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The intersection of ethnic-racial identities and the development of leadership identity for Asian American women leaders and the impact on their success

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**THE INTERSECTION OF ETHNIC-RACIAL IDENTITIES AND THE
DEVELOPMENT OF LEADERSHIP IDENTITY FOR ASIAN AMERICAN
WOMEN LEADERS AND THE IMPACT ON THEIR SUCCESS**

A Research Project

**Presented to the Faculty of
The Graziadio Business School
Pepperdine University**

**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements of the Degree
Master of Science
In
Organization Development**

By

Nann Chan Chan Aye

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This research project, completed by

NANN CHAN CHAN AYE

under the guidance of the Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the faculty of The Graziadio Business School in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Faculty Committee

Committee Chair, Kent Rhodes, Ph.D.

Committee Member, Terri Egan, Ph.D.

Deborah Crown, Ph.D., Dean
The Graziadio Business School

Abstract

This study explored the intersectionality of ethnic-racial identity and leadership identity in Asian American Women Leaders (AAWLs) in the United States and its potential impact on leadership success. Findings revealed that community, inclusivity, and growth are the elements that intersect the three pillars: ethnic-racial identity, leadership identity, and organizational climate/environment for AAWLs to embrace the ownership of collective leadership identity. AAWLs strongly desire to foster positive organizational cultures that value service, collaboration, trust, autonomy, diversity, and growth. Another prominent finding is the enthusiasm of AAWLs to share and pass down learnings and experiences through open dialogues and mentorship to fellow leaders. This study sheds light on the unique experiences of AAWLs from diverse industries and backgrounds growing up, aspirations from navigating and finding balance in their world of polarity, the journey for self-identity through their stories, and offering and demanding inclusive environments in organizations for professional and organizational growth.

Keywords: ethnic-racial identity, leadership identity, Asian American

Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgments.....	vi
List of Tables.....	viii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Background	1
Research Purpose and Objectives	3
Research Questions.....	4
Significance and Application	4
Study Outline.....	6
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	7
Individual Level.....	7
Identity Development.....	7
Ethnic-Racial Identity (ERI)	8
Leadership Identity	12
Successful / Meaningful Leadership	14
Sociocultural Level	15
Acculturation	15
Biculturalism	20
Intersectionality of Ethnic-Race, Gender, and Leadership	21
Social Dynamics	23
Diversity in Asian American Community.....	24
External Factors	26
Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Procedures.....	30
Research Purpose.....	30
Research Questions.....	30
Research Design.....	31
Research Sample.....	31
Data Collection	33
Data Analysis	33
Summary	34
Chapter 4: Results	35

Themes Identified in Ethnic/Racial Identity.....	36
Themes Identified in Leadership Philosophy.....	38
The Impact of Ethnic/Racial Identity on Leadership Styles	39
Organizational Climates and Environments to Enable Collective Leadership	42
What Do AAWLs Enjoy About What They Do?	44
Summary	46
Chapter 5: Discussion.....	48
Conclusions and Interpretations	48
Implications of This Research.....	51
Organizational Level.....	51
Community Level.....	51
Recommendations for Organizational Development Practices.....	55
Limitations	58
Summary of Learnings	59
References.....	61
Appendix A: Interview Questions.....	73
Appendix B: Informed Consent.....	75

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List of Tables

Table 1. Interview Demographics.....	32
Table 2. The Intersection of Themes.....	47

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

Only four Asian American women hold senior executive positions in Fortune 500 companies, and none of the CEOs in Fortune 100 companies are Asian American women (Guynn & Fraser, 2022). Anne Chow, the first Asian American woman in the highest position at AT&T, said, "My style of leadership is not in your face. My style of leadership is based on humility" (Guynn & Fraser, 2022, p. 1). Ethnic-racial identities are part of who we are and where we are from. Understanding and owning different elements of someone's identity, including race and ethnicity, is a choice. It is up to individuals to actualize the impact of those elements in forming their self-identity. The classic manual for Asian Americans for work success highlights simply working harder even when failing. However, it ignores the impact of society's structural problems on their race and ethnic backgrounds (Chin, 2020). A 2017 report on Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) data showed that Asian Americans are most likely to be hired for technical-specific job positions but least likely to be promoted to higher-level positions (Gee & Peck, 2017). Kramer (2023) stated, "Asian Americans' unique stereotypes, or demographic features, although seemingly positive, are potential barriers to career advancement" (p. 5).

Many dimensions are involved in the issue of Asian American women not reaching higher positions in work. The literature on the experiences of minority women leaders is scattered (Choi, 2017), and the challenges and discriminations faced by individuals cannot be studied by one identity alone (Dennissen et al.,

2018). This multi-faceted issue did not begin with the COVID-19 pandemic or the increase in hate crimes and discrimination against the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. The stereotyping of Asian American women is long-standing (Tulshyan, 2002). Perceptions of the group as intelligent and capable but too deferential and submissive to lead are familiar stereotypes. If a leader's characteristics deviate from these traits, they are penalized. Tulshyan (2002) notes that Asian American Women Leaders (AAWLs) often had to navigate narrow societal expectations to be likable professional women as they are often regarded as submissive and grateful. The toxic phrase "the minority model myth" often portrays Asian Americans as intelligent, hardworking, highly earned professionals who face less racism and discrimination and are represented relatively in leadership positions. Those assumptions do not fully reflect the struggles and issues Asian Americans face in the workplace.

Chau and Chan (2021) stated that "the lack of data integrity fails to reflect the diversity of the populations and their needs. The term "model minority" has mischaracterized Asian Americans. This stereotype has negative implications for policies, programs, and resource allocations" (p. 1). The lack of data on Asian American women leaves the group without support or resources as they are misunderstood and projected in the stereotypes and minority myth as "they do not need help" (Kramer, 2023, p. 20) regarding inclusive workplace conversations and leadership advancement; they become invisible as leaders without advancing to C-Suite boardrooms. The media and researchers often need to pay more attention to the subgroups' unique culture, history, and

language diversity. Due to limited data research and understanding of the group and the diversity of languages and cultures within the group, the model minority myth became the common racial trope. Tradition and culture also play a role in the characteristics of expected behaviors of the groups. Like other minority races, women are less likely to be in leadership positions than men. Hence, Asian American women have double jeopardy working towards leadership positions as ethnic women. Asian Men are also impacted by stereotyping using certain generalizations, but it is more prone to Asian American Women in leadership positions due to the double jeopardy theory (Wu, 2020).

In 1938, Congress passed the Fair Labor Standards Act, establishing the minimum wage for all workers regardless of gender (Congressional Research Service, 2023). That was the beginning of women being legally allowed to work and the road to leadership and equal pay has been progressive since then. Due to COVID-19 and the alarming rate of hate crimes against the AAPI community in the United States, President Biden signed the *COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act* on May 20, 2021 (U.S. Department of Justice, 2021). It is a big step for the community as legal protection from racial crimes. Another milestone is President Biden signing the *Asian American Pacific Islander Museum Commission* into law on June 13, 2022, to inspire and educate stories, cultures, and history of Asian American Pacific Islanders in the United States (Biden & Harris, 2022).

Research Purpose and Objectives

This research aims to explore the intersection of ethnic-racial identities and the development of leadership identity in AAWL in the United States and

their impact on the success of leadership. AAWL are bicultural, and studies show that leaders with biculturalism often turn the mechanism of oppression to productivity and tend to resonate with their racial groups; in other words, ownership of self-identity turns to the resilience to work in white and male-dominant environments (Li & Chiu, 2018).

Research Questions

The following questions are to examine the research purpose:

- How do Ethnic-Racial elements show up in developing leadership identity?
How do Ethnic-Racial identities affect the ways leadership is enacted?
- How do Asian American Women leaders define successful leadership?
- How do leaders react to the social reality of Asian American Women in Leadership?
- What organization climate and environments can support ownership of collective leadership identity?

Significance and Application

The multi-faceted elements of identity intersect in the development of conscious self-identity. Asian Americans are adapting to two types of cultures: traditional (race and ethnicity culture) and host country (American) (LaFromboise et al., 1993). As for AAWL, the study will explore different elements such as race, ethnicity, gender, and leadership identity and their intersections.

The world is changing and leaders with flexibility, adaptation to multi-cultures, and diverse experiences and skill sets can bring diverse perspectives into organizations and communities. Suppose the American societal playbook is

the reservation for the specific categories of people in C suites; Asian American men have higher chances of getting into senior executive positions than women. Most leadership theories and manuals claim to be gender-neutral but disregard the diversity of leaders, especially for women of color. A Goldman Sachs study in 2022 states, "While accounting for 13% of professional positions at large employers, Asian Americans hold just 6% of senior management positions. Across the country, there is a persistent gap between Asian American representation in entry-level professional positions and more senior management roles" (p. 1). Even though Asian Americans are the fastest-growing population and workforce in the United States (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021), the number of executives in senior positions is still underrepresented, which explains the structural racial barriers, such as bamboo ceilings, are still there to break (Gee & Peck, 2018; Hyun, 2005; Kramer, 2022). The time has passed for organizations to see diversity, equality, and inclusion as merely a checkbox. Now is the time to create inclusive environments that embrace diversity and promote equality. Organizations have rare opportunities to explore those advantages and even uplift the communities' spirits by embracing diverse leaders who can represent the diverse workforce. Organizations can honor diversity and create unity to better respond to our fragmented environments and global challenges.

The study will examine the intersectionality theory of interconnections and interdependencies between social categories and systems (Atewologun, 2018), in this case, the intersections of race, ethnicity, and gender in developing collective leadership self-identity concerning the social system. The findings of

this study will question AAWLs on the role of race, ethnicity, and gender in developing leadership identities. The study will also emphasize the different organizational cultures the leaders are in and how those impacts shape the self-identity of an AAWL. The study findings ideally will have implications for leaders and their organizations on implementing changes in the system and creating environments that foster the cultures that AAWLs represent for their skills and expertise, not because of their race, ethnicity, and gender.

