, and they are proud of me but in their own way.

She described Asian values as Asians being very hard workers. She describes it as it's in her, just know how to work hard even with her background, she says it's a different kind of hard work that Asians do.

9/19/2021 - It's interesting how she makes this statement, I don't know how to describe it but I can understand what she means. It's in their values, beliefs, but it exists that they work very hard and overcome obstacles that's hard to describe. I reflect and look at how my parents came to America with 2 young children, they never went on any government assistance and after staying with our sponsors for only 2 weeks, my parents moved out into a 2 bedroom apartment. They worked so hard and eventually saved enough to buy a car, and then get a second car. They were able to buy a house and open a business but they started with only \$20 and to be as successful as they are. That's hard work.

She stated that the American cultural view of Asian women that they are quiet, giggle and put our hands over our mouths and very sweet, like a Japanese geisha.

9/19/2021 - It's very interesting how she references the cultural view but it's sad but I've seen that. It is assumed that Asian women will remain quiet and are not strong women.

She mentioned how people would perceive her as – she looks different, expect her to sound different, and stuns them when they wonder why she speaks English so well.

9/19/2021 - I have many moments similar to that, it's that stereotype, she's Asian, she probably doesn't speak English very well. I am very quiet by nature so I tend not to say too much and just let people speak their mind and usually don't say anything til the very end or before I leave. I don't know why it comes to such a shock to people that because Asians look different that they can't speak English.

She brings up never having to experience discrimination til she got older or that it was there and she didn't realize it.

9/19/2021 - I guess I don't either, I made the comment the other in a conversation that I forget that I'm Asian until someone points it out. I just see everyone as the same, they are all people, I've never seen race or any of that before but in the past year it's been very prominent. This starting bringing all kinds of memories of all the times that I was seen to be different or discriminated at, but I guess I never let it bother me but reflecting back, I've experienced quite a bit of it. I experienced it all through K-12 at work, it's been an emotional rollercoaster. When I was aware of it at my workplace, I brought it up to my superiors, and to HR but nothing happened. No follow up, nothing so I keep things to myself because I just felt like no one would listen or hear me out. Maybe that's the Asian culture, keep you head down and keep working. Work harder and try to not cause trouble because that's how it is seen to speak up.

Interview with Elena on 9/8/2021

She mentioned studying the topic of workforce bullying because she was experiencing having that at work.

9/8/2021 - I try not to think too much about this topic since I grew up with it almost all my life and didn't really experience it til I got older. I remember how hard those days were to sit in the office and have co-workers be so rude and mean to you. I remember the yelling, the closed door talking behind your back, little huddles, etc. It was tough during those times and leaving work, I'd sit in the car and cry and try to not bring the emotion home to my family. This is something that I went through by myself and didn't have anyone to share this with until recently.

9/9/2021 – Looking back at what she experienced, did other employees witness what was going on and did anyone speak up. This will be interesting to compare with other participants experiences and did they also experience bullying in the workplace or at all growing up.

She stated that it took her awhile to figure it out because it's not the expectation or sort of behavior in an adult working situation.

9/8/2021 - I would have thought the same thing, I wasn't aware of it for a while too. I saw it happen but I was brought up to not say anything and just keep it to myself because you don't want to cause any trouble. I always thought that way but it got so bad, when I finally stood up and said something, it was just pushed under the rug and nothing was done. The behavior continued for a long time and anyone that I worked closely with received the same behavior to them. But instead of feeling good about speaking up, a few of my coworkers and myself were retaliated against but we had no one to go to. That was probably the worst moment to feel so vulnerable and not be able to do anything about it and not to trust the system.

She describes doing the research as a way of therapy through the situation, because it was very, very emotionally damaging, especially in confidence.

9/8/2021 - I feel that sometimes this wound is still open and hasn't closed yet, I've talked with others but I don't feel that there is closure. I do feel judged for speaking up and that my privacy for the situation did not take place. It was like there was no one to confide in because they would tell others and the people who were doing the bullying were proud of their actions.

She brought up how her company, HR and legal reasons why the company didn't want to talk about the topic, leaving them up to lawsuits. The best way for the company to address this was to pretend that it was not happening and they politely told her that it was great information and they will call you when they were ready.

9/8/2021 - I had the same situation happen to me, actually, it was brought to many people's attention and went close to the top when it was asked to get addressed but after the call with HR, that was it. Nothing happened, no return call, the workplace culture got worse and they started retaliating on those of us that spoke up.

She described one of the companies she worked for where she was completely stressed out, her time, weekends, nights, lunch and all working moments belongs to the boss and not allowed to leave until she leaves.

9/8/2021 - This brings back so many memories of a company I use to work for, it was like déjà vu. I was doing well, I loved the job and the coworker but the director, she felt like she owned you. She would call meetings last minute and hold everyone til late in the evening.

When I was leaving the company, the company offered me a bump in my salary to stay but I remember her words to me, “you will have to put in more hours if you accept the salary bump.” I guess looking back, I left because of her toxic behavior.

She talked about getting yelled at in the company.

9/8/2021 - This was such an emotional time when I had several co-workers who were constantly being disrespectful in front of others and students. I believed at the time it was just how they were at the company, but it only got worse, I didn’t realize it at the moment but it was a combination of discrimination, racism and bullying.

She mentioned how on the job, she saw the signs as a slow progression.

9/8/2021 - I just can’t imagine what she’s going through, it’s a tough place to be in and for me, I almost feel numb when I hear about situations like this. It happens too often even though we have all these courses and the companies would talk about the workplace and about HR. My past situations gave me a hard time in who to trust and who I can go to with the information and in the back of my mind, I always wonder if speaking up would be a mistake because it could make my work situation worse.

She described if her parents were supportive, she stated that it was completely over their heads because they understood being a doctor, etc. She also stated that her brother was a MD and when her parents introduce them to other people, they would say he’s an MD and this is my daughter.

9/8/2021 - I know my parents are proud that I’m going for my doctorate especially my mom but I remember how they would describe my career to other people or family members. When I worked as a Dean or Campus Director, they didn’t know how to explain that so they would tell everyone that I was a teacher.

Interview with Anna on 9/17/2021

She mentioned working with some students where most of them were at home due to financial need or because their parents wouldn’t allow them or just cultural value kind of thing.

9/17/2021 - This is something that I remember in my family because my parents and my aunts and uncles were the same, they wanted us to go to school close by. It is a cultural thing because my grandma use to say how we should all live close together.

She mentioned in values from Asian heritage was the sense of competitiveness.

9/17/2021 - It’s funny because I never saw myself as being competitive til I got older but it’s true, we try to be the best or the first. I really don’t know where that comes from.

She brings up being the model minority but it’s her own sense of academic pride and to continue to persist, and not fail.

9/17/2021 - It’s a strange feeling because it seems like I’m fighting with myself and I’m this way at work, I do the best and more than most people on my team because I feel like I have a responsibility to do well so that it reflects not just on me but for the team. It’s that sense of

burden that if you don't do well, it won't look good for the team but I can see that not everyone feels the same or care as much as I do. It's that external image or save face.

Interview with Lily on 9/22/2021

She mentioned realizing how she really enjoyed learning.

9/22/2021 - I felt the same way, I'm not sure if it's just being curious but I'm always looking up new courses, programs, something, that can challenge or peek my interest.

She brought up how she was fascinated with science and later how she decided to go to nursing school. She also mentioned subbing for a colleague and really enjoyed teaching.

