

DISSERTATION

CENTERING ASIAN AMERICAN WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES IN
(RE)CONCEPTUALIZING LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION
THROUGH COUNTER-STORYTELLING

Submitted by

Kerry Nakasone Wenzler

School of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Spring 2022

Doctoral Committee:

Advisor: OiYan Poon

Lumina Albert
Pamela Graglia
Susana Muñoz

Copyright by Kerry Nakasone Wenzler 2022

All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT

CENTERING ASIAN AMERICAN WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES IN (RE)CONCEPTUALIZING LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH COUNTER-STORYTELLING

The purpose of this study is to understand how Asian American Women (re)conceptualize leadership given their racialized and gendered experiences with oppression within higher education. Asian American Women leaders' stories are not represented in the traditional leadership theories dominated by white male heteronormative perspective that creates a culturally biased and homogenous conceptualization of leadership. Seven Asian American Women research collaborators joined me in co-constructing how we collectively (re)conceptualized leadership and centered our multiple identities to interrogate the systems of oppression within higher education that have impacted our leadership experiences at the intersections of race and gender.

This critical constructivist study is rooted in Asian American Feminist ways of knowing, using a qualitative critical race methodology called counter-storytelling to highlight the power of experiential knowledge that exists within Asian American Women's experiences. The (re)conceptualized leadership themes are interconnected, introspective, culturally informed, and reflect a duty of care for our communities that centers the humanity in others and ourselves, ongoing engagement in critical self-reflection as part of our own healing and leadership praxis, an understanding of how to leverage our positionality through intersectional strategic leadership,

and a commitment toward shared liberation through collective empowerment. The significance of this study is contributing an intersectional (re)conceptualization of Asian American Women leadership, co-constructed through meaning-making of counter-stories shared by Asian American Women leaders in higher education. Additionally, I offer a conceptualization of Asian American Women's ways of knowing and engaging with the world to contribute to future research toward an Asian American Feminist epistemology co-constructed with other Asian American Women leaders and scholars.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My dissertation journey has been transformational for me as an Asian American Woman in leadership in higher education and as a scholar practitioner. I could not have persisted in this journey without the love, care, and support of my family, friends, colleagues, and community.

To my research collaborators, the Asian American Women leaders who joined me in this study – it was such a privilege to be in community with you and to be trusted with your stories. I could not have anticipated the depth in the connections we made. Thank you for sharing your stories with such honesty and vulnerability that allowed us to create a healing space. This study is ours, not mine alone.

To my advisor and committee – I was very intentional in selecting a committee of women who I value and admire and who have supported me through their areas of expertise. Dr. Poon, thank you for the investment you made in providing thought-provoking feedback that challenged me to strengthen my critical lens and pushed me to interrogate scholarship that did not resonate with my experiences. I am deeply grateful to have been in community with another Asian American Woman as my faculty member and advisor. Dra. Muñoz, you have a way of speaking truth right to my heart and helping me believe in myself as a scholar. My tears flow when we talk because you make me feel seen and valued, and your teaching, research, and writing inspires me. Thank you. Dr. Albert, you exemplify centering the humanity in others through your research and through your relationships. With each interaction, thank you for making me feel cared for and included. I have deep admiration for your leadership as a Woman of Color from South Asia, faculty member, scholar, and community leader. Dr. Graglia, you have a way of asking questions that encourages my ongoing reflection, and you inspire me to break away from

linear, one-dimensional ways of thinking. I value how you teach about autoethnography and critical self-reflection, and thank you for your support as a scholar, colleague, and friend.

To my HEL cohort and those in other cohorts who have been a source of support and encouragement – thanks for the support as we commiserated over the challenges of working full-time, parenting, and PhDing through a pandemic. Thank you to my Formation family, Rachel, Shanna, Dr. Love, and Dr. B – I would not have persisted in this program without this incredible group of Women of Color. You have shown me what being in community means, both giving and receiving love and support. And to Dra. Carmen Rivera, HEL graduate and my dissertation whisperer – thanks for your friendship, mentorship, and being a trusted sounding board. You continue to be my go-to person to celebrate each milestone accomplishment.

To my friends, colleagues, and community – thank you for checking in on me, asking me about my research, and offering a welcome break to connect in community. Thanks to my Women of Color friends who offered encouragement and reminded me of the importance of our community and supporting each other as Women of Color leaders. I am especially thankful to my community of Asian American Women friends. As I wrote my dissertation, I kept a list of your names on my computer to remind me of the sense of belonging and connection you have created for me. I get emotional when you tell me that this research makes you feel seen and valued. This research is for us.

And to my family – thank you for your love and support throughout my decades in this strange world of higher education and throughout this program. Michael, you believed I could succeed in this program before we even knew how challenging it would be, and I could not have done this without your support. You're the best husband and father...and food delivery on my binge writing weekends. Mom, thanks for the time you invested in helping me improve my

writing skills throughout K-12. I think of that often and attribute my writing abilities to your support and persistence. Dad, thanks for showing me your support each time you asked about how school was going. My research has inspired me to ask you more questions about our family history, and I have loved hearing stories about family memories, food, and more. Kim and Kyle, thanks for supplying me with beef jerky, chocolate, and daily pet videos that helped me feel connected. This study made me reflect on how grateful I am to grow up with family as my community, having a sister and brother who look like me and get me no matter how often or where we moved. And to my son, Kellan, ILYSM, and being a role model for you motivated my success in this program. Being your mom is the best job in the world, and this was all worth it when I hear you call me Dr. Mom.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Problem Statement.....	4
Purpose.....	5
Significance of Study.....	6
Research Question	10
Who are Asian American Women?	10
Summary	12
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	15
Asian American Women.....	15
Gender.....	17
Invisibility	18
Asian American Women in Leadership in Higher Education	19
Racialized and Gendered Experiences in Higher Education	20
Lack of Asian American Women Mentors	22
Higher Education Leadership.....	25
Asian American History and Panethnicity.....	28
Historical Overview of Anti-Asian Racism	28
Asian American Panethnic Term and Implications	32
Theoretical Lens Framing the Study.....	35
Summary	40
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	42
Purpose of the Study and Research Question	42
Positionality	43
Epistemological Approach.....	46
Asian American Feminisms	47
Critical Constructivism	48
Methodology	49
Research Methods	53
Recruitment.....	53
Informed Consent.....	55
Data Generation	56
Analysis Procedures.....	59
Trustworthiness.....	61
Summary	63
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS	64
Introduction to the Research Collaborators	65
Anjali.....	67
Emma	70
Leny	72

Michelle	74
Sun	77
Yoko.....	81
Yuna.....	83
Summary of Introduction to Research Collaborators	86
Findings	87
Centering the Humanity in Others and Ourselves	89
Critical Self-Reflection	94
Intersectional Strategic Leadership	100
Collective Empowerment.....	103
Summary of Findings.....	108
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, REFLECTIONS	110
Findings and Connections to Existing Literature	110
Critical Self-Reflection: Connection to Literature.....	112
Centering the Humanity in Others and Ourselves: Connection to Literature	113
Collective Empowerment: Connection to Literature	114
Intersectional Strategic Leadership: Connection to Literature	115
Significance of Research Study	116
Recommendations for Action	117
Recommendations for Asian American Women	117
Recommendations for Higher Education Administrators	120
Recommendations for Further Research	121
Reflections	125
REFERENCES	128
APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT EMAIL	147
APPENDIX C: ELIGIBILITY SURVEY	149
APPENDIX D: EMAIL TO SELECTED PARTICIPANT.....	151
APPENDIX E: INFORMED CONSENT.....	152
APPENDIX F: DATA GENERATION.....	157

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“Everyone has a story. Our stories are glorious tales of reconciliation of others’ expectations of us, our own internalized perceptions of ourselves, and our aspirations of who we want to become.” (Accapadi, 2018, p. 115)

Early in my professional career, I remember being asked to share my story at a first-generation college student event. I froze. I did not think I had a story worth telling. I hesitantly said yes and started to jot down memories of finding my purpose through student leadership roles or connecting with faculty and staff mentors. And then the uncomfortable, embarrassing, and shameful memories started to creep in including a time when I thought I was being segregated when I received a welcome bag from the Asian Pacific American Student Services office, or when I was repeatedly mistaken for another Asian American student on campus, or how certain I was an adult would stop me on campus and announce I was admitted by mistake. It turned out that sharing my non-extraordinary-everyday-story with other first generation college students and staff led to people telling me they resonated with my experiences, felt a meaningful connection based on our shared experiences, and were inspired to share their own stories as they introduced themselves to the group at the event.

Since that time, I have shared my story with Asian American groups, with colleagues and coworkers, with classes I teach, and with staff members I supervise. I have also spent time listening to and reading about other peoples’ stories, finding where I can relate or appreciating

the differences in lived experiences. I am deeply grateful to the Asian American Women who have shared their stories of life, family, culture, oppression, resistance, and empowerment with great vulnerability and courage, because I find immense value in hearing their stories to connect in community, to learn, to reflect, and to also make meaning of my own experiences. There is an “invisible collection of patterns” that oppresses marginalized people (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 5), and that invisible collection becomes clearer to me as I share my story and listen to other Asian American Women share their stories. Each time I share, I gain a little more courage to face the shame that has lived silently and painfully within my body. Giving my shame a voice and an outlet feels like a release from the decades I have spent trying to hide its existence. And I know there are still many more stories to share.

I also find value in the stories of other Asian Women I have never met yet feel a connection based on shared experiences through storytelling. For instance, during the COVID-19 global pandemic, anti-Asian racism and violence were rampant in the U.S. Although there is a long history of anti-Asian racism and violence in U.S. history, it was inescapable from the country’s consciousness when Asian elders were being beaten to death by strangers in major cities and a mass murderer targeted and killed six Asian Women in Atlanta. The names of these six Asian Women are: Hyan Jung Grant, Suncha Kim, Soon Chung Park, Xiaojie “Emily” Tan, Yong Ae Yue, and Daoyou Feng (Kim, 2021), and I intentionally share their names to show respect and humanize these six Asian Women whose names and stories have been carelessly misspelled and misinformed in mainstream media. In the despair and fatigue of anti-Asian racism and violence, some moments of hope grew from the solidarity and support from Asian American communities and other Communities of Color, increased education about the long history of anti-Asian racism in the U.S., and Asian American people, especially women,

speaking out and sharing their stories of what it is like to be Asian in America. Their stories illuminated the invisible collection of patterns (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) that oppressed them as Asian American people in the U.S. with stories of the omnipresent pressure to assimilate, the confusion of being lumped in with whiteness, the pain of invisibility and enoughness, and the ways of coping with childhood racial trauma that carries on into adulthood.

As I share my personal stories and listen to individual narratives, I also gain more clarity on how the invisible collection of patterns (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) that oppress people with marginalized identities are directly connected to larger systems of oppression in society and within institutions of higher education. As an Asian American Woman in leadership in higher education, I think of the racial microaggression when my image is used without consent and falsely labeled “I’m International!”; the racism and sexism when a white person or man of color takes credit for my ideas and labor; the oppressive policies and practices used to deny me a salary increase, equity increase, or supplemental pay. With each instance, I internalize messages that I am the “other,” I am invisible as an Asian American Woman leader, and my contributions are not valued.

The process I have experienced in retelling my own stories has helped me identify that racism and sexism are central to these experiences. I can more clearly understand how each instance with racism and sexism is rooted in a larger system of oppression within higher education and within U.S. society. I can no longer live in silence with my internalized oppression and through experiencing the harm of racism and sexism perpetrated by coworkers and higher education administrators who uphold and protect these racist, patriarchal systems of oppression. I want to join in solidarity with other Asian American Women leaders to tell our stories and share how we collectively (re)conceptualize our leadership in higher education. By collectively telling

our stories as Asian American Women leaders, we can resist internalizing racist and sexist messages that diminish our value as leaders, and instead support each other in reflecting, healing, and shared liberation. Inspired by the concept of “me-search” in which I focus my research on identities and topics that are salient for me, I present this study to center Asian American Women leaders as we (re)conceptualize leadership and share stories of our racialized and gendered experiences in higher education.

Problem Statement

Asian Americans are the second fastest growing racial group in the United States according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2018). Asian American college student enrollment in higher education also reflects a similar growth trend. However, Asian Americans have the lowest representation among college and university administration (Maramba & Kodama, 2017; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2016), and Asian American Women are the most underrepresented in student affairs leadership positions (Pritchard & McChesney, 2018). Asian American non-faculty, full time professional staff are chronically underrepresented in leadership in higher education, and arguably the most misunderstood and misrepresented population in higher education (Chang, 2008; Museus et al., 2013). With the increasing number of Asian American college students, it is important to understand representation impacts leadership self-efficacy. Asian American students develop leadership self-efficacy when they can see other Asian Americans serving in leadership roles (Bertrand Jones et al., 2016; Luutran & Chung, 2021). Paired with the underrepresentation of Asian American Women in leadership roles, it is critical for colleges and universities to understand the implications on the campus environment, decision-making, and retention of both Asian American students and Asian American Women leaders who demonstrate the value of racial justice, social justice, and equity-

centered decision-making as well as multicultural competency (Assalone & Fann, 2017; Luutran & Chung, 2021; Maramba, 2011).

In addition to the misrepresentation of Asian American Women in leadership in higher education, there is an underrepresentation of Asian American Women within traditional leadership theories and within leadership in higher education (Dugan, 2017; Maramba, 2011). Leadership theory is dominated by research centering the privileged white male heteronormative perspective that creates a culturally biased and homogenous conceptualization of leadership and does not include how social identities, specifically race and ethnicity, impact leadership development (Balón & Shek, 2013; Bordas, 2007; Dugan, 2017; Eagly & Chin, 2010). With traditional leadership literature written predominantly by white men and often from a business perspective, this approach to theorizing leadership has erased identity and ignored the systems of oppression that privilege whiteness and white normative leadership approaches (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Rivera, 2019). When leadership theories and narratives do not use an identity-informed and culturally relevant approach to leadership, Asian American Women and other Women of Color are challenged to envision themselves as leaders (Almandrez, 2010). The underrepresentation of Asian American Women in leadership in higher education paired with my aim to contribute to higher education research about Asian American Women leadership both inform the purpose and significance of this research study.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to understand how Asian American Women (re)conceptualize leadership given the racism and sexism they experience as leaders in higher education. I use “(re)conceptualize” to place emphasis on the process of having Asian American Women critically self-reflect and create their own deeper understanding of identity-informed and

culturally relevant concepts of leadership that may otherwise be lost in the more commonplace “reconceptualize” (Jones et al., 2014). This distinction also emphasizes a recognition and clear separation from traditional white male normative leadership concepts of leadership to center the voices of Asian American Women and their description of their leadership. Because white patriarchal approaches to leadership prioritize individual values over the collective, foregrounding the intersectional identities of Asian American Women can reframe our (re)conceptualization of ourselves as valuable leaders (Luttrun & Chung, 2021).

In conducting this research centering Asian American Women leaders, I contribute to the higher education leadership literature in solidarity with other Asian American Women and other Women of Color scholars. Research *about* Asian American Women leaders in higher education *must center* Asian American Women leaders. Using Asian American Feminisms as a theoretical framework and counter-storytelling methodology, I center Asian American Women leaders as they share their counter-stories of experiences with racism and sexism in their leadership roles in higher education.

Significance of Study

Since high school, I can remember being drawn to leadership roles. I was driven to advance in my leadership throughout my career and enrolled in a Ph.D. program for Higher Education Leadership. But then I took my first formal leadership course and quickly developed a disdain for leadership theory. The theories were technical, transactional, and lacked entry points for me to engage in the leadership concepts in a personal and meaningful way. I lacked the critical lens to name that the leadership concepts were identity-neutral and rooted in white dominant norms. I only knew I wanted to avoid these leadership concepts in my research to avoid the dissonance of serving in leadership roles while not being validated as a leader in the

scholarship being centered in my leadership course. However, one of my final courses included readings about culturally responsive leadership and critical leadership, and this completely changed the trajectory of my dissertation research. In previous readings, I did not resonate with the theories provided and even tried to squeeze myself into one or two to complete an assignment. However, in reading about culturally responsive leadership and critical leadership, I easily immersed myself in the readings because I could see myself as a Woman of Color in leadership, the stories shared named my struggles and experiences in higher education, and the authors explicitly stated that the previous leadership theories I was exposed to only focused on white male dominant traits and styles (Dugan, 2017; Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012, 2016). However, even though I resonate with the growing literature on Women of Color in leadership research, I am still seeking research specifically centering Asian American Women in higher education leadership concepts.

While there is an increasing amount of research on Women of Color in leadership in higher education (Jean-Marie, 2011), there needs to be more research specifically about Asian American Women's experiences in leadership in higher education. Traditional leadership theories are racialized (white), gendered (male), hierarchical, and individualistic, in ways that do not reflect Asian American Women's leadership (Almandrez, 2010). Asian American Women leaders need to be centered in telling their counter-stories of how systems of oppression within higher education continue to permit racist and sexist behavior to go unchecked. Asian American Women counter-stories can illuminate the invisible collection of patterns of oppression upheld by administrators in higher education who refuse to recognize Asian American Women as leaders. Within these stories told through the lens of Asian American Women, there is also a need to complicate the counternarratives by recognizing times Asian American Women choose

to be less visible in their leadership to survive the oppressive systems within higher education, and times when Asian American Women leaders have been the oppressor as well as the oppressed. Foregrounding race and gender within systems of power and oppression allows Asian American Women to (re)conceptualize what it means to lead authentically when structures of inequity are considered (Jones & Bitton, 2021).

As an Asian American Woman researching Asian American Women leaders, I sought out an Asian American Feminist epistemology or theoretical framework to guide the design of my study. I also looked for a methodological approach to data generation that contextualized the intersectional experiences of Asian American Women. However, these epistemological and methodological frameworks have not yet been fully conceptualized in the ways that Chicana Feminist Epistemology or Black Feminist Thought have been developed (Fujiwara & Roshanravan, 2018). With this gap in research, I used selected tenets from various Asian American Feminist and other Women of Color literature to guide my research design and add a perspective that moves our community toward an Asian American Feminist Epistemology.

Although studies focused on Asian American Women leaders are continuing to increase, especially as I have read dissertation research among Asian American Women doctoral students (Almandrez, 2010; Briggs, 2020; Elsey, 2020; Liu, 2019; Mella, 2012; Ng, 2017; Reeves, 2015; Vogel, 2019), the literature available on how Asian American Women reconceptualize their leadership given their racialized and gendered experiences in higher education remains incomplete. I want to be explicit: this research study is deeply personal for me, my salient identities, and my own identity exploration and critical self-reflection as an Asian American Woman working as a full-time professional in a leadership role in higher education. By working

with Asian American Women research collaborators to co-construct knowledge and (re)conceptualize leadership, I want:

- Asian American Women readers to reflect on and relate to the stories shared to foster a sense of community, solidarity, and belonging;
- Asian American Women research participants and readers to enhance their own self-awareness and critical self-reflection that allows us to more fully engage in collectively advocating for racial justice, social justice, healing, and liberation in our Asian American Women communities and in solidarity with other Women of Color Communities;
- Asian American Women readers aspiring to become leaders in higher education to learn ways to navigate and push back against obstacles created by systems of oppression which are built into the foundation of higher education and to reclaim our leadership as a way to liberate ourselves;
- Higher education administrators to examine how they are complicit in upholding systems of oppression within higher education that marginalize Asian American Women leaders. I also want higher education administrators to better understand the racialized and gendered experiences of Asian American Women leaders and gain a better understanding of how Asian American Women conceptualize and engage their leadership. Through this learning, higher education administrators can work with Asian American Women leaders to create a more culturally inclusive environment that is conducive to recruitment and advancement of more Asian American Women leaders in higher education.

Research Question

With Asian American Women underrepresented in leadership in higher education paired with my aim to contribute to higher education research about Asian American Women leadership, the goal of my study was to center Asian American Women leaders as they critically reflect on their racialized and gendered experiences and (re)conceptualize their leadership in higher education. My primary research question is – How do Asian American Women (re)conceptualize leadership given the racism and sexism they experience in leadership roles in higher education?

Who are Asian American Women?

After sharing the problem, purpose, and significance of my study, I conclude this chapter by sharing who Asian American Women are within the context of this study. Language and terminology are critical for effective communication, and they continue to adapt and evolve, often dependent upon context. Matsuda (1996) states, “Language can construct understanding, language can assault, and language can exclude. Words have power. Theory is not the key to social change, and words alone cannot end subordination, but words are part of the struggle” (p. xiii). Because terms may be used differently across disciplines, periods of time, and contexts, I included operational definitions relevant to my research study.

Asian American is a panethnic term that includes East Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and various countries and territories in the Pacific Ocean Islands (Pak et al., 2014; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). Asian American activists created the Asian American term to proclaim their political activism to challenge and overcome racially discriminatory policies that affected diverse ethnic communities, creating shared interests (Espiritu, 1993; Tamura, 2001). The Asian American panethnic term “represents both a singular racial identity and a collective of diverse

ethnic identities” (Chan, 2017, p. 13), aimed to create unity, solidarity, and coalition building among the many diverse Asian ethnic communities (Accapadi, 2017).

In Chapter two, I further elaborate on how the Asian American category results in overgeneralizations and misconceptions that reinforce false narratives regarding Asian Americans as monolithically successful, perpetual foreigners, and honorary whites. This racial categorization also results in another layer of marginalization of ethnic identities and experiences within Asian American communities, particularly exclusive of Pacific Islanders, Native Hawaiians, and Desi Americans whose narratives get masked by the larger ethnic group narratives (Museus et al., 2013). In my study, I included both monoracial, multiracial, and multiethnic participants who self-identify as Asian American Women. I aimed to foster community, connections, solidarity, and shared experiences among Asian American Women without perpetuating or reifying the problematic narratives that misrepresent Asian American communities (Museus et al., 2013; Nomura, 2003).

Additionally, in the scope of this study, it is important to note I include both cisgender and transgender Asian American Women. Asian American Women *are* Women of Color. I define the term “Woman of Color” as a person who self-identifies as a Woman and a Person of Color, which could include Black/African American diaspora, Latinx/Hispanic diaspora, Indigenous/Native American, Asian/American diaspora, and multiracial or multiethnic. This overarching term “Woman of Color” is intended to foster solidarity between people who have been racially and ethnically minoritized at the intersection of patriarchy to engage in coalition work to challenge systems of oppression including sexism and racism.

I personally identify with the terms: Asian American Woman, Japanese American Woman, and Woman of Color. To further complicate the term Woman of Color, it is important

to recognize this term—similar to the panethnic term Asian American—emphasizes a collective political identity rather than explicitly acknowledging the important differences among various racial experiences for monoracial and multiracial women (Bhangal & Poon, 2020). It is important to understand how an individual identifies and not labeling a person based on perception. My intent in using the term Women of Color is to emphasize solidarity and shared community connection through marginalized racial and gender identities.

Finally, I bring these terms together to frame how Asian American Women leaders experience systemic oppression within higher education. A racialized experience describes the oppression Asian American Women encounter based on their race. A gendered experience describes the oppression Asian American Women encounter based on their gender. Asian American Women have multiple marginalized identities based on race and gender (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017; Velasquez Farmer, 2019). Multiple marginalized identities, or intersecting identities, refer to how one's social identities intersect; however, intersectionality refers to the structures and systems of oppression that marginalize Asian American Women (Crenshaw, 1991; Rivera, 2019; Wijeyesinghe & Jones, 2014). Both intersecting identities and intersectionality was addressed in this study as Asian American Women leaders shared counter-stories of the racism and sexism they experienced as leaders in higher education.

Summary

Asian American Women in leadership and within a higher education context are underrepresented and misrepresented in research. While there is a growing body of research of Asian American Women leaders in higher education, there remain significant gaps in the literature regarding Asian American Women in non-faculty, staff leadership roles in higher education as well as inclusion of Asian American Women amongst research and scholarly

discourse about Women of Color in leadership. In this study, I aimed to center Asian American Women who have navigated racism and sexism in their leadership roles in higher education and co-construct how we (re)conceptualize leadership.

Chapter two begins with an overview of research to describe the landscape of literature about Asian American Women, specifically about Asian American Women in leadership in higher education. Next, to establish context for my study, I provide a brief history of anti-Asian racism that highlighted Asian American Women and share context on Asian American panethnicity. I concluded by framing how I approached my research design utilizing selected tenets of Asian American Feminisms and highlighted how my research study will contribute to the gap in literature about how Asian American Women (re)conceptualize leadership given their racialized and gendered experiences with oppression within higher education.

Chapter three begins with a framing of how this study is grounded in my personal experience and connection to the research question, rooted in an Asian American Feminist perspective that provided the theoretical lens for the study. I outline counter-storytelling as the critical race methodology that guided my data generation process to remain centered on Asian American Women leaders' voices and counter-stories to co-construct knowledge. I conclude with a detailed description of the methods used to generate data to answer my research question and ensured trustworthiness of the study.

Chapter four begins with an introduction to the Asian American Women leaders who joined me in this study to co-construct our (re)conceptualization of leadership. The introductions provide a glimpse into the experiences my research collaborators have navigated in their leadership careers within a higher education system that privileges the white patriarchy. Learning more about each Asian American Woman contextualizes the salient findings that describe how

we (re)conceptualize leadership. The four primary themes that emerged include: 1) centering the humanity of others and ourselves, 2) critical self-reflection, 3) intersectional strategic leadership, and 4) collective empowerment.

Chapter five concludes this dissertation with an overview of the findings in relation to the existing literature and how this study contributes to research on Asian American Women leadership. Additionally, I offer recommendations for action, future research, and researcher reflections.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

“We have the power to reclaim our experience.” (de Jesús, 2005, p. 12)

This literature review serves as the foundation for my proposed study on how Asian American Women (re)conceptualize leadership given their experiences with racism and sexism in their leadership roles in higher education. This literature review begins with selected research on Asian American Women and existing research on Asian American Women in leadership in higher education. After laying this foundation, I provide a review of selected literature on the history of anti-Asian racism in the U.S. and the historical connection to the term panethnicity. In my review, I found the literature on how Asian American Women (re)conceptualize leadership given their racialized and gendered experiences in leadership roles in higher education remains incomplete. I conclude by describing how this literature review motivated my research question and presenting a theoretical framework on Asian American Feminist leadership to guide my study.

Asian American Women

Researchers and scholars have commented on the extent to which Women of Color, including Asian American Women, are consistently marginalized throughout history. Hune (2003) asserted from the perspective of race within Asian American Studies, the dominant narrative has been centered on Asian American *men*. The narratives of Asian American Women are rendered invisible and historical writing made the false assumption that Asian American men's stories represented Asian American Women's stories. Feminist scholars of color have problematized the dominant narrative within Women's Studies that centers *white, middle class*

women's experiences rather than representing the complexity that race, class, sexual orientation, citizenship status, etc. women truly experience (Hune, 2003). Asian American Women are also invisible in these white dominant narratives. Overall, within racial and gender identities, the intersections of identity are hidden or homogenized within the larger category of Asian men and white women (Hune, 2003).

Intersectionality refers to the structures and systems of oppression which marginalize Asian American Women (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Wijeyesinghe & Jones, 2014). Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) coined the term intersectionality, rooted in Black Feminist legal scholarship, to define and illuminate the way multiple forms of oppression compound and create discrimination and disadvantages (Ochefu, 2021). Intersectionality was designed to disrupt the assumption that Black Women experienced racism based on the experiences of Black men, and Black Women experienced sexism based on the experiences of white women. This assumption lacks the acknowledgment of how Black Women experience the intersections of racism and patriarchy different from Black men and white women (Crenshaw, 1989; Ochefu, 2021). Broadly, intersectionality addresses how those with multiple minoritized identities are marginalized by systems of oppression, which allows the framework to be applied to Asian American Women. Nevertheless, it is important to stay grounded in the understanding this concept was designed to address the differential experiences of Black Women.