Study Outline

Chapter 2 explores the literature of Asian American Women's history, different types of Identity, ethnic-race identity, women in leadership, and the intersections of all elements in developing collective leadership identity. Chapter 3 reviews the research methods and frameworks, covering who the participants are, how to collect the data needed, and how to analyze them. Chapter 4 reveals the data collection and analysis findings from participants' interviews. Chapter 5 states the conclusion of the study with recommendations and further implications and discusses the limitations of the current research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This research aimed to understand the intersection of Ethnic-Racial identities and the development of leadership identity in Asian American women leaders in the United States and its potential impact on leadership success. The study examined the role of Ethnic-Racial identity in developing leadership identity, the impacts on leadership styles, the definition of successful leadership, the reaction of the leaders to social reality, and what climate and environments better support collective leadership identity.

Individual Level

Identity Development

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, identity is "the distinguishing character or personality of an individual and the relation established by psychological identification such as the psychological orientation of the self-regarding something (such as a person or group) with a resulting feeling of close emotional association" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Hecht and Choi (2011) stated that "Individuals' identities influence the formation of their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors" (p. 137). Identity is developed through self-exploration, making choices, and committing to the options individuals discover from the self-explorations. Its development is the continuous awareness of self and its recognition by others (Erikson, 1980). Identity development impacts individuals and their social phenomenon (Adams & Marshall, 1996). At the maturation of individuals, significant cognitive development enables the competence to form a theory of self (Elkind, 1994). Individuals construct the formation of the theory of

self by observing their role models and exploring various identity options (Erikson, 1980).

Many identity theories in the West argue that there are individuals' certain behaviors that intend to remain consistent with their ingroup's norms as well as other social phenomena and their self-interpretations (social identity theory; see Harwood & Giles, 2005; Tajfel & Turner, 1986 and as explicated in symbolic interactionism; see Cooley, 1902; Goffman, 1967; Mead, 1934; Schlenker, 1985). In the East, Identity is often viewed as paradoxical, characterized by polarities that drive the process not necessarily dysfunctional (Hecht et al., 2004). In the postmodern view, identities are layer-specific, and the communication theory of Identity is also stretched to view the notion of Identity as layered (Faulkner & Hecht, 2007). Hence, identity is "the multilayered ways that individuals and communities socially construct themselves" (Hecht & Choi, 2011, p. 138). Identity theory (Cooley, 1902; Goffman, 1967) studies the interaction of the individual and society. Hecht and Choi (2011) confirm that "a person's sense of self is part of his or her social behavior, and the sense of self emerges and is defined and redefined in social interactions" (p. 138).

Ethnic-Racial Identity (ERI)

The historical understanding of racial identity has been the response to racism and prejudice (Helms, 2007), while ethnic identity encompasses a sense of belonging or attachment to specific ethnic groups characterized by a shared heritage, values, traditions, and languages (Phinney & Ong, 2007). However, both terms are the social construction of considerable variability and complexity

in conceptualizing and defining those constructs (Cokley, 2005; Cross & Cross, 2008; Helms, 2007; Markus, 2008; Omi & Winant, 1986). Both terms are difficult to isolate due to the intersection of their involvement in identity development.

Umaña-Taylor et al. (2014) defines ERI as "a multi-dimensional, psychological construct that reflects the beliefs and attitudes that individuals have about their ethnic-racial group memberships, as well as the processes by which these beliefs and attitudes develop overtime" (p. 3). *Ethnic Identity* is a multi-faceted and evolving concept that unfolds gradually over time and encompasses a blend of cultural experiences, actions, traditions, self-categorization, acquiring knowledge, and a sense of belonging or attachment to the specific ethnic group's individuals are related to (Phinney & Ong, 2007).

Racial Identity refers to an individual's self-regard and understanding of the racial group membership as well as the meanings and significance they contribute to their racial backgrounds and involves recognition and exploration of self-racial history, heritage, values, experiences, and socialization within the racial group (Phinney & Ong, 2007). Sellers et al.'s (1997) model defined Racial Identity as one's salience and self-concept to that race. Arroyo and Zigler (1995) proposed racial Identity as "attempts to balance racial group membership needs and personal desires for positive relations with the larger society" (p. 903). According to Sellers and colleagues (1997), there are three constructs: oppressed minority ideology, centrality, and public regard. This model was initially a framework for African American Identity, and it is now widely used to study the Identity of different races and ethnic groups. Oppressed minority

ideology refers to one's worldview of the interaction of different race groups in society, centrality is one's self-sense of belonging to one group, and public regard relates to the critical consciousness of what people perceive of one's group (Sellers et al., 1998). Charmaraman and Grossman (2020) also revealed that Black and Latinx adults had a higher level of centrality (one's sense of belonging to one group) than Asian Americans.

During adolescence, the process of ERI involves exploring an individual's race-ethnicity and conceptualizing values from their ethnic and racial groups as they grow with increased social-cognitive maturity and ability to understand the impact of ethnic race on their social experiences (Quintana, 1998). With that, individuals have matured into the capacity to merge their identity or self-regard with their reference group (Cross & Cross, 2008). The ERI formation and development evolve and changes in one's take on social cognition and behaviors toward one's and others' ethnic-racial groups can contribute to the evolution (Rivas-Drake et al., 2014; Umana-Taylor et al., 2014).

During the process of ERI, exploration and meaning making are essential components of ERI development. With growing cognitive capabilities, individuals are more equipped to explore what ERI means to them, apart from what it means to their parents. Thus, the phase of exploration and search is very salient in ERI development (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2004). Exploration involves self-reflection and thinking about one's ethnicity, sharing with others about it, and participating and being open to activities representing their ethnic group and culture (Syed et al., 2013). It is also on the quest to find the answer or meaning of "Who am I?" The

notion of having options for individuals in the process of finding one's identity, Erickson (1968) pressed on the commitment individuals make to the options they choose. Through that, the formation of identity occurred (Erikson, 1968). Marcia (1994) has liberated the individual's identity status into four based on one's commitment and exploration. They are identity achievement, foreclosure, moratorium, and identity diffusion.

Phinney (1990) described the formation of ERI in three stages: the unexamined stage, the moratorium stage, and the achieved stage (Phinney, 1990). The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) states stages of ERI formation as achievement (content), ethnic behaviors (process), and affirmation and belonging (content) (Dai, 2021). Another model by Umana-Taylor (2004), the Ethnic Identity Scale (EIS), has the stages content, explorer, and content. These different models and frameworks reflect the process and the context of how individuals evolve and evaluate their identities and actions toward the collective Identity of cultural explorations of one's belonging group. They help us understand the structure of identity development, but it is crucial to understand that they may change based on the situation.

Kim's (1999) model studied the dynamic of identity formation for Asian Americans and described the racialization of the group as "Racialization is a reflexive as well as externally imposed process" (p. 129). Through studying the formation of Asian Americans' identity through racial positioning (i.e., White and Black), Kim (1999) found that Asian Americans' perception of their group reflects the outcomes of how other races interact through social stratification.

Leadership Identity

Evidence indicates that ERI and leadership identity may impact the leadership styles of people from various ethnic-racial backgrounds. Leadership identity is one's realization and awareness of who he/she is as a leader to self, others, and groups (Lord & Hall, 2005). Leadership identity refers to "how individuals develop the social identity of being collaborative, relational leaders interdependently engaging in leadership as a group process" (Rocco & Priest, 2023, p. 108). Rocco and Priest (2023) addressed the limitations of many existing leadership identity development research and methodologies by suggesting extending the knowledge scope and understanding in multi-level, complexity, and system views rather than individual-focused views in both research and literature.

The scope and depth of leadership evolve, and more theories and studies focus on three layers of leadership from an individual, relational, and contextual perspective (Day & Harrison, 2007). The definition of leadership identity involves over time. Relational leadership by Komives et al. (2005) describes the process of people working and coordinating together to impact change and make a difference. The leadership identity development model by Komives et al. (2005, 2006) focused on "research designed to understand how one's leadership beliefs and practices broaden as they advance through other human development processes such as cognitive and psychosocial" (Rocco & Priest, 2023, p. 108). The model outlines leadership identity development, starting from perceived as something external to oneself and exploring it in others, then progressing to the

person-centric view of leadership, where individuals identify themselves as leaders. As development continues, individuals work towards understanding and practicing leadership as an interdependent process with others before integrating their understanding, and experiences of leadership identity into self-conceptualization (Komives et al., 2005, 2006).

The study of any identity did not go without explaining the relationship with self-awareness. The self-actualization of identity within one does not exist without self-awareness; hence, they are interrelated. Self-awareness is vital to developing leadership identity (Cashman, 2008; Day et al., 2009; Goleman et al., 2002; Hall, 2004; Northouse, 2010). According to Eurich (2018), "Leaders who focus on building both internal and external self-awareness, who seek honest feedback from loving critics, and who ask *what* instead of *why* can learn to see themselves more clearly — and reap the many rewards that increased self-knowledge delivers" (p. 2). Eurich (2018) claimed that self-awareness at two types: internal (how well you know yourself) and external (how well you understand how others see you. Hall's (2004) definition is congruent and defines self-awareness as "the extent to which people are conscious of various aspects of their identities and the extent to which their self-perceptions are intentionally integrated and congruent with the way others perceive them" (p. 154).

A clear understanding of self allows people to make better decisions and stand firm with those decisions as they are self-directed through consciousness. When leaders have self-awareness of who they are as a leader regarding their ethnic-racial background and concerning others and groups, these components

of forming leadership identity can determine the success and effectiveness of leadership development (Lord & Hall, 2005; Luhrmann & Eberl, 2007; Van Knippenberg et al., 2005). Evidence of the relationship between Ethnic Identity and Leadership Style by Haney-Brown (2017) found that "different attitudes of ethnic identity relate to different styles of leadership and different attitudes of ethnic identity predict styles of leadership and concluded that there is a predictive correlation between ethnic identity and leadership style for the sample African American Leaders in her study" (p. 186).

