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Pink Bamboo Ceiling: Barriers and Breakthroughs for Asian American Women Leaders

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Abstract

Pink Bamboo Ceiling Barriers and Breakthroughs for Asian American Women Leaders

by

Mele Kramer

MS, Walden University, 2018

BS, New York University, 1999

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Industrial and Organizational Psychology

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Abstract

Asian Americans are the most diverse and fastest-growing minority group in the U.S and have the highest average level of education of all minority and dominant groups in America, making up 6.2 % of the labor market. However, Asian Americans overall hold one percent of the executive leadership roles in Fortune 500 organizations. Low leadership representation leaves this demographic without a decision-making voice and without power in society. The purpose of this qualitative study was to learn about the lived experiences of Asian American women (AAW) leaders and potential leaders as it pertains to race, gender, and stereotypes in the workplace along with learning about their leadership style, model leader characteristics, and any career support they received. The theoretical framework used was from Crenshaw's Intersectionality framework and Biernat's Shifting Standards Theory (SST) for analyzing AAW experiences. Data were collected through qualitative interviews of 19 Asian American women (AAW), between the ages of 18-65 years old, who worked in U.S. organizations and analyzed through descriptive thematic coding. The resulting themes were: (a) Experiences of race, gender , and stereotyping of AAW (b) Leadership qualities of AAW (c) Career Support (d) Family background (e) Positive social change implications. This research is relevant to Organizational Psychology, Occupational Health, and Management Theory in terms of personnel diversity, competitive advantage, organizational leadership equality, and worker retention. The study results intend to bring awareness about the AAW experience and suggest future research and recommendations for positive social change to increase support of AAW as executive leaders in U.S. organizations and government roles.

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Dedication

"In societies where men are truly confident of their own worth women are not merely tolerated but valued" ~ Aung San Suu Kyi

I dedicate this research not only to Asian American women but to all women and men in the workplace. May this study open minds about Asian American women and shed light on their unique lived experiences so we can learn how to become a more inclusive and compassionate society and workplace. Hopefully, it can be a reminder that organizations function because of their people, not in spite of their workers. I urge leaders to consider their legacy by choosing present actions that will positively affect the future of the United States. Representation of a diverse population, including Asian women in the workplace, is a vital contributing factor that should not be ignored. Perhaps the role of our organizations should be to ensure competitive advantage by developing diverse leaders that reflect the climate and culture of today's society, securing sustainability for our children's future. To drive leadership development that reflects the American *melting pot* society, and be the trailblazer providing diversity leadership succession. After all, the American Dream is our hallmark and the model for the world, which is arguably slipping away with each passing day. For Asian American women, I hope I have presented your voices well. I urge you to have the courage to amplify your own voice because you are valuable. Find mentors, be mentors and "power through" opposition, so you may be the model for all our daughters' and sons' futures. You are Americans, and you belong here. It is time to move beyond the 1% leadership representation. If not now, when? If not you, then who?

"Be not afraid of going slowly. Be afraid of standing still" ~ Chinese Proverb

In loving memory of three people who deeply affected my life.

My brother John P. Weaver, M.D.

Grandmother Katherine Popiel.

Uncle Ron M. Gillis

Thank you for your love, inspiration and support that fueled my determination to complete this dissertation.

May you rest in peace.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the study

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study is to learn about the lived experiences of Asian American women (AAW) potential and established leaders in the workplace to gain a better understanding of how race, gender, and stereotypes, or other barriers may be preventing them from ascending into leadership roles. The goal of this research is to learn how these issues affect their upward trajectory into leadership roles in organizations. According to Yu (2020), "Asians comprise 6.2% of the overall U.S. labor market, have the highest average level of education (Mani & Trines, 2018) and are the fastest growing and most diverse racial group in the country, but continue to be unrepresented in executive leadership. Especially Asian American Women" (p. 1). Asian Americans overall hold one percent of the executive leadership roles in Fortune 500 organizations. Asian American women are even less representation than Asian men (Hyun, 2005). Low or no leadership representation leaves them without visibility, voice or power during critical decision-making. This study explored AAW workplace experiences to help understand barriers may prevent them from ascending into leadership roles. There is very little research data about AAW leaders (Yu, 2020). It is essential to learn more about how and why AAW are not represented as executive leaders in U.S. organizations. Recent research showed an increase in organizational performance when Asian Americans were leading (Gündemir et al., 2019). Asian leadership gap is puzzling since they have demonstrated value as leaders according to Gündemir et al., (2019).

In this chapter, the following will be discussed, the current context regarding women leaders, research progress and data regarding minority leaders, research gap regarding AAW leaders, recent research regarding the impact of Asian Americans as organizational leaders and why more research is needed to understand the low percentage of AAW leaders, diversity focus in the workplace and history of discrimination and how it affects minority ascension. The research methodology is included along with details on theoretical and conceptual framework for this research. The chapter addressed performance standards and how stereotype bias may be influencing promotion outcomes. The chapter begins with a context using the example of the recent 2020 elections. It then moves into a brief history of diversity progress as well as how diversity and discrimination in the workplace affects leadership ascension. The methodology is general qualitative research using Crenshaw's (1989/1993) intersectionality theoretical framework along with Biernat's (1991/2003) Shifting Standards theory. The chapter also looked at performance standards and how stereotype bias may be influencing promotion outcomes. This research is relevant to Organizational Psychology and Management Theory regarding performance outcomes, equal opportunity employment, and diversity in the workplace.

In 2018, thirty-six women became new members of the United States House of Representatives. The newly elected women, along with the sixty-six incumbent representatives, totaled 102 Congresswomen serving in the Washington, D.C. House of Representatives (Lu & Collins, 2018). In the 2020 election, Kamala Harris became the first woman to be elected as Vice President of the United States of America. Not only

was she the first woman Vice President in the U.S., but she is also the first woman of African American and South Asian American descent to rise to this leadership position. The election demonstrates a formidable victory for breaking the *glass ceiling.* The *glass ceiling* is a term used to describe the "Invisible barrier preventing women from ascending into organizational leadership roles" (Zimmer, 2015). Kamala Harris's accomplishment is a significant breakthrough for minority women in government, breaking the *glass ceiling* and opened the door for other minority women seeking future leadership positions. As of the 2020 election, AAW holds 2% of the Senate seats and 1.8% of the House of Representative seats. Asian Americans collectively hold 7% and 3% overall seats in the Senate and House, respectively (Senate.gov website, 2021). In 1995, A 21-member bipartisan committee appointed by President Bush established The Federal Glass Ceiling Commission to address women and the workplace, and now include minority issues in the workplace (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995). Although the congressional election shows promise for minority women rising into high government leadership roles, a significant gap in Asian Americans, especially AAW seeking leadership advancement, continues to be present across various industries.

Background

Asian American are underrepresented as leaders in the United States public and private sectors. AAW are particularly underrepresented as leaders. In the private sector, a study conducted by, LeanIn.Org with McKinsey & Company analyzed 329 organizations employing 13 million people to determine female leadership in the corporate workplace. "Of the 68,500 men and women workers, only 5% were women of color in senior

leadership roles and only 4% [were] in C-Suite positions compared to white women at 18% and 21% respectively" (Sawhney, 2019). The LeanIn.Org data showed a significant leadership gap for white and minority women, with a higher disparity for women of color. Research by Kawahara et al. (2013) present Asian Americans as even less represented as organizational leaders. Their study showed the number of "Asian American executives, officers, and directors included 96 men and women who held 127 seats at Standard & Poor 1500 companies during 2004, which represented less than 1% total seats" (p. 240). Over the years, additional research showed similar data.

Research by Gee and Peck (2018) also looked explicitly at Silicon Valley, where Asians are over 25% of the population. They found that in Asian dominant industries such as technology, accounting, government, and law, there was a significant absence of Asian American leaders. According to their study, Asians who graduated from prestigious law schools in the top 10% of their class only held associate positions in top-rated law firms. They also found Asian Americans had the highest attrition rates at these firms (Gee & Peck, 2018). Their research is similar to details from Goldman Sachs and other industrial, professional workforce data. "On a national scale, Goldman Sachs reported 27% of its U.S. professional workforce was Asian American, but only 11% were U.S. executives or senior managers. None of its executive officers were Asian Americans. In the federal sector, 9.8% of the workforce was Asian American, of which only 4.4% were at the highest federal level" (p. 3-5). Ascend, which is the Asian division for the Harvard Business Review, published a 2017 paper that found similar data for Asian Americans working towards partnership in accounting firms. Ascend reported 20%

of the accounting firm workforce were Asian Americans, but most of them were on the Associate level. Despite overall progress for women breaking the *glass ceiling*, research shows a gap in Asian Americans leaders overall, with AAW significantly underrepresented as in leadership roles.

Hyun (2005) described this gap in popular terms and coined it as *the bamboo ceiling*, which is a side take on the *glass ceiling,* specifying a barrier facing Asian Americans pursuing leadership advancement. Over 15 years later, the leadership data has not changed much for AAW. Hyun (2005) quantified the invisibility of AAW, "Out of 10,092 Fortune 500 corporate officers in 2002 only 30 (0.29%) were Asian Women" (p. xviii). Hyun (2005). Gee and Peck (2018) also mentioned AAW are not in boardrooms of either the private or federal sectors. The lack of AAW voice in C-Suites creates invisibility during critical diversity and organization strategy discussions. According to these studies, Asian American, and specifically AAW, continue to be the least likely to be promoted into management positions (Johnson & Sy, 2016; Yu, 2020). The various research data represent a consistent disproportionate gap of AAW leaders across many industries and professions even when their contribution is considered relevant to organizational success. Reynold Associates (2014) underscored, AAW face double jeopardy: "With the exception of females in the Chief Human Resources Officer [CHRO] role, minorities, and females are sorely underrepresented in all the C-suites" (p. 10). Although many strides were made by President Bush's 21-member Glass Ceiling Commission (1995b) under Title II of the Civil Rights Act, data regarding the Asian American population was missing (Yu, 2020). This omission is a concern since the lack

of data for AAW creates issue invisibility in the workplace. Thus, it excluded them as a population that needs support and resources.

The lack of leadership representation for AAW brings up an important question: Why are Asian Americans less likely to assume leadership roles when they are highly educated and capable? Yu (2020) argues, the lack of data regarding Asian Americans and the Asian racial stereotypes are barriers to their progress. According to Yu (2020), "Asians are the least visible of all minority groups, evident by their lack of inclusion on workplace discrimination research involving denied promotion opportunities, in part, due to their small sample size, but primarily because of a pervasive stereotype that Asians achieve universal occupational success and are not disadvantaged minorities, commonly known as the *model minority* myth" (p. 1). The *model minority* stereotype perceives Asian Americans as highly educated minority population (Mani & Trines, 2018), that are doing "just fine" and do not need assistance, which is problematic on many levels. Other research by Kawahara et al. (2013) suggests Asian Americans face adverse effects from both positive and negative stereotypes. Negative stereotypes about Asian Americans include "social introversion, emotional withdrawal, verbal inhibitions, passivity, a quiet demeanor and a reserved manner (Sy et al., 2010, p. 210), which are not considered the ideal of leadership occupations" (Kawahara et al., 2013, p. 241). They explain some of these perceptions carry a different semantic meaning within traditional Asian values. In Western culture, Asians are often misunderstood, which affects being perceived as leaders in Western society. Despite seemingly positive stereotypes that omit Asians from being affiliated with criminal behaviors, the false perception of the *model minority* and

other racial stereotypes create barriers for Asian Americans, leaving them isolated and alienated in the workplace (and society) without support.

Regarding Asian American leaders' positive contribution, a study by Gündemir et al. (2019) found an increase in productivity when Asian Americans were leading, especially during an organizational crisis or periods of decline. Their study analyzed archival data of 4,951 CEOs across five decades. Their findings showed that "Asian American leaders were often chosen during times of decline due to being perceived as self-sacrificing and better equipped to be leaders" (p. 107). They looked at success factors embodied by Asian leaders aligned with the Five-Factor Model traits of leadership: extroversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (Grice, 2019). Asian leaders were seen as "self-sacrificing," which aligned with "conscientiousness," and had an openness to experience. Openness to experience indicates an individual's inquisitiveness, thoughtfulness, and propensity for intellectually challenging tasks. Conscientiousness refers to an individual's sense of responsibility and duty as well as foresight (Grice, 2019). Of the Five-Factor model traits, the two qualities of openness and conscientiousness reflect the Asian Authentic leadership style (Burris et al., 2013). In their research, Burris et al. (2013) explain, "[An] authentic leader is confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, moral/ethical, future-oriented, and gives priority to developing associates to be leaders. The authentic leader is true to him/herself" (p. 260). The current financial crisis exacerbated by COVID-19 and may be an opportunity for Asian American leaders to demonstrate their abilities, leverage recognition, and secure future positions as executive leaders.

Diversity in organizations is positive for productivity and performance when supported and aligned (Goldberg et al., 2019; Goswami & Goswami, 2018; Lorenzo & Reeves, 2018; Powers, 2018; Turban et al., 2019). Specifically, Lorenzo and Reeves (2018) found "Companies with above-average total diversity, measured within six dimensions of diversity (migration, industry, career path, gender, education, age), had both 19% points higher innovation revenues and 9% points higher EBITA margins, on average. All six dimensions of diversity had statistically significant correlations with innovation, both individually and collectively" (p. 3). Asian American men and women have a unique opportunity to step up and contribute vital attributes and skills in recovering from the economic crisis. It is also an opportunity for Asian Americans to secure leadership recognition and stability, including ongoing leadership collaboration beyond the situation. The relevance of diverse workers positively impacting performance and productivity and research presenting increased organizational performance as more Asian American leaders emerge to support the need to research the AAW leadership gap. However, AAW leaders' invisibility poses a professional concern and carries over into social, mental health, and economic disadvantage for AAW on the micro and macro levels. Lack of adequate research leaves them without data to support and address their needs. Lack of support and resources affect their unique population, and may inhibit their ability to be a valuable economic contributor to our national completive advantage in innovation and productivity. Discriminating, whether conscious or unconscious, against any minority population warrants policy change with the intention for positive social change.

Issues regarding the complexity of inclusion acceptance are underscored by Zhang's (2017) research indicating laws are not enough to ensure workplace inclusion. The study looked at how *regulatory acceptance* and *normative acceptance* factor into an organization's diversity success concerning women leaders. The research showed that even when regulatory acceptance was present, employees did not accept female leadership change unless the culture supporting them was also accepted and socialized within its company culture. In other words, the law did not change attitudes (Zhang, 2017). However, her research found that female leaders are more likely to succeed if normative acceptance is present. Simply put, women leaders' success must be socialized into the organization's culture *(normative acceptance). Normative acceptance* of women leaders may be a parallel indicator for Equal Employment Opportunity Commission EEOC diversity regulations, and why, in some circumstances, race and gender acceptance still has not generalized to normative or social acceptance in the workplace. Despite efforts to ensure diversity and inclusion in the workplace, *normative acceptance* is only one barrier for minorities seeking leadership advancement.

Shifting standards research by Biernat et al. (1991) found judgments are influenced by relative comparisons that are subjective, and may be imposed by onlookers (Biernat et al., 1991). Meaning, an objective measurement may be shifted in perception based on race or gender. For example, a person's height may measure at 5'9." The Shifting Standards model says the evaluation becomes a *subjective* evaluation when gender is included. For instance, a woman, 5'9' may be perceived as tall. However, a male evaluation may determine 5'9" is short for a man. It becomes more complicated in

the work environment. Performance evaluations are critical for the success of employees, including advancement. The Biernat (2003) study found based on shifting standards in work assessments, race and gender had complex implications. She refers to a *common-rule* standard in the workplace, which means *common rule or* understanding is, white men are to be leaders. This default will take precedent when race and gender are present. When all is equal, the *common-rule* standard stereotype will prevail. Her research discusses how objective performance and personnel evaluation bias are projected onto the external candidate or internal employee seeking advancement, which is based on both *subjective* evaluation and *common-rule* standards. These bias's have a lot to do with advancement outcomes. Additional complexities surround positive performance evaluations regarding zero-sum and nonzero-sum outcomes. The zero-sum result is finite; a person receives a promotion or not. Nonzero sum outcomes are infinite, such as positive support in the workplace and positive work evaluations. However, when performance evaluations are equal, women and minority men were placed lower than white male counterparts with the same rating if force ranked. The shifting standard model would say this is due to females being *subjectively* rated high "for a woman" on an individual performance review. Still, by *common rule,* men are perceived to be better leaders than women when it comes to promotions (Biernat, 2003). The findings are interesting since the bias starts with lower expectations for the stereotyped demographic, and therefore when promotions are presented, the *common rule* standard bias prevails.

Crenshaw (1991/1993) emphasizes intersectionality as a framework describing the African American women's experience through the complex nature of multiple

dimensions axes. Hall et al., (2019) research expand upon the Intersectionality Theory model by looking at the Mosaic of demographic characteristics that impact stereotypes and intersectionality. Mosaic model researchers discuss each demographic characteristic's impact and how the target population experiences bias. For example, how does each demographic feature make a difference in how the population experiences prejudice. Perception of a group based on their features, is vital to look at within organizational psychology and management theory. The experience of being a white female is very different from being a white male. The experience of being a black female is very different from being a black male, and so on with each race, gender, and other characteristics (Hall et al., 2019). Asian Americans' unique stereotypes, or demographic features, although seemingly positive, are potential barriers to career advancement.

Tinkler et al. (2019) add to the discussion with their research on *Intersectional Invisibility* and *Differences in Stereotyping* work. Their study describes the double bind white and nonwhite women in positions of power face. To become leaders, women must appear competent, demonstrating assertive behavior; but is against their gender stereotype expectation and face backlash. If they do not act authoritative enough, they are not seen as qualified to be a leader. This research has been primarily with white women (Brescoll and Uhlmann, 2008; Rudman, 1998; Rudman et al., 2012; Williams and Tiedens, 2016). Further aspects are revealed in their research which includes intersectionality, stereotypes, and reactions to authoritative behaviors. Black Americans and white Americans' authoritative behaviors were perceived and rewarded differently depending upon race and gender (Livingston and Pearce, 2009; Livingston, Rosette, and

Washington, 2012; Pedulla, 2014). Black women who behaved authoritatively received less backlash than white women who acted authoritatively.

The results were explained by the intersectionality invisibility research (Tinkler et al., 2019). Those with multiple subordinate identities experienced social invisibility, and their behaviors were less likely to be recalled (Purdie-Vaughn, and Eiback, 2008). In the case of black women leaders, it allowed them to avoid backlash for authoritative behavior (Tinkler et al., 2019). AAW leaders have a double submissive stereotype that is "less easily categorized and less strongly associated with race and gender stereotypes of their social group." (Tinkler et al., 2019) explained intersectional invisibility might be a barrier for AAW. "Asian Americans are stereotyped as more feminine and deferential than other racial groups, traits that are negatively associated with leadership" (Chen 1999; Garg et al., 2018; Ho and Jackson, 2001; Lin et al., 2005). Therefore, Tinkler et al. (2019) assert the intersectional invisibility is problematic for AAW. Suppose they display dominance; they would be violating stereotypes about Asian women's deference behavior. In that case, they could face more backlash than other women, making them likely perceived as the least suitable for leadership. These studies present a complex issue regarding social stereotypes of race, gender that may be barriers that prevent AAW from advancing as leaders.

Public racial stereotypes of Asian Americans such as the *model minority* may be a factor that led to their omission from research, resulting in invisibility as Yu (2020) mentioned. Various stereotypes may be interfering with Asian perceptions as leaders. Without support or resources other minority populations receive, Asian Americans are a

vulnerable at-risk minority population. Yu (2020) argues that the previously assumed *model minority* myth, which subscribes (Asians) to collective success, created invisibility that costs them by being omitted from inclusion and diversity research of 1995 *Glass Ceiling* and other research that allocates resources. By being overlooked for assistance, this population is specifically racially discriminated against, which may be another factor impeding leadership progress in the workplace (Gee & Peck, 2017). Since research on AAW is not a priority for many organizations and the government, AAW have had to find support systems independently. Career development, leadership training, mentorship, and other required business networking skills are essential to ensure career success. Without these resources and skills, AAW are disadvantaged for fair and equal opportunities for leadership advancement.

Industrial and Organizational Psychology (I/O Psychology) looks to enhance human well-being and performance in organizational work and work settings (SIOP, 2020). I/O Psychology stemmed from the primary branch of Psychology. It became relevant during landmark historical events such as World War I (WWI), World War II (WWII), the Great Depression, and the Civil Rights movement, where tremendous physical and cultural changes were taking place nationally and globally. The need for industrial productivity was vital to our nation and economy (Saklofske & Zeidner, 1995). Today organizational psychologists continue to contribute to organizational success by reviewing and consulting on workplace processes through research, scientifically reporting on needs, and sharing industry trends. The Society of Industrial and Organizational Psychologists (SIOP) provides analysis and information relating to the

workplace's annual trends and conditions, evaluated by their consultant and research member base. For the past five years, workplace diversity concerns have been among the "Top 10 Trends," consistently ranking as the number two trend from 2015 to 2020 (SIOP, 2020). Since the Civil Rights Act of the 1960s, racial discrimination, and reparations through diversity regulation have been a heated issue in the workplace. Despite over fifty years since the Civil Rights Act, the resistance to change continues. Subtle forms of discrimination or microaggressions and stereotyping may still be barriers to advancement for AAW and other minorities in the workplace.

Asian Americans have remarkably high education levels and comprise a disproportionate percentage of Ivy League graduates and income (Mani & Trines, 2018). Yet, they remain underrepresented in top leadership positions in organizations, especially Asian American women AAW (Gündemir et al., 2019; Hyun, 2005; Johnson & Sy, 2016; Yu, 2020). Research thus reveals a deep incongruence between the high levels of education and the low leadership positions for Asian Americans. The *model minority* stereotype (Kitano, 1969, p.257; Wong, 2015, Wu, 2013) refers to Asian Americans as highly intellectual and industrious. However, they hold low to mid-level management positions in organizations. Low leadership representation leaves this demographic without a decision-making voice and without power in society. This stereotype perception supports what Hyun (2005) defined as the *bamboo ceiling* phenomena. Researchers have presented data that showed corporations that supported diversity in the workplace reported high performance and productivity (Lorenzo & Reeves, 2018; Turban et al., 2019). Further, Gündemir et al. (2019) found, as Asian American leaders emerge in

the workplace, organizational performance improved. However, Asian Americans, specifically AAW in leadership roles, remain under one percent (Hyun, 2005; Kawahara et al., 2013; Gee & Peck, 2017). The gap between AAW leaders is significant and warrants a need for research to discover the issues that may be barriers to workplace advancement into executive leadership roles.

Diversity in the workplace has been a priority and trend for over ten years, according to the Society of Industrial and Organizational Psychologists (SIOP, 2020). Although diversity is a focus in the workplace, the history of diversity in America shows a different ideal than the one experienced by minorities. Healy and Stepnick (2017) discuss two reasons for this: a). The American *melting pot* ideal; and b). *The Human Capital Theory*. According to the authors, "the idea of a *melting pot* society would be the process in which different groups come together and contribute roughly equal amounts to co-create a common culture and a new unique society. The belief is to use assimilation as a benign and egalitarian process that emphasized sharing and inclusion" (p. 49). However, each new set of immigrants quickly realized that the *melting pot* ideal was an illusion. Each group experienced unequal rules and competition for resources that prevented smooth assimilation. Sociologist Milton Gordon's *Assimilation in American Life* (1964) clarified the acculturation [assimilation] process as ideally occurring in stages over time" (Healy & Stepnick, 2017).

However, time did not erase prejudices for most immigrants, which includes Asian Americans. Competition for resources led immigrants into forming hierarchies of varying degrees. The higher the status, the more power they had to compete for

resources. The second element of the minority group success exemplifies the *Human Capital Theory*. "The *Human Capital Theory* explains why some new arrivals in America are more successful than others. This theory argues that status attainment, or the level of success achieved by an individual in society, is a direct result of educational levels, personal values and skills, and other individual characteristics and abilities" (Healy & Stepnick, 2017, p. 53). In essence, education is one of the keys for the immigrant to assume higher status. The Asian immigration experience will prove to debunk both *melting pot* and *human capital theories* and raises the puzzling problem that brought Asian Americans to become known as the *model minority*. Last, Healy and Stepnick (2017) emphasize, "Inequality is the most defining characteristic of a minority group. The pattern of inequality is the key" (p. 11). Their research looked at variables that create discrimination, which they describe as "The unequal treatment of a person or persons based on group membership" (p. 485). The degree of disability, disadvantage, exploitation, and exclusion factors inhibit AAW's ability to advance in society. Minority status is not merely the percentage of a group to the majority; status involves a pattern of inequality imposed upon the minority group to prevent a rise in rank or power (Healy & Stepnick, 2017). The practice of repeated disparities will be seen in the brief history of Asian immigration into America and continued throughout their immigration history.

A key barrier to immigration success for Asian Americans is the *pattern* of discrimination and inequality the population experienced. The history of Asian American racism is long and of repeated discrimination design. The discrimination includes pay-disparity through lower wages, foreign income taxes levied upon the immigrant workers,

and various laws preventing the first arriving immigrants from forming families, citizenship, and other resources European immigrants received. Asian immigration history sheds light on the long-term impact of this discrimination pattern, which handicapped them from the outset, and reveals how they have endured. The Chinese were the first Asian immigrant group to arrive back in the 1700s as both slaves and servants. Over the years, more than 19 documented Asian race groups have immigrated to the U.S. from various geographic regions of the world (Census, 2010). Each group has separate histories, language, culture, economic, and social needs. Each has a cultural dimension signature that is unique to their group (Hofstede, 1984). This broad homogenous category created a generalized false stereotype perception of the collective population, which was another barrier they faced while striving to advance in society and as leaders.

In their book, *Diversity & Society*, authors Healy and Stepnick (2017) examined extensive historical and sociological diversity research. The focus of their book looks at diversity concerns in the workplace. According to the authors, "Of the challenges confronting the United States today, those relating to minority groups continue to be among the most urgent and the most daunting. Everyone in our society is, in some sense, an immigrant or a descendent of immigrants. Each wave of newcomers has altered the social landscape of the U.S." (p. xvii). Their research indicates the history of immigration in the U.S. laid the foundation for many complex issues regarding diversity. They assert "When each new wave of immigrants arrives, the landscape of the nation changes" (p.4). They discussed the dynamics of discrimination as it pertains to the initial immigration process, and the challenges the *melting pot* American dream for equal opportunity and

success. The American ideal of a *melting pot* society would be the process in which different groups come together and contribute roughly equal amounts to co-create a common culture and a new unique society. The *melting pot* ideal was also meant to use assimilation as a benign and egalitarian process that emphasized sharing and inclusion" (p. 49). However, each new set of immigrants quickly realized that the *melting pot* was an illusion. Each group experienced unequal rules and competition for resources that prevented smooth assimilation. Sociologist Milton Gordon's *Assimilation in American Life* (1964), clarified the acculturation process as occurring in stages over time" (Healy & Stepnick, 2017). However, time did not erase prejudices for most immigrants, which include Asian Americans. The history of discrimination against Asians in America spans over 300 years. Competition for resources led immigrants into forming hierarchies of varying degrees. The higher the status, the more power they had to compete for resources.

The argument about inclusion and exclusion, unity, and diversity still remains a passionate topic in the workplace, as evidenced by the Society of Industrial and Organizational Psychologists (SIOP) yearly trends. Society and workplace dynamics are contingent on the climate of the current national, economic, cultural conditions, which continually change. The growth of the U.S. has included ongoing immigration, creating a continuous shift in diversity dynamics. These changes may be one of many reasons diversity issues in the workplace remain a troubling trend to resolve. Each year the Society of Industrial and Organizational Psychologists (SIOP) issues the "Top 10 Workplace Trends" article that presents the results of a survey given to roughly 1,000

Society of Industrial and Organizational (I/O) Psychology members in the field. The questionnaire's purpose is to gather information from professional I/O psychology consultants regarding likely important industry focal points for the upcoming year. SIOP explains, "Industrial-Organizational Psychologists (I/O Psychologists) study workplace issues of critical relevance to business, including talent management, coaching, assessment, selection, training, organizational development, performance, and work-life balance" (SIOP, 2016). The annual SIOP survey is significant because it gives I/O Psychologists and industry followers a preview of upcoming demographic and organizational shifts that impact the industry trends. The survey's results provide direction for professional planning designed to bring solutions to organizations for the upcoming year. Diversity in the workplace consistently has been in the "top-ten" trends for the past five years, indicating the need for additional investigation and discussion.

My research focused on AAW potential leaders and current leaders in the workplace. This population is a highly educated population but assumed the least likely to hold leadership roles (Johnson & Sy, 2016; Yu, 2020). The gap in AAW leadership data opens questions about why they are underrepresented in the C-Suites Executive positions. My research focused on historical and current information to discover why the gap in AAW leaders exist, and explore the specific lived experiences of AAW pursuing workplace advancement. It looked at how they navigated the challenges of race, gender, and stereotypes to either achieve success or how it interfered with success in the workplace. This research explored the social, and professional gaps creating barriers for AAW and workplace advancement.

Problem Statement

Women and minorities have made some progress ascending into organizational leadership roles (Sawhney, 2019). However, AAW are disproportionality underrepresented as leaders (Kawahara et al., 2013; Johnson & Sy, 2016; Yu, 2020). The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission laws (EEOC) Federal Title II of the Civil Rights Act (1991) omitted data on Asian Americans pursuing leadership roles (Yu, 2020). As a result, Asian Americans are not represented as leaders who have voice and equality in leadership conversations, putting them at a disadvantage as a minority group. Asian Americans are the most diverse and fastest-growing minority group in the U.S. (Yu, 2020) and have the highest average education level of all minority and dominant groups in America (Mani & Trines, 2018). However, they hold less than one percent of the executive leadership roles in Fortune 500 organizations (Hyun, 2005; Kawahara et al., 2013; Gee & Peck, 2017). Yu (2020) argues that the previously assumed *model minority* myth, which subscribes to Asian collective success, is inaccurate and costs them. Being omitted from the EEOC Federal Title II report and other diversity research leaves this population invisible without a voice within the national diversity dialog, which is an economic and social concern for AAW and a potential competitive advantage missed opportunity for organizations.

The impact of stereotypes such as *model minority* or other specific Asian gendered perceptions of Asian women such as exotic and submissive (Mukkamala & Suyemoto, 2018) is problematic for AAW seeking to promote leadership roles. According to Kawahara et al. (2013), AAW are challenged with a different kind of

stereotype. The work of Louie (2000), explains the concern, “leadership in the form of social advocacy has not been studied among AAW because they are portrayed stereotypically to be passive and apolitical [and] portrayed in the media as demure and obedient, as sex objects, and victim of a patriarchal traditional Asian culture” (p.13). For AAW, the stereotypes that prevent leadership ascension are social and organizational psychology concerns about workplace bias, discrimination, harassment, and retention. Research by Zhang (2017) found that even when there is *regulatory* support, if the organization does not *normatively* accept and support the culture, [of women leaders] it becomes a workplace concern (Zhang, 2017). This research addresses a need for positive social change. Without the ability for AAW to advance in society through career success, they are vulnerable to professional hostility, domestic violence, depression, and suicide (Kim, 2000; Kuem et al., 2018; Tebb et al., 2018).

Since the Civil Rights Act of 1965, racial integration and diversity inclusion continue to be at the forefront of tense negotiations for minorities in the workplace and society (Stepnick & Healy, 2017). The diversity dialog continues to be a hot topic despite research presenting diversity advantages to productivity and performance. Goldberg et al. (2020) explain, “diversity drives economic growth and contributes to the success of individual organizations as well as the national economy” (Goldberg et al., 2019). Other researchers also found organizations that support diversity in the workplace report high performance and productivity (Goldberg et al., 2019; Goswami & Goswami, 2018; Lorenzo & Reeves, 2018; Powers, 2018; Turban et al., 2019). Specifically, Lorenzo and Reeves (2018) report, “Companies with above-average total diversity, measured within

six dimensions of diversity (migration, industry, career path, gender, education, and age), had both 19% points higher innovation revenues and 9% points higher EBITA margins, on average. All six dimensions of diversity had statistically significant correlations with innovation, both individually and collectively" (p. 3). Despite positive research on the topic, many companies struggle with managing diversity within their organizations (Goldberg et al.; Goswami & Goswami, 2018; McHugh, 2020). Therefore, diversity and the issues impacting organizational resistance continue to be an ongoing dialog since positive economic advantages are significant and help mitigate incongruence and discrimination concerns.

Research by Gündemir et al. (2019) shows increased organizational performance overall as more Asian American leaders emerge in the workplace. More studies to learn why there is a gap in Asian American leadership are essential. Invisible Asian Americans and the leadership gap pose a social, mental health, and economic concern to society on the micro and macro levels. By not adequately addressing the needs of a minority population that is a substantial financial contributor not only may affect the U.S. economic, competitive advantage but may also affect AAW's unique population socially and individually. Discriminating against any minority population warrants social change attention and policy change. This research applies to Organizational Psychology and Management Theory, workforce selection, promotion, diversity, discrimination, retention, organizational productivity, sustainability, leadership development, and competitive advantage. It is a social change and public health issue, primarily for Asian American women (AAW). The *model minority* stereotype leaves Asian Americans

resented in the workplace and competition for salary and advancement without EEOC resources or support. Individually and collectively, promotion and advancement outcomes are significant. When one population is remarkably behind in leadership representation, it should be examined to learn why and what can be done to assist and support all people, thereby securing a more vital competitive advantage globally.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the lived experiences of AAW in the work social environment and how they navigate race, gender, and stereotypes in the workplace. The methodology aligns with the purpose of the study. The goal of this research is to learn how these issues affect their upward trajectory of AAW into leadership roles in organizations. My research is in the format of personal narratives through semi structured interviews of AAW leaders and potential leaders in U.S. organizations and government entities.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study:

RQ1: What is it like for AAW leaders and AAW aspiring into leadership roles in U.S. organizations to experience race and gender stereotyping?

RQ2: What are the lived experiences of AAW leaders and aspiring leaders in U.S. organizations regarding their leadership style and strategy?

SQ1: What leadership qualities and characteristics do AAW value in a model leader?

SQ2: What support did AAW receive in terms of guidance, training, mentorship, and leadership training during their careers?