The intersectional identities that Asian American Women hold are marginalized within the systems of oppression in the U.S. context that privilege dominant groups and erase Asian American Women (Crenshaw, 1991). As such, this long-standing historical framework has left Asian American Women as unrepresented, omitted or absent in historical writings and scholarly research. Foregrounding race and gender within systems of power and oppression allow Asian

American Women to (re)conceptualize what it means to lead authentically when structures of inequity are considered (Jones & Bitton, 2021).

It is important to acknowledge that race and gender are salient for many people who hold marginalized identities, and these identities are complex and diverse. My study is inclusive of multiracial Asian American identities; however, the research I review is predominantly representative of monoracial Asian American experiences. My study is also inclusive of transgender and cisgender Asian Americans who self-identify as women, noting the limited research in higher education specifically about Asian American transgender women as well as Asian non-binary, and gender non-conforming identity. As such, this literature review primarily includes research on the experiences of monoracial Asian American cisgender women.

Gender

Gender is an important part of the identity of Asian American Women. Patriarchal gender norms and roles are found in many Asian cultures (Luu Tran & Chung, 2021). Similar to research on other Women of Color in higher education, Asian American Women experience a co-occurring discrimination related to race and gender (Grant, 2016; Zamani, 2003). Research reveals that Asian American Women struggle with gender stereotypes that converge with racial stereotypes on a daily basis (Hune, 1998). In literature, Asian American Women have most commonly been researched as *objects* of a study based on their roles or jobs rather than as *subjects* of a study which centers their voices and lived experiences (Hune, 2003). This problematic research approach creates a knowledge base rooted in objectifying Asian American Women, and this objectification dehumanizes and subjugates Asian American Women to roles of sexual objects, exoticization, and submission, particularly by white men (Sue et al., 2009).

Related, there is a long-standing history and social construction of Asian American Women and how the dominant, white, male-centered literature has created the narrative that Asian American Women are “orientalized” and “hypersexualized” as the “other,” exotic, quiet, or obliging (Espiritu, 1996; Fujiwara & Roshanravan, 2018; Hune, 2003; Luutran & Chung, 2021; Parrenas-Shimizu, 2007). Compounded by associations with pornography, sexual harassment, and other forms of sexual exploitation, all these factors undermine and oppress Asian American Women. The recent mass murder of six Asian Women in Atlanta is a contemporary example of how fetishization and exotification of Asian American Women, rooted in racism and patriarchy, contribute to a culture of violence for Asian American Women. These various forms of objectification, racism, sexism, and oppression contribute to the challenges experienced by Asian American Women in the U.S. The historical lack of representation and misrepresentation also reinforces the issues of invisibility among Asian American Women.

Invisibility

Race and gender research portray the concept of invisibility as a subtle form of racial and/or gender oppression (Nadal, 2010; Sue, 2010; Sue et al., 2009). Scholars and researchers thoroughly discuss how Asian Americans find themselves invisible in research and policy, resulting in Asian Americans being dismissed, devalued, ignored, isolated, and, in many cases, completely excluded on the basis of race (Hune, 2003; Mena & Vaccaro, 2017; Museus et al., 2013; Sun & Starosta, 2007; Torres-Harding et al., 2012). Sue et al. (2009) highlight the idea of Asian Americans being overlooked without conscious intention, being left out of conversations related to race, or not recognized as a racial or ethnic minority group that experiences discrimination and even considered more like white (yet never being fully accepted by white peers).

Adding another layer of complexity to the issue of invisibility, there is the paradox of hypervisibility and invisibility for Asian American Women (Maramba, 2011; Sun & Starosta, 2007). The concept of hypervisibility is experienced through Asian American Women feeling like they stand out, feeling like the spokesperson for their race (Mena & Vaccaro, 2017), or feeling singled out as the “only one” in the workplace, alternating with feeling invisible, underrepresented in the workplace, feeling unacknowledged, or being told Asian Americans do not need to have racial issues addressed since they are viewed as part of the privileged racial group (Maramba, 2011). Swinging between these experiences of invisibility and hypervisibility can lead Asian American Women to feeling like racialized and gendered objects rather than people first (Sun & Starosta, 2007). As described in this section, the sexism, racism, and invisibility common in narratives about Asian American Women contribute to the challenges experienced by Asian American Women when they hold leadership roles.

Asian American Women in Leadership in Higher Education

Higher education has a long history of exclusion and resistance to desegregation, which privileged affluent white men and marginalized Students of Color (Hurtado et al., 1998; Kupo, 2011). As the research has shown up to this point, Asian American Women, like other Women of Color collectively, are at a disadvantage in advancing to leadership because they are subjected to both racial and gender discrimination. Specific to leadership in higher education, Black, Latinx, Indigenous, Asian American, and Multiracial Women are underrepresented in leadership compared to their white peers, and they face more obstacles when seeking promotions. These factors are only a few that make it more difficult and less likely they advance to higher education leadership positions (Liu, 2019; Ortega-Lison & Soto, 2014). Relatedly, the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR) conducted research to

examine the representation of gender and race among student affairs employees relative to student demographics. Results highlighted white women are overrepresented in all student affairs professional roles as well as amongst leadership positions while Asian Americans were the most disproportionately underrepresented in all student affairs positions (3% staff compared to 6% students), and Asian American Women were the most underrepresented in student affairs leadership positions (Pritchard & McChesney, 2018).

The dominant narrative created by the model minority myth adds to the obstacles that hinder Asian American Women in advancing in leadership because it conceals their experiences with racism and sexism that obstruct their advancement to leadership, particularly in higher education (Reeves, 2015). This void in Asian American leaders in higher education contributes to the misperceptions of the leadership abilities of Asian Americans (Neilson & Kiang, 2013) and the persistent underrepresentation of Asian American Women in leadership. Misrepresentation and underrepresentation of Asian American Women in leadership in higher education leads to challenging and oppressive experiences when working on college campuses, without the benefit and support of Asian American mentors.

Racialized and Gendered Experiences in Higher Education

Over two decades ago, Hune (1998) published a report about Asian American Women in higher education, stating Asian American Women staff and faculty felt they had to work harder and be more qualified than others. Issues of invisibility, marginalization, unfair workloads, and slow career mobility were issues in the 90s (Hune, 1998) and continue to be salient issues for Asian American Women leaders in higher education today.

In searching literature for Asian American Women and other Staff of Color experiences working in higher education, the research I reviewed focused primarily on how *undergraduate*

students and faculty experienced higher education rather than focusing on how *full-time, non-faculty staff* experienced higher education. Even within these student-focused studies, few focused specifically on Asian American students (Johnston & Yeung, 2014; Museus & Truong, 2009) and the impact of racial climates on Asian Americans is often ignored (Teranishi et al., 2009). Since faculty and professional staff are students prior to the start of their career, I extrapolated from these limited studies on students to share what Asian Americans have experienced regarding their experiences on college campuses and being a part of higher education, acknowledging that faculty and staff navigate campus environments in ways different from students. The research on Asian American students found negative campus climate led to increased depression levels, lower levels of institutional attachment (Cress & Ikeda, 2003), and perceived interpersonal racism correlated with lower self-esteem (Tawa et al., 2012).

Relatedly, women faculty and full-time, non-faculty Staff of Color also report isolation, lack of representation, and invisibility at predominantly white institutions (Mena & Vaccaro, 2017; Mills, 2019). Data show Women of Color in higher education are overburdened and feel hyper-visible when asked to support Students of Color on campus, yet they feel invisible when they need professional support and mentoring (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). An additional challenge is that Asian American leadership development on college campuses remains relatively non-existent. Balón and Shek (2013) asserted:

It can be argued that Asian Americans have been deemed irrelevant by many in higher education, owing to their assumed overrepresentation and outperformance of other groups of color...yet statistics in all sectors of industry, including education, reveal that other Communities of Color are outpacing Asian Americans in advancement to leadership positions. (p. 311)

I think it is important to highlight that this quote makes a comparison between Asian Americans and other Communities of Color. Problematic with the model minority myth, comparisons among Communities of Color are intentionally made to elevate Asian Americans and uphold white supremacy, yet my intent in including this comparison is to frame the narrative on how and why people may contribute to the erasure of Asian Americans in leadership. While there is emerging visibility of Asian American Women in higher education, there is still a battle against the historical erasure of Asian American Women and how they have been excluded in higher education policy and practice and are relatively invisible in higher education scholarly research and discourse (Museus & Kiang, 2009; Museus et al., 2013).

Lack of Asian American Women Mentors

One of the contributing reasons for the underrepresentation of Asian American Women in leadership in higher education may be due to the lack of Asian American mentors in senior administrative leadership roles that support and help other Asian American Women navigate the racism and sexism experienced in the workplace (Maramba, 2011; Turner et al., 2008). The lack of Asian American mentors ultimately reinforces and perpetuates "...an oppressive cycle of exclusion for Women of Color in higher education" (Mena & Vaccaro, 2017, p. 313), in which Women of Color have few professional role models or mentors, resulting in a lack of support in advancement opportunities. Feeling undervalued and marginalized in the university environment can lead Asian American Women to feel dissatisfied and choose to leave the field of higher education (Maramba, 2011).

Representation problems are systemic so when there is a lack of Asian American leaders in higher education, it diminishes the likelihood students will see themselves as institutional leaders and pursue this career trajectory, resulting in a cyclical lack of Asian American mentors

for staff and faculty as well (Museus & Truong, 2009; Talusan, 2016). Talusan (2016) astutely described the cycle of socialization to education for Asian Americans which highlighted the importance of representation, culturally relevant curriculum, role modeling, and mentoring in the lives of Asian American students. The cyclical nature infers there is no clear starting point and one part of the cycle impacts the next. As seen in Figure 1, there are few professional staff and faculty role models and mentors for Asian American undergraduate students to see themselves reflected in education leadership; resulting in lower numbers of Asian American teachers and staff which contributes to a lack of culturally relevant teaching styles and content; leading to Asian Americans narratives being excluded from curriculum, further adding to the existing stereotypes of Asian Americans as model minorities and perpetual foreigners; resulting in lower numbers of Asian American students interested in pursuing education or higher education faculty or professional leadership roles; and the cycle continues (Talusan, 2016).

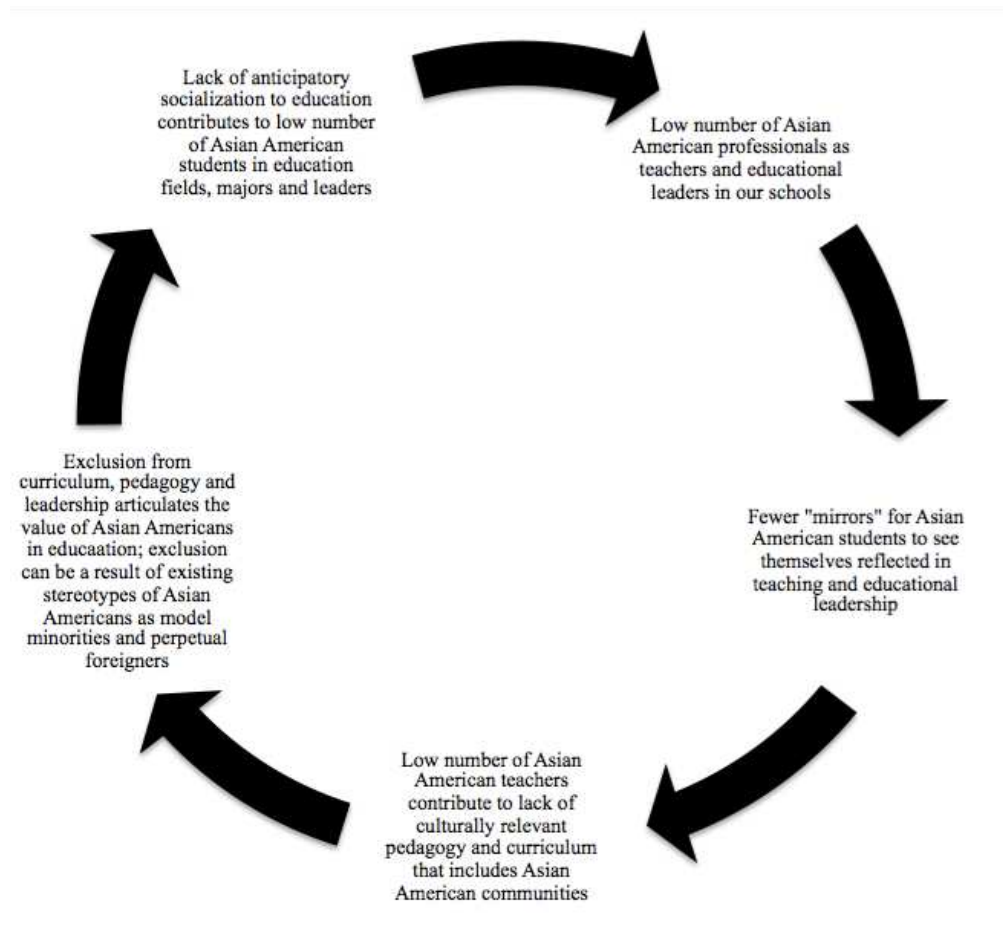


Figure 1: Cycle of socialization to education of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (Talusán, 2016).

There is a gap in the research on Asian American Women non-faculty, professional staff experiences on college campuses and there are significantly fewer opportunities for Asian American Women to be mentored by other Asian American Women in leadership in higher education. To better support Asian American Women in their advancement in leadership roles in higher education, more research is needed to address the gaps in research and understand the obstacles Asian American Women experience, what support they need to advance professionally, and the support networks on which they lean to navigate the challenges that result.

Higher Education Leadership

With leadership literature written predominantly by white men and often from a business perspective, this approach to theorizing leadership has erased identity and ignored the systems of oppression that privilege whiteness and white normative leadership approaches (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Rivera, 2019). It is important to highlight that leadership is a socially constructed concept, derived by people to make meaning of observations in the world. And because power is central to leadership, leadership can be used as a tool to manipulate and maintain social stratification and white supremacy (Dugan, 2017). The earlier dominant leadership theories reflect the values and beliefs of dominant groups while diminishing or erasing the value of leadership among marginalized groups (Dugan, 2017). For many Asian American Women whose values shape the ways we lead, these white, male, dominant values minimize our leadership contributions as deficiencies rather than assets. This deficit-based approach makes it difficult for white dominant culture to see Asian American Women as valuable leaders, and it negatively impacts our self-perception and self-efficacy as leaders (Luttrun & Chung, 2021).

Even in contemporary literature on leadership in higher education, leadership is an area of study that is frequently and consistently framed from a dominant white lens and neutral in terms of social identity, especially race and ethnicity (Ayman & Korabik, 2010). Having identity-neutral framing of leadership theory and styles maintains the status quo for marginalized populations and upholds systems of oppression (Rivera, 2019). Further, Asian American Women are rendered invisible and erased from the leadership narrative when using identity-neutral leadership approaches.

To elaborate further on the deficit in traditional leadership theories that center dominant groups, I provide examples from group-centered theories (i.e. leadership-member exchange

theory, shared leadership, etc.), relationship-centered theories (i.e. connective leadership, relational leadership model, etc.), and transformative leadership theories (i.e. transformational leadership, servant leadership, etc.) (Dugan, 2017). Dugan noted while that idea of shared leadership is appealing, there remains a focus on productivity as the central goal and these theories may serve to perpetuate power differentials and social stratification. Additionally, relationship-centered theories espouse the value of relationships while still idolizing individualism, which may result in damage to relationships (Dugan, 2017). Finally, while there is an appreciation that theories of transformation go beyond the traditional boundaries of leadership theory, transformative leadership theories are still fundamentally rooted in an ideology of individualism and do not capture the spirit of interdependence central to social movements (Dugan, 2017). In summary, even the more contemporary leadership theories that acknowledge the role of followers and group members still focus on white, male, dominant narrative of leadership that infers a need to “transform” or “adapt” to white patriarchal leadership values and styles.

Contrary to many traditional leadership models, applied critical leadership centers identity and insists identity not be considered singularly but in its multiplicity and context (Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012). Santamaría and Santamaría (2016) charge institutions and leaders in higher education to apply critical leadership to subvert the “long-standing system that has privileged certain citizens while oppressing or neglecting others” (p. xii). Further, higher education administrators need to interrogate organizational inequities and their own leadership practices to cultivate the courage to disrupt the status quo and advocate for education change (Santamaría & Santamaría, 2016).

Despite the growing research on culturally relevant leadership (Guthrie & Chunoo, 2018; Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012), leadership is still not associated with Asian Americans, and “discussions of Asian American leadership development, particularly on college campuses, remain relatively nonexistent” (Balón & Shek, 2013, p. 311). As false narratives prevail about Asian Americans outperforming other groups of color, data show other Communities of Color are outpacing Asian Americans in advancement to leadership in higher education (Balón & Shek, 2013; Hyun, 2005; Pritchard & McChesney, 2018). The lack of representation of Asian American Women leadership in higher education literature emphasizes that research has not yet reached a critical mass in Asian American Women centered scholarship. The lack of representation highlights the need for studies focused on Asian American Women leaders’ stories which have been overlooked or rendered invisible in higher education, particularly in non-faculty, professional staff leadership roles (Velasquez Farmer, 2019; Yenpasook et al., 2015).

More research centering Asian American Women leaders can serve to empower Asian American Women to claim their space in leadership; more research can inspire solidarity among Asian American Women communities and with other Women of Color leaders in higher education to resist and challenge systems of oppression that have created obstacles for their advancement; and more research can encourage higher education administrators to examine how they are complicit in upholding systems of oppression within higher education that marginalize Asian American Women leaders and work with Asian American Women leaders to create a more culturally-inclusive environment conducive to recruitment and advancement of more Asian American Women leaders in higher education.

Asian American History and Panethnicity

This literature review foregrounds Asian American Women leaders in higher education as the focus of this study. In this section of the literature review, I provide background on Asian American historical experiences more broadly to understand the roots of Asian American Womens' racialized and gendered experiences in leadership in higher education. Connected to Asian American history, I will also tie in how the Asian American panethnic term was created.

It is important to share my deliberate selection of the term Asian American for this literature review. While common terms include "Asian American," "Asian Pacific American" (APA), or "Asian American and Pacific Islander" (AAPI), and, more recently, "Asian Pacific Islander Desi American" (APIDA). I chose to use the term Asian American as the panethnic term representative of much of the research included in this literature review (Maramba & Kodama, 2017) and more importantly because this panethnic term "represents both a singular racial identity and a collective of diverse ethnic identities" (Chan, 2017, p. 13), aimed to create unity, solidarity, and coalition building among the many diverse Asian ethnic communities (Accapadi, 2017). There is great debate over terms because this broad racial grouping results in overgeneralizations, misrepresentations, and misconceptions which contribute to the persistence of false narratives regarding Asian Americans. To provide context, I share a brief history of Asian Americans in the U.S. before elaborating on the complexities of the Asian American panethnic term.

Historical Overview of Anti-Asian Racism

I include a brief history of Asian Americans in the U.S. to give chronological and social context for the racism, stereotypes, and sentiments toward Asian Americans today. In the 19th century, Chinese people seeking sanctuary and survival immigrated to the west coast of the U.S.

(Takaki, 2008), contributing to a population increase and resulting in white men feeling threatened by employment competition. Compounded with Japanese military efforts that were posing a threat to countries worldwide, these threats led to race-based restrictions against Asian immigration to the U.S. through legislation including: the Page Act of 1875, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907, the Asiatic barred-zone immigration Act of 1917, the Immigration Act of 1924. These laws restricted Asian presence (socially, culturally, economically, politically) in the U.S. so Asians could not become citizens, own property, or marry outside of their race (Pak et al., 2014; Takaki, 2008).

It is important to highlight the aforementioned Page Act of 1875 because this is the first U.S. race-based immigration legislation, specifically prohibiting Chinese Women from immigrating to the U.S. (Peng, 2014; Takaki, 2008). Fueled by racism and misogyny, white men viewed Chinese Women as a threat to the racial homogeneity of white America (Takaki, 2008). Empowered by racist patriarchy, the federal government created legislation to exclude Chinese Women from entering the country (Peng, 2014), illuminating the historical roots of the racism and sexism Asian American Women continue to experience today.

Anti-Asian racism continued during World War II resulting in Executive Order 9066 and the internment of Japanese American citizens from 1942-1946. White historical narratives describe the internment of people of Japanese ancestry as necessary for the safety of the U.S. following the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, ending after the U.S. bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. However, revisionist history tells the counter-narrative that Japanese Americans, including those American citizens born in the U.S., were singled out, unlike Germans and Italians who were also enemy countries of the U.S. (Takaki, 2008). An exception was made only when it benefited white Americans including an exception for the Japanese living in Hawaii who

made up 90% of the workforce who would invest the labor to rebuild after the damage to Pearl Harbor, and Japanese Americans were allowed to risk their lives in the military to fight for the U.S. *if* they passed a loyalty test (Takaki, 2008).

A few years later, the Emergency Detention Act of 1950 during the Korean War authorized the establishment of concentration camps. With China's involvement in the Korean War, this posed a threat to Chinese Americans and other Asian ethnic groups that internment was easily repeated, which ultimately contributed to the political silencing of Asian Americans (Lee, 1999). The numerous racist and xenophobic laws that targeted Asian Americans resulted in some Asian Americans being silenced as an intentional strategy for survival, while other Asian Americans channeled their outrage into resistance to the oppression they experienced (Takaki, 2008). Chinese American laborers joined together to go on strike to demand equitable wages compared to their white counterparts. Japanese Americans, known as the No-No Boys, refused to sign the loyalty oath and fight for the U.S. after the same country denied them their civil rights (Nittle, 2020; Takaki, 2008). In both examples, Asian Americans refused to be silenced.

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 overturned many restrictive aspects of previous legislation, allowing for more immigration to the U.S. from many different Asian countries. This law enacted in 1965 prioritized family reunification and resulted from the civil rights era at a time of major crisis in race relations and accounts for most of the Asian American population growth in the U.S. today (Pak et al., 2014). Nevertheless, the pattern Japanese Americans experienced during World War II and Chinese Americans experienced during the Cold War (two examples among many others targeting many Asian ethnic groups) continues to fuel the narrative that Asian Americans are threatening foreigners rather than members of the "American" community (Lee, 2015).

The implications surrounding these historical racial and ethnic profiling lives on and fuels contemporary anti-Asian racism and violence (Sugiyama, 2015). In more recent history, the idea that Asian Americans are threats to white Americans is further evidenced by the murder of Vincent Chin in 1982. Two white men murdered Vincent Chin, a *Chinese American* man, because they viewed him as a representative of the *Japanese* auto industry, for the strain and unemployment of the U.S. auto industry and its workers (Lee, 2015).

In 2001, soon after the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, there was a new wave of anti-immigrant, racial profiling, and hate crimes against Muslim, Middle Eastern, and South Asian Americans (Lee, 2015). In 2017, Dr. David Dao was physically harmed and forcibly dragged off a United Airlines overbooked flight when no passengers volunteered to rebook their flight for airline employees to travel.

In 2020, with the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus which emerged in China before spreading to the U.S., Asian Americans experienced increased fear and visibility of anti-Asian racism and violence in the U.S. with beatings and killings of Asian elders and the mass murder of six Asian American Women in Atlanta. These acts of racism and violence continue to symbolize that in many ways “Asian Americans are seen as Asians, not Americans” and even viewed as subhuman objects (Lee, 2015, p. 381). Contemporary anti-Asian racism and violence did not begin with white America’s racist reference to COVID-19 as the “China virus” or the kung-flu.” These symptoms of racism are rooted in the disease of white supremacy and patriarchy that have been a part of the Asian American experience since the early 1850s when Asians first arrived in what is now the U.S. (Huber et al., 2008; Takaki, 2008).

Despite a long history of anti-Asian racism and silencing, there has also been a history of Asian American Women activists who got their start in the civil rights movement. Yuri

Kochiyama, a Japanese American Woman, was subjected to an internment camp and later became a community organizer and close associate of Malcolm X. This led to a connection with the emerging Asian American movement with the ongoing African American civil rights movement (Lee, 2015). Similarly, Grace Lee Boggs, a Chinese American Woman, was a civil rights activist and played a key role in humanizing movements including Black Power, labor issues, women's rights, and Asian American rights. Both Asian American Women activists led the way in forming a new era to establish an Asian American voice in politics and radical social change (Lee, 2015).

Asian Americans have been historically lumped together for white people to quickly assess racial group status based on a set of physical characteristics. Racial groupings are made political as the U.S. government uses these categories to leverage legislation that perpetuates racism and oppression against people of color by negatively impacting freedoms, voting rights, property ownership, and citizenship rights (Junn & Masuoka, 2008). As Asian Americans are historically and currently subjected to racialized stereotypes, a racial group identity and consciousness forms and an Asian American political identity is developed in response to the social, cultural, and political context (Junn & Masuoka, 2008). This brief history lays the foundation for the Asian American racial grouping in the U.S. and leads into the complexity of the panethnic term for a racial grouping that represents a vast number of ethnic groups, cultures, languages, religions, and experiences (Okamoto & Mora, 2014).

Asian American Panethnic Term and Implications

By choosing one term to use throughout this literature review, I do not suggest Asian Americans are a single homogeneous group, nor do I obscure the distinctiveness among ethnic groups (Museus et al., 2013; Nomura, 2003). I do, however, acknowledge there are some shared

realities of discrimination and oppression that contribute to the lived experiences of all ethnic groups categorized within the Asian American racial grouping within the U.S. context. The U.S. census first began to count Asians as a separate racial group in the 1860s (Junn & Masuoka, 2008; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), and the panethnic racial categories emerged from the post-civil rights era in the 1960s (Okamoto & Mora, 2014). During this time, Asian American activists adopted the term to proclaim their political activism (Tamura, 2001) and to assert an alternative to “oriental” which was used as a derogatory term ascribed to them (Chan, 2007). The “Asian American” term, “represents both a singular racial identity and a collective of diverse ethnic identities” (Chan, 2017, p. 13), in a phenomenon termed “panethnicity” (Espiritu, 1993). Panethnicity can aim to create unity, solidarity, and coalition building among the many diverse Asian ethnic communities (Accapadi, 2017), and as noted in the previous section, the panethnic racial grouping can also be a political identity. Political efforts to create a pan-Asian American identity worked to challenge and overcome discriminatory policies (Espiritu, 1993), but the monolithic identity masks ethnic groups’ histories and colonization that impact ethnic cultures and values ethnic groups are still working to recognize, dismantle, and reclaim (Pak et al., 2014).

The Asian American racial category includes Central Asians, East Asians, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders, South Asians, Southwest Asians, and can also include West Asian or people from the Middle East (Pak et al. 2014). It is important to problematize the Asian American racial category because it forces a wide range of almost fifty ethnic groups’ cultures into one monolithic group identity that does not capture the unique histories and experiences of each group (Chan, 2017; Maramba & Kodama, 2017). Asian Americans are roughly two-thirds foreign born and are the most internally diverse racially minoritized group in the U.S. (Kim, 2004), yet most historical research on Asian Americans represents monoracial East Asians, and

“the heterogeneity of [Asian American ethnic] group identities become masked by the monolithic perceptions of who Asian Americans are” (Pak et al., 2014, p. 7). More complexity is layered on when recognizing that U.S. global empire and colonialism has shaped experiences for various Asian ethnic groups including Southeast Asian Americans, Desi American/South Asians and Filipinx populations (Chan, 2017). For ethnic groups with a history of colonization, there is still a battle to understand how historical colonization impacts present-day culture. To further problematize colonization, it is important to highlight that the Japanese colonized Hawaii and are the oppressors in relation to Native Hawaiians. As a Japanese American Woman, I still grapple with the complexity of being the oppressor and being oppressed.