Successful / Meaningful Leadership

Different leaders have different perspectives on what successful and meaningful leadership looks like. There are many notable theories and studies on different types of leadership which can benefit leaders in directing their path to success. Regarding change, Burns (1978) defines *transformational leadership* as "leadership brings about the real change that leaders intend" (p. 414). That is a relevant image of meaningful leadership with the leaders' intentions and actions behind those intentions. Bass (1985) developed transformational leadership in four elements: they are in idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Barnett (2022) states, "In a transformational culture, there is generally a sense of purpose and a feeling of family. Commitments are long-lasting, and leaders and followers share common interests and a sense of synergy. A transformational culture can build on the organization's culture" (p. 24). Bass and Avolio (1993) stated that more than including everyone's priorities and values is needed to encourage people to

pursue their goals. However, a sense of purpose and coordination must also achieve simultaneously (Bass & Avolio, 1993).

Leaders often refer to people with defined roles and positions. The definition of leaders goes beyond that. We have leaders in our communities, families, and friends without having titles or being rewarded. Haney-Brown (2017) argued that "leadership styles have an impact on the overall effectiveness of the leader-follower relationship" (p. 62). The perception of leaders and followers should be challenged more to the core of any leader for their ability to influence others and benefit from the inclusionary behaviors of the leaders in the relationships with the followers. Initial studies on leadership identity development suggested that the developmental trajectory is more cyclical rather than linear, which indicates that individuals are in the process of development and may revisit and reassess their earlier notions of leadership capabilities and beliefs before fully embracing and committing to the broader perspectives of their leadership identity (Komives et al., 2005, 2006).

Sociocultural Level

Acculturation

The study of an individual's ERI is complete with an understanding of the impact of cultures. The impact is complicated, as the involvement of the culture of one's origin and culture of residence differs, resulting in individuals going through the acculturation process. Acculturation, defined by many scholars, is the process of adapting and alterations resulting from continuous and direct contact between two more different cultural groups (Berry, 1997; Cabassa, 2003;

Redfield et al., 1936). Acculturation is the dynamic and ongoing process that unfolds for individuals through interactions between members of a minority culture and elements of the dominant society, and the process has multi-dimensional changes for individuals from both cultures (Berry, 2005). This acculturation process continues to impact individuals and societies, and extensive studies have contributed significantly to understanding this phenomenon (Berry, 2005). The understanding of the phenomenon was initially conceptualized at the group level, as it has led to changes in social settings and practices at the macro level (Berry, 1992; Berry & Sam, 1997).

From those changes, the definition of acculturation has expanded to include psychological acculturation elements at the individual level (Graves, 1967), which has a direct impact on individuals as regard encompassing psychological changes in self from the contact of cross-cultural and altering in daily behaviors as seem fit (Berry, 2005). The shifts in the cultural dynamics and individuals' adapting and coping with those changes have altered their behaviors and expectations regarding how they eat, dress, speak, communicate, and socialize (Berry, 2005; Berry & Sam, 1997). The study of acculturation has evolved. In the linear approach to the subject, the unidimensional acculturation model by Park (1928) positions that acculturation exists as the alternative through the single continuum in which individuals adjust to the new environments by emancipating the original cultural group to align themselves with the new dominant cultural group, which is typical for individuals as coping mechanism to adjusting to the new environment through invasion and migration (Espeleta et al.,

2019). Over time, researchers have argued that acculturation has more than one dimension regarding personal change. Redfield et al. (1936) claimed that Park's (1928) unidimensional model of acculturation could be one aspect of multiple acculturations rather than one sole method.

Once the possibility of non-linear aspects of looking at the acculturation process surfaced, researchers hypothesized different multi-dimensional models of acculturation. 20 years after Redfield et al.'s (1936) claim about the liberation of acculturation, a group of social scientists expanded this model, stating:

Acculturative change may be the consequence of direct transmission; derives from non-cultural causes, such as ecological or demographic modifications induced by an impinging culture; it may be delayed, as with internal adjustments following upon the acceptance of alien traits or patterns; or it may be a reactive adaptation of traditional modes of life. Its dynamics can be seen as the selective adaptation of value systems, the processes of Integration and differentiation, the generation of developmental sequences, and the operation of role determinants and personality factors. (Social et al., 1954, p. 974)

Ryder et al. (2000) claimed that the foundation of multi-dimensional models focused on two foundations: 1) different individuals' identities and self-regards may differ based on the degree of cultural influences they are associated with, and 2) individuals can have more than one cultural identity instead of abandoning original ethnic affiliation to obtain a new society membership.

As our understanding of acculturation evolved, studies suggested that

immigrants do not entirely disown their native values, cultures, and beliefs. At the same time, they navigate into the new culture (host) (Espeleta et al., 2019). Berry (1980, 1997) categorizes individuals' way of adapting and integrating cultures based on two dimensions, 1) the desire to preserve their ethnic culture and 2) the desire to interact with people from the majority group, and four strategies: assimilation, separation, Integration, and marginalization.

The assimilation strategy is very similar to Park's (1928) unidimensional theory of acculturation. In assimilation, individuals adopt new cultures and practices at dominant (host) culture and disown their culture of origin (Berry, 1997). In separation, individuals refuse to adopt new cultures and practices to preserve their original ethnic identity and culture in the host environment (Berry, 1997). In Integration, individuals embrace both cultures, known as biculturalism (Schwartz & Zamboanga, 2008), where they maintain the marriage of both cultures simultaneously by being frequently in contact with both cultural values and groups (Berry, 1997). The last strategy is marginalized, where people choose to desert all cultural affiliations related to self, refuse to embrace the authentic culture, and adopt the new one (Berry, 1997). Studies have shown that the last strategy may lead to psychological distress (Fox et al., 2017, p. 2).

Studies suggest that integrating cultures enables higher adaptability ability for individuals. In contrast, those who inhabit either one of the cultures other than integrating both will be slightly worse in terms of adaptability skills, and the ones who are unable to preserve or affiliate with any cultural group will have unfortunate outcomes (Berry, 2004, 2005; Berry & Kim, 1988; Berry & Sam,

1997; Lopez & Contreras, 2005; Phinney et al., 1992; Schmitz, 1992; Wei et al., 2010). The impact of acculturation on individuals refers to "the successful acculturation to the dominant culture can provide individuals with new relationships and expand their network of social support system" (Santos & Kawabata, 2023, p. 2). According to Steinglass et al. (1985), people with access to a more extensive support social network likely face fewer difficulties adjusting to different cultures. Studies also suggest that individuals with an integration strategy can benefit from less psychological difficulties and anxiety (López & Contreras, 2005; Vasquez et al., 2011; Wei et al., 2010), more self-confidence (Berry, 2005), more competency for coping and psychologically adjusting to change (Berry, 2005; López & Contreras, 2005; Torres & Rollock, 2007).

According to Padilla and Perez (2003), "Pragmatism and cultural competence play critical roles in how we theorize about individual and group acculturation" (p. 5). They point out that acculturation is the individuals' choice of conceptualizing and its process based on their characteristics and may also explore the various levels of attachments and affiliations with their host culture or original culture. Regarding choice, Fiske and Taylor (1993) hypothesized that people make pragmatic decisions for acculturation based on their goals, motivations, and needs in the new environment. Based on their choices, once they achieve their pragmatic cognitive goals, they tend to engage less in acculturation. Padilla and Perez (2003) supported the above hypothesis by stating that "This is equally true for people in a new culture who are striving to be successful in a new country to which they have migrated" (p. 8)

Biculturalism

The marriage of different cultures for an individual is referred to as biculturalism, or when one uses two internalized cultures that direct psychological components of how they think, feel, and perceive (LaFromboise et al., 1993; Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997). Asian Americans adapt to two types of cultures: traditional (race and ethnicity culture) and dominant (American culture). The degree to adapt to two cultures depends on an individual's maturity and social experience and evolves through life. The goal is achieving bicultural efficacy, which is adapting to the dominant culture without giving up on one's identity; in other words, embracing both cultures (LaFromboise et al., 1993). Scholars have proposed that bicultural individuals have strengthened their cognitive ability to switch between cultures due to their frequent involvement with both cultures in various contexts. That ability is referred to as cultural frame switching and has connections to better problem-solving skills and greater perspective-taking as being in touch with two different cultures (Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005; Chae & Foley, 2010). It refers to the defense mechanism or protective factor against acculturative stressors that individuals are facing. Frankly, individuals with bicultural efficacy enable them to master relationships and navigate social, work, and family environments with a strong sense of psychological well-being. In the current study, the adaptation to those bicultural through the navigation of an individual's learning and experiences to form an individual's ethnic/racial Identity and the impact it has on leadership identity will emphasize by questioning how and what elements from cultural backgrounds

and family values influence the way people lead.

Studies have discussed the direct impact of specific cultural competencies, such as the ability to transfer across contextual boundaries and cross-cultural communication skills, on more excellent team effectiveness (Hong, 2010), and the competence of attributional knowledge also links to leadership effectiveness (Lakshman, 2013). Mody (2014) summarized that "the successful bicultural leaders use bicultural competencies as a situational repertoire favoring attributional knowledge, frame switching, and behavioral adaptability as the top three" (p. 63).

Intersectionality of Ethnic-Race, Gender, and Leadership

The term intersectionality was coined by legal scholar Crenshaw (1989) to highlight the gap where systematic oppression failed to create inclusive experiences for people with multiple identities, such as race and gender. Crenshaw (1989) coined the term as "a prism to bring to light dynamics within discrimination law that were not being appreciated by the courts" (p. 8) and the term became popular in challenging the systems by highlighting the discriminations and challenges faced by black women and other women of color (Coaston, 2019). The four dimensions of AAWLs in the study include race (general group), ethnicity (specific subgroup and more for mixed ethnicity), gender (women), and leadership style (the ways leaders influence others). The long oppression of race and gender has created barriers for Asian American women in leadership as they had to integrate those aspects into building their own identity as race and gender displayed the focal points of someone's identity

in the sense of public regard. The development of an individual's adaptation to biculturalism and gender identity can influence leadership in different contexts (Kawahara, 2008).