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The conceptual model and theoretical framework of this study is the Intersectionality framework (Crenshaw, 1989/1993), which combines foundations of Critical Race Theory CRT (Delgado, 1995, Ladson-Billings, 2000) and Feminist Theory FT (Rhode, 1989: Olesen, 2000, Martin, 2003, Sprague, 1989). I discussed Transformational Leadership Theory TLT to look at how oppression transcends the present paradigm. Kawahara et al. (2013) point out, "TLT has been associated with some positive outcomes including follower job satisfaction and motivation leader job performance and positive leader-follower relationships" (Gerstner & Day, 1997: Judge & Piccolo, 2004). It is valuable in terms of integrating inclusion since "Transformational leaders inspire their followers to transcend their self-interest and work toward a greater cause" (Kawahara et al., 2013, p. 260). Transformational Leadership Theory **(**TLT) utilizes change management processes of making the calibrations from one leadership mindset to another way of thinking about leadership. Transformational Leadership Theory is significant in positive social change for society because it empowers individuals to make judgments and comparisons based on their perception of social standards and incrementally assists in leadership change.

CRT (Delgado, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2000) looks at race and power of precedence in the law. Both CRT and FT look at how a population is marginalized and oppressed through societal power inequities (Creswell, 2016 p. 61). Martin (2003) connects feminist theory to critical theory. Although both feminist theory and critical theory focus on social and economic inequalities, both have a plan of promoting system

change; however, they lack assimilating complexities of the multi-faced axes of diverse populations. The Intersectionality framework by Crenshaw (1989/1993) describes the African American women's experience through the complex nature of multiple dimensions axes. This research model emphasizes the unique dynamics when race and gender are present. Crenshaw's (1989/1993) intersectionality "calls for examining the heterogeneity within social categories" (Else-Quest & Hyde, 2016). This research looked through the lens of Mosaic intersectionality (Hall et al., 2019) and how it is essential to management theory. I also reference Shifting Standards Theory (SST) (Biernat et al., 1991), which proposed that relative comparisons influence judgments. As such, "Evaluation and judgment are subjective and may be imposed by onlookers depending on the group being evaluated. Prior experiences with a given group affect future assessments of group members by creating expected norms for behavior" (Biernat et al., 1991). Solutions for shifting perceptions may be found through Transformational Leadership Theory (TLT), identifying the findings and proposing positive social change awareness and recommendations. The theories are discussed in-depth in chapter two.

The Intersectionality framework by Kimberlee Crenshaw (1989/1993) provides insights into the complex nature of multiple dimensions or axes present when race and gender are considered (Shin, Welch, Kaya, Yeung, Obana, Sharma, Vernay & Yee, 2017). The underlying theoretical methodologies are CRT (Delgado, 1995) and FT (Sprague, 2016). Past work has focused on one theoretical construct or the other, missing the unique experiences of multi-axis identity. Using separate approaches to evaluate the experience in a diverse group is short-sighted. Crenshaw (1989/1993) shaped and refined

variation within intersectionality to deepen the CRT and FT frameworks. She describes CRT and FT as "narrowly focus on one social identity category like race or gender, while also considering these categories as independent or mutually exclusive (Crenshaw, 1989/1993), which resulted in an inaccurate analysis of the true experience (Shin et al., 2017). It also calls to present how marginalization experienced at the individual, interpersonal, and structural levels are inseparable" (Brah & Phoenix, 2013). Using the intersectionality framework will provide a richer analysis of the experiences of AAW who live within the combined axis of race and gender. The results will bring further insights into the effects of possible micro-aggressions for AAW in U.S. organizations that may exist and differ from those experienced by Asian men or women of other races. This will be completed through interviews and by presenting themes in the narratives. Transformational Leadership Theory (TLT) was examined and guides this study to describe how oppression transcends the present paradigm. TLT utilizes change management processes of making the calibrations from one leadership mindset to another way of thinking about leadership. TLT is significant in society because individuals make judgments and comparisons based on their social standards.

The conceptual framework includes data collection consisting of a literature review and include peer-reviewed research articles, observations, public media articles, and semi-structured interviews. This phase utilized individual semi-structured interviews for primary data collection, and document analysis for context. The objective was to identify patterns of experiences, shared views, similar behaviors towards them, responses to external actions to analyze incidents, and to look at the question on a micro-level

(Yale, 2015). Using standardized open-ended interview questions and thematic content analysis, the aim was to learn about the lived experiences of AAW through narratives, stories, anecdotes, writings, reflections, thoughts regarding their workplace experiences. The workplace is a social experience related to professional life, cultural expectations, personal strengths, and obstacles.

Data processing will be through three-phase qualitative cycle coding of descriptive, concept, and pattern coding. The goal was to learn common themes (Saldana, 2016) and to learn about successes and obstacles that inhibit AAW confidence and advancement within social and various workplace structures inhibiting or enhancing AAW aspiring to advance in the workplace. Further, I explored Asian stereotypes that intersect race and gender to discover the impact of the unique sexualized discrimination the population may have faced and the social and professional implications.

Nature of the Study

This qualitative study will use a general qualitative approach that focuses on AAW individual experiences in the workplace, which is considered a social environment (Creswell & Creswell, 2014; Ratvich & Carl, 2016). The interpretive approach is appropriate to understand the lived experiences of AAW in the workplace, as it seeks descriptive results of subjects in their social (work) environment (Creswell & Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research helps understand the complex intricacies of lived experiences within a population that simple data collection may not capture. This research format is interested in the participant's perception of an incident (Smith & Osborn, 2007) to understand the complex intersection of unique gender and race stereotypes specific to

Asian American Women (AAW) and the impact of subtle discrimination experienced by the population. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, and document analysis for background context. The research approach can also help understand if their experiences reveal feelings of disempowerment of a people, limiting advancement into power positions. The participants are AAW, including Pacific Island and South Asian populations, Ages 18-65 working in U.S. organizations, currently in or pursuing leadership roles. The U.S. born or immigrant participant was required to be able to read, write, and speak English.

The data collection included individual interviews and document analysis for context. The goal was to identify patterns of experiences, shared views, similar behaviors towards the AAW, responses to external actions to analyze incidents, and looked at the question on a micro-level (Yale, 2015). I reviewed the experiences, narratives, stories, anecdotes, writings, reflections, thoughts, and feelings of AAW and Asian American leaders in various workplace structures. I also researched the experiences and feelings of AAW and Asian American leaders in various workplace structures, along with the stereotypes that inhibit AAW in leaders or aspiring, to advance in the workplace. Further, I am explored Asian race and gender aspects and the *model minority* general and gendered stereotypes ascribed to Asian Americans. I then looked at how these demographics' intersectionality affected how AAW experience and navigated their social and professional environments.

Definitions

The following are key cultural and operational terms related to the study:

Assimilation: Sociologist Milton Gordon's *Assimilation in American Life* (1964) clarified the acculturation (assimilation) process as "occurring in stages over time" (Healy & Stepnick, 2017).

Authentic Leadership: Authentic Leadership is an approach to leadership known for being ethically transparent and trustworthy with followers. Avolio et al. (2004) define authentic leaders as "Those who are deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others' values/moral perspectives, knowledge, and strengths; aware of the context in which they operate; and who are confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and of high moral character" (as cited in Avolio et al., 2004). Burris et al. (2013) explain, "[An] authentic leader is confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, moral/ethical, future-oriented, and gives priority to developing associates to be leaders. The authentic leader is true to him/herself" (p., 260).

Bamboo Ceiling: In her book *Breaking the Bamboo Ceiling: Career Strategies for Asians*, Hyun (2005) identifies barriers for Asian Americans pursuing leadership advancements, such as racism and stereotypes. She attributes a combination of individual, cultural, societal, and organizational factors that inhibit progress for Asian Americans.

Discrimination and Inequality: According to Healy and Stepnick (2017), "Inequality is the most defining characteristic of a minority group. The pattern of inequality is the key" (p. 11). Their research looked at variables that create discrimination, defined as "The unequal treatment of a person or persons based on group membership" (p. 485).

Five-Factor Model of Leadership: The Five-Factor Model of Leadership came from a study that looked at the relationship between the Big Five personality traits and applied them to evaluate leadership success (Lew, 2019). The Five-Factor Model traits of leadership, which include: extroversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (Grice, 2019).

Federal Glass Ceiling Commission (1995): The Glass Ceiling Commission is a 21-member bipartisan body appointed by President Bush and Congressional leaders and chaired by the Secretary of Labor, was created by the Civil Rights Act of 1991. Its mandate was to identify the glass ceiling barriers that have blocked the advancement of minorities and women as well as the successful practices and policies that have led to the advancement of minority men and all women into decision-making positions in the private sector" (Executive Summary, Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995).

Hofstede's Cultural Dimension Theory: Geert Hofstede (1984), professor, researcher, and former IBM Executive, developed his Cultural Dimension Theory to explain cross-cultural communications and society's culture on its members' values and relate them behavior by using factor analysis. Through his research, he distinguished six dimensions of culture that are relevant for workplace clarity: 1. Individualism or Collectivism; 2. Power distance; 3. Masculine/Feminine; 4. Uncertainty avoidance; 5. Long-Term Orientation; and 6. Indulgence. With each culture, characteristics within a continuum scale (Hofstede, 1984).

Human Capital Theory: In Sweetney's (2020) Human Capital Review from 1776 to 1960, he defers to Vaizey (1962): "*Human capital theory* suggests that individuals and

society derive economic benefits from investments in people. This suggestion's investment feature significantly differentiates human capital expenditures from consumptive expenditures-those providing few benefits beyond immediate gratification (Vaizey, 1962). Healy and Stepnick (2017) further define it concerning immigration in America as "Status attainment, or the level of success achieved by an individual in society is a direct result of educational levels, personal values and skills, and other individual characteristics and abilities" (p. 53).

Limited language proficiency LEP: The U.S. Census Bureau (2019) classified an individual as having LEP if they speak a language other than English at home and they speak English less than "very well" (Census Bureau, 2019)

Melting Pot: Healy and Stepnick (2017) describe this analogy as an American ideal. "[A] *melting pot* society would be the process in which different groups come together and contribute roughly equal amounts to co-create a common culture and a new unique society. It was meant to use assimilation as a benign and egalitarian process that emphasized sharing and inclusion" (p. 49).

Model Minority: The stereotype that subscribes to Asian Americans seen as highly intellectual and industrious, yet only holding low to mid-level management positions in organizations (Hyun, 2005, Kitano, 1969, p.257; Wong, 2015, Wu, 2013; Yu, 2020).

Microaggression: Research by Sue et al. (2007) looks at a unique type of discrimination – microaggression. "Micro-aggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional,

that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group" (p. 271).

Normative Acceptance: A concept Zhang (2019) referred to as acceptance in a role; her study looked at women as leaders. However, even with the regulatory presence of equal opportunity and diversity practices, if normative acceptance is not present, diversity still be problematic in the organizational culture.

Shifting Standards model SST: The shifting standards research by Biernat et al. (1991) proposes judgments are influenced by relative comparisons that are subjective and may be imposed by onlookers (Biernat et al., 1991).

Assumptions

The first assumption is that the AAW participants meet the inclusion criteria. The participants can contribute to insights about the lived experiences of AAW leaders or AAW ascending into leadership roles in U.S. organizations. The second assumption is that the participants will be honest and forthright in their responses. The third assumption is that the semi-structured interview and questions will evoke meaningful and substantial responses that provide insights from the participants.

Scope and Delimitations

A delimitation of the study is that I chose the Asian American minority population for this study. I explored the experiences and perceptions of the participants. I also limited the scope to leaders or AAW ascending into leadership roles (supervisor through executive leaders) in U.S. organizations within five years. The study excludes Asian American male

participants, which limits the investigation to female adults. The age range is from (18-65 years old) which is the active employment age range, and excluded retirees.

Although Moustakas (1994) suggests 5-25 participants are sufficient for a Qualitative study to obtain purposeful sampling data or until saturation. Due to the minimal data on AAW leaders (Yu, 2020) and the intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989/1993) aspects that may affect advancement in the early stages of the population, the participant criteria will be open to both AAW in leadership roles and AAW seeking to advance into executive leadership positions. I used qualitative semi-structured interviewing for data collection. Moustakas (1994) described the importance of purposeful interviewing importance as, "to learn the lived experiences to determine importance and normalcy" (Moustakas, 1994). Since there is a gap in AAW leaders (Yu, 2020), it is appropriate to use qualitative interviews to learn about the lived experiences contributing to AAW career decisions regarding advancement into leadership roles. The research questions and interview script allowed for transferability for future research.

Limitations

This is a qualitative study where the sample was a convenience sample, since there are few AAW leader pool to draw from (Hyun, 2005; Johnson & Sy, 2016); Yu, 2020). I expanded my participant potential to AAW, pursuing leadership roles in organizations in addition to AAW in leadership roles. The study included interviews to learn about their lived experiences with issues with race and gendered stereotypes. Generalization will also be a limitation because it is a qualitative study.

This study was limited by unintended bias due to this researcher's positionality of being an Asian American woman in the workplace who has held a leadership role in organizations. I am also a Korean American Adoptee. The research employed triangulation, member checking, adequate engagement, rich data, reflexivity, audit trail, peer review, discrepant evidence, and reported commonalities (frequencies) on theories measures to reduce bias (Maxwell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I used as many or all the preventative practices to mitigate bias through close supervisory oversight. The data collection was prepared and executed using an interview guide to evaluate its effectiveness (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Personal bias was self-examined and documented through reflective journaling and member checking to clarify researcher bias and transparency and validity measures (Center for Research Quality, 2015a). I noted when something that a participant said was surprising, implying that the researcher expected something else. This Researcher explored this expectation (bias) later and reported on any underlying bias.

Significance

This research was relevant to AAW as a social change concern. In a press conference addressing the Atlanta shootings of six AAW, Vice President Kamala Harris asserted, "Representation in leadership matters. [Asian American Pacific Islanders] AAPI hold less than 3% of Executive leadership positions in corporate America" (CBS, March 24, 2021). Asian Americans are the most diverse and fastest-growing minority group in the U.S. and have the highest average level of education of all minority and dominant groups in America (Mani & Trines, 2018, Yu, 2020). However, they hold less than one

percent of the executive leadership roles in Fortune 500 organizations (Hyun, 2005; Gee & Peck, 2017). According to Russell Reynolds Associates (2014) report, at the C-Suite level, there is an under-representation distinctly within minorities and women (Russell Reynolds Associates, 2014). Yu (2020) asserted that they are the least likely to hold leadership roles due to a lack of research data about AAW. Without leadership representation, AAW do not have a voice in C-Suite strategic planning or workplace inclusion discussions. Nor do they have representation in governmental discussions of policy or planning for their communities, which leaves them vulnerable to societal dangers and scapegoating. The study results of this study intend to bring awareness about the AAW experience so education on their experience and solutions in the workplace can be heard, addressed and positive social change can be implemented.

This research applies to Organizational Psychology and Management Theory as it applies to workforce selection, promotion, diversity, discrimination, retention, organizational productivity, sustainability, leadership development, and competitive advantage. It is a public health social change issue, primarily for AAW. The *model minority* and other long-standing stereotypes such as exotic and submissive leaves Asian Americans resented in the workplace and in competition for salary and advancement without EEOC resources or support. The stereotypes also leave them vulnerable to race/gender scapegoating and targets of violence (CBS, March 24, 2021). The study results intend to bring awareness about the AAW experience in the workplace, and how it affects them in society, which is dependent on work attainment and career advancement. The aim of the research was to open a communication channel, so AAW may contribute

to the diversity discussions through discussion about their experiences, education and policy change. The data may be useful for transformational leadership change management approaches that include leadership empathy development as part of diversity training, incorporating cultural sensitivity of the Asian American Pacific Islander community that addresses specific AAW barriers to leadership advancement and to open doors that also benefit the organization. Asian Americans have been found to be highly productive and highly educated, yet also have high attrition rates in many industries (Gee & Peck, 2018). By addressing this in organizations, cost savings through increased retention and productivity benefits through organizational profits such as EBITA gains (Lorenzo & Reeves, 2018), may increase as well and will mitigate potential future class action or individual lawsuit costs concerning workplace discrimination which may be their only option post resignation.

This study also looked at potential public health concerns for AAW with mental health which suggest positive social change for AAW. In the current climate of COVID 19, Asian Americans have been a target and focus of racial violence. On December 4, 2020, Journalist and activist Helen Zi discuss the impact of over 5,000 violent racial attacks against Asian Americans (AAJC, 2020). AAW women age 40-74 years old were misrepresented in the media through sexualized stereotypes as demonstrated during the Atlanta shooting on March 17, 2021 (CBS, March 17,2020). Without Asian American leaders speaking on behalf of Asian Americans, especially AAW, and the ability to advance in society through career success, they are vulnerable to professional and societal hostility as seen in the Atlanta shooting. They nearly double domestic violence

data for some Asian races (Kim, 2000), have high depression rates, and suicide is the second highest cause of death for AAW (Kuem, 2018). This is relevant to society, as Asian Americans have been found to be effective leaders in times of financial decline (Gündemir, et al., 2019). As this country and the world are still spiraling economically due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we need all the innovative minds working together to find and implement effective solutions for regaining economic profitability.

This will mean finding innovative solutions. Ensuring Asian Americans are included as an accessible positive contributor, and needed resource, which is a mutually beneficial and empowering proposition. In order to survive the aftermath of this global pandemic and the economic chaos it has created we need to embrace all our valuable resources. The study results intend to bring awareness about the AAW experience. Researcher such as Johnson and Sy (2016), Gee and Peck (2018), Kawahara et al. (2013), and Yu, 2020) suggest future research is needed for social, mental health, and other positive social change needs for AAW utilizing TLT approaches to support their ongoing careers. Without research and awareness, the *model minority* stereotype leaves Asian Americans resented in the workplace and competition for salary and advancement without EEOC resources or support (Yu, 2020). Individually and collectively, promotion and advancement outcomes are significant. When one population is behind in leadership representation, it should be examined to learn why and what can be done to assist and support all people, thereby securing a more vital competitive advantage globally.

Summary and Conclusion

"The more we can break the rules, the better off we will be."

~Indra Nooyi – Retired CEO PepsiCo

The current leadership literature identifying minority populations has grown over the past ten years, with distinct progress for women minorities. However, there is a significant gap in leadership data and research for Asian Americans, especially AAW. General qualitative research helps understand the complex intricacies of lived experiences within a population that simple data collection may not capture. The research format is interested in the participants' perception of an incident (Smith & Osborn, 2007). It contributes to the collective understanding of how people construct meaning through their social environment experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2014). It also looked at the social, cultural, economic, and mental health factors that may be fundamental barriers to career advancement for AAW working in U.S. organizations. The intersection of race and gender and unique stereotypes pose a challenge for AAW as a minority group. Asian Americans are less than one percent of the overall leadership population, and AAW are considered the least likely to hold leadership roles (Johnson & Sy, 2018; Yu, 2020, p. 1). The unique collective history of AAW has led to stereotypes that make the minority group susceptible to bias resulting in subtly being the targets of various forms of racial-gendered micro-aggressions and micro-invalidations. Many are categorized as sexist events (Kuem et al., 2018). Research by Mukkamala and Suyemoto (2018) has found, as a result of discrimination, AAW suffers higher adverse effects than white women in social and professional environments. Their study indicates gendered stereotypes of

AAW as a unique form of sexual harassment. The recent shooting of six AAW in Atlanta on March 17, 2021, underscores an enduring stereotype impression of AAW as exotic and in this incident, a reason for violence by the perpetrator. In reality, the six AAW women were between the ages of 40–74 years old, and sexual misconduct was not uncovered within the investigation. Ignoring intersectional stereotypes that incite discriminatory beliefs and the death of six AAW is problematic since this will likely continue to act out in social and professional environments in the form of harassment with potential violence until something substantial is done to mitigate this. The Asian gendered stereotypes stem from the historical genesis of Asian women being imported for prostitution, which has not been extinguished. Gendered stereotypes affect leadership perceptions (Biernat, 1991/2003). In a press conference addressing the Atlanta shootings of six AAW, Vice President Kamala Harris (2021) asserted, "Representation in leadership matters. Without leadership representation, women do not have a voice in C-Suite or governmental discussions of policy or strategic planning and remain vulnerable to societal scapegoating.

In organizations, a lack of dialog or protections can cause a hostile work environment, inhibiting a safe workplace for AAW to thrive and potentially advance, leaving them invisible and at risk of isolation and further harassment. By ignoring the voices of AAW, the organization risks resignation or worse (potential lawsuits), which may be the only option for AAW after they leave. Discrimination also affects the mental health of AAW. Kuem et al. (2018) noted a mental health concern for AAW who have an alarming rate of depression and suicide is the second reason for the death of AAW

(Kuem et al., 2018; Mukkamala & Suyemoto, 2018). There is very little data overall on AAW. However, the omission of data from primary research such as the *Federal Glass Ceiling* report is a concern. Data invisibility result in a lack of awareness about support and resource needs for this population, especially about AAW as potential leaders.

Invisibility also leads to vulnerability. Unspoken and unseen, AAW are far from surpassing the *bamboo ceiling* and are potentially at-risk. When women cannot sustain employment or advance professionally, they are vulnerable to abuses within the workplace and society, including domestic violence. Impeded advancement in the workplace for any population can lead to other means of surviving, including tolerating objectification, inhumane treatment, or resorting to crime to survive (Tebb et al., 2018). Domestic violence among AAW is hard to detect because it often is unreported due to cultural shame. "The national average for women as victims of domestic violence is at a rate of 21-37% for AAW overall, with Korean & Vietnamese women having an estimated 60% & 53% domestic violence rate respectively" (Kim, 2000, p. 3).

The general racial stereotype of Asian Americans, such as the *model minority,* may be a factor that led to their omission from fundamental research, such as the *glass ceiling commission* project, resulting in their invisibility (Yu, 2020). The *Shifting Standards Theory* (Biernat et al., 1991) suggests stereotype bias may be interfering with perceptions, in this case, perceptions of AAW as leaders. Yu (2020) argues that the previously assumed *model minority* myth, which subscribes Asians to collective success, cost them. They became invisible and omitted from inclusion and diversity research. By being overlooked for assistance, this population is specifically racially discriminated

against, which may be another factor impeding progress into leadership roles in the workplace (Gee & Peck, 2017). Since research on AAW is not a priority, AAW have to find their support systems independently.

"Louie (2000) found AAW active in leading community-based organizations in national Asian advocacy organizations, helped define issues, formulate policy and influence social change, and were motivated and committed to fighting social inequities" (as cited in Kawahara et al., 2013, p.241). Career development, leadership training, mentorship, and other required business networking skills are essential to ensure career success. These initiatives are a positive step for AAW. However, without resources, support, and AAW leader role models, it is difficult for AAW to find leadership opportunities or get ahead. Transformational Leadership Theory TLT is the most well-established empirically supported model of effective leadership (Judge & Picollo, 2004; Lowe & Galen, 1996) and is associated with several positive outcomes, including job satisfaction and motivation. Using TLT and AAW leadership awareness, supported with funding other minorities receive, may increase AAW's leadership potential and provide an avenue for opportunities (Burris et al., 2014). Otherwise, without additional research and support, AAW are disadvantaged from fair opportunities for leadership advancement.

According to Hofstede's cultural dimension scale, Asian culture values collectivism, which is considered a "feminine" business characteristic. Asian cultural dimension also values long-term orientation (Hofstede, 1984). In an interview with Ms. Park Young Sun from the Republic of South Korea (ROK) and former Minister of Small Medium Enterprises (SME's) and Startups, she discussed her role and contribution to

finding solutions for the COVID crisis. She accomplished positive collaboration by becoming the bridge between several global organizations and governments. Her established respect in this role through relationships and reputation brought the K-Syringe makers to partner with Pfizer to optimize the syringe vaccine protocols successfully. Through her expertise in managing autonomous collaborative companies and ability to diplomatically negotiate sensitive issues between two private pharmaceutical-biotech companies and multiple global governments, including the U.S., she was able to execute the delivery of over 180 million enhanced COVID-19 vaccines to Pfizer during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. The delicate negotiation further increased jobs from one S. Korean organization from 80 to 300 employees within two months, and also opened 50,000 jobs in the ROK. The K-syringe project facilitated a 20% increase in productivity due to its unique design. It also reduced Pfizer spending by 20%. The project lead by Ms. Park Young Sun was considered a success that benefited all involved in the collaboration (Korea Society, March 23, 2021). The success of this multimillion-dollar endeavor was leveraged by the Asian leadership "collaborative" approach, which Hofstede (1984) categorized under his cultural dimensions as Asian "collectivism" and considered a "feminine" business quality (Hofstede, 1984).

Minister Park Young Sun’s ability to diplomatically negotiate sensitive issues between two private pharmaceutical-biotech companies while ensuring multiple global governments, including the U.S. needs, is one example of AAW leadership success. Besides leveraging the feminine collectivism cultural values, long-term orientation is a cultural dimension of the ROK values. The ROK weaves in long-term planning to ensure

sustainability, to maintain competitive advantage, and prepare for a potential crisis. In a Harvard Business Review report, Hill et al. (2018) pointed out, "The average lifespan of a U.S. S&P 500 company has fallen by 80% in the last 80 years (from 67 to 15 years), and 76% of UK FTSE 100 companies have disappeared in the last 30 years" (Hill et al., 2018, p.1.). Minister Park Young Sun previously led the "Davos Forum" project, the ROK model for innovation and learning. Under Minister Park Young Sun, "autonomous collaboration" companies were supported to ensure innovation growth is sustained through startups. Since she was already well respected with this project, and the start-up organizations within it, she became the conduit for brokering the negotiations. She was the bridge between global organizations and governments while effectively negotiating a crisis management plan using established resources. Also, a result, it increased 50,000 jobs introduced a medical devise (K-Syringe), that improved Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine efficacy by 20% delivering over 180 million vaccines during the COVID-19 crisis (Korea Society, 2021). The Davos forum project represents Asian culture's long-term business strategy, which is very different from the U.S. Western business culture, may find Eastern culture of value, through this negotiation process and long-term crisis management strategy.

As Lorenzo and Reeves point out, diversity in organizations had a statistically significant positive impact on various performance and production measures. Further, Gündemir et al. (2019) found an increase in productivity when Asian Americans were leaders, especially during an organizational crisis or decline periods. With the task of re-imagining the future due to the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy,

we could benefit by including more Asian Leadership as we vision a new economic future. Hill et al. (2018) also point out organizations that have lasted over 100 years start by stabilizing their core, safeguarding what they stand for, and staying on track. “They [Centennials] are incredibly strategic, looking 20 to 30 years ahead, to understand how society is evolving, how they can shape it, and how they can get the talent to do this. All the Centennials we studied talked about their impact on society — the beliefs and behaviors they’ve changed” (Hill et al., 2018, p.1). Asian cultural dimensions value and have strategies for long-term orientation where U.S. organizations may benefit.

For the specific studied population of AAW, it is a social change concern that affects social, mental health, and economic spectrums for the people and continued U.S. potential. Through leveraging diversity in all its forms, the U.S. secures its global competitive advantage sustainability. Leaving any population out leaves them vulnerable to race-specific discrimination through microaggression and hostile work and social environments and affects our collective strength as a sustainable economic leader. By understanding Asian American history and culture and learning about the unique experiences of AAW in the workplace, we can learn more about the population. This research was intended to discover and illuminate more insights regarding AAW’s unique lived experiences as to why Asian Americans and AAW minorities who are overall considered highly educated, high achieving workers that are underrepresented as organizational leaders and should not be ignored.

Chapter two literature review looks at Asian immigration history, the history of Industrial and Organizational Psychology and how diversity is an ongoing interest in the

workplace. It also looks at research specifics regarding minorities and AAW in leadership roles in the U.S., theoretical frameworks of Intersectionality and Transformational Leadership Theory articles are also searched for context and social change approach for educating future leaders moving forward.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to learn about the lived experiences of Asian American women (AAW) potential and established leaders in the workplace to gain a better understanding of how race, gender, and stereotypes, or other barriers may be preventing them from ascending into leadership roles. In Chapter 2, literature that supported this research was examined by reviewing Asian American immigration and discrimination history, Asian stereotypes, diversity issues in society, and in the workplace along with theoretical framework literature supporting this research. Literature about Asian American immigration history and their economic contribution to American society is relevant to understanding their beginning and progress over time. The historical experience provided context regarding initial challenges Asian Americans faced due to race, gender and stereotypes, and how gendered stereotypes of AAW have endured and may continue to underlie challenges for Asian American women (AAW) ascending into leadership roles. This literature review and research looked at how these issues affect AAW upward trajectory into leadership roles in U.S. organizations. The study utilized Crenshaw's (1989/1993) intersectionality lens to discuss the complex nature of multiple axes that affect the AAW experience. Hall et al, (2019) later describe this as Mosaic Intersectionality, which considers multiple characteristics extending beyond race and gender. In addition, Biernat (1991) Shifting Standards Theory (SST) as it pertains to stereotypes may explain perception bias against specific groups. These frameworks were reviewed and applied as a lens to discuss barriers for AAW advancing into executive

leadership roles in the workplace. Without leadership status, AAW do not have a representative voice or equality in workplace regarding issues that affect them, putting them at a disadvantage as a minority group.

The literature review begins looking at the annual Society of Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP) “trends" report. SIOP is the established professional organization for I/O Psychologists. Next, background historical overview and development of I/O Psychology, key opinion leaders in I/O Psychology, and a discussion about diversity in the workplace as an ongoing dialog in organizations was presented, and then the literature regarding AAW leadership issues was researched. The search strategy presented literature topics and resources used to conduct the literature review. The background literature provided context for this research, then transitioned into the main research topics: (a) The lack of research data on AAW leaders in organizations, (b) Asian American immigration history, including the pattern of discrimination and stereotypes, (c) Diversity in the workplace, and (d) Conceptual and Theoretical models. This literature review looks at the overall lack of research data for AAW leaders, and how it impacts AAW gap in leadership representation in the workplace, and why this is a concern.

According to Yu (2020), “Asian Americans are the least likely to be promoted into management positions, especially Asian American women" (p.1). Collaborative research show Asian Americans are still significantly underrepresented in higher management with very little leadership data regarding AAW leaders. Back in 2005, Hyun pointed out AAW invisibility: “Out of 10,092 Fortune 500 corporate officers in 2002, only 30 (0.29%) were Asian Women (Hyun, 2005, p. xviii). Nearly twenty years later,

not much has changed. Reynold Associates (2014) underscores the ongoing disparity for AAW on a national scope. “With the exception of females in the [Chief Human Resource Officer] CHRO role, minorities and females are sorely underrepresented in all the C-suite” (p. 10). The literature review also examines Asian American history, as it pertains to economic contribution, integration, status, stereotypes, discrimination and other barriers to advancement, both socially and professionally. Despite the multiple immigrants arriving to the U.S. and the positive *Melting Pot* theory of assimilating all into a prosperous American economy for all immigrants, the Asian American immigration experience showed a pattern of discrimination that were barriers to establishing equality and status early on.

Research studies have shown that corporations that support diversity in the workplace report high performance and productivity. It is important to explore diversity barriers in the workplace, since various data present productivity and performance when organizations support diversity (Lorenzo & Reeves, 2018; Turban et al., 2019). Further, a study by Gündemir et al. (2019) the data indicated increased organizational performance overall as more Asian American leaders emerged in the workplace. Their research showed organizations that had Asian leaders, experienced ‘economic success,’ especially in periods of decline. With Asian Americans as organizational leaders, positive contributions were made to organizations and the U.S. economy. However, there is a gap in literature and representation of Asian American leaders, specifically AAW leaders. Research of this population was intended bring insights that may provide awareness regarding the low number of AAW in leadership roles. It was also intended to provide

recommendations for future research in I/O psychology, development, and management theory.

The theoretical framework literature about Crenshaw's (1989/1993) Intersectionality model was the lens used in support of this study. The combination of race and gender axes help explain the unique lived experiences of a the AAW population. Her framework was aligned with this study, since multiple axes of race and gender are relevant to AAW in society and the workplace and society. The study also looked at Hall et al, (2019), research that further discussed intersectionality, using the term Mosaic Intersectionality, which considers additional characteristics extending beyond race and gender. Mosaic intersectionality was relevant for this study since an added dimension was present with four participants, who were transracial adoptees. In addition, Biernat (1991/2003) Shifting Standards Theory (SST) as it pertains to stereotypes was used to explain perception bias against specific groups through stereotype bias, and how it affects performance reviews. Transformational Leadership Theory (TLT) was included in the literature review as an avenue for positive social change.

Qualitative research is an iterative process. "Qualitative research is often described as iterative, signifying that it is (a) involves a back-and-forth process (b) change and evolves over time as you engage in these processes. Ideally, these back-and-forth processes lead to a progressive evolutionally refinement of your research at conceptual, theoretical and methodological levels" (Ratvich & Carl, 2017, p. 12). The iterative process involved many reviews, refining and revising of this literature while learning more about the topic and when new material and data becomes available.

Chapter 2 focused on literature that was relevant to the lived experience of AAW as it pertains to race, gender, stereotypes that may be barriers to leadership advancement. The chapter discussed search strategies, key terms used to search and databases used for this literature review.

Background

Each year, the Society of Industrial and Organizational Psychologists (SIOP) issues the Top 10 Trends article, which are the results of an annual survey given to roughly 1,000 SIOP I/O Psychology Consultant members. The questionnaire's purpose is to gather information from professional I/O Psychology Consultants regarding likely important industry focal points for the upcoming year. According to SIOP, "Industrial and Organizational Psychologists study workplace issues of critical relevance to business, including talent management, coaching, assessment, selection, training, organizational development, performance, and work-life balance" (SIOP, 2016). The annual survey is significant because it gives I/O Psychologists and industry followers a look at organizational concerns to assess upcoming needs. The survey results provide direction for professional planning, proactive proposals for solutions for the upcoming year. Diversity in the workplace consistently has been in the "Top Ten Trends" in this annual survey report for the past five years, indicating the need for ongoing investigation and discussion.

In the book *Diversity & Society*, authors Healy and Stepnick (2017) reviewed diversity with extensive historical and sociological research. Their research indicated diversity concerns in the workplace is not a new development. According to the authors,

"Of the challenges confronting the United States today, those relating to minority groups continue to be among the most urgent and the most daunting. Everyone in our society is, in some sense, an immigrant or a descendent of immigrants. Each wave of newcomers has altered the social landscape of the U.S." (p. xvii). They assert the history of immigration in the U.S. laid the foundation for diversity complexities. Their research supports the SIOP annual trends report, which ranks diversity in the workplace as the number two concern for the past three years, maintaining its focus in the top ten for a decade, indicating diversity dynamics remains a top focus in the workplace today. Society and workplace dynamics are contingent on the climate of the current national, economic, and cultural conditions and paradigm changes. Healy and Stepnick (2017) mentioned "when a new wave of immigrants arrives, the landscape of the nation changes" (p.4). The argument about inclusion and exclusion, unity, and diversity remain a passionate topic as predicted. The growth of the U.S. has included ongoing immigration, creating fluid diversity shifts and dynamics. Diversity issues in the workplace remain challenging to resolve. SIOP surveys represent the ongoing need to address diversity in the workplace. This literature review and research study focused on one minority population, AAW, seeking leadership roles in the workplace.