As a researcher and an Asian American Woman, I continue to struggle with the term “Asian American” because of the potential to exclude ethnic groups not well-represented by the term, while simultaneously seeking a term that creates a community connection and solidarity through shared experiences. Wei (1993) asserted:

The concept Asian American implies that there can be a communal consciousness and a unique culture that is neither Asian nor American, but Asian American. In defining their own identity and culture, Asian Americans bring together previously isolated and ineffective struggles against the oppression of Asian communities into a coherent pan-Asian movement for social change. (p. 1)

Okamoto and Mora (2014) described this tension succinctly as, “...panethnicity is characterized by a unique tension inherent in maintaining subgroup distinctions while generating a broader sense of solidarity” (p. 219). The goal to recognize the diversity of ethnic experiences while highlighting community solidarity creates this inherent tension, so as a researcher, I want

to stay conscious of these multiple truths and honor the individual narratives and experiences shared through the research process.

As a Japanese American Woman, I also recognize my privilege that my racial identity is included in the existing, albeit limited, literature on Asian Americans, and I want to be cognizant of including the narratives of various ethnic identities within the Asian American community through my research. This racial categorization also results in another layer of marginalization within Asian American communities and research because the voices of Desi Americans, Southeast Asian Americans, Filipinx, among other ethnic Asian ethnic groups, are masked by the generalizations of the larger ethnic group narratives (Maramba & Kodama, 2017; Museus et al., 2013). As a researcher, I commit to recognizing the unequal representation of ethnic groups in using this panethnic term and understand some ethnic groups have a stronger attachment to their subgroup identity rather than their panethnic identity (Wong et al., 2011).

Anti-Asian history and the context for the pan-ethnic term “Asian American” are included to situate the research in this literature review. The next few sections focus on a literature review of research on Asian American Women, more specifically about Asian American Women in leadership in higher education, and ends with leadership in higher education.

Theoretical Lens Framing the Study

The literature reviewed in this chapter provided context for how I identified a framework through which to theorize Asian American Women’s experiences with racism and sexism in leadership roles in higher education. Asian American Women’s leadership needs to center social identities, be culturally relevant, and be viewed within frameworks rooted in social justice, identity, and power and oppression (Balón & Shek, 2013; Bordas, 2007). To explore the

experiences of Asian American Women and how we(re)conceptualize our racialized and gendered leadership in higher education, I used selected concepts from Asian American Feminisms to serve as the lens and guide for designing my study which centers Asian American Women leaders. Asian American Feminisms is the central component to my theoretical lens for this study because it is essential for my research to share the story of Asian American Women *with* Asian American Women and *for* Asian American Women.

When I set out to research my topic, I craved an epistemological framework or theoretical lens designed for Asian American Women similar to Chicana Feminist Epistemology (Calderón et al., 2012; Delgado Bernal, 1998) and Black Feminist Thought (Hill Collins, 1986). However, with the vast array of pan-Asian cultural and ethnic experiences, there is not one primary Asian American Feminist epistemology or a Pan-Asian Feminist theoretical framework. Yet, various Asian American Feminisms resonate for me as an Asian American Woman researcher that guided my theoretical perspective for my dissertation research. I was inspired by Chicana Feminist Epistemology in which we are reminded “the process of decolonization is not to recover the silenced voices by using hegemonic categories of analysis, but to change the methodological tools and categories to reclaim those neglected voices” (Calderón et al., 2012, p. 514). With encouragement from my advisor and other Women of Color scholars, I began a journey to create a theoretical lens toward an Asian American Feminist Epistemology.

I view Asian American Feminisms as the stories and ways Asian American feminist scholars view the world, make meaning of the world, and transform the world. I drew from both Asian American Feminists and activists to help center the racialized and gendered experiences of Asian American Women as well as other Women of Color feminist scholars who work in solidarity for shared liberation from oppression for Communities of Color, specifically at the

intersections of race and gender. Asian American Feminisms are rooted in a critical theoretical perspective with a focus on interrogating systems of power at the intersections of race, gender, and other socially constructed identities to inform change (Fujiwara & Roshanravan, 2018). With this critical lens, Asian American Feminisms align with the tenets of Critical Race Theory including storytelling as valuable experiential knowledge, experiential knowledge of People of Color is a valuable tool for analyzing racial oppression, intersectionality of race intersects with other marginalized identities to shape systemic forms of oppression, and challenging the dominant ideology that privileges dominant groups in the U.S. (Crenshaw, 1991; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Yosso, 2005).

Among many Asian American Feminisms, Pinayist Pedagogy was a theoretical perspective that resonated for me as I selected elements of Asian American Feminisms that represent the everyday lives and personal stories of “struggle, survival, service, sisterhood, and strength” (Tintiangco-Cubales & Sacramento, 2009, p. 180). Pinayist Pedagogy, referred to as Peminist Critical Theory (de Jesús, 2005), is rooted in the experiences of American-born Filipinas, and combines theory, practice, and personal reflection. Chicana Feminist Epistemology (Delgado Bernal, 1998) was another framework that resonated strongly for me as I aim to heal my mind and body from internalized oppression as well as disrupt the false narrative about Asian American Women leaders. After a lot of reading and reflection, for me, Asian American Feminisms represent ways of knowing ourselves and others through reflection, community, humanization, and healing toward liberation (Accapadi, 2017; de Jesús, 2005; Delgado Bernal, 1998; Tintiangco-Cubales & Sacramento, 2009).

Asian American Feminism engages a collectivist approach rather than an individualistic approach that typically characterizes white-centric approaches to leadership in the U.S. (Balón,

2005; Lo, 2011; McManus & Perruci, 2015). Calderón et al. (2012) stated, “we must collectively embark on a path of decolonization...and in doing this work, we are not alone” (p. 514).

Accapadi (2017) asserted a need to reframe interdependence as a strength and, “encourage one’s sense of self as part of a larger community and that one is connected to others and does not stand alone” (p. 98). Community is essential for Asian American Women’s spiritual growth (Bundang, 2005), and this connection within community can then be leveraged as a cultural asset and strength that is brought into the community (Accapadi, 2017; Bordas, 2007). This approach is reinforced by Pinayism with a foundational value of family, wisdom, and care among community (Accapadi, 2017; Tintiangco-Cubales & Sacramento, 2009). Chen (2015) shared “by developing our identity both as an individual and as a collective community, we gain a stronger voice and become advocates for our own inclusion” (p. 285). Collective community care also aligns with the concept of panethnicity and the Asian American Feminism about ways of knowing ourselves.

The collectivist theorizing described above allows us to identify the “invisible collection of patterns” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) that serve to oppress us, and once identified, we can rearticulate our identities and put our divided selves back together (Calderón et al., 2012; Delgado Bernal, 1998). I strongly resonated with this way of knowing ourselves in Chicana Feminist Epistemology which names that, for Chicanas and other Women of Color, we navigate this colonized world with separated parts of our total selves. Our grief, fears, desires, and love are divided up and compartmentalized, and “we must accept and reconcile who we are and how we have come to be” (Calderón, 2012, p. 534). Buenavista et al. (2009) described how Asian Americans experience the split of body and mind, spirit and soul because of the ambiguity and liminal positioning between being ascribed as honorary whites and perpetual foreigners based on

the manipulative interests of white America. Asian Americans also straddle worlds with cultural expectations and traditions at home versus assimilation to white dominant norms in predominantly white schools or workplaces (Lee, 2015). Pinayism also theorized “remembering is never a quiet act of introspection or retrospection. It is a painful remembering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present” (Homi K. Bhabha as cited in Mendoza Strobel, 2005, p. 19). The process of uniting our divided selves is part of our healing.

Uniting our divided selves is a process of reflection and healing. When U.S. society reveres white normative values, behaviors, physical appearances, and protects systems that privilege whiteness and oppress people with marginalized identities, Asian American Women and other Women of Color internalize shame and trauma for not embodying those norms and expectations. Reflection on internalized oppression can then lead to healing through words to rejoin severed parts of ourselves. To engage this approach, “we must be ready to truly encounter ourselves...and we must first confront those aspects of ourselves that render us the colonized or the perpetrator” (Calderón et al., 2012, p. 534; Delgado Bernal, 1998). This approach is described in Pinayism as a process of reflection, humanizing ourselves and our communities, healing through uniting our divided selves, relationship building, and working toward our own and shared liberation (Tintiangco-Cubales & Sacramento, 2009). Pierce (2005) builds on the process of reflection and healing as a way of naming internalized oppression, shame, inferiority, confusion, and anger (Mendoza Strobel, 2005) by operationalizing this approach to Asian American Feminisms:

Once I could name my shame and recognize its constructed origins - recognize
that the skeletons in my closet did not belong to me alone - I could reject

internalized notions of superiority and inferiority, sort out my own confusion, and find constructive methods for channeling my anger into proactive work. (p. 39)

These tenets of Asian American Feminisms offer an alternative way of knowing toward an Asian American Feminist perspective and serve as the lens and guide throughout my research design, which centers Asian American Women leaders in higher education.

Summary

With a rapidly increasing Asian American student population, the underrepresentation of Asian American Women in leadership in higher education, there is a need to focus more research on Asian American Women leaders. By understanding historical research to provide context for future research, I highlight concepts central to the experience of Asian American Women and specifically Asian American Women leaders in higher education. To provide more context for the contemporary experience of Asian American Women leaders, I provide a brief overview of anti-Asian history, xenophobia, patriarchy, as well as the historical connection to the term panethnicity. I conclude by describing how this literature review motivated my research question and present a theoretical framework on Asian American Feminist leadership to guide my study centering Asian American Women leaders in higher education.

While there is a growing body of research of Asian American Women leaders in higher education, there remain significant gaps in the literature regarding Asian American Women in non-faculty, professional staff leadership roles in higher education. There is also a gap with the inclusion of Asian American Women amongst research and scholarly discourse centered on Women of Color in leadership. In my study, I collaborate with other Asian American Women to co-construct how we collectively (re)conceptualize leadership and center our identities to

interrogate the systems of oppression within higher education that have impacted our leadership experiences at the intersections of racism and patriarchy.

As I discuss in chapter three, this study provides an opportunity for Asian American Women to create our own leadership narrative and (re)conceptualize leadership in a way that centers our racialized and gendered experiences, including wisdom gained from navigating and resisting systems of oppression within our leadership roles in higher education. I use an asset-based approach that focuses on who Asian American Women are rather than focusing on who Asian American Women are not (Poon et al., 2016). With this co-constructed knowledge, I aimed to encourage and empower other Asian American Women leaders in higher education and inform higher education administrators of culturally responsive leadership that will foster an environment more conducive to the recruitment and advancement of Asian American Women.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

“To decolonize is to tell and write one’s own story, that in the telling and writing, others may be encouraged to tell their own.” (Mendoza Strobels, 2005, p. 66)

This qualitative critical constructivist study was rooted in Asian American Feminist ways of knowing and understanding the world and guided my research design. Asian American Feminisms are congruent with the qualitative methodological approach of counter-storytelling to highlight the powerful experiential knowledge that exists within Asian American Women’s experiences (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, 2002). With an Asian American Feminist lens that centers collectivist approaches, I engaged the Asian American Women in my study as *research collaborators* rather than *participants* to emphasize our collaborative co-construction of knowledge through this study (Mahoney, 2007). Asian American Women collaborators joined me in co-constructing how we collectively (re)conceptualized leadership and centered our identities to interrogate the systems of oppressions within higher education that impacted our leadership experiences at the intersections of race and gender. This chapter describes my research purpose and research question, positionality, epistemological approach, methodology, and research methods.

Purpose of the Study and Research Question

The purpose of my study is to understand how Asian American Women (re)conceptualize leadership given the racism and sexism we have experienced in our leadership roles in higher education. Grounded in Asian American Feminisms, I centered Asian American Women leaders as they shared their counter-stories of racialized and gendered experiences navigating leadership

in higher education. My primary research question was - How do Asian American Women (re)conceptualize leadership given the racism and sexism they experience in their leadership roles in higher education?

Positionality

Early in my doctoral program, I took a course on Student Development Theory and one assignment was to complete a reflective self-analysis. I started searching through the suggested readings for class but only found two articles on Asian Americans, both written by Asian American men. I searched online and found a few peer -reviewed articles or books about Asian American Women leaders and their experiences in higher education. I felt frustrated and defeated. I completed the assignment by centering my identity as a *Woman of Color* in leadership rather than more authentically and saliently as an *Asian American Woman* in leadership. Later in this same course, Dra. Susana Muñoz shared the concept of “me-search,” which inspired me to center my own racialized and gendered experiences in the research I was interested in pursuing. After learning research from a post-positivist perspective in my undergraduate major in which I was taught to be objective and neutral, this idea of “me-search” felt liberating and gave me the freedom to value my own voice and pursue research on Asian American Women in leadership.

In deciding my research topic, I continued to search for articles on Asian Americans and Asian American Women. I remember reading some articles by Asian American authors and trying hard to relate to their experiences. When I did not resonate with the experiences about having parents who immigrated to the U.S. or using English primarily outside the home or attending Japanese school after a day of U.S. school, I slumped into a state of not feeling Asian-enough and wondered what I had missed out on by being raised in predominantly white communities. Then I came across two articles. One article was by Sue et al. (2009) about Asian

American experiences with racial microaggressions. The authors described stories and themes like invisibility, denial of racial reality, and alien-in-own-land that put words to my own experiences.

The other article was by Museus and Park (2015) about how Asian American college students experience racism through racial harassment, vicarious racism, racial isolation, and racial silencing. Reading these findings and stories, I felt seen and understood, and I gained a better understanding of myself and my own racial identity. I also gained a deeper understanding that the Asian American experience is complex, and the narratives that treat Asian Americans as a monolith are harmful and mask the varied experiences of Asian Americans in the U.S. (Museus & Park, 2015).

While these stories of centering and naming Asian American racialized experiences resonated deeply within me, I was also left feeling the dissonance of caring for and tending to my *Asian American* identity, while not having the stories to heal and liberate my more salient *Asian American Woman* identities. I was craving intersectional stories that could help me make meaning of my racialized *and* gendered experiences to better unite the parts of me that have lived silently and separately within me for too long. Reflecting on my experiences of dissonance, internalized oppression, and drive to continue critical self-reflection, I was motivated to become a part of a community of scholars doing research to center the experiences of Asian American Women in leadership in higher education.

I recognized each of us entered this study with our own ways of describing leadership as Asian American Women working in higher education. I anticipated this conceptualization of leadership would evolve throughout the study as we reflected, made meaning, and shared our own counter-stories with each other. To be transparent in my research positionality, I shared my

own conceptualization of leadership prior to conducting the study, and looked forward to co-constructing a (re)conceptualization of Asian American Women leadership, recognizing that our experiences are not monolithic. My thoughts on Asian American Women leadership included how traditional leadership concepts did not resonate for me as an Asian American Woman, how I embrace multiple truths and trust when people share their lived experiences, and how I honored others' identities to guide my leadership actions.

To elaborate further on each of my thoughts on Asian American Woman leadership, I shared that I do not resonate with the traditional leadership concepts that center white male leadership characteristics as the most dominant and valued. I also did not resonate with the more contemporary leadership concepts (transformational, servant, adaptive, etc.) that seemed to enforce an identity-neutral approach to leadership and may infer a transformation or adaptation to whiteness (Dugan, 2017; Northouse, 2016). Additionally, as an Asian American Woman and Woman of Color, I grew up feeling like the “other” and not what was represented in leadership, in media, in my communities. While an isolating experience, this also gave me the understanding that our identities forced me to experience the world differently and that someone else's truth was not for me to question and understand through my lens but for me to listen, learn and support. With this experience, I can welcome multiple truths and honor individual identities and stories with support and without question. Finally, as an Asian American Woman and Woman of Color, community care has been central to my culture and leadership. I care deeply about the humans with whom I interact and lead, and I choose to take on leadership roles to influence positive change for people who are marginalized by systems of oppression in society. My ability to welcome multiple truths and honor individuals' identities have also enhanced my awareness of my own and other's emotions and to use this information to guide my leadership actions. With

these initial conceptualizations of my leadership as an Asian American Woman, I was interested to explore whether these reflections resonated with other Asian American Women leaders and what concepts we would co-create together through this research study.

Specific to my study, understanding was derived from my own insider's perspective as an Asian American Woman leader (Bhattacharya, 2017; Jones et al., 2014), with emphasis on Asian American Feminist themes of reflection, humanization, community, healing, and liberation (de Jesús, 2015; Tintiangco-Cubales & Sacramento, 2009). Through my research, I joined in community with other Asian American Women who became co-collaborators with me in this research. I strived for this experience to create a mutually beneficial opportunity for me and my research collaborators. As they shared their counter-stories and lived experiences with me for my dissertation research, I hope they also gained new insights and meaning-making through their reflections. I also hope they benefited from being in community with other Asian American Women to feel seen, understood, and empowered to build on our individual and collective counter-stories to create change by challenging the oppressive systems in higher education. Additionally, my primary aim in conducting research was to add to the literature about Women of Color in leadership and specifically center Asian American Women leaders and their experiences in higher education. Through an Asian American Feminist lens, the counter-stories shared examined the intersectional systems of oppression within higher education which have impacted our leadership experiences and described how we (re)conceptualize leadership.

Epistemological Approach

My epistemological stance was rooted in Asian American Feminist ways of knowing and understanding the world that privileges the experiential knowledge of Asian American Women as sources of knowledge, brings Asian American Women together to share counter-stories and

co-construct knowledge as a collective community, and uses this knowledge to transform systems designed to oppress Women of Color and Asian American Women. Therefore, I used a critical constructivist paradigm to guide my research design, using an inductive approach for in-depth understanding of lived experiences (Merriam, 2009; Solórzano, 1998)

This critical constructivist study centered Asian American Women leaders in higher education as we made meaning of our experiences with racism and sexism in our leadership roles and created a counter-narrative and conceptualization of leadership distinctly separate from white dominant norms of leadership. In this section, I shared a brief overview of how I view Asian American Feminisms and how a critical constructivist approach aligned with Asian American Feminisms as my theoretical lens.

Asian American Feminisms

To explore the experiences of Asian American Women and how we (re)conceptualize our racialized and gendered experiences with leadership in higher education, I used selected concepts from Asian American Feminisms to serve as the lens and guide for designing my study which centers Asian American Women leaders. For my study, Asian American Feminisms are about ways of knowing ourselves and others through reflection, community, humanization, healing, and toward liberation (Accapadi, 2017; de Jesús, 2005; Delgado Bernal, 1998; Tintiangco-Cubales & Sacramento, 2009).

Asian American Feminisms are rooted in a critical theoretical perspective with a focus on interrogating systems of power at the intersections of race, gender, and other socially constructed identities to inform change (Fujiwara & Roshanravan, 2018). With this critical lens, Asian American Feminisms aligned with selected tenets of Critical Race Theory including counter-storytelling as valuable experiential knowledge, experiential knowledge of people of color as a

valuable tool for analyzing racial oppression, intersectionality of race with other marginalized identities to shape systemic forms of oppression, and challenging the dominant ideology that privileges dominant groups in the U.S. (Crenshaw, 1991; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Yosso, 2005).

Along with many different Asian American Feminist perspectives, Peminist Critical Theory and Chicana Feminist Epistemology were two frameworks with which I resonated and refer to throughout my interpretation of Asian American Feminisms. For me, Asian American Feminisms represent ways of knowing ourselves and others through: 1) *reflection* as the idea that we must be ready to truly encounter ourselves and confront what parts of us have been oppressed and confront when we have been the oppressor (Delgado Bernal, 1998); 2) *community* as a collectivist approach that reframes interdependence as a strength (Accapadi, 2017) and emphasizes connection to a larger community to create a strong voice in advocating for our own inclusion (Chen, 2015); 3) *humanization* as challenging historical and contemporary objectification and erasure to claim our humanity as Asian Women in the U.S.; 4) *healing* from internalized oppression as a remembering and putting together our dismembered past to make sense of current trauma (Mendoza Strobel, 2005), and a uniting of our divided and compartmentalized selves to reconcile who we are and how we have come to be (Calderon et al., 2012); and finally, 5) *toward liberation* as we revisit all these tenets in no linear form to work towards liberation for ourselves, with other Asian American Women, and with Women of Color communities (Tintiangco-Cubales & Sacramento, 2009).

Critical Constructivism

This epistemological approach borrowed from the constructivist paradigm and critical paradigm to inform a critical constructivist lens (Kincheloe, 2008). Asian American Feminisms

are closely aligned with the critical epistemological approach and can be identified in my study through the research question and research design. Asian American Feminisms are rooted in an intersectional lens to confront systems of power at the intersections of race and patriarchy (Fujiwara & Roshanravan, 2018). In congruence with a critical approach, Asian American Feminisms also promoted analysis of existing theory and centers transformation, both individually and collectively, through reflection, community, humanization, healing, and liberation (de Jesús, 2015; Jones et al., 2014; Tintiangco-Cubales & Sacramento, 2009).

Asian American Feminisms view Asian American Women as sources of knowledge, which align with elements of the constructivist approach of knowledge being co-constructed with participants (Lincoln et al., 2011). Asian American Feminisms also emphasize a collectivist approach in community with other Asian American Women that aligns with the constructivist approach that emphasizes the importance of relationship between the researcher and research collaborators, noting that my role was as a research facilitator rather than participant (Lincoln et al., 2011). Finally, as guided by Asian American Feminisms, my study centers both race and gender which are socially constructed identities.

A constructivist approach suggests reality was created through social interactions and how Asian American Women made meaning of their experiences with racism and sexism (Lincoln et al., 2011). While both critical and constructivist approaches differ, these categories are not static; elements of both approaches can be blended to align with appropriate research designs (Merriam, 2009).

Methodology

With my research study grounded in Asian American Feminisms as my theoretical framework, and using a critical constructivist paradigm, the next step was to identify a

qualitative research methodology that centered a critical perspective to inform change and centered the narratives of those who were marginalized by systems of oppression. Therefore, I selected counter-storytelling as the methodology most aligned with my research design. An Asian American Feminist research methodology *about* Asian American Women must be *with* Asian American Women, and counter-storytelling intentionally places Asian American Women at the center.

Asian American Feminisms center the experiential knowledge of Asian American Women as essential to understanding and analyzing how systems of oppression have impacted our experiences at the intersections of race and gender (Fujiwara & Roshanravan, 2018). A way for Asian American Women to share their experiential knowledge is through counter-storytelling as a process of reflection, unlearning internalized oppression, and healing through words (Calderón et al., 2012). Counter-storytelling encourages sharing and piecing together narratives to “name the internalized oppression, shame, inferiority, confusion, anger” (Mendoza Strobel, 2005, p. 39) to channel experiences and emotions into proactive work that will challenge systems of oppression.

Counter-storytelling is a methodology rooted in Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, 2002) and “intended as a process for telling the lived experiences of people who are silenced and made invisible by existing dominant narratives” (Wagaman et al., 2018, pp. 1-2). Additionally, Critical Race Feminism, also grounded in Critical Race Theory, uses counter-storytelling to legitimize the voices and experiences of Women of Color as sources of knowledge to challenge and disrupt the dominant narrative at the intersections of race, gender, class, and all forms of oppression (Verjee, 2013). Because counter-storytelling is grounded in theories that center race and gender, there is clear alignment between counter-storytelling methodology and

Asian American Feminisms. Through counter-storytelling, Asian American Women were centered in their own story, dominant norms were named and made visible, and Asian American Women's voices and stories were a form of resistance to challenge oppressive dominant norms in higher education (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, 2002).

To elaborate further on counter-storytelling as a critical race methodology, Solórzano & Yosso (2001, 2002) explained counter-storytelling is a CRT methodology that creates a space to do research grounded in the experiences and knowledge of People of Color. Solórzano & Yosso (2002) described critical race methodology as a theoretically grounded approach to research that foregrounds race and racism in all aspects of the research process; however, it also challenges the separate discourses on race, gender, and class by showing how these three elements intersect to affect the experiences of Students of Color; challenges the traditional research paradigms, texts, and theories used to explain the experiences of [People] of Color; offers a liberatory or transformative solution to racial, gender, and class subordination, and focuses on the racialized, gendered, and classed experiences of Students of Color (p. 27). As such, counter-storytelling was a methodological approach that foregrounds race and gender, and I combined it with Asian American Feminisms to create the cultural texture that was foundational to my research study.

Additionally, counter-stories serve four functions including 1) they can build community among those at the margins of society by putting a human and familiar face to educational theory and practice; 2) they can challenge the perceived wisdom of those at society's center by providing a context to understand and transform established belief systems; 3) they can open new windows into the reality of those at the margins of society by showing possibilities beyond the ones they live and demonstrate that they are not alone in their position; and, 4) they can teach others that by combining elements from both the story and the current reality, one can construct

another world that is richer than either the story or the reality alone (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 36).

Counter-storytelling combined with Asian American Feminisms set the stage for my research collaborators to challenge existing narratives of Asian American Women, created new possibilities and meaning-making in community, and constructed a narrative richer and more relevant to Asian American Women leaders. Asian American Feminist counter-storytelling was foundational in the design of my research to guide me in centering community building with other Asian American Women to create trust in sharing our counter-stories with each other throughout interviews and in analyzing the data generated through a critical lens that contextualizes Asian American Women's counter-stories and concepts of leadership based on their own experiences, reflections, and meaning-making.

Consistent with sharing experiential knowledge through counter-storytelling, I included one individual interview, two group interviews, and two journal responses as the methods for each research collaborator to share their individual stories, in both verbal (interview) and written (journal) forms. The group interview method aligns with Asian American Feminist perspective as a way to join together in community and heal through reflection, connection, and shared wisdom. A collectivist community of care is central to Asian American Feminisms, and I drew inspiration from Delores Delgado Bernal that "women united in close circles can awaken the wisdom in each other's hearts" (Delgado Bernal as cited in Calderón et al., 2012, p. 534). The group interview promoted shared vulnerability which allowed us to enter each other's lives, overcome pain, and foster solidarity that could lead to collective healing and liberation (Calderón et al., 2012; Tintiangco-Cubales & Sacramento, 2009). I expanded further on the data generation in the research methods section.

In summary, my methodological stance was grounded in Asian American Feminist ways of knowing and counter-storytelling methodology. In combination, Asian American Feminisms and counter-storytelling guided my study to understand how Asian American Women (re)conceptualize our leadership given the racism and sexism we have experienced in our leadership roles in higher education.

Research Methods

In this section, I outline recruitment, informed consent, the data generation, analysis procedures, and trustworthiness. My research methods were guided by an Asian American Feminist theoretical framework, using counter-storytelling methodology. This study responded to my primary research question: How do Asian American Women (re)conceptualize leadership given the racism and sexism they navigate in their leadership roles in higher education?