Different dimensions of identity development such as race, ethnicity, gender, and age can vary in psychological aspects. However, the interrelation of the complexity and dynamics of their existence in forming one's identity is hard to ignore. Ghavami and Peplau (2013) studied the experiences of colored and white women in leadership and found that stereotypes exist, and the experiences differ based on their race and gender. The studies on race described that the social disadvantage is not only from skin color but also from other components such as accent, language, gender, and immigration status (Baynes, 1997). The understatement of the involvement of diverse dimensions in forming one's identity pushes the movements toward needing more comprehensive models that embrace one's multiple subjectivities. One positive possibility suggests that women can use multiple parts of their identities, such as values and behaviors from their racial-ethnic backgrounds and dominant American culture, to fulfill their dreams. In a study of gender biases for women in attaining leadership positions, Eagly and Karau (2002) proposed two types of agentic bias: 1) agentic deficiency, the perception that women are insufficiently agentic to occupy leadership roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 1983), and 2) agentic penalty, the social and economic backlash women face for behaving in an agentic manner that is at odds with their prescribed gender role (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Phelan, 2008).

In an experimental study, Rosette, and Livingston (2012) discovered that Black women leaders who made mistakes on the job were penalized more severely than White women and Black men in leadership because these groups have the advantage of being in the predominant groups such as either being a white person or being a man. Hence, studying minority women's leadership identity cannot go without studying the intersection of multiple dimensions of identities in response to a social construct. The intersectionality of different dimensions of Identity can showcase the possibility that one's experience can be so different from others regardless of the oppression against certain groups. Both gender and race/ethnic identity may have a somewhat degree of impact on the ways people lead. Comparing both factors, some people may experience the other depending on their situations, cultures, and industries.

Social Dynamics

Social Identity is one of the multi-faceted elements of identity development, and understanding it intersects with other aspects of identity is critical not only for one's self-actualization but also for the individual's relation to the group. Social Identity is a bridge between one's Identity and belonging to the group with a strong sense of connection and commitment to supporting one's group (Tajfel, 1981). An individual's identity development is influenced by the demands created by the external social identities they relate to (Watson, 2008). Social identity theory is a framework to understand how individuals interplay relationships with others, in-groups, and out-groups (Hogg et al., 2012; Padilla & Perez, 2003). Operario and Fiske (1999) have pointed out three characteristics of

social identity theory; people are:

- Self-motivated to conceptualize a positive identity,
- draw the concepts from group identifications and affiliations (which group or groups they identify with), and
- establish positive social identities by comparing in-groups against out-groups (Operario & Fiske, 1999).

Through comparison and distinction, the self from others to form social identifications are motivated by the need to be unique and belong (Brewer, 1991). Padilla and Perez (2003) highlighted the importance of social Identity by stating that "having a social identity satisfied individuals' needs for inclusion and differentiation" (p. 44). Goffman (1963) reasoned that if other people's reactions or society influence our behaviors and self-esteem, rational people will control their reactions by manipulating what they show others about themselves in different dimensions of social criteria. People would respond similarly to the social stigma. Social stigma by Crocker et al. (1998) refers to "a function of having an attribute that conveys a devalued social identity in a particular context" (p. 22). Padilla and Perez (2003) explained that "stigmatization is not inextricably linked to something essential to the stigmatized attribute or the person who possesses that attribute. The essential distinction is in the unfortunate circumstance of possessing an attribute that in each social context leads to devaluation" (p. 45).

Diversity in Asian American Community

The estimated number of Asians alone or in combination in the United

States is nearly 24 million, and the number of Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders, as their only identity or in combination with another identity, is 1.6 million according to the 2020 census (Bureau, 2020). The AAPI community is diverse, with over 50 subgroups and more than 100 languages and dialects (Chau & Chan, 2021). According to U.S. Census Bureau, there are four major groups of Asian Americans:

- East Asians: Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Taiwanese
- Southeast Asians: Filipinos, Vietnamese, Cambodians, Thai, Hmong, Laotians, Burmese, and Indonesians
- South Asians: Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Nepali, Bhutani, the Maldivians, and Sinhalese
- Pacific Islanders: Native Hawaiians, Samoan, Guamanian or Chamorro, and other Pacific Islanders.

According to a study by Pew Research Center (2021), the combination of Chinese, Indian, Filipino, Vietnamese, Korean, and Japanese make up 85% of all Asian Americans in the U.S. The diversity of ethnic groups, language, history, culture, and social status makes Asian Americans a significant race group in the United States (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021). According to Goldman Sachs (2022), immigration somehow shapes the pathways of Asian Americans in the United States. Ethnic groups who moved to the U.S. through high-skilled immigration programs (often from China and India) have a significantly higher income than other ethnic groups who arrived via other immigration programs, creating a significant income gap within the Asian-American population (Goldman Sachs,

2022). The study also shows the following:

As the Asian American population grows, the group has had an outsized contribution to the U.S. economy, according to Goldman Sachs Research. Despite representing less than 10% of the population, Asian Americans comprised nearly a quarter of U.S. employment growth from 2003 to 2019. This population also drove around 23% of private-sector output growth during that span, contributing \$1.5 trillion in current dollar terms to the growth in gross domestic product. (Goldman Sachs, 2022, p. 1)

External Factors

The phrase Pink Bamboo Ceiling calls attention to Asian American Women for the barriers preventing them from advancing as leaders (Kramer, 2023). *The bamboo ceiling* is the issue that hinders the growth and success of reaching managerial positions regardless of professional standings for Asian Americans in the workplace. One of the factors contributing to the issue is stereotypes of Asian Americans. Some researchers claimed that Asian Americans hold tenure positions in shorter terms than their white counterparts, even though they vastly represent the professionals across the workforce in the United States. According to Perez (2003), the conversations of race, gender, and inclusion in the workplace have overlooked Asian American populations. Supporting that research, the common justifications like they are not senior enough or accomplished enough to be in leadership positions are common denominators of the bamboo ceiling (Yamagata-Noji, 2005).

The Model Minority Myth (Petersen, 1966) portrayed the image of

Japanese Americans as educated achievers, high earners with low crimes and delinquency. The perception that Asian Americans are well-off and there is no urgency to include them in important topics has led to biases and makes it harder for them to advance in their careers. According to Hall (2017), the term initially referred to Japanese Americans, the largest Asian population, when the term was well-known to the public and has been carried over and blatantly applied to all other ethnic groups in Asian American Community. Some researchers dived deeper into the underlying factors and found that the famous Confucian and collectivist values embedded in many Asian cultures and values, such as blending in and not standing out (Akutagawa, 2013; Hyun, 2005; Zane et al., 1991). Due to the diversity in the group, that statement only applies to some significant geographic areas of the people in the group.

When Asian Americans are not reaching the top of the corporate ladder, they ignore other social structural issues that might impact them but keep working harder based on how they were taught (Chin, 2021). Chin (2021) stated the typical household playbook for second-generation Asian Americans as "work hard, have access to opportunity, can be in control of situations, choose what they want to do with their lives and find rewards for themselves and their families" (p. 51). Kramer (2023) revealed that

The majority of participants indicated the biggest barrier to AAW is not having AAW leadership representation, leaves them without visibility or a voice during critical decision-making. The absence of AAWs in leadership roles also leaves them without peer mentors to support or advocate they

can relate. The second barrier was Asian gendered stereotypes. Over half of the participants felt stereotypes perceptions of Asian women as meek, submissive, obedient, accommodating, exotic (sexualized), a Lotus Flower, Tiger Mom or Dragon Lady, and young are problematic and interfere with leadership promotion. (p. 48)

Cho et al. (2021) found that "a blend of racial prejudice, poor coping, and partisan media viewing was found in Americans who stigmatized people of Asian Descent during the COVID-19 pandemic" (p. 4). The stigmatization of the AAPI community is the outcome of coping mechanisms of the Pandemic through stereotyping and emotion towards the group. Cho et al. (2021) concludes that "Efforts to reduce stigmatization should address racial stereotypes and emotions, maladaptive coping, and biased media use by providing education and resources to the Public, fostering collective efficacy and media-based contacts with Asian Americans who can facilitate these efforts" (p. 5).

According to a study by Pew Research Center, the data on Asian underrepresentation of American Pacific Islanders is the result of two reasons. The first is the language barrier, and the second is that only 3% of voters responded as Asian Americans despite the total population making up 6% (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021). Another example is the underrepresentation of AAWLs leaders in senior executive positions in the United States, even though the group has the second-largest professional workforce with higher education and experience. Asian Americans are the second-largest professionals in the workforce in America after white (Chin, 2021).

For AAWLs, they have additional barriers and challenges from compounded effects of race, ethnicity, and gender biases. Research reveals that Asian American women are often perceived as less compatible for leadership positions than Caucasian men, Caucasian women, and Asian American men (Moss-Racusin et al., 2012). The lack of data on Asian American women leaves the group without support or resources as they are misunderstood and projected in the stereotypes and minority myth as they do not need help regarding inclusive workplace conversations and leadership advancement, that they become invisible as leaders and stuck without advancing to C-Suite boardrooms (Kramer, 2023). Kramer (2023) also stated that "impeding advancement in the workplace for the population can lead to other means of surviving, including tolerating objectification and inhumane treatment or resorting to crime to survive" (p. 23). Based on the findings by Kim (2000), "status inconsistency (educational and occupational) often contributes to increased tensions between husband and wife that may lead to wife abuse" (p. 9).

Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Procedures

This chapter describes the research methodology and its procedures. The chapter begins with its purpose and objectives, followed by research questions. The research methodology and procedures include research purpose, design, sample, data collection, data analysis, limitation of study, and summary.

Research Purpose

This research aims to understand the intersection of Ethnic-Racial identities and the development of leadership identity in AAWLs in the United States and the impact on the success of leadership.