9/22/2021 - I found myself reflecting on when I first went to college and there was a new program opening up and it would count as an elective course, and we could get a certificate in it. I found myself taking massage and fell in love with it because I saw how it was helping the patients coming to the school clinic. I didn't ever think I was going to be a teacher but I accidentally stumbled into that as well and have been teaching ever since. It's that joy when I'm trying to teach a student about the body and trying to make that connection and all of the sudden, you can see it in their face when everything starts to make sense.

She described not realizing that she was going to be that involved in her dissertation.

9/22/2021 - I think when I first started my dissertation, I didn't think it was going to turn out the way it did. The reason I am saying this is that after interviewing some of the participants, I didn't realize how much of a connection I had with their stories and how emotionally impacting it was. Every interview has been amazing, to hear where they started to where they are today, it's powerful.

She stated when she realized that she was a doctoral student and having to figure this out.

9/22/2021 - I really felt this way at times, I questioned whether I could get through the program. I have to say, there were some faculty members that I felt were not a good fit and actually made me feel like I was not going in the right direction, they were taking apart what my interests were, and I did feel like giving up. It didn't feel like it was my paper anymore and that they didn't understand what I was trying to do. I remember going to one of my residency courses and I am so blessed to have been in Dr. Watson's class. When I started talking about what I wanted my dissertation topic to be, he introduced me to Dr. Spaulding because he felt that she was a better fit for me. It was that moment that I felt good again about being in the doctoral program.

She mentioned having people like her boss being so supportive in finishing her journey.

9/22/2021 - I think back and feel the same way with my best friend always pushing me to continue and my friends who always encouraged me. I am surrounded by good people right now and where I am at, ask me that a few years ago and I would have a very different story. I can honestly say that support was not always around me, I did feel that I was battling being a mother, wife, working, going to school and making sure that I am still preparing a meal for the family. It was a tough time in my life.

She had met someone at the tail end of her dissertation and how he is very supportive in completing her education.

9/22/2021 - I am very fortunate now to be in a relationship that I have someone in my life that he understands how important my dissertation is to me.

Interview with Jade on 9/23/2021

She mentioned how she loved that her program had the mandatory residency every summer.

9/23/2021 - I am so glad that I was able to have residencies with Liberty, I believe we were the last class to have residency courses. I think it was the most impactful experience, it brings that reality that I am really in a doctoral program and I'm setting foot at the campus. I love the experiences with my faculty and met some interesting peers. Most of all, if I hadn't attended the residency, I don't know that I would have been introduced to my chair.

She stated that she took all the lead on the household management, all the parent teacher conferences and there was nothing that she missed.

9/23/2021 - I know that I was feeling the same way, I felt like I had to be everywhere and be part of everything. I was the sole provider in my household, managing a family, working 2 jobs, going to school and also making sure I was still able to come home to cook for the family.

APPENDIX M: AUDIT TRAIL TIMELINES

Participant/ Date of Receipt of Timeline	Key Events	Notes
Mary 7/25/2021	<p>12/18/1989 - arrived California after 18 months in a refugee camp in the Philippines</p> <p>1996 – received BS Accounting, first full time job Accountant</p> <p>1998 – attended Dale Carnegie course to improve public speaking</p> <p>2001-2003 – studied MBA</p> <p>2005 – moved out of U.S., worked fulltime in private equity investment firm</p> <p>2009-2012 – PhD Organization Management</p> <p>2013 – adjunct faculty</p> <p>2011-present – active member, International Foundation company</p>	<p>7/29/2021 - made reference during interview, expanded on coming to the US, first bachelors degree and attending Dale Carnegie</p> <p>10/3/2021 - add to portrait,</p> <p>10/3/2021 – add to portrait</p> <p>7/29/2021 – expanded on the journey of going through her doctorate</p> <p>10/3/2021 – add to portrait and description of participants</p> <p>10/3/2021 - Add to portrait and Table of Description of Participants</p>
Lisa 8/10/2021	<p>1981 – parents immigrated from Vietnam to US with sister, sponsored by Methodist Church</p> <p>1986-1994 – experienced discrimination and making fun of first name</p> <p>1994 – changed name in middle school to avoid name calling but changed name back in high school after mom found out</p> <p>2000 – graduated high school valedictorian, full ride scholarship to university</p>	<p>8/9/2021 – expanded during interview</p> <p>10/3/2021 – added to portrait</p> <p>8/9/2021 – described time during school with Asian name</p> <p>10/3/2021 – added to themes and significant statements</p> <p>10/3/2021 – added to themes and significant statements</p>

	<p>2005 – completed masters</p> <p>2006 – completed credential/masters in Educational Leadership at university</p> <p>2014 – finish doctorate and became elementary school principal</p> <p>2015 – got married, moved to unified school district as Principal</p> <p>2018 – became Director of Educational Equity</p>	<p>10/3/2021 – add to portrait</p> <p>8/9/2021 – provided additional information on her role and her background</p> <p>10/3/2021 - add to portrait</p>
<p>Sophia 8/30/2021</p>	<p>2009 – began higher education journey, completed technical associates degree and taking full time classes at university after</p> <p>2012-2013 – completed bachelors degree</p> <p>2015 – accepted teaching position at community college</p> <p>2016 – applied for Master’s program</p> <p>2021 – during final stages dissertation, felt defeated. Attribute completion with advisor who kept her on track. successfully defended dissertation</p>	<p>9/10/2021 – expanded on the journey and the challenges during dissertation</p> <p>10/4/2021 – referenced during interview, her doctoral journey</p>
<p>Mia 9/3/2021</p>	<p>2000 – graduated high school</p> <p>2005 – graduate college</p> <p>2007 – first time moving out on her own</p> <p>2009 – graduated with Master’s</p> <p>2013 – became manager at hospital</p> <p>2016 – started PhD, 9 year relationship ended</p> <p>2020 – graduated PhD General Psychology</p> <p>2021 – adjunct professor at university</p>	<p>9/10/2021 – talked about first time moving out</p> <p>9/10/2021 – spoke about her journey and her personal life</p> <p>10/4/2021 – add to portrait</p>
<p>Emily 9/01/2021</p>	<p>1981 – family immigrated to refugee camp</p> <p>1986 – came to US</p>	<p>9/8/2021 – expanded on immigrating to US</p>

	<p>1994 – graduated high school, attended university</p> <p>1998 – got into bad car accident, took year off school</p> <p>1999 – completed bachelors Biological Science</p> <p>2000 – got married</p> <p>2001 – had first child</p> <p>2003 – 2nd child born, worked as Health Program Manager and Research Director for Association</p> <p>2005 – 3rd child born, started Masters Social Work</p> <p>2008 – completed Master’s Social Work</p> <p>2009 – 4th child born</p> <p>2010 – father passed away, published 2 research articles</p> <p>2012 – started doctoral program</p> <p>2013 – published 2 research articles</p> <p>2016 – completed PhD Health Administration</p> <p>2018 – published part of dissertation in peer review journal</p>	<p>10/4/2021 – add to portrait and description of participants</p>
<p>Grace 9/6/2021</p>	<p>1990 – graduate high school</p> <p>1994 – graduated Bachelors in Communication Studies</p> <p>1995 – got married</p> <p>1997 – had first child</p> <p>1998 – had 2nd child</p> <p>2002 – had 3rd child</p> <p>2010 – started working in higher education</p> <p>2013 – graduated Masters Management</p> <p>2020 – graduated PhD Industrial/Organizational Psychology</p> <p>2020 – began work as Industrial Organizational Psychologist</p>	<p>9/6/2021 – talked about her husband and family</p> <p>9/6/2021 – described her work and her positions</p> <p>9/6/2021 – described her process through doctoral</p> <p>10/4/2021 – add to portrait and description of participants</p>