I/O Psychology stems from the primary branch of Psychology. Saklofske and Zeidner (1995) provide a condensed history of the I/O psychology profession to illustrate the history and significance over time. I/O psychology became relevant during landmark historical events such as World War I, World War II, The Great Depression, and the Civil Rights Movement. These were periods in U.S. history where tremendous physical and

cultural changes took place in the nation. The need for productivity was vital to the survival of our country and economy. Their review outlines a brief history of I/O Psychology, the rise of I/O Psychology, and why it is still essential today.

I/O Psychologist Hugo Munsterberg (1913), Head of the Harvard Psychology Lab and trained by German psychologist Wilhelm Wundt, was known as the "Father of I/O Psychology" due to his notoriety for studying "job selection" and "worker-fit" using experimental scientific methods. His foundational work would become essential for organizational initiatives in the future. Later, Fredrick Taylor was known to expand research studies taking a collective approach with employees of organizations instead of studying each individual within the organization. In his book *Principles of Scientific Management* (New York, 1911), Taylor presented the idea of "engineering a scientific approach to organizations as a means to increase efficiency" (p. 252). The impact of I/O Psychologists Munsterberg, Taylor, and others brought attention to industrial psychology as a needed profession. These contributions expanded Psychology's discipline from studying the individual to studying many individuals' collective needs within an organization to raise productivity.

World events such as the World Wars incited an urgency for improved processes for workers. Some of the research techniques recommended by I/O Psychology were helpful. The military World events such as the World Wars incited an urgency for improved processes for workers. Manufacturers and the military leveraged some of the researched techniques that emerged from I/O Psychology. These were used to quickly and efficiently recruit soldiers and women into the workforce. With the urgency of the

first World War efforts, Taylor's scientific methods were immediately put to the test. I/O Psychology and his work was a significant factor in ensuring economic sustainability at this point in history. During post-war reconstruction, individuals and humane working conditions came back into focus, and I/O Psychology became an essential contributor to recovery and rebuilding during this period. The Carnegie Institute of Technology (1916-1924) developed specializations to work on training programs and statistical techniques for improving industry and employee performance. Also, due to The Great Depression of the 1930s, there was a need for I/O Psychologists to conduct new studies. The purpose of the research would be to gain insights into workers' perceptions. Kurt Lewin's work looked at various workers and their concerns within multiple organizations, such as job satisfaction and leadership effects on productivity, group dynamics, and expectancy theory.

The sixties brought in new challenges. The Vietnam War, and the Civil Rights Movement, created a new plethora of concerns in society and the workplace, such as racial integration and gender issues (Saklofske & Zeidner, 1995). The Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Dol.gov.org, 2020) prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, or sex. Almost sixty years later, workplace diversity (formerly racial integration) is still a societal issue, according to the SIOP (2020) annual trends report. Diversity and inclusion have consistently been in the top five rankings of SIOP's trend list every year since 2016. In the last three years, it had held the number two placeholder in terms of importance for I/O Psychologists (SIOP, 2020). Gender issues in the workplace, although improving, also continue to seek a collective voice in the '*glass ceiling'* discussions.

Despite the overall progress of women's advancement in the workplace across various races, a gap exists with AAW seeking leadership roles apart from the collective minority groups. "Asian Americans overall and specifically AAW have been overlooked within the conversations of race, gender, and inclusion in the workplace" (Perez, 2003, p. 212). Existing research on the women's movement has left out Asian American women (Nagayama Hall, 2018), restricting their chances of being perceived as leadership potential. AAW appears to be invisible as collective leadership potential in the workplace, as Yu (2020) noted. The purpose of this literature review is to learn about the experiences of AAW in the work social environment and how they navigate race, gender, and stereotypes. It will examine the aspects that affect the lived experiences of AAW leaders or AAW ascending into leadership roles in U.S. organizations. This research aims to learn how these issues affect their upward trajectory into leadership roles in organizations. This research seeks to understand how these issues affect their upward trajectory into leadership roles in organizations. The study utilizes the lens of Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989/1993) with a discussion about Mosaic intersectionality and Shifting Standards Theory (SST) as they pertain to stereotypes. Transformational Leadership Theory (TLT) will also be reviewed to consider possible solutions through training and development for organizations as it applies to inclusion for AAW.

Literature Search Strategy

For my literature review, I searched relevant peer reviewed articles and other sources using the primary search engines, Thoreau, EBSCO, and Google Scholar. I found most of my articles in the following specialized databases APAPsycInfo, PsycArticles,

Business Direct, Education Source, Emerald Insight, Political Science Complete, Sage, Science Direct, SocINDEX. I limited it to peer-reviewed. My initial search did not have a time frame to learn the scale of literature. To obtain recent relevant data, I narrowed the search to peer-reviewed, scholarly journals from 2015–2020 for each topic except for historical inquiries, conceptual and theoretical framework research. I first researched the history and foundational leaders of Industrial and Organizational Psychology (4 Results), the history of Industrial and Organizational Psychology (242 Results), and Asian American history, discrimination, and stereotypes (5,265 Results), the history of Industrial and Organizational Psychology (242 Results), and Asian American history, discrimination, and stereotypes (5,265 Results).

The theoretical models and the main topics in my search were conducted using the same filters (peer-reviewed, scholarly articles from 2015-2020). The search topics included Critical Race Theory (4,861 results), Critical Race Theory and Asian Americans (21 results); Critical Feminist Theory (712 results), Critical Feminist Theory and Asian Americans (5 results), Intersectionality (14,030 results), Intersectionality, race, and gender (3,066 results), Intersectionality, race, gender, and Asian Americans (81 results), Intersectionality, race, gender, and AAW (53 results), Intersectionality, and Shifting Standards Theory (52 Results), AAW leaders (2 results), Stereotyping and Industrial Psychology (305 Results), and Mosaic Model of stereotyping (10 Results). I also explored areas that suggest solutions and processes that may contribute to social change contributing to AAW diversity leadership: Transformational Leadership theory (470

results); and Asians (5 Results). The research also includes five books and various industry periodicals.

Next, I used the same databases and time-frames for the following: Asian American Stereotypes (198 Results); Model Minority (236 Results); Bamboo Ceiling (27 Results); Asian Leaders (340 Results); Asian American Leaders (203 Results); Asian American Women AAW Leaders AAWL (19 Results); Asian Women stereotypes (112 Results); Asian American Women AAW stereotypes (45 Results); Discrimination of Asian women (156 Results). I then continued with subtopics Diversity & Organizational Performance (915 Results); Diversity and Discrimination (674 Results); Diversity and workplace Discrimination (239 Results); Diversity, Discrimination, and Asian American (170 Results).

The lack of research data on AAW leaders

According to Perez (2003), "Asian Americans overall and specifically AAW have been overlooked within the conversations of race, gender, and inclusion in the workplace" (p. 212). Reynold Associates (2014) underscores the ongoing disparity for minority women leaders on a national scope. "With the exception of females in the CHRO role, minorities and females are sorely underrepresented in all the C-suite" (p. 10). Back in 2005, Hyun pointed out Asian American women's invisibility. "Out of 10,092 Fortune 500 corporate officers in 2002, only 30 (0.29%) were Asian Women (Hyun, 2005, p. xviii). Over 15 years later, not much has changed. The collaborative research shows that Asian Americans are still significantly underrepresented in higher management with very little data regarding AAW in leadership roles. In a press

conference after the Atlanta shootings of six AAW, Vice President Kamala Harris (2021) asserted, “Representation in leadership matters. AAPI holds less than 3% of Executive leadership positions in corporate America” (CBS, March 24, 2021). By providing awareness of the lack of data, researchers highlight available data and call for additional research on AAW leaders.

Yu (2020) points to President Bush’s 21-member Glass Ceiling commission (1995b) under Title II of the Civil Rights Act. This commission looked at data and concerns regarding women and minority leadership. Overall, the commission results are favorable since many steps are now available to identify and rectify invisible barriers for women and minorities. However, there is still a wide gap in AAW leaders. She indicates the lack of data for Asian Americans from that report and lack of current research excludes AAW from benefiting from the recommended changes for minorities and women and the study’s support recommendations. Further, “evident by [their] lack of inclusion on workplace discrimination research involving denied promotion opportunities, in part, is due to their small sample size but primarily because of a pervasive stereotype that Asians achieve universal occupational success and are not disadvantaged minorities” (Yu, 2020). These issues raise the question regarding the impact of stereotypes and minority advancement.

Crenshaw’s (1989/1993) Intersectionality model looks at the African American women’s experience, analyzed through the complex nature of multiple dimensions axes. Intersectionality combines critical theory foundations. Critical Race Theory CRT (Delgado, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2000) looks at race and power and precedence in the

law. Feminist Theory FT (Rhode, 1989; Olesen, 2000; Martin, 2003; Sprague, 1989) expands them to assimilate axes' intersection. The Mosaic model of stereotyping and intersectionality research (Hall et al., 2019) considers multiple characteristics extending beyond race and gender. The two models include other demographics to examine each person as their total intersectional characteristics. Intersectionality research caution against simple broad category demographics. For example, they are categorizing all "white" people together. A white woman's experience is not the same as a white man's experience. Similarly, a white man with disabilities experience is not the same as a white man without disabilities experience. The Mosaic model of stereotyping and intersectionality is significant in the application for Management Theory and performance evaluations. Hall et al. (2019) point out demographic characteristics that are critical sources of bias in assessments and analyze them through micro-lens of multiple (Mosaic) categories to consider how stereotyping affects decision-makers views and preferences. Biernat et al. (1991) Shifting Standards model is based on stereotype bias that sheds more light on performance evaluations.

The Shifting Standards model (Biernat,1991) looks at stereotype bias and how this can become problematic in corporate hiring and promotions of minority personnel. The Shifting Standards model proposes judgments are influenced by relative comparisons that are subjective and may be imposed by onlookers (Biernat et al., 1991). The Shifting Standards model looks at key outcomes when promotions or personnel selections are made. According to the data, shifting standards regarding organizational promotions are persuaded by stereotype perception. When skills and performance evaluations are equal,

the final selection will default to the *common-rule* standard belief. The *common-rule* standard judgments are likely to reveal an assimilative stereotype effect to the dominant belief or biased *common-rule* standard (Biernat, 2003). For example, in a *common-rule* standard view, male leaders are more competent than female leaders. Since this is the *common-rule* standard, the perceiver holds the "gender" stereotype as real. Despite equally rated positive performance reviews, male leaders' bias may prevent women and minorities from equal advancement in leadership positions or promotions in the workplace. The Asian American population has a unique *model minority* stereotype generalization that prevents them from leadership advancement and inhibits support and resources other minority populations receive.

Hewlett et al. (2011) study the *model minority* stereotype and how it affects Asian Americans overall and the low percentage of leadership advancement. The Asian American *model minority* stereotype is "hard-workers and successful." The assumption became, they [Asian Americans] "do not need [government] help" (Peterson, 1966), which has been problematic for the population. Scholars contend, "The celebration of the apparent Asian American success in the news media was started as a ruling class endeavor to disunite African Americans and Asian Americans during the Civil Rights Movement and has continued to serve as a convenient tool to manipulate racial perceptions" (Chou & Feagin, 2008, p. 86). Researchers Chao et al. (2013) also found "perceptions of the *model minority* stereotype as a shared belief across all *but* Asian ethnic communities" (p. 90). The division caused by stereotyping has hurt the Asian American population. According to Nagayama Hall (2018), the *model minority* myth was

"based on the Japanese, who were the largest Asian population at the time, but since has been blanketly applied to other Asian American groups" (p. 172). The blanket stereotype is harmful to Asian Americans because it excludes them from the needed resources; the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was low-wage intended to provide for all minority populations. In essence, socially engineering, the *model minority* stereotype as a divisive strategy, resulted in Asian Americans becoming invisible as a minority group needing services and resources. Also, the *model minority* stereotype includes all Asian Americans as homogenous.

Pew Research Group (2015) and Bureau of Labor Statistics (2018) suggests Asian Americans are currently the largest growing immigrant group in the U.S (Pew Research Center, 2015). However, according to the census (2012), there are 19+ unique Asian cultures represented in the U.S., each with their signature culture, language, immigration history, economic status, and needs. Grouping them and stereotyping them as a homogenous group and *model minority* success undermines support and services the various Asian cultures need and other minority groups in America receive. The misperception of Asian Americans through stereotyping also hurts them when it comes to leadership advancement. The phenomenon of Asian Americans seen as "highly intellectual and industriousness" yet only holding low to mid-level management positions in organizations underscores Hyun's (2005) *bamboo ceiling* phenomena and support the stereotype of Asian Americans as the *model minority* (Chao et al., 2013; Dishman, 2014; Hyun, 2005; Museus & Ting, 2019; Russell Reynolds Associates, 2014; Song, 2013;

Thompson & Kiang, 2010; Tinkler, Zhao, Li, & Ridgeway, 2019). The *bamboo ceiling* was coined by Hyun (2005), mirroring a *glass ceiling* specific to Asians.

Stereotype perceptions divide Asians from other minority groups, causing resentment between the minority populations and direct competition with all groups, including the European white majority for jobs and other needed social services. Resources and communications are difficult for many refugees Asians since English is their second language (Chao et al., 2013). Many Asian American immigrants who need support struggle with language and cannot access the resources they need. The generalized *model minority* stereotype keeps the population at a double-disadvantage within the minority populations and dominant majority population. Despite the seemingly positive stereotypes, the perceptions they create have come to disempower Asian Americans in the workplace, evidenced by the omission of data regarding Asian Americans from the Federal Title II report. Invisibility does not mean there are no issues regarding discrimination. The Asian American *model minority* stereotype "hard-workers and successful" and the misperception that they do not need help (Peterson, 1966) *has* been problematic for the population in terms of assistance, including visibility and support as leaders.

Asian American immigration history

The earliest record of Asians arriving on both the East and West coasts of America dates back to the 1700s. Those from the East coast were from England and came as slaves. Those from the West coast came from Spain as immigrant workers. All Asian immigrants were discriminated against from the outset as either slaves or low-wage

earners (Nagayama Hall, 2018). In the mid-1880s, 12,000 Chinese workers came to the U.S. to help build the railroads. The railroad completion date was earlier than expected, and Chinese workers gained a positive reputation. However, the public Golden Spike Newspaper never mentioned the Chinese worker contribution after the successful railroad completion. Despite the large immigration of Chinese workers and their contribution to successful projects in the U.S., they were not treated equally on many levels from the outset.

During the early 1800s, only male Chinese immigrant workers entered the U.S. as railroad and mining workers. They did not bring wives, and U.S. laws did not allow interracial marriage (Takada, 1993). Unlike European immigrants, they had restrictions preventing them from obtaining U.S. citizenship or land ownership in America and could not vote, which retarded their ability to settle and establish a family and community (Nagayama Hall, 2018). Discrimination of Asian immigrant workers in America was two-fold. Chinese workers receive lower pay, and foreign taxes were levied on them for the same work as their European immigrant counterparts, leaving them unlikely to get ahead in the new land (Nagayama Hall, 2018). Over the years, Japanese immigrants also arrived in America. Both the Chinese and Japanese workers were quick and efficient. In agriculture, the Japanese transformed the land from a predominant wheat crop to successful fruit and vegetable crops (Nagayama Hall, 2018). Despite the many limitations imposed upon Asian workers, the Chinese and later Japanese immigrants made positive progress in California's railroad and agriculture industries. However, lower pay, foreign income tax levies, without recognition for successful work, set the stage for the Asian

population as invisible contributors in America. These discrimination practices were barriers for Asian assimilation as Americans for centuries to come.

The Historical pattern of Asian race discrimination:

According to Healy and Stepnick (2017), "Discrimination is the unequal treatment of a person or persons based on group membership" (p. 37). They emphasize that the degree and scope of the inequality are significant since it factors into the ability to advance in society. Minority status is not merely the percentage of a group to the majority. "Discrimination involves a pattern of inequality imposed upon the minority group to prevent a rise in status or power. The pattern of discrimination is the key" (p.11). Asians from various ethnicities experienced prejudice from multiple angles. The history of discrimination patterns against Asian immigrants is significant. Compared to European immigrants arriving simultaneously during the early 1800s, Asians had many imposed restrictions that retarded their ability to obtain equal opportunity in pay, laws that retarded the ability to establish families and assimilate into American culture from the outset.

Unlike European immigrants such as the Irish and Italians, multiple discrimination laws prevented Asians from fair and equal opportunity. Resources and privileges such as U.S. citizenship, income equality, land ownership, and voting rights enhance or inhibit the wealth and social status of a minority group (Healy & Stepnick, 2017). "The history of the United States of America is founded upon the American ideal of a *melting pot* society. This is how different unite and contribute roughly equal amounts to co-create a common culture and a new unique society. The belief is to use assimilation

as a benign and egalitarian process that emphasizes sharing and inclusion" (p. 49). Asian immigrants were restricted from the resources and privileges their European immigrants enjoyed and therefore struggled to assimilate into the American *melting pot* society. The pattern of discrimination against Asian immigrants caused many barriers to settle as a community, which affected their status as a minority group.

Stereotypes: Asian gendered stereotypes

During early Asian immigration, few Asian women in America and laws forbid interracial marriage until the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Therefore, Asian immigrants had difficulty establishing families and communities. After the Korean War, American soldiers who brought home "war brides" could petition American citizenship on behalf of their new wives. Before the war, the one area Asian women could enter into the U.S. was through prostitution. Over 60% of Asian women entering the U.S. were brought here to be prostitutes. Asian women, due to the profession they were assigned to, became perceived as exotic spice women who were submissive, subservient, and obedient (Mukkamala & Suyemoto, 2018). Eventually, the Page Law of 1875 prohibited importing Asian women for this purpose. The lasting impressions are significant since gendered stereotypes for AAW are persistent today, affecting perceptions of their capability as leaders. According to Kawahara et al. (2013), "AAW are challenged with a different kind of stereotype presented in the work of Louie (2000) who revealed, "leadership in the form of social advocacy has not been studied among AAW because they are portrayed stereotypically to be passive and apolitical [and] portrayed in the media as demure, obedient, as sex objects and victim of a patriarchal traditional Asian culture" (p.13).

These perceptions of Asian women in this light endured for years to come as Asian female stereotype.

In the mid-1800s, the U.S. was experiencing an economic downturn, and Asian immigrants became the scapegoats. They experienced gang beatings and other acts of hate. For survival, they gathered into small Chinatown communities and had few resources. Asian men could only obtain job duties such as laundry, cooking in a restaurant, and cleaning in the Chinatown community. These occupations (tasks) were perceived as "feminine." The Asian male became associated with their duties, which created the stereotyped of the emasculated Asian male (Stepnick & Healy, 2017). Further, Kawahara et al.'s (2013) research points out that Asian American males have varied, including the historical effeminate inferior Asian male and range to the aggressive or commendable (Sheck, 2006) confusing race misperceptions regarding Asian males. Early perceptions of Asian women and Asian men were developed by their duties, leaving lasting underlying persistent gender stereotypes for Asian Americans.

Various researchers discuss current female gender stereotypes of AAW as submissive and exotic (Chao et al., 2013; Kuem et al., 2018; Mukkamala & Suyemoto, 2018), which cause invisibility as career women and leaders. Research by Mukkamala and Suyemoto (2018) focuses on targeted stereotypes of AAW as microaggressions. In earlier research, Sue et al. (2007) describe microaggressions as "subtle race insults that put a specific race down and, if not addressed, are barriers to career advancement" (Sue et al., 2007). The variables that affect AAW are underscored by Chao et al. (2013), which support the need to discuss and include AAW gendered racism experiences. In a study by

Kuem et al. (2018), the researchers look at gender stereotypes. Their research showed Asian gender microaggressions were more disturbing to Asian women than stereotype microaggressions targeting white women. These researchers also explain, "It is likely that AAW faces gendered racial microaggressions across various contexts, such as career, education, and relationships" (Kuem et al., 2018). Researchers have found Microaggressions are an invisible barrier for AAW, leaving them less likely to advance into leadership roles.

Examining power and inequality across many contexts is essential, especially when discussing career and societal advancement costs due to being stereotyped and labeled as submissive. Being stereotyped as passive, apolitical, and not assertive often prevents AAW from advancing into leadership positions or acquiring promotions" (Kuem et al., 2018, p. 573). Asian women stereotype of exotic spice (Mukkamala & Suyemoto, 2018), China doll, mail order brides (Perez & Encarguez, 2003), or the Asian dragon lady (Mukkamala, & Suyemoto, 2018) are all forms of gendered microaggressions that interfere with work performance. The intersectionality model analyzes the intersection of race and gender through multiple axes (Crenshaw, 1989/1993). Asian gendered stereotypes lend to specific microaggressions (Kuem et al., 2018; Mukkamala & Suyemoto, 2018) that obscure discriminations that target AAW specifically, which may occur in the workplace affecting trust, confidence, and advancement. Stereotypes that intersect race and gender minimize AAW and interfere with work productivity and progress. Sue et al. (2007) looked at a preliminary study that suggests Asian Americans are prone to be victims of micro invalidations with themes that revolve around "alien in

one's own land" (p. 284). These forms of microaggressions prohibit people of color from entering the leadership space. Microaggressions, if not addressed, are barriers to career advancement. Without AAW as leaders, they are without representation or voice in the C-Suite boardroom dialog. Research regarding the lived experiences of AAW in the workplace may provide more information and insights on social change needs in the workplace to support AAW. Conducting qualitative research regarding the lived experiences of AAW female-specific racial stereotyping could bring more data regarding how the microaggressions affect AAW in the workplace and perhaps provide more insights regarding the low representation of AAW in leadership roles.

The long history and pattern of discrimination, inequality in immigration, settlement laws against Asians, along with early gendered stereotypes, laid the groundwork for the challenges Asian Americans face breaking this *bamboo ceiling* (Hyun, 2005) into leadership roles in U.S. organizations. The early laws retarded their ability to settle or establish families and communities that European immigrant settlers enjoyed (Nagayama Hall, 2018). Despite attempts to restrict Asians from U.S. citizenship, 4% of the Chinese born in the U.S. did not experience the same second-generation advantages, other immigrants experienced, such as being welcome into the *melting pot* community and assimilating into American culture. The second-generation Chinese remained in the small Chinatown communities segregated from American society. Gendered stereotypes of the emasculated Asian male and exotic, submissive Asian female may continue as subtle stereotype perceptions, and are demonstrated as

microaggressions against them, restricting their chances of being perceived as leadership potential (Nagayama Hall, 2018).

Asian American history is relevant to understanding their contribution to the American economy, their challenges to integration, status, stereotypes, and barriers to advancement, both socially and professionally within U.S. organizations. Despite the many limitations imposed upon Asian workers, which eventually included Japanese immigrants seeking agriculture work, Chinese and Japanese workers made positive progress. They were quick and efficient workers. In agriculture, the Japanese transformed the land from a predominant wheat crop to successful fruit and vegetable crops (Nagayama Hall, 2018). However, overcoming hardship and discrimination brought on the new stereotype; Asians became known as the *model minority,* which remains a challenge for Asian Americans today.

General Stereotype Asian American *Model Minority* Stereotype

Cultural scholars Chou and Feagin (2008) look closer at the model minority stereotype and assert, "The celebration of the apparent Asian-American success in the news media was started as a ruling class endeavor to disunite African Americans and Asian Americans during the Civil Rights Movement and has continued to serve as a convenient tool to manipulate racial perceptions" (p. 86). Researchers Chao et al. (2013) also found "perceptions of the *model minority* stereotype as a shared belief across all *but* Asian ethnic communities" (p. 90). According to Nagayama Hall (2018), the [model minority] myth, which coincided with the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s was "based on the Japanese, who were the largest Asian population at the time, but since has

been blanketly applied to other Asian American groups" (p. 172). The Japanese's perceived success extending to all Asians as a homogenous minority group is problematic for Asian Americans. According to the U.S. Census (2010), there are over 19 ethnic races under the Asian American category, each with their unique history, culture, language, and socioeconomic disposition (Census, 2010). Asian Americans are perceived as a homogenous population, which dismisses the reality of Asian diversity within the broad demographic umbrella.

Overall, the *model minority* stereotype keeps the population at a double disadvantage. By socially engineering, a stereotype that divides minorities, Asian Americans became invisible as a minority population in terms of support. The *model minority* stereotype became a perception tool to disrupt minority unity and deflect support responsibility that other minority groups receive. The blanket stereotype is harmful to Asian Americans because it excludes them from the needed resources the Civil Rights Act of 1964 intended to provide to all minority populations. In essence, they became the invisible minority group. As the *model minority* stereotype presumes, they [Asian Americans] do not need services that other minority groups need. Asian Americans are also left in the competition with the dominant majority in the U.S. for jobs, promotions, resources, and support. Many Asian American immigrants struggle with economic concerns. Communications are difficult since, for many refugee Asians, English is their second language (Chao et al., 2013). The *model minority* perception divided the minority groups' resentment of Asians by other minority groups and placed them in direct

competition with the European white majority for jobs without needed social services other minority groups enjoy.

Despite the progress of women's advancement in the workplace, a gap exists with AAW seeking leadership roles apart from the collective minority groups and are invisible within the conversations of race and gender inclusion in the workplace (Perez, 2003, p. 212). Existing research on the women's movement has left out the Asian American population subscribing to the *model minority* stereotype perception of "hard-working and successful" and therefore do not need help. Other researchers discuss AAW stereotypes that have caused invisibility as potential leaders, further inhibiting this population's leadership advancement. Stereotypes such as the *model minority*, submissive, exotic Asian women, and feminine Asian men, affect Asian Americans from being perceived as leaders Chao et al., (2013). The low percentage of AAW in leadership roles calls for a need to discuss AAW and include their lived experiences in the workplace regarding leadership advancement, gendered racism, invisibility, and stereotypes. Since they are not "seen or heard" it is unknown why there is a gap in AAW leadership which may continue, since they are presently left out of boardroom decisions.

Diversity in the workplace

Diversity in organizations is positive for productivity and performance when supported and aligned (Goldberg et al., 2019; Goswami & Goswami, 2018; Lorenzo & Reeves, 2018; Powers, 2018; Turban et al., 2019). Lorenzo and Reeves (2018) specifically found "Companies with above-average total diversity, measured within six dimensions of diversity (migration, industry, career path, gender, education, age), had

both 19% points higher innovation revenues and 9% points higher EBITA margins, on average. All six dimensions of diversity had statistically significant correlations with innovation, both individually and collectively" (p. 3). Zhang (2017) researched how regulatory acceptance and normative acceptance factors into an organization's diversity success. Normative acceptance was the key to organizational success, even when regulatory acceptance (regulation) was enforced. In other words, the law did not change attitudes (Zhang, 2017). However, if normative acceptance was present, the demographic (female leaders) was more likely to be successful. The success of cultural diversity acceptance depends whether the leaders provided support to the diverse demographic (women leaders) and ensured it became socialized within the organization (normative acceptance). Normative acceptance of women leaders may be a parallel indicator for Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) diversity regulations, and why, in some circumstances, race and gender acceptance still has not generalized to normative (social) acceptance in the workplace.

Interpersonal evaluations in the workplace affect the advancement and promotion of employees. Two theories, Shifting Standards Theory SST (Biernat et al., 1991) and the Mosaic Intersectional categories that pertain to stereotypes and performance (Hall et al., 2019), may shed some light on some of the ambiguity barriers to normative acceptance of diversity in the workplace. Research by Hall et al. (2019) discuss the added complexity of Crenshaw's (1989/1993) Intersectionality framework describing the African American women's experience through the complex nature of multiple dimensions axes. This research model emphasizes the unique dynamics when race and gender are present. Hall

et al. (2019) discuss the importance of taking a closer look at the Intersectionality Theory through the Mosaic Model of Stereotyping using intersectional categories. It applies to Management Theory and performance evaluations. Hall et al. (2019) point out demographic characteristics that are vital sources of bias in assessments need to be looked at through micro-lens to look at the intersection of multiple categories (Mosaic) to consider how stereotyping affects preference and views of the promotion decision-makers. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has increased the number of racial/ethnic categories that require employers to report and include multiracial employees (EEOC, 2008). The added demographics add intersectional dimensions that may be important to consider in personnel evaluations and annual reviews. "Interpersonal evaluations have always been deeply embedded in the fabric of organizational life and are the fundamental basis for hiring and promotion decisions (Avery & Campion, 1983), and influence interactions within teams and among leaders" (Mannix & Neal, 2005; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). Employee and interpersonal evaluations are considered an objective measurement of performance in many organizations. Since personnel selection and annual reviews are often utilized for hiring leaders, merit raises and evaluating employees for internal promotions, dissecting Mosaic intersectionality and Stereotyping, and the Shifting Standards theory (Biernat et al., 1991) is essential to mention. The Shifting Standards model proposes judgments are influenced by relative comparisons that are subjective and may be imposed by onlookers (Biernat et al., 1991).

The Shifting Standards model's key prediction states "*common rule*" judgments are likely to reveal an assimilative stereotype effect (Biernat, 2003). For example, Males are more aggressive than females. Since this is the common standard, the perceiver holds these "gender" stereotypes as real. However, if the evaluation is presented in objective terms, there can be a shift in standards for an "in-group" compared to another group. For example, a well-written memo may be considered suitable for a black man but average for a white man. According to Biernat (2003), performance evaluations are stereotype biased as well. The Shifting Standards model argues a woman who is a "good" athlete is not rated the same as a man who is a "good athlete." She is rated "good for a woman" and not held to the same athletic standards as a man's competition. Thereby, there are women's and men's competition standards in athletics, such as at the Olympics. Overall, team competition is segregated into women's or men's professional sports. Biernat (2003) presents research where Shifting Standards affect the professional environment. Her research discusses how objective performance and personnel evaluation bias are projected onto the external candidate or internal employee seeking advancement, which has a lot to do with advancement outcomes. Women who receive positive performance evaluations equal to their male counterparts when force ranked were placed lower than white male counterparts with the same rating in the professional environment. The Shifting Standard model would say this is due to females being rated *subjectively* rated high for a woman on an individual performance review. By *common rule* (men are better leaders than women) when it comes to promotions (Biernat, 2003). This is problematic

since the bias starts with lower expectations for the stereotyped demographic, and therefore when promotions are presented, the *common rule* standard bias prevails.

Biernat (2003) also adds that zero-sum and nonzero-sum behaviors add to the complexities and confusion for those receiving positive performance reviews but not receiving promotions. Zero-sum behaviors refer to finite outcomes. You either get the job, promotion, or achievement goal. Nonzero-sum behaviors are infinite, such as positive encouragement, friendliness, friendliness towards co-workers and subordinates in the work environment. However, when it came to promotion (objective outcome), the zero-sum behaviors favored the *common rule* candidate (Biernat, 2003). Both the Mosaic Model for intersectional stereotyping and shifting standards are significant when it comes to stacking the decks for minorities in the workplace advancing into leadership roles. Hall et al. (2019) remind us of key opinion leaders who emphasized, "Social categorization is a cognitive process through which an evaluator encounters an individual and uses demographic characteristics that are socially meaningful for the evaluator to classify the individual" (Allport, 1954; Bruner, 1957). Stereotypes prescribe social categories and imply social meaning about a population. Without being aware of the limitations these stereotypes bound each population, the inequalities continue to present a pattern of inequality in leadership advancement.

Regardless of the stereotypes, perceptions, and misperceptions surrounding Asian Americans, Asian Leadership paradigms are part of collectivism's cultural foundation. "The effectiveness of traditional leadership is more concerned with aspects of guarding and achieving an atmosphere of harmony and stability" (Santoso, 2019), often referred to

as the Authentic Leadership model. In contrast, Western leadership is diametrically opposite, where individualism and competition are the hallmarks of effective leadership. Other studies on perceptions of Asian Leadership style or Authentic Leadership are different from Western Charismatic Leadership style. Burris et al. (2013) evaluated how Caucasians and Asian Americans characterize successful managers and compare them to Asian American and Caucasian managers (Burris et al., 2013). Overall, both are efficient, but Asians were less sociable, which was a disadvantage for Asians overall in a charismatic value culture. According to Burris, Ayman, Che, and Min (2013), Asian Americans have the highest proportion of college graduates of any race or ethnic group in the United States and comprise a disproportionate percentage of Ivy League graduates (Le, 2012; Mani & Trines, 2018). Further, Kawahara et al. (2013) noted the number of Asian American executives, officers, and directors included 96 men and women who held 127 seats at Standard & Poor 1500 companies during 2004 representing less than 1% total seats" (p. 240). Despite the low percentage of Asian leaders, research by Gündemir et al. (2019), looks at emerging data with organizational performance as Asian American leaders increase in organizations. Asian Americans have a strong work ethic, high education, and are effective as corporate leaders. Especially in situations of financial decline. Therefore, leaving out this minority population from the C-Suites may disservice the overall national and global competitive advantage.

Theoretical Frameworks

Critical Race Theory CRT (Delgado, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2000) looks at race and the power of precedence in the law. Feminist Theory FT (Martin, 2003; Olesen;

2000; Rhode, 1989; Sprague, 1989) applies to power and inequality between men and women. Both CRT and FT look at how a population is marginalized and oppressed through societal power inequities (Creswell, 2016, p. 61). Martin (2003) connects feminist theory to critical theory. Although both feminist theory and critical theory focus on social and economic inequalities, both aim to promote system change.

The Intersectionality framework by Crenshaw

Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989/1993) pertains to how discrimination affects a minority population, society, and the workplace. Her Intersectionality framework described the African American women's experience through the complex nature of multiple dimensions axes. This research model emphasizes the unique dynamics when race and gender are present. "It also calls to present how marginalization experienced at the individual, interpersonal, and structural levels are inseparable" (Brah & Phoenix, 2013). Crenshaw (1989/1993) and Brah & Phoenix (2013) underscored the need to look at all axes that complicate the experience as a comprehensive concept. Hall et al. (2019) research looks at the Mosaic impact of stereotypes and intersectionality on a broader scale to include LGBQ, ADA, and any additional demographic formerly not included in a study but newly added within the EEOC categories and how each demographic characteristic makes a difference in how the population experiences bias is essential for organizational management theory. The experience of being a white female is very different from being a white male. The experience of being a black female is very different from being a black male, and so on with each race, gender, and other characteristics (Hall et al., 2019). The Shifting Standards model's combined complexity,

along with the layered Mosaic of stereotype intersectionality, has many implications when it comes to management theory. Each demographic characteristic is layered into the sum of the Mosaic. In addition to the demographic characteristic, Biernat (2003) research asserts the demographic characteristic is judged by Shifting Standards stereotyping bias's.