Recruitment

Purposive recruitment was ideal for this study as I sought a specific group of Asian American Women leaders working in higher education. While there was no clear way to predict the minimum number of research collaborators needed to reach saturation (Merriam, 2009), I selected a range from five to eight collaborators based on the in-depth nature of the interviews including three interviews and two journal responses. Additionally, in reviewing recent dissertation studies on Asian American Women in leadership in higher education, there was a variation of participation to reach saturation ranging from five participants (Else, 2020), seven participants (Liu, 2019), and eight participants (Mella, 2012). Further, because identity is personal and fluid, I wanted to honor how a person self-identifies, so I used the following language to recruit research collaborators:

1. Self-identify as Asian American, inclusive of multiracial Asian identity

2. Self-identify as a woman, inclusive of transgender and cisgender identity
3. Hold a higher education position as non-faculty, professional staff in a leadership role ranging from mid-level management through executive administrator level (i.e. assistant director and above) for at least five years.

I specified non-faculty, professional staff because there was more extensive literature on faculty in higher education and less focused on non-faculty, professionals in higher education (Wilson et al., 2016; Velasquez Farmer, 2019). I also specified mid-level management as the *minimum* leadership level experience for this study because mid-level managers have bi-directional responsibilities in which they supervise other professional staff and are supervised by upper-level administrators (Beeny et al., 2005; Wilson et al., 2016). With vast responsibilities from frontline services through visioning for the office, mid-level managers through executive leaders navigate many relationships and power dynamics in which they may experience racism and sexism in their leadership role. And finally, I also specified a minimum of five years of experience in mid-level management through executive leadership roles. I reviewed research involving non-faculty, professional staff at the mid-level management role, and five years of experience was a common parameter for recruitment of participants (Ng, 2017; Rabas, 2017; Rivera, 2019; Vasquez, 2012; Watson, 2020).

To identify research collaborators, I asked professional colleagues who were positioned at institutions across the country and across different areas of higher education (student affairs, academic affairs, enrollment and access, communications, etc.), to either share my recruitment materials with Asian American Women leaders in their higher education networks (see Appendix A) or to send referrals for me to outreach directly to Asian American Women leaders in higher education (see Appendix B). I also posted my recruitment materials in social media groups that

foster opportunities for community with Asian American Women through higher education professional development opportunities. Each potential research collaborator was asked to complete a brief eligibility survey (see Appendix C). Once I confirmed research collaborators met the criteria for participation in the study, I sent an email to each collaborator to confirm their membership in the study (see Appendix D) and shared information about informed consent.

Informed Consent

Informed consent is a critical part of research in which I committed to my research collaborators that I would disclose all information necessary for them to make informed decisions about their participation prior to, during, and after the study (Glesne, 2016). While informed consent was an ethical part of conducting research, the informed consent process also aligned with Asian American Feminisms in centering the humanity of my research collaborators and the community of care I wanted to commit to the Asian American Women who invested their time and energy in my study. In return for the investment of time and energy that research collaborators contributed to this study, I hoped they also benefited from meaningful self-reflection, connection in community with other Asian American Women leaders, and contributing to research on Asian American Women leadership in higher education.

I was transparent in my communication with collaborators from recruitment through completion of data collection and analysis as it pertained to how interviews would be conducted through member checking interviews and sharing emerging themes. It was also essential my research collaborators understood they had the ability to withdraw from participation in the study at any point in time for any reason without fear of negative consequences. Once a collaborator confirmed their participation in my study, I shared a consent form that outlined the purpose of the study, requested commitment level, access to Zoom video conferencing technology for

interviews, estimated duration of the study, and how data would be stored (see Appendix E).

Additionally, before starting the first interview with each collaborator, I reviewed the informed consent form as a way of checking in with each person to ask if there were any questions or concerns.

As part of the data generation, I included group interviews in which all research collaborators participated in two group Zoom meetings at a designated time. The group interviews are described in more detail in the next section, and I wanted to be upfront with each collaborator that I could not guarantee confidentiality with the information shared in the group discussions. To maximize confidentiality, I asked each participant to choose a pseudonym that became their identification associated with the study. Prior to each group interview, I reminded each research collaborator how to change their Zoom display name to their pseudonym prior to logging in. The pseudonyms were used throughout the data collection process, data analysis, and written dissertation. Additionally, I started the group interview with an overview of community guidelines that included a request for confidentiality of the counter-stories shared. And finally, all audio, video, and transcription files were stored in a password protected Google Drive to which only I, as the researcher, had access to.

Data Generation

After Institutional Review Board approval, I engaged recruitment and informed consent as described above. Once my study collaborators were identified and determined to meet the criteria for participation, I began data generation which included three interviews for each research collaborator and two journal responses as outlined (see Appendix F for a more detailed outline of the research protocol):

- 1) Initial individual semi-structured interview with each collaborator for 60 - 75 minutes

- 2) First journal entry with prompts to prepare reflections to share during the first group interview
- 3) First group interview for up to two hours; three different group interview times were scheduled with two-three research collaborators in each group interview
- 4) Second journal entry with prompts to prepare reflections to share during the second group interview
- 5) Second group interview for up to two hours; three different group interview times were scheduled with two-three research collaborators in each group interview

Originally, my plan was to have all seven research collaborators participate in the same group interview together; however, it was not feasible to identify one time that worked for everyone. Instead, as noted above, I hosted smaller group interviews multiple times and still had each research collaborator participate in two group interviews. Even with two to three people in each small group interview, we often exceeded the allotted time. In retrospect, it would have been difficult to reach the depth of sharing and vulnerability if all seven research collaborators participated in the same group interview.

The selected research methods intentionally aligned with elements of Asian American Feminisms to center counter-storytelling, reflection, humanization, and community connection toward healing and shared liberation. To help shape my research methods, I reviewed research that focused on storytelling and centering Asian American Women and other Women of Color to learn about culturally responsive data generation methods. In one study with queer Latina administrators, two individual interviews and one group interview was conducted (Rivera, 2019). In another study with Asian American Women leaders, three individual interviews were initially planned, and the researcher decided to convert the third interview into a group interview (Elsley,

2020). And finally, in a study with Latina faculty, three individual interviews were conducted in addition to a written blog response (Carmona, 2020). These studies influenced my selected research methods.

The first individual interview was important for me to meet one-on-one with each research collaborator so I could start to build rapport with them, answer any questions they had, and encourage them in their counter-storytelling. I sent a journal entry prompt to each collaborator that aimed to help them prepare reflections to share in the first group interview. Following the first group interview, I sent another journal entry prompt to each collaborator prior to the second/last group interview. The group interviews were intentionally included as a culturally inclusive method that aligned with the Asian American Feminist collectivist approach to meaning making and shared liberation (Neilson & Suyemoto, 2009). Throughout the group interviews, I shared my own racialized and gendered experiences with research collaborators as another way to build rapport and to show my commitment to doing reflection and meaning-making through counter-storytelling. As a group of Asian American Women leaders, we each had our own set of experiences and shared experiences and universal memories. Sharing these stories in community assured us we had not imagined these experiences, and “we are not alone as Asian Americans, any more than we are all the same” (Wu, 2015, p. xiii).

Asian American Feminisms centered reflection as a way of knowing ourselves in the process of unlearning internalized oppression, humanization, healing, and liberation (Accapadi, 2017; de Jesús, 2005; Delgado Bernal, 1998; Tintiangco-Cubales & Sacramento, 2009), and I committed to reflecting on my own stories and meaning making through this study. Throughout the data collection process, I maintained a research journal to reflect on questions I wanted to revisit, storylines left unexplored, notes when I observed emotion or tension, notes on patterns

across stories, observations of interactions among research collaborators as a group and with me as the research facilitator (Kim, 2016). The process of journaling also held me accountable for doing critical self-reflection throughout the research process to hold space for both my stories and the stories of my research collaborators (Jones et al., 2014; Mahoney, 2007).

Analysis Procedures

Data analysis and interpretation were the next steps in the research process that allowed me to “develop an understanding of the meanings our participants give to themselves, to their surroundings, to their lives, and to their lived experiences through storytelling” (Kim, 2016, p. 189). To answer my research question using an inductive, qualitative research approach, I used thematic analysis as the primary analytical process to analyze my data. Thematic analysis can be applied to qualitative research that centers stories developed through interviews and focuses on identifying patterned meaning across a dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2018; Reissmann, 2008). The steps to thematic analysis include: 1) becoming familiar with the data through reading and re-reading transcripts and journal responses; 2) coding to identify important features of the data that are relevant in answering my research question; 3) generating initial themes by examining codes and identifying broader patterns of meaning; 4) reviewing themes by checking them against the dataset and verifying if they answer the research question; 5) defining and naming themes by determining the focus and story of each theme; and 6) writing up the themes and weaving together an analytic narrative to answer the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2018).

Using the steps for thematic analysis, I collected data through individual interviews, journal responses, and the group interviews, and I had each interview transcribed. Once the transcriptions were completed, I read and re-read the interview transcripts to begin the interpretation and meaning making process. As I read through the interview transcripts, I utilized

the tenets of Asian American Feminisms that guided my research study to develop initial codes that were relevant in answering my research question. An Asian American Feminist informed framework guided me in a culturally relevant interpretation of the stories shared and codes and themes I identified.

Another approach to thematic analysis beyond coding and thematizing data was to use a combination of mapping and writing as inquiry that helped me engage a different way of thinking and processing information (Bhattacharya, 2017). For me, this approach included keeping a research journal to deepen my own understanding and interpretation of the data by noting my reflections on being an Asian American Woman in leadership, motivation to conduct this research, and observations that informed my research process. Additionally, journaling also helped me capture notes throughout the interviews about my reactions to stories shared, stories that were surprising, observations on a shift in energy that I wanted to explore further, and notes. As I read through transcripts, I began to code, categorize, identify patterns, and develop themes (Jones et al., 2014, Saldaña & Omasta, 2018).

Thematic analysis paired with Asian American Feminisms guided me in answering my research question of how do Asian American Women (re)conceptualize leadership given the racism and sexism they navigated in leadership in higher education. Along with the guidance of thematic analysis, foundational to this inductive analysis process was approaching the coding through the theoretical lens of Asian American Feminist ways of knowing which included reflection, humanization, healing, community, and liberation (Accapadi, 2017; de Jesús, 2005; Delgado Bernal, 1998; Tintiangco-Cubales & Sacramento, 2009). These Asian American Feminist tenets guided me in identifying connections to the collaborators' racialized and gendered experiences within the oppressive systems built into higher education that marginalize

the leadership voices and value of Asian American Women. These tenets also kept me grounded in my research collaborator's authentic and identity-informed narratives throughout data analysis, findings, and implications of this study.

Trustworthiness

In my positionality statement, I shared I was inspired by the idea of doing me-search. Engaging in me-search implied I was personally connected to the subject based on my salient identities as an Asian American Woman and leader. Me-search has been critiqued for its perceived lack of neutrality, subjectivity, and lack of rigor (Gardner et al., 2017). While I embraced the lack of neutrality to center identities that are subjective and salient for me, I remained committed to establishing trustworthiness in my research process.

Trustworthiness is grounded in post-positivist, quantitative research paradigms, so when trustworthiness is translated to qualitative research, it is important to ensure the study is conducted in an ethical manner (Carmona, 2020). Trustworthiness was promoted by providing participants the opportunity to react to findings, interpretations, and providing feedback into the research process (Jones et al., 2014). As I approached my research from an Asian American Feminist perspective, co-construction of knowledge had to be conducted in community with my research collaborators. An important part of critical research is to center the storyteller as the source of knowledge, so if at any point, my research collaborators wanted to remove a part(s) of their stories or change their participation in the study, I honored that request as a form of community care and ethical research practice.

In qualitative research, "trustworthiness is associated with confidence in the research findings" (Jones et al., 2014, p. 36) and authenticity (Patton, 2002), and Lincoln and Guba (1985) asserted "the basic issue in relation to trustworthiness is simple: how can an inquirer

persuade [the] audience that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of” (p. 398)? The approaches I used to promote trustworthiness included alignment through my study with my epistemology, theoretical lens, and methodology as well as through member checking and maintaining a research journal.

First, alignment throughout my research study created a foundation of trustworthiness by ensuring Asian American Feminisms and a critical constructivist paradigm were aligned with counter-storytelling methodology. This alignment continued to be shown through how I engaged my research collaborators throughout interviews and how I kept Asian American Feminisms central when I analyzed the data generated (Bhattacharya, 2017; Jones et al., 2014).

Additionally, member checking created a way to enlist participants in providing feedback on research findings to verify I represented their stories and themes accurately (Glesne, 2016).

Coulter et al. (2007) stated:

In asking the participants to read, edit, and collaborate on the construction of their own personal stories, a researcher seeks to make their lives present. Ultimately, it is this type of procedure and discourse between participants and researcher that is most vital for the narrative to succeed. (p. 108)

Prior to sharing initial findings, I provided information to participants regarding their role as collaborators in the member-checking process in qualitative research. I provided my research collaborators with transcripts from each interview and asked them to review findings and themes that emerged through data analysis. This process also provided an opportunity to seek participant feedback, ensured I had represented my collaborator’s stories accurately, and maintained confidentiality.

Finally, another way to maintain trustworthiness in qualitative research was to use a research journal throughout data generation and data analysis. Counter-storytelling methodology benefits from the development of a collaborative relationship between researcher and participants, and a research journal can be a tool to “keep the researcher’s voice and stories of the collaborators alive and vibrant simultaneously” (Kim, 2016, p. 99; Mahoney, 2007). Further, Jones et al. (2014) asserted a research journal allows the researcher to do self-reflection throughout the research process, and they emphasized the importance of reflection both with participants as well as with other researchers.

Summary

This study centered Asian American Women leaders with a focus on how they (re)conceptualize leadership given the racism and sexism they experienced in their leadership roles in higher education. Using a critical constructivist approach focused on how Asian American Women leaders make meaning of their racialized and gendered identities through counter-storytelling, this study was grounded in Asian American Feminist ways of knowing as a theoretical lens which was in congruence with counter-storytelling methodology. Together the theoretical lens and methodology ensured a research paradigm that centered Asian American Women as sources of knowledge and brought an identity-informed critical lens to data analysis, findings, and implications. Through our counter-stories and (re)conceptualizing leadership higher education in our own words, I joined my research collaborators in reflecting, humanizing, connecting, healing, and uniting our divided selves toward liberation.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

“We are the leaders we’ve been waiting for.” - Grace Lee Boggs, Asian American civil rights activist and feminist scholar on a reframe of a Hopi quote that describes how leadership often reflects an outward gaze (cited in Dugan, 2017, p. 1).

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how Asian American Women leaders (re)conceptualized leadership given their racialized and gendered experiences with oppression in higher education. The parenthetical distinction “(re)”conceptualize emphasized the process of having Asian American Women leaders critically self-reflect and co-construct a deeper understanding of intersectional leadership concepts that departed from the traditional white male normative leadership concepts. In congruence with a critical constructivist approach, my research design was rooted in an Asian American Feminist theoretical framework and used counter-storytelling methodology to guide data generation and analysis. In this chapter, I introduce my research collaborators and present the findings from the counter-stories shared to answer the research question: How do Asian American Women (re)conceptualize leadership given the racism and sexism they experience in their leadership roles in higher education? The (re)conceptualized leadership themes that emerged are interconnected, introspective, culturally-informed, and reflect a duty of care for our communities including: centering the humanity of others and ourselves, critical self-reflection, intersectional leadership, and collective empowerment.

Introduction to the Research Collaborators

To better contextualize and understand the findings, it was important to start by introducing each of the seven courageous Asian American Women leaders who joined me as research collaborators in this study. These Asian American Women leaders committed their time, energy, and emotional labor to join me as vulnerable and audacious counter-storytellers to (re)conceptualize leadership in a way that honored and centered our voices and experiences as Asian American Women leaders in higher education. As I share each collaborator's salient identities and experiences, I also highlight some of the counter-stories they shared as they navigated their careers and leadership at the intersections of race and patriarchy in higher education. Table 1 below briefly overviews the demographic data of the seven Asian American Women leaders in this study:

Table 1. Demographic Data about Research Collaborators

Name	Years in Higher Ed	Role	Functional Area	Self identifies as...
Anjali	23	Associate Dean	Admissions	South Asian/Indian American Woman
Emma	19	Interim Executive Director	Student Mental Health Services	Korean American Cis- Woman
Leny	25	Vice President	Diversity & Inclusion	Filipina/Asian American Woman
Michelle	8	Associate Vice President	University Communications & Marketing	Chinese/Asian American Woman
Sun	17	Dean of Students/Assoc Vice President	Student Affairs	Asian American Cis- Woman
Yoko	21	Executive Director	Student Affairs	Biracial Japanese/White Cis-Woman
Yuna	16	Associate Vice President	Student Affairs	Asian American Woman

Research collaborators worked at institutions from the Pacific Northwest, Mountain West, Midwest, and Southeastern regions. The individual geographical regions were not disclosed to provide anonymity of identities for my research collaborators since there are so few Asian American Women in leadership roles in their regions.

I provided each researcher collaborator with a list of possible pseudonyms, and each name on the list was intentionally selected to honor Asian American Women who have made meaningful contributions to their field including authors, athletes, politicians, artists, and activists. Some collaborators chose a pseudonym because they resonated with the Asian

American Women's contribution being honored. Some collaborators chose a pseudonym because they associated the names with a meaningful memory. Each collaborator chose a pseudonym that aligned with her ethnicity. These introductions were intended to provide insight to who joined me as research collaborators, their salient identities, a snapshot of their counter-stories amid a lifetime of counter-stories and are not representative of their whole identity or experience.

Anjali

The way Anjali foregrounds her immigrant parents, her daughter, and her culture was beautiful and moving, so I am compelled to introduce Anjali in her own words:

When I get asked about myself, one of the first things that comes to mind is how I was raised. I identify as a Woman and identify as Indian, raised in an Indian Hindu household. I'm a child of immigrants...I am of them and their life and their work. That is part of me every single day, and certainly more so now that I have a kiddo. I am a mother and a daughter...a mother raising a child that will also identify as Indian. And then second to that, I'm a leader, a professional leader. I remember a friend telling me that few people are going to be remembered for their titles, and the rest of us will be remembered for how we treat others. I would like to be known for being a good parent...treating my daughter with respect, showing her integrity and honesty. If people want to think that I did something meaningful in my professional life, that would be sort of extra. I love what I do, it's interesting, it's challenging, but nothing excites me as much as parenting.

Anjali's introduction provided a much-needed reminder about prioritizing what was most important in life, as well as a heartwarming way to honor the relationship she held close with her family. Related, during the group interview, another research collaborator asked Anjali a

question about her parents, and she responded with a pleased smile and said, “Thank you for the question...it’s a privilege to talk about them.”

Anjali shared she identifies as Indian American, South Asian, and Asian American, depending on the context and space. She also held the tension of working in predominantly white institutions and in senior leadership spaces in which she was the only Person of Color:

I almost feel like I lose my Asian American, South Asian, Indian identity in some spaces...I am a Person of Color and my [race and ethnicity] are unrecognizable because every space I’ve ever been in higher education, I’ve so often felt like I’m the only one. I hold one space, Person of Color, because there are so few of us. I’m the only senior leader of color and because I am here, that seems to be enough for folks. This [study] is really one of the first times in a 20-year career where I’ve had space to specifically think about being Asian American.

Anjali resumed this storyline in a group interview and this experience resonated for other research collaborators as well. She elaborated on this experience by sharing:

We’re [Asian American Women] way underrepresented in visible leadership roles so [my recommendation to executive administration is to] find us! Find us, promote us, seek us out. We’re not seen as diverse. I wouldn’t even say that I’m seen as white, I feel like I’m just NOT seen. I’m just invisible [laughing to keep from crying]. And again, I’m this thing that nobody can identify, um, I’m, I’m a placeholder because I’m not white...I add some value because I’m not white. But what I truly want to be valued for is being an Asian American Woman leader [collective deep breath from the whole group].

Anjali’s counter-story is powerful. Each one of us in the group interview had a visceral reaction because we deeply resonated with the pain of being tokenized and feeling like a

placeholder. And closely connected to this storyline, Anjali later shared in another group interview:

I'm constantly thinking about racism and I'm constantly thinking about sexism, those are probably the two biggest ones with every decision, every action. What I'm not thinking about enough, though, is being an Asian American Woman, and how racism and sexism has affected me as an Asian American Woman. In the spaces I've been, there's...there's no critical mass of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) individuals so all I can be is a Person of Color. The people around me don't even have the capacity to think about my individual [racial and ethnic] identity...I have not had a chance to think about my individual identity.

Anjali's counter-story addressed both the hypervisibility of being the only Person of Color in leadership spaces and the invisibility of not being seen and recognized as an Asian American Woman. This dichotomy weighs heavily as Anjali and other Asian American Women navigate leadership spaces. She further shared:

I have this struggle with the minority tax (uncompensated duties that people of color perform to support diversity, equity, inclusion). I totally feel it. So yes, tax me, because if not me then who? Where else is the conversation going to happen? It's a burden and a privilege to *want* to look out for others but I'm also *expected* to look out for others...You're constantly having to weigh the options of challenging white supremacy and patriarchy for fear of losing your seat at the table but wanting to be a part of the change when you have a seat at the table.

Throughout each interview, Anjali's genuine care for others came through consistently as advocacy and allyship were central to her leadership.

Emma

Emma brought moments of such profound and penetrating emotion to the interviews and storytelling. This does not mean crying throughout the interviews. Her emotion was exhibited in a few instances during which she allowed herself to shed the defenses that she built around her heart to show up each day. I felt those emotions when she spoke about feeling seen by another Woman of Color colleague, when she resonated with another research collaborator on feeling like a placeholder, and when she shared the value of this study and joining in community with other Asian American Women to be able to just breathe. Each time, I could not hold back my tears. Her honesty and vulnerability had a direct line to my heart, and I had to let myself feel the emotions with her.

Emma grew up in a rural area, a place she described as a rampantly racist environment in which she and her family had a lot of concerns of physical safety. When comparing her childhood environment to higher education, she noted the racism and sexism in higher education was much more subtle and covert, and still extremely frustrating. Emma described various instances with racism and sexism in her leadership in higher education:

At one institution, there was a woman who identified as a Japanese international [I identify as Korean American], we didn't know each other...[yet] people kept referring to her and me in the same breath as if we were the same, which was extremely frustrating for me, like, I felt really unseen. I expressed concerns about these references to me and her, and I was basically labeled, like, a problematic employee.

Not only is it all too familiar to be lumped with the one other Asian American Woman as if our individual identities were not enough to constitute a complete person, but the experience of being silenced when we identified racist behavior was a common experience. A tool of white

supremacy was to make us, Asian American Women, the problem instead of the racist perpetrator, and this served to erase and diminish the value and voices of Asian American Women.

Emma shared another example of the racism and sexism she endured as an Asian American Women in leadership. An academic college at her institution was managing the return of a racist faculty member to campus. The college administration thought they had it handled until another incident occurred. The plans imploded. Students were harmed and their mental health suffered. As the leader of counseling services, Emma was contacted by a [white male] college administrator who declared, “YOU need to send a mental health provider to come talk with our students...they need a [Person of Color] provider!” Emma firmly said, “No.” She shared:

I thought he was going to have a complete conniption. I finally shared, “I’m not going to parade around my BIPOC mental health providers because you don’t have your agency in order. This is a problem with your faculty. Your students need to feel like you give a damn, and they’re not going to feel that way if you just send my staff out there.” He was really trying to bulldoze me into doing this...like it was my problem, like we’re letting down the students of color if we don’t send our providers. I’m like, “No, they’re finding us just fine.” It’s stuff like that that happens, frankly, more than I’d like...really upsetting. You know, he called my boss and went over my head to try to force me to send people...I think, like, it was very political. I could lose my job...it would be worth it.

Emma was ethical, bold, and did not let intimidation tactics from a [white male] college administrator distract her from centering the humanity of her BIPOC staff while still being available to students of color. She acknowledged the potential consequences, particularly while

in an interim leadership role, yet she was not willing to compromise her leadership ethics and advocacy for her BIPOC staff. This represented courageous leadership with integrity, and I wondered if Emma was cognizant of the leadership she radiated.

Leny

Leny is a connector, personable, an encourager, among many incredible qualities. She brought energy, levity, and experienced insight to the interviews. Leny was born in the Philippines, immigrated to the U.S. at a young age, and grew up in the southern region of the U.S. As she recalls her various leadership roles in higher education, a clear pattern of trailblazing emerged. She was the first woman and first Asian American in one role, took an inaugural role in an academic college, and held an inaugural role as the Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion.

Leny shared a counter-story which emphasized the impact of feeling invisible as an Asian American Women leader. During the past two years in the COVID-19 pandemic, anti-Asian violence became more visible with increased awareness. The Atlanta spa shooting in March 2021 was the most violent example, yet one of many examples of anti-Asian hate and racism. Leny shared if she was not at her institution to coordinate a campus-wide communication recognizing the impact of this violence on the Asian community, she felt like no one else was going to do it. Sounding exasperated, she shared, “It costs nothing to send out! We’re not asking you to pay for anything...we just want an awareness and recognition that these things are happening, and we see you.”

Central to the Atlanta spa shooting was the narrative of how Asian Women are sexualized and objects of fetishization. This resonated for Leny and she shared:

The thing we don't talk about, but they did during the Atlanta shooting, was how Asian American Women can be sexualized in these roles as well. It's one of those things in higher ed that no one really wants to talk about, but I think, for me, that's happened a number of times, you know, where you have men just propositioning you. They see our salient identities as Asian American and those stereotypes. Am I supposed to just be okay with it? That is not okay. And sometimes they are equal level to me or multiple steps above. It really resonated during all the API hate incidents, and they talked about the sexualization of Asian Women...I thought, "oh my gosh, that's happened to me too." Those are the things besides racism that we [Asian American Women] have to deal with...that maybe other women don't have to experience in the same way.

For me, this was an important counter-story to bring into the research space. I admit that my own experience and shame around sexualization, exoticization, and fetishization created barriers to more thoroughly engaging with this topic, yet I know it is such a common experience among Asian American Women.

Leny described an experience she navigated in her leadership role that resulted in harassment from students, staff, and community members for over a year and impacted her personally and professionally. Leny made a decision involving confidential personnel matters in which community members could not have access to the details that would explain her decision. She was bashed in the paper, harassed at the grocery store, needed a campus police escort, and her child was even asked about the matter at school. Leny shared:

I would say that was the most visible reminder of being Asian American in this role and the type of hits that you have to take. [The staff wanted a Black male in the role.] There were moments when I thought, "If I were a Black male, would this have been seen

differently?” As an Asian American Woman, it was like, “Okay, we can beat up on her a little more then maybe she’ll choose to leave.” But I didn’t, and all those other people have left since then. It was a lot.

There was so much pain and harm packaged up in that last sentence, “It was a lot.” During the interview, Leny addressed the disproportionate racism and violence Black men experience, and she also noted the skepticism she experienced as an Asian American Woman leader, working in diversity and inclusion, that even comes from within Communities of Color. White people were the primary perpetrators in most of Leny’s examples of oppression, yet this example highlighted the complex tension of oppression between Communities of Color. As she sought the humanity in others, she listened, and then tried to re-center on advocacy and the notion of “working together against systems of oppression rather than battling each other within Communities of Color.”

Leny’s racialized and gendered counter-stories represented how the system of oppression within higher education marginalized her as an Asian American Woman. She endured trauma and erasure, and she developed resilience and fortitude as an Asian American Woman leader in higher education, specifically working in diversity and inclusion.