<p>Leah 9/19/2021</p>	<p>1973 – born and adopted, also came to the US</p> <p>1989 – mission trip to Russia</p> <p>1992 – graduated high school</p> <p>1995 – graduated undergrad</p> <p>1997 – started MBA</p> <p>1999 – father died</p> <p>2000 – graduated MBA</p> <p>2001 – became Executive (sitting in C-suite)</p> <p>2007 – started PhD</p> <p>2013 – graduated PhD Human Services</p> <p>2016 – mother died</p> <p>2018 – diagnosed with cancer</p> <p>2019 – 2021 – had multiple surgeries</p>	<p>9/19/2021 – talked about being adopted by her family 10/4/2021 – add to portrait</p> <p>9/19/2021 – discussed her trip and how much of an impact it had</p> <p>9/19/2021 – talked about her father</p> <p>9/19/2021 – talked about her role and how she got to the position</p> <p>9/19/2021 – talked about her mother and her siblings</p> <p>9/19/2021 – talked about her cancer</p>
<p>Elena 9/28/2021</p>	<p>1994 – completed high school</p> <p>1998 – completed undergraduate</p> <p>2001 – completed MBA</p> <p>2001 – 2002 – first professional position in non-profit healthcare</p> <p>2006 – first experience workplace bullying</p> <p>2008-2011 – second company faced with workplace bullying</p> <p>2010-2018 – PhD program</p> <p>2020 – furloughed/COVID</p> <p>2020 – started own company with business partner</p>	<p>9/8/2021 – talked about her experiences at her work</p> <p>9/8/2021 – discussed the impact being furloughed had</p>

<p>Jade 9/18/2021</p>	<p>1985 – graduated high school</p> <p>1987-1990 – graduated Psychology and Social Welfare</p> <p>1999 – graduated Masters Public Administration</p> <p>2020 – graduated Doctorate Educational Leadership</p>	<p>9/23/2021 – provided background on educational journey</p> <p>9/23/2021 – expanded her doctoral experience</p> <p>10/4/2021 – add to portrait and description of participants</p>
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APPENDIX N: THEMES

Research Questions	Themes	Significant Statements
What experiences motivate Asian American women to pursue doctoral studies through distance education programs?	Accomplish getting a doctoral degree	“go through doctoral was personal” (4)
	Intrinsically motivated, wanting personal growth	“personal intrinsic satisfaction”
	Motivated to be a Role Model	“always interested in” (3) “I want to be a role model” (4)
What personal factors contribute to the persistence experiences of Asian American women enrolled in distance education doctoral programs?	Commitment to finish degree	“I am setting a positive example”
	For personal goal attainment	“being a perfectionist, a double-edge sword” (3)
	Seen racism, bullying and discrimination	“balancing family, school and work” (3)
	Having the self-efficacy that they can	
What cultural factors influence how Asian American women experience persistence in distance education doctoral programs?	Ethnic background vs. cultural influences	“parents wanted me to become a doctor or lawyer” (5)
	Having high expectations as a minority	“don’t talk back to parents” (2)
	Discrimination within Asian community	“don’t ask for help” (4)
		“being Asian, put your head down and do the work” (2)
		“parents pushed education” (7)
		“Asians are seen as hard-working people”
What institutional factors influence the persistence of Asian American women enrolled in distance education doctoral programs?	University being a good fit	“university has a good structure program”
	Online format	

	Support from faculty and peers	“choosing a program that I will benefit the most from” (4)
	Residency was an important factor	“major factor was the required residency” (2)
		“appreciated the professors, they were supportive” (6)
		“having good relationship with peers” (3)
		“chose distance learning because it was flexible” (5)
		“support from faculty and peers” (4)
		“college was a good fit” (3)
What do Asian American women experience upon persisting to completion of distance education doctoral degree?	Sense of accomplishment for attaining degree	“I want to make my parents proud” (3)
	Degree attainment provide opportunity for career options/advancements	“Model Minority or Stereotype” (4)
	Break out of the stereotype	“wanting to help others” (3)
		“wanting to help community” (3)
		“Asian to speak up and break out of the cultural habits that keep us from speaking up”
		“Pride for their families in attaining degree”
		“to be called Doctor”

APPENDIX O: AUDIT TRAIL THEMES & SIGNIFICANT STATEMENTS

Research Questions	Themes	Significant Statements
1 What experiences motivate Asian American women to pursue doctoral studies through distance education programs?	1.1 Accomplish getting a doctoral degree ✓ 1.2 Intrinsically motivated, wanting personal growth ✓ 1.3 Motivated to be a Role Model ✓	1.1 "go through doctoral was personal" (4) 1.2 "personal intrinsic satisfaction" 1.1 "always interested in" (3) 1.3 "I want to be a role model" (4)
2 What personal factors contribute to the persistence experiences of Asian American women enrolled in distance education doctoral programs?	2.1 Commitment to finish degree ✓ 2.2 For personal goal attainment 2.3 Seen racism/bullying and discrimination 2.4 Having the self-belief that they can	2.1 "I am setting a positive example" 2.1 "being a perfectionist, a double-edge sword" (3) 2.4 "balancing family, school and work" (3) 2.4 <i>actual identity and vs. cultural identity</i>
3 What cultural factors influence how Asian American women experience persistence in distance education doctoral programs?	3.1 Ethnic background vs. cultural influences 3.2 Having high expectations as a minority ✓ 3.3 Community influences 3.4 Discrimination within Asian community 3.1 Asians are seen as hard-working people	3.1 "parents wanted me to become a doctor or lawyer" (5) 3.1 "don't talk back to parents" (2) 3.1 "don't ask for help" (4) 3.1 "being a girl, being obedient" (2) 3.1 "being Asian, put your head down and do the work" (2) 3.1 "parents pushed education" (7)
4 What institutional factors influence the persistence of Asian American women enrolled in distance education doctoral programs?	4.1 University being a good fit 4.2 Support from faculty and peers	4.1 "university has a good structure program" 4.1 "choosing a program that I will benefit the most from" (4)

	°	Residency was an important factor	4.3	4.9	"major factor was the required residency" (2)
				4.2	"appreciated the professors, they were supportive" (6)
				4.2	"having good relationship with peers" (3)
				4.1	"chose distance learning because it was flexible" (5)
				4.2	"support from faculty and peers" (4)
				4.1	"college was a good fit" (3)
5	°	Sense of accomplishment for attaining degree	5.1	5.1	"Lack of role models: (3)"
	°	Degree attainment provide opportunity for career options/advancements	5.2	5.1	"I want to make my parents proud" (3)
				5.3	"Model Minority or Stereotype" (4)
	°	Break out of the stereotype	5.3	5.2	"wanting to help others" (3)
				5.2	"wanting to help community" (3)
				5.3	"Asian to speak up and break out of the cultural habits that keep us from speaking up"
				5.1	"Pride for their families in attaining degree"
				5.1	"to be called Doctor"

Themes categorized

- R1 What experiences motivate Asian American women to pursue doctoral studies through distance education programs?
 - Theme 1.1 Accomplish getting a doctoral degree
 - Theme 1.2 Intrinsically motivated, wanting personal growth
 - Theme 1.3 Motivated to be a Role Model

