

Beating the Odds: Asian Women Leaders in Academic Research Libraries

ACRL 2021, April 14

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Abstract:

In the United States, Asians are the least likely among all races to become executives, in spite of having the highest educational attainment, according to public data. [A recent Ithaka S+R survey of ARL Libraries](#) reveals that the proportion of Asian and Asian Americans in libraries decreases as positions become more senior. A panel of Asian women deans and associate deans from academic research libraries will discuss how they broke the so-called 'Bamboo Ceiling' and got to where they are. They will describe the barriers they faced and how they overcame them. The panel intends to inspire future generations, inform hiring managers, and expand the definition of leadership. (Note: The panel uses the term "Asian women" to include all people of Asian descent who identify as women.)

Goals/Learning Outcomes:

- Challenge the monolithic model minority image of Asian women
- Broaden the perspective on the definition of leadership
- Help develop future Asian women leaders

Barriers for Asian Women Leaders:

- Racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism
- Explicit and implicit bias
- Stereotypes such as the model minority myth and perpetual foreigner myth
- Not being valued, seen, and heard as colleagues
- Narrow definition of leadership – not being perceived as a leader
- Penalty for speaking up
- Being judged more harshly than others
- Limited leadership opportunities (limited to DEI, women, and specialized topics)
- Being pigeonholed
- Lack of role models
- Internal struggles (life choices, difficulty speaking up, conflict with cultural value)

Strategies to break the 'Bamboo Ceiling':

- Seek mentors and sponsors, seek advice
- Form alliances
- Help other women, people of color, and other marginalized groups
- Control processes to make the outcome inclusive
- Self-efficacy, self-advocacy, and being visible

Leadership Approaches:

- Shared leadership (sharing power)
- Collectivism (working with and through others)
- Authenticity (sharing personal stories, finding own voice, living your value)
- Self-reflective leadership (includes emotional intelligence, mindfulness, intentionality, passions, ambitions, values, etc.)

Suggested Readings:

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