Michelle

Michelle identifies as Chinese American. She and her family immigrated to the U.S. from Malaysia when she was five years old. She spent her childhood growing up in the mid-Atlantic region of the U.S. states before moving to the west in early adulthood. She is a parent of two biracial boys, Chinese Malaysian and white. Michelle is a storyteller by trade with an early career in journalism and news anchor reporting. Her astute curiosity led to questions she had for

other research collaborators in the group interviews and questions for herself that had her reflecting and making meaning in the moment. Michelle shared her path to higher education:

After the news, I went to K-12 education and worked in an urban school district that had lots of “risk factors.” I remember we were always at the Capitol fighting for equitable funding and access to education...these children [from limited income backgrounds] deserved to have the same high-quality tools and experiences as those in the affluent community. They needed advocates, too. Then when I got to [higher education], I began seeing that there weren't very many of us [Women of Color and Asian American Women] at the table, barely anyone that looked like me. I recognized that there was power in that. I needed the courage to represent my own perspective and beyond that, know how to advocate for Women of Color and People of Color while I had a seat at the table. All of those factors led me to my current Ph.D. program. It's called Education, Equity, and Transformation and I think it really pulls together all of the experiences I've had thus far. It took reflection to understand that my journey really led me here in a progressive and focused sort of way.

Michelle's commitment to educational equity was interconnected with her racial awakening and understanding of the systems of oppression within which she operated as an Asian American Woman leader. Early in Michelle's time in higher education, she was struck by vitriol and rhetoric that surrounded the 2016 presidential election and subsequent increase in overt acts of racism and sexism. This period accelerated her investment in learning and self-awareness of power, privilege, and intersectional oppression:

I was so angered by the election, and something clicked where I was like, “I have never really owned that I'm a representative of Asian American Women.” I've been privileged

to have a seat at the table...and I've never owned my identities in that space to push for change against stereotyping. I then got really engaged with [DEI] trainings on campus. People of Color are always expected to be the DEI experts...as an Asian Woman, if I'm not well-versed because no one taught me, how can I be that changemaker? That was definitely my start in figuring out how to own my identity and become an advocate for us. I'm more aware of owning my identity and taking time to do it.

Michelle's gender and racial awakening was relatable because I can always remember knowing I was an Asian American girl/woman with a clear understanding of how I was classified by the world, but it took me much longer into adulthood to understand that those identities were also central to my interactions and experiences in the world. Michelle's engagement in self-work and social justice education gave her clarity and insight as she described the ongoing racism and sexism she faced in her first executive leadership role in higher education:

People make assumptions about me based on being an Asian American Woman before I even open my mouth...you see me as a Woman of Color and expect me to know all things DEI [diversity, equity, inclusion]. And, typically, when we're talking about diversity, we're excluding Asian Americans - we tend to be the model minority and therefore invisible and erased...But there's power in that. I feel that when I explicitly verbalize to my team that I am what many in our country consider an "other", I am a Woman of Color, I am an Asian American Woman! Beyond that clear articulation of identity, people [white people] ascribe quiet and meek to Asian American Women, based on assumptions. When I self-described as direct and confident, and demonstrated these traits, they were still surprised when I had things to say. Another example of invisibility -

at one institution, every single time I was in a room with the [white male] provost, I had to reintroduce myself. Each time...it was like he had never met me before and there weren't that many other Asian Women in [Division] leadership...one other. It was so offensive to me.

Michelle's examples highlighted the stereotypes and invisibility Asian American Women continue to experience. Finally, Michelle shared an overtly racist and sexist experience that ultimately ended her time at one institution, (I have summarized it to remove identifying details) in which she was under investigation for creating a hostile work environment for her staff. She was overheard holding a [white woman] staff member accountable for an error of omission. A decision was made overnight to remove all her supervisory duties. She had no record of human resource concerns, she had staff members reach out in her support, yet the speed with which her area leadership acted on this one situation made her believe it was premeditated and an excuse to push her out of her leadership role. She reflected on the professional gaslighting she endured through this experience that made her second guess herself, her skills, and her leadership abilities. There are too many examples in higher education in which Asian American Women, and other Women of Color, are not valued, their leadership talents and perspectives are not understood, and they are pushed out of their roles to protect the racist patriarchal systems in higher education. In the end, Michelle triumphed with a promotion at another higher education institution that better aligned with her talents, passion, and leadership.

Sun

Sun was the first Asian American Woman to join my study, and she was consistently quick at responding to communications throughout the study. This spoke to her action-oriented and engaged leadership style, and how she managed the many responsibilities she holds in her

senior leadership role in higher education. Sun identifies as a transracial East Asian American adoptee. She has held different leadership roles in her career, each one providing a stronger foundation for her advancement in leadership. Sun shared an insight about the assets she gained from being a transracial adoptee:

I do believe that because I have, you know, transracial upbringing, I can also code switch so much easier than many of my colleagues and Friends of Color just because of who my [white] parents are and who my [white] family is. I was raised in whiteness.

This resonated for Yuna, another research collaborator with a shared transracial adoptee experience. Yuna was interested to gain Sun's thoughts on the idea that the capital gained from being a transracial adoptee may have equipped them to advance in their careers more quickly, recognizing that there are not many Asian American Women leaders at their level or higher. Sun absolutely agreed with that insight.

Sun brought an important perspective to the group interview conversations and highlighted the underrepresentation of Asian American Women in leadership and the implications of representation:

We're in the largest and fastest growing racial group yet we are so underrepresented in leadership in higher education. I can't name another Dean of Students or VP who looks like me so it's very isolating. As an Asian American Woman in higher education, I've never had a mentor that looks like me, which is really unfortunate. I don't have any mentors of East Asian identity that are in a VPSA role. So being an Asian American Woman in leadership in higher education means a lot of pressure. We're not only representing ourselves, I'm representing all Asian Americans.

Sun's counter-story of underrepresentation added to the narrative of Asian American Women leaders' experience being trailblazers, being the first Asian American Woman in their role, or being the first person in an inaugural role. With the underrepresentation of Asian American Women in leadership, there are assumptions and stereotypes about our lived experiences:

Just based on my phenotypic presentation and living as an Asian American Woman means that we're constantly surprising people...the expectation is that Asian American Women are fully available, representative, and knowledgeable about all things equity, inclusion, diversity, justice, often as the only Person of Color in the room. [In addition to race and gender], it's also ambiguous age. It's absurd...I was recently patted on the head by a regent of our university who said, "good girl," while he was patting me on the head. I was so fired up from that experience. We're treated as younger; others assume we don't have enough experience to be in leadership. And because of my identities, I feel like I've always had to be over poised and "over-experted."

Sun's counter-stories were shared experiences among other research collaborators. While relating to harmful and problematic shared experiences was validating and made us feel seen and understood, Sun also shared the astute insight that we often coalesce around trauma, and we also need to coalesce around joy. Her leadership is rooted in deep care for others and their humanity. While Sun has held various leadership roles and progressively advanced in her leadership, when asked about when she first claimed the term "leader" for herself, she shared:

I don't know that I think about it, to be honest, not because I don't think I am one. I've never claimed it [the term leader] but I've never rejected it either. I just want to show up and do good work and make a difference in the lives of the people around me. But the

way I perceive myself and the way that others perceive me are very different. I think...others perceive me as a junior member of the senior administration, the bottom of the top. And I view myself as the top of the bottom...advocating...fighting against “the man”... and then I realized that other people think I am “the man” (the authority or representative of the system of oppression).

Again, claiming the “leader” term did not resonate for Sun but there was clear understanding that she held a leadership role and desired the responsibility that allowed her to be positioned to make positive change on her campus. The findings section elaborates on the idea that while we know we, Asian American Women, provided leadership to the benefit of our communities, we do not choose to prioritize an individualistic perspective of owning and claiming the “leader” label.

Finally, central to Sun’s leadership approach was her commitment to challenging inequity in higher education. Sun shared how this commitment was derived from her personal story:

There’s such an innate inequity to power and privilege and my story being from an orphanage in [country of origin]. There is a significant amount of both loss and privilege and then being thrust into a middle-class white family, and kind of examining the benefits that I got to reap but also mourning the loss of my biological family...it’s very, very complex. Then, when we put all those pieces together inside a leader structure...ultimately to operate without social justice principles is just simply not the right thing to do. It’s unethical to exclude people based on identities they can’t control.

Sun’s reflections and counter-stories were powerful, relatable, and she used her voice and influence to challenge systems of oppression in her personal community engagement, in her volunteer work with professional associations, and in her leadership role in higher education.

Yoko

Yoko was a gifted storyteller through descriptive imagery, powerful rhetoric, and personal vulnerability. She is the biracial daughter of a Japanese mother who immigrated from Japan, and Yoko shared:

I kept my mom's [Japanese] last name, even after I got married...it was really important for me to stay rooted in my Japanese identity. I identify as a biracial Woman of Color, Japanese and white. Because I don't phenotypically present as Asian for others...I felt like my name was really important, like, as an outward expression of an identity that is so salient for me that I always wanted to hold onto. So fast forward, I gave my kids my last name as well because they look like little white dudes so they need to have, like, connection to that Asian identity.

Family, Japanese culture, and Asian identity were important parts of Yoko's 20-plus year leadership story. The vast majority of her professional career was in higher education, and she recalled a time she provided direct feedback about unhealthy work conditions, and she was criticized for her fiery and emotional delivery (even though a white woman matched her tone and did not get rebuked for it):

I clearly got the message that I need to zip up, put your hair up [eyes tear up, voice cracks a little], don't speak passionately or step out of line. I remember thinking, as an Asian American Woman, I'm supposed to show up and shut up, look presentable, be docile. Now we have words that we didn't have at the time for those problematic messages. Early on, I was being mentored and coached to perform whiteness.

Those problematic messages are a form of professional gaslighting in which we have been manipulated by those in power to a point in which we question ourselves, our memory, our

perceptions, and instead contort ourselves to fit the rigid form of whiteness in the workplace.

Yoko shared another significant experience with professional gaslighting related to a title promotion and salary increase:

I have so much trauma around all of those experiences [with multiple promotions]. In one promotion [to oversee an additional work area], I was told, “You’ve done such great work, we want to give this to you, no one else...unfortunately we just don’t have a lot of money, so we’re asking you to do this in addition to your full-time job for \$4K.” I had all the identities that made that work, things that mattered to me like duty, responsibility, being asked to take on something important is like family duty. When you’ve been invisible for so long and then your talents are seen as extraordinary, exceptional, we take it. The raise of praise. And now I can see that it was professional gaslighting.

Yoko shared other painful experiences with promotion processes. Emma and Leny resonated with these experiences and shared their own challenges with promotions and salary negotiations as Asian American Women leaders.

To further exemplify her experience with racism and sexism in leadership in higher education, Yoko shared a counter-story about a time when one of her [male] staff members asked her a question, she provided a definitive answer, and he pushed back suggesting that she needed to check with her [white male] supervisor first. Similarly, she has other staff members who have asked if they could speak directly to her supervisor to consult or get his input, ultimately subverting her leadership of the team. Yoko shared further:

It’s frustrating the amount of times I get questioned. I can’t help but think that my identities [as an Asian American Woman] play into this...it didn’t land well on me. I think about the stereotype of Asian American Women being quiet and timid when my

staff questions if I am a strong advocate or don't believe I have the power to make a decision or speak up...things I really do see myself doing. I know I'm fighting and leading and advocating but other people aren't listening.

I related to this experience of being in a position of power yet feeling oppressed and rendered invisible by a person I supervised. Racism and sexism are so oppressive the power dynamics in a relationship feel secondary to the multiple marginalized identities we hold as Asian American Women. As a result of the invisibility she experienced in her leadership, Yoko shared these perspectives:

Being an Asian American Woman in leadership...it feels lonely sometimes. The feeling of being invisible and erased...until violence made us visible over the last few years [anti-Asian racism; Atlanta spa shooting]. Sometimes I feel like a prop or a token. I feel like we're placed on a pedestal and expected to be perfect, yet no one sees us unless we fail...then it feels like everyone sees the failure. It feels like being invisible to everyone but yourself...and you're screaming to be heard, to be seen, to be believed, but no one can hear you because what cannot be seen cannot be heard and what cannot be heard cannot be seen.

I had a visceral reaction to Yoko's powerful and impassioned description of being an Asian American Woman leader in higher education. She put words to feelings I have experienced and helped me make meaning of my own reflections.

Yuna

Yuna shared it was important to start off by sharing that she is a mother, a partner, and a transracial adoptee. Her parents, brother, and partner are white and she noted being surrounded by whiteness as an Asian American Woman. Professionally, Yuna's work in higher education

was her second career after having started out in business consulting. Her experience in business consulting created a strong foundation for Yuna to bring her change management skills to higher education, which has been pivotal in her advancement and success in senior leadership roles.

Yuna shared the perspective that being an Asian American Woman leader meant she represented both herself and her race, whether or not she wanted to. She has held multiple senior leadership roles and continues to advance in her career, yet, when reflecting on claiming herself as a leader, she shared:

I don't know that I have [claimed myself as a leader], and if so, it's just starting. I don't refer to myself as a leader, not the way some of my colleagues do. I think some of it's fear, there's a lot of fear that people will be like, "oh, who is she to call herself that?!" so probably connected to imposter syndrome. I think men boast about themselves in a way that our society makes acceptable for them. I think women have to figure out ways to navigate being exceptional...and when we don't refer to [being a leader], we don't speak it into existence, then it probably changes how we think of ourselves.

Like Emma, Sun, and other research collaborators in this study, Yuna grappled with identifying with the "leader" term. We spent time talking about our experiences with racial awakening and developing a critical lens to identify racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression. Yuna shared:

I think a lot of my process began, specifically as a transracial adoptee, just being empowered to identify myself as an Asian American Woman. For a long time, right, I felt much more comfortable being a Person of Color...because there's so many expectations with being Asian that I don't have – connections to language, culture, food. My students helped me understand that knowing the language or understanding a culture, growing up

a certain way wasn't a precursor to being Asian American...you can be taught those things. So that was a large part of first claiming my Asian American identity. Then also, everyone already sees me as Asian American so rather than disassociating myself from it and assuming that [distancing] is going to protect me in some way from, you know, racism, I claimed it. It was another step in some racialized awakening and some undoing of white supremacy that I'd internalized. I always felt like I was disappointing, particularly East Asians, when they realized I was adopted...I often would avoid or distance myself. If we had met a couple decades ago, I probably would have been very cognizant, right, there's another Asian American Woman, but would have been like, "Well, we can't be together" because that will just further highlight, right, that I'm Asian American and different. I think after I started having more East Asian friends, I mean, like, when you start to compare experiences, something that you might explain away to yourself, all of a sudden, you're like, "wait, all of us?!"

This was a powerful counter-story of reflection, messages we have told ourselves about Asian-enoughness, and how our community supported and encouraged our ongoing racial awakening. As an Asian American Woman myself, raised by Japanese American parents, I still deeply resonated with stories of not feeling Asian enough, and I was so grateful for Yuna's vulnerability in sharing her story with which many Asian American Women can resonate.

Yuna's identity awareness and critical lens on the systems of oppression in higher education have equipped her to identify racist and sexist experiences in her leadership roles.

Yuna shared an example when she was the director of an office:

We were having this emergency meeting with cabinet and senior leadership, sitting around a boardroom table. This white man, senior leader, comes in late and he literally

comes up to me and is like, “Would you mind moving to the chair next to the door because you can still take notes there” and I reacted shocked. It was one of those things where it’s like, “oh, it’s because I’m an Asian American Woman.” And another time, white male athletic coaches would only talk to my [white male] assistant director and assumed I was an administrative assistant. Even when they found out I wasn’t, they just wanted to work with him. [Another example] White men who are part of the religious majority don’t even feel like they have to listen to me, the things they say to me, the way they talk over me, the way they literally ignore me when I speak is infuriating.

Even while Yuna had example after example of racist and sexist experiences, delivered with a matter-of-fact tone that inferred that these are regular occurrences, she shared there are still times when she has reacted and was gaslit into doubting her interpretation. There was a constant navigation of the context of a situation, held identities, and strategy. Yuna shared powerful insights about strategic bravery and strategic leadership that I highlighted in more detail in the findings section.

Summary of Introduction to Research Collaborators

While these seven Asian American Women leaders each had individual and distinctive counter-stories, they also had shared experiences with racialized and gendered oppression in their leadership roles in higher education. Some of the counter-stories were raw, emotional, and left the storytellers with trauma and unprocessed harm that continued to live within their bodies and minds. Some counter-stories were daily occurrences with racism and sexism, microaggressions, and patterns of oppression they experienced throughout their careers. Among the counter-stories, some of the shared experiences among these Asian American Women leaders included invisibility, isolation, tokenization, exoticization, professional gaslighting, lack of Asian

American Women mentors, barriers to leadership, and pervasive exhaustion. Many of these themes have persisted over time and unfortunately remained similar to what has been identified in previous research on Asian Americans over the past two decades.

This research was not designed to illuminate the themes of racism and sexism experienced by Asian American Women leaders in higher education. Nevertheless, I provide an overview of these themes to set the context for how racialized and gendered experiences with oppression have informed, influenced, and impacted how this group of Asian American Women (re)conceptualized their leadership in higher education.

Additionally, it is worth noting while four of the seven Asian American Women in my study hesitated to claim the term *leader*, there was no hesitation about how they provided *leadership* through their roles in higher education. The nuance between *leader* and *leadership* is an important distinction. The term “leader” connotes an individual and leader development is for the benefit of one individual’s advancement. Whereas the term “leadership” connotes a collectivist action and leadership development benefits a group of people (Dugan & Osteen, 2016). For this study, the focus is on leadership, which aligns with the culturally relevant ways in which Asian American Women lead. The next section highlighted a thematic analysis of the findings.

Findings

Having introduced these seven inspiring Asian American Women leaders, there is foundational context for who they are as individuals and how we collectively came together to put words to our (re)conceptualization of leadership that centered our voices, honored our leadership styles, and celebrated each other. In this section, I present the findings from the counter-stories shared by my research collaborators. Thematic analysis guided an iterative

process reading and re-reading transcripts and journals, coding, identifying patterns of meaning to develop themes, member checking, reviewing themes, and weaving themes together to answer the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2018). Just as an Asian American Feminist framework guided me in designing the data generation process and interview questions, I kept the tenets of Asian American Feminisms top of mind as I engaged in data analysis, making sure to forefront a critical lens on how Asian American Woman identities informed and impacted experiences and ideas around a (re)conceptualization of leadership. My goal was to give power to where their counter-stories coalesced and develop themes that represented their shared experiences as Asian American Women leaders. As the themes emerged, I intentionally did not try to fit each person's counter-story into each theme, and instead, my goal was to honor each individual's counter-stories as their own lived experiences, while also identifying patterns of meaning that guided the development of overarching themes.

As part of the data analysis process, I reflected on my positionality statement in Chapter three in which I shared my initial conceptualizations of Asian American Women leadership. In brief, I described how I did not resonate with traditional white male dominant leadership theories, how growing up feeling different and "othered" created capacity for me to affirm others' truths and identities as valid and central to their being, and how I am motivated to take on leadership roles because of my deep care for the humans with whom I interact. My perspectives were congruent with the findings, particularly with the themes of centering humanity and collective empowerment. Acknowledging that I entered this study with pre-existing notions of Asian American Women leadership based on my personal experience, it was important for me to consider confirmation bias when analyzing the data. Confirmation bias is the tendency to interpret new evidence as confirmation of my existing beliefs, and I am confident in the

trustworthiness of these findings through clearly identified patterns of meaning across counter-stories and through active engagement in member checking.

It is important to explicitly state that we, Asian American Women leaders, are not a monolith. And, how we demonstrate our leadership is not monolithic. When I use “we” throughout the findings, I am referencing the collective “we” of joining together for a common purpose rather than the implication our ethnic background and racialized and gendered experiences were the same. Joining together in community for the purpose of this study allowed us as a collective group of Asian American Women leaders to reject the white male dominant narrative of leadership, dismiss traditional leadership concepts that did not resonate with our leadership styles, and reclaim and (re)conceptualize leadership by honoring our own identities, culture, and authenticity.

The primary findings are represented through four interconnected themes. These themes are not intended to be linear or sequential, yet this section begins with the theme of centering humanity because humanization is foundational in the ways in which Asian American Women lead with care. Humanization of ourselves and others is a central tenet of our leadership that motivates our commitment to engage in ongoing critical self-reflection, leveraging our positionality through intersectional strategic leadership, and making a commitment toward shared liberation through collective empowerment.

Centering the Humanity in Others and Ourselves

The theme of centering peoples’ humanity had such a strong presence throughout each research collaborator’s counter-stories, as though our families, our younger selves, and our communities were joining us in each interview. I created the two sub-themes of others and ourselves to fully represent our counter-storytelling and meaning-making through reflection. We

shared how it was often our practice to advocate for others more than ourselves. And, we are worth fighting for, too.

Centering the Humanity in Others

It was powerful to hear how much intentional care these Asian American Women pour into the staff with whom they worked, the students they engaged, their families, and their communities. Their focus was on the individual humans they worked with, while concurrently challenging policies and systems that contributed to oppressive environments so future students, staff, and folks with marginalized identities could thrive in higher education. Emma described her approach to leadership:

I think [my leadership qualities are] very rooted in being an Asian Woman. I lead with grace and kindness, give people the benefit of the doubt, I'm flexible, I tap into peoples' creativity and really leverage their strengths...as an Asian Woman, my kindness and flexibility are mistaken for passivity. I think of this as attending to each person and their needs, which I think will support the whole group. I think oftentimes managers feel a pressure to keep things *equal* with employees but keeping things equal is not actual *equity*. Equity is important to me, which means I'm okay with tolerating the tension. I care about people, not just the institution. Also, I think about empowering people who may feel silenced in spaces, and that may be empowering them by creating space for them, individually or in a group, where they will be heard.

These approaches to leadership were reiterated through numerous counter-stories with the resonant words including, "I want people to know that I care about them (Sun)," and "I want my team to know that I view them as humans first (Yuna)," and "I'm someone who looks around the table to see who's missing (Anjali)."

We also discussed how a human-centered approach to leadership was influenced and resulted from our own experiences with racism, sexism, and other forms of intersectional oppression. While we held the pain of oppression, we also held the awareness and empathy for other people with marginalized identities that fueled our leadership as Asian American Women. Anjali shared about how, decades later, she still felt the embarrassment thinking about the harmful messages about professionalism that minimized her cultural identities. Because of those problematic messages she endured, Anjali shared an example of centering humanity by being conscious of how she advised individuals from marginalized communities, especially Women of Color, to honor their identities and culture as professionals. Additionally, Leny reinforced the importance of humanization by sharing:

We need to be able to see each other's humanity. You think about groups that have been oppressed in the past, and it's because they've been dehumanized.

Leny's recounted experiences being exoticized and fetishized as an Asian American Woman by male colleagues. When perpetrators view Asian American Women as sexualized objects, we are no longer perceived as human. We become dehumanized and more vulnerable to racist hate and gendered violence. Leny also shared a counter-story of how white women leaders supported each other but she did not receive that same support, personally nor publicly. This exemplified the danger in being invisibilized as an Asian American Woman in leadership. If we are invisible, we are not seen. If we are not seen, we are dehumanized. Both experiences were all too familiar to many Asian American Women leaders, so we were uncompromising in our commitment to center humanity in our leadership.

Centering the Humanity in Ourselves

We emerged from this study with a renewed energy to reclaim our worth and center our own humanity. We could no longer prioritize other people *over* ourselves, rather, we need to *also* prioritize ourselves. To center our own humanity meant self-advocacy, reclaiming our space in leadership, honoring how our identities and culture informed our leadership, releasing the shame we have held in our bodies, and claiming our identities as Asian American Women and Women of Color. In Yoko's introduction, she shared a counter-story about Asian American Women being placed on a pedestal with the constant pressure to be perfect yet feeling invisible unless we fail. Emma resonated with this experience and added that along with the expectation to perform, we are also resented for performing and excelling. In support of honoring our identities and reclaiming our leadership, Yoko declared:

And instead of backing away and being like, "Oh well, I better not perform because I don't want to bring about resentment," I'm going to perform...and I'm not going to feel shame in that. This is my superpower. I'm really good at this and I'm just going to hold on to that. I don't need to speak up and be like, "Hey, look at all the things I'm doing!" I'm not going to shy away. I'm going to perform.

In this declaration, Yoko emphasized the notion of reclaiming our power and reclaiming our true worth. We shared too many examples of times we made ourselves small or minimized our achievements. Centering our own humanity meant reclaiming leadership that honored our strengths as Asian American Women.

Michelle shared a counter-story which still weighed heavily based on the emotion it brought to the surface as she recounted her experience:

I've always hidden the fact that I was competitive in college as a member of the university dance team. I'm always aware of the fetishization that happens with those kinds of sports...and then I'm Asian. When people find out, it's a huge deal, and I'm super embarrassed by it. When a [older white male senior leader] heard I participated in these highly visible sports, something changed. He couldn't believe it and kept repeating the fact over and over in this really sleazy way...the stereotyping around not only these sports and then Asian Women, yeah, that boils us down to these sexualized objects, which is why I never tell anybody and that is such a disservice to me. Being a college athlete...I should be damn proud that we were some of the best in the country - with accolades and major awards (eyes well up with tears). I get emotional realizing how much I've pushed that part of my life and development down because people won't take me seriously...that I'm less of a badass...or because of the sexism and fetishization.

Michelle's reflection on being a college athlete was a source of pride and a source of pain. I observed her consciousness of this experience shift from being a sexualized object to reclaiming her humanity as both a college athlete and Asian American Woman. Later in her interview, Michelle spoke about the importance of leveraging her seat at the table to call out racism and sexism. As an external processor, she realized in the moment she also wanted to leverage her leadership to center her own humanity by calling out the racism and sexism the next time her experience as an athlete was brought up in a derogatory manner.

Emma provided insight about the worthwhile challenge of battling our own internalized oppression as Asian American Women as a form of self-advocacy:

Sometimes when I feel strongly about something, I hear this [inner monologue], like, "don't rock the boat too much, don't do this, don't do that..." and I have to figure out,

like, how much is my inner Asian, and how much do I need to lean against my inner Asian, especially when it comes to things that involve me. Right, like, it's much easier for me to advocate and fight on behalf of other people than it is for myself. That's something in leadership I've had to figure out, like, I'm worth fighting for, too.

Those words are so powerful, "I'm worth fighting for, too." That brief phrase offered a succinct boldness that cuts right to the core of self-advocacy and centering our own humanity in our leadership as Asian American Women.

Critical Self-Reflection

Throughout the interviews, my research collaborators and I did not explicitly discuss self-reflection as a part of our leadership praxis. However, when looking for patterns of meaning across collaborator counter-stories, I was struck by the consistent thread of self-reflection, and more specifically, critical self-reflection that centered their identities as Asian American Women. Their critical self-reflection went beyond recalling an interaction, identifying the oppressive behavior, and applying their learning to their current leadership approach. They engaged in a deeper reflective analysis of their privileged and marginalized identities in context with the social identities of others involved, and they interrogated the circumstances: Was there miscommunication? Was I being gaslit? What were their intentions? Would that have happened to a white man/woman? What do I need to learn to grow in my understanding? Critical self-reflection was exhibited in counter-stories through examination of cultural values learned in childhood that are present in adulthood, growth through identity awareness and social justice education, and identifying their own learning edges and gaps in knowledge.

Yoko demonstrated authentic critical self-reflection by sharing how she was negotiating the tension between upholding perfection as a Japanese value ingrained in her since childhood and carrying perfectionism into adulthood with the implication that it was performing whiteness.

I didn't grow up thinking perfectionism was a bad thing. The way my [Japanese immigrant] mom raised me with strong traditional values around duty, obedience, honor, and not failing...failure brings dishonor to your family. So, I was always like, "I've got to be perfect, I can't fail or I'll bring dishonor to our family name." That's a lot of pressure and has had a lifelong impact on my mental health but it came from a place of my mom's held values. Now I feel like those values are being erased...talking about perfectionism as white supremacy culture...it's seen as whiteness...but whiteness doesn't get to take that away...it's something that I have with my mom and my family...[in agreement with Emma] yes, these [cultural] values are being co-opted by white America...and then we're accused of colluding with whiteness because of those values and being pitted against other people of color. This just brought up a lot of emotion.

Yoko prefaced a few of her counter-stories with, "I've been reflecting on..." Reflection is infused in her leadership practice, and I know Yoko will continue to do self-reflection on this story that has created dissonance in the connection of her familial culture with her ongoing growth as an Asian American Woman leader who is actively trying to disrupt whiteness in the workplace.

I have such gratitude for Leny and the vulnerable critical self-reflection she shared in her counter-stories about validating spaces and invalidating spaces:

Through this research, being able to meet other [Asian American] Women has been extremely empowering for me...we have a lot of shared experience...it was really

emotional...to see how deeply impacting some of the lived experiences have been for many of us. When I was growing up, I was aware of my identity and who I was, but it was not something we talked about all the time. And I feel like this [research study] is the most that I've been able to talk about it [being an Asian American Woman] in my entire life. [Contrarily] I remember when I went to a NASPA conference and finding the API group but feeling completely isolated from that group. I felt like I wasn't Asian-enough because I didn't live on the west coast or east coast, and I had an accent so I felt like a novelty on display...I didn't really like that, being with people who you were supposed to feel like, this should be my space, and it was never my space...I didn't really feel included in those groups the way you're supposed to feel when you're with people that look like you.

Leny's self-reflection was powerful because she was willing to deeply connect with two contrasting emotions: validation and isolation. Strong feelings can be an obstacle to critical self-reflection, and Leny exhibited her willingness to engage with emotion in this reflection.

I admired Michelle's ability to demonstrate critical self-reflection through counter-storytelling. In one counter-story, Michelle recalled while growing up, she never felt "othered," yet she also recalled an intentional choice to not speak her primary language of Cantonese:

In second grade, I distinctly remember deciding not to answer my parents anymore when they spoke to us in Cantonese in public. Now, I can understand my family's language, but I can't speak it and it's a huge loss. I will not be able to pass it [Cantonese language] on to my kids.

As Michelle recalled this memory about dismissing the Cantonese language, I sensed her unease. She quickly changed the subject but reflected on this memory later in the interview when she shared:

Back in second grade when I refused to speak Cantonese anymore, what made me, as a seven-year-old, decide that it was not okay [to speak Cantonese]?! Then as a young professional and young adult, I remember wanting to differentiate myself as an Asian Woman from other Asians who had really thick accents. I've watched people treat immigrants who have really thick accents differently. Now, I realize I need to own who I am and that my own implicit bias was not acceptable. I really needed to work on that.

Within two years of living in the U.S., seven-year-old Michelle was able to intuit the racism, nativism, and discrimination against Asian people who spoke a primary language that was not English. Upon reflection, Michelle recognized her internalized oppression by refusing to speak Cantonese and discriminating against Asians who have thick accents, likely stemming from a deep desire not to stand out as different. The critical self-reflection process continued to add to her meaning making and consideration of the implications now as an adult.

Anjali shared a counter-story that also exemplified critical self-reflection through identification of her own learning and gaps in knowledge. I perceived Anjali as a learner, taking in information to grow her knowledge base and identifying her learning edges. While whiteness places value on hoarding information as power, Anjali exuded this learner strength through genuine investment in others and growing her ability to be a strong ally for people with marginalized identities, including her identities as an Asian American Woman. Anjali and I discussed the challenge of feeling Asian-enough amongst other Asian American Women and the intimidation we experienced at times. She went on to share:

I appreciate the diversity of mentors that I have...but also, I wonder, like, I'm not being challenged, you know. In a previous relationship with an Asian American Woman leader, I was being challenged greatly about things that I had not ever thought about because I don't have that kind of person in my life, so that's a gap in my, in my knowledge base that I would like to fill. There's an opportunity in the challenge...if I have a gap, I don't want intimidation to prevent me from filling that gap.

Anjali's self-reflection on the challenge she experienced with another Asian American Woman leader represented a "glass half full, not half empty" framing on the opportunity to learn and add to her gaps in knowledge.

Emma also exemplified self-reflection in action. When asked when she first claimed being a leader, Emma quickly responded:

Oh, I don't know that I have...I think I'm reluctant in my leadership...but when did I lean more into leadership, it's probably been in the past two to three years...[a pause to reflect]...yeah, I think it's the everyday thing like a staff member who is crying and needs support, ones who are trying to figure out how to navigate the system...it's an accumulation of those things that made me realize that other people see me as a leader. I think I've always sort of leaned away from being a leader, frankly, I think it's the term, like a label...[another pause]...it's sort of a weird thing to realize, honestly...I do think there's a way in which I don't know that I always see that quality in myself...it's interesting to me to watch myself lean away from it [the term leader] so actively.

Multiple times, I observed Emma giving herself space to thoughtfully pause and engage in honest self-reflection in the moment. She later shared this insight that speaks directly to my research study:

When you're asking me earlier, like, about being a leader, I think there is a negative connotation. For me, it's almost, like, very ego-driven, right. I think that's the piece that I really lean away from. There was a time when I thought what would make me happy in my career was to move up...and then there's actually all these other things in life that are really important. So, I had to set that part of my ego aside to do what made me happy. I think that's probably the piece [ego driven leader] I lean away from, which is Asian-ness, right? Growing up being taught to be humble, put other people first...those things are less ego driven.

I value and admire Emma's reflection and meaning making, especially in this part of the counter-storytelling. From her self-observation of leaning away from the term "leader," to naming the ego-driven white, male dominant connotation of the term, and finally, being able to identify that the dissonance derived from her cultural upbringing. This depth of self-reflection is a foundational element to how we have come to (re)conceptualize leadership as Asian American Women.

These counter-stories evidenced a deeper analysis, both inward and outward, to understand ourselves in relationship with others, to understand how our past informs our present, to understand ways we need to learn and grow, and to understand the context and systems within which we work. By recognizing critical self-reflection as a part of how we (re)conceptualized our leadership, we explicitly named what we are already doing in our leadership praxis and proclaimed the importance of prioritizing ongoing critical self-reflection as essential to our growth and learning as Asian American Women leaders in higher education.

Intersectional Strategic Leadership

The theme of strategic leadership was named more explicitly by many research collaborators as they described their leadership as Asian American Women. In addition to the navigation of choices all leaders face, I observed a pattern of meaning throughout our counter-stories about how our identities as Asian American Women influenced our leadership strategy. The term “intersectional” strategic leadership forefronts our multiple marginalized identities as Asian American (race) Women (gender). In reaction to the systems of oppression within which we operate in higher education, Asian American Women leaders developed an intersectional strategic leadership approach to navigate the complexities of racism, sexism, campus politics, and advocacy while preserving our integrity and well-being. We bring a critical awareness to our leadership role that we are 1) strategically operating within a system of racist patriarchy in higher education, 2) that marginalizes our intersecting identities as Asian American Women leaders, 3) while we simultaneously aim to enact change and disrupt the system by leveraging our positional power in leadership.

The counter-stories that represented intersectional strategic leadership highlighted the constant and complex navigation of leadership. While all research collaborators discussed strategic leadership in their counter-stories, Yuna’s voice showed up prominently in the description of this theme. Informed by her experience in senior leadership roles and business consultation in change management, Yuna had the astute ability to name the nuanced complexities involved with intersectional strategic leadership. Yuna and I discussed the unconscious bias that Asian American Women experienced in leadership along with the expectations others ascribed to us. Yuna shared:

[As an Asian American Woman] I have to be strategic in how I navigate. I can't just go in with my passion and being fiery, or even just with my knowledge, like, I have to have a plan and how to combat [the issue]...it's kind of like a game of chess, like planning ten moves ahead.

Yuna brilliantly described her leadership as the need to be strategic in a three-dimensional way in which she advocated for the needs of students by challenging white supremacy, while she maintained relationships with her allies, and moved forward in her career and leadership to influence change. Yuna described the process of maintaining allies:

It doesn't always mean that you're throwing down the hammer, right, forcing things to happen...sometimes it's convincing, eliciting people to want to join you. People think my job is [direct confrontation], whereas, I feel like that's maybe 1% of my job, and the other 99% is helping the person in front of me see why our interests align, which to me, is a very critical race theory alignment. In fact, if there was a leadership style that was formed around critical race theory, I would say that is very much my alignment, which is how we create interest convergence.

I was astounded by Yuna's revelation that gave life to the notion of CRT (critical race theory) as a leadership approach. Yuna further elaborated on the strategic choices to make in leadership as Asian American Women:

When something gets complicated, you have to decide, like, are you going to challenge it, or are you going to accommodate it? And we know we can't be successful in our work if we're always challenging, and we know that we can't do the work that we're supposed to do if we're always accommodating. It's a delicate balance, and definitely based on identities, because you know white cis or straight men can *challenge more* and not be

seen as *challenging*. So not only is that a choice you have to live with as a leader, but then if you have less capital or your capital runs out quicker, then I have to accommodate more to be successful, maybe more than other people who are my [white] peers...and I've never been on a team with another Asian American Woman...when you're the only one, then you are also having to accommodate because I can't pass it to someone else.

Yuna's counter-story resonated with Sun during the group interview, and there was an energetic exchange as they layered in nuanced complexities that built off each other's stories. Sun shared her own counter-story that illuminated the complexities of intersectional strategic leadership:

You're carrying the weight of your whole identity, all the time, which is a thing that marginalized people get to do. You have to decide, when do you fight and when do you become complicit...I've been very careful about picking which hill I am willing to die on and which ones I'm not. There are just dozens of examples of times when I've had to give up part of me or part of my values in order to get somebody else to say yes to something that I really needed them to say yes to for the benefit of students. I don't think I've ever gotten to come to work as my full self, like probably ever, because I'm navigating majority culture just constantly, constantly. I know [in some meetings] I have to show up in that room fully cloaked in whiteness to get anything done, and I hate that.

Sun's honest counter-story highlighted the ways in which she negotiated her racial and gender identities with her awareness of white male dominant culture to strategically navigate leadership to influence change.

Anjali and Emma both touched on how their leadership styles were intersectional and strategic. Emma expressed frustration when she shared:

It's in my nature and culture to try to accommodate and collaborate and find win-win situations...it's strategic yet because I'm an Asian American woman, people perceive this as a weakness or lack of willingness to fight. Sometimes I just want to be able to time-out, but I feel so much responsibility.

Anjali agreed and added, "we're [Asian American Women] constantly navigating the conversation, where we can step in and where we need to step out...when can we center our own identities and when do we need to center other people of color."

Intersectional strategic leadership brings our multiple identities as Asian American Women directly into our consciousness when strategically navigating our leadership choices. It is complex, it is multi-dimensional, and it can create significant dissonance when our inclination is to take on a challenge but our energy or the circumstances require us to accommodate. Ultimately, intersectional strategic leadership guides our complex navigation as we operate within the same system of oppression we are trying to disrupt.

Collective Empowerment

The notion of a "collective" represented individuals coming together to enact change toward common goals. The notion of "empowerment" represented advocating for and fostering agency among our community and ourselves. Together, the theme of collective empowerment meant cultivating agency among individuals who joined together in community to enact change toward common goals.

Collective empowerment foregrounds our Asian American cultural values of care, responsibility, and duty for our family and communities. Traditional white, male, dominant narratives of leadership evoked an image of one person out in front of a group. This did not align for us. As Asian American Women leaders, our (re)conceptualization of leadership meant we are

not successful unless our communities are successful. We invested in the collective “we” more than the individual “I.” We believed in *leadership* development for the benefit of our communities more than *leader* development solely for the benefit of an individual. My research collaborators shared counter-stories that contextualized this theme by centering their identities and cultural values. Collective empowerment was demonstrated in the counter-stories of culture valuing the collective, co-constructing “the table,” leading as a member of the collective, and mentoring and allyship.

Anjali led with her ability to build consensus, which, she noted, was counter to white male leadership. She went on to share a culturally-centered counter-story about how her leadership represented collective empowerment:

I feel like my culture does influence the way in which I lead, and that is not often clearly understood by the white dominant culture. I reflected back on a job interview, sitting on one side of the boardroom and everybody else in a U-shape. One question...what have you done to institutionalize change...and I gave three examples that all included working on teams, working with different teams. The [white male] chair of the search committee pointed right at me and said, “NO, I want to know exactly what YOU did...not what you did with your team.” There’s this constant conflict culturally with these professional expectations...and the “we” is such a significant part of our [Asian American Women] personal identity.

Anjali was offered the position, and her delivery of this narrative created vivid imagery that represented the emotion and frustration of being misunderstood and devalued by white dominant norms in leadership. Anjali remained committed to a leadership approach that centered the collective empowerment of her teams.

Yoko shared how duty and honor were important to her and her Japanese family values. With that context, she shared a counter-story that set the stage for how she approached collective empowerment in her leadership:

My mom always said, “You represent your family.” And now, how I advocate matters for my community. I’m trying to hold the duty I feel...I’m leading for me, I’m leading for my team, I’m leading for my community...and I want to be really authentic and continue to, like, challenge stereotypes. So, it’s not just about being, like, invited to the table, that’s not it. We want to co-construct the table and have a voice when we’re there. I want to know that one day we can see that we paved the path for others to follow...I want to do my part to bring in and amplify [marginalized] voices in white spaces...to disrupt, like, the dominance that just keeps playing out in those spaces.

Yoko emphasized the responsibility she held to advocate for people who also hold marginalized identities and felt silenced or invisible. Her notion of “co-constructing the table” was a powerful representation of centering marginalized identities to collectively construct a new system.

As Yuna described her leadership, she shared, “I am direct, and I’m also direct in owning my mistakes, like I’m quick to apologize if I make a mistake or a misstep.” This was a brief yet important description of how her leadership was represented by collective empowerment. As one of the individuals in a collective, not the leader out front, it was important to take responsibility for our mistakes and learn as a member of the community. Yuna shared:

Process is as important as product. When you’re relying on a community to be successful, it has to feel good for others, too. It’s not just about me. Sometimes we have to find a compromise that brings us all together. I think when you’re an Asian American Woman,

you're dependent on that community...and because process is important...I'm not going to make decisions independent from consulting with others. I do want to take time and communicate with lots of folks.

Yuna further shared she was careful to explain that inviting input did not mean a voting system and some voices carried more significance based on the context of the issue. Yuna also acknowledged whiteness valued the product over process and may view this approach as weak, uncertain, and inefficient. Once again, there was a noticeable synergy between Yuna and Sun as they resonated with each other's experiences and approaches to leadership. Sun also shared:

I think one of the gifts of being in my literal skin [being an Asian American Woman] is learning how to get people on board...if you truly intend to be inclusive...you have to bring them along, because otherwise change is happening to them and they don't know why, and they are not going to agree. You have to build space for dialogue and explanation...if you don't [process], you're not going to be successful in changing hearts and minds...if you don't contextualize, you can't get anyone to come with you.

Contextualization is not part of white dominant male leadership. They lead from a command perspective, and I lead from an input perspective...I can take information, put it into a picture that makes sense to me, and I can explain that picture in a way that makes sense to other people...but that's so much labor that doesn't have to be done by other leaders.

Both Yuna and Sun shared experiences in which they remained committed to a collective empowerment approach to leadership that prioritized people and community in shared success.

Mentorship and allyship were integral elements in collective empowerment. A repercussion of the underrepresentation of Asian American Women in leadership in higher

education resulted in sparse access to mentors who hold shared racial and gender identities. I included Emma's counter-story about a mentor to illuminate the significance of mentoring relationships. While many research collaborators have never had a mentor who identified as an Asian American Woman leader, Emma shared how humanizing and affirming it was to build a trusted relationship with an Asian Woman mentor. She described a time when her mentor empowered her with the perspective of finding a job that fit her interests rather than trying to mold her interests to fit a job:

I was sort of mind blown, like, "oh, I don't have to yield myself to fit something...actually find something that fits." It was really one of the few times that an Asian Woman told me I did not have to make myself secondary, I could make myself primary. She taught me how to be more gentle with myself. I was really, really hard on myself about making mistakes and she just approached me with a lot of compassion, and grace, and perspective.

Fostering mentoring relationships was a significant way to invest in other Asian American Women and other Women of Color. As much as whiteness pushed us toward individualism, we knew we could not succeed separate from our communities. Yuna added an important reframe recognizing how we often think of potential mentors as Asian American Women who hold higher level leadership roles than we do; however, we can also gain insight from other Asian American Women peers and newer professionals. This reframe reminded us to resist patriarchal hierarchy and honor the wisdom throughout our communities.

And finally, it was imperative to create space to prioritize our leadership role in allyship in support of other Women of Color and Communities of Color. My research collaborators

repeatedly shared stories exemplifying how the collective “we” does not just represent Asian American Women but includes Communities of Color. Anjali spoke to allyship:

I know the importance of identifying as Asian American when it comes to driving policy change and being an ally to other Communities of Color and their work being advocates for important issues. I want to be a voice that supports other Communities of Color, because of recent events [racial injustice and violence]. We really need to come together to support our Black and Brown and Indigenous brothers and sisters. So, for me, being an Asian American Woman leader in higher education means being someone who is reliable and can be seen as an ally for issues facing other BIPOC communities. I feel a strong sense of responsibility to be that voice, knowing there are significant gaps in my knowledge and experience.

As Asian American Women leaders, collective empowerment represented our (re)conceptualization of leadership in a way that honored our values, identities, and cultures. We were inspired by a collective approach to leadership that made space for individuals and shared identities and experiences that brought us together in community. And, we were motivated to engage in mentorship and allyship so our communities, Women of Color, and other Communities of Color could be visible, uplifted, and empowered to enact change.

Summary of Findings

It was a profound privilege to have been entrusted with the counter-stories of these seven phenomenal Asian American Women leaders. During data analysis, I was not communicating as actively with my research collaborators, yet I felt their presence, heard their voices in my mind, and visualized their pain, joy, relief, hurt, and laughter. As I read and re-read the interview transcripts, I held a resolute responsibility to honor their individual counter-stories while seeking

patterns of meaning across their counter-stories to develop the four themes: centering the humanity in others and ourselves, critical self-reflection, intersectional strategic leadership, and collective empowerment.

Each research collaborator engaged with this study because they connected with the idea of centering our own Asian American Women's voices in (re)conceptualizing our leadership. It was especially gratifying and validating when my research collaborators came across their own counter-stories about how others' expectations of them, as Asian American Women leaders, were based on false narratives informed by white male dominant norms in leadership theory. As they reflected on feelings they suppressed, on frustrations they experienced, on times when they felt misunderstood and invisible, I could see and hear when they encountered their own revelations of how traditional leadership concepts did not honor their styles as Asian American Women.

My research collaborators entered this study with a pragmatic resonance with my research question. Counter-storytelling methodology paired with an Asian American Feminist framework guided us in co-constructing meaning of our critical self-reflections through connection in community. My research collaborators emerged from the study with a deeper resonance and personal embodiment of my research question, which I hope will fortify our continued connections toward healing and liberation as Asian American Women leaders. There were so many powerful counter-stories I wanted to delve into, but I reminded myself to stay focused on my primary research question. In the next chapter, I present the implications for this research, recommendations for action, and recommendations for future research based on the counter-stories that were not fully engaged through this study.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, REFLECTIONS

“I look to my own experience and the experience of others like me to understand the world and to decide how to move it.” (Matsuda, 1996, p. xi)

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how Asian American Women leaders (re)conceptualize leadership given their racialized and gendered experiences with oppression in higher education. In congruence with a critical constructivist approach, this study is rooted in an Asian American Feminist framework using counter-storytelling methodology to answer the research question - How do Asian American Women (re)conceptualize leadership given the racism and sexism they experience in their leadership roles in higher education? This study contributes to the existing research focused on the experiences of Women of Color in leadership, using a critical approach to co-construct a reconceptualization centering the experiences of Asian American Women who are disproportionately underrepresented in leadership in higher education. This chapter connects the study findings and analysis with the existing literature, presents recommendations for action for practice and for future research, and concludes with researcher reflections.

Findings and Connections to Existing Literature

The design of this study was critical in guiding the research process to answer the research question. Counter-storytelling methodology with a critical constructivist approach grounded in Asian American Feminisms paved the way in forming trusting relationships for me and my research collaborators to gather rich data that honored both individual and collective

experiences. Counter-storytelling set the stage for Asian American Women leaders to share about the racialized and gendered harm they experienced within higher education. They joined in solidarity and community through sharing their stories and hearing the stories of other Asian American Women leaders (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Using thematic analysis, four interconnected themes emerged to answer my research question. These themes are interconnected, introspective, culturally informed, and congruent with the Asian American Feminist perspective that guided this study. While these themes are not intended to be linear or sequential, I began by describing the first theme of *centering the humanity in others and ourselves* because humanization is foundational in the ways we lead with care. The second theme of *critical self-reflection* described how our leadership prioritizes a commitment to ongoing analysis of ourselves in context with others and within the systems of oppression in which we lead. The third theme of *intersectional strategic leadership* described the complex navigation of working within a system of oppression that aims to marginalize our multiple identities while simultaneously leveraging our leadership positionality to disrupt oppression. And finally, the fourth theme of *collective empowerment* described investing in communities to cultivate agency to enact change toward healing and liberation. In the following section, I highlighted ways in which the findings connect with existing literature on Asian American Women leaders and Asian American Feminisms.

Together with the Asian American Women who joined my study, we have a combined 150 years of working in higher education. My research collaborators have well-established careers in leadership in higher education, each with an impressive history of career advancement and working with diverse teams. Each research collaborator also has numerous examples of the racism and sexism they experienced as Asian American Women leaders including invisibility,

dehumanizing objectification, underrepresentation, misrepresentation, and lacking mentors who held shared identities. These experiences with oppression directly connected with the existing literature on Asian American Women from more than two decades ago and continues to be present in the lives of Asian American Women leaders in 2022. A powerful result of this study is in the community we created, the relationships we developed, and the meaning making we co-constructed as we shared our counter-stories with one another. Each of us brought our individual counter-stories and felt validated, seen, and heard through our shared experiences.

Critical Self-Reflection: Connection to Literature

Through critical self-reflection, we learn about ourselves, about our relationship with others, and about the systems within which we live and work. Critical self-reflection must focus on our own positionality, identities, and power within systems (de Jesús, 2005; Dugan, 2017) because “self-transformation and structural transformation must go hand in hand” (Boggs & Kurashige, 2012, p. 15). And the more we learn, the more we know we need to learn, un-learn, and re-learn to heal our minds and spirits from what the white patriarchy has taught us (Calderón et al., 2012; Mendoza Strobel, 2005). The process of unlearning begins with identifying and naming the “unseen, largely invisible collection of patterns” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 5) that contributed to our experience with invisibility as Asian American Women leaders. The relearning empowered us to honor our identities and culture as assets and motivates us to challenge dominant narratives and reclaim our voices and space in leadership.

Critical self-reflection relates to traditional leadership concepts through transformational leadership, which underscores how self-awareness and knowledge of one’s identities shape access to and uses of power and capital in leadership (Dugan, 2017). While transformational leadership offers a more humanizing approach, transformational leadership theories are rooted in

an ideology of individualism and do not capture the value of interdependence that is essential for the way in which we, Asian American Women leaders, have (re)conceptualized leadership. We are driven by our sense of duty and responsibility to care for the people in our communities.

Centering the Humanity in Others and Ourselves: Connection to Literature

Connecting critical self-reflection with centering humanity, Accapadi (2017) expressed, “Reflection is deeply important because it is a manifestation of our own commitment to move beyond theory to action. Reflection brings humanity to the ‘what’s next’ of our work” (p. 99). Accapadi is a preeminent APIDA (Asian Pacific Islander Desi American) Woman leader in higher education who informed my selected tenet of humanization in Asian American Feminisms. Accapadi’s leadership and scholarship bring vulnerability, cultural humility, and reflexive praxis to her writing and counter-storytelling which aligns with the theme of centering humanity of others and ourselves.

The notion of humanization was present throughout each research collaborator’s counter-storytelling. My research collaborators and I were all too familiar with feeling dehumanized through racialized and gendered oppression, and, as a result, we had an unwavering commitment to center the humanity in others and in ourselves. This leadership approach relates to strategic social change leadership which is rooted in grounded humanism (Dugan, 2017). Humanism refers to an appreciation of the humanity of all people and a belief in their potential to contribute to positive change that is needed to transform society (Ospina et al., 2012). While our (re)conceptualization of Asian American Women leadership is somewhat aligned with this leadership approach that centers humanization, strategic social change leadership takes an identity-neutral approach that omits an important intersectional lens that is central to how Asian American Women lead.

Collective Empowerment: Connection to Literature

Centering the humanity of others and ourselves infers a commitment and investment in our communities. Asian American Women strive to lessen individualism and increase collectivity. This collectivist approach aligns with the finding of collective empowerment in which our success is interdependent with our community's success. Asian American Women leaders prioritize group success over individual credit and personal recognition. Accapadi (2017) framed interdependence as a strength which reflects the Asian American Feminist perspective of community. There is significant value in one's sense of self being defined as part of a larger community, and that when one is connected to others, they do not stand alone. This approach to interdependence was leveraged as an asset to one's communities. Another important asset-based reframe of traditional leadership was to consider indirect communication styles as having respect for the honor of people in our communities and being inclusive of opinions to seek consensus (Luutraan & Chung, 2021). Additionally, Bordas (2007) framed collective empowerment from the perspective of Communities of Color by noting the contrast in style that, "only North Americans and Western Europeans are so individualistic that each person is highly differentiated from others and independent. Self-interest, autonomy, and personal achievement are highly valued" (p. 37).

Collective empowerment relates to various elements of different traditional leadership theories, especially group-centered leadership and relationship-centered leadership. Group-centered leadership approaches emphasize the value of team and shared leadership with greater agency to group members. However, group-centered leadership situates productivity as the focus of leadership (Dugan, 2017). Additionally, relationship-centered leadership values interdependence and the co-construction of knowledge, which also align with our theme of

collective empowerment. However, relationship-centered leadership tends to be difficult to operationalize. Cooperation and teamwork tend to be overshadowed by individual performance, and that can have a damaging effect on relationships (Dugan, 2017; Lipman-Blumen, 1996). Both of these traditional leadership approaches emphasized the power of people engaging in leadership together yet neglected how identities and cultural values impact Asian American Women leadership approaches. Through this study, our (re)conceptualization of Asian American Women leadership contributes to the existing literature on leadership by foregrounding our multiple identities, values, and cultures which motivate our collectivist community care, investment in mentoring and allyship to foster agency among individuals and uplifting our communities to enact change.

Intersectional Strategic Leadership: Connection to Literature

Relatedly, the white, male, dominant narrative that prioritizes the individual over the collective is a central element of traditional leadership theories (Dugan, 2017) that did not resonate for the Asian American Women leaders in this study. What resulted from our counter-storytelling is a theme of intersectional strategic leadership that reframed the use of collectivist and supportive skills like strategizing, listening, and information gathering as leadership (Luttrun & Chung, 2021). This theme forefronts the intersectionality of race and gender within systems of oppression Asian American Women strategically navigate in leadership (Crenshaw, 1991). My research collaborators also addressed the ways in which they had to navigate leadership situations from the intersections of age, religion and parenting.