- R2 What personal factors contribute to the persistence experiences of Asian American women enrolled in distance education doctoral programs?
 - Theme 2.1 Commitment to finish degree
 - Theme 2.2 For personal goal attainment
 - Theme 2.3 Seen racism, bullying and discrimination
 - Theme 2.4 Having the self-efficacy that they can

- R3 What cultural factors influence how Asian American women experience persistence in distance education doctoral programs?
 - Theme 3.1 Ethnic background vs. cultural influences
 - Theme 3.2 Having high expectations as a minority
 - Theme 3.3 Discrimination within Asian community

- R4 What institutional factors influence the persistence of Asian American women enrolled in distance education doctoral programs?
 - Theme 4.1 University being a good fit
 - Theme 4.2 Online format
 - Theme 4.3 Support from faculty and peers
 - Theme 4.4 Residency was an important factor

- R5 What do Asian American women experience upon persisting to completion of distance education doctoral degree?
 - Theme 5.1 Sense of accomplishment for attaining degree
 - Theme 5.2 Degree attainment provide opportunity for career options/advancements
 - Theme 5.3 Break out of the stereotype

Mary

Born in Vietnam been here over 30 years. English was not the first language.
Add to portrait

Work full time in investment firm and teach online.

After living in the Philippines for 18 months as a refugee.
Add to themes 3

I wasn't allowed to go to the university. So that time was really sad for me.
Add to themes 3

And because at the time it was no future, no matter what you learn or not, you couldn't do any better.

So yeah, I like, but I just accepted the fate that no future, just high school.

After living in the Philippines for 18 months as a refugee.

So this is when I try to reach out to my dream that going to the university first and then I liked it and was able to do it and achieved it.

Add to themes 2.4

Given that I was not speaking English fluently and you know, so it encouraged me to go further.

At first I was kind of reluctant, then believe in myself that I would be able to. Study doctorate degree or PhD but just try. Because for my job, I had to travel a lot, so I was not able to study on campus.

So after doing some research and I found that XXX University with would be a good fit for me.

Add to themes 4.1

Getting my PhD was a significant point in my life. I did not know that. I was always interested in learning.

Add to themes 1.1

It was for me like the goal to achieve something for my career, not for me personally. It means to help me get better job or implement more of my career but with PhD is different like my personal intrinsic satisfaction.

Add to themes 1.2

I felt more confident and I felt like I have achieved something. And this, that it is mine. So I would say, yeah this is the biggest point in my life.

during my PhD program. My mother passed away.

It is online. It was convenient for me because I could not go to on campus. The university was accredited.

Add to themes 4.1

Getting a PhD is not only for myself but also for my whole family. I want to make my parents proud.

Add to significant statement 1.3

For the next generation, like my niece and nephew, you know I don't have to be my own, but I want them to think about like there is someone in the family called doctor, so that's what my motivation

Add to significant statement 1.3

Role in success in her education was “Determination”

Add to themes 2.4

My husband is the one that you know fully supported me. Not just from the family, from parents, but in general, **I would have to say the Asian, hard working people** and I’m not the exception. So that helps a lot.

Add to significant statement 3.5

Not to give up, sometimes, it was difficult, it’s not always easy. But it just stick with it and get going.

Add to themes 3.5

But what I have to say that sometimes, something about **Asian characteristic that sometimes hinder the study.**

Add to significant statement 3.1

Lisa

My parents were immigrants from Vietnam. After the war, they decided to escape on my grandfather’s boat. They escaped in the middle of the night. One of my cousins was left behind. There were about 50 people that ended up escaping. It took them 12 days instead of three nights to get to Hong Kong. They were in Hong Kong and stayed there for about nine months before getting sponsored by the Hillsdale United Methodist Church in Michigan.

Add to portrait

When I was in school, of course **my parents wanted me to become a doctor or lawyer.**

Add to significant statement 3.2

I spoke Vietnamese when I was growing up because my parents didn’t know English back then.

In elementary school, facing discrimination

Add to themes 2.3

So I made a decision without my parents knowing in middle school to change it to Anne. So I changed it to Anne for two years in middle school just because I didn’t want to have to deal with name calling and going through that with my peers and students at school. My mom found out about it and she was not very happy because she emphasized the importance of your name and how we need to make sure that we’re honoring and respecting it. And so she made me change back.

Add to themes 2.3

When I went to high school, I ended up changing it back to Anne and had gone through school with that name in high school, college, and beyond. I'm glad I did that. I think by then I built more confidence within myself. It made me really think about my identity, understanding whiteness, and trying to be something that is different than what we were. And a lot of it was due to my understanding. I didn't quite understand my parents being immigrants. How come they came to this country and had so many kids? Why were we poor? It's just our upbringing was very different and my parents worked super hard. But I knew that I had lots of friends and lots of other families around us that did really well. I always questioned how come we struggled when we were growing up.

Add to themes 2.3

One of my professors at XYZ University, when I was going through the administrative program, had talked about how she had completed her dissertation and doctorate through XYZ Graduate University. She talked about how it was very flexible and you would be able to do your school while you're working. That really attracted me to the actual school. And when I talked to her a little bit more about that, she emphasized how much she really enjoyed being able to research what she wanted to research and it was able to enjoy what she was doing.

Add to themes 4.1

my dad was super strict, having seven girls and a boy. Of course, he wants to make sure that we're all very successful and that we were not going to get in trouble or not do anything to shame our family.

Add to theme 3.1

Dissertation was the harder part and just finding the motivation because you're really in your own little silo and this, when you're doing this work

Add to them 2.4

But because I forced myself to go to the summer sessions because I wanted to make sure I've connected with people one on one but at the same time, I wanted to see my professors. Besides seeing them on the screen or on the phone or whatever, I wanted to also see them in person, and they had different sessions there that I can actually go to talk about my work.

Add to themes 4.3

luckily I was able to find people that would help support that work.

Add to theme 4.2

Depending on who you get and how the professors are, they've been pretty motivating.

Add to theme 4.3

I think my parents put a lot of pressure on me. I want to say it's pressure as in, besides the fact that they want us to do well, you know like they want us to be successful, but it's really because I want to make sure that I'm taking my family out of this cycle of poverty.

Add to significant statement 3.1

I think being part of the struggle growing up and then now being in education, and I'm definitely on the other side of that.

Add to theme 5

I see you know that with our students and families. I am more empathetic and want to support them and do the best that I can to make sure that things are more equitable.

Also I think having a different lens, you know. I feel like coming from an immigrant family and then having grown up in, you know, an area that is more impoverished, or even just having the experiences that I have experienced. I think a lot of educators may not have the same experiences. Everybody has a different story, and so I think just having that other lens to look at education has really helped me grow and be in this position. And I think that's probably one of the main reasons why I'm now working in the equity area of education too, is because of some of the experiences that I've experienced myself and then of course, looking at our own bias and some of the systemic racism that's happening, right. Some of it, I faced and others, I was able to witness and see.

Add to theme 5

My parents definitely could not support me financially and they still can't handle it, but they let me know that they're there to support me. They always tell me, be happy, whatever you do, just be happy. In my mind, I'm like, I know you want me to become a doctor. They are like whatever you do, just be happy.

Add to theme 3.1

I am trying to set an example for my siblings too.