Research Questions

The following questions are to examine the research purpose:

- How do Ethnic-Racial elements show up in developing leadership identity?
How do Ethnic-Racial identities affect the ways leadership is enacted?
- How do Asian American Women leaders define successful leadership?
- How do leaders react to the social reality of Asian American Women in Leadership?
- What organization climate and environments can support ownership of collective leadership identity?

Based on the research questions and objectives, the interview questions were designed to examine an individual's ethnicity/ racial identity, leadership identity, and organizational climate/environment. The interview questions can be found in Appendix A.

Research Design

This research selected a qualitative method, interviewing 14 AAWLs in American enterprises. The qualitative research method was used for this study because there has been little research focused on the research topic, and the qualitative method allows continued exploration of further discovery (Creswell, 2003). The interviews were designed to probe more into the participants' values, beliefs, and attitudes, which are valid for understanding identity formation. I prepared for the interviews by aligning the probing questions with the research objective. Leadership is a mindset, and it is more than a position and a role that individuals are in. The research also explored how individuals take on what successful leadership means and what elements influence forming the collective leadership identity. *Identity formation* is an evolving process that changes and adapts to personal experiences, espoused values, and conscious attention to one's being. Qualitative research is the best-suited method to explore an individual's journey to where they are and collect data through their stories (Creswell, 2003).

Research Sample

The Asian American community is diverse regarding ethnic groups, even within each country of origin. There are three subgroups in this study: South Asian (i.e., India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, The Maldives), Southeast Asian (i.e., Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Vietnam, Singapore, Brunei, Timor-Leste, Lao, Cambodia), and East Asian (i.e., China, Hong Kong, Japan, Macau, Mongolia, North Korea, South

Korea, Taiwan). Fourteen participants from three subgroups were interviewed for this study. The participants were women who are between the ages of 25 to 60 who have lived in the United States for at least 10 years and who have grown up in an Asian family mentioned in the subgroups. They were in leadership positions in American enterprises, government, military, non-profit organizations, or owned businesses. At least two years in management or supervisory positions were required to participate in the interviews. Table 1 highlights the demographics of the interviewees.

Table 1

Interview Demographics

Sample Characteristics	Range	Samples	Percentage
Age	20-30	4	29%
	30-40	4	29%
	40-50	3	21%
	50-60	3	21%
Ethnicity	Vietnamese	1	7%
	Chinese (Hong Kong)	1	7%
	Chinese (Indonesian)	1	7%
	Taiwanese	1	7%
	Filipino	3	21%
	Burmese	3	21%
	Indian (South Asian)	2	14%
	Korean	1	7%
Pacific Islander	1	7%	
Positions	Academics	1	7%
	Corporate Managers	3	21%
	Military	4	29%
	Healthcare providers	4	29%
	Business Owners	2	14%
Career Length	3 -10	10	71%
	10-20	2	14%
	Over 20	2	14%

Data Collection

Data was collected through a 45-minute interview with participants, either face-to-face or via video conference. The interviews intended to discover and collect data on what factors led to forming the leadership identity through stories, experiences, and personal reflections. I sent out the invitation, the interview details, the intent, and the consent form before the interviews. The consent form describes confidentiality, collecting, storing, and destroying data, and the level of risks which can be found in Appendix B. The participants received the interview questions ahead of time for them to brainstorm. The questions included both close-ended questions and open-ended questions. The interview meetings were voice recorded with the participant's permission and transcribed for analysis. The interviews were only one-way conversations which means I only asked questions and did not share personal views during the interview.

Data Analysis

All responses were tallied for demographic variables. In analyzing the qualitative data, I looked at the responses to find similarities, differences, and themes. Several consistent themes of success attributes were identified for Asian American leaders in American corporations contributing to data triangulation, content reliability, and validity. Content analysis of responses to open-ended questions was grounded in theory. Responses were categorized to generate common themes. Coding, data entry, and data analysis were completed and then confirmed by an independent auditor.

The analysis of the interview data followed the steps described by Creswell (2009). First, the interview recordings were transcribed before reading through the raw data to generate codes and themes. Then, I interpreted the meanings of the themes, manifested them, and found consistent ones which emerged from the interview data. I began the coding process through open coding derived from data without preconceived categories. Once initial codes were established, I aggregated the initial codes into categories or themes. Once I compiled emerging themes from data in categories based on research design, I further analyzed and synthesized themes to identify key findings and patterns. The final step of data analysis was to interpret the meaning of themes regarding research questions and explore the connections to existing studies, literature, and own insights and expertise.

Summary

This chapter provided a summary of the research methodology and its process of data collection, processing, and analysis to understand the intersection of Ethnic-Racial identities and the development of leadership identity in AAWLs in the United States and the impact on the success of leadership. Chapter 4 will describe the findings of the interviews.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this research is to understand the intersection of Ethnic-Racial identities and the development of leadership identity in AAWLs in the United States and the impact on the success of leadership. This research was designed on the following research questions to examine the research purpose:

- How do Ethnic-Racial elements show up in developing leadership identity?
How do Ethnic-Racial identities affect the ways leadership is enacted?
- How do Asian American Women leaders define successful leadership?
- How do leaders react to the social reality of Asian American Women in Leadership?
- What organization climates and environments can support ownership of collective leadership identity?

This chapter represents the findings of 14 interviews of Asian American women in leadership across industries in the United States on how they navigate life experiences, careers, and self-reflections in developing ethnic/racial identity and leadership identity. Based on the research questions, the interview questions were designed to examine three areas: an individual's ethnic/racial identity, leadership identity, and organizational climate/environment. These three pillars of the study are presented into themes with sample comments from the interview data in the sections that follow.

Themes Identified in Ethnic/Racial Identity

The five common themes collected from 14 interview responses were 1) empathy and connection, 2) work ethic and stability, 3) personal growth and development, 4) family values, and 5) cultural barriers/fear of being misunderstood.

Regarding empathy and connection, one respondent said, "The sense of service instilled in me to ask how I could help. Seek out the host and support them" and "The biggest impact on my background and family values is the stories told by my elders." Some of the comments from respondents for connection were statements such as "I felt a sense of belonging when I was welcomed by my ethnic community when I moved to New York, and I was very surprised by the impact" and "Teachers and mentors, Understanding my roots through community and history."

Work ethic and stability also had an impact on family values and background. Some comments referencing this were "I learned hard work and service when I was a child. My parents expect me to work hard on my education" and "Security for the future and stability is important."

Family values espoused the ability and opportunity to practice freedom and equal opportunity with hard work and experience and learn both cultures. The comments referring to the first part (appreciation) were "We are fortunate to be rescued" and "We appreciate having access to opportunity and freedom here in the United States; I feel protected somehow, and I can accomplish so much here." One of the respondents said, "Growing up in my father's hometown was a

blessing because I got to know my family, and I could experience/learn the importance of our family's values and culture, which helped me carry myself in my everyday life." Other respondents said things like, "My culture is that family is a priority, and being raised in a family-oriented environment impacted my family's way of life," "Instilled many family values when it comes towards lifestyle, respect, and emphasis on ensuring stability in the future," "Growing up in a Vietnamese catholic family, I hold highly of both faith and culture values," and "Hard-working ethics from father as Hong Kong, Asian people, hard-working, low key, reserved, tend not to speak up."

Cultural barriers and fear of being misunderstood were another set of themes discovered in developing the ethnic/racial identity of AAWLs. One participant explained, "Asian women do not voice, not because people don't want to hear from them. I wanted to be sure (face-saving mentality), which is unique to my culture, not risk-taking and fear of being wrong and very common to what I observed and how I work, how much I explained myself and opinions to others." One of the respondents said in the interview, "Culture differences, I don't understand social norms here. I never get the jokes, and I don't fit in. There is always a language barrier, so I often stay quiet; I fear that people would not understand my speaking."

The last theme in developing ethnic/racial identity was diversity and individuality. The idea of being different was prevalent in responses to most questions, which participants saw as both an advantage and a disadvantage. Some of the responses relating to leaders navigating and finding the balance of

being different and unique were "I am always different from others. I was able to use that as strength later in life. I am the only Asian in the community", "School culture forced me to speak up, and my parents would tell me to stay quiet and head down," and "Uncomfortable situations teach me so much to learn and reflect on my identity."

Themes Identified in Leadership Philosophy

The collective themes of successful leadership for different AAWLs were leading by serving, being inclusive, collective growth, shared values and co-creation, and a trusting community. Comments and keywords for the first theme, leading by serving, were statements such as "build the capacity and environment where people feel empowered", "create space and situations for people to follow", and "create space and take barriers down for people". Collective growth was regarded as if a team succeeds, it is everyone's and vice versa, and it can be accomplished through having a meaningful impact.

Under the theme of being inclusive, the comments related mentioned by participants were "Inclusive of individual needs in teams," "Helping others to be their full selves," and "Understanding situations and others' needs."

The last two themes were shared values and co-creation and a trusting community. The relationships were built upon trust and shared values. The leaders defined *successful leadership* as having teams with shared values and missions through co-creation and teamwork. Some of the comments about a trusting community were "People follow you regardless of your position or title," "Having trust is a solid foundation," "Having trust in you," and "Having followers

who follow your directions."

The Impact of Ethnic/Racial Identity on Leadership Styles

The themes identified for the impact of ethnic/racial identity on leadership styles for AAWLs were diversity and inclusion, service and empowerment, growth, authenticity and individuality, equity and social justice, communication and collaboration, and empathic ways of leading.

The first theme, diversity and inclusion, regarded being different as both a strength and a weakness. Some leaders mentioned that they could see later in their careers that being different is the strength they hold among their colleagues, which enriches their leadership identity. Some of the comments reference the theme: "I have been in multiple leadership positions and been living in the United States for 15 years, I still don't understand some of the social norms and cultural gap in the social gatherings, and It is still challenging for me", "Having cultural awareness and being able to see the uniqueness in each individual," "I come from a collectivist culture, so I make sure everyone feels included and works as one while embracing their individuality and differences," "I respect everyone I work with and be inclusive," and "I understand what it means to be different from others in terms of culture, values, race, and ethnicity and being inclusive of everyone under my leadership is very important to me as a leader."