It is also important to contextualize strategic leadership within the landscape of traditional leadership theory. There is a related leadership concept called strategic social change leadership, which is a relatively new leadership theory focusing on social action through

collective power to disrupt systemic inequity (Dugan, 2017). While that focus aligns with our broad theme involving strategic leadership, strategic social change leadership is presented as an identity-neutral approach to leadership. It is also important to bring in Santamaría and Santamarías' (2012) concept of applied critical leadership, which centers identity and insists identity not be considered singularly but in its multiplicity and context. The combination of both strategic social change leadership and applied critical leadership supports our (re)conceptualization of Asian American Women leadership as intersectional strategic leadership.

Significance of Research Study

The findings from my study offer culturally relevant knowledge of how Asian American Women leaders (re)conceptualize leadership grounded in how our multiple minoritized identities have been marginalized within the racist patriarchal systems in higher education. The Asian American Women leaders in this study committed to critical self-reflection as ongoing leadership praxis, to centering the humanity in others and ourselves, to navigate complex spaces through intersectional strategic leadership, and to prioritize collective empowerment. These findings are significant because they disrupt the traditional white, male, dominant narratives of leadership, and instead honor and validate the ways in which Asian American Women lead. They also add to the increasing amount of research about Women of Color leadership in higher education, specifically centering the voices and experiences of Asian American Women leaders.

Early in my research, I lamented the absence of a fully conceptualized Asian American Feminist epistemology that could guide my research design and data analysis. As I spoke with other Asian American feminist scholars and Asian American Women who had recently completed their dissertations on a similar topic, there was a resounding investment in joining in

community to create an Asian American Feminist Epistemology that could speak to our experiences similar to how Chicana Feminist Epistemology and Black Feminist Thought resonate for many Latina Women, Black Women, and other Women of Color. To frame my study and guide me in using an intersectional lens to develop the interview protocol and analyze the data, I conceptualized a preliminary Asian American Feminist perspective of my own by selecting tenets from Asian American feminisms and other Women of Color feminisms. My conceptualization of an Asian American Feminist perspective represented ways Asian American Women know ourselves and others through reflection, community, humanization, and healing toward liberation. The significance of the Asian American Feminist perspective I conceptualized is it offers one approach to inspire the co-construction of an Asian American Feminist Epistemology in community with other Asian American Feminist scholars, which can frame future research and foster unity, solidarity, and coalition building among Asian American Women.

Recommendations for Action

In this section, my research collaborators and I make recommendations for other Asian American Women, for higher education administrators, and for further research. Each recommendation aims to advance the humanization and liberation of Asian American Women.

Recommendations for Asian American Women

When I set out to do this research study, I thought I needed to focus on how to transform higher education to create a space that is more inclusive and empowering for Asian American Women leaders. While that is still a worthwhile aspirational goal, the process of engaging with this incredible group of Asian American Women helped me understand that one of the most valuable aspects of my study was creating space to bring Asian American Women leaders

together to support each other in sharing our stories, our pain, and our joy to make meaning of our past trauma within systems of racist patriarchy to help us understand our present reality and healing. As I conclude this research study, I write this dissertation for Asian American Women and other Women of Color as my primary audience.

Relatedly, as I narrowed in on my research topic, I remember reading a special issue of *New Directions for Student Services* that focused specifically on Asian Americans (Maramba & Kodama, 2017). I was grateful to read literature from Asian American scholars illuminating the experiences of Asian American students. In the same journal, Accapadi (2017) shared her own reflection: “reading these pieces not only equipped me to elevate my practice as an administrator, they also contributed to the healing of the earlier versions of me - student, early career educator, mid-level administrator and current vice president” (p. 93). She also shared, “I wish I had created space to honor my own pain and healing so that I could have better served (staff) in their own terms and in their own truths.” (Accapadi, 2018, p. 121). I resonate with both reflections that center healing for herself and with others through my own experiences of engaging with literature about Asian American Women leaders. My hope is other Asian American Women can read this research to feel connected in community, to reflect on their own experiences, and to join us in healing earlier versions of ourselves to work towards liberation for ourselves and with Asian American Women leaders.

The sense of community and healing that comes from reading the research, stories, and experiences of other Asian American Women is powerful. And yet, the vulnerability, emotion, deeper reflection, and meaning making I experienced through this collaborative research study was a humanizing experience I believe can only be created in relationship, interaction, and conversation with other Asian American Women. My research collaborators shared our time

together was refreshing, rewarding, comforting, supportive, validating, and extremely empowering. During the second group interview:

Emma: After having internalized so much racism and sexism for so long, I thought these were my issues, but this shared space and sharing experiences was really validating...powerful and also painful...We tend to externalize success and internalize failure...being an Asian American Woman leader can be lonely and isolating because we internalize the pain and failure, so sharing this space with other Asian American Women is powerful...I feel like I can, just, breathe...[voice cracks, tears well up in eyes]

Me: [deep inhale and exhale]...whoa...I feel that...[tears well up in my eyes]

Yoko: While emotional and hard to be vulnerable, I feel less weighed down like I'm shedding and getting rid of a bunch of shit that I need to get rid of.

Ultimately, our recommendation to Asian American Women leaders in higher education is to connect in community with other Asian American Women leaders, through reading and through relationships. Especially for Asian American Women leaders who live and work in spaces that are predominantly white institutions and communities, it is important to intentionally cultivate a network to connect in community through shared identities and experiences. Many Asian American Women leaders already engage in these communities, so join them. Participate in an Asian American/APIDA affinity group at your institution or in your professional associations. Connect one-on-one with Asian American Women staff and faculty. Engage Asian American Women students or younger professionals with the potential to develop mentorship. Connecting in community with other Asian American Women, as well as with other Women of Color, fosters the healing and liberation we need to care for ourselves and our collective community.

Recommendations for Higher Education Administrators

Higher education was intentionally selected as the setting within which I wanted to focus my study on Asian American Women leaders. Higher education operates as a system of oppression which reifies the same white supremacist and patriarchal systems in our country and world. Yet, higher education is also a prime setting to advance knowledge and understanding of self and others, cultivate critical thinking, and join in solidarity to challenge the systems that oppress people who hold marginalized identities, including Asian American Women leaders. To begin, a resounding recommendation is for higher education administrators to recruit and hire more Asian American Women to engage the increasingly racially diverse student population enrolling in college (Espinosa et al., 2019; National Center for Education Statistics, 2018) and invest in opportunities for mentorship, community building, and advancement to retain Asian American Women leaders.

Another recommendation is for higher education staff, faculty, and administrators to make a commitment to engage in ongoing social justice education and critical self-reflection on power, privilege, and how they uphold systems of oppression that protect the white patriarchy. The depth of education and reflection needed to disrupt systems of oppression cannot be achieved in a one-time or annual training and must be incorporated into sustainable structures within organizations (e.g., hiring and promotions, curriculum development, feedback and accountability, funding proposals, assessment, etc.). Accapadi (2018) contextualized this leadership imperative:

As educators, we have a duty to disrupt the status quo and dismantle [systems of oppression]. If we are to disrupt the status quo, we must recognize that the status quo has been a source of harm and that we, through our privileged identities, are the conduit of

that harm. We do the greatest harm from our unexamined, dominant places even if we have good intentions. This harm occurs precisely because we are not able to challenge what we are afraid to name, and we choose not to name what we are not able or willing to own. (pp. 120-125)

This recommendation can be further operationalized ensuring that Asian American Women leaders are included in decision making about fiscal management, hiring and promotion, policy reform, etc. and not only discussions about diversity, equity, and justice.

And because social justice education and critical self-reflection is important for all students, staff, and faculty in higher education, another recommendation is to prioritize identity-centered courses in the university curriculum including a course for Asian American students, taught by Asian American faculty and staff, to join in community to explore their identities, learn about their racial and ethnic histories, develop and share their counter-stories, and engage in leadership development. Luutran and Chung (2021) highlighted the insight: “We make ourselves racially invisible by assimilating to Whiteness, subsequently falling behind our peers of color in developing our racial identity salience” (p. 41). Related, my research collaborators and I shared about not having opportunities to engage with Asian American staff and faculty and exploring our identities much later in life. This type of course or space can provide much needed community, learning, and empowerment for Asian American Women students who will become the future leaders in higher education.

Recommendations for Further Research

As I conclude this study, I encourage future researchers to use a similar theoretical foundation that aligns with intersectionality, Asian American Feminisms and counter-storytelling as a critical race methodology to bring Asian American Women and other Women of Color

together in community to collectively co-construct knowledge. I employed counter-storytelling as a critical race methodology to center the voices and experiences of Asian American Women leaders as a powerful tool in analyzing oppression and challenging the dominant ideology that privileges racist patriarchy (Crenshaw, 1991; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Yosso, 2005). These epistemological and methodological frameworks guided me in designing a study in which the relationships my research collaborators and I developed allowed us to be vulnerable, honest, and brought depth to our shared meaning making, which ultimately informed our collective co-constructed (re)conceptualization of Asian American Women leadership.

Also related to my study, another recommendation for future research is for a collective of Asian American Women scholars to join in community to collectively conceptualize an Asian American Feminist Epistemology. To frame my study, I conceptualized an Asian American Feminist perspective by drawing on tenets from literature on Asian American Women. Now that I have completed this study, I recognize the obvious misalignment in conceptualizing this epistemological perspective in relative isolation, and I now have a clearer understanding of the power of co-constructing knowledge in community. A collectively co-constructed Asian American Feminist Epistemology can frame future research to amplify and empower Asian American Women, can offer guidance in creating space for healing and shared liberation, and can add to furthering unity, solidarity, and coalition building among Asian American Women.

In addition to epistemological and methodological recommendations, I also recommend further exploring topics that more specifically address the diverse experiences of Asian American Women leaders. To some, perhaps especially to non-Asian people, a study on Asian American Women leaders in higher education may seem narrow. On the contrary, because Asian American Women are not a monolith and are often underrepresented in leadership research, there

are numerous ways to further narrow the topic to understand more about Asian American Women leaders in higher education. I remain interested in two experiences I explored before finalizing my research topic and question. The first area of interest focused on how geographic location may impact a comparison between Asian American Women leaders who live and work in predominantly white spaces and those who live and work among more Asian Americans and other Communities of Color. The second area of interest focused on how cross-generational longevity in higher education may impact a comparison between Asian American Women leaders who have worked in higher education for more than 20 years and those entering the field within the past 5 years. Further research in these areas will continue to add to how we understand, value and uplift Asian American Women leaders' diverse experiences in higher education.

I also echo other scholars who recommended research centering Asian American ethnicity and ethnic culture to gain a more nuanced understanding of the diverse ethnic groups within the Asian American racial category (Chan, 2017; Elsey, 2020; Museus & Truong, 2009). Like my study, East Asians are the predominant ethnic group represented in research about Asian Americans (Fujiwara & Roshanravan, 2018; Pak et al., 2014), and future research needs to center or be more intentionally inclusive of Native Hawaiian Women, Pacific Islander Women, and Desi American and South Asian Women. While my research collaborators each referenced identification with the pan-Asian American term, there were also counter-stories involving their specific ethnic culture, values, and pride. I am a Japanese American Woman who strongly identifies with the pan-Asian American Woman term. As the researcher designing this study, I acknowledge my positionality informed concepts of race and ethnicity in this study (Johnston-Guerrero, 2016), and I privileged the racial pan-Asian American experience to create unity,

solidarity, and coalition building among diverse Asian ethnic communities (Accapadi, 2017). I also value research that centers specific Asian ethnic experiences because, throughout my readings to prepare this study, I resonated with, learned from, and felt inspired by the narratives and insights shared by Desi American Women and Filipina scholars that I personally want to explore further. In the classes I teach and in my leadership roles, I want to continue to amplify the knowledge shared by other Asian American Women scholars.

Throughout my time with the Asian American Women leaders in my study, I found myself so captivated by their counter-stories, their emotions, their meaning-making, that I wanted to explore more about different elements of their experiences in leadership. For instance, Anjali, Emma, Leny, Michelle, and Yoko shared about being the daughters of parents who immigrated to the U.S. through stories about negotiating culturally-rooted values and U.S. values. Related, Luutran and Chung (2021) described factors that influenced leadership for children of immigrant parents:

Asian values prioritize the collective over the individual; this orientation is compounded for children of immigrant parents. The incredible and tragic persistence to create new lives in a foreign place for their children is a powerful foundation for us to navigate our own stories. This creates a sense of duty to make our families and parents' sacrifice worthwhile. This level of responsibility is notable, yet not always labeled as leadership. (p. 45)

I recommend further research that centers the experience of Asian American Women leaders as children of immigrant parents, highlighting the assets gained and potential departures from familial and cultural values as they navigate leadership in the U.S. and in higher education.

There were many other areas of research I wanted to explore that my research collaborators shared such as: the experience of being a transracial adoptee, navigating multiracial identities among other Asian Americans and Communities of Color, finding mentors within peer groups (not only those who hold roles we aspire to), examining the social and political relationship dynamics between Asian American Women leaders and white women leaders, exploring the costs or compromises when Asian American Women and Women of Color pursue leadership, and identifying significant moments in developing a critical consciousness of intersectional identities and how that impacts leadership. All these experiences influence who my research collaborators are as leaders and further research will continue to add to understanding the complexities and challenges that Asian American Women leaders navigate, as well as the value, cultural assets, and integrity Asian American Women bring to their leadership.

Reflections

For those of us who engaged in this research together, this study was significant beyond (re)conceptualizing our leadership as Asian American Women, anticipating that these conceptualizations will continue to evolve as more research is conducted on Asian American Women leadership. For us, this study also created space for us to value ourselves as Asian American Women and to reclaim our worth as Asian American Women leaders in higher education. Our culturally-influenced duty of care and responsibility to others drives us to prioritize other's needs, often over our own needs. Our conversations helped us realize we need to prioritize ourselves along with others in our communities. We are worthy, and we are worth fighting for.

I also believe this experience allowed us to unearth stories that still elicit shame, pain, and trauma. In sharing these stories in community, we continue the healing process of pulling

these memories out of our body/mind/spirit, naming the racialized and gendered oppression, and unlearning the oppressive, racist, misogynistic messages we have internalized throughout our lives. I needed to read and hear other Asian American Women's stories, which gave me permission, empowerment, and validation to claim my past pain and bring vulnerability in sharing my own stories. Our stories are knowledge, our stories are significant, and sharing our stories in community is a powerful tool toward healing and liberation.

When I reflect back, I have to admit I was incredibly intimidated to start recruiting Asian American Women for this study. Throughout the development of my study, I trusted my intuition and leaned into what resonated for me and interrogated what did not resonate for me. I spent hours alone with my words and thoughts as I wrote three chapters of my dissertation and then it was time to bring other Asian American Women leaders into the study with me. I felt like the recruitment process was a public declaration of my own personal struggle. I wondered if any other Asian American Women leaders would resonate with the purpose of my study and if they would want to engage in critical self-reflection during an already exhausting pandemic which highlighted ongoing anti-Asian racism and violence. Admittedly, I was especially intimidated to lead a group of Asian American Women leaders through this study as I held feelings of not being Asian-enough, anticipating judgment for cultural disconnections, and questioning my ability to bring a critical Asian American feminist lens to understanding my own internalized oppression and how I have learned to perform whiteness.

Now, on the other side of the research, I feel transformed through this experience, I feel an incredible sense of community connection with other Asian American Women, I have a confidence in the foundation I bring to my ongoing self-work as an Asian American Woman leader, and I have an eagerness to continue learning how to resist compartmentalizing various

facets of my life, identifying and unlearning internalized oppression, and understanding the power I hold with my privileged identities and leadership roles. While I commit to critical self-reflection independently, my goal is to continue meaning making and community building through counter-storytelling among Asian American Women and other Women of Color. I anticipate that intimidation will still creep in, and I will do my best to embrace it and engage with vulnerability as part of the healing process in unlearning and relearning.

This dissertation is complete but the research is not final. (Re)conceptualizations of Asian American Women leadership will continue to evolve as more research is conducted. Each of us in the study will continue to unlearn and relearn through our commitment to self-work, and the meaning we make of experiences will continue to evolve as we join in community and counter-storytelling with other Asian American Women. From the time I began my dissertation research a few years ago, new literature has been published on Asian American Women in leadership. Through this dissertation study, I am proud to have contributed to the community of scholars who privilege the voices and experiences of Asian American Women leaders in higher education.

REFERENCES

- Accapadi, M. (2017). From reflection to refraction. *New Directions for Student Services*, 160, 93-101. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.20246>
- Accapadi, M. (2018). A journey of reconciliation and healing. In A. K. Gonzalez, D. M. Ching, L. S. White, & R. D. Kelly (Eds.), *Transformational encounters: Shaping diverse college and university leaders* (pp. 113-138). NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education.
- Almandrez, M. G. A. (2010). *History in the making: Narratives of selected Asian Pacific American women in leadership*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of San Francisco].
USF Scholarship: a digital repository @ Gleeson Library, Geschke Center.
- Assalone, A. E., & Fann A. (2017). Understanding the influence of model minority stereotypes on Asian American community college students. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 41(7), 422-435. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2016.1195305>
- Ayman, R., & Korabik, K. (2010). Leadership: Why gender and culture matter. *American Psychologist*, 65(3), 157-170. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0018806>
- Balón, D. (2005). Asian Pacific American college students on leadership. Culturally marginalized from the leader role? NASPA. [http://daniello.balon-home.net/Balon APAs Leadership.pdf](http://daniello.balon-home.net/Balon_APAs_Leadership.pdf)
- Balón, D. G., & Y. L. Shek (2013). Beyond representation: Confronting the new frontier of Asian American leadership. In S. D. Museus, D. C. Maramba, & R. T. Teranishi (Eds.), *The misrepresented minority: New insights on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and the implications for higher education* (pp. 311-326). Stylus Publishing.

- Beeny, C., Guthrie, V. L., Rhodes, G. S., & Terrell, P. S. (2005). Personal and professional balance among senior student affairs officers: Gender differences in approaches and expectations. *College Student Affairs Journal*, 24(2), 137.
- Bertrand Jones, T., Guthrie, K. L., & Osteen, L. (2016). Critical domains of culturally relevant leadership learning: A call to transform leadership programs. *New Directions for Student Leadership*, 2016(152), 9-21. <https://doi-org.ezproxy2.library.colostate.edu/10.1002/yl.20205>
- Bhangal, N., & Poon, O. (2020). Are Asian Americans white? Or people of color? Yes Magazine. <https://www.yesmagazine.org/social-justice/2020/01/15/asian-americans-people-of-color/>
- Bhattacharya, K. (2017). *Fundamentals of qualitative research: A practical guide*. Routledge.
- Boggs, G. L., & Kurashige, S. (2012). *The next American revolution: Sustainable activism for the twenty-first century*. Berkeley University of California Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520953390>
- Bordas, J. (2007). *Salsa, soul, and spirit: Leadership for a multicultural age*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Briggs, C. Q. (2020). *Encouraging Asian American women in leadership: Intersectionality and identity cues*. (Publication No. 27958731) [Thesis, Michigan State University]. ProQuest.
- Buenavista, T. L., Jayakumar, U. M., & Misa-Escalante, K. (2009). Contextualizing Asian American education through critical race theory: An example of U.S. Pilipino college student experiences. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 142, 69-81.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/ir.293>

- Bundang, R. A. R. (2005). "This is not your mother's Catholic church": When Filipino Catholic spirituality meets American culture. In M. L. de Jesús (Ed.), *Pinay power: Theorizing the Filipina/American experience* (pp. 61-80). Routledge.
- Calderón, D., Delgado Bernal, D., Pérez Huber, L., Malagón, M., & Vélez, V. (2012). A Chicana feminist epistemology revisited: Cultivating ideas for a generation later. *Harvard educational review*, 82(4), 513-539.
<https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.82.4.1518621577461p68>
- Chan, J. (2017). Complexities of racial identity development for Asian Pacific Islander Desi American (APIDA) college students. *New Directions for Students Services*, 160, 11-23.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.20240>
- Chan, S. (2007). The changing contours of Asian-American historiography. *Rethinking History*, 11(1), 125-147. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642520601124484>
- Chang, M. J. (2008). Asian evasion: A recipe for flawed solutions. *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*, 25(7), 26.
- Chen, C. (2015). Contemporary prospects and voices of the future: Introduction to Part V. In S. Wilkinson & V. Jew (Eds.), *Asian Americans in Michigan: Voices from the midwest* (pp. 283-285). Great Lakes Books.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. Jossey-Bass.
- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, 19(4), 2-14. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X019005002>

- Coulter, C., Michael, C., & Poynor, L. (2007). Storytelling as pedagogy: An unexpected outcome of narrative inquiry. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 37(2), 103-122. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-873X.2007.00375.x>
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989(1), 138-167. <https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8>
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241-1299.
- Cress, C. M., & Ikeda, E. K. (2003). Distress under duress: The relationship between campus climate and depression in Asian American college students. *NASPA Journal*, 40(2), 74-97. <https://doi.org/10.2202/1949-6605.1224>
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Creswell, J., & Miller, D. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into Practice*, 39(3), 124-130. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip3903_2
- de Jesús, M. L. (Ed.) (2005). *Pinay power: Theorizing the Filipina/American experience*. Routledge.
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2017). *Critical race theory: An introduction* (3rd ed.). New York University Press.
- Delgado Bernal, D. (1998). Using a Chicana feminist epistemology in educational research. *Harvard Educational Review*, 68(4), 555-582. <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.68.4.5wv1034973g22q48>

- Dugan, J. (2017). *Leadership theory: Cultivating critical perspectives*. Jossey-Bass.
- Dugan, J., & Osteen, L. (2016). Chapter 24: Leadership. In J. H. Schuh, S. R. Jones, & V. Torres (Eds.), *Student services: A handbook for the profession* (pp. 408-422). Jossey-Bass.
- Eagly, A. H., & Chin, J. L. (2010). Diversity and leadership in a changing world. *American Psychologist*, 65(3), 216-224. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0018957>
- Elsley, J. L. (2020). *A critical phenomenological study of female Asian American Leadership in Higher Education*. [Doctoral dissertation, George Fox University]. Digital Commons @ George Fox University.
- Espinosa, L. L., Turk, J. M., Taylor, M., & Chessman, H. M. (2019). *Race and ethnicity in higher education: A status report*. American Council on Education. <https://1xfsu31b52d33idlp13twtos-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Race-and-Ethnicity-in-Higher-Education.pdf>
- Espiritu, Y. L. (1993). *Asian American panethnicity: Bridging institutions and identities*. Temple University Press.
- Espiritu, Y. L. (1996). *Asian American women and men: Labor, laws and love*. Rowman and Littlefield.
- Fujiwara, L., & Roshanravan, S. (2018). *Asian American feminisms and women of color politics*. University of Washington Press.
- Gardner, S. K., Hart, J., Ng, J., Ropers-Huilman, R., Ward, K., & Wolf-Wendel, L. (2017). “Me-search”: Challenges and opportunities regarding subjectivity in knowledge construction. *Studies in Graduate and Postdoctoral Education*, 8(2), 88-108. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SGPE-D-17-00014>
- Glesne, C. (2016). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (5th ed.). Pearson.

- Grant, C. M. (2016). Smashing the glass ceiling: Accountability on institutional policies and practices to leadership diversity in higher education. In L. J. Santamaría & A. P. Santamaría (Eds.), *Culturally responsive leadership in higher education: Promoting access, equity, and improvement* (pp. 167-179). Routledge.
- Guthrie, K. L., & Chunoo, V. S. (2018). *Changing the narrative: Socially just leadership education*. Information Age.
- Hill Collins, P. (1986). Learning from the outsider within: The sociological significance of Black feminist thought. *Social Problems*, 33(6), 14-32. <https://doi.org/10.2307/800672>
- Huber, L. P., Lopez, C. B., Malagon, M. C, Velez, V., & Solórzano, D. G. (2008). Getting beyond the ‘symptom,’ acknowledging the ‘disease’: Theorizing racist nativism. *Contemporary Justice Review*, 11(1), 39-51. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10282580701850397>
- Hune, S. (1998). *Asian Pacific American women in higher education: Claiming visibility and voice*. Association of American Colleges and Universities.
- Hune, S. (2003). Through “our” eyes: Asian/Pacific Islander American women’s history. In S. Hune & G. M. Nomura (Eds.), *Asian Pacific Islander American women: A historical anthology* (pp. 1-15). New York University Press.
- Hurtado, S., Milem, J. F., Clayton-Pedersen, A. R., & Allen, W. R. (1998). Enhancing campus climates for racial/ethnic diversity: Education policy and practice. *The Review of Higher Education*, 21, 279-302. <https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.1998.0003>
- Jean-Marie, G. (2011). “Unfinished agendas”: Trends in women of color’s status in higher education. In G. Jean-Marie & B. Lloyd-Jones (Eds.), *Women of color in higher education: Turbulent past, promising future* (pp. 3-20). Emerald Group.

- Johnston, M. P., & Yeung, F. P. F. (2014). Asian Americans and campus climate: Investigating group differences around a racial incident. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 51(2), 143-156. <https://doi.org/10.1515/jsarp-2014-0015>
- Jones, S. R., Torres, V., & Arminio, J. (2014). *Negotiating the complexities of qualitative research in higher education: Fundamental elements and issues* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Junn, J., & Masuoka, N. (2008). Asian American identity: Shared racial status and political context. *Perspectives on Politics*, 6(4), 729-740. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20446825>
- Kim, C. J. (2004). Asian Americans are people of color too...Aren't they? Cross-racial alliances and the question of Asian American political identity. *AAPI Nexus*, 2(1), 19-47. https://doi.org/10.36650/nexus2.1_19-47_Kim
- Kim, J. H. (2016). *Understanding narrative inquiry*. Sage.
- Kim, Y. (2021). Respecting the victims in the Atlanta spa shootings means getting their names right. *Popsugar*. <https://www.popsugar.com/news/atlanta-spa-shootings-victims-names-matter-essay-48231585>
- Kincheloe, J. L. (2008). *Critical constructivism primer*. Peter Lang Publishing.
- Kramp, M. K. (2004). Exploring life and experience through narrative inquiry. In, K. de Marrais, & S. D. Lapan (Eds.), *Foundations for research: Methods of inquiry in education and the social sciences* (pp. 103-122). Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Kupo, V. L. (2011). Remembering our past to shape our future. In D. L. Stewart (Ed.), *Multicultural student services on campus: Building bridges, re-visioning community* (pp. 13-28). Stylus Publishing.
- Lee, E. (2015). *The making of Asian America: A history*. Simon & Schuster.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage.