Add to theme 1.3

Work ethics and trying to work hard. That was something that I have always done just growing up and I knew that that was really important. **I'm not letting my parents down too, so going through school and making sure that I do well, I've really tried to push myself to do that.**

Add to significant statement 5

But I feel like overall experience because it was distance learning program because it was so flexible and I was able to build my own schedule and that really helped a lot.

Add to theme 4.1

When we go to my uncle's house for ceremonies, the boys always have the privilege to be the first one to burn the incense. The females have to wait and burn incense afterwards. There are still traditions that we follow while living in America.

Add to theme 3.1

I feel like if I set an example for them, it would be very helpful for them to be able to see that, like if she's able to do this, we need to make sure we do that. I'm setting a positive example for them and their family. **It makes my parents proud.**

Add to significant statement 5.1

Sophia

Well, my current family situation so I am like very close with my family. Growing up, we were like forced to have family nights like it was so much so that we joke about it now that we had too many family nights, we still hang out a lot

Add to theme 3.1

Associate Dean at College.

Add to portrait

Was born in the United States.

Where she works, she says **There's not a lot of Asian people**

Add to significant statement 2

this degree will just help me, you know, learn more about the about higher education or education in general and then it can just open doors for me if I want to go teach at a university, or if I wanna, you know, just different teaching jobs. But I definitely halfway through was like I don't think administration is for me.

Add to them 5.2

My mom was so she was so strict like if you got a spelling words wrong, we'd have to practice our spelling every single night, which is great. But if you got it wrong, he had to write it 100 times.

Add to theme 3.2

And I still remember having to sit there and write it and I don't know if I don't know if I consider that traumatizing.

Add to theme 3.2

My parents were a big part of that too, 'cause they've always wanted, you know, they're always like you should be a doctor or you should be a little you know, like, right? So it's not the doctor that they had imagined, but it was just like.

Add to significant statement 3.2

You just that is a huge motivation is that you just want them to feel like they're successful.

Add to theme 5.1

Through you and so I think that's why I really like pushed me to start it.

Add to theme 5.1

But I think that was one of the big motivating factors to is just like if I can do it, just do it. Just get it.

Add to theme 2.4

Convenience was why she chose distance education

Add to theme 4.1

That I was drawn to is that they met every single Wednesday night and so I do like the in person and I really like that the residency that was a one week in the summer.

Add to theme 4.3

Definitely my faculty and my advisor. The faculty it just like I said, the effort that they put in and the time that they spent to ensure that you were successful

Add to theme 4.2

it was my advisor who really pushed me to the end because at least with like my family in the way that I feel like my family can only do so much, they don't really know the process.

Add to theme 4.2

To be successful because we all find success in each other, especially in our community or in our family and so that's really what pushed me for my family was just like I just want them to feel like they were successful.

Add to theme 4.2

The hard work ethic.

Add to significant statement 3.5

Hmong people have because we are farm people. We have always worked hard for a living and growing up. You were expected to. You had to work hard like if you at 7:00. If somebody is, you know.

Add to theme 3.1

There's so much like face saving right? Like you said you someone you saw it like and so you want you don't want to. Like I said earlier, like you don't want to be like Oh yeah I started this program everybody knows that then you don't finish like.

'cause then it's like. People talk about you right? And so I think that kind of stuff. I'm definitely like pushed me through

Add to theme 5.1

'cause growing up and culturally you know you don't. **You don't talk back to your parents and you don't say no and you don't. If they have a wish you really tried not to go against their wishes and so.**

Add to theme 3.1

Mia

Her parents came from Philippines, she was born in the United States

Add to portrait

Single, no kids

So I was hoping to open that door, but I was also wanting to. You know, get my foot in research and just other avenues because I didn't realize there were--other opportunities such as research for things like NASA or research in UM.

Add to theme 5.2

I guess one stereotype you know, with Filipinos, you have to be a nurse or in some type of health care setting.

Add to theme 3.2

I'd say middle school because it's just again **a lot of the pressure to be the perfect Asian daughter.**

Add to significant statement 3.2

And my dad was very strict. Didn't allow us out the house, he yelled alot, didn't really have the best communication. we weren't allowed to talk about our feelings, he just wanted us to be a doctor or be a nurse

Add to theme 3.1

I don't necessarily need a PhD. and there was still that piece in the back of my head of my dad saying you have to be a doctor or something. Yeah, so that was a part that played a role in my decision **I wanted to make my parents proud.**

Add to significant statement 5.1

the online program. It's very flexible

Add to theme 4.1

they were very supportive (my professors) during that time during residencies.

Add to theme 4.1

They play a role because I as the oldest well, I consider myself to oldest because my brother is just so much older than me and I've kind of taken on that, I guess leadership role, but I wanted to be a good role model.

Add to theme 1.3

perfection. it both helped me and hindered me. I was taught to Just push through it. No emotion. Even though I did get emotional with it, did kind of hindered me from that.

Add to theme 3.1

Be very hard working. That's what I learned from my parents.

Add to significant statement 3.1

Just being perfect little Asian woman. You know, feeling like being a perfect person included not just exceeding in school but exceeding in career and social life. And it became just kind of difficult to balance all of that.

Add to significant statement 3.2

Emily

I was born in Laos. refugee camp for a good five year. But I think my mom and like I was two days old when they evacuated. Lived here in the United States for 35 years.

Add to portrait

Because I made that decision to pursue higher education and you know, I pave the path or my sister and my niece.

Add to theme 1.5

First language was English

Not, there's so much funding out there, but you know we just don't have any kind of data to show that there's still disparity in our community, so I'm.

That's why I went back to school so that I could get my degree. And you know, if I do want to do.

Add to theme 5

I'm like my own research or applied for my own, uh, at least I could kind of like inspire kids, my niece and nephew you know to pursue higher education or because I know that the younger generation they are.

Add to theme 1.3

My dad, he has a daughter and three sons.

Uh, me and my other uncle. They have more than a daughters right? So my dad was they always look down with my dad because they feel that because he has so much daughter that he his life will not be as good as them.

Add to theme 5.0

my dad passed away back in 2010. Can you give me hope that you know? He always wanted me to continue my school but I and I have family and then I didn't really continue. 2 years later. I, you know, I decide, you know, to go back and finish my doctorate degree and just kinda to fulfill after us, you know.

Add to theme 5.1

so that's why I'm not so much at the school, but I chose the program, but I feel that I will benefit the most from. And, UM. And it also wasn't online program, so I did a, uh. I had to make a decision. And you know, we always alternatives, you know, support family, community service. So, like I was telling him that people are asking about my experience. So, I was like, you know.

I learn about the people of that for me because you know, I'm working full time and how it's going to school full time for my kids. I have family obligation. Uhm, you know. So, I stay really late. You know I'm way late and everybody sleep. I do my paper.

Add to theme 5.1

Factors that play role in success. In having a good network such that I mean like people who are.

Add to theme 4.2

Limited contact with faculty member.

Add to theme 4.2

I think that I have really good committee and the two faculties that I'd like to be my dissertation committee.

Add to theme 4.2

So, I have that at least one or two weeks interaction with interfaces you know face to face, and so I think that that help. Uhm? Made. Not only the relationship stronger by you know, having that one or two week working in one and one together on class and then.

Add to theme 4.2

So, I think it was great in that sense how the school structure those programs

Add to theme 4.1

And my niece is, you know, like. Uhm? Because my news, so like all of my paper. She will. She will do the final review for me. She's like my editor, right. Yeah, so I'm just very fortunate to have my niece I really support.

Grace

Work in higher education.

I also am very involved in the Filipino community here.

Born in the United States

Married and three children

Add to portrait

I slowly decided I wanted to become a pioneer in. Uhm, advocating for.

Asians to speak up and to break out of the cultural habits that keep us from speaking up

Add to significant statement 5.3

I did my doctorate double up to I finished all my coursework in 1 1/2 years. In 1 1/2 years and then. I finished my dissertation in nine months. Even though I had to stay enrolled for one for 12 months.

To pick up the phone and I say XXX. How may I help you? They like no. You have to call yourself Doctor. We all worked so hard for you to get this so now I'll end.

Add to theme 1.2

Asian culture, especially during this world of DEI, is so important you can be a person who speaks on.

Add to significant statement 5.3

Asian culture and behaviors and how to bridge the gap between what's needed in Western society. Because this is you know. There's the model minority myth that you bring that up in your thing and perpetual foreigner syndrome. In the Filipino we have like colonial mentality, which is where.

Add to significant statement 5.3

Let's break that down. I'm like Filipino parents. Never say that you know, like just rest. Don't worry about your homework so much. You're pushing yourself too hard. Let's relax here today you know, yeah, like we never said that, and I started crying because I'm like this is so true so many people. **Suffer because of the pressures of their Asian parents and to hear those words is just like painful because it's what you didn't hear.**

Add to theme 3.1

Immigrants were discriminating against me. Same things like I was saying earlier.

You're not one of us. What do you mean? I'm not one of you. I have 100% blood like you do and they're like, but you don't speak our language. It's So what? So, I'm garbage, you know. And so, I was like, I'm going to study that I want to study what's happening in peoples brains so that I can manage.

Add to theme 3.4

Family supportive

My faculty members who were always checking in on me, how's your dissertation going? Has your PhD going? It's going, it's going. I had one particular professor who was like.

Add to theme 4.2

So, the values so hard work of course. Uhm? Hard work was a big thing.

But then the hinder was, you know we have a value that is all about meeting expectations so. It would be like. The whole.

Add to significant statement 3.1

What is that program you know? Like that's not Medical. It's not that you're not an attorney, you know, it's like engineering. Then what's this? Psychology is like, oh, you know, the Asian cultures. That psychology is very taboo. Like we don't go there. We don't talk about our feelings. Psychology was only accepted in the Philippines only and I read something that said it was only

in about like the last ten years or something that it started to really be looked at. I mean man watch any Filipino movie and I I'm betting your culture too but.

Add to themes 3.2

There's shame, there's expectations. All of that. It's really tough, but then the hard work ethic and then it also strengthened my ability to be me through and through which is also part of my message.

Add to themes 3.1

Leah

So currently academically I'm teaching evening classes (now online) for University of XYZ. Uh, I'm still a fellow at the University of XYZ and XYZ University. I'm currently working as the CEO for the XYZ.

my parents have both passed away

I wanted to know that when I retire from health care that I could teach and so you know beyond just teaching sort of evening classes, hoping in the future that it would open doors for a permanent. You know, associate professor or tenured professor position at some point.

Uhm, I also felt like it. It didn't open up, it didn't open something specific that I was looking for, but I knew it gave me credibility.

Add to theme 5.2

I was adopted when my parents were a little bit older, so they were in their 30s. When they adopted me, and they already had the other three kids so it was nice because they had forged through all the.

Add to portrait

my dad passed away and so I moved home, came back home 4-5 months to take care of him. the death of my parents when my dad died 27 years ago, and my mom died five years ago. It was time that I obviously I took off and I cared for. I ended up caring for both parents like take care of my mom as well.

To be honest, and you know, I don't know how honest everybody is being with you, but I just wanted to be a doctor.

Add to theme 1.1

I'm going to change the world. just wanted to do more now that I have that credential behind me. I wanted to do more, and I was really lucky that my committee chair actually worked in healthcare and prison. So, and I actually got to meet her in person because one of the prisons I went to shoot was one that she worked at, and I didn't know that.

Add to theme 5.2

Because I worked hard for it, and I know I worked hard and I overcame a lot of my own crap. You know, my own impostor syndrome, my own lack of self-esteem, and I think a lot of.
Add to theme 2.4

My lack of self-esteem, both educationally and you know, through high school as a high schooler and everything is I, even though my parents always told me I was special, and they chose me, and I believe that 100%. I still looked different, and I was still the only Asian in my school until high school, like preschool to 8th grade. It was me and.
Add to significant statement 2.4

My parents were great in letting me help educate my peers about what adoption was and what the Vietnam War was and what you know being different was.

But in all of my education, there's been that I'm different and I have to work harder, and I think maybe that helped.
Add to theme 3.1

The people I met. The people that ate the pizza rolls with me. That flew me out to Hawaii that. You know, had gone through it. That was the success of it. It was.
Add to theme 4.2

now that I've never really thought about it. But even though **I wasn't raised in a traditional Asian home.** I think knowing and I mentioned this before, knowing that it could have been so different. Knowing that where I came from. You know the place that I was born in Vietnam, had I stayed. I mean, I probably would have been fine.
Add to portrait

My homeland, you know they did the right thing, and you know, **I think of all the Asian myths that we know are out there that we're all good at math primarily.**
Add to significant statement 3.2

Many, many Asians. Are very hard workers. And I think that even though I didn't have that. Uhm, shown to me through. Through a heritage or through growing up in in that kind of background, I almost think it's in me. You know, I just know how to work hard and part of it was learning that from my family. My dad, my mom will hard workers too, **but this sounds so racist and I'm so sorry but there's a different kind of hard work that Asians do. I can't explain it because I do it too. It's that hard work until you fall down. That I'm sorry to say, I've never seen other races do.**
Add to significant statement 3.5

American cultural view of Asians as Asian women is quiet, and we giggle and we put her hands over her mouth and we're very sweet.
Add to significant statement 5.3

I really think that it's gonna help a lot of people because **unfortunately I think a lot of Asian women. We stop at that undergrad**, even if we want more, and I think this will prove that whether you go a traditional route or nontraditional route or evening route to get higher education.

Add to significant statement 5.3

I never thought I experienced discrimination as an Asian woman.

until I got older and now at, you know, at XX years old. I have and I didn't realize it because it's so sneaky and invasive, and ingrained in what we tell our little girls.

And especially what we tell our little girls who are not white.

Add to significant statement 2.3

Elena

first language was technically Mandarin.

born and raised in United States.

I studied this topic of workplace bullying is because I was having that experience at work when I was with ABC company. It took me awhile to figure it out what it was because it was not. It's not my expectation that that sort of behavior is going to be present in adult working situation. I think that's like.

Add to theme 2.3

What would I term as? **Culturally, Asian response to work or response to authority. People, that I think they're like my bosses by elders or do people of respective position.**

Add to significant statement 3.1

You know, in a lot of places everyone I talked to is like can probably name some kind of experience with themselves or like colleagues or something like this.

I thought people would. Organizations would jump at the chance to receipt to have that information that didn't happen. I thought that door would open and that didn't happen.

Add to theme 2.3

My colleagues would want to hear about the information, but there is a lot of HR and legal reasons why the Company doesn't want me to talk about that that topic because they feel like it's Leaves them open to. Lawsuits to be in trouble. You know, there's something like this, so the the best way to address it is pretend that it's not happening in that whoever has this information is a. You know this is kept. And under HR's close guidance, shall I say politely, and it was a they, that's great information that you have that will call you when we have. When they were ready to talk about this topic and the phone call.

By the time I realized that I was being bullied by my director and the VP, the VP believe the Director, the director bullied us. It was like a chain. This cascade effect and I wasn't the only person he believed my colleagues as well. So, I was the newest person there is like six months.

Add to theme 2.3

To put your time, your weekends, your nights, your lunch hours, all your working moments belongs to the boss. And so, they essentially like owned you like they don't like you're not allowed to leave until the boss leaves and she doesn't tell you what time she's going to leave.

They tell me that I have to tell colleagues that they have to work over the weekend. Also, even though I'm not their boss, I'm the same position as them, but putting the responsibility of. Impacting their personal time on me rather than telling them directly. I'm so completely stressed out by Monday morning I actually go to work and throw up in the garbage can of my cubicle in plain view of my boss. He would sit so close to me and at such an angle that he would be able to see what's happening on my computer screen. So, this I'm in full view of him and I throw up into the into the garbage can.

In fact, I had actually never experienced childhood bullying, so these adult working experiences.
Add to theme 2.3

And quite frankly, like the kind of person that I thought I was right, and I'm not particularly assertive aggressive, I'm a people pleaser by nature, but I didn't think that I was so. Susceptible to being abused. And. If you had asked me before that, I would say no. I would record. I said I'd stand up for myself and that was like that. That did not happen. And or it did not happen effectively. I kind of kept on finding ways to cope, adjust or. I go around. Or make excuses for what was happening at work or the reasons why I chose to remain in that that unpleasant situation.

my program was a brand-new program in on the XYZ campus. I was the first cohort. There's a lot of things that were really disjointed about the program, because being the first cohort, you're kind of like the Guinea pig at they're trying out new things. They may not have all their faculties.

Add to theme 4.1

Divorced.

Asians push academics forward

Add to significant statement 3.1

Do you know? Medical School, Dental school or pharmacy, which is like essentially, you're three things that you do. If your bio major.

Add to theme 3.1

Anna

I'm half Chinese American have Japanese American. Born in the United States.

I didn't do it with any kind of end goal of wanting to become some kind of administrator or anything, but I did figure that if I'm going to continue working in higher Ed
Add to theme 1.2

Oh, online was a big factor. The fact that I got a fee waiver it was a big factor. And yeah, those are the two main and I just wanted to do it for myself and also to kind of show my daughter and my step kids that you can still do this.
Add to theme 4.1

The one that I referred to you 'cause I know I've known her for over 25 years. we kind of both decided to apply to the program together

most of them were done home at of financial need **or because their parents wouldn't allow them to move away or just cultural value kind of thing.** They felt like they had to work to help support the family, so they had a whole bunch of needs that nobody had ever talked about before
Add to significant statement 3.1

The sense of competitiveness that I have to be the best.
I think it helped motivate me to make sure that I completed all my assignments, and I did a good job on everything and that's kind of funny that you say that because it reminds me at the end of our program.
Add to theme 2.4

just like a sense of pride, I think because I didn't feel like the program was that difficult intellectually.

I felt like I had to continue in in persistent and not fail really, and so that's kind of. That's just me, though I know a lot of other people don't feel that way, but I was always very somebody who's always very competitive.

Lily

I am Filipino American. My family immigrated here from the Philippines
Married, stepson and son

Associate Dean XYZ University

first language was actually Tagalog which is a Filipino dialect

So, I you know with that degree, I'd hope to continue in education full time to advance in my roles. And to, you know. Obviously. Be able to continue working up in terms of research as well as.
Add to theme 5.2

I can tell you I never thought I would be in education. I've always enjoyed learning as a child I remember very fondly as a, you know, a taught well, not a toddler. But as a young.

Add to theme 1.2

Full ride scholarship

so, the environment was not really encouraging of students. You know, collaborating with each other, students collaborating with other faculty. It was just this is what you do. You come in and you put in your time and you, you go home.

Add to theme 4.2

Uhm, after that year I really kind of had to step back and think about where I wanted to go to finish my PhD. And so, I did some research on programs and found the University of Northern Colorado and its emphasis on education and it, really, you know, appealed to me in that they were very supportive. They were very encouraging of students, really examining self, examining their own careers and understanding.

Add to theme 4.1

group of individuals who faculty who really challenged us academically.

Add to theme 4.2

The way that this design of the program.

You know, really, I think shaped. Uhm? I guess my view of doctoral education, because in some cases.

Add to theme 4.1

I primarily chose it just for its flexibility because. Our program actually wasn't. It was entirely online, but there were requirements for residencies over the summer.

Add to theme 4.1

I still maintain contact with a lot of the colleagues that I formed relationships with at that time as well as students within my own cohort.

Add to theme 4.2

I think supportive faculty and supportive peers having a relationship with their peers, particularly in a very tight knit doctoral cohort, was very helpful because it they challenge you to really think differently, but also it made you want to go into the classroom and see what was happening in the dialogue.

Add to theme 4.2

Online learning is very dependent on the engagement between students and faculty, and when you don't have that happening, it becomes self-learning. It doesn't become education any longer, so.

Add to theme 4.0

I think that relationship was really key in terms of me getting the most out of my experience, but I think it's also crucial in terms of online learning in general.

it's definitely important that you have a support structure within your colleague group as well as your peer group in terms of your cohort. I'm very fortunate in that my university.

Add to theme 4.2

my parents have always been very supportive of my education. I've been through school for many years, so they've always known that I've enjoyed going to school. My husband, you know, he was very supportive of my continuing my doctoral journey and finishing my degree.

Add to theme 2.4

Persistence recognizing that that it takes time and effort and energy and hard work in order to complete something, and this is a very big project, completely dissertation doctoral program. It's not for the faint of heart and I think **you know being Asian, it's just you put your head down**. You get to, you know, do the work you work hard and.

Add to significant statement 5.1

I think Asian Americans tend to be perfectionist in in regard to their work. They want it. They want the work to be done well. But also, I think. Uhm, you know there's a high regard for education and there's a high regard for. Uh, for accomplishment and recognizing that there is value in working hard, and I think that's that carries through in terms of you know how I was brought up. And it also, you know has carried me in terms of.

Add to significant statement 2.1

I think you know the perfectionist tendencies. I mean, the desire to do well I think has is a double-edged sword because on the one hand you know you want to do well, but on the other hand, you're your biggest critic.

Add to themes 2.1

Jade

I'm Chinese American, born in the United States

Currently director at XYZ company

So, for me honestly, it was something that I wanted to do for myself.

Add to theme 1.2

The opportunity to really have a largely free education, and our free doctoral experience. I couldn't. I couldn't turn it down. I would never turn down a free education.

Add to theme 1.2

I think that even though my parents were first generation, I had a very untraditional Asian. Uh, experience growing up, they really didn't over. A pressure me to do extremely well. You know in

school I did it did do well. It was a good student. I was very focused, but it wasn't. It wasn't the stereotypical. Uh Asian child's relationship, right?

Like a good Asian daughter, I applied to XYZ University

Add to significant statement 3.2

So, this program was perfect for me when I signed up for it. I loved that it had the mandatory residency every summer. For a moment, and then there was, I think, some meetings in between and. Uh, but the rest was online and that for me at the time.

Add to themes 4.1

But I think that probably one of the things that was most frustrating at the time was that there were probably faculty members who are very good in person but hadn't had the amount the training or support necessary to learn how to do it very effectively in an online kind of way.

Add to themes 4.0

Some factors you say played a role in successive education. Or my doctoral education. Uhm, I would say again. I think that one of the major factors was the required residency. I can't imagine. Going through the program without knowing. My fellow students at all.

Add to themes 4.3

a handful of the faculty members again, was it strong.

Add to theme 4.2

relationship with your peers. So many, most of us are still in regular contact.

Add to theme 4.2

I'll be really honest with you. They did it up. You know my husband. Uh, and my kids. I think for a lot of it, they didn't understand it, you know, because I was there and so they still expected you know the same level of mom no matter what my schedule might have been. And I think that women kind of do a disservice to themselves in many ways because we are so used to handling it all and doing it all. And we juggle and we don't complain, and we just do it. And we're very good at its in. I don't. I don't think that they realized. I mean most of the time. Again, my job is pretty intense and so the work would happen. You know, when the kids were asleep, you know and. Took all of the lead on the household management. You know at all the parent teacher conferences there was nothing that I missed, you know?

Add to themes 3.0

They said they were proud of me, which she knew for Asian parents. That's big like you know, they don't even usually say something like that.

Add to significant statement 5.1

I was going to say uh or Asian, but all you think also had like of some eight of some Chinese descent too. So, there are three of us out of the cohort and we're very bonded and come.

And I think that yes, there are some things that are just even unspoken that made it easier for us to be. So, we would have very late night. You know, we would be messenger ring back and forth with each other checked in with each other. Read each other's dissertations, papers, brainstorm together, really supported each other through that through the through the process.
Add the significant statement 5.0

I didn't really have a lot of support. I mean, it was very much kind of on my own, and UM. **my Asian classmates, but for all of my classmates who were women who had families.** That that work doesn't stop, and I don't think it even becomes less. You know, you are just you're just doing it and I've had so many women in particular who said to me I don't know how you did it. Like how did you do it and I said I honestly, I don't know like I don't. I don't know how I did it and I just don't think that that same.
Add to significant statement 5.0

It's the first thing I looked at when I walked into the room, you know, was and **actually it wasn't about Asians per southeast**, but the first thing I looked at when I met my cohort and I walked in the room was who are the people of coloring here?
Add to significant statement 5.0

APPENDIX P: MEMBER CHECKS

	Interview Date	Sent Interview Transcript for Review	Transcript Approved
Mary	7/29/2021	8/30/2021	9/12/2021
Lisa	8/9/2021	9/12/2021	9/27/2021
Sophia	9/3/2021	9/19/2021	9/20/2021
Mia	9/10/2021	9/20/2021	9/28/2021
Emily	9/8/2021	9/20/2021	
Grace	9/6/2021	9/20/2021	
Leah	9/19/2021	9/20/2021	9/24/2021
Elena	9/16/2021	9/20/2021	
Anna	9/17/2021	9/20/2021	
Lily	9/22/2021	9/24/2021	9/25/2021
Jade	9/23/2021	9/24/2021	

APPENDIX Q: SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 4 PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Date Sent	Participant	Summary of Feedback
12/31/2021	Mary	12/31/2021 – error on page 19, should be Lisa instead of Mary
12/31/2021	Lisa	<p>1/5/2022 – make following changes</p> <p>Lisa is the second eldest of eight children. Her parents immigrated from Vietnam to Hong Kong before being sponsored to immigrate to the United States. When she was in elementary school, Lisa experienced discrimination from other kids. Later, It was at this time that she decided to change her first name to an “American” name in middle school, but changed it back in high middle school when her mom made her.</p> <p>Lisa’s DDPIS scores indicated the highest level of satisfaction with curriculum integration ($M = 5.00$), followed by student integration ($M = 4.69$). Her lowest level of satisfaction was with faculty integration ($M = 4.77$).</p> <p>Lisa did end up changing her name back in high school and kept it through college and beyond.</p>
12/31/2021	Sophia	12/31/2021 – will review and provide feedback later
12/31/2021	Mia	1/3/2022 – on upbringing, was growing up in the “South” meant like Georgia and Louisiana, never lived in South Asia.
12/31/2021	Emily	<p>1/14/2022 - 1/14/2022 - I would introduce this chapter this way: Chapter 4 includes discussion of the research questions, demographic characteristics, data collection, data analysis procedures and protocols, theme identification.....</p> <p>Format - Research Questions</p> <p>I would be nice to create a table to capture the main findings for all of the participants</p>
12/31/2021	Grace	1/4/2022 – would like chat, couple small requests for change
12/31/2021	Leah	No Response
12/31/2021	Elena	<p>1/1/2022 – Consider putting more in bullet or list format –</p> <p>The central research question was: What are the persistence experiences of Asian American women in distance education doctoral programs? The sub-questions were: Sub-Question 1: What experiences motivate Asian American women to pursue doctoral studies through distance education programs?; Sub-Question 2: What personal factors contribute to the persistence experiences of Asian American women enrolled in distance education doctoral programs?; Sub-Question 3: What cultural factors influence how Asian American women experience</p>

		<p>persistence in distance education doctoral programs?; Sub-Question 4: What institutional factors influence the persistence experiences of Asian American women enrolled in distance education doctoral programs?; and Sub-Question 5: What do Asian American women experience upon persisting to completion of a distance education doctoral degree?</p> <p>Under Emily – some quotes, some grammatical errors. Wanted to know if this is intended as a direct quote or if adjustments may be made?</p> <p>Some quotes are directly from the individual and therefore uses self-referential language (“I”, “me”, “my”). I understand that this is a paraphrase, but it does take the reader out of context for a moment as there is an expectation for it to be a direct quote from the participant. Particularly because the next two sentences contains a direct quote. Consider rephrasing?</p> <p>Leah – Polish-German.</p> <p>Grammatical errors - At 15 years old, she had a life changing experience when she did mission work over the summer in Russia which she described as “really helped me be independent and [gave] me a drive.”</p> <p>Elena - I think this was probably a direct quote from the transcript, but in this context, it doesn’t quite convey meaning very clearly. In this instance, is clarity being sacrificed for the desire for a direct quote?</p> <p>I think the point of this quote is that culturally Asians respond with a higher degree of deference to people in perceived authority positions. This may have been a factor which made this participant more vulnerable to relational dynamics with her boss and workplace bullying experience.</p> <p>Anna – Careful with phrases such as “here” – try to keep to language that removes cultural bias. Assume that your dissertation will be read by an international audience who may not know where you are referring to.</p> <p>Elena –</p> <p>The unfortunate thing with her situation was that the organization was not receptive to the information she provided and that she thought that the “door would be open and that didn’t happen.”</p>
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		<p>I remember this part of the conversation. My motivation to get this degree was so that no one could deny my expertise when I identified that I was being bullied. I felt that getting a PhD meant that I would have credibility against being constantly gaslit on my own perception of how I and my Asian women colleagues were being treated. However, the system of inequality had other strategies – after getting my degree, they could no longer deny my credibility. But they could simply not ask for my opinion.</p> <p>Quote is in area twice - Elena described “culturally, Asian’s respond to work or respond to authority. People, that I think they're like my bosses, my elders or people of respective position.”</p>
12/31/2021	Anna	12/31/2021 – typo/missing word. Regarding her remark about being competitive comes off slightly wrong when not cited in the context in which it was made.
12/31/2021	Lily	No response
12/31/2021	Jade	1/2/2022 – did not have any insights