The second theme, service and empowerment, referred to the journey of AAWLs, was enriched with learnings and lessons. Mentoring and inspiring was a way of service leadership to pay forward to fellow ethnic women leaders. Some of the comments were statements such as "mentorship to other young female

leaders, role model, representation, inspiration for people coming from similar backgrounds," "I did not have the same race/gender mentor when I started my career, and now, I am all about mentorship and serving women. I think it was so much to learn from our backgrounds and history and find my way of leading", "Serving others and encourage them to take charge, be better and brighter than me," and "Caring for the whole and individuals, strength and focus to accomplish our shared mission."

The third theme, growth, revolved around professional, personal, and subordinate growth and development. Some comments related to that were "I serve, learn from others and always the people to take charge, be better and brighter than me" and "I believe it's given me a different perspective in certain situations."

The next theme, authenticity and individuality, has comments such as "The family values, uniqueness, and work ethics have so much impact in the way I show up," "Being different, bringing your own culture to practice, connecting people over culture," and "In terms of how we lead, it is a unique way for me, but my background, family, and journey also have an impact. My characteristics, such as transparency and Integrity, are the values that uphold who I am and how I lead, not because of my ethnic or racial identity". One respondent said, "I am still navigating to communicate and speak up as my true self."

For the theme of equity and social justice, the language gap, speaking up, not speaking up, connecting over culture, and open conversations were the keywords in the comments by the respondents. Some of the comments were

statements like, "I don't feel rewarded for my contribution as equal as male colleagues and management know the fact and still no change," "As women, speaking up is not the norm in my ethnic culture and if I do, I still being marginalizing from my racial group for speaking up, so I have to work harder and smarter internally and externally in navigating my true voice," "I was underestimated by male counterparts for my size and being a woman," "Sometimes, people take advantage of my kindness as my weakness, and I felt being bullied in the workplace," "As a minority woman leader in the Army, I have to work harder and smarter than men to have my voices heard and authority be taken seriously," and "I have seen throughout my corporate life, the diversity is as written on my face, and I knew in some situation, I was chosen as I fit the diversity quota, even though I have equal opportunities in terms of career wise regardless of race/gender/ethnic."

The next theme, communication and collaboration, has sample comments such as "I believe in open dialogue and conversation to bring diverse perspectives and values to solutions we are facing," "Bring my uniqueness of culture to connect with others through food," and "Sharing my culture with others to connect and interact, open conversations about learning from each other."

The last impact theme, empathic ways of leading, originated from the values leaders grew up with. Some of the comments that referenced the theme were "I treat my subordinates as family, I also treat them with fairness," "I want to treat them like a family and always think of ways to serve them," "I feel that I can lead better when I treat them as a family," "During long days, as leaders, I treat

them as a family by bringing food and caring for their welfare, which is my ethnic culture and values," "I tried to treat my team as a family as I was taught and raised that way," and "Sometimes I worry for them, and I want to help them out as much as I can."

Organizational Climates and Environments to Enable Collective Leadership

The last pillar this study observed was what organization climates and environments can do to support ownership of collective leadership identity for AAWLs. The themes collected from the interviews were appreciate diversity and inclusion, let leaders shine through autonomy, culturally competent teams and leaders, opportunities for growth, and meaningful interventions at the system, teams, and individual level.

The first common theme, appreciate diversity and inclusion, was expansively mentioned by leaders as the situation or condition they would require from organizations and communities to embrace their leadership potential fully. Some comments related to the theme were statements such as,

At the corporation I was at, there was a concentrated effort on inclusion and diversity. There was a whole system transformation, and inclusion was foundational. I had the opportunity to be a change agent, and at the core of that was exploring my own identity through my transformation; that is what influenced others to be open and explore their identities as well, and it was life-changing for me.

Other participants echoed, "Appreciation and training for diverse minority leaders. Sponsorship for dialogues/ conversations are much needed to embrace our presence and unlock our full potential," and "Open Communication is one way of understanding our differences and learning from each other."

The next theme, let leaders shine through autonomy, had participants

mentioning things such as "embracing the leader with everything she has to bring to the table and not limiting their possibilities," "autonomy of power. Building trust, providing motivation and direction with a team is what I need in support of", "supportive, mission-driven teams, trust in my leadership and me and trust in my capabilities," "clinical (expert) and Leadership Autonomy," and "I am grateful for the safety and support from my organization where I can explore and be open to possibilities."

The third theme, a culturally competent community, was referenced by hiring, training, and maintaining "culturally competent teams and leaders" in the organization. Some comments on this theme were "supporting, kindhearted and respecting people in the community who are willing to solve problems through differences," "where people are culturally intelligent and competent who understand different cultures, and I do not always have to explain myself. I enjoy working with them, and I can fully focus on the quality of my work without fear. I also feel supported being in that environment," and "comrades- mindset people and collaboration to co-create."

The next theme, growth opportunities, meant having equal access and opportunities for growth, such as leadership training, coaching, and rewards, all of which were mentioned as essential for leaders to own their collective leadership identity. Two respondents mentioned "opportunities for my growth opportunities and organizational growth" and "leadership development training and working in teams for collective success."

The last theme, meaningful interventions at the system, teams, and

individual level, described meaningful interventions that can support leaders in building the capacity for leaders but also for the people they work with. Some of the comments from the interview data were "same gender mentorship to inspire other fellow leaders. More support for academics", "there was a whole system transformation and inclusion was foundational. I had the opportunity to be a change agent, and at the core of that was exploring my own identity through my transformation; that is what influenced others to be open and explore their identities as well, and it was life-changing for me," "coaching not only for leadership but also for people she has to work with, the way of performance review focusing on individual strength through observable components. Culturally and Different learning styles embedded in conscious training developments," and "leadership development training and interventions for minority leaders."

What Do AAWLs Enjoy About What They Do?

The first question asked to explore the journey of Asian American women in leadership was what they enjoy about what they do; not specifically in terms of role, but in terms of their relationship with the work, people, culture, and consequences. The first common theme in observing what makes AAWLs enjoy their work is a sense of purpose. A sense of purpose is a medium that attaches the leaders to the work or organization they work for. The types of professions and organizational cultures can deepen a sense of purpose in leaders. One respondent said, "Feeling fulfilled by seeing and helping other people succeed." Another respondent said, "The ability to grow a team and community for health and wellness." The pride of being attached to the organization can be seen in

one comment: "Protecting the people and serving the country."

The second common theme was making a difference and impact with leaders' work. These participants found value and saw the impact of the work and the presence they bring to their daily practice. Leaders have walked the journey to where they are now, and making a difference by giving back through their work is a prevalent theme for AAWLs to enjoy what they do. The difference and impact have no size that leaders perceive, but it is through the lens of their enjoyment of their contribution to society. One respondent said, "Seeing my patient smile and make their pain disappear after my treatment makes my day and work enjoyable." Another respondent said, "I enjoy what I do as I can make a difference in someone's life by mentoring them."

The next theme, autonomy and trust, gave leaders the space, power, and authorization to exercise their full potential with the foundation of trust from their subordinates, higher leadership, and organizations. One respondent said, "I get to exercise my ideas without getting afraid of the reactions." The comment about having the trust of an individual's priority was, "Flexibility is important for me to enjoy the work that I do."

The ability and opportunity to build relationships and community is another theme leaders enjoyed about what they do. The essence of this theme was also tied to a sense of purpose and making an impact with their work. One of the respondents said, "Through my work, I rally people together, build a small community that can change, and co-create results with teams." Another reference comment about culture was, "I teach people about culture through my

work, having conversations and interacting especially with soldiers, and I enjoy the relationship I build through my own culture."

The last theme in this category, individual growth, was one of the reasons leaders enjoy what they do. The individual growth mindset came from receiving, giving, learning, and being from external and internal sources. The comments to support the last theme were "Working with people willing to help each other grow," "I am also growing while mentoring and leading others," and "Having the opportunity to explore and learn for my growth."

Summary

This chapter presented the findings of qualitative analysis to explore the four research questions based on the research objectives. The research questions were designed to explore how Asian American women in leadership across the United States navigate ethnic/racial identity and leadership identity through life experiences, careers, and self-reflections and study three areas as focal points of the study: individual's ethnic/ racial identity, leadership identity, and organizational climate/environment. The research data explained the values, challenges, and opportunities and finds the balance for an individual's identity through stories and narratives where leaders choose to honor, imitate, expand, or even refute what they have learned, continue to learn, and unlearn. A synthesis of themes that emerged from the research questions is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

The Intersection of Themes

Themes	E/R Identity	ERI Impact on Leadership Identity	Successful Leadership	Org Climates and Environments
Leading by service			x	
Work ethics and stability	x			
Cultural barriers and fear of being misunderstood	x			
Empathy and Connection	x	x		
Family values	x			
Equity and Social justice		x		
Authenticity and individuality		x		x
Service and Empowerment				
Communication and Collaboration		x		
Diversity and Inclusion	x	x	x	x
Family Oriented way of leading		x		
Autonomy/Trust			x	x
Growth	x	x	x	x
Meaningful interventions at system, teams, and individual level				x

Chapter 5 will present and discuss the conclusions, implications, and recommendations based on each research question's emergent and dominant themes and design criteria. It will also discuss the interpretations and implications of how AAWLs see the connection between ethnic/racial identity and the development of leadership identity and where they intersect and impact successful leadership identity. Chapter 5 will also discuss the implications of the study's findings, the limitations of the study, and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this research was to understand the intersection of Ethnic-Racial identities and the development of leadership identity in AAWLs in the United States and the impact on the success of leadership. Three objectives were at the center of this study:

- An examination of how ethnic/racial identity has an impact on leadership identity,
- An examination of how they define successful leadership,
- A definition of a climate and environment where organizations and communities will support to embrace collective leadership identity.