- Lincoln, Y. S., Lynham, S. A., & Guba, E. G. (2011). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 97-128). Sage.
- Liu, J. (2019). *An exploratory study on leadership in Asian American women executives in higher education*. (Publication No. 22583059) [Doctoral dissertation, California State University, Fullerton]. ProQuest.
- Lo, F. C. (2011). Leadership perspectives and experiences of Asian American and Pacific Islander college students: Challenging and expanding the leadership discourse in higher education institutions. (Publication No. 3472173) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Washington]. ProQuest.
- Luttrian, V. & Chung, J. (2021). Leading from in between: Asian American student leadership. In K. L. Guthrie & V. S. Chunoo (Eds.), *Shifting the mindset: Socially just leadership education* (pp. 39-52). Information Age Publishing.
- Mahoney, D. (2007). Constructing reflexive fieldwork relationships: Narrating my collaborative storytelling methodology. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13(4), 573-594.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800407300765>
- Maramba, D. C. (2011). Few and far between: Exploring the experiences of Asian American and Pacific Islander women in student affairs administration. In G. Jean-Marie, & B. Lloyd-Jones (Eds.), *Women of color in higher education: Turbulent past, promising future. Diversity in higher education* (Vol 9, pp. 337-359). Emerald Group Publishing.
- Maramba, D. C., & Kodama, C. M. (2017). Editors notes. *New Directions for Student Services*, 160, 5-10. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.20239>

- Matsuda, M. J. (1996). *Where is your body?: And other essays on race, gender, and the law*. Beacon Press Books.
- McManus, R. M., & Perruci, G. (2015). *Understanding leadership: An arts and humanities perspective*. Routledge.
- Mella, H. R. (2012). *Exploratory study of Asian Pacific American female leaders in higher education*. (Publication No. 3505800) [Doctoral dissertation, Capella University]. ProQuest.
- Mena, J. A., & Vaccaro, A. (2017). "I've struggled, I've battled": Invisibility microaggressions experienced by women of color at a predominantly white institution. *NASPA Journal About Women in Higher Education*, 10(3), 301-318.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19407882.2017.1347047>
- Mendoza Strobel, L. (2005). A personal story: On becoming a split Filipina subject. In M. L. de Jesus (Ed.), *Pinay power: Theorizing the Filipina/American experience* (pp. 19-30). Routledge.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. Jossey-Bass.
- Mills, K. J. (2019). "It's systemic": Environmental racial microaggressions experienced by Black undergraduates at a predominantly white institution. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 13(1), 44-55. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000121>
- Museus, S. D., & Kiang, P. N. (2009). Deconstructing the model minority myth and how it contributes to the invisible minority reality in higher education research. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 142, 5-15. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ir.292>

- Museus, S. D., Maramba, D. C., & Teranishi, R. T. (2013). *The misrepresented minority: New insights on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and the implications for higher education*. Stylus Publishing.
- Museus, S. D., & Park, J. J. (2015). The continuing significance of racism in the lives of Asian American college students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 56(6), 551-569. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2015.0059>
- Museus, S. D., & Truong, K. A. (2009). Disaggregating qualitative data from Asian American college students in campus racial climate research and assessment. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 142, 17-26. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ir.293>
- Nadal, K. (2010). Gender microaggressions: Implications for mental health. In M. A. Paludi (Ed.), *Feminism and women's rights worldwide* (Vol. 2, pp. 155-175). Praeger.
- National Center for Education Statistics (2016). *Fall enrollment of U.S. residents in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by race/ethnicity*. National Center for Education Statistics. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16_306.30.asp
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2018). *College enrollment rates*. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/coe_cpb.pdf
- Neilson, P. A., & Kiang, P. N. (2013). Asian American and Pacific Islander leaders in higher education. In S. D. Museus, D. C. Maramba, & R. T. Teranishi (Eds.), *The misrepresented minority: New insights on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and the implications for higher education* (pp. 245-248). Stylus Publishing.
- Neilson, P. A., & Suyemoto, K. L. (2009). Using culturally sensitive frameworks to study Asian American leaders in higher education. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 142, 83-93. <https://doi-org.ezproxy2.library.colostate.edu/10.1002/ir.298>

- Ng, F. (2017). *Asian American women leaders' strategies for negotiating intersectional discrimination related to racism and sexism*. (Publication No. 10637226) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts Boston]. ProQuest.
- Nittle, N. K. (2020). *Japanese-American no-no boys explained*. Thought Co.
<https://www.thoughtco.com/the-japanese-american-no-no-boys-stood-up-for-justice-2834891>
- Nomura, G. M. (2003). On our terms: Definitions and context. In S. Hune & G. M. Nomura (Eds.), *Asian Pacific Islander American women: A historical anthology*, 16-24. New York University Press.
- Ochefu, A. (May 5, 2021). The history of intersectionality and the Black feminists behind it. Assembly: Malala fund publication. <https://assembly.malala.org/stories/the-history-of-intersectionality-and-the-black-feminists-behind-it>
- Okamoto, D., & Mora, G. C. (2014). Panethnicity. *Annual Review of Sociology*, (40), 219-239.
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-071913-043201>
- Ortega-Liston, R., & Soto, I. R. (2014). Challenges, choices, and decisions of women in higher education: A discourse on the future of Hispanic, Black, and Asian members of the professoriate. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 13(4), 285-302.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192714540531>
- Pak, Y. K., Maramba, D. C., & Hernandez, X. S. (2014). Asian Americans in higher education: Charting new realities. In *ASHE Higher Education Report*, 40(1). Wiley Online Library.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/aehe.20013>
- Parrenas-Chimizu, C. (2007). *The hypersexuality of race: Performing Asian/American women on screen and scene*. Duke University Press.

- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Peng, X. (2014). Chinese mother as other under patriarchy and racism. *European Journal of Business and Social Sciences*, 2(10), 147-156. <http://www.ejbss.com/recent.aspx>.
- Pierce, L. M. (2005). Not just my closet: Exposing familial, cultural, and imperial skeletons. In M. L. de Jesús (Ed.), *Pinay power: Theorizing the Filipina/American experience* (pp. 31-44). Routledge.
- Pritchard, A., & McChesney, J. (2018). *Focus on student affairs, 2018: Understanding key challenges using CUPA-HR data* (Research Report). College and University Professional Association for Human Resources. https://www.cupahr.org/wp-content/uploads/Student_Affairs_Report.pdf
- Poon, O., Squire, D., Kodama, C., Byrd, A., Chan, J., Manzano, L., Furr, S., & Bishundat, D. (2016). A critical review of the model minority myth in selected literature on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in higher education. *Review of Education Research*, 86(2), 469-502. <https://doi.org/10.3102%2F0034654315612205>
- Rabas, J. S. (2017). *Experiences of mid-level managers in student affairs: A qualitative study*. (Publication No. 138700001) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Missouri-Columbia]. ProQuest.
- Reeves, M. (2015). Leadership journeys of Asian women in US higher education: A narrative research study exploring leadership development experiences through critical reflection. (Publication No. 3683195) [Doctoral dissertation, Northwestern University]. ProQuest.
- Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Sage Publications.

- Rivera, C. (2019). *Testimonios of leadership: Experiences of queer Chicana/Latina administrators in higher education*. [Doctoral dissertation, Colorado State University]. Mountain Scholar Home; CSU Theses and Dissertations.
- Saldaña, J. & Omasta, M. (2018). *Qualitative research: Analyzing life*. Sage.
- Salvoy, P., & Mayer, J. D. (1990). Emotional intelligence. *Imagination, Cognition, and Personality*, 9, 185-211. <https://doi.org/10.2190/DUGG-P24E-52WK-6CDG>
- Sanchez-Hucles, J. V., & Davis, D. D. (2010). Women and women of color in leadership: Complexity, identity, and intersectionality. *American Psychologist*, 65(3), 171-181. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0017459>
- Santamaría, L. J., & Santamaría, A. P. (2012). *Applied critical leadership in education: Choosing change*. Routledge.
- Santamaría, L. J., & Santamaría, A. P. (2016). *Culturally responsive leadership in higher education: Promoting access, equity, and improvement*. Routledge.
- Segoshi, M. S. (2018). *Asian American engagement in racial justice: Journeys through identity development and critical consciousness*. (Publication No. 10808965) [Doctoral dissertation, Loyola University Chicago]. ProQuest.
- Sensoy, O., & DiAngelo, R. (2017). *Is everyone really equal? An introduction of key concepts in social justice education* (2nd ed.). Teachers College Press.
- Solórzano, D. (1998). Critical race theory, race and gender microaggression, and the experience of Chicana and Chicano scholars. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 11(1), 121-136. <https://doi.org/10.1080.095183998236926>

- Solórzano, D., & Yosso, T. (2001). Critical race and LatCrit theory and method: Counter-storytelling. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 14(4), 471-195.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09518390110063365>
- Solórzano, D., & Yosso, T. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative inquiry*, 8(1), 23-44.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/107780040200800103>
- Souto-Manning, M. (2012). Critical narrative analysis: The interplay of critical discourse and narrative analyses. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 27(2), 159-180. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2012.737046>
- Sue, D. W. (2010). *Microaggressions in everyday life: Race, gender and sexual orientation*. Wiley.
- Sue, D. W., Bucceri, J., Lin, A. I., Nadal, K. L., & Torino, G. C. (2009). Racial microaggressions and the Asian American experience. *Asian American Journal of Psychology*, S(1), 88-101. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1948-1985.S.1.88>
- Sugiyama, D. (2015). My family's experience of the Japanese American internment camps. In S. Wilkinson & V. Jew (Eds), *Asian Americans in Michigan: Voices from the midwest* (pp. 238-245). Wayne State University Press.
- Sun, W., & Starosta, W. J. (2007). Perceptions of minority invisibility among Asian American professionals. *The Howard Journal of Communications*, 17(2), 119-142.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10646170600656870>
- Takaki, R. (2008). *A different mirror: A history of multicultural America*. Back Bay Books.

- Talusan, L. A. (2016). *The formation of scholars: Critical narratives of Asian American and Pacific Islander doctoral students in higher education*. (Publication No. 10118448)
[Doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts Boston]. ProQuest.
- Tamura, E. H. (2001). Asian Americans in the history of education: An historiographical essay. *History of Education Quarterly*, 41(1), 58-71. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1748-5959.2001.tb00074.x>
- Tawa, J., Suyemoto, K. L., & Roemer, L. (2012). Implications of perceived interpersonal and structural racism for Asian Americans' self-esteem. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 34(4), 349-358. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01973533.2012.693425>
- Teranishi, R. T., Behringer, L. B., Grey, E. A., & Parker, T. L. (2009). Critical race theory and research on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in higher education. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 142, 57-68. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ir.296>
- Tintiango-Cubales, A., & Sacramento, J. (2009). Practicing pinayist pedagogy. *Amerasia Journal*, 35(1), 179-187. <https://doi.org/10.17953/amer.35.1.98257024r4501756>
- Torres-Harding, S. R., Andrade, A. L. Jr., & Romero Diaz, C. E. (2012). The racial microaggressions scale (RMAS): A new scale to measure experience of racial microaggression in people of color. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 18(2), 153-164. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0027658>
- Turner, C. S. V., González, J. C., & Wood, J. L. (2008). Faculty of color in academe: What 20 years of literature tells us. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 1(3), 139-168. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0012837>

- U. S. Census Bureau (2018). *Midwest home to most of the counties with decreases in median age*. U.S. Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2018/popest-characteristics.html>
- U. S. Census Bureau (2010). *2010 census data results of the Asian population and native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander populations*. U.S. Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2018/popest-characteristics.html>
- Vasquez, S. (2012). Cultivating strategies for success: How mid-level women leaders of color in student affairs navigate the balance of work and family. (Publication No. 3513857) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Southern California]. ProQuest.
- Velasquez Farmer, J. (2019). *Navigating an invisible labyrinth: Asian Pacific American women in higher education*. (Publication No. 13426192) [Doctoral dissertation, Fielding Graduate University]. ProQuest.
- Verjee, B. (2013). Counter-storytelling: The experiences of women of colour in higher education. *Atlantis*, 36(1), 22-32.
- Vogel, S. N. K. (2019). *Leadership (API)phanies: A comparative case study of Asian/Pacific Islander women developing leadership identities*. (Publication No. 10981945) [Doctoral dissertation, University of California San Diego] ProQuest.
- Wagaman, M. A., Caballero Ovejero, R., & Gregory, J. S. (2018). Countering the norm, (re)authoring our lives: The promise counterstorytelling holds as a research methodology with LGBTQ youth and beyond. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 17, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406918800646>.

- Watson, S. L. (2020). *The unheralded hero: Mid-level manager training and development in student affairs, a case study analysis*. (Publication No. 27830968) [Doctoral dissertation, Old Dominion University]. ProQuest.
- Wei, W. (1993). *The Asian American movement*. Temple University Press.
- Wijeyesinghe, C., & Jones, S. (2014). Intersectionality, identity, and systems of power and inequality. In D. Mitchell (Ed), *Intersectionality & higher education: Theory, research, & praxis* (pp. 9-19). Peter Lang Publishing.
- Wilson, M. E., Liddell, D. L., Hirschy, A. S., & Pasquesi, K. (2016). Professional identity, career commitment, and career entrenchment of midlevel student affairs professionals. *Journal of College Student Development*, 57(5), 557-572. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2016.0059>
- Wong, J., Ramakrishnan, S. K., Lee, T., & Junn, J. (2011). *Asian American political participation: Emerging constituents and their political identities*. Russell Sage Found.
- Wu, F. H. (2015). Foreword. In S. Wilkinson & V. Jew (Eds.), *Asian Americans in Michigan: Voices from the midwest* (pp. ix-xiv). Great Lakes Books.
- Yenpasook, M. S., Nguyen, A., Her, C. S., & Pang, V. O. (2015). Defiant: The strength of Asian American and Pacific women. In N. D. Hartlep & B. J. Porfilio (Eds.), *Killing the model minority stereotype: Asian American counterstories and complicity* (pp. 61-82). Information Age Publishing.
- Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race, Ethnicity, and Education*, 8(1), 69-91.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1361332052000341006>
- Zamani, E. M. (2003). African American women in higher education. *New Directions for Student Services*, 2003(104), 5-18. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.103>

APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT EMAIL TO COLLEAGUES

As you may know, I am working on my dissertation focused on Asian American Women leaders in higher education. My study is motivated by my own racialized and gendered experiences as an Asian American Woman leader navigating systems of oppression within higher education and feeling invisible in traditional leadership theories. I want to join with other Asian American Women leaders to tell our stories and how we (re)conceptualize leadership in a way that centers our identities and experiences.

In an effort to recruit participants for this study, I would appreciate your help in connecting me with potential participants who meet the following criteria:

- Self-identify as an Asian American Woman (inclusive of multiracial, monoracial, transgender, and cisgender identities)
- Currently hold a position as non-faculty, professional staff in a leadership role, ranging from mid-level management through executive administrator level, for at least five years.

You can either send me contact information for the person/people you have identified as potential participants and I will reach out to them via email, or you can forward potential participants the attached recruitment flier. The recruitment flier has more information about the study and a link to an eligibility survey. Participation in the study will not be directly connected to the participants' institutions and participation will be confidential.

Thanks in advance for your help and support in recruiting participants for my dissertation study. If you have questions regarding the study or further clarification of the criteria, please contact me at kerry.wenzler@colostate.edu or (970) 402-5958.

With gratitude,

Kerry Nakasone Wenzler

Doctoral Candidate

Higher Education Leadership

Colorado State University

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Hello, my name is Kerry Nakasone Wenzler, and I am currently a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education Leadership program at Colorado State University. I am conducting a qualitative study on how Asian American Women (re)conceptualize leadership given the racism and sexism they have experienced in their leadership roles in higher education.

My study is motivated by my own racialized and gendered experiences as an Asian American Woman leader navigating systems of oppression within higher education and feeling invisible in traditional leadership theories. I want to join with other Asian American Women leaders to tell our stories and how we (re)conceptualize leadership in a way that centers our identities and experiences.

I will conduct my research in fall of 2021. I am seeking participants who self-identify as Asian American Women (inclusive of multiracial, monoracial, transgender, and cisgender identities) who currently hold a non-faculty, full-time professional staff leadership role ranging from mid-level manager through executive administrator level for at least five years. Participants will be interviewed three times and asked to complete two journal responses. The sequence will be: individual interview (60-75 minutes), journal response, first group interview (up to 2 hours), journal response, and final group interview (up to 2 hours). The journal prompts will be the same questions asked in the group interviews to reflect on what stories will be shared. Each interview will be virtual via Zoom, so all participants will need to have access to a device that has a camera and microphone to conduct audio and video interviews.

If you or someone you know might be interested in this research study, please complete this brief eligibility survey at: <https://tinyurl.com/AAWLead>. If you would like more specific information about timeline, confidentiality, and/or process, please contact me at kerry.wenzler@colostate.edu. Participation in this study is completely voluntary.

With gratitude,

Kerry Nakasone Wenzler

Doctoral Candidate

Higher Education Leadership

Colorado State University

APPENDIX C: ELIGIBILITY SURVEY

All research collaborators will complete an eligibility survey via a secure, password-protected Google Forms prior to confirmation of participation in the study.

My name is Kerry Nakasone Wenzler, and I am currently a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education Leadership program at Colorado State University. I am conducting a qualitative research study on how Asian American Women (re)conceptualize leadership given the racism and sexism they have experienced in their leadership roles in higher education.

Purpose: My study is motivated by my own racialized and gendered experiences as an Asian American Woman leader navigating systems of oppression within higher education and feeling invisible in traditional leadership theories. I want to join with other Asian American Women leaders to tell our counter-stories and how we (re)conceptualize leadership in a way that centers our identities and experiences. Therefore, the purpose of my study is to explore how Asian American Women (re)conceptualize leadership given the racism and sexism they have experienced as leaders in higher education.

Research question: How do Asian American Women (re)conceptualize leadership given the racism and sexism they experience in leadership in higher education?

If you are interested in joining me in this research study, please complete this eligibility survey. Once I receive your response, I will follow up with an email communication to confirm your participation in this study. If you have any questions about this study or your eligibility, please email me at kerry.wenzler@colostate.edu.

1. What is your first and last name?
2. What is your preferred email?

3. What is your preferred phone number?
4. How do you identify racially and ethnically?
5. What is your gender identity?
6. Do you currently hold (or have you recently held) a non-faculty, full-time professional leadership role in higher education (mid-level manager or higher) for at least five years?
7. Are you willing to share stories about your experiences of racism and sexism in your role as an Asian American Woman leader in higher education (with the researcher and also with a small group of other Asian American Women)?
8. Why are you interested in participating in this study?

When recruitment efforts reach study participation capacity, I will update the Google Form to indicate that I am no longer recruiting more participants:

Thank you for your interest in participating in my study about Asian American Women leaders in higher education. At this point, I have reached the number of participants I plan to engage for this current study. As Asian American Women leaders, our stories need to be told and shared, so I hope you continue to find spaces and opportunities to join in community to share your stories. Take care, Kerry Nakasone Wenzler

APPENDIX D: EMAIL TO SELECTED PARTICIPANT

Dear (Name),

Thank you for your interest in participating in my research study on how Asian American Women (re)conceptualize leadership given the racism and sexism we have experienced in our leadership roles in higher education. I appreciate your willingness to invest time and energy in this study, and I would like to extend an invitation to participation as a research collaborator in this study (while I will serve as the primary researcher, my approach is that all participants in the study will join me in co-constructing knowledge together and collaborating to develop research findings).

Your response to this email will commence the informed consent process (sent via DigiSigner), which will outline the timeline, confidentiality, and process for the study. I look forward to connecting and learning more about your stories and experiences. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions via email, kerry.wenzler@colostate.edu, or phone, (970) 402-5958.

With gratitude,

Kerry Nakasone Wenzler

Doctoral Candidate, Higher Education Leadership

Colorado State University

APPENDIX E: INFORMED CONSENT

Consent to Participate in Research Study

Colorado State University

TITLE OF STUDY

Counter-storytelling: How Asian American Women (Re)Conceptualize Leadership Given the Racism and Sexism They Experience in Their Leadership Roles in Higher Education

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?

My name is Kerry Nakasone Wenzler, and I am a doctoral candidate at Colorado State University in the Higher Education Leadership Program. Along with my dissertation chair, Dr. OiYan Poon, I am inviting you to be part of my study that centers Asian American Women in leadership in higher education because you have stories and experiences that need to be shared.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

- You have self-identified as an Asian American Woman
- You have held a non-faculty, professional staff leadership role ranging from mid-level manager through executive administrator level for at least five years

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

My study is motivated by my own racialized and gendered experiences as an Asian American Woman leader navigating systems of oppression within higher education and feeling invisible in

traditional leadership theories. I want to join with other Asian American Women leaders to tell our counter-stories and how we (re)conceptualize leadership in a way that centers our identities and experiences. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore how Asian American Women (re)conceptualize leadership given the racism and sexism they have experienced as leaders in higher education.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

The interviews for this study will be conducted using audio and video via Zoom. The study will begin in October 2021 and conclude by December 2021.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?

If you agree to participate in this study, I will ask you to complete the following over a period of 3-4 weeks:

- Participate in 1 individual interview: 60-75 minutes
- Participate in 2 group interviews: up to 2 hours each
- Complete 2 online journal entries in preparation for the group interviews. I will provide each participant with a private Google Doc and journal prompts.
- Review final themes identified through analysis of interviews and journal entries.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

This study poses minimal risks. It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but I have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any potential, but unknown, risks.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There is no direct benefit to you. My hope is that participants will engage in meaningful self-reflection and connect through sharing stories and experiences in community with other Asian American Women leaders. Another goal is that my study will result in positive contributions to the literature on the experiences of Asian American Women leaders in higher education, and potentially lead to continued research in this area.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may decline to answer any questions, withdraw your consent to participate, and/or stop participating at any time without penalty.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE?

Research records that identify you will be kept private. For this study, you will create a pseudonym for your data (including your name, institution, title) so the only place your name will appear in research records is on the eligibility survey, consent form, and in the spreadsheet which links you to your interview data. Before each group interview on Zoom, I will remind you to change your screen name to your pseudonym prior to logging in. As the researcher, I am the only person who will have access to the link between you, your data, and your pseudonym. The only exception to this is if the research files are audited with the CSU Institutional Review Board Ethics Committee, if necessary.

I will audio and video record the individual and group interviews via Zoom to be sure that your comments are accurately recorded. I am the only person who will have access to the recordings, and the recordings will be destroyed when they have been transcribed by a 3rd party transcription service.

When I write about the study, I will share themes from the collection of counter-stories shared by all participants throughout the interviews. I may use direct quotes from your interview to elaborate on the themes, and I will be careful to not share any identifiable information that links you to your quote. Your information and stories that are collected as part of the research will not be used or distributed for future research studies.

Participation in group interviews involves some loss of privacy. I will make every effort to ensure that information about you remains confidential but cannot guarantee total confidentiality. Your identity will not be revealed in any publications, presentations, or reports resulting from this research study. At the beginning of both group interviews, I will set community guidelines to explicitly ask all group members to keep the information they hear in the group interview confidential; however, I cannot guarantee that everyone will do so.

WILL I RECEIVE ANY COMPENSATION FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

No form of compensation will be issued to participants in this research study.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

If you have questions about the study, you can contact me, Kerry Nakasone Wenzler, at kerry.wenzler@colostate.edu or via cell at (970) 402-5958. Dr. OiYan Poon is my dissertation chair and serves as the primary investigator for this research study; Dr. Poon can be contacted at

oiyan.poon@colostate.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the CSU Institutional Review Board at: RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu; (970) 491-1381. You will receive a copy of this consent form after signing it via DigiSigner.

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

You will receive this document in an email from DigiSigner.com. After reading the entire document, please provide your electronic signature and date at the bottom of the form. Your signature and date constitute the following:

- I have read and understand the consent form.
- I consent to having my participation in Zoom interviews audio and video recorded.
- I consent to having my pseudonym and direct quotes included in the final research study and potential future publications and presentations.
- I understand no other identifying information will be included in the final research study and potential future publications and presentations.

Upon signing and dating the consent form, you will receive an email from DigiSigner.com letting you know the document is complete and signed with your signature. Please keep this document for your records, shall you want to or need to refer to it in the future.

Signature of person agreeing to participate in the study

Date

APPENDIX F: DATA GENERATION

Interview 1: Individual interview

60 - 75 minutes

The initial individual interview will be semi-structured and conversational.

1. Tell me about yourself and your journey in leadership in higher education.
2. What have been some significant and defining experiences you've had with racism and sexism as an Asian American woman, both personally and professionally?
3. Tell me about when you first remember identifying with the term "leader"...calling yourself a leader...claiming it. *If needed*, when did you first identify as a leader in your professional career?
4. What does it mean to you to be an Asian American Woman leader in higher education?
 - a. In what ways, if any, have your racial and gender identities shaped your leadership style and approach? How do you show up as a leader? How do you convey your leadership? How do you ideally want others to describe your leadership?

Journal Entry 1: The journal prompt will ask participants to reflect on stories they may choose to share in the group interview. I will share the questions I plan to ask in the group interview.

1. Introductory sharing - To be an Asian American Woman leader in higher education in 2021 is to be...(complete sentence)
2. What are the greatest *challenges* of being an Asian American Woman leader in higher education?

3. What are the greatest *advantages* of being an Asian American Women leader in higher education?
4. As an Asian American Woman, what have you had to compromise in order to advance in your leadership role in higher education, if anything? And describes times when you chose not to compromise your leadership, values, etc.
5. What other questions or aspects of Asian American Women leadership would you like for us to collectively explore in the group interviews?

Reminder: Before logging into the group interview via Zoom, please change your display name to your pseudonym. Sign in to the Zoom portal at zoom.us/profile, click “profile” in the left sidebar, click “edit” located to the right of your name, change your “display name” to your chosen pseudonym, and scroll down and click “save”.

Interview 2: First Group interview

Up to 2 hours

All participants will engage in an online video group interview. The aim of the group interview will be for each participant to share a brief introduction and the following semi-structured interview questions are intended to prompt further reflection and storytelling.

1. Introductory sharing - To be an Asian American Woman leader in higher education in 2021 is to be...(complete sentence)
2. What are the greatest *challenges* of being an Asian American Woman leader in higher education?

3. What are the greatest *advantages* of being an Asian American Women leader in higher education?
4. As an Asian American Woman, what have you had to compromise in order to advance in your leadership role in higher education, if anything? And describe times when you chose not to compromise your leadership, values, etc.

Journal Entry 2: The journal prompt will ask participants to reflect stories they may choose to share in the group interview. I will share the questions I plan to ask in the group interview.

1. Warm up/check-in: what resonated with you most from the first group interview and how has it contributed to your own reflection and meaning making process?
2. Building on the story sharing from the first group interview, how have your experiences with racism and sexism influenced or informed your approach to leadership?
3. Setting aside the traditional leadership concepts that center white male leadership, how do you describe your concept of leadership that is meaningful and relevant to you as an Asian American Woman leader in higher education?
4. Based on your own lived experiences and our group interview discussions, if you could talk with the executive leadership of your institution about ways to make the campus culture better for Asian American Women leaders, what recommendations would you make?
5. What do you think we should do with this research?
6. What other questions or aspects of Asian American Women leadership would you like for us to collectively explore in the final group interview?

Reminder: Before logging into the group interview via Zoom, please change your display name to your pseudonym. Sign in to the Zoom portal at zoom.us/profile, click “profile” in the left sidebar, click “edit” located to the right of your name, change your “display name” to your chosen pseudonym, and scroll down and click “save”.

Interview 3: Second/Final Group interview

Up to 2 hours

All participants will engage in an online video group interview. The aim of the group interview will be for each participant to share a brief introduction and the following semi-structured interview questions are intended to prompt further reflection and storytelling.

1. Warm up/check-in: what resonated with you most from the first group interview and how has it contributed to your own reflection and meaning making process?
2. Building on the story sharing from the first group interview, how have your experiences with racism and sexism influenced or informed your approach to leadership?
3. Setting aside the traditional leadership concepts that center white male leadership, how do you describe your concept of leadership that is meaningful and relevant to you as an Asian American Woman leader in higher education?
4. Based on our group interview discussions, if you could talk with the executive leadership of your institution about ways to make the campus culture better for Asian American Women leaders, what recommendations would you make?
5. What do you think we should do with this research?

(Leave time to share appreciations)