Biernat's Shifting Standards Theory of Stereotype bias

Biernat's (2003) Shifting Standards theory, explains that stereotyping bias affect performance and promotion due to the *common rule* standard bias default. The *common rule* standard perceives white men as leaders. This default decides the fate or outcomes for each population and can vary within the subjective group as well. Biernat's (2003) research presents ratings that can shift, depending upon race, gender, and disposition of the perceiver, who consciously or unconsciously forms judgments and makes outcome decisions based on *common rule* standard judgments. The Shifting Standards Theory SST, Transformational Leadership Theory TLF, and Feminist Transformational Framework FTF. Look at judgments based on social perceptions, which can move or change.

Transformational Leadership Theory

According to Bass, (1999), who modified Transformational leadership theory discussed the leader as one who inspires the team to effectively execute successful change management through a process starting with visioning, influence and inspiration. "The transformational leader inspires, intellectually stimulates, and is individually considerate of them. Transformational leadership may be directive or participative.

Requiring higher moral development, transformational leadership is recognized universally as a concept. Furthermore, contrary to earlier expectations, women leaders tend to be more transformational than their male counterparts" (p. 1). Transformational Leadership speaks about using cross-culture strengths to apply transformational leadership (Santamaria & Jean-Marie, 2014). Grosser & Moon's (2019) research discussed Corporate Social Responsibility CSR and Feminist Organization Studies FOS as necessary to bring about awareness and change. The Mena Report (2019) *towards a brighter future* focused on AAW as the key to breaking the stereotypes. Noh (2018) looks at problems with transformational leadership theory for AAW. Perhaps due to the non-leader stereotypes present in society and the workplace. More research regarding the experiences of AAW in leadership roles or seeking to ascend as leaders is necessary to learn more about if and how race, gender, and stereotypes affect their career journey. It is vital to learn why there are so few AAW in leadership roles in U.S. organizations, which is what this study intends to research.

The Gap in Literature

The collective research shows that Asian Americans are significantly underrepresented in higher management with very little leadership data regarding AAW in leadership roles (Gee & Peck, 2018; Johnson & Sy, 2017; Yu, 2020). Back in 2005, Hyun pointed out AAW's invisibility. "Out of 10,092 Fortune 500 corporate officers in 2002, only 30 (0.29%) were Asian Women" (Hyun, 2005, p. xviii). There is a gap in empirical literature and data regarding AAW in leadership roles and how race, gender, and stereotypes may be affecting their career advancement and leadership promotion

accessibility. Hyun (2005) described this gap in popular terms as the *bamboo ceiling*; this identifies barriers facing Asian Americans pursuing leadership advancement. Hyun's (2005) and Gee and Peck's (2018) findings suggest that AAW are not in boardrooms of either the private or federal sectors. The lack of AAW voice in C-Suites creates invisibility during critical diversity discussions. According to these studies, Asian Americans continue to be the least likely to be promoted into management positions, mostly AAW (Johnson & Sy, 2016; Yu, 2020). The various research data represents a consistent disproportionate gap of AAW leaders across many industries and professions even when their contribution is considered relevant to organizational success. Literature regarding stereotypes, and the effects of microaggressions (Kuem et al., 2018; Mukkamala & Suyemoto, 2018; Sue et al., 2007) in the workplace and community, can be enriched with qualitative research utilizing the intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989/1991) model to gain data on race and gendered stereotypes that affect AAW pursuing leadership advancement in the workplace pursuing leadership advancement.

Literature Review – Methods

This research study used a general qualitative approach which focused on Asian American women's (AAW) lived experiences in the workplace, which is considered a social environment (Creswell & Creswell, 2014; Ratvich & Carl, 2016). The interpretive approach is appropriate since it will be used to understand AAW's experiences in the workplace as it pertains to race, gender and stereotypes. The approach sought out descriptive data shared by the subjects about their experiences in their social (work) environment (Creswell & Creswell, 2014). General qualitative research helps understand

the complex intricacies of lived experiences within a population that simple data collection may not capture. This research format was interested in the participant's perception of an experience (Smith & Osborn, 2007) in order to understand the complex intersection of the populations unique gender, race stereotypes specific to AAW, and the impact of subtle discrimination experienced by the population, so it can be understood more. The research approach can also help to understand if there is a belief that their experiences demonstrate feelings of disempowerment, limiting advancement into power positions.

Data collection included individual interviews and document analysis for context. The goal was to identify patterns of experiences, common views, similar behaviors towards them, responses to external actions, to analyze incidents, and to look at the question on a micro-level (Yale, 2015). I will use the pre-qualifying questionnaire for recruitment. The data was analyzed through three phases, thematic content analysis of the experiences, narratives, stories, anecdotes, writings, reflections, thoughts, and feelings of AAW. This will encompass their thoughts regarding stereotypes, workplace and social experiences that relate to their professional life, and cultural expectations. The goal was to discover insights regarding how these issues affect their upward trajectory into leadership roles in organizations. Further, the study explored Asian stereotypes that intersect race and gender to discover the impact of the unique sexualized discrimination the population may be facing and the social and professional impact.

Summary & Conclusion

A body of literature represents the value of diverse populations in organizations on innovation and performance within various dimensions (Lorenzo & Reeves, 2018). Overall, women in organizations are making strides in *glass ceiling* breakthroughs since the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission (1995) initiative was launched. However, by unintentionally omitting data regarding the Asian American population, especially regarding progress or discrimination AAW experience in the workplace, this population have become "invisible" as leaders. Invisibility means not being seen nor having a voice at decision-making C-Suite boardroom tables. The *model minority* and other stereotypes projected on this population assume they do not require help provided by Federal Title II's fundamental protections and additional workplace support. Without research data for AAW, they may be misunderstood (Kawahara et al., 2013). Factors that may be uncovered by detailed qualitative research can bring awareness to factors that may be impeding their advancement into leadership roles. The current lack of data indicates the *model minority* stereotype that they are "just fine" leaves them without support or resources, and voiceless regarding workplace inclusion support, discussions or leadership advancement. Without a seat at the leadership table, they are invisible to the decision-making processes and must fend for themselves in the workplace and society.

Theories suggest the *model minority* stereotype has been socially accepted and "glamorized" the population strategically as a means to divide minority cohesion with the African American population during the Civil Rights Movement, and continues to serve as a tool to manipulate racial perceptions" (Chou & Feagin, 2008, p. 86). Despite the

seemingly positive stereotypes, they have come to disempower Asian Americans in the workplace by excluding them from EEOC Federal Title II support, despite being projected to be the largest growing immigrant group in the U.S. Asian Americans are also stereotyped as a homogenous monolith of highly educated, highly productive workers, which invalidates the diversity within the over 19+ ethnic cultures worldwide. Many Asian American immigrants struggle with economic concerns. Many sub-Asian populations are below the poverty level, and communications are difficult since, for many refugees, English is their second language (Chao et al., 2013). There is very little data on AAW, which leaves them a vulnerable invisible population. "Unspoken and unseen" they are vulnerable to the *bamboo ceiling* barriers to career advancement. Many may also become targets of discrimination, hostile work environments, and domestic violence on a professional and social level.

Domestic violence among Asian Americans is hard to detect because it often is unreported due to cultural shame. However, AAW in some ethnic populations are double the national average as victims of domestic violence, at a rate of 21-37%. AAW, especially Korean and Vietnamese women, have an estimated 60% & 53% domestic violence rates, respectively (Kim, 2000, p. 3). Kim reviewed two studies, both of which found "Status inconsistency (educational and occupational) often contributes to increased tensions between husband and wife that may also lead to wife abuse" (p. 9). When women cannot sustain employment or advance professionally, they are vulnerable to abuses within the workplace and within society, including domestic violence as Kim (2000) research showed. 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 (Tebb et al., 2018). Therefore, limiting advancement for AAW may have severe ramifications beyond employment, and warrants positive social change awareness.

Positive Social Change

General qualitative research helps understand the complex intricacies of lived experiences within a population that simple data collection may not capture. This research format is interested in the participant's perception of an experience (Smith & Osborn, 2007). It contributes to the collective understanding of how people construct meaning through their social environment experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2014). This research analyzed the social, cultural, economic, and mental health factors that may be fundamental barriers to career advancement for AAW working in U.S. organizations. The intersection of race and gender poses a unique challenge for AAW as a minority group, leaving them as Yu, 2020 mentioned, "the least likely population to hold leadership roles" (p. 1). This research is relevant for Organizational Psychology in terms of personnel selection, retention, employee equal opportunity concern, economic strength, and competitive advantage missed opportunities. This research also looks at social justice concerns in terms of discrimination, and harassment in the workplace against this population. The research may bring awareness for positive social change that pertains not only to hire practices, employee diversity, discrimination in the workplace underscoring leadership advancement for AAW minorities, especially in light of the complexities of

mosaic intersectionality and shifting standards stereotype bias that may be conscious or unconscious drivers of personnel selection and employee performance evaluations.

Leaving any population out of promotion opportunities leaves them vulnerable, not only to race-specific discrimination through microaggression and hostile work and social environments and misunderstandings affect our collective strength as a sustainable economic leader. According to Hofstede's cultural dimension scale, Asian industrial culture values include collectivism and long-term orientation (Hofstede, 1984). Asian industry culture values long term business strategy, which is very different from the U.S. Harvard Business Review reports, "The average lifespan of a U.S. S&P 500 company has fallen by 80% in the last 80 years (from 67 to 15 years), and 76% of UK FTSE 100 companies have disappeared in the last 30 years" (Hill et al., 2018, p.1.). As Lorenzo and Reeves (2018) study pointed out, diversity in organizations had a statistically significant positive impact on various performance and production measures. With Gündemir et al. (2019) study of effective Asian CEO's in mind, the task of re-imagining the future due to the disruption of the recent economic crisis resulting from the current ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we could benefit by including more Asian Leadership as we reimagine our financial, economic future.

For the specific studied population of AAW, positive social change that affects social, mental health, and economic spectrums for the population and continued U.S. potential is warranted by leveraging diversity in all its forms and populations including AAW, to ensure a global competitive advantage. This study was intended to discover and illuminate more insights regarding AAW's leadership gap, through research of their

unique lived experience. Asian Americans women AAW who are overall considered highly educated, high achieving workers and underrepresented as organizational leaders, through this study and data sought out to learn why.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to learn about the lived experiences of Asian American women (AAW) potential and established leaders in the workplace to gain a better understanding of how race, gender, and stereotypes, or other barriers may be preventing them from ascending into leadership roles. Low or no leadership representation leaves them without visibility, voice or power during critical decision-making. Chapter 3 described the rationale for using a general qualitative research approach for this study. The research questions and details of the researcher's role describe participant recruitment and the data collection process, analysis, methodology, and ethical considerations for this research. Asian Americans are the most diverse and fastest-growing minority group in the U.S. (Census, 2010). They also have the highest average education level of all minority and dominant groups in America (Mani & Trines, 2018). However, Asian Americans hold less than one percent of the executive leadership roles in Fortune 500 organizations (Hyun, 2005; Kawahara et al., 2013; Gee & Peck, 2017). According to research by Yu (2020), Asian American women (AAW) are the least likely to be promoted into leadership roles. Her study noted a lack of data on this population, specifically during the *Glass Ceiling* (1995) evaluation conducted by President Bush's administration in the 1990's, leaving them invisible as a minority group. Inclusion into the *Glass Ceiling* study was significant. The outcome of the report delegated support, and resources in accordance to the data to elevate women in the workplace. The methodology

aligns with the purpose of the study. This research aimed to learn how these issues affect AAW upward trajectory into leadership roles in organizations.

Research Design and Rationale

A general qualitative research approach for gathering data was used as for the study methodology, which explored the lived experiences of AAW potential leaders and AAW existing leaders in U.S. organizations to learn how race, gender, and stereotypes, may have affected their work social environment (Creswell & Creswell, 2014; Ratvich & Carl, 2014) and career trajectory. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), "Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible" (p.3). The researchers assert, "there are focal points that qualitative research can draw out such as (a) To capture an individual's point of view, in-depth, (b) Examine the constraints of everyday life, and (c) To secure rich descriptions (of the participant's experience)" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). To ensure rigor, they underscore the importance of the work, "Critical realists believe that reality is arranged in levels. Scientific work must go beyond statements of regularity to the analysis of the mechanisms, processes, and structures that account for the patterns that are observed" (p.11). Creswell and Creswell (2014) mentioned five viable ways to conduct qualitative studies: Narrative research, Phenomenological research, Grounded theory, Ethnography, and Case studies. (Creswell & Creswell, 2014). I am using the general qualitative research model, which includes the narrative stories of AAW as the best fit for the research goals. The general qualitative approach allows for the exploration of realities as AAW perceive them.

Qualitative research regarding the lived experiences of AAW and workplace advancement is relevant for exploring the low percentages of AAW leaders in executive roles in organizations. According to the Society of Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP), "Industrial-Organizational Psychologists (I-O Psychologists) study workplace issues of critical relevance to business, including talent management, coaching, assessment, selection, training, organizational development, performance, and work-life balance" (SIOP, 2016). Low leadership representation of a specific demographic is a concern and warrants further research that falls under the scope of I/O psychology. I/O psychology professionals enhance human well-being and performance in organizational work and work settings (SIOP, 2020). The delicate balance of job safety, satisfaction, and performance contributes to overall corporate security. This study is significant for organizational psychology to help understand possible workplace disparities within the AAW specific population that are barriers to leadership ascension.

Research Questions

Research questions for this study arise from two points. First, there is little data relating to AAW leaders and leadership. Data about AAW and descriptions of their personal leadership styles, philosophies, and leadership values may bring understanding about their attitudes about promoting into high-level positions. Second, if participants feel they work in an environment where race, gender, and stereotype pre-dispositions [bias] are present, how did the participants become aware of their predicament and how are they navigating these challenges in their workplace? This research also aimed to learn the potential disconnect with *regulatory acceptance* or *normative acceptance* (Zhang,

2017) of diversity and inclusion measures perceived for AAW in the workplace. The research questions were as follows:

RQ1: What is it like for AAW leaders and AAW aspiring into leadership roles in U.S. organizations to experience race and gender stereotyping?"

RQ2: What are the lived experiences of AAW leaders and aspiring leaders in U.S. Organizations regarding their leadership style and strategy?

SQ1: What leadership qualities and characteristics do AAW value in a model leader?

SQ2: What support did AAW receive in terms of guidance, training, mentorship, and leadership training during their careers?

Role of the Researcher

The researcher's role was to construct research that outlined the goals and meaning of the research project. "The [process] included ensuring transparency in positionality, social location, experiences, belief, prior knowledge, assumptions, ideologies and work with epistemologies and biases of the researcher own perspectives on the world" (Ratvich & Carl, 2014, p. 40). In qualitative research, the researcher's role is to attempt to access study participants' thoughts and feelings. This was done as the observer, participant, and observer-participant. As an observer, my role was to review data as it was presented objectively. As a participant in the interview, using qualitative semi-structured interviewing provided primary source data through interaction with the other participant. As the observer-participant, recording the data comes from objective observation of the responses and observing my interactions to maintain objectivity. "The data collected is a primary responsibility of the researcher is to safeguard participants and

their data" (Sutton & Austin, 2015, p. 1). Supposing participants were personal or professionally related to me, ethical procedures were planned in the form of informed consent, transparency of any relationship(s) in the interview data recordings, reflective journals, and member checking to ensure the research and participants remain safe throughout the process. There were no issues with studying in one's environment. Interviews were conducted on a virtual Zoom platform. I work from home, and therefore no concerns of privacy breaching were known. No superiors or personnel from my workplace were interviewed. Thereby, no power differentials were present. Incentives of nominal gift cards for interviews were offered to all participants who completed the interview. This research methodology included transparency and ethical procedures were taken, including member checking to ensure the research and participants remained safe throughout the process.

Methodology

Qualitative research culminates in the essence of exploring the experiences of AAW seeking leadership roles or who are leaders or potential leaders in the workplace, to learn if and how race, gender, and stereotypes affected participants positively or negatively as it related to career advancement. This design has strong philosophical underpinnings and typically involves conducting interviews (Giorgi, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). Qualitative research seeks to understand the lived experiences of the people of a population. I chose general qualitative narratives over the other qualitative methods because it allows flexibility and more in-depth discovery of data through the participants' eyes and focuses on the work environment. Narrative research involves sharing stories to

learn more about one or many experiences. The format helped to look at the specifics of race, gender, stereotypes, and career advancement by offering open-ended interview questions that allow participants to share. Currently, there is little data on the population as it pertains to AAW and low leadership representation.

I did not choose other formats for various reasons. Grounded theory is a design of inquiry from sociology in which the researcher derives a general, abstract idea of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of participants. This process involves using multiple data collection stages, plus the refinement and interrelationship of information categories (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2007, 2015). I did not choose this method. The method I chose, qualitative research, addresses specifics about the experiences, descriptions and interpretations of the experiences. Interviewing is specific to this approach and was most effective for learning about AAW workplace experiences. The research study addresses the research purpose and problem through general qualitative interviews most effectively. Ethnography research is a design of inquiry coming from anthropology and sociology. The researcher studies the shared patterns of behaviors, language, and actions of an entire cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period (Creswell & Creswell, 2014). Data collection often involves observations and interviews. The data could be valuable in learning the differences and similarities between the 19+ cultures and races under the Asian American umbrella. Case study research develops an in-depth analysis of a case, often a program, event, activity, process, of one or more individuals. Case studies focus on a specific time and movements in an organization, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data

collection procedures over a sustained time (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009, 2012, 2014). Since case studies' focus is centered on a particular organization or group to discover issues that may be present, I could not use this format for this research. Unless the organization is requesting the study, it would be invasive and difficult to access its operations and employee interactions. My research format focused on the participant's perception and experiences of AAW when seeking to advance into or as a current AAW leader working in U.S. organization. Through this approach, my research aimed to understand the complex intersectionality of gender, race, and stereotypes related to the participants' experiences.

The primary data collection instrument was through qualitative semi-structured interviews (Appendix D; Part 2B), document review, and reflective journals. Qualitative research of AAW reveals a research gap of AAW in leadership roles and intends to bridge some of the holes in research data about AAW in the workplace through interviews to learn more about the lived experiences of AAW in the work social environment and how they navigate race, gender, and stereotypes. The methodology aligns with the purpose of the study.

Instrumentation

Semi-Structured Interviews: I used qualitative interviews, using an interview script with the participants (Appendix D). Ratvich and Carl (2016) emphasize "the semi-structured interview seeks range and variation in people's meaning-making processes, experiences and points of view towards being able to understand, then communicate about relationships between their complicated realities and viewpoints" (Brinkmann &

Kvale, 2015; Fontana & Prokos, 2007; Weiss 1994; Ratvich & Carl, 2016, p. 4). The Primary Data collected was in the form semi-structured individual interviews. The participants were AAW, aged 18-65 years old, who held or was seeking management and higher executive leadership roles in U.S. organizations.

Semi-structured interviews require that the researcher learns about the topic to prepare a limited number of questions in advance, with follow-up questions built into the plan (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 21). Sharon Ratvich (2014) notes, "customized replication requires the interviewer to create individualized follow-up questions and contextualizing probes both prior and during the interview" (p. 147). This researcher prepared an interview script and plan for semi-structured or customized replication of the interview questions to allow personalized follow-up questions relevant to the individual participant's experience. The customized replication format allowed for flexibility and personalization in follow-up questions relevant to the individual participant's experience. Weiss (1994) focused on purposeful interviewing, targeting specific meaning. Personal interviews and methods for collecting qualitative data are appropriate for research because they uncover a deeper understanding of a particular issue or topic within a kinship group related to race and gender. Weiss (1994) highlighted many reasons for choosing qualitative interviewing as a significant source of a study. He emphasizes the primary goal is to develop holistic descriptions of the participants' perspectives, realities, experiences, and phenomena and learn how they interpret the events and occasions. This method aligned with the objective of my qualitative interviews. Specific goals of the interviews were to (a) Developed full detailed and contextualized descriptions of

experiences and perspectives of AAW in the workplace, (b) Understand and integrated multiple individual perspectives, (c) Described processes and experiences in depth, (d) To develop holistic descriptions of perspectives, realities, experiences, and phenomena, (e) To learn how participants interpret events and experiences, (f) Bridge intersubjectivity between researcher and participant. The goal of interviews in this research were to meet these criteria.

Given the current pandemic, the semi-structured interviews were conducted through a virtual Zoom platform and audio recorded. The interview was transcribed through the Word transcription platform, and coded. A sample of the interviews were upload to the Quirkos software for additional analysis and support. No interview was conducted through face-to-face meetings due to the COVID pandemic risks. The interviewees received the Participant Guidelines (Appendix A), Signed Consent form (Appendix B) that explain the process for participants. Participants who meet the inclusion criteria completed and consented before the interview commenced. The guidelines and signed consent documents were available via email or paper copy before the interview. Those who meet the inclusion criteria were provided with information via email regarding the interview calendar, expectations, and interview process. I utilized a prepared interview script that contained my introduction and purpose of the interview, expectations of the interview process, structure, the estimated time-frame, transparency of all recording devices, and the information related to the participants' opportunity to review the interview draft within a 48-hour window for edits and corrections. A calendar meeting date, time (and place if in-person) was not relevant to this study due to COVID-

19 pandemic health risks. The semi-structured interview protocol and prepared script ensure consistency for all participants. At the end of the interview, I provided follow-up procedures verbally and an email thank you note, with a nominal gift card offer of $25.00 for the subject's time in the interview. The participant was provided with a summary of their interview contribution for the study and had 48 hours to respond and submit questions or changes. If no response was received, it was presumed acceptable. Data collection includes document reviews and reflective journals.

One primary drawback of Likert-type surveys is the limited amount of information it can provide and is not designed to explain or context. For this reason, I will be conducted semi-structured individual interviews with the participants. The interview questions are provided in Appendix D. This format highlighted the importance of the participants' lived experiences (Ratvich & Carl, 2016). Those who meet the inclusion criteria were provided with information via email regarding the interview calendar, expectations, and interview process and used the semi-structured interview protocol and script to ensure consistency for all participants. At the end of the interview, I provided follow-up procedures verbally, and in writing with a thank you note and a nominal gift card offering for the subject's time and effort participating in the interview as previously proposed.

Sample Selection

Ph.D. candidate is seeking the following participants for a research study:

- Participant number: 12 to 25 AAW
- Participant age range: 18-65 years old

- Participant work status: Employed within five years in a U.S. organization, with a goal of promoting into a manager or higher; or current leaders.

Moustakas' (1994) work suggests 5-25 participants are sufficient for study to obtain purposeful sampling data or until saturation. Rubin and Rubin (2012) described saturation as, "You [the researcher] continue interviewing others so long as each additional interviewee presents more refined or somewhat different perspectives on the matter. When no new information is forthcoming, you have reached what Glaser and Strauss (1994) term the saturation point" (p. 63). They also explain, "You [researcher] do not need a vast number of interviewees to demonstrate balance and thoroughness so long as you show that you have explored alternative points of view and evaluated them carefully. You want to interview two or three with each vantage point" (p.63). I plan on engaging 12 to 25 AAW participants and confirmed and completed 19 interviews for this study. There is minimal data regarding this population (Kawahara et al., 2013; Yu, 2020). Therefore, it is appropriate to use qualitative interviewing to learn about the lived experiences that contribute to AAW career decisions, advancement and to explore the intersectionality aspects that affect AAW in leadership roles and AAW seeking to advance into executive leadership positions. I used qualitative interviewing for data collection which is appropriate since there is little data regarding AAW leaders, as it pertains to race, and gender stereotyping.

Data Collection

For qualitative research to be meaningful, the selection process for choosing participants to interview also needs to be appropriate. I chose *purposive sampling* (non-

probability sampling), also known *as purposeful sampling* (Ratvich & Carl, 2014), and snowball sampling for participant selection using the data sources previously mentioned for recruiting subjects. “Purposeful sampling provides context-rich and detailed accounts of specific populations and locations” (Ratvich & Carl, 2014). Patton (2015), discussed purposeful sampling further, “[it] is to focus case selection strategically in alignment with the inquiry’s purpose, primary questions, and data being collected. The power of this approach lies in selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study” (p. 264).

Moustakas (1994) indicates that a sample size of 5-25 is sufficient for qualitative research. The ideal subject participation goal of this study is 12-25 or when saturation occurs. The concept of theoretical saturation means that there is clear evidence of themes repeating themselves during data collection. This is an indicator of completion of the data collection because it seems to be complete, and there is no new information emerging. Therefore, there is no need to continue with additional data gathering on the subject (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006). To ensure comprehensive data collection is accurate, integrated, and thorough, I collected data from a participant one day, planned, reviewed and reflected on it, then transcribed and analyze it the following day while it is still fresh in my mind. I used the insights gained from the analysis to help me with my next interview. I continued with this process until I reach saturation.

Purposeful sampling focuses on intentionally choosing individuals with certain experiences and knowledge of a specific phenomenon and can answer questions regarding the study research questions. It is the primary sampling approach used in qualitative research (Coyne, 2008; Patton, 2015). Ratvich and Carl (2014) describe

Snowball sampling as "starting with one or a few relevant and information-rich interviewees and then asks for additional relevant contacts, others who can provide different or confirming perspectives. Creates a chain of interviewees based on people who know people, who know people, who would be good sources given the focus of inquiry. The researcher does the recruiting" (p. 135). Since the sample size is small, snowball sampling will likely be the primary recruiting method. Ensuring credibility was the goal, when using a small sample size (Ratvich & Carl, 2016). This approach can be perceived to reduce biases. Similarly, Mukkamala and Suyemoto (2018) used interviewing to uncover their participants' rich lived experiences. "The most poignant practical implication of [their] study is the power of the participants' voices describing experiences of discrimination in their lives in their own words" (p. 44). I intend to leverage purposeful random sampling to ensure rich, valuable information from the participants to document experiences, patterns, and themes. Using participants who fit the eligibility criteria and have personal lived experiences in organizations, the information will not likely be not easy to access through other methods.

I planned to send inquiries to the source listservs utilized in Mukkamala and Suyemoto (2018). They reached out to the following organizations that focus on Asian Americans to recruit participants: Asian American Journalists' Association, Asian Women in Business, Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, Asian American Business Development Center, Asian Pacific American Medical Students' Association, the Center for Asian Pacific American Women, National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum, the Asian American Psychological Association, the

American Psychological Association's Women's Division subsection on Asian American women (Mukkamala & Suyemoto, 2018, p. 34). A pre-qualifying survey was used to validate participants prior to conducting each interview to gain preliminary inclusion qualifications.

Inquiries were sent through organizational and cultural groups with AAW memberships social media. Snowball recruitment was also being utilized. The requests were in alignment with each organization, social media, or instrument protocol. Emails and postings helped to screen potential participants and to establish the proper inclusion target population. The emails or message posting served as a request for participants with inclusion criteria. I obtained initial inclusion and exclusion from the inclusion criteria for recruiting by virtual Zoom individual interviews. I sent email inquiries across the country to various AAPI institutions' listservs, LinkedIn, and other social media platforms with the Participant Pre-Qualifier Questions (Appendix C).

I continued with participant recruitment until a minimum of 10 participants were collected for both the qualitative semi-structured interviews. I also utilized snowball referrals for recruiting. The semi-structured interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded through in a three phases qualitative thematic coding process described in the data analysis section. In the event I did not get enough participants, Plan B was prepared which involved (a) Connecting with the committee with an analysis of progress, (b) Connect to review participant list and listserv organizations and potential snowball participants (c) Connect with Walden CRQ for additional recruitment options (d) Post on Research Gate for participant recruitment. The alternative plans were not necessary since

sufficient participant recruitment successfully recruited 19 participants who met the inclusion criteria.

Secondary Data: Document Review included existing, relevant, and contextual documents essential for the data collection and analysis process (Patton, 2015). Bogdan and Biklen (2006) divide archival data into three categories for data sources: personal documents, official documents, and popular culture documents. I planned on utilizing U.S. Census source data or other population data, including PEW research center, Ascend, Harvard Business Research center, Russell Reynolds data, Walden Center for Research Quality website, and other data sources with documented research results regarding various race, gender, salary, education, and position held, and which include Asian Americans and Asian American women data within the workforce at any given period. These may also include other data sources within websites of representative Asian American organizations, AAPA, AAPI, AAJC, blogs, listserv communications, public domain sites where there is participant-generated data.

Data Analysis

Data Analysis for the semi-structured interviews consisted of ensuring the interview protocol was followed. The semi-structured interview script was utilized for consistency with each interview, along with an observation sheet. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by this researcher using Word transcription tool technology and Zoom technology was used for the video interview meetings. Microsoft Word Voice transcription software that efficiently assists with reviewing and transcribing interviews and other source materials such as videos, documents, was sufficient

documenting data collected. Zoom transcription and Word transcription are capabilities leveraged within in audio form, where a text transcript is available post-recording. No video recording was used. Data analysis was conducted through theme coding referenced by (Saldana, 2016), using excel at each phase of the coding. The bottom-up approach was used in the first phase. The top-down approach was used afterwards to ensure the goal of the study was focused on using interview questions to address the research questions of the study.

Thematic data content analysis includes qualitative coding in three phases: (a) Descriptive coding; (b) Concept Coding, and (c) Pattern and theme coding was used to analyze the interviews and narratives, stories, anecdotes, writings, reflections, thoughts, and feelings of AAW and their workplace, social environment. The data analysis was used to inform how race, gender, and stereotypes may affect their professional life. Cultural expectations, personal strengths, and obstacles can be barriers for AAW seeking leadership roles, navigating work and career trajectory. I coded the data looking for themes and patterns from the participants interviews regarding perceptions of their career journeys and experiences as it pertains to the research questions.

Data processing was through in the three-phase qualitative cycle coding of descriptive, concept, and pattern coding described. The first-cycle review involved descriptive category coding to organize the data. The second cycle looked at conceptual patterns. I planned to look for concepts that appear more than twice. Patterns demonstrate habits and importance in people's daily lives and help confirm salience. Saldana's 5 "R" were focused on observing possible patterns: routines, rituals, rules, roles, and

relationships (Saldana, 2016, p.6). The “after cycle review” phase focused on value coding to gather thematic significance. The coding would be organized manually and through Quirko’s platform for support, accuracy and efficiency along with an observation review notes, interview protocol, interview script, audiotape, artifacts, archived data, and other kinds of data collection instruments). The goal of the coding process was to learn common themes (Saldana, 2016) for success or obstacles they may be experiencing, such as stereotyping, that inhibit their confidence within social and various workplace structures that inhibit or enhance AAW leadership advancement. Further, this research explored the intersectionality of race, gender and Asian stereotypes to discover the unique sexualized discrimination the population may face as indicated in Mukkamala and Suyemoto (2018) research, and the social and professional impact. Any discrepancies would be noted under discrepant cases under the valid data in the analysis section.

Secondary data sources would also be reviewed and categorized as a bibliography of archival data reports and noted as support data (i.e., Census, PEW Research reports, etc.). The data will be collected, analyzed, synthesized, and summarized to report common patterns and themes of AAW leaders’ and potential leader experiences in their workplace. Content validity would be established through the iterative and recursive nature of qualitative research analysis to ensure validity and reliability. Ratvich and Carl (2016) assert the qualitative process is the “intentional, systematic scrutiny of data at various stages and moments throughout the research process. This scrutiny involves the specific processes of data organization and management, immersive engagement with data and data analysis” (p. 217). The data’s intentional, systematic scrutiny would be

noted throughout the process through the iterative and recursive three-step coding of carefully collected data from the semi-structured interviews, observations note, and secondary data sources. I planned to maintain professional engagement and review by my Chair person and committee, engaging in data triangulation, theory, and data analysis. To address bias, I kept personal journal notes of my feelings about observations and reflections on various influences on data interpretation and attention to researcher identity, positionally and assumptions and attended to issues of interpretive authority in systematic ways in the effort to resist the imposition.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Ratvich and Carl (2016) describe validity as "an approach to achieving complexity through systematic ways of implementing and assessing a study's rigor" (p. 188). The research Participant Guidelines (Appendix A) and Participant Consent (Appendix B) are available for each participant before the interview. Also, an explanation of the interview's purpose, the interview format, and the follow-up process to all participants orally and in writing before the interview begins. "Credibility is the researcher's ability to take into account the complexities that present themselves in a study and to deal with patterns that are not easily explained" (Guba, 1981). Transparency, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are all aspects of ensuring trustworthiness. Ratvich and Carl (2016) discuss transferability and internal validity in juxtaposing the researcher's ability to draw meaningful inferences from instruments that measure what they intend to measure and develop descriptive, context-relevant statements (Guba, 1981). Maxwell (1992) described five categories to understanding qualitative validity as:

> (a) Descriptive, collecting, and transcribing data; (b) interpretive, matching meaning and attributed behavior of the participant and actual participant's perspective (accurate analysis); (c) theoretical, explaining the phenomena studied through concepts and relationships between them; (d) generalizability, understanding how individuals from the same community agree and understand their experiences; and evaluative validity, whether the researcher can describe and understand the data without being judgmental (Ratvich & Carl, 2016, p.191).

Descriptive and categorical coding of the data was utilized to uncover patterns and themes from this population and learn more about AAW attitudes and barriers as leaders. The qualitative interview's key characteristics are the relational, contextual, nonevaluative, person-centered, temporal, partial, and subjective, and nonneutral elements, which are values to consider when the data is analyzed post-interview (Ratvich & Carl, 2016). I also looked at similar trends that emerged, to discover the meaning of the participants' experiences. I maintained a reflective journal. The reflective journal is "an ongoing, real-time chronicling of reflections, questions, and ideas over time. They are useful for in-the-moment reflections and meaning-making and for charting ideas, thoughts, emotions, and concerns over time" (p. 79). I utilized a dedicated, reflective journal to capture field notes to document my thoughts, discoveries, questions, and insights, including emotions from design, throughout the process and to ensure continuous reflection about personal bias is available for review.

Ethical Procedures

I planned and ensured all IRB and ethical requirements were communicated and protected. These include, participants would be treated with respect (APA 1.2.1), and the data would be confidential (APA1.3.4). Participants' confidentiality and data protection are communicated through the participant guidelines and informed consent forms (APA 1.2.3). (See Appendix A, Appendix B). All participants were required to sign or give recorded oral informed consent before engaging in the study. (Appendix A). Ethical concerns related to recruitment materials and processes would be addressed through both Participant Guidelines and agreed upon informed consent (APA1.2.2). (See Appendix A and Appendix B). Institutional permissions, including IRB approvals that are needed (proposal) or were obtained (for the completed dissertation, included relevant IRB approval numbers 08-26-21-0624225. Ethical concerns related to data collection/intervention activities and data collection protocols, confidential storage through password-protected storage was communicated with the participants and adhered to (Dropbox or cloud storage with encryption and stored for the five-year required period). Other ethical issues as applicable would be available for review (these issues could include doing a study within one's work environment, conflict of interest or power differentials, and justification for the use of incentives).

Summary

This general qualitative research approach seeks to understand the complex intricacies of lived experiences within a population that simple data collection may not capture (Ratvich & Carl, 2016). It seeks answers to questions that stress how social

experience is created and given meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 4-8). This design has strong philosophical underpinnings and typically involves conducting interviews" (Giorgi, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). The research format focus is on the AAW participants' perception of their lived experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2007) to understand the complex intersection of gender, race, stereotypes, and discrimination experienced by the participants seeking to advance into leadership positions organizations. It is also to understand the gap regarding their lack of Executive leadership presence in U.S. organizations. The data collection instruments, qualitative semi-structured interviews, and document review, allow for unique experiences of AAW data to be collected and analyzed, to learn more about how their career experiences pertains to race, gender, and stereotypes perceptions by others. Qualitative research of AAW identifies a research gap and of AAW in leadership roles and seeks to bridge some of the holes in research data about AAW in the workplace. This study intends to learn more about the lived experiences of AAW in the work social environment to illuminate how they navigate race, gender, and stereotypes barriers in their career.

The methodology aligns with the purpose of the study. This chapter describes the rationale for using a qualitative research approach for this study. The research questions and details about the researcher's role, describes participant recruitment and the data collection process, analysis methodology, and ethical considerations for this research. Asian Americans are the most diverse and fastest-growing minority group in the U.S. (Census, 2010). They also have the highest average education level of all minority and dominant groups in America (Mani & Trines, 2018). However, Asian Americans hold

less than one percent of the executive leadership roles in Fortune 500 organizations (Hyun, 2005; Kawahara et al., 2013). AAW currently holds less than 1% of the leadership roles across industries in U.S. Organizations. This qualitative research method aimed to collect, analyze, and present research to inform us about the lived experiences of AAW in U.S. organizations in leadership roles or seeking promotion into executive leadership positions. The research data is meant to help inform and educate about the low leadership representation of AAW in organizations and learn what issues affect their upward trajectory into leadership roles in organizations and to propose potential positive social change opportunities to support this population.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to learn about the lived experiences of Asian American women (AAW) potential and established leaders in the workplace to gain a better understanding of how race, gender, and stereotypes, or other barriers may be preventing them from ascending into leadership roles. Low or no leadership representation leaves them without visibility, voice or power during critical decision-making. The goal was to report on the perceived barriers that the population face with the intention to educate and provide awareness about AAW's thoughts, attitudes, and experiences as leaders or potential leaders in U.S. organizations. The methodology is aligned with the purpose of the study as it is intended to explore a unique phenomenon and lived experiences. Specific research questions included:

RQ1 - What is it like for AAW leaders and AAW aspiring into leadership roles in U.S. Organizations to experience race, gender, and stereotyping?

RQ2 - What are the lived experiences of AAW leaders and aspiring leaders in U.S. Organizations regarding their leadership style and strategy?

SQ3 - What leadership qualities and characteristics do AAW value in a model leader?

SQ4 – What support does AAW receive in terms of guidance, training, mentorship, and specifically leadership training.

Chapter 4 describes the setting of the study, the participant's demographics, and the data collection process. This chapter also includes a description of the data analysis, methods,

trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, then will close with the results of the data analysis and a summary of the results.

Setting

This study used qualitative interviewing for data collection. Researchers Ratvich and Carl (2016) focused on semi-structured interviews as a relevant and significant tool in qualitative research since the approach seeks to draw out the depth and breadth of the participants' lived experiences from their point of view. This approach helps researchers understand the complex interpretation of their realities in their social environments (Ratvich & Carl, 2016). The qualitative study method was chosen due to the limited data on the AAW population overall and to learn more about the lived experiences of the population and why the leadership representation has been consistently low for over two decades despite the growth of women in leadership overall since the glass ceiling task force study of 1995 (Yu, 2020).

The participants were recruited by posting flyers and email notices to Asian American Associations, through social media and snowball referrals. The 19 qualified AAW participants completed semi-structured interviews through the Zoom video platform and audio recorded through word transcription from September 1, 2021 through January 30, 2022. The data from these interviews were used as the representative data for the AAW population for this study. A qualitative study method was chosen due to overall limited data on this population and to learn more about what is causing low AAW leadership representation despite the overall growth of women in leadership as shown in the glass ceiling task force study of 1995 (Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995). The semi-

structured interviews were conducted through the Zoom video platform. Some conditions in employment changed due to the COVID 19 pandemic. Some participants were no longer employed, while others were transferred out of the country. The IRB revision to include those who were employed with U.S. organizations within 5 years was approved with a supplemental request on 11.10.2021.

Demographics

Due to the minimal data on AAW leaders (Yu, 2020) and the intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989/1993) aspects that may affect advancement in the early stages of careers for this population, the participant selection was open to both AAW in leadership roles and AAW seeking to advance into executive leadership positions. Asian American women who are leaders or seeking to be promoted into leadership positions, age 18-65 years old, and who are currently working in or have worked in U.S. organizations were invited to be in the study. Table 1 shows the specific demographic breakdown of the 19 interviewees.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participants	Age/Category	Nationality	Industry	Region
P1	40-49	Chamorro/Micronesia	Healthcare	Honolulu, HI
P2	30-39	Taiwanese/American	Education	Greenwich, CT
P3	50-59	Chinese	Energy	Carrollton, TX
P4	18-29	Chinese	Psychology/Writing	Austin, TX
P5	50-59	Pilipino	Aerospace	Mesa, AZ

P6	50-59	Indian	Financial/Marketing	Mahwah, NJ
P7	30-39	Korean (Adoptee)	Retail/Real Estate	Plymouth, MN
P8	30-39	Taiwanese	Government	Fulton, MD
P9	18-29	Japanese/White	Psychology/Research	Portland, OR
P10	40-49	Korean	Advocacy	Los Angeles, CA
P11	50-59	Chinese	Government	New York, NY
P12	30-39	Korean (Adoptee)	Chemical/Research	Lexington, SC
P13	18-29	Chinese (Adoptee)	Education/Advocacy	Chicago, IL
P14	18-29	Thai/Korean/Chinese	Advocacy	Brooklyn, NY
P15	30-39	Korean	Law	Phoenix, AZ
P16	40-49	Korean (Adoptee)	Government	Honolulu, HI
P17	30-39	Taiwanese	Hi Tech/Manufacturing	Phoenix, AZ
P18	18-29	S. Asian/Indian	Audit/Accounting	Riverside, CA
P19	50-59	Korean	Advocacy	Atlanta, GA

Data Collection

Participant Recruitment

Following IRB Approval, 19 participants were recruited through research fliers via email. Each participant verbally consented to be interviewed (see Appendix A & B). The invitations and flyers were distributed via email, social media, listservs of various Asian American professional organizations. Participants were also recruited through snowball referral. According to McKinsey (2021), the issues with the COVID pandemic had ongoing uncertainty regarding employment, child, and parent care that interfered

with employment for women in the workplace. For example, according to McKinsey (2021), the major groups that were impacted were working mothers, women in senior management and black women. Those which children under ten years old were 10 percentage points higher than men during the pandemic. To accommodate such impacts caused by the pandemic, interviews were offered to participants who had been employed within five years of the study date and subsequently requested with the IRB on 10.8.21. Interviews were conducted via Zoom at a time that was convenient for each participant.

Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews require that the researcher learns about the topic to prepare a limited number of questions in advance, with follow-up questions built into the plan (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 21). Using recommendations from Ravitch and Carl (2016, p.147), I prepared an interview script and planned for semi-structured or customized replication of the interview questions to allow personalized follow-up questions relevant to the individual participant's experience. Weiss (1994) highlighted many reasons for choosing qualitative interviewing as a significant source of a study. This method aligns with the objective of my qualitative interviews which are: (a) Develop full detailed and contextualized descriptions of experiences and perspectives of AAW in the workplace, (b) Understand and integrate multiple individual perspectives, (c) Describe processes and experiences in depth, (d) Develop holistic descriptions of perspectives, realities, experiences, and phenomena, (e) Learn how participants interpret events and experiences, (f) Bridge intersubjectivity between researcher and participant.

Prior to beginning the interview process, participants received the Participant Guidelines (Appendix A) and Consent Form (Appendix B) that explained the process of the interview. Participants who met the inclusion criteria completed and submitted the documents before the interview. The guidelines and signed consent documents were available via email or downloadable copy before the interview. Those who met the inclusion criteria were provided with an appointment email. A calendar meeting date and time were provided prior and confirmed with a Zoom meeting link before the interview. Along with the Zoom link was the email describing expectations and the interview process. The interviews lasted approximately 1 hour, though some went over this expected timeframe, with permission from the participant to continue. The 19 interviews were conducted over a period of three months.

The interviews were conducted using the interview script provided in Appendix D. The script contained an introduction of myself, my role as a Ph.D. doctoral candidate, the purpose of the study, the interview process, structure, estimated time frame, transparency of all recording devices, and explanation of post-interview follow up. The interviews were audio-recorded via the Word Transcription platform, uploaded, edited, and coded in a three-phase coding process. In addition, I utilized Quirkos software to capture additional patterns. The proposed NVivo software was changed to Quirkos because of the user-friendly and affordable platform compared to NVivo software.

Following each interview, the participants were provided with a subjective summary of the chapter with their interview direct quotes highlighted, and had 48 hours to respond and submit questions regarding the summary. If none were submitted, the

summary would be presumed acceptable. At the end of the interview, I provided follow-up procedures verbally and a thank you email was sent with a nominal gift card offer of a $25.00 gift card for the subject's interview time. Data collection included document reviews and reflective journals

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted through theme coding referenced by (Saldana, 2016), using excel at each phase of coding. The bottom-up approach was used in the first phase. The top-down approach was used to ensure the goal of the study was focused on using interview questions to address the research questions of the study. Three phase thematic coding was utilized to analyze the participant interviews based on Saldanas (2016). The first phase was open coding, inductive phase of coding (bottom up). The specific type of open coding was descriptive. The second phase was attribute and pattern coding of the data, and then reviewed the data for correspondence between open coding and apiori codes, then deductively looked for the apiori codes. Then began the category phase of data analysis. (Described in a table on one page in Chapter 4 sample. See appendix F full coding).

Table 2

Example of Open Coding

Open Codes	Categories	Participants' Identifier & Excerpts
Race, gender and stereotypes	Perceived as a foreigner	P14 – "There is this idea of always being the "others" the foreigners in the room causing us to be overlooked, being explicitly left out of advancement opportunities because of that idea that like you don't belong in that position of power.

	Perceived as meek	P12 – "What I found interesting was, when my name got circulated to do this. When my name got circulated it was said, "Oh, she's such a meek person, she's so quiet, are we sure she's going to be able to deal with these men? She doesn't seem like, you know, she would be able to."
	Sexualized	P10 – "Having a CFO once tell me that he is attracted to me and also making gestures. He was also someone who used to travel to Asia a lot and he knew about those parlors and kind of making those kinds of gestures in a sense and verbally, about his experiences there and then in the same token, showing advances to me at the same time. It was very, you know, I could tell it was very race-driven in a sense because I was an Asian American woman."
	Experiences of discrimination Bullying/Harassment	P4 – "He [coworker] threatened to hurt me when he found out I was Chinese. He called everything on the Panda Express menu and said he was going to hurt me and that he kicked other women. My boss said he is only kidding."
Career Support	Training	P12 – "They were very intentional about the training that they offered. I appreciated that.
	Mentoring	P 11 – "Mentoring was available and her department spent a lot of money on mentoring. I participated in more than ten mentoring sessions because it was expected, but did not feel they were useful.*"*
		P10 – "Yes, [there are mentors] but zero are available. I realized growing up as an Asian American woman, as an Asian American period, there was this understanding, this perception that we were white. We were very 'white adjacent' and so [leaving us out] it wasn't considered racism in my workplace. So, there wasn't anything available for someone like me."
	Networking	P18 – "I network through my LinkedIn account"
Leader qualities	Self-Ascribed leader traits	P17 – "I am collaborative, Compassionate, Creative, providing enough of a balance between guidance but not creating restrictions that make

	people feel like they don't have the freedom to operate and I am fun."
Model leader qualities	P8 – "I think the ability to Communicate well is number one. Having the ability to understand your decisions is meant for societal impacts and not just to benefit your own agenda. So, having that wisdom and empathy to understand the responsibilities that come with leadership, understanding that this is an obligation back to society."

The interviews were conducted by Zoom and lasted between 45 to 90 minutes. A few of the participants' interviews went over one hour. At the participant's agreement, a second appointment was arranged for participants 8, 11, and 16. The additional 30 minutes roughly totaled 1.5 hours for the three-outlier interview. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed through the Microsoft Word transcription tool and manually edited. Another interesting note is the inclusion of four Asian Transracial adult adoptees. Three were adopted from South Korea and one was adopted from China. All TRA participants were raised with Caucasian parents. All participants were asked the same questions from the prepared interview script. The data was coded using three phase thematic coding in a Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet. The first pass at coding the interview transcripts was aimed at documenting answers from the interview questions. The next phase of descriptive coding gathered data into categories that addressed the research questions. The interview guide is found in (Appendix D). The themes that emerged from interview questions 10, 11, 14, 15, 18, and 21 helped to answer Research Question 1. Interview question 16 provided data for Research Question 2. Questions 16 and 20 from the interview guide provided data for Subsequent Question 3. Subsequent Question 4 data

looked at career support for AAW that came from interview question 15. The goal was to collect and analyze data from the interviews to answer the four research questions, which became the first four themes. An additional two themes were added to provide a holistic picture of the participants. Theme 4 looked at cultural context by gathering data about the participants' cultural background and family expectations growing up along with their feelings about early childhood years, and later adult life experiences in society and the workplace. The data for this theme was derived from questions 1, 2, and 3. In Theme 5 AAW shared thoughts and messages to various audiences. These messages helped to understand where positive social change awareness and recommendations were drawn. Theme 6 data came from interview questions 20, 23, 24, and 25.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Transparency/Credibility

Trustworthiness is used to describe quality and rigor and credibility in qualitative research. Guba (1981) explained the need to ensure validity through credibility: "Credibility is the researcher's ability to take into account the complexities that present themselves in a study and to deal with patterns that are not easily explained" (as cited in Ratvich & Carl, 2014, p. 188). To ensure credibility, this research employed methods of credibility and transparency through engaging in and documenting triangulation, member checking, adequate engagement, rich data, reflective journal, audit trail, peer review, discrepant evidence, and reporting commonalities (frequencies) as described (Maxwell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Maxwell (1992) described five categories to understanding qualitative validity that is important for credibility. The first is descriptive validity. This refers to collecting and transcribing data accurately. Interpretive validity involves accurate analysis by matching meaning and attributing the behavior to the perspective reported by the participant. Theoretical validity explains the phenomena studied through concepts and relationships between them. Generalizability entails understanding how individuals from the same community agree and understand their experiences. Lastly, evaluative validity involves whether the researcher can describe and understand the data without being judgmental (Ratvich & Carl, 2016). In addition to member checking, triangulation, and committee review, I used a reflective journal. The reflective journal is "an ongoing, real-time chronicling of reflections, questions, and ideas over time. They are useful for in-the-moment reflections and meaning-making and for charting ideas, thoughts, emotions, and concerns over time" (Ratvich & Carl, 2014, p. 79). My reflective journal captured field notes that documented significant thoughts, discoveries, questions, and insights, including emotions throughout the process.

Transferability

As mentioned in Chapter 3, according to Ratvich and Carl (2016), "The ability to demonstrate transparency, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are all aspects of ensuring trustworthiness" (p. 191). According to research, transferability when juxtaposed with external validity or generalizability (Toma, 2011) bounds qualitative work contextually, which aligns with the goal of providing descriptive, context relevant statements, which can be applicable in broader contexts while still remaining rich in data

description (Guba, 1981). Of key significance is ensuring the faithfulness to the participant by collecting accurate rich descriptive data from each qualitative interview. Thereby, aspects of the study design and findings can be compared to other populations in future studies (Ratvich & Carl, 2016). This research utilized qualitative three phase thematic coding, which provided descriptive, context relevant statements which could be applicable in broader contexts as descried by Guba, (1981).

Dependability

One way to establish dependability was through triangulation and member checking. There are multiple forms of triangulation. "Triangulation is a set of processes that researchers use to enhance the validity of a study or having different sources or methods challenge and or confirm a point of set of interpretations" (Ratvich and Carl, 2016, p.195). The authors also described five types of triangulations that allow taking different perspectives for objective data presentation. They are seen in methodological triangulation, data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theoretical triangulation, and perspective triangulation. This research employed methodological triangulation, data triangulation, and theoretical and perspective triangulation.

Methodological triangulation included primarily in-between methods such as interviews, surveys, and field notes. Data triangulation consists of recruiting for as many different data sources as geographical location, industry the participant works in, age, and role within the organization. This allowed for as many different data sources as possible for analysis. Theoretical triangulation was achieved by incorporating two primary theories, Crenshaw's (1989/1993) intersectionality theory of experience seen through

multiple axes, and Biernat's (1991/2003) shifting standards theory as it pertains to stereotypes and promotion in the workplace. In addition, the Hall et al. (2019) mosaic model of stereotyping theory was used to delve into how it pertains to stereotypes. Perspective triangulation extends data triangulation to include a range of nuanced complex perspectives by choosing participants from various roles, occupations, and ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds to contribute to the study.

This research also included preventative methods to reduce bias such as member checking. Member checking, also known as respondent validation (Barbour, 2001), is described as process-oriented and person-centered check-ins. This is a means of creating a channel for the participant to provide input on their data (as cited in Ratvich & Carl, 2016, p. 197). This can be done in many ways. During the interview, I checked in frequently to confirm the participants understood the questions, felt comfortable with the interview, and had time to ask questions, pause, or go back to add or delete any comments or thoughts from the interview. Afterward, they were offered interview summaries so they can contribute additional information and also provide an avenue to make corrections if any data was misinterpreted.

Other strategies for credibility included inviting adequate engagement, providing rich data, making time for reflexivity, keeping an audit trail, peer-reviewing discrepant evidence, and reporting commonalities (frequencies) on theories and close supervisory oversight (Maxwell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The data collection was prepared and executed using an interview guide and piloted interview to evaluate its effectiveness (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The interview script questions were revised to include

demographic data (marital status, age range, education level) along with adding a clarifying question about the participants' perceived leadership attributes and style to align with the research question. I also maintained professional engagement and review by my chairperson and committee, engaging in triangulation of data, theory, and data analysis processes.

Confirmability

To ensure confirmability, an audit trail with records of interview recordings, transcripts, notes, journals, and analysis, and the work product was documented and securely stored throughout the process. To address any bias, I kept personal journal notes of my feelings about observations to investigate various influences on data interpretation. Attention was given to researcher identity, positionality, and assumptions and attending to issues of interpretive authority in systematic ways in the effort to resist imposition. I also met with committee members and utilized office hours with the Qualitative Methodologist staff members and Qualitative drop-in sessions to share questions, thoughts, and concerns to ensure I maintained accurate data recording and coding that was clear and accurate and received feedback and guidance.

In this written analysis, the five themes and subthemes that emerged focus on the research questions. Sub theme descriptions were detailed under each primary theme. The Main Themes and subthemes are as follows: Theme 1 - Experiencing race, gender and stereotypes; subthemes (a) Work foundational question - What did participants like about their job, (b) Work foundational question – What did participants disliked about the job, role, or industry, (c) Subtheme –Defining advancement, (d) Promotions and advancing in

the workplace, (e) Breakthrough moments, (f) Experiences of race, gender, and stereotype perceptions from others, (g) Experiencing Discrimination. Theme 2 – Asian American women's leadership style and strategy; (a) Subtheme - Leadership qualities AAW admire in a model leader; (b) Subtheme – Childhood Role models and admired qualities, (c) Other thoughts on Asian Leaders. Theme 3- Career Support; (a) Subtheme – Training, (b) Mentors, (c) Networking. Theme 4 – Context, background and childhood experiences in family culture, expectations and society. (a) Subtheme – Inquiry, what does it mean to be an AAW in the U.S? (b). AAW shares experiences in the community, workplace and society. Theme 5 – Positive Social Change opportunities; (a) Subtheme – Message to AAW youth wishing to become leaders, (b) Message to non-Asian populations (c) Message about the top three barriers AAW in the workplace, (d) Additional messages from AAW participants and last thoughts.

Theme 1 – Experiencing race, gender, and stereotypes perceptions in the workplace.

Theme 1 was derived from the guiding research question for this study: What is it like for AAW leaders and AAW aspiring into leadership roles in U.S. organizations to experience race and gender stereotyping? The collective participant answers showed that all of the participants experienced race, gender, and stereotyping that affected their careers. To provide a little background and context each participant shared what industry they worked in, their role or title, and what they liked the most and least about their job or industry. Theme 1 had seven sub themes that emerged. The interview questions that provided data for Theme 1 were extracted from interview questions 10, 11, 14, 15, 18, and 21. Interview questions 10, 11 and 14 were context questions regarding their

industry, role, their likes and dislikes about their job. Questions 14, and 15 asked participants their thoughts about advancement in the workplace and their experiences promoting. The preliminary questions helped provide understanding and context before asking deeper questions about their awareness of race, gender issues or discrimination experiences. Questions 18 and 21, provided an avenue for the participants to share deeper experiences that uncovered race, gender and stereotyping at work and in society. Question 18 looked at stereotype assumptions participants experienced being an Asian American female. Question 21 asked participants to describe a time when they believed they were discriminated against because of their race, gender, ethnicity or other people's stereotype perceptions, and how it felt.

Work foundational question - What did participants like about their job:

As presented in Demographics Table 1, the participants represent a cross-section of Asian ethnicities, ages and professional industries around the country. Their roles include government positions across the U.S. The various roles and positions held ranged from Student Workers aspiring into C-Suite positions to C-Suite leaders (CEO, COO, and other Executive Leaders). Interview questions 10 and 11 helped to establish career context from the AAW's perspective. Questions 10 and 11 asked, "What industry are you in, what is your role, and what do you like most and least about your industry, and role? The top answer regarding participant satisfaction was reflected in the work they do. Nearly half of the 19 participants mentioned having projects they loved. More than a quarter of the participants felt helping people on their team succeed was significant. A few of the participants reported having meaningful work such as Diversity, Equity and

Inclusion initiatives. A few of the participants mentioned job stability and being with people. The data showed a couple different participants valued freedom and flexibility, love of learning. One participant said she enjoys the power of her visibility and influence she has as an officer and communicator.

Work foundational question – What did participants disliked about the job, role, or industry

Participants reported office dynamics and workplace politics as their highest dislike about their job. A couple participants mentioned conflict management was stressful and other participants felt that people's perception of Asians such as being a "foreigner, quiet, AAW will take on extra work," and other assumptions such as, "they don't want leadership roles," as an ongoing issue. Many mentioned sexual harassment and white men demeaning them. A couple of the participants mentioned microaggressions and being looked down on as not equally American. Other comments were about lack of work-life balance, low pay, being overworked, and burnout. Other sentiments regarding feelings of compassion from a corporate lawyer who recently became a public defender mentioned that she felt compassion for her underprivileged client population when she realized her own limits in helping their circumstances; and a preschool teacher wishing to move into leadership roles did not like babies crying.

Defining advancement

To get a baseline on what participants believed about promotions in the workplace, participants were asked to define advancement in the workplace through Interview question 14. Nearly all participants said a higher job title than their current role.

A couple mentioned when they were in their early career title elevations was important, but other things became more important as they got older such as more schedule and work flexibility along with the ability to allocate resources. Over half of the participants said taking on more responsibilities and decision-making power were important aspects of advancement. Pay raise was mentioned by nearly half of the participants. While many others felt having more freedom and flexibility in their schedule and job should come *with* the promotion. Many participants said it is important to have their boss's support in their [new] leadership role. One felt that leading high-level projects was equal to a promotion, and another felt making an impact in her field was her definition of advancement. One participant learned promotions came from job-hopping to gain advanced titles. However, they later realized job satisfaction was more important than the title.

Promotions and advancing in the workplace.

Interview Question 15 focused on promotion experiences. Participants were specifically asked about barriers and breakthroughs in their careers. Of the 19 participants, nearly all participants had been promoted in their careers, of which more than a quarter were in director or above roles. This indicated most were able to advance in the workplace at some level. Advancement came primarily in their early career stage. One participant believed the key to obtaining a promotion was being patient. Although it took time, she eventually got promoted. Many had bosses who advocated for their advancement and got promotion(s). Others had to advocate for themselves to get promoted. A couple were offered promotions after they turned in their resignation.

Of the executive leader subgroup, nearly all reported harassment, microaggressions, and bullying as top barriers to promotion in the workplace. Other barriers to advancement include, frustration about being assumed inaccurate Asian gender stereotype perceptions such as: "meek, too young, or exotic," all of which are counter to leadership characteristics, and interfered with being heard or acknowledged in the workplace. Over a quarter of the participants mentioned being overlooked for promotions. Many participants felt they had to prove themselves constantly. Overall, participants said major barriers were bullying or harassment in the workplace and others mentioned a lack of recognition for their work product. An example included projects or cases a participant worked extensively on that was transferred to a white male as it was gaining recognition. She was not rewarded or recognized (promotion) for the work. The participant was frustrated by a project she initiated and led for a year, which was a "big deal" to her; to later have transferred to a male colleague when she was close to presenting the research project findings. The explanation she was given was, it needed to be presented by a "suitable" leader [white male]. This experience was disheartening for the participant. Another example came from Participant 15 who said "I think that the biggest barrier is people's perceptions. She recalled her client's words,

> 'You know the women attorneys know everything. They're the ones that know the whole case inside and out. But when it comes to that opening argument, [they] have, Paul or Randy, or John (pseudonyms) do the argument [because] they are all men.' She commented about this statement, "I think it was so jarring to hear that the woman could do all the work and will get none of the recognition… and

get none of the experience of having the opening argument or the closing argument."

Some participants said they were overlooked. Others chose to resign, and one was offered a promotion once the organization realized she was leaving. Participant 10 recalled, "You know the sad thing about being an Asian American woman, promotion comes when you leave. That's the only way to get promoted is when they realize just how good they had it, and when you go somewhere else, with another organization or company that's going to value you, that's when they wanted to promote me. They never thought of it [promoting me] while I was there." A couple participants received a title promotion and added responsibilities but no raise. While others were given the work of the next level role, but no title or raise were offered. One job hopped to advance in her industry. Another was put through "hoops" that her male competing candidate was not required to do in his interview, and when she was offered the promotion, only gave her a .50 raise to lead a team. She resigned shortly afterward.

Breakthrough moments

Many participants mentioned breakthroughs in their career came in the form of awareness. One participant explained, she felt relieved when she understood some issues in the workplace were not about her individually, it was about being a woman or Asian or both. She could see systemic race and gender issues as the barrier which was still a frustration, but not personal about her ability. The new awareness opened her understanding of the many predicaments she experienced in the workplace. The previous example underscores the experience of the majority of the 19 participants. Awareness of

societal barriers such as the glass ceiling and other gender workplace issues, helped them understand the bigger picture society. Many participants said race was a barrier and more than a quarter of the participants felt gender issues were problematic. The issue of being a female of child bearing age included balancing home and work responsibilities, which they were expected to bear rather than their male partners. The gender stereotype perceptions of being female and bearing the primary caretaker responsibility of the family was a barrier and additional stress on advancing. Other issues, such as sexual harassment came up for many. Participants who reported harassment by a peer or superior that was minimized or were ignored. In some cases, the harassment was so shocking, it led them to fight through their Human Resources department or other legal avenues, which was expensive and for some, ineffective. Legal recourse was very expensive emotionally, and economically. One participant resigned after having the awareness that reporting does not help. She had been bullied and threatened in the workplace for being Asian. When she reported it, was told "he is only joking." Another went through substantial effort to prove others stereotype perceptions about her race was not true. She had a breakthrough with trust in her workgroup.

Participant 17 shared, "After two years of working hard to disprove stereotypes about her ethnic group, she felt her peers and team finally accepted her." Participant 8 explained her breakthrough about understanding east versus west issues. "All the things that give you the life skills to be successful in the workplace, culturally, we are not raised with. So, I think it is a realization that it was my responsibility to stop waiting to be spoon-fed. I had to understand what I'm missing. I needed to be strategic. I can't just be a

victim." Participant 6 asked for the promotions she wanted and was successful. She recalled, "I found, instead of waiting to be asked for a position. I said [to her manager], you know, this team is great. I am the most senior person here. Why don't you promote me to director? I'll oversee it, and they'll report to me. Then I'll report back up to you. I got the role." While, Participant 19 had a sponsor who gave strategic guidance that steered her career to success. Her sponsor advised her to move into either a revenue-generating department or where the core business is run. By following his guidance, her final role in that company was Department Head overseeing 600 employees and 1,000 contractors. She left to become a CEO of a nonprofit.

Experiences of race, gender, and stereotype Perceptions from others

Race, gender and stereotype data came primarily from the experiences reported by participants during interview questions 18 and 21. These questions were worded slightly different. Question 18 asked participants to talk about a time they felt certain assumptions were made about them because they are an AAW. The intent of the question was to extract memories of being expected to be or act a certain way specifically for her gender or race by others. Question 21, later asked participants about specific experiences of being discriminated against or harassed because of their race or gender. The primary answers to question 18 reported by these participants centered around their ethnicity and appearance. The issue of being a foreigner or being "less equal" to the majority population, was commonly shared by the participants. This was explained by the way they were spoken to. For example, being repeatedly asked "Where are you from? If the answer was somewhere in the U.S., they would be asked another time, "Where are you

really from?" Or "Where are your parents from?" This was interpreted as: You are not really American. Comments such as being told they speak "good" English (by white people) felt insulting. Many were born and raised in the United States and were irritated when people were surprised that they spoke well, which translated to not being an American. Specific Asian gendered stereotypes came up with more than half of the participants in the study. Experiences included being sexualized and harassed in many forms. Some were referred to as exotic, or sexually appealing either in the workplace or in a society by non-Asians. Reports of older white men commenting on Asian females sexually was reported by many of the participants. One reported this started as early as nine years old by a middle-aged white man when she was out on a shopping trip with her mother. Others were treated as exotic sexually in grade school and by high school boys, or teased for what they look like or because of the food they ate. Other forms of micro-aggression or invalidation came in the form of avoidance.

A couple participants mentioned they were treated as if they were diseased during the pandemic and felt they needed extra safety protections when in public. Especially recently during the COVID pandemic. Participant 7 shared her feelings,

> The Asian American community was attacked and ridiculed. I remember last March when those shootings [Atlanta] happened, a lot of Asian hate was going on. I was going to go to the Mall of America which is a huge mall in the area where I live. I was going to take my two nieces, who are half Asian. This was the first time in a long time I didn't want to go alone with them somewhere in the daylight. I was afraid that someone might attack me for no reason other than I am

Asian and did not want my nieces to be there if something like that happened. All over the United States, Asian people, primarily Asian women, were being attacked in public places for no reason. My husband, who is white, came with me almost everywhere I went with the exception of work for two weeks because I didn't feel safe going places. I am lucky to say I was never targeted, but the fear and the reality of the situation that it could happen, needing his protection because he is white and I am Asian."

Many of the participants expressed feelings of not belonging or not being an American despite being born and raised in America. Others said AAW are perceived as being submissive, obedient, and subservient. Over a quarter of the participants mentioned AAW are associated with nail salon workers and uneducated or treated as "less than" the dominant white population. While half mentioned they were assumed to be well educated, STEM smart, hardworking, and the *model minorities.* The experiences of being perceived differently or treated differently ranged from being rejected, harassed and looked down upon, to being perceived as highly educated and smart. All experienced some form of race and gender stereotyping by the participants and reported most were misperceptions that were daily underlying added stressful frustrations.

Experiencing Discrimination

Question 21 specifically asked participants about a time they felt discriminated against. The most frequent responses included sexualization and incidents of sexual harassment, hostile work environments, and being bullied in and out of the workplace.

More than half of the participants mentioned being in hostile work environments or bullied at work or in society. Comments from peers about their food smell, assuming they liked eating rice, or being treated as if they were not worthy of being served at restaurants, or other stores while shopping was some of the experiences the participants shared. Many specifically talked about sexual harassment and the stress and confusion it caused. One participant recalled being cornered by her superior in the car on the way home from a work event and did not know how to respond in the moment or who to report it to. Another reported sexual harassment by a peer to her boss. She was surprised when her boss dissuaded her from officially reporting because he did not want to hurt the perpetrator's reputation. Another who had earned her Ph.D. was told the organization was going to add a Ph.D. (doctor) title to a colleague so he did not feel undervalued by others even though he did not have any graduate doctoral education nor did he earn the degree.

Participant 18 took a different approach to the race mis-perceptions of her work team. She worked intentionally and made an extra effort to dispel negative stereotypes about South Asians. She recalls ``I think it took every day for two years for me to show her [boss] I was not like that…that's not the case.” A few participants were given additional administrative work by their boss that was not their responsibility, and was expected to add as part of their projects. The additional work was without a pay increase, recognition or title change. Many felt their voice was ignored or hushed anytime they spoke up in meetings. Even as a leader, one Executive Director had to emphasize her point multiple times before she was heard. Being hushed was especially strong when participants tried to report harassment incidents in the workplace.

Other areas of frustration were discussed by some participants who were upset with being treated like a foreigner and felt they were not trusted by their co-workers because they were Chinese. One discussed being the "token Asian friend" or colleague on a team. One Transracial Adoptee (TRA) shared the frustration of feeling "on their own" with Anti-Asian hate aggression. One TRA who had white parents mentioned feeling frustrated because her white parents couldn't understand her point of view and concerns dealing with Asian hate issues during the COVID pandemic. Another TRA also mentioned she did not feel she had an Asian community to share her unique feelings. She said she felt isolated and misunderstood even further. Another (non-TRA participant) expressed frustration with being assumed all Asians are alike. Participant 4 who is a mixed race (Chinese/European) participant was specifically harassed when an employee learned she was Chinese. She recalled,

> One day at work an Asian customer was in the drive-through. He [co-worker called me over] and then he pulled back his eyes, and started saying very racist racially induced, insults. I told him you cannot say that. It is so racist and rude to our customers. (X workplace) practices to treat the customer with respect and you are disrespecting this customer by calling her racist things. I told him I am also Asian, I am Chinese. You are disrespecting me by disrespecting her. After that day, he would call me orange chicken rice noodles and chopsticks. He called me Ling Ling. He would pull his eyes back and laugh at me, and I don't even know how I endured this for 3 months. He also harassed me in other ways, about being a woman. He would come up behind me and whisper in my ear… Judy

(pseudonym), I'm gonna hurt you in the parking lot. He threatened to hurt me, kill me and to kick me. He told me he had kicked and punched girls before. He had told me all these horrible stories of him beating up women and I was like Oh my God, why are you telling me this? I was so scared."

Participant 10 shared her concern about being an AAW in the workplace, "I think it is also the sexualization of Asian women especially. When I am working with white men, I've noticed that I would have situations where there would be advances and other very uncomfortable situations. I would literally just freeze because it's very traumatic every time it happens."

In summary, all of AAW participants experienced race, gender or stereotyping. Some specific race stereotypes assumed they were foreigners. Intersectional stereotypes combined race and being female which resulted in Asian sexualization experiences both in and out of the workplace. Discrimination or harassment came in the form of being bullied, especially while becoming visibly successful or sexualized in ways that confused or shamed them. Even when reported, oftentimes their concerns were ignored or addressed ineffectively.

Table 3

AAW experiences in the workplace as it pertains to race, gender, and stereotypes

Open Codes	Categories	Participants' Identifier & Excerpt
What are AAW leaders experience of race, gender, and stereotyping?	Theme 1 - Experiences of promoting or advancing into leadership roles.	P6 – "I was proactive…I noticed that there was a whole team of people who were engagement managers. I got promoted to manager and I said, you know what this team is great I am the most senior person here. Why don't you promote me

		to director? I'll oversee, then they'll report to me, and then I'll report back up to you and I got the role." P14 – "Luckily for me, in terms of formal promotion, I actually didn't face any barriers really. It was the timing. So, the longer I stayed here, the more you're eligible for this next role. [However] I did not get a raise with the promotion." P15 – "I did get promoted when I was at my previous firm, from associate to managing associate. I've been told that if I stick around a little bit longer, I could make it to senior manager, then ultimately partner. I think a lot of people thought I had that potential). I think a lot of it was the advocacy of my mentor and how I was given a lot more responsibility that ensured that I would be promoted."
	Barriers to advancement	P4 – "I was still a team member, even though I've been there way longer than this [other] guy. He was also a man and he was white so I'm not going to say anything but, it made me sort of uncomfortable that they would only want to promote me to this team lead status and they had me do all of these weird processes." P10 – "You know what the sad thing is about being an Asian American woman? Promotion comes when you leave. I think that's the only way to get promoted. When they realize just how good they had it, and then you go somewhere else, with another organization or company that's going to value you. It was whenever I was ready to resign. That's when they wanted to promote me. They never thought of it [promoting] while I was there."
	Breakthroughs in career	P8 – [Awareness] "I think the biggest breakthrough for me was understanding that the glass ceiling analogy was created based on white women data. At least for me, the way I process things is that I have to understand the situation

		that I am in. All the things that give you the life skills to be successful in the workplace, culturally, we are not raised with. So, I think it is a realization that it was my responsibility to stop waiting to be spoon-fed. I had to understand what I'm missing. I needed to be strategic. I can't just be a victim." I think that most women or most young people don't understand the environment that they're in."
	How do you define advancement?	P13 – "Advancement is when you're given a role that is more responsibility, more authority, matched with your pay. Pay to show that you value me. Advancement is also that social thing. Men in the workplace are allowed to do things that women would never be allowed to do. [When] we all behave this way or none of us behave this way regardless of your gender, that to me is advancement."
	Experiences of being assumed a characteristic or role based on race, gender, stereotype or being discriminated against or harassed as an AAW.	P12 – "He [boss] sent me over to this other location. He said 'this person is kind of hard to work with but I really need to get this information from him, so if you could for me, please use your feminine w*iles* to get it from him. Can you please just do what you need to do to get this information...you know.' I was never like this."
	Experiences of being discriminated against or harassed in the workplace based on race, gender or stereotypes being an AAW.	P10 – "Having a CFO once tell me that he is attracted to me and also making gestures. He was also someone who used to travel to Asia a lot and he knew about those parlors and kind of making those kinds of gestures in a sense and verbally, about his experiences there and then in the same token, showing advances to me at the same time. It was very, you know, I could tell it was very race-driven in a sense because I was an Asian American woman." P14 – "We were driving late at night. [and was asked] 'what do you think about guys that have yellow fever?' I was like WTF? [He continued] 'well, don't you think people are showing more appreciation for your culture?' That's where the conversation went and that was naturally uncomfortable. Is that how you see me? I was like, what the hell? That was my boss! I was a college staff member and college intern."

		Participant 13 – "If I was a white man, I don't think anyone would raise questions about the way I express myself. So, I definitely think there is racial stereotypes and then gender stereotypes." P10 – "In a non-Asian work setting and when we do speak up, it's not received in the most positive way. It's actually almost either gas lighted or it becomes a. It becomes a problem of ours. It's our issue."

Theme 2 - AAW leadership Style and Strategy

Theme 2 looked at the participants' leadership style and strategy by asking them about their self-ascribed leadership attributes and how each hoped she was seen by peers and their team along with what they value in a leader. Research Question 2 asked: What are the lived experiences of AAW leaders and aspiring leaders in U.S. Organizations regarding their leadership style and strategy? The data to answer the research question came predominantly from interview question 16 which asked, "What are five adjectives that describe how you wish others see you as a leader? Or when you become a leader" if interviewing a college student. By asking how they would like to be perceived as a leader, participants took time to reflect on their leadership attributes and behaviors they value while considering how they may be perceived. These reflections opened a dialog about their style and strategy as a leader. The goal of the question was to gain insights into what they value in a leader and their own leadership character, style, and strength.

The responses that emerged from Question 16 provided information regarding what the participants believed their best leadership attributes were and how they hoped to be perceived by their employees. The leader attribute that came up with the highest

frequency was compassionate leadership. The majority of the participants believed they possessed, and wished to be seen as compassionate leaders. The character self-attributions were expressed in words of being caring, understanding, thoughtful, or patient with their employees. The second highest frequently described characteristic of being a strong leader was found in nearly half of the participants. Descriptor words such as powerful, capable, impactful, effective, and results-driven leader were what made a strong leader for these participants. Integrity was third, with nearly half of the participants self-attributing their leadership style as honest, principled, fair, and well-intended. More than a quarter of the participants felt being smart, intelligent, and knowledgeable were important leadership qualities they possess. A few of the participants described being confident, fearless, and "a leader of action." A few of the participants felt being loyal, counted on, and committed were part of their leadership attributes. A couple of the participants felt having a positive attitude was important as a leader. A couple of the participants felt they were adaptable. A couple of the participants thought they were fun. A couple of the participants mentioned having experience [in the role] as a key to successful leadership. A couple of the participants felt that they inspire their employees. Miscellaneous leader attributes from participants included being decisive (one participant). Being passionate (one participant). Hardworking (one participant). Being level-headed, strategic, and a big picture thinker (One participant). Being a servant leader (one participant). Being emotionally intelligent, and humble (one participant). Listening intently to her employees (one participant). One participant mentioned that it means "pushing." Being intentional and meaningful (one participant).

One participant mentioned that she would like to be seen as “tall” because she is short and fears not being taken seriously. One participant mentioned she is balanced between giving freedom to creative and ensuring work is done. In summary, the participants had many self-ascribed qualities that were important in a leader. The top three most frequent leader qualities the majority of these participants believed were their strength as a leader were, 1. Being compassionate as a leader. 2. Strong and with 3. Integrity.

Leadership qualities AAW admire in a model leader and why.

The data for this theme came from Interview Question 13, designed to answer Subsequent Question 3, “What leadership qualities and characteristics do AAW value in a model leader?” Of the 19 participants, many participants admired leaders who care about them and or have compassion overall. Many participants said integrity was an important leadership trait. More than a quarter of the participants mentioned being a servant leader or serving their employees was important and admirable. Some of the participants believe communication and listening are significant leadership skills. In each category, a couple of the participants mentioned other important characteristics of being a leader: Ability and capability was important to a couple of the participants. Being visionary leader and being a collaborative leader, which includes pitching in with mundane tasks. A couple other participants mentioned being a change agent. Other attributes mentioned included, being tough, robust, hardworking, and disciplined; having a positive attitude; and a model leader brings fun, joy, and laughter to the team; Spirituality in a leader was mentioned as well as wisdom and emotional intelligence, and

commitment. One participant mentioned a good leader should be a succession planner, and a driver. An example of a participant who felt a leader's responsibility is to serve came from Participant 8 who said,

> Having the ability to understand your decisions is meant for societal impacts and not just to benefit your own agenda. So, having that wisdom and empathy to understand the responsibilities that come with leadership... understanding that this is, an obligation back to society. I think that is very rare to see and I don't know if it's [part of] the process of the grooming of the leaders.

Figure 2 (Space intentionally left blank to insert figure 2)

Table 4

AAW Leadership style and strategies and valued characteristics

Open Codes	Categories	Participants' Identifier & Excerpt
AAW leadership style and strategy.	Self-Ascribed leadership attributes	P19 – "My five leadership adjectives: 1. Cares, 2. relationships, 3. Results, 4. understand, 5. pushes. Your leadership style: My leadership style is collaborative, however, I'm not necessarily a consensus person. So basically, I don't need every person to agree. I'm also somebody who's going to really drive conversation and I'm going to push people to give their opinion. It doesn't mean that I'm always going to agree with you. It's not always about agreement. I seek understanding." P17 – "I am collaborative, Compassionate, Creative, providing enough of a balance between guidance but not creating restrictions that make people feel like they don't have the freedom to operate and I am fun." P7 – "I am level headed, strategic, a big picture thinker, inclusive and adaptable. P6 – "I want them to see me as a person of action. A person who cares. Last year during COVID my title was changed from Chief Operating Officer to Chief/Optimism Officer. He [my boss] said that my superpower is optimism. I hope

	Admired characteristics of their role models	my legacy will be to know how to inspire people to be the highest self." P 11 – "To be a leader who cares, listens, and allows their voices to be heard is an admired attribute. "I think that a leader understands the experiences of the person or people they are leading. For me, I want to be seen as someone who has integrity, 2. who's going to do the right thing. Even though it's not the easiest thing and who's going to do what she says and is very straightforward. 4. Someone who really knows her stuff, someone who has a great deal of integrity, the utmost unquestionable integrity. I do as much as any other leader. You care about the well-being of your team." P3 – "Definitely someone that will give credit where credit's due. That is not in it for power or the title but someone who actually wants to help the greater good of the company, the individual. My manager now comes to mind." P 4 – "I really admire leaders who are cooperative. They are going out of their way to help us. Collaboration with the lesser like means menial tasks. I also really like a manager who's respectful. I really value universal respect and I also value good communication" P 8 – "I think the ability to Communicate well is number one. Having the ability to understand your decisions is meant for societal impacts and not just to benefit your own agenda. So, having that wisdom and empathy to understand the responsibilities that come with leadership, understanding that this is an obligation back to society. I think that is very rare to see and I don't know if it's [part of] the process of the grooming of the leaders." P9 – "A leader that understands the experiences of the people they are leading." P10 – "A great leader is a good listener. A great leader is also someone who empowers others to just shine. Another great leadership quality is someone who is willing to stand for what he or she believes or they believe is right."
	Primary influencers growing up	P6 - "So my first role model was my grandfather on my father's side. He was an educator. He lived to 102 [years old]. He walked 12 miles every day. I mean he was very athletic, action-oriented and I was very much that way. He taught me free-spirited intelligence. You can be fun and saucy and playful and still achieve what you want to do."

	Other thoughts on Asian Leaders	P12 – "My Middle school science teacher. She was awesome. So, to give context to this, I grew up in poor Alabama. I grew up going to county schools. She was the science teacher and just encouraged me…She believed in me." P11 – "My parents were wonderful. They're hardworking immigrants. They said they did not think about leadership, they thought about survival. They provided guidance; it was to work hard, and don't make waves. So, they were more about stability." P1 – "My Aunt. She was a customs director. Her qualities, she worked hard, did the right thing, was respected, enjoyed her job, was tough, even on relatives and retired young." P1 – "Women of strong culture don't accept women leaders. So, although they're very hard to get along with or deal with in general for some reason, there is still that respect." P2 – "Thoughts on AAW: Fearless comes up again, fearless and brave. Generous, and I think that is something that I hope I see as an Asian woman leader. Kindness again and compassion." P5 – "I think Asian women are really sharp and are really smart. It's truly owning what we can do. I learned to carve that out. Last week we had an employee who resigned and she's very seasoned, very, very long-time experience and expertise, but the reason she resigned was because she didn't want to be a manager. She said "I'm tired, I don't want to do this anymore. What man would ever do that? P16 – "The first person that comes to mind is *Aung San Suu* from Burma. She was officially elected for a moment, she grew up under a military dictatorship, and kept pushing for change. Something I learned over time about leadership, you don't necessarily need to be elected or need to be paid and selected to be that leader. You can be a leader among your peers simply by what you do and people turn to you and look to you to lead them and to provide advice. She certainly is one of those people that comes to mind as one of those leaders." P7 – "There are not a lot of Asian American women who are public figures. I feel like the Asian community has not had the same kind of grassroots activism within communities or equal rights movement assistance as other minority groups. This may be stereotypical saying this, but I feel like Asian American women within the Westernized

		culture are polarized into two categories. We are either seen as smart, ugly, nerds, or we are sexualized, so we are not taken as seriously as other women of different races. I think we deserve to be heard and given the validation we deserve as equal members of society." P17 – "The first two people I thought of were the CEO of TSMC. She's an Asian female CEO. One of the few. Then the other was President Xi from China. So, it seems like the two people have popped into my head. I think they have similar characteristics. They're not people that are perceived as the loudest person in the room. But they're the people that have taken the time to think about strategy and vision and are grounded in a way on what's important for making that vision a reality. I also think they're not necessarily; a typical leader would have been…the two of them are people who have worked their way into leadership positions (without being loud)." P18 – "I feel like some of the smartest people are Asians. I feel like we're not recognized enough. I felt that, especially in the states. Google's CEO is an Indian and he's an Asian. We're not given the credit for what we do. I've come across some of the most hardworking and smart Asians no matter what industry they're in. I feel like they're like these microaggressions you sort of have to deal with, these are really not small things."

Theme 3 – Career Support

Career support is significant to success. Subsequent Question 4 asked: "What support do AAW receive in terms of guidance, specifically leadership training, mentorship, and networking? The sub themes developed to answer this question came from interview questions 12: What career development resources were available to you in your career? The primary sub themes that emerged regarding career guidance came in the form of (a) training, (b) mentorship, and (c) networking within and outside of the organization. Overall, most of the participants mentioned organizational training, however, few were aware of leadership training available and networking was proactive mostly outside of their organization. Some participants independently sought training,

mentors, and networked to gain knowledge, skills, and support to advance in their careers.

Training

Of the 19 participants, many participants said training was provided by the organization. Of those who had training, they said it was either helpful or good training. A couple of the participants mentioned poor training or "not seminal" in their career development. A few of the participants were neutral. A couple of the participants were offered leadership training, and another participant said she was able to gain certificates through self-paced training. In addition, A couple of the participants mentioned that they sought out training on their own. Participant 5 was happy with her organization and shared, "Our company is very good with continuing education and sending me to conferences and seminars." Participant 12 was more descriptive about the training she received from her organization:

> They were very intentional about the training that they offered. I appreciated that. I have a background in technical writing so they had somebody come onsite or offsite to do a technical writing class and we would get CEUs for participating. I was on the safety team, so they had lots of safety team type of training because, in Pharmaceuticals, you have to be safe because you want to be compliant with OSHA and all. So that was good, they gave us resources.

Participant 7 was not satisfied with her training and shared, "I got burned out with the stress and the poor training." Comments from those who received training, but sought out additional training that fulfilled needs not offered by their company. Participant 6

looked into self-development and leadership training, and Participant 17 found even though her organization had a lot of training available, the most "informative training" was sought out on her own.

Of the 19 participants, only a few of the participants said leadership training was available from their organization. Of the participants who had leadership training, they were positive about it. For example, Participant 5 noted, "I used to be able to attend the Diversity Summit, the Diversity leadership alliance (DLA). That's something that I miss. We're kind of limited [with] travel right now; time-wise it's not available." Participant 19 said, "I got a lot of training, a lot of executive training. All kinds of training. I went to Brookings twice. We have authors come in. There's leadership and all kinds of things." Participant 15 noted, "There are a couple of programs here in (SW state) that specifically deal with getting lawyers into leadership. So, there's the Bar Leadership Institute and Ladder Down, and a bunch of programs out there that I had an opportunity to be a part of. I think those are the kind of things that I would think about." Other participants had mixed experiences with leadership training. A couple of the participants said leadership training was there, but hard to find. It was not explicitly available to them. One participant said there was leadership training but it was "light" and not meaningful. More than a quarter of the participants sought out leadership training or leadership development on their own.

Mentors

Mentors were categorized into (a) Organizational mentors, and (b) Other mentors outside of the organization.

Organizational Mentors. Of the 19 participants, more than a quarter of the participants said they were assigned to an organization mentor through a formal mentor program provided by their company. All of the participants who were in the formal mentor program felt it was good, helpful, or effective. However, when one participant's mentor left, no new mentor took her place and her career stalled. Some of the participants out of the six felt the mentor program was ineffective. One who wanted to be a leader felt mentor sessions were about forcing her to make people do their jobs (police her team) versus being able to lead projects and innovation, (which was her career goal). One participant worked for an organization that had a formal mentor program but was passed over due to being Asian and "adjacent" white," which she said meant, not needing mentorship. One of the five was assigned a mentor which she described as a "mismatch." She recalls, "He was a white man who did not understand or help." One simply did not feel the mentor program was impactful but did not elaborate. More than half of the participants were not in a formal mentor program. Participant 9 explained in her interview, "Although there were mentors, it was hard to access one." She found a mentor through other professors of color. Some organizations did provide mentoring but the participant did not feel it benefited her own goals. Participant 11 explained, "Mentoring was available and her department spent a lot of money on mentoring. I participated in more than ten mentoring sessions because it was expected, but did not feel they were useful."

Participant 10 described not having access to mentors, "Yes, [there are mentors] but zero are available. I realized growing up as an Asian American woman, as an Asian

American period, there was this understanding, this perception that we were white. We were very ‘white adjacent’ and so [leaving us out] it wasn't considered racism in my workplace. So, there wasn't anything available for someone like me.” Some of the participants had informal mentors from within their organization. Participant 2 shared an experience with a co-worker she did not seek out but assumed the role of her mentor. It ended up being a “miss-match.” According to the participant, the person was hired roughly at the same time but was a White Jewish woman who was mentoring her about the Chinese language and culture for a Mandarin language course they both were teaching. The participant was in disagreement with the mentors’ views about Chinese people and culture. She explained, “She was supposed to be my mentor, was hired the same year as me. She's a high school Mandarin teacher. She is a white Jewish lady, who taught overseas in Asia for a couple of decades. Long story short, we had different approaches to teaching. It was interesting because she symbolizes a lot of what I personally can't stand about people who think they know everything about culture but don't actually identify with it.”

Other Mentors. Many participants found mentorship in places apart from their employment at non-profit or other organizations they belonged to. For example, a couple had mentors in the non-profit or service sectors whom they either volunteered for or worked with in addition to their full-time job. Of the 19 participants, nearly half of the participants had mentors from other organizations. Some of the participants nine sought out their own mentors and felt they were very helpful. One had a formal mentor program in the DEI space but had to fight for Asians to be included in the resources because the

focus was on African American support. Participant 2 talked about a person she admired and considered her informal mentor, “I had lovely colleague support. She was my indirect mentor and never knew it. Paula (Pseudonym and the leader of the non-profit organization), might be the first Asian woman I've worked with directly where I felt, you are amazing. I wish I had met you earlier.” Participant 10 had to find her own mentors and even put together her own leadership program. Participant 14 who worked in the C-Suite space, did not have anyone who was Asian to be her mentor or role model. She later found other Executive Directors, (non-Asian) that she called her ‘big sisters,’ in civic engagement, who became mentors to her. However, she did not have them until she was in the leadership role.

Networking

Networking through the organization as a tool for visibility and advancement through company events and outings, along with personal networking was not directly mentioned or discussed as a means to enhance career overall, by this participant pool. Many participants did not know about or did not discuss organizational events or networking. Taking into consideration environments that were previously mentioned as part of their training, however, a couple of the participants discussed conferences and others discussed specific leadership institutes they participated in regularly, which could indicate networking opportunities, but did not discuss this as a career strategy. For others, outside networking may have been leveraged in the form of civic engagement and participation with non-profit organizations and were positive about their experiences. One participant discussed networking through her LinkedIn platform and University

connections. Another networked through her family to obtain new employment. One used employment agency networks primarily to gain employment or career advancement. Participant 2 shared her thoughts about working with a non-profit organization, “Through my work with (XXX project) and policy work, I've been exposed to so many AAPI [Asian American Pacific Islander] folks who I deeply respect and admire, that I wonder what it would be like had I met them earlier.” Participant 18 proactively networked through her LinkedIn and University connections and shared, “I feel like this provided me with invaluable insights into how to get about doing basic things, how to go forward, and I'm forever grateful to all these people. They are mentoring in small bits and pieces and have always been very valuable information for me. I always apply them [with] good results. I'm really grateful.”

In summary, overall, most of the participants did receive organizational training such as onboarding and skills training that pertained to their job. Some of the participants were offered leadership training and development. Of those that did receive leadership training, the majority felt it was very helpful. Mentoring was present and available to some of the participants from their organizations. Only one participant found their assigned mentor helpful. Nearly half of the participants found helpful mentors outside of the company. Of the participants who found mentors outside of their organization, all found their mentors helpful and were grateful they had someone to learn from. Not all the non-profits had mentors readily available. One participant felt even in the non-profit space she had to fight out for support as an Asian American. In both leadership training and mentorship, participants mentioned being considered “white adjacent” alluding to the

model minority myth that ascribes Asians are doing "just fine" (Yu, 2020), and were assumed to not need support. However, they expressed great value in leadership training, helpful mentorship, and networking as shown from participants' testimony.

Table 5

Career Support

Open Codes	Categories	Participants' Identifier & Excerpt
Theme 3 - AAW Career Support. What support do AAW receive?	Training	P5 - "Our company is very good with continuing education and sending me to conferences and seminars." P12 - "They were very intentional about the training that they offered. So, I appreciated that. Whether they would have lunch and learn and bring you [added education]." P6 – "I don't think that there was anything that was a Seminal influence on me in terms of career development. I [had] been doing my own self-development." P17 – In terms of development in some of the organizations, I had a lot of training that was available. However, some of my most formative training was self-sought out."
	Leadership Training	P 5 – "I used to be able to attend the Diversity Summit you know or Diversity leadership alliance (DLA). That's something that I miss. We're kind of limited [with] travel right now; time-wise it's not available." [due to COVID 19 lockdown]. P 19 - "I got a lot of training, a lot of executive training. All kinds of training. All of it. I went to Brookings twice; I've you know we have authors come in. There's leadership. There are all kinds of things."

	Mentors	P 2 – [She] "was supposed to be my mentor, and was hired the same year as me. She's a high school Mandarin teacher. She is a white Jewish lady, who taught for 25 years in Taipei, and, long story short, we had different approaches to teaching. It was interesting because she symbolizes a lot of what I personally can't stand about people who think they know everything about culture but don't actually identify with." P 9 – "I would say yes, that being said, I wouldn't say that they were easy to access. Yes, I've had to search for them myself. The ones that I have found have been offered to me through other professors of color." P10 – "Yes, [there are mentors] but zero available. I realize growing up as an Asian American woman, as an Asian American period, there was this understanding, this perception that we were white. We were very 'white adjacent' and so it wasn't considered racism in my workplace. So, there wasn't anything available for someone like me. [There was] nothing formal for me. I had to seek my own mentorship. I had to seek people to mentor me and had to almost put together my own leadership institute, in a sense."
	Networking	P18 – "I feel like this [networking through LinkedIn & University], provided me with invaluable insights into, you know, just how to get about doing basic things. You know how to go forward, and I think I'm forever grateful to all these people. So, mentoring in small bits and pieces has always been very valuable information for me. I always apply them and it gives me good results. I'm really grateful."

Overview - Theme 4

The next two themes focused on the participant's personal history and messages they would like to share with the community that can provide opportunities for positive social change for Asian American women (AAW). In Theme 4, data regarding the family background and the participants' youth, and experiences were collected for context. The participants shared their early years, expectations of growing up, and their parents' background. The two subthemes that emerged gave insights regarding (a) What does it

mean to be an AAW in the United States? and ***(b)*** What are the experiences of Asian American women in their community, workplace, and society?

Theme 4 –Background

Theme 4 looked at the family background to gain insights into history, expectations, and cultural context for each AAW within their family, community, and society. The three sub themes that emerged were, (a). Cultural family and community expectations growing up as an AAW, (b). What does it mean to be an AAW in the United States? (c). Experiences of Asian American women in their community, workplace, and society. The data was derived from interview questions 1, 2, and 3. Interview questions asked about their role in the family, parent history, cultural traditions, obligations, and expectations. Question 2 asked participants to describe what it means to them to be an AAW in the U.S. Question 3 was similar but asked specifically about their experiences being an AAW growing up in their community (school), society (social perceptions), and later workplace. This question is to collect data from their personal earlier life experiences to gain insights into how they might have influenced their experiences in society and the workplace as an adult.

Cultural family and community expectations growing up as an AAW

Interview question 1 asked, "As an Asian American woman, what cultural expectations were raised within your family and community? The participants predominantly responded with values held within the family such as education, family and culture, and religious values. Regardless of economic status, education and doing well in school were emphasized by most of the participants. Three quarters of the

participants mentioned graduate school was expected with a goal of being a doctor or lawyer. The family obligation was emphasized by over half of the participants as a priority. A couple of the participants emphasized respecting elders through communications, meals, and holidays was expected and a traditional value. More than a quarter of the participants specifically mentioned cultural holidays where traditional food, preparations, dance, and other cultural rituals were expected and enjoyed. A few of the participants mentioned culturally, they expected to take care of the men in the family, specifically their husbands. Other participants were raised with the expectation that women take care of the children and home. A couple of the participants were also responsible for taking care of their siblings while their parents worked. One was raised to believe women are to be quiet and defer to the man. This participant had Caucasian parents. She also reported domestic violence and racial microaggressions against Asians in the home by her father, a religious Mennonite elder in the church.

Religion and religious expectations were reported as a priority for over half of participants. Of the eleven, many of the fathers were Pastors and church Elders. More than a quarter of the participants went to Christian schools. One family practiced the Hindu religion. A few of the participants mentioned career and success expectations. A couple of the participants were expected to be self-sufficient while their parents worked many hours. A couple of the participants mentioned being raised equal to their male siblings, feeling valued by their parents, and being raised to be curious. A couple of the participants were forced to assimilate into American life. One participant mentioned as an Asian American that you had to be perfect, had to keep any family or other issues or

problems within the four walls, and the image was very important. Another participant mentioned being enticed to the American values to "be anything she wanted to be by her Caucasian parents and good health was valued. One mentioned being told to only speak English and learning to eat American food. All participants mentioned living in dominant white communities and the majority of the participants recalled being bullied or sexualized growing up. One Chinese participant who was adopted by a Caucasian family recall being taught to pull herself up by the bootstraps, not having debt but being physically and emotionally abused to be kept in line by her Caucasian parents.

What does it mean to be an AAW in the United States?

To gain insight into an AAW daily experience, Interview question 2 asked participants to give descriptive words (adjectives) that describe what it means to be an Asian American woman in the U.S. The participants' descriptive adjectives ranged from outsider perceptions that align with some stereotypes to attributes and characteristic strengths, or issues that either help or hold them back in society being an AAW. The most frequent answers reflected qualities that describe their character. Many participants felt being an AAW meant being strong, persevering, and determined. Many of the other participants said they were stereotypically perceived as submissive or obedient. More than a quarter of the participants felt being an AAW meant being adaptable, specifically to fit into their environment. Many more felt they lived in two worlds and had to always assimilate to the white Caucasian culture to belong. More than a quarter of the participants felt they were sexualized or exoticized by white men. Some of the participants said it meant being educated, while a few of the other participants said that

they feel vulnerable and it has been scary since the COVID pandemic targeted Asian as the cause of the pandemic by the past administration. A few of the participants felt it means being open, and tolerant. A few of the participants described being an AAW in the U.S. meant being strong, and fearless. A couple of the participants felt they had to constantly prove themselves and it meant being seen as a different culture, and a foreigner. A couple of the participants said it meant always being the responsible one. And other participants added they were proud to be Asian.

There were many miscellaneous responses which included feeling judged; being intentional; being flexible and realistic; that it is challenging being an AAW, AAW connects others; are selflessness, self-sacrificing, and possess integrity. One participant mentioned, "I feel it is confusing being an AAW socially and being aware of the race and gender issues. For another it meant being creative and adventurous and still others said "being an AAW is complex overall. One said to be an AAW means being beautiful at the same time it means being suppressed; it means to be perceived as not self-sufficient; AAW are high output workers that receive low rewards; AAW are not given leadership roles; AAW are perceived as apathetic, traditional, and always breaking the stereotype; AAW are treated as a Minority; It is challenging being an AAW; We do all the work and there is no balance; AAW are complicated, ethical, privileged in some ways, and humbling.

In summary, the variety of responses represents the broad complexity of being an AAW in the U.S. according to these participants. There was a wide range of adjectives the participants used to describe what it means to be an AAW in the United States. The

most frequently expressed characteristics involved work ethic where descriptors of hard workers, strong, persevering, and determined were used. The next most frequent responses involved managing stereotype perceptions of AAW such as meek, exotic, and obedient. Many felt proud of being adaptable and able to fit in with the dominant society. Awareness of being sexualized by white men and feeling vulnerable, especially during the COVID pandemic rise of Anti-Asian hate was also mentioned as part of being an AAW in America. In summary, the variety of responses represents the broad complexity of being an Asian American woman in the U.S. according to these participants.

Experiences of Asian American women in their community, workplace, and society

Interview question 3 was designed to learn more about the participants' experiences in their community, workplace, and society. The predominant theme discussed by the majority of the participants, concerned navigating in the dominant white culture they lived and worked in. Over half of the participants were married to white men, or some of the participants were adopted into a Caucasian family or both married a Caucasian and were adopted from a Caucasian family. More than a quarter of the participants said having a white husband or family member was an added protection, especially during the pandemic. More than a quarter of the participants experienced being bullied or were scared of being in white environments. Some of the participants felt they needed to be guarded around white people. Many of the participants discussed feeling sexualized and were misunderstood by white people. Participant 2 worked and lived in a wealthy white environment described her day to day life,

> I moved after graduating from college. From 22 [years old] to now, I've been at this [work] place...In terms of my work, it means I have to be, by choice, very cautious of how I present myself. I am cautious also with collegial relationships. I am very good at assimilating in predominantly white communities because it is what I was familiar with... [My town] it's a very white wealthy town where the top 1% live with its hedge fund manager central. I'm doing what you're supposed to do as a (NE Wealthy town) resident. Pre-pandemic I would spend almost every weekend in New York City where I felt like I could breathe. Because I would and I would always go first straight to Chinatown, just to be with people who look like me. When I go to the city, then I find myself again.

This example was not isolated. Nearly half of the participants mentioned being misperceived by inaccurate stereotypes. Participant 8 shared her feelings about Asian stereotypes,

> You know, it's hard to be an Asian woman. Even within your own community. I'm fighting because I think the stereotypes are so strong that we and the community also believe these stereotypes. I think that there are many layers to, if you want to call it, *the glass ceiling.* There are many barriers within the Asian community, it's not just men. Women say they empower women, but they don't. I don't think they really understand what that means. It's not just the Asian community, it is a problem with being a woman. Either through jealousies or insecurities, we like to pull another woman down. It could be because this 'other woman' is not fitting into what Asians should fit into. We expect Asian women to

> be nurturing, empathetic, and always doing things. Then the moment they exhibit traits that are antagonistic even though you are right, other Asian colleagues, including Asian women get angry. I will say, the older Asian women understand a little bit more.

More than a quarter of the participants mentioned being assumed as the *model minority* stereotype; many were believed to be good in math and good at everything was put on them. More than a quarter of the participants were treated like foreigners, not trusted or asked where they 'really' came from. More than a quarter of the participants reported being bullied. More than a quarter of the participants felt they were adaptable and expected to be flexible to fit into society. Participant 19 described how it felt,

> I first encountered racism in grade school, and it was the first time I knew I was very different. I was the only minority period. I remember being picked on. I remember especially the boys, well they really picked on you. I remember having my first friend. She helped me navigate through the classes and through different things. It was just so nice to have somebody who actually supported you. So that shaped a lot of the way I viewed things. Because as I grew up, and lived in a lot of small, medium-sized towns where I was kind of used to being the only one, or one of very few, and always having to adapt. I think I learned how to adapt all the time. That was one of my survival skill sets.

More than a quarter of the participants felt they were treated as if they were invisible and when they tried to speak up, they were ignored. More than a quarter of the participants felt they were always trying to fit in. Some of the participants were expected

to be submissive, obedient, and adapt to white culture. Some of the participants saw cultural gaps. A few of the participants specifically mentioned being perceived as too young, equating to not being capable. One participant specifically mentioned being perceived as young, and being treated like they are little girls not able to take care of themselves or to have decision making power. A few of the participants said they always have to prove themselves and work harder than others. A few of the participants felt vulnerable being an AAW in terms of safety. A few mentioned positive advantages to being an AAW. For example, one participant could be the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) representative and help other Asians in the workplace. One said being an AAW, she was more trusted by people. Participants talked about being sexualized. One participant who is half white was aware and grateful for her ability to hide her Asianness to avoid harassment. A couple of the participants mentioned women's competition or not being supportive of other women in general, especially Asian women, is a concern. Other thoughts on Asian women's experiences included religion as a driving force of prejudice; One had difficulty navigating the Black/Asian relations bridge. For others, living in a multigenerational family caused added responsibilities that impacted their work. One felt lucky she was treated equally with the boys, which gave her a sense of confidence in society; and lastly, many were aware of the wage gap for AAW in the workplace which was another challenge they had to deal with.

In summary, all of the participants discussed being in and how they navigate in the dominant white culture they lived and worked in. Over half of the participants were either married to white men or had white parents. Nearly half of the participants felt they

were being misperceived by stereotypes. Being perceived as foreigners and bullied both in childhood and as an adult was common for many of the participants, and they all said they adapt in order to fit in. Childhood and youth experiences provide insights into their personal foundations and give context between earlier life experiences to adult life in society and the workplace. Question 1 produced participant reflections on early childhood and youth. All participants mentioned living in dominant white communities and the majority recalled being bullied or sexualized growing up. Although the experiences of being bullied or sexualized were reduced into adulthood, it remained a relevant issue in the workplace according to the data from this study.

Figure 4 (Space open for figure)

Table 6

Family, Cultural & Societal Expectations for AAW

Open Codes	Categories	Participants' Identifier & Excerpt
Theme 4 - Cultural Context .	Expectations in the family and community	P1 – Micronesian culture "You tend to your husband. It is a very strict culture, focused on attending to and bringing up a man. I was also brought up very Catholic and with whites. Very Strict expected to go to Sunday Mass. I went to the church first. Then I went to school." P4 - "Cultural expectations within the scope of my family and as Taiwanese American, communications with grandparents, coming together to talk daily, and dinner together weekly. It's really been focusing on family and education and family also ties in with health, I think. It's really those three things."
		P3 – "Basically as a Chinese raised in a Chinese household, the woman really was the caretaker and, uh we were expected to do the cooking and the cleaning. We weren't expected to go to college in my immediate household.

	Describe what it means to be an AAW in your community, society, and workplace	P15 – "I find myself involved in groups of people of color rather than specifically Asian American groups. I think in my workplace there are no Asian American attorneys aside from me. In my previous workplace at my law firm there were also no Asian American attorneys. There were probably 20 attorneys, but you know, given the rate of lawyers and passage rates of bar exams and whatnot, I feel like there should be more Asian American attorneys in these various places. When I was living in New York, there were way more Asian American attorneys. But I think the number of Asian American attorneys in a partnership were very few. P6 – "To me [the struggle has been] it's the ability to actually fit in. I have this saying where I really believe that everybody feels like an alien at some point. You feel like an alien in your body. You know with this person you feel sometimes like an alien in the family and then certainly with the community? That's the piece that I always carried with me coming to America. I felt like an alien and was a legal alien. It's always about how I fit in." P7 – "In the workplace, as I get older, I look for companies that align more with my morals and beliefs more than the salary they offer or the title I have. I want to feel proud of who I work for and that my beliefs and what I feel is right is also similarly viewed where I work." P19 – "I first encountered racism in grade school, and it was the first time I knew I was very different. I was the only minority period. I remember being picked on. I remember just, especially the boys were really, they really picked on you. I remember having my first friend, and she really helped me navigate through the classes and through different things. It was just so nice to have somebody who actually supported you [her]. My first ally and my first BFF. So that shaped a lot of the way I viewed things. Because as I grew up, we lived in a lot of small, medium-sized towns where I was kind of used to being the only or one of very few, and always having to adapt. I think I learned how to adapt all the time and that was one of my survival skill sets. P10 – "I used to be very upset when I was treated a certain way because of people thinking I was far younger than I actually was. Being an Asian American woman, when you're trying to get respect, when you're trying to make a point where you're trying to have authority over something, it really is difficult. It's almost

		as if I have to try, not even twice as hard. I have to try 3 or 4 times as hard as anyone else to make a point or to make myself clear or to be heard. I'm constantly trying to prove myself, that's how I feel in both communities."
	Feelings expressed	P11 – "I only started noticing the racism around me, the biases, as I got older. Think in terms of just being perceived by my colleagues on a professional level, I think they perceive me as someone who's competent, and responsible. But there is a distrust. They don't perceive me as 100% American. I think this is particularly so because I worked for the US government and particularly so in the past four or five, six years as tensions between the United States and China have intensified. Is always that "oh here she comes, let's stop talking about certain things and you know. We all have the same clearance!"

Theme 5 - Positive Social Change Opportunities

Theme five focused on Positive Social Change opportunities. Data was collected by asking participants their thoughts and suggestions to specific populations. These messages were analyzed to provide insights about their current reality for this population and to provide suggestions for positive social change. The sub themes came in the form of messages. The messages offer insights into opportunities for positive social and were drawn from interview questions 22-25. The four subthemes were (a) Messages AAW have for youth wishing to ascend into leader roles. (b) Messages AAW have for non-Asian populations. (c) AAW thoughts on barriers AAW face in the workplace and (d) Last thoughts they feel are significant, or not covered in the interview. The messages provide insights about what AAW wished others to understand about their real-world daily experiences, which will be discussed in the conclusion and recommendations for positive social change opportunities in the workplace and society.

Messages for AAW youth wishing to become leaders

The first message was guidance for AAW youth aspiring to become leaders. Question 23 asked participants, "What message do you have for Asian American women youth wishing to become leaders?" Over half of the participants encouraged AAW youth to "be bold, just do it - be a leader." Many of the participants wanted AAW youth to know that "they are worthy and to be proud of who they are." Many of the participants encouraged AAW youth to take time to reflect so they can learn what their passions are first, and then choose their own path. Next more than a quarter advised AAW youth to "speak up, be heard and advocate for themselves and others." A few of participants advised the youth "to find support in the form of people, mentors, and community support." Some of the participants encouraged youth to "work hard and educate themselves, do research – and that knowledge is power." A couple of the participants encouraged young AAWs to "be resilient, keep going, and get up even after failure."

Other guidance included: don't burn bridges; drive change; make positives from negatives; don't give up; get a job that provides stability; don't try to fit in - find your people instead; be flexible; and volunteering helps to gain leadership skills. Some gave thoughtful words to ensure hope. Participant 15's advice to youth is, "Expand the definition of leadership and really find what it is that you value. Such that you become a leader, maybe not in a position or in a formal title, but that you become a leader for the next generation in that same way." Participant 8 addressed parents and emphasized, "Have your child play a competitive contact sport such as soccer so they learn aggression and competition because it is the American culture and it will prepare them for the work

world.” Participant 14 had other positive words for AAW youth. Her message to the youth was,

> We are in a historic period right now. We are in a year where we saw at least in my generation, the huge surge of a new generation of young AAPI activists coming out and finding their voice and supporting their communities in ways that I have never seen before; and that's it's exciting. I think it's encouraging young people like myself to find their voice and to know that there are people that will support them. Whether it be in your community, outside the community, that multiracial building [is what] I am working on. I'm seeing it and it's beautiful. Message to AAW youth: “Believe that things are changing in the workplace. We matter now and we are no longer invisible. Carry that with you [and] feel comfortable and able to step into these positions that our elders didn't feel able to.

In summary, the participants brought positive encouragement for AAW youth to become leaders, along with practical guidance and to honor the uniqueness of being who they are. Participants who were successful in their early career, had positive encouragement of unity and shared their own success as inspiration to others, underscoring the value of having a successful model (leader) in place as a vision for others to strive for.

Message participants have for the non-Asian population about AAW

The second message was to non-Asians and what participants wanted them to know about AAW and their experiences. Interview question 24 asked participants, “What message do you have for the non-Asian population about AAW?” The messages from the

participants to non-Asian populations emerged into five common messages. At times the participants clarified their message by category, one message was for the Caucasian community and another for the non-Asian minority community. The most frequent message was heard in over half of the participants who emphasized frustration of being treated like a foreigner instead of a fellow American. This is underscored in Participant 16's response to the question, "Anyone who is not white understands racism is real. America is diverse. It is offensive to be asked where we come from? Where do my parents come from? Europeans don't get asked that."

The second most frequent message concerned stereotypes, and misperceptions including media depictions in over of the participants. These messages discussed how it feels to be limited by stereotypes, objectified, or misrepresented in society and the media. The participants emphasized that they are not your *model minority*, not submissive, or any of the other Asian stereotype perceptions. Participant 15 shared, "Asian American women are very diverse. We exhibit various different qualities and characteristics that may not fit your definition of stereotypes. My outgoingness, my desire to be around people is not in spite of my Asianness that is a part of my Asianness." Participant 14 gave a message of unity, "For non-Asian folks, I would say that we are all not a monolith. That we are all not the same. That we have our own dreams. Our own issues. We ask them to listen to us and to build with us. Do not continue carrying these stereotypes of what it means to be an Asian American woman in this country because we are Modern women. The future looks like us literally."

The next message came from nearly half of the participants, which was to take time to learn about unconscious biases. Reflect on your judgments because it affects us. Participant 11 explained unconscious racism in this way, “I've heard people say, ‘My wife is Asian how can I be racist?’ My response to that is, just because you have Asian friends, and Asian family members doesn’t mean you're not racist. In fact, I can cite many cases where, because you're racist you choose partners of the minority race [as a token]. Most people believe they're not racist, but if they think about [it], some of their actions indicate that they are. If they reflect and recognize it, they can change.” Many of the participants encouraged others to have open minds. To really listen to who they are, and what their needs are, and try to understand and get to know them, even when there are accents and language barriers. Participant 17 specifically addressed managers, “Everyone has this full range of potential. So, it might require people [managers] to develop people differently. Realize that everyone has potential. You may have to think differently when it comes to developing someone that isn't your demographic.” Many of the participants wanted others to know the frustration they feel about being targets of racism, microaggressions, and being invalidated. These participants felt it is important for others to hear they want to be treated like human beings and to not be dismissed, invisible, taken for granted, or be a token. Participant 4 described being harassed and dismissed by her management, “He [coworker] threatened to hurt me when he found out I was Chinese. He called everything on the Panda Express menu and said he was going to hurt me and that he kicked other women. My boss said he is only kidding.”

Messages to other minority populations who were not Asian centered around unity. Participant 11 shared "I would say to minority groups, we are Americans. So, let's support each other. The progress I make helps you, the progress you make helps me. It's not a zero-sum game. Some people make it seem that way. We are in this together as minority Americans, so let's support each other." Participant 13 had a message of unity to other minority groups, "Our enemy is not one another; it is white supremacy." In closing, Participant 6 wanted non-Asian women to know there is enough for everyone. "I'm not here to threaten you. I'm not here to take away from you from your fire. I'm here to offer what I have learned. And there's enough for everybody."

Overall messages focused on being heard and understood to dispel stereotypes meant listening to AAW and reflecting on personal unconscious biases. Despite stereotype misperceptions, messages of unity and building together were important and desired by participants.

What are the top three barriers for AAW in the workplace?

The purpose of Interview question 22 was to learn what AAW thinks are the top barriers for Asian American women who wish to be promoted into leadership positions. The majority of the participants indicated the biggest barrier to AAW is not having AAW leadership representation in the workplace or society. Not having leadership representation leaves them without visibility or a voice during critical decision-making. The absence of AAW in leadership roles also leaves them without peer mentors to support or advocacy they can relate to. 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. Participant 2 shared, “Asian American women especially, are up against so much with so many stereotypes. It's two spectrums; you're either the super passive Asian woman or you're this dragon lady stereotype. That's it." Participant 10 shared a similar response, “I think, in some ways, society doesn't believe that Asian American women can actually lead because of all the perceptions that they have of us. 2. I think for Asian American women, sexualization is one of them. 3. We have to deal with this on an ongoing bias in addition to the general East/West culture difference.”

The third most frequent barrier for nearly half of the participants reported cultural expectations. Some were conditioned to lay low and not speak up. However, those that did, reported their voices were not heard. Participant 11 shared “We're not taught at a young age how to *want* to lead. How to fight to become [a leader] or to compete to become a CEO. I think we really have to own some of this and our parents have to own some of this.” Participant 15 also recalled, “My parents told me, put your head down, and now all I want to do is be seen." Other issues mentioned by many of the participants was regarding males being awarded leadership roles or their project was reassigned to white men when it was near completion, and the difficulty learning how to navigate through a patriarchal society was an added barrier. These experiences support the literature review of (Biernat, 1991/2003) research regarding stereotype perceptions and *common rule standard* of men perceived as better leaders, which is another barrier for women and minorities in the workplace. Other interviews revealed many participants said the culture

clash between East and Western values is also problematic. Further, some of the participants believed social expectations of gender roles, and the lack of economic resources for working mothers interfered with career advancement for women. Women have the additional burden of economic expenses of daycare costs, and economic pay inequality, and are expected to still take care of the home, family, and elders without support or resources. Participant 12 explains gender issues,

> We are Asian American women, and we are women also. It's interconnected, but very complex because they are intertwined identifiers. Both have to be broken down and are societal norms. Being Asian is complicated, but are both within complex societal norms. For example, being mommy tracked at work after being pregnant in a male dominant field. I think it's because we can bear children and when we choose to do that, then it changes the trajectory of our careers, and that's unfortunate. [society needs to] make things more accessible like childcare. My husband is an engineer and we spent over $18 grand on child care…So, until we make all of these things more accessible for women, and we change the societal perception of what it means to be a working mother, we will be disadvantaged. To do this, you have to look at these statistics [and] have these really tough conversations.

In summary, the primary issues for AAW reported by the participants were lack of leadership representation and external stereotype perceptions which are the primary barriers to leadership promotion. In addition, they expressed navigating a patriarchal society, societal expectations, and traditional cultural upbringing and expectations as

additional macro challenges they identified, which complicates AAW's career trajectory and are barriers to obtaining leadership roles.

Additional message comments or closing remarks from AAW participants

The last interview question 25, asked if there is anything else they would like to share about AAW that was not covered in the interview. The question gave participants the opportunity to share relevant thoughts and feelings about the interview or anything that was not covered in the interview. The participants expressed gratitude for being included in a study and appreciation for being listened to. Some described their feelings after the interview as "unpacking a lot of stuff" and "a relief to talk and to be heard." Participant 16 shared, "I really appreciate that you are doing this research. I think it is really important. There are a lot of nuances about the AAW leader experience. There are a lot of commonalities, yet a lot of things that are really unique. We are not given a voice in society about how we feel, and it's important that people like you are giving us a voice so people will hear that bit that contributes to the greater dialog."

A summary of the last thoughts included feelings that *the system* is the problem and AAW needs to step into CEO and leader roles [in order to move forward]. As the earlier themes represent, the intersection of gender and race issues along with the added aspect of Asian culture and expectations for AAW puts more pressure and responsibility on them in the home. One participant added the reason AAW didn't speak up, the backlash is big and that includes family humiliation. Another felt AAW discipline and education is what keeps them consistent and it is helpful for AAW to survive in the dominant culture. An important message from one participant was that AAW needs a

community of supporters, to have each other's back, to be here for each other. Some support communities exist, but they are in silos. She felt they needed it on a larger scale. Participant 14 ended her interview on a visionary note,

> I think the one thing I would add, with my voting hats on is, I'm encouraged. I just want to throw in the conversation to young Asian Americans; we are the fastest growing electorate in the country [with] young Latinos and that's been really exciting to see. From 2020 on, more Asian young folks are participating in the voting process. That's indicative in the workplace and outside. [It is] this idea of young Asian Americans finding power right at the ballot box and beyond…and so, just encouraging younger Asian American youth to not just get involved on the streets or in the workplace, but also in politics and the nonprofit world.

Table 7

AAW shared insights and messages to AAW Youth and non-Asian populations

Open Codes	Categories	Participants' Identifier & Excerpt
Positive Social Change What messages do AAW want to share?	Message for AAW youth wishing to become leaders	P3 – "Definitely speak up, don't be afraid to speak up. Definitely Learn as much as you can about where you want to be and utilize every resource. Don't burn bridges." P4 – "I would say don't let anything hold them back." P9 – "Don't be afraid to let your voice be heard. Because if you don't say anything about it, it's likely that no one else is going to." P10 – "Ensure they have the right support from the very beginning. Seek out for support if you don't have it." P15 – "Expand the definition of leadership and really find what it is that you value. Such that you become a leader, maybe not in a position or in a formal title, but that you become a leader for the next generation in that same way."

		P19 – "1. You are worthy & more than capable. Number 2: You can do it. 3. Seek mentors who can help. Don't be afraid to ask [for help]." P16 – "I think I would say to expand the definition of leadership and really find what it is that you value. Such that you become a leader, maybe not in a position or in a formal title, but that you become a leader for the next generation in that same way."
	Message for Non-Asians about AAW	P2 – "Just listen. Approach each person recognizing that they have their own history and stories and truths to tell and truly listen. What does it mean to truly listen? Just listen and take it in. I think this is again where it ties into the importance of storytelling." P14 – "For non-Asian folks, I would say. That we are all not a monolith. That we are all not the same. That we have our own dreams. Our own issues. And that we asked them to listen to us and to build with us. Not continue carrying these stereotypes of what it means to be an Asian American woman in this country because we are the modern woman. The future looks like us - literally." P16 – "America is a diverse place that you can be multigenerational and be born here and not have a white face. It is offensive to be asked where do you come from? Where did your parents come from? Europeans don't get asked that. Everybody came from somewhere." P13 – "We're not your model minority to white people. Treat us with the same respect and stop delegitimizing our pain. Our suffering is really important. To the non-white population, our enemy is not one another our enemy is white supremacy - the result of the extreme opposite stereotypes of black women and Asian women. At the end of the day, it's white supremacy, perpetuating and driving that wedge. I think it's really important to remember."
	Top issues for AAW Leaders	P15 – "I think the lack of representation and not seeing others [AAW leaders] is problematic. We're Asian American women and are probably some of the most educated demographic groups." P10 - "I think for Asian American women, I think sexualization is one of them. We have to deal with it on an ongoing basis outside of the general culture. 2. "Being an Asian American female who actually is perceived to be young and trying to get things done, it's

		very hard. I have to work harder. I have to work smarter. I have to be better at everything in order just to get one little thing done." P11 – "I think perception is the biggest challenge. Not what we are, but what people think we are… they're not going to push back. Perception starts young. They [non-Asians] are going to reflect on their experience with Asians from school. I think that perception is broadened into adulthood. Sometimes it works in our favor and other times, most of the time it doesn't. Also, we don't reach out or speak out. 4. We're not taught or a young age how to *want* to lead. How to *fight to become* a CEO. 5. Culture - If we're not teaching our children how to become leaders in their elementary class, you know in their school sports teams, there will be at a disadvantage. Sports help to learn how to navigate those relationships that will help them become leaders of industries." P19 – "Culture Clash in the workplace - We are brought up to listen, but [the culture of her job] the louder and the more territorial and political you were, the better you did in that organization. Those are not characteristics that I have. So that was one of the struggles that I had" P14 – "There is this idea of always being the "others" the foreigners in the room causing us to be overlooked, being explicitly left out of advancement opportunities because of that idea that like you don't belong in that position of power…We need to be seen as disruptors, especially in this day and age. We don't reach out or speak out." P16 – "1. Asian women have to deal with all that misogynistic BS 2. In addition to the racism and the decades-long mentality of the Stereotypes - the Asian woman as a subservient docile woman who is the perfect woman because she does whatever her man wants and is also doing the thing on the side in the sheets. I don't think a lot of people contemplate the history, there were plenty of women who were not sex workers, who met military men and left." P4 – "I am half white. I have learned from being bullied [after telling a coworker I am Asian], that I can decide not to tell people I am Asian. So, I have white privilege because I was born and present as white. So, I hold that privilege. One thing that my professor said in multicultural psychotherapy is that it's an unearned privilege. I didn't do anything to earn it, which is not

	Other thoughts	fair, because you can't control what race you are born into. It is not earned, so it was really hard to see that." P6 – "Message to non-Asians women, I'm not here to threaten you. I'm not here to take away from you from your fire. OK. I'm here, I'm here to offer what I have learned. And there's enough for everybody." P8 – "For Asian women, I have to say that one of the most important things is not to become a victim. These [your Asian upbringing] are just part of you, they don't define you, and they don't control your future. *Say no*, [to their perceptions] it's not you." P11 - "The system is the problem. AAW needs to learn how to navigate in the system by becoming CEOs or cabinet members." P17 – On being asked if she was a "Tiger Mom" and being identified with the stereotype replied, "It is offensive and it's annoying,"

Summary

This qualitative study was conducted through semi-structured interviews to gather data about the lived experiences of Asian American women (AAW) and how they navigate race, gender, and stereotypes in workplace social environments. The goal was to understand the long-standing low leadership representation of Asian American women (AAW) in organizations and learn what barriers AAW face in their careers. Results from the data collected to address Research Question 1, What is it like for AAW in U.S. organizations to experience race, and gender stereotyping, found that all of the participants experienced race, gender, and stereotyping in either the workplace or community. Race experiences started in childhood and continued through life, adulthood and their career. The intersection of both race and gender stereotype perceptions of Asian

women, and female gender role expectations affected AAW careers. Gender role assumptions included being the implied caretaker of home, family, and children. Even with additional help (paid services or family assistance), many participants expressed implicit expectations of managing home care. The time, economic stress, and physical labor of these responsibilities were an added barrier for all women who chose to have a family. In Asian households, the responsibility may be expanded into cultural expectation to care for multi-generational family members, parents, and grandparents who are considered the nuclear family and live in the same household. These added assumed responsibilities made it difficult to balance their career with home life. Home and childcare issues are generally not a barrier to a man's career. According to research by Choudhary (2021), "S&P Global (2020) statistics show that 25% of mothers quit the workforce entirely for child or family care and 39% of women take significant time off for child or family care" (para 1). Society is slow to economically support women with child and elderly care costs or provide affordable support services. AAW faced issues of balancing work, family, and home, oftentimes having to choose one or the other. The race and gender pay gap compound economic security for women in the workplace. The high cost of daycare and home care costs interfere with career stability. A stalling career makes it difficult to justify child care expenses which leaves women often sacrificing work ambition or economically making the decision to resign all together.

The intersection of race and gender and stereotypes perceptions compound issues that are unique to Asian women. Participants reported stereotype perceptions of meek, obedient, subservient, Lotus Flower and the Asian female sexualization and Dragon Lady

(both implicit and explicit) intersect both race and gender. These perceptions are unique to AAW and problematic to leadership perception and selection. The diametrically opposing stereotypes of *lotus flower* and *dragon lady* along with the general Asian *Model Minority* myth stack the deck against them as a minority group from a leadership perspective. The *Model Minority* myth, adds expectation pressure for Asian women to work hard, diligently, without mistakes, and not complain. When they do make a mistake or speak up, voices are minimized or dismissed. When they do speak up or raise a concern, the backlash and dragon lady is brought in with consequences such as minimization, no promotions, raises, or recognition. For Asian women breaking stereotypes is not accepted as mentioned in Chapter 1. "Asian Americans are stereotyped as more feminine and deferential than other racial groups, traits that are negatively associated with leadership" (Chen 1999; Garg et al., 2018; Ho and Jackson, 2001; Lin et al., 2005). Tinkler et al. (2019) assert, therefore, intersectional invisibility is problematic for AAW and discussed the scenario, supposing they display dominance explaining that they would be assumed to be violating stereotypes about Asian and women's deference behavior, and could face more backlash than other women.

To learn about AAW leadership style and strategy, participants were asked to reflect on their leadership qualities and style. Each participant shared self-assessed leader attributes. The most frequent leadership qualities were compassion, being a strong capable leader, and integrity. The majority of the participants felt they had the qualities of a compassionate leader. Half of the participants felt they were a strong and capable leader. Many of the participants believed they led with integrity. Some participants

shared strategic approaches. Collaborative leader and participatory leader approaches came up frequently when explaining how they approached situations. To understand how their leadership style compared to their role models, Subsequent Question 3 asked AAW what do they admire in a leader? The top qualities AAW admired were aligned. The quality many participants valued most in a role model was compassion, and integrity. Third most frequent characteristic admired were qualities of a Servant leader as reported by more than a quarter of the participants. The top three leader qualities reported were aligned with their top three self-assessed leader attributes.

Acquiring leadership positions was more likely when support was available. Subsequent Question 4 was aimed at learning what resources and assistance AAW received during their career and if they think it helped their career. Overall, the participants did receive basic resources. Many of the participants received organizational training such as onboarding and skills training that pertained to their job. Some of the participants were offered leadership training and development. Of those that received leadership training, the majority of the participants felt it was very helpful. Mentoring was present and available to over a quarter of the participants from their organizations. Only one participant found their assigned mentor helpful. Nearly half of the participants found helpful mentors outside of the company. Of the participants who found mentors outside of their organization, all of them found they were helpful and were grateful they had someone to be their mentor, most of whom were minorities or specifically other Asians. In both leadership training and mentorship, participants mentioned being considered “white adjacent” alluding to the *model minority* myth that ascribes that Asians

are doing “just fine” (Yu, 2020) and do not need support. However, there seems to be great value in leadership training, mentor role models, and networking as shown from participants' testimony.

The fifth theme focused on background context. Table 1 represented the participant demographics. Childhood and youth experiences provide insights into each participant’s personal foundation and gave context between earlier life experiences to adult life in their societies and the workplace. Question 1 produced participant reflections on early childhood and youth. All participants mentioned living in dominant white communities growing up, and the majority of the participants recalled being bullied or sexualized growing up. Although the experiences of being bullied or sexualized were reduced into adulthood, it remained a relevant issue in the workplace according to the data of this study. In their adult life, the top three sub themes that emerged are as follows, the majority of the participants explained they had to constantly navigate in a dominant white culture community and workplace. Over half of the participants currently lived with Caucasians either by marriage or had lived with parents who were white. Nearly half said they were misperceived by stereotypes. The fourth theme that came up was the perception of being a foreigner and fifth theme, being bullied in and out of the workplace was mentioned by over a quarter of the participants. The same percent felt it necessary to adapt in order to fit into white society. One participant who was half Chinese decided early on she would selectively share her Chinese ethnicity with others. She was very aware she has white privilege which protects her. Her awareness of how unfair white privilege is [for those who don’t have it] was a big eye-opener for her. The last theme and

interview questions were intended to analyze data messages from AAW to non-Asians. The predominant theme was to listen to them, and to be open to hearing their lived experiences, stereotypes that are put on them. The messages to AAW youth was about being bold, stepping up into leader roles and to allow themselves to be who they are, and to do what they are passionate about. The last question captured last thoughts, feelings, messages, and guidance. The purpose of the last theme was to gather collective data from the study, and to provide recommendations for positive social change for AAW leaders and potential leaders.

In closing, Chapter 4 provided a detailed report on the results of the study, themes and subthemes that emerged and answers the research questions regarding their experiences, their self-proclaimed leadership attributes, style, strategies, and values as a leader, and insight into what guidance they received to navigate organizational culture, and build skills and strategies to ascend into leadership within their workplaces. Chapter 5 provides an overview of the study's interpretation of findings. It also discusses the limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and opportunities for positive social change opportunities in the workplace and society along with my conclusions from the analysis of my study.

Chapter 5

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to learn about the lived experiences of Asian American women (AAW) potential and established leaders in the workplace to gain a better understanding of how race, gender, and stereotypes, or other barriers may be preventing them from ascending into leadership roles. Low or no leadership representation leaves them without visibility, voice or power during critical decision-making. This qualitative study explored the lived experiences of Asian American women (AAW) in their workplace and social environments to learn how they navigated race, gender, and stereotypes. The findings from Chapter 4 are discussed in Chapter 5, along with recommendations for future research, and implications for positive social change. The literature review of this study indicated (a) there was little research data about AAW leaders (Yu, 2020), (b) stereotype perceptions such as the *Model Minority* and Asian gendered stereotypes, are problematic for Asians (Mukkkamala & Suyemoto, 2019; Yu, 2020), and (c) the impact of intersectional race and gender stereotypes interfere with leadership advancement for AAW (Biernat, 1991/2003; Kuem, 2018; & Mukkamala & Suyemoto, 2018) as indicated in the literature review.

Asian American women (AAW) hold less than 1% Executive or C-Suite representation and are perceived to be the least likely to become leaders (Johnson & Sy, 2016). Low or no leadership representation leaves them without visibility, voice or power during critical decision-making. Many researchers discussed feminine and deferential stereotype perceptions of AAW, which are negatively associated with leadership (Chen,

1999; Garg et al., 2018; Ho and Jackson, 2001; Lin et al., 2005). According to Tinkler et al. (2019), when multiple subordinate identities are involved, AAW behaviors or work performance are less likely to be recalled. They further suggested, since AAW leaders have a double submissive stereotype that is "less easily categorized and less strongly associated with race and gender stereotypes of their social group, intersectional invisibility might be a barrier for AAW. Social and performance invisibility is problematic to career advancement" (Purdie-Vaughn, & Eiback, 2008). Tinkler et al. (2019) explained intersectional invisibility and backlash could also be an issue for (AAW) when they display behavior counter to the stereotypes.

In this research, data was collected and analyzed to learn about AAW in their social and work environments, to understand how and why AAW are not represented in leadership or as potential leaders. Low leadership representation of a group is an organizational psychology, performance management concern for AAW and organizations. Since recent research showed an increase in organizational performance when Asian Americans were leading (Gündemir et al., 2019), this research supports the need to learn more about barriers for Asian American in the workplace. AAW are highly educated (Seramount, 2021). According to their research, 67% of AAW have a bachelor's degree and 33% have graduate degrees. 45% of the AAW in the survey aspire to a senior executive or C-Suite leader role, but 54% feel disadvantaged in the workplace due to race and 59% feel disadvantaged due to their gender, and 48% were risk of leaving their current employer. Leaving AAW on average out of leadership roles may be a missed competitive advantage opportunity in both national and international business.

This research data also brings awareness to some of the challenges AAW face in the workplace and shed insights into opportunities and for positive social change. The gap in data along with low leadership representation of this demographic was explored through this study. The findings of this research describe in the data analysis Chapter 4, support the concern that stereotypes and perceptions of AAW affect work and social environments and are barriers to leadership advancement, as described in the literature review.

Interpretation of Findings

The guiding research question for this study was: What is it like for AAW leaders and AAW aspiring into leadership roles in U.S. organizations to experience race and gender stereotyping? Out of 19 participants of this study, all experienced race, gender, and stereotyping in either their workplace or social environments. Despite the challenges, fifteen participants advanced in their workplaces on some level during their career. More than a quarter of the 19 participants were promoted into Executive leadership positions with titles of Director or above. Of the Executive leader subgroup, more than a quarter of the participants reported harassment, microaggressions, or bullying as the top challenge. It was especially present as they were advancing into more visible leadership roles. Another frequent experience was being perceived incorrectly as "meek, too young, or exotic." Some AAW expressed the need to work harder and constantly had to prove themselves with peers and supervisors in order to overcome inaccurate generalizations and stereotype perceptions of Asian women which. Participants believe inaccurate stereotype perceptions of them interfered with being heard or acknowledged in the

workplace. Other AAW believed they were simply overlooked as potential leaders. More than a quarter of the non-executive participants also experienced bullying or and harassment in the workplace. Some of the participants mentioned the hard work they put into a project was turned over to a male colleague and they did not receive recognition for their work or when it was to be publicly presented. These experiences underscore Biernat (2003) research regarding stereotype perceptions of males being the preferred leader. She used the term *common rule standard* that men are perceived to be better leaders than women when it comes to promotions (Biernat, 2003) and therefore receive them. In this case, given visibility and ownership of projects this AAW researched, analyzed and detailed for many months.

Becoming aware of societal barriers of being an Asian woman helped some participants understand the bigger picture. Societal issues such as their position as it pertains to race and gender were frequently expressed by the participants through the interviews. More than a quarter of the participants believed (a) race perceptions, and (b) gender stereotypes were the issues in the workplace and in their careers. Specific race stereotypes assumed AAW were foreigners. Gendered stereotypes specific to Asian women emerged as being meek, or sexualized both in and out of the workplace, which also aligns with the research by Mukkamala and Suyemoto (2018) regarding stereotype perceptions of AAW by non-Asians. General gender issues, being a female of child bearing years had many layers for AAW. The expectation for a married AAW, and decision to have a family was a remarkable disruption to career in terms of family expectations, economic challenges of daycare and other child expenses. Cost of daycare

often times put an economic burden on the family, leaving them with few choices. In AAW families, the woman's career was often compromised if daycare costs were too high. In addition, any family obligation was assumed the woman's role, which included having to call out of work or leaving early to tend to a sick child or other school needs during work hours. Asian gendered stereotypes differed from simply being female as mentioned earlier. Some of the participants were able to use an effective strategy to circumvent the stereotype perceptions.

Many AAW experienced Asian gendered discrimination or harassment came in the form of bullying through micro and macro aggressions, especially when participants were becoming recognized by their organization visibly. Harassment through bullying was another significant issue in the workplace and may be a barrier to leadership advancement or AAW. A professional reporting processes for harassment, to include Asian gendered micro-aggressions was either unclear to participants or ineffective. A couple of the participants mentioned being bullied in the workplace that led them to fight through legal avenues, which they felt was emotionally, professionally, and economically costly. Another participant went to her Human Resources department and was able to obtain assistance due to her relationship with the department members. Other (non-leaders) found human resources ineffective. Several of the participants reported going to their managers, both were minimized until it was re-addressed or another employee was affected by the same person. Most of the participants explained that after incidents of sexual harassment by superiors or peers occurred, they felt confusion or shame which

affected their confidence. They either avoided all white men or resigned from the organization.

The second research question asked: What are the lived experiences of AAW leaders and aspiring leaders in U.S. organizations regarding their leadership style and strategy? Understanding AAW leadership style and strategy and how they are perceived is essential to leadership success. Biernat, 1991 discussed stereotype perceptions affect leadership advancement (Biernat, 1991). How AAW are perceived through stereotypes are not notably leadership qualities. The data from the participants in this research showed (a) The majority of the participants believed they were compassionate leaders and wanted to be seen as such by their peers and teams. (b) Many participants also felt they were strong, powerful, capable, impactful, effective, and results-driven leaders. (c) Integrity was the third most frequent leadership attribute they value and believe they demonstrate in their leadership style. Participants believed they were honest, conscientious, fair, and well-intended leaders. Over a quarter of the participants believed being smart, intelligent, and knowledgeable were important leadership qualities they possessed. Overall, the qualities they believe they had aligned with qualities they valued in a model leader. Interview question 13 asked what qualities they admired in a model leader. Many participants responded, leaders who cared and showed compassion. Many participants valued leaders who demonstrate integrity, and over a quarter of the participants admired servant leaders or leaders who acted in service to the community and their employees. Some of the participants found good communication and listening skills as significant leadership attributes. Many of the AAW in this research study believe

they hold strong leadership qualities. All the self-ascribed leader characteristics were contrary to AAW stereotypes of being meek, obedient, and exoticized. To the contrary, they presented as competent professionals who want to be recognized for work well done.

Theme 3 looked at career support for AAW in the workplace. Subsequent question 2 asked: "What support did AAW receive in terms of guidance, training, mentorship, and leadership training during their careers?" The primary sub-themes that emerged regarding career guidance came from training, mentorship, and networking within and outside the organization. Nearly half of the participants had organizational training, such as onboarding and skills training that pertained to the job. However, few were aware of or were offered leadership training. Of those who received leadership training, more than three-quarters of the participants felt it was beneficial. Organizational mentoring was available to over a quarter of the participants, but only one thought it was useful. Nearly half of the participants found mentors outside of their organization. Of those, who had mentors, all mentioned their mentors were helpful and were grateful for their guidance. This data aligns with research by Chao et al (1992) who looked at the success of participants who were in either formal or informal mentor relationships to those without mentors. The research found, protégé's in informal mentoring reported more career related support and higher salaries than those in the formal mentoring programs or those without mentors.

Zero participants discussed networking as a career-advancing strategy. Some participants mentioned civic engagement or conferences where networking may have taken place. However, it was not consciously acknowledged as a career strategy. Some

participants independently sought training outside of their field to gain knowledge, skills, and support, which helped them advance in their careers. In both leadership training and mentorship, participants mentioned being considered “white adjacent,” by their management and Human Resources department, alluding to the *model minority* myth that ascribes Asians are doing “just fine” (Yu, 2020). This stereotype assumes Asian Americans do not need support, which is problematic in the workplace. Career support such as mentoring and leadership training is a noteworthy success factor. The participants interview support Chao et al (1992) value of mentors. There also seems to be great value in leadership training, and networking, as shown from participants' testimony, but for some, was available to this participant pool.

Theme 4 looked at the family background to gain insights into history, expectations, and cultural context for each AAW within their family, community, and society. The data was derived from interview questions 1, 2, and 3. Interview questions asked about their role in the family, parent history, cultural traditions, obligations, and expectations. To gain insight into an AAW daily experience, Interview question 2 asked participants to give descriptive words (adjectives) that describe what it means to be an Asian American woman in the U.S. The participants’ descriptive adjectives ranged from how non-Asian’s see them, which align with attributes and characteristic strengths, while other descriptors are barriers and hold them back in society. The variety of responses represents the broad complexity of being an AAW in the U.S., according to these participants. The participants used a wide range of descriptors. The most frequently characteristics described their work ethic. Descriptors of hard workers, strong,

persevering, and determined were frequently mentioned. The next most frequent responses described managing stereotype perceptions of AAW, such as meek and obedient. The third most frequent answer was about their adaptability and how they had to fit in with the dominant society. Awareness of being sexualized by white men and feeling vulnerable, especially during the COVID pandemic and the rise of Anti-Asian hate, was also frequently mentioned throughout many of the interviews.

Interview question 3 was designed to learn more about the participants' experiences in their community, workplace, and society. As mentioned prior, over three-quarters of the participants felt they had to navigate the dominant white culture they lived in and worked in. Over half of the participants were married to white men or had white parents. Nearly half of the women felt they were misperceived by stereotypes of foreigner, meek, model minority or sexualized. As mentioned previously, many thought it was necessary to adapt or change themselves to fit in. Asking questions about the participants childhood and youth experiences provided insight into their foundations and gives their adulthood some context. Early childhood upbringing, culture and expectations imprint experiences that endures in adult life, which may affect them in the workplace. Question 1 produced participant reflections on early childhood and youth. Most of the participants recall family and cultural expectations that included valuing education, family members, culture and holidays. A general definition of Expectancy refers to an individual’s confidence in their abilities to succeed (Eccles, 1983). When an individual excels in education, but does not ascend into leadership, as the data has shone for nearly two decades, the expectancy theory falls short for this population. The AAW population

in general, and the participants in this study may be an exception to the expectancy theory since many are highly educated, but only some promoted into leadership roles, despite emphasis on education in many AAW homes. Overall, the 19 participants all mentioned living in dominant white communities, and more than three-quarters recalled being bullied or sexualized growing up. Although the experiences of being bullied or sexualized were reduced by adulthood, it still remained a relevant issue in the workplace, according to the data.

In summary, the data represents the broad complexity of being an AAW in the U.S., according to the participant interviews. An interesting notable distinction are the four adult Asian transracial adoptees (TRA's). Like the general participants pool, the TRA participants were aware of living and interacting in predominantly white environments. Both populations felt they had to adapt and "fit in" to the dominant culture. They also were similar regarding early childhood bullying experiences. Later life some of the stereotypes endured in various forms of discrimination, harassment, or sexualization in society or workplace (foreigner, smart, meek or exoticized). However, the TRA's were immersed into their Caucasian family culture in early childhood adding another layer of intersectionality. Although both groups felt they had to fit in to society and the workplace and may have thought they were treated as an outsider, some TRA participants remarked clear feelings of being an outsider in their own family due to being Asian. By contrast, Asian families assimilated to the dominant culture and had their nuclear and sometimes extended family unit to support them in a common race experience.

Theme 5 focused on messages the participants had to specific populations. The data emerged from answers to interview questions 22-25. These messages were collected and shared to review and analyze potential positive social change for AAW in society. The questions gave AAW the opportunity to (a) guide AAW youth wishing to become leaders, (b) offer thoughts to non-Asians to consider when engaging with AAW, and (c) share final thoughts on top barriers for AAW in the workplace and (d) AAW were asked to add information not covered in the interview. The data from these questions provided insights into what they wish others to know about their real-world daily experiences. This is also discussed in the conclusion and recommendations for positive social change. In summary, the participants brought positive encouragement to become a leader along with practical guidance to AAW youth to honor the uniqueness of being who they are. Participants who were youth themselves had positive encouragement and shared their success as inspiration to others, underscoring the value of having a successful model (leader) in place as a vision for others.

Interview question 24 asked participants, "What message do you have for the non-Asian population about Asian American women?" The messages from the participants to non-Asian populations emerged into five common subthemes. At times the participants clarified their message by category, one message for the Caucasian community and another for the non-Asian minority community. The top three messages to non-Asians emerged as (a) emphasized frustration of being treated like a foreigner instead of a fellow American and (b) Message that AAW are not a monolith. They are very diverse. Each has its unique history, culture, and experiences living in America. (c)

They emphasized “they are not a stereotype.” Suggestion outward was to take time to reflect and learn unconscious bias and understand how they are being projected and how it affects them. Overall, messages focused on being heard and understood to dispel stereotypes meant listening to AAW and reflecting on personal unconscious biases. Despite stereotype misperceptions, messages of unity and building together were essential and desired by participants.

Messages to other minority populations who were not Asian centered around unity. Participants expressed concern for minority group division and completion. To understand they are united in supporting each other. Some addressed white women with the same message of unity. Overall messages for this theme focused on being heard and understood to dispel stereotypes meant listening to AAW and reflecting on personal unconscious biases. Despite stereotype misperceptions, messages of unity and building together were essential and desired by participants.

The participants were asked what barriers they felt AAW faced in the workplace through interview question 23. The top three noted issues for AAW by this participant pool were (a) not having AAW leadership representation in the workplace or society. No leadership representation leaves them without visibility or a voice during critical decision-making. The absence of AAW in leadership roles also leaves them without peer mentors to support and advocacy that can relate to their needs. (b) The second barrier was Asian gendered stereotypes. Participants felt stereotypes and perceptions of Asian women as meek, submissive, obedient, accommodating, exotic (sexualized), a Lotus Flower, Tiger Mom or Dragon Lady, and youth are problematic and interfere with leadership

promotion. (c) The third most frequent barrier was cultural expectations. Some were conditioned to lay low and not speak up. However, those that did felt their voices were not heard. Other issues mentioned males being awarded leadership roles even when performance was equal, and the difficulty of learning how to navigate through a patriarchal society was an added barrier. The participant experiences underscore research discussed in the literature review by Biernat's *common rule.* Her research found men are perceived to be better leaders than women when it comes to promotions (Biernat, 2003). Many felt the culture clash between East and Western values was also problematic. Further, social expectations of gender roles and the lack of economic resources for working mothers interfered with career advancement for women in general. Women have the additional burden of monetary expenses, daycare costs, and financial pay inequality, they also were expected to take care of the home, family, and elders without support or resources.

In summary, the primary issues for AAW reported by the participants were lack of leadership representation and external stereotype perceptions, which are the primary barriers to leadership promotion. In addition, they expressed navigating a patriarchal society, societal expectations, and traditional cultural upbringing and expectations as additional macro challenges they identified, complicating AAW's career trajectory and barriers to obtaining leadership roles.

The last interview question allowed participants to share relevant thoughts and feelings not covered. Their thoughts included feelings that "the system" is the problem, and AAW needs to step into CEO and leader roles in order to move forward. As the

earlier themes represent, the intersection of gender and race issues and the added aspect of Asian culture and family expectations for AAW puts more pressure and responsibility on them in the home. One participant added that when AAW speak up, the backlash is big and includes family humiliation. Another felt that AAW discipline and education keep them consistent, and it is helpful for AAW to survive in the dominant culture. An important message from one participant was that AAW needs a community of supporters to have each other's back, to be here for each other. Some support communities exist, but they are in silos. Overall, the participants expressed gratitude for being included in a study and appreciated being included.

Situation and Effects

According to Kawahara et al. (2013), AAW are challenged with a different kind of stereotype. Research by Louie (2000) explained, "leadership in the form of social advocacy has not been studied among AAW because they are portrayed stereotypically to be passive and apolitical, portrayed in the media as demure, and obedient, and as sex objects, and victim of a patriarchal traditional Asian culture" (as cited in Kawahara et al., 2013, p.13). Further research by Zhang (2017) found that even when there is regulatory support, if the organization does not normatively accept and support the new changes, it becomes a workplace concern (Zhang, 2017).

The need for positive social change is beneficial for this demographic as an organizational psychology concern, mental health and social concern. Without the ability for AAW to advance in society through career success, they are vulnerable in organizations to hostile work environments through microaggressions and sexual

harassment, in society in the form of domestic violence incidents, where some AAW ethnic groups have over double the national average. AAW will continue to be personally at risk for depression, which continues to rise for AAW, and suicide is the second highest cause of death for AAW (Kim, 2000; Kuem et al., 2018; Tebb et al., 2018). For AAW, the stereotypes that prevent leadership ascension is an organizational psychological issue. It concerns workplace bias, discrimination, harassment, retention all of which affects organizational success. Organizational reputation can be affected if public and costly lawsuits become the only recourse for AAW. In society and as a personal mental health risk, AAW continue to be at risk. Without being able to advance in the workplace and being "delegated to dispensable roles and sex objectification" (Kuem, 2018, p.572), AAW are left without support or protection in the workplace and society.

Health Implications

As follow-up questions after participants explained specific situations, participants were asked how they felt. Most of the responses of feelings about their career, leadership, and personal progress were pragmatic responses such as: "I feel integrity is important in a leader." However, when asked about being bullied, harassed, or perceived through a stereotype lens, responses such as "taken aback, shocked, uncomfortable, unsafe, and terrified" were common responses when discussing harassment incidents. Other expressions of emotion came when race or gender stereotypes such as meek, good at math, *Model Minority,* or being perceived as a foreigner instead of an American was discussed. Participants expressed feelings of anger, irritation, or insult with stereotypes. Many ignored them for lack of effective strategies to

extinguish these beliefs. With sexual incidents, shame and confusion were described along with uncertainty about how to prevent it from happening again. Kuem et al. (2018) explains the unique collective history of AAW has led to stereotypes that make the minority group susceptible to bias resulting in subtly being the targets of various forms of racial-gendered microaggressions and micro-invalidations. Many of which are categorized as sexist events. Research by Mukkamala and Suyemoto (2018) has found that as a result of discrimination, AAW suffers higher adverse effects than white women in social and professional environments. Their study indicates gendered stereotypes of AAW as a unique form of sexual harassment as cited in Kuem et al. (2018) research, "Sue et al.(2007) identified eight racial microaggression themes pertinent to Asian Americans as (a) alien in their own land, (b) ascription of intelligence, (c) exoticization of AAW, (d) invalidation of interethnic differences, (e) denial of racial reality, (f) pathologizing cultural values or communication styles, (g) second class citizenship and (h) invisibility" (p. 572).

The data and themes that evolved around this research underscored all of the themes outlined by Sue and colleagues. The term "gendered microaggressions" was coined by Capodilupo et al. (2010), which included denigrating messages of sexual objectification, sexist treatment, and invisibility as enduring (As cited in Kuem et al., 2018). Participants in this study expressed anxiety over gendered microaggressions that sexualized them and further felt uncertain about how to handle them at the moment, leading to either avoidance or reporting to a higher authority, which resulted in little consequence to the perpetrator or resignation. The same researchers underscore the

concern that microaggressions and or harassment often is dismissed as insignificant or harmless. However, scholarship has demonstrated deleterious consequences on mental health and elevated levels of depression (Hyun, 2012; Nadal et al., 2014), along with chronic detriments on their mental health over time (Kuem et al., 2018). The data from this study support the research, and the lasting effects of race and gender microaggressions have been noted to affect AAW in society, the workplace, and mental health that needs to be addressed through policy and procedures that includes intersectional micro-aggressions and sexual harassment of this demographic.

Theoretical Framework Applied

The study utilized Crenshaw's (1989/1993) intersectionality lens and further variation of Mosaic Intersectionality (Hall et al.2019) and Biernat et al. (1991) Shifting Standards Theory (SST) as they pertain to stereotypes. As described by Crenshaw, 1989/1993), the theoretical lens of intersectionality combines the intersection of race and gender axes which was used to look at the unique lived experiences of AAW in the workplace and society. Various researchers discussed race, and gender stereotypes of AAW as submissive and exotic (Chao et al., 2013; Kuem et al., 2018; Mukkamala & Suyemoto, 2018), which cause invisibility as career women and leaders. These stereotypes, as mentioned earlier, when expressed, become workplace and societal microaggressions. In earlier research, Sue et al. (2007) described microaggressions as "subtle race insults that put a specific race down and, if not addressed, are barriers to career advancement" (Sue et al., 2007). The variables that affect AAW were underscored by Chao et al. (2013), which support the need to discuss and include AAW gendered

racism experiences. Kuem et al. (2018) research looked at gender stereotypes which showed Asian gender microaggressions were more disturbing to Asian women than stereotype microaggressions targeting white women. These researchers also explain, “It is likely that AAW faces gendered racial microaggressions across various contexts, such as career, education, and relationships” (Kuem et al., 2018). Ignoring intersectional stereotypes that incite discriminatory beliefs is problematic for AAW. Incidents such as the Atlanta shootings are not new. As discussed in the introduction, Healy and Stepnick (2018) explain such incidents will likely continue to act out in social and professional environments. The incidents may present in micro invalidations, working up to harassment with potential violence until something interventions are implemented to mitigate this. The Asian gendered stereotypes stem from the historical genesis of Asian women being imported for prostitution (Healy & Stepnick, 2018), which has not been extinguished. Gendered stereotypes affect leadership perceptions (Biernat, 1991/2003). As shared in the data themes, looking singularly at race or gender alone would not be enough for this population. This study looked at the intersection of multiple axes that create a holistic view of the AAW experience. Therefore, the intersectionality framework of Crenshaw's (1991/1993) theory, along with Biernat's, 1991/2003) Shifting Standards theories as it addresses stereotype perceptions were relevant to this research study.

Limitations of the Study

There were strengths and limitations to this qualitative study. There is little known about the lived experiences of AAW in the workplace as described in this qualitative research. Although many AAW were advanced during their career, and some

were promoted into Executive Leadership roles, there were significant barriers along the way. The data themes that emerged from the study represented discussion regarding gender stereotypes and perceptions that participants believed were barriers to advancement. In addition, there were many reports of micro and macro harassment as discussed as microaggressions and bullying in the workplace and society. Some limitations include that research was conducted with a convenience sample since there are few AAW leaders (Hyun, 2005; Johnson & Sy, 2016); Yu, 2020). To address the potential limited participant pool, the recruitment was expanded to AAW pursuing leadership roles in organizations along with AAW in leadership roles. The study was conducted through qualitative semi-structured interviews, which helped gain a better understanding of their lived experiences in their workplace, where race and gender stereotypes may have affected them. In addition, generalization was a limitation because it is a qualitative study.

This study is also limited by unintended bias due to my positionality as an Asian American woman researcher who has held executive leadership positions in the workplace and also a Korean American Adoptee. The research employed triangulation, member checking, adequate engagement, rich data collection, reflexivity, audit trail, peer review, discrepant evidence, and reporting commonalities (frequencies) on theories and measures to reduce bias (Maxwell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I used as many of the measures as preventative practices to mitigate bias and engaged in close supervisory oversight. The data collection was prepared and executed using an interview guide and pilot to evaluate its effectiveness (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). After the first interview, slight

revisions were made to include additional demographics and to clarify participants' self-described leadership attribution. Personal bias and self-examination have been documented through reflective journaling and member checking to explain researcher bias, transparency, and validity measures (Center for Research Quality, 2015a). I noted when a participant said something was surprising, especially when I expected something else. After each interview, I explored expectation (bias) and reported on any underlying bias.

Recommendations

Recommendations for further research for AAW in the workplace would be beneficial since the low leadership representation has been consistently low for over 20 years. Recommendations include to recruit and explore additional interviews of AAW within specific Asian ethnic categories and by region in the United States to learn about the individual cultural and regional nuances of whether or not geographical location and specific history and culture impact leadership ascension. In addition, it might be interesting to have data comparing AAW with other minority women, including Latino, African American, Native American, Muslim, and white women, to gather more information regarding how their obstacles are similar and different—in addition, differentiating the intersectionality of microaggressions regarding (a) gender and (b) race of the various ethnic groups.

Implications

The results of this study contribute to the sparse research and dialog about AAW. The data from this study can provide further insights regarding specific barriers AAW

believes are present in the work and social society for advancing AAW. It also has implications for research and programs that may enhance career and social support, including needed resources for AAW to enhance professional success. Such implementations should provide education and leadership sensitivity through primary and secondary childhood education as well as social and organizational cultural sensitivity. In the workplace, transformational leadership programs should ensure leadership training and resources that include Asian Americans within the career ladder process. These resources may be implemented through Transformational Leadership Theory (TLT) programs that include AAW. Transformational Leadership Theory **(**TLT) utilizes change management processes of making the calibrations from one leadership mindset to another way of thinking about leadership. Transformational Leadership Theory is significant in positive social change for society because it empowers. According to Kawahara et al. (2013) research, Transformational Leadership training is valuable in terms of integrating inclusion. "Transformational leaders inspire their followers to transcend their self-interest and work toward a greater cause. It allows individuals to make judgments and comparisons based on their perception of social standards and incrementally assists in leadership change (Kawahara et al., 2013, p. 260).

Positive Social Change

As discussed in the implications section, by increasing awareness about the impact of low leadership representation of AAW, and provide resources and leadership support through mentorship, funding and sponsorships to empower AAW in society and in the workplace, is essential. AAW are highly educated economic contributors. This

should be accomplished in a multi-level approach. (a) Bring public awareness and support of grassroots organizations that support AAW leadership training, education would provide an avenue for skills training, mentorship and networking for AAW. (b) In the workplace implementing Transformational Leadership training as part of diversity, Equity and Inclusion training that promotes AAW will help bring visibility as rising leaders and increase representation. Resources and leadership ladders training are intended to include all employees including AAW, which would be available upon hire within organizations. (c) The third area should focus on community and society. Education to the general public should begin at the primary and secondary school levels. Participants recall experiences of being perceived as “foreigners" and bullied as early as childhood. Exposure to Asian history should be included as part of the American history curriculum. Asian American history in primary and secondary school curriculum has recently been passed in four states since the 2021 Atlanta shootings of six AAW. Education in the public schools increases awareness and fosters unity.

Conclusion

This study supported the literature review and research questions regarding Asian American women’s (AAWs) experiences in the workplace and society by Yu (2020 and other researchers, “Asians are the least visible of all minority groups, evident by their lack of inclusion on workplace discrimination research involving denied promotion opportunities, in part, due to their small sample size, but primarily because of a pervasive stereotype that Asians achieve universal occupational success and are not disadvantaged minorities, commonly known as the *model minority* myth” (as sited in Yu, 2020, Harris,

2004; Lai & Babcokc, 2013; Museus & Kiang, 2009; Takei, Sakamoto & Kuo, 2014, p. 1). AAW data from this study showed all participants experienced race, gender and Asian gendered stereotyping that affected their careers. Their leadership style and strategies discussed aligned with what they value in a model leader and culture and society stereotype perceptions affect their experiences. From childhood many experienced bullying, sexualization or discrimination which carried over for many into their adult professional environments. Additional research regarding effective education programs in society along with effective transformational leadership programs in organizations that include AAW would be areas of further research. In addition, allocating resources for women in the workplace to provide for the physical labor and economic costs of childcare and elder care, which could be in the form of tax benefits along with pay parity are some of the many strategies that can be implemented to provide a level playing field for AAW. Most importantly, it is also important for AAW to become educated about resources, networking and community and to support each other.

Awareness about Asian American women's lived experiences in society, and the effect of race, gender, and stereotypes embedded in U.S. culture and society affect their career journey. AAW from this study experienced inaccurate stereotype perceptions that were barriers to workplace advancement in addition to societal microaggressions that affected them on a small scale such as being overlooked in shops to macro aggressions, of overt harassment, name calling and threats in the workplace and society. AAW in this study acknowledge some stereotypes are cyclic and they need to also do their part as an Asian community. They also need to have the courage to speak up, collaborate and

advocate more through grass roots organizations and insist on support from Asian American men and non-Asians to support their career goals and ambitions. This would mean having support of other Asian women leaders. The path is not easy, and solutions are not so simple. It is a multifaceted strategic approach that will need diverse support from family, community and society as well as courageous AAW to step up to become leaders for their community and culture. These are all essential for initiating positive social change. Awareness is the starting point. Inclusion is a lifelong process, when diversity is expressed as a strength and belonging is understood as the agent for competitive advantage success, only then will the *Melting Pot America* envisioned by our founders will be materialized as a true United States of America, which is needed today. In addition, supporting AAW with education and resources regarding communication skills, advocacy and networking could significantly reduce the mental health risk and social services burden when depression, suicide, or domestic violence results from the unachieved potential for AAW in the workplace and society.

"If you are not intentionally including, you are accidentally excluding" ~ J. Gerstadt.

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Appendix A: Participant Guidelines

Ph.D. Doctoral Candidate seeks study participants

Greetings,

My name is Mele Kramer, and I am a doctoral student working with Dr. Amy Hakim at Walden University. I am conducting a research study for my dissertation exploring Asian American women seeking career advancement into leadership roles in the workplace (U.S. or U.S. Based Organizations). For this study, you are invited to describe your career and workplace experiences and career advancement journey.
This research's larger goal is to understand better how Asian American women experience and cope with career goals, advancement and how their racial, ethnic, gender, and stereotypes may affect their progress. I am emailing you to invite you to participate in this study. You can choose to participate in one or both parts of this study.

About the study - There are two parts to the study as follows:

- **Part 1** - Pre-Study Participant Qualifier Survey (5-15 minutes)

- **Part 2** - Choose one of the following:
  A. One 15-30-minute online survey (Click on Link A)
  B. One 45 minutes to 1 hour - Zoom or Skype recorded virtual interview (Click on Link B for an appointment)

* For the live interviews, you will be provided with a typed transcript of your interview to make corrections within 48 hours if needed. You may also request to speak with the researcher one more time after the interview to hear the researcher's interpretations and share your feedback (this is called member checking, and it takes 20-30 minutes, phone option available).

Volunteers must meet these requirements:

- Asian American women who identify as AAPI
- 18 – 65 years old
- Employed in a U.S. based organization

Participation is entirely voluntary, and your answers will be confidential. Feel free to skip any questions that you do not want to answer. If you indicate interest in participating in the follow-up interview, you will be audio and video recorded. You may review these recordings and request that all or any portion of the recordings be destroyed. The part 2 interview should take approximately 1 hour to complete.
To confidentially volunteer, click the following link: [insert survey link]
For completing the survey, eligible participants will be entered in a drawing for a chance to receive 1 in 10 gift $25 Amazon gift cards upon conclusion of the study. If you agree

to take part in the follow-up video/audio-recorded interview, you will be compensated $30 upon the interview conclusion via mobile payment service (PayPal, CashApp, etc.). If you choose to withdraw, no payment will be given.
If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me (mele.kramer@waldenu.edu) or Dr. Amy Hakim (Amy.hakim@waldenu.edu).

Thank you in advance for your time.

Mele Kramer – Ph.D. Candidate – Walden University

Appendix B: Signed Informed Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Researcher – Ph.D. Candidate - Mele Kramer
Walden University

You are invited to participate in a research study about Asian American (AAW) women seeking career advancement into leadership roles in the workplace. The researcher is inviting Asian American women who are leaders or seeking to promote into leadership positions, age 18-65, working in U.S. organizations to be in the study. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Mele Kramer, who is a Ph.D. Candidate at Walden University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the unique lived experiences of AAW leaders or those seeking leadership roles in U.S. organizations to gain a better understanding of how race, gender, stereotypes, or other reasons may affect career advancement in U.S. organizations. This researcher's larger goal is to understand better how Asian American women experience and cope with career goals, advancement and how their racial, ethnic, gender, and stereotypes may affect their progress.

Procedures:

About the study - There are two parts to the study as follows:

Part 1 - Pre-Study Participant Qualifier Survey (5-15 minutes)

Part 2 - Choose one of the following:

A. One 15-30-minute online survey (Click on Link A)
B. One 45 minutes to 1 hour - phone, or virtual interview (Click on Link B for an appointment)

Here are some sample questions:

1. What leadership characteristics or qualities do you admire in a leader and why?
2. How would you describe your leadership style?
3. How do you define advancement in the workplace?
4. What are the challenges you have experienced as it pertains to seeking promotion in the workplace?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Research should only be done with those who freely volunteer. So, everyone involved will respect your decision to join or not. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time. The researcher seeks 5-25 volunteers for this study. Please note that not all volunteers will be contacted to take part.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
Being in this study could involve some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as the stress of answering personal questions on workplace experiences. With the protections in place, this study would pose minimal risk to your wellbeing.

This study offers no direct benefits to individual volunteers. This study aims to benefit society by adding to the research data on organizational psychology, human resources, social change, and mental health of AAW and their career environments. It will also add to understanding how race, gender, and stereotypes are experienced in the workplace and how perceptions may affect Asian American women's advancement opportunities.

Payment:

For completing the survey, the first 10 eligible participants will receive a $10 courtesy gift card. Those who agree to participate in the interview will be compensated $25 gift card upon the interview conclusion. Gift cards will be delivered via email or U.S. mail.

Privacy:
The researcher is required to protect your privacy. Your identity will be kept anonymous, within the limits of the law. The researcher, Ms. Kramer, will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. The researcher will also not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. If the researcher were to share this dataset with another researcher in the future, the researcher is required to remove all names and identifying details before sharing; this would not involve another round of obtaining informed consent. Data will be kept secure by password protection, data encryption, use of codes in place of names, storing names (when necessary) separately from the data, discarding names (when possible), etc. Data will be kept for at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:
You can ask the researcher questions by email at mele.kramer@waldenu.edu and cell (908) 285-8109. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant or any negative parts of the study, you can call Walden University's Research Participant Advocate at 612-312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **08-26-21-0624225** and it expires on **August 25, 2022.**

You might wish to retain this consent form for your records. You may ask the researcher or Walden University for a copy at any time using the contact info above.

Obtaining Your Consent

If you feel you understand the study and wish to volunteer for an interview, recorded verbal consent will be requested prior to the interview commencing.

Appendix C: Participant Qualifier Questions

Part 1: CQR-M Participant Qualifier Questions (5-15 minutes)

Personal inclusion criteria & demographics questions link:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1BI8MFXdY2ONDq1PBoowkUj67BAxSusoKih7cnAay3c0/edit

1. I am an Asian American woman, between the ages of 18-65. __Yes __ No
2. As an AAW, what specific nationality do you identify with? For example: Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Taiwanese etc._____
3. Are you currently employed or have you been employed in a U.S. organization within the past five years? ____ Yes ____ No
4. What city and State is your place of employment? If you are a virtual worker, list your organization's City and State of the U.S. headquarter office. For example: Local office: San Mateo, CA or U.S. Headquarters: New York, NY.
5. What is your employment status?

   ____Employee - Non supervisory, non-management role

   ____Supervise - 5 or more employees and conduct performance evaluations for my team

   ____ Entrepreneur

   ____ Senior management or Executive Leadership role
6. If you are a supervisor or above, how many employees to you oversee?

   ___ 0-5 Employees

   ___ 5-20 Employees

___ I oversee a department of over 20 employees

___ I am an Entrepreneur, CEO/President with over 20 employees

___ I do not oversee employees

7. Are you seeking promotion within your career? If so, what level of leadership are you seeking?
    1. Manager
    2. Director/Executive Director
    3. V.P. and above
    4. Entrepreneur
    5. I do not wish to be a manager or leader
8. Thank you for completing the demographic qualifying section 1. Please choose which interview option you would like to participate in.
    1. Online Qualitative Survey - Estimated time commitment - 15-30 minutes
    2. Zoom Interview - Estimated time commitment - 45 minutes to 1 hour
    3. Phone Interview - Estimated time commitment - 45 to 1 hour
    4. 4. In person - TBD due to Pandemic restrictions

Go to Part 2 Links below:

Part 2 - Live Zoom or Phone Interview: Click on the link below to set up an interview appointment:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1_Kxn8BRa8hVCANAV97xTwuiYefBHvyE0dou1GgG16-0/edit

Thank you for your time and participation! Mele Kramer Ph.D. Candidate

Appendix D

Part 2: Semi-Structured Interviews.rev.9.11.21

Part 2: Interview questions. Estimated time commitment 45 – 60 minutes

Section 1 – Context Questions. The first set of questions are to share your background, and experience as it pertains to being an Asian American woman in America. Thank you for your participation.

1. As an Asian American woman, what cultural expectations, were raised with in your family and community?
2. What are 5 adjectives (words) that describe what it means to be an Asian American woman in the U.S? (For example, empowered, invisible, etc.)
3. Describe your community and environment and how it feels to be an Asian American woman in your community, society and workplace?
4. Who were the primary influencers and role models in your life and describe the qualities they inspire in you?
5. Please indicate your status
   - ○ Single - Never married
   - ○ Married
   - ○ Divorced
   - ○ Widowed
   - ○ Other

6. If you are married, is your spouse Asian (Identifies as AAPI).
   - ○ Yes
   - ○ No

7. Please indicate your age category
   - ○ 18-29
   - ○ 30-39

- 40-49
- 50-59
- 65+

8. What is the highest level of education you have completed? _____

9. Section 2 - Career Questions: This section asks questions regarding your feelings and experiences about your job and career goals. Confirm you will proceed by checking "Yes" below.

10. What industry are you in and what do you like best about your industry/occupation and why?

11. What do you like least and why?

12. What career development resources were available to you in your career?

(i.e.: mentoring, leadership development, networking etc.)

13. What leadership characteristics or qualities do you admire in a leader and why?

14.How do you define advancement in the workplace?

15. What has been your experience promoting into management/leadership roles? What were the barriers or breakthroughs you experienced during your career trajectory?

16. What are five adjectives (words) that describe how you wish others see you as a leader? Or - Describe your leadership style now?

17. Section 3 - Race, Gender and stereotypes questions about experiences in the workplace and community. This section asks questions about your feelings and experiences regarding your race, gender, and stereotypes as an Asian American woman. Confirm you will proceed by checking "Yes" below.

18.Tell me about a time you felt you were assumed to have certain characteristics or experiences based on race, gender or stereotype of being an Asian American female and how it felt?

19. What comes to mind when you think of Asians as leaders?

20. When you think of Asian women as leaders, what are the top 3 issues you feel AAW face in the workplace and in society?

21. Can you describe a time when you felt you were discriminated against in or out of the workplace because of your race, gender, ethnicity or stereotype? When and where did this occur and how did it feel?

22. Research shows, Asian American women have the lowest leadership representation across a variety of industries. Why do you think this is?

23. What message do you have for youth Asian American women youth wishing to become leaders?

24. What message do you have for the non-Asian population about Asian American women?

25. Is there anything else you would like to add? Is the something we did not address that you think is important to discuss?

*After the interview is concluded a "Thank You" note will be sent to the participants along with a nominal gift card for their time. Thank you for taking the time to complete this live interview.

Mele Kramer Ph.D. Candidate

Appendix E

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participants	Age/Category	Nationality	Industry	Region
P1	40-49	Chamorro/Micronesia	Healthcare	Honolulu, HI
P2	30-39	Taiwanese/American	Education	Greenwich, CT
P3	50-59	Chinese	Energy	Carrollton, TX
P4	18-29	Chinese	Psychology/Writing	Austin, TX
P5	50-59	Pilipino	Aerospace	Mesa, AZ
P6	50-59	Indian	Financial/Marketing	Mahwah, NJ
P7	30-39	Korean (Adoptee)	Retail/Real Estate	Plymouth, MN
P8	30-39	Taiwanese	Government	Fulton, MD
P9	18-29	Japanese/White	Psychology/Research	Portland, OR
P10	40-49	Korean	Advocacy	Los Angeles, CA
P11	50-59	Chinese	Government	New York, NY
P12	30-39	Korean (Adoptee)	Chemical/Research	Lexington, SC
P13	18-29	Chinese (Adoptee)	Education/Advocacy	Chicago, IL
P14	18-29	Thai/Korean/Chinese	Advocacy	Brooklyn, NY
P15	30-39	Korean	Law	Phoenix, AZ
P16	40-49	Korean (Adoptee)	Government	Honolulu, HI
P17	30-39	Taiwanese	Hi Tech/Manufacturing	Phoenix, AZ
P18	18-29	S. Asian/Indian	Audit/Accounting	Riverside, CA
P19	50-59	Korean	Advocacy	Atlanta, GA