The results of this study need to provide definite answers to the objectives. However, they offer valuable insights into the thinking of the interpretation, the definitions, implications, and the support system of what community, being inclusive, and growth are for AAWLs. This chapter will discuss the study conclusions and interpretations, implications and recommendations, limitations, and future research directions in more detail. The chapter will conclude with a summary of learnings and reflections from the journey of this study.

Conclusions and Interpretations

I made various interpretations and conclusions by listening to 14 interviews with AAWLs and analyzing the data. Research findings concluded that ethnic/racial identity and leadership identity development intersect in three themes: diversity and inclusion, empathy and connection, and growth. This finding supports the idea that organizations and communities can support

AAWLs to unlock their full potential, foster a positive work environment, and achieve meaningful outcomes for both individuals and the organization by building a solid community, embracing differences and inclusivity, and focusing on growth at the individual, team, and organizational level. The research data uncovers challenges such as navigating social expectations, self-confidence, and fear of being wrong. Opportunities also derive from some bicultural leaders' frame-switching and adaptability skills from their experiences and situational awareness with practical and appreciative mindsets. Hence, they see the opportunities in embracing diversity and inclusion, leading by serving, appreciating different perspectives, and building trust and autonomy. The ultimate foundation of the third conclusion tells researchers about the importance of creating positive and thriving organizational culture as leaders and for leaders.

Research also indicates that AAWLs navigate their ethnic/racial and leadership identity through their experiences, careers, and self-reflection. Leadership identity development is a multifaceted process/journey of learning and unlearning. It is also the selective integration of our values, priorities, personal characteristics, and experiences with the influence of home cultures, history, and the social climate that leaders are in by acting, being, and feeling. Among the four strategies of Berry's (1997) acculturation model, almost all the participants in the study were at the integration of two cultures; in other words, bicultural, which indicates that they are embracing values and practices from both host and original cultural groups. Some participants may have experienced and been triggered at some point in their lives to question, "Who am I really?"

then the journey started to unfold as they committed and paid attention as time went by. The social identity of AAWLs is dense as they represent not only ethnicity and race but also their gender. Hence, navigating their leadership identity is very challenging in finding the balance and making meaningful decisions without losing their individualities. Racho (2012), on Asian American Senior Leaders, concluded:

This study captured the stories of resilient, driven leaders, from their early years growing up to their adventurous career journeys, full of turns and twists, some self-initiated, some unexpected. While different in context, their stories surfaced common themes and attributes such as strong Asian values concerning hard work; willingness to take risks; seeking and receiving mentoring and guidance from others, especially non-Asians; and having a passion for teaching and developing others (p. 68)

The last conclusion was that AAWLs defined successful leadership as creating a positive organizational culture that values service, collaboration, trust, autonomy, diversity, and growth. They define those keywords from the leaders' positions to embody and act them to be successful leaders. The five themes dominate the definitions of successful leadership by AAWLs based on their values, experiences, priorities, and desires for impact. Then, they find a sense of purpose, belonging, making a difference and impact while building relationships and community and continuously growing in an environment where trust and autonomy are norms. Coming from different backgrounds as bicultural leaders, I have a sense from women leaders that they crave more inclusive working

environments and cultures where people and values are centered with the impacts and meanings as the outcomes. Based on the themes discovered in this study, the intention for creating and receiving those environments is striving for both personal and organizational growth.

Implications of This Research

The interview data suggests that the three dominant themes (i.e., community, being inclusive, and growth) are the elements that intersect the three pillars of an individual's ethnic/racial identity, leadership identity, and organizational climate/environment for leaders to have successful leadership.

Organizational Level

By building a strong community that values diversity, inclusion, growth, empathy, and connection, organizations can promote collaboration and a sense of belonging, connections, and support among individuals and teams. By embracing differences and inclusivity, organizations can create a space where people are heard, valued, seen, respected, and included, leading to an inclusive community. By prioritizing growth, organizations can provide opportunities for personal and professional development, enabling them to unfold their full potential and contribute to collective achievement. The three themes are interconnected, reinforcing and complementing each other, directly indicating the importance and the need for positive and thriving organizational culture.

Community Level

The AAPI community is diverse in ethnicity, history, religion, and social and political backgrounds. Stereotyping of the AAPI community has existed for

so long by the system and outside of the community, and the change and movement are mainly reactive to the social reality, which needs urgent actions and awareness to the public. Even within the AAPI community, discrimination, racism, stereotyping, and marginalization of different ethnic groups and social statuses have existed. Only a little progress in change has been seen compared to external reactive initiatives. The sense that I observed from the leaders from various ethnic backgrounds is navigating and finding the balance of what it means to be AAWL from different ethnic backgrounds. Internal and external barriers exist to define those on their terms. Integrating both elements is essential to understand what comes up regarding characteristics when they lead, or things get triggered for them in terms of ethnic/racial elements. Building the capacity internally of leaders would encourage them to fully embrace different aspects of their identity and find their proper rhythm of leading. What this research discovered on three dominant findings of diversity and inclusion, empathy and connection, and growth can also be implied for different ethnic groups in the AAPI community to repair stigma, empower individuality, unite, and build capacity and practices can be applied:

1. Promote empathy and connection: Cultivating cultural understanding and appreciation is one practice to promote empathy and connection through cultural events, dialogues, campaigns, and initiatives. For this to be effective, create a safe and supportive space where empathy and connections are valued. Doing so allows people to share their stories, insights, and experiences within the community regardless of differences.

Furthermore, it creates space, strengthens the connections between community members, and enhances understanding. The importance of empathy in the community, described by Chandara (2022), is that "Some people do not value diverse cultural identities and opt for scapegoating instead. To prevent this, we need to build empathy for people who are like us and those who are not like us" (p. 1). According to Racho (2012), Asian Senior American leaders have a crucial role in narrowing the gap at the top and breaking bamboo ceilings. The only way is "acknowledging and opening up the dialogue about the group-level differences and experiences" (Racho, 2012, p. 70).

2. Diversity and Inclusion: Building a solid and supportive community within the AAPI community is crucial for resistance, representation, and resources for better change. It involves creating spaces, conditions, and situations where individuals from diverse backgrounds can come together, share their perspectives and experiences, support each other, and create a community of belonging, connecting, and learning. Promoting inclusivity and appreciating diversity is critical to combating stereotypes, discrimination, and stigma within the community and enhancing understanding and accepting differences. It involves actively challenging and dismantling stereotypes, biases, and prejudices within and outside the AAPI community. They encourage dialogues and open conversations about learning, connecting, and increasing awareness and understanding by emphasizing diverse experiences and the history of different ethnic

groups. According to Herrera et al. (2013) and McKenna (2007), to address the adverse effects of stereotypes and generalizations on leaders without direct knowledge, diversity, and inclusion can benefit from generating differences to foster innovation tactics.

3. Growth: Empowering individuals and leaders within the AAPI community through personal and professional growth opportunities is crucial for boosting their self-confidence and sense of power in their identity. The initiatives involve providing access to education resources, coaching, group therapy, mentorship, tools and resources, and leadership training and development. Also, matching experienced and skillful leaders with juniors for mentorships and exchanging creative solutions and learnings. Encouraging storytelling and amplifying diverse narratives using different mediums of arts, creativities, and initiatives within the AAPI community can also empower individuals and counter negative stereotypes. Kramer's (2023) study on barriers and challenges of Asian American women in advancing their careers to executives suggests the importance of having mentors and shows that participants have mentors mostly outside their organizations. Chao et al. (1992) confirmed that participants who are in formal or informal mentorship are more successful than those without mentors. Some of the benefits of mentorship have been psychosocial and career advancements (Kram, 1985).

Recommendations for Organizational Development Practices

Based on the findings and themes identified in the research, I have some recommendations for organizational development practices for leaders and organizations.

AAWLs can develop a stronger sense of self by engaging and committing to internal processes through self-reflection, self-learning, customized coaching, and active engagements with the broader community. For leaders to navigate the complexity of their ethnic/racial identity and embrace their collective leadership identity, they can benefit from vertical self-development practices to deepen their awareness and understanding of what shapes how they interpret and interact with their environments. Vertical development refers to "supporting people to transform their current way of making sense towards a broader perspective" (Cook-Greuter, 2004, p. 3) and defines an individual's progressive growth through stages of increasing socio-emotional and cognitive sophistication (Cook-Greuter & Miller, 1994; Kegan, 1982; Petrie, 2014; Torbert, 1987). At each stage, people develop increasingly sophisticated and inclusive meaning-makings and points of view of selves (Jones et al., 2020). Leaders also must bear in mind that internal work is a journey that requires commitment and desire to be open, learn and accept. The self-journey can benefit from embracing cultural heritage where leaders can learn about themselves and others through research, dialogues, and conversations, building support networks where they can share diverse experiences and support each other, challenging biases and stereotypes where they can continuously challenge and question the stereotypes and biases exist in

the society, in community and most importantly confront of those exist in themselves, and welcoming the intersectionality and balance of different facets of identity such as race, ethnicity, gender, social, economic backgrounds, and sexuality. Self-development is a recommendation that can help AAWLs to discover and make sense of who they are. However, Cook-Greuter (2013) said, "While vertical development can be invited and the environment optimally structured towards growth, it cannot be forced. People can be who they are at any station in life" (p. 3). Vertical development differs from horizontal development, which is more technical, structured, and skill-based, where presenting problems and approaches are clearly defined (Jones et al., 2020). A strong sense of who they are as leaders and humans has an impact and transverses the energy on how they show up and how they lead, which not only impacts the environment but also on leaders. One of the respondents said that uncomfortable situations in her life have always questioned her identity, and the transformation unfolded once she started her journey of finding her identity.

Organizations can also benefit by promoting and embracing vulnerability in leadership to foster connection, empathy, and growth. Leaders do not need to fit into one box of what leaders should be but instead embrace who they are as humans and leaders and expand their connection and capability for more significant societal impact. Vulnerability was not considered a great leadership trait in the past. However, lately, there has been research and evidence on how it can contribute to leadership effectiveness and overall organizational outcomes. One myth of vulnerability in leadership is that "oversharing, being emotional and

sensitive, and is generally viewed as a weakness and a risk in business" (Ward, 2020, p. 2). Brown (2019) asserted that "Vulnerability is not only a leadership trait and practice but rather must be encouraged as a norm across the organization so that it can cultivate what it means for individuals and prepare for mistakes, risk-taking, and resilience" (p. 19). Vulnerability does not mean oversharing our personal lives or does not need severe measures for leaders. Being vulnerable can be as simple as admitting their imperfections as leaders and their decisions and taking responsibility for them. Murphy (2019) concluded that "if an employee believes their company openly shares the challenges facing it, that employee is about ten times more likely to recommend it as a great employer" (p. 1). Ward (2020) concluded that:

Vulnerability is a factor in many key performance indicators of an organization. The vulnerability impacts the bottom line and the people in an organization. It drives building teams, creativity and innovation, trust, diversity and inclusion, employee satisfaction, productivity, retention, and overall business success. (p. 17)

Currently, in the world of constant change that organizations and leaders are in, AAWLs can benefit personally and professionally from learning, developing, and practicing vulnerable leadership traits. Leaders can also challenge themselves as a growth factor to better connect with their teams, have practical and meaningful performance conversations, and hold a sense of community and inclusivity by creating a space of risk-taking by modeling and encouraging others to do the same. Brown (2018) asserted the courage to be vulnerable as "it is not about

winning or losing; it is about the courage to show up when you cannot predict or control the outcome" (p.19).

Limitations

There were several limitations in this study. The sample size was small to understand the generational progress patterns in navigating their ethnic/racial and leadership identity. The experiences and years of leadership in the sample size varied, and only the leaders who have been in leadership positions for more than 10 years may have a deep understanding of what influences their development of leadership identity. Young leaders have yet to experience expansively by the research subject. The sample size for age, ethnicity, years of experience, and industry was small to understand better the complete picture of how the subject's impact on each category due to rich diversity in terms of the generational element, the nature of the industry, diverse ethnic history and cultures, exposure to prominent social realities in the United States.

Suggestions for Additional Research

Padilla (2008) notes that second generations keep more in touch with the values and cultures of the domestic country's culture and their family's origin. Some shifts in the AAPI community regarding the social reality vary by generation with the rise of social protests across the country resulting from Asian hate Crimes. I believe that studying at each generation level of AAPI women leaders and comparing the findings would be beneficial for the AAPI community to eliminate the misunderstanding of the generational gap towards the issues and which can open more opportunities for learning and strategies to accommodate

the needs and address the emerging issues in inclusive and meaningful ways instead of reacting. However, more proactive ways to form what truly represents the community in a more unified tone.

Further research on the three common themes (i.e., empathy and connection, diversity and inclusion, growth) would be beneficial to validate the conclusion that those themes are for AAWLs to fully embrace the collective leadership identity, how they intersect the element of ethnic/racial identity with supportive organizational climates, and additional research on how those themes are necessary ingredients for lasting collective leadership success.

Summary of Learnings

This research suggests an intersection of ethnic/racial identity in developing leadership identity for AAWLs. The leadership identity is complex and multifaceted, especially when leaders have more elements involved in finding the balance between the culture and values from three different dimensions of self, background, and society, which can collide and clash. Finding who we are is a personal choice; no society nor community can enforce that. The journey is liberating and enriching as people experience it throughout their lives. I learned that each journey is unique for the individual, and the stories and the narratives we listen to are in our interpretations. We may only partially reflect someone's experience. One significant learning is the power of vulnerability through conversations. Through conversations, I have experienced the courage, power, connection, and yearning for their true self from 14 AAWLs in the United States, which leaves me to explore more depth into who I am and learn it through the

unfolding journey. Another learning is the power of open conversations with women, as they have much to offer society and the world. Someone struggling with her identity and self-confidence can benefit from open conversations through presence, openness, and learning. This research and experience can calibrate for more openings and opportunities of possibilities and meaningful engagements in the future for me.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Interview Questions

Career

- a. What is your role at work? (Either at current or previous work)
- b. What do you enjoy the most about your job?
- c. How long you have been in the leadership position?
- d. Can you please walk us through your journey to getting to where you are now?

Ethnic-Racial background

- e. What is your ethnicity origin?
- f. Do you identify yourself as Asian American? How do you identify yourself in terms of ethnic-racial background as growing up?
- g. What impact your background and family values have on you and your connection to your Asian culture?
- h. Were there triggers in your life that heightened your self-awareness of your Ethnic-Racial background?
- i. If so, what elements influence the most in forming your ethnic-racial identity?

Leadership Identity

- j. What does a successful leadership mean to you?
- k. How satisfied are you with your leadership skills?
- l. As an ethnic woman in leadership position, what challenges, and opportunities you see compared to your coworkers?
- m. How do Ethnic-Racial elements show up in developing your leadership identity and how it is enacted?
- n. During the Covid era and at the high of Asian hate Crimes around the country, what was your reaction to the social reality of Asian American Women in Leadership?
- o. Do you agree that your ethnic-racial identity has a somewhat direct impact on your leadership identity?
- p. If so, what kind of impact your ethnic-racial identity has on the way you lead?

Organizational/Environmental Support

- a. In your experiences, what do you think was helpful for you in terms of organization climate and environment which can support and embrace the ownership of your collective leadership identity?

Appendix B: Informed Consent

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ADULT PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT

Title of Study: THE INTERSECTION OF ETHNIC-RACIAL IDENTITIES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEADERSHIP IDENTITY FOR ASIAN AMERICAN WOMEN LEADERS AND THE IMPACT ON THEIR SUCCESS

Investigator: Nann ChanChan Aye, contact number: 626-318-7059

Faculty Advisor: Kent Rhodes, Ph.D.: 949-422-3762

The study about this topic will help the researcher to understand and discover the link between the understudied areas of Asian American Women leaderships and the impact of ethnic-racial identities on their leadership identity. The study of new findings will provide more information on the area of Asian American women leadership and their identities and help communities and organizations to learn how to create the environments where Asian American women leaders can thrive.

If you agree to participate in this study, the project will involve:

- 12 to 15 Females who identified themselves as Asian American leaders.
- Procedures will include signing Informed consent form and participating in one 45- minute interview with Research Investigator.
- Only one interview is required.
- There are no more than minimal risks associated with this study.
- You will not be paid for your participation.
- You will also be provided a copy of this consent form.

You are invited to take part in this research study. The information in this form is meant to help you decide whether to participate. If you have any questions, please ask.

You are being asked to be in this study because you meet the criteria for the research.

This topic is understudied for Asian American women, and it is important to understand what dynamics and factors contributed to successful leadership identity and hear what each's stories in forming those identities. The study will examine the role of Ethnic-Racial identity in developing leadership identity, the impacts on leadership styles, the definition of successful leadership, the reaction of the leaders to social reality, and what climate and environments better support collective leadership identity.

Details about this study are discussed below.

The study interview is no more than 45 minutes of your time to participate in the video conference call (zoom). 12 to 15 participants will be participating in the study.

The steps required by you to participate in this study are as follows:

1. Read and understand the cover letter to the consent form provided through email.
2. Read, understand, and sign the consent form and email back to the researcher.

Once the consent form is received by the Research Investigator, she will contact and arrange a timeslot to participate in the interview and email you the zoom invite.

3. Participate in the interview through zoom or your preferred application.

There is potential risk of confidentiality breach beyond the research investigator's capabilities. This research presents a minimal risk of emotional and psychological distress because the questions involve some extent of sensitivity about your identity's formation regarding your ethnicity, race and leadership style. However, you may not get any benefit from being in this research study. The benefits to science and society may include better understanding of the relationship of ethnic/racial identity and leadership identities which can help the communities, researchers, and organizations to better create the environments where Asian Americans leaders can thrive.

There is no cost to you for being a participant in this research study. Your welfare is the major concern of every member of the research team. If you have a problem as a direct result of being in this study, you should immediately contact one of the people listed at the beginning of this consent form.

All information collected will be kept confidential, no personal information will be collected and saved. You will also be asked for permission to AUDIO record to collect data. The video(zoom) session will NOT be recorded. Participants will not be identified in any report or publication about this study. To protect your identity, interviews will be only recorded in real-time audio form, and they will be deleted once the interviews are transcribed. For the storage of the transcript files, they will be named in numbers not in your name or anyway which can identify you as a participant. All stored data such as transcripts and aggregate findings will be destroyed once the study is published. All the records of communication such as emails or chats between participants and the research investigator will be

permanently deleted once the interviews are over. The data will be stored electronically through a secure server and will only be seen by the research team during the study and will be destroyed after the study is complete.

The only persons who will have access to your research records are the study personnel, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Pepperdine University, and any other person, agency, or sponsor as required by law. The information from this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but the data will be reported as group or summarized data and your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. For study related questions, please contact the investigator listed at the beginning of this form. For questions concerning your rights or complaints about the research contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB):

Phone 1(310) 568-2305

Email: gpsirb@pepperdine.edu

You can decide not to be in this research study, or you can stop being in this research study ("withdraw") at any time before, during, or after the research begins for any reason. Deciding not to be in this research study or deciding to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the investigator or with Pepperdine University (list others as applicable)

You are voluntarily deciding whether or not to be in this research study. Signing this form means that (1) you have read and understood this consent form, (2) you have had the consent form explained to you, (3) you have had your questions answered and (4) you have decided to be in the research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Participant Feedback Survey To meet Pepperdine University's ongoing accreditation efforts and to meet the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs (AAHRPP) standards, an online feedback survey is included below:
<https://forms.gle/nnRgRwLgajYzBq5t7>

Participant's Agreement:

I have read and understand the information provided above and the cover letter about the study provided by the research investigator. I have asked all the questions I have currently. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

Printed Name:_____
Name of Research Participant: Please Print

Date:

Participant Signature:_____
Signature of Research Participant**Investigator certification:**

My signature certifies that all elements of informed consent described on this consent form have been explained fully to the subject. In my judgment, the participant possesses the capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research and is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent to participate.

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date: