Pushing Against Invisibility: Asian American Women's Leadership in Higher Music Education

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Abstract

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This critical hermeneutic phenomenological study investigates the lived experiences of Asian American women leaders in higher music education, in order to address their historic and ongoing underrepresentation in leadership roles. Asian Americans comprise a large percentage of students in schools of music and are represented at higher numbers among music faculty than their other minority counterparts, although they are still not at parity with the number of Asian American students. Despite their success as performers and teachers, Asian American faculty and students are subject to typecasting, racialized experiences, and xenophobic attitudes that are often ignored or unchallenged in higher music education institutions. These experiences, along with prevalent gender biases surrounding women leaders, have contributed to the "shockingly small" representation of Asian American women in leadership and administrative positions in music.

The purpose of this research is to discover essential factors that impact Asian American women's leadership opportunities by learning about their racialized and gendered experiences in higher music education. A hermeneutic phenomenological study is especially suited for incorporating the researcher's reflexivity while exploring nuances of the phenomenon and discovering commonalities between lived experiences. The study utilized Asian Critical Theory as the main conceptual framework. Lifeworld existentials, such as the lived space, lived body, lived time, and lived human relations of Asian American women, served as additional frameworks for data analysis and hermeneutic reflection. Data was collected from six Asian American women leaders in

higher music education in the form of conversational hermeneutic interviews and focus groups, then analyzed to detect larger phenomenological themes.

Findings indicate that Asian American women leaders experience dual conflicts in the workplace due to internal cultural influences and external influences of dominant male White ideals of leadership. They experience discrimination as members of the privileged oppressed, and their rich lived experiences are central to their development of community-based leadership values—among them, empathy, resilience, representing marginalized voices, and pragmatism. Asian American women leaders are driven by their missions to create space for belonging and inclusion in schools of music, and are committed to social justice around all forms of oppression.

Keywords: *Asian American women, music, leadership, higher education, intersectionality, phenomenology, Asian Critical Theory, privileged oppressed, social justice.*

Table of Contents

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

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To Asian American women and other readers who identify with qualifiers of this population – I hope that you feel seen in these narratives and encourage you to add to the conversation, both self-reflectively and in action. Know that small things can add up to sizable systemic differences, and continue to believe in our collective efforts of speaking truth to power.

Chapter I

Introduction

"The power of visibility can never be underestimated."

– Margaret Cho

For the last six decades, Asian Americans have experienced notable visibility in the field of music and higher music education in the U.S. (Wang, 2009; Kaneko, 2022; Yang, 2007; Yoshihara, 2007). Wang (2009) states that in certain music schools, they represent approximately 30 to 50 percent of the student body, and these numbers are even higher in distinguished preparatory programs such as Juilliard Pre-College. Statistics from the Higher Education Arts Data Services suggest that Asian Americans make up 5.7% of faculty in National Association of Schools of Music-accredited institutions, with Black and Latinx faculty representing 4.4% and 4.2% respectively (Higher Education Arts Data Services, 2021). The percentage of Asian Americans participating in music correspond with the proportion of their overall population in the U.S., which stands at 6.1% (U.S. Census, 2022).

Although these figures confirm Asian Americans' overall success in performing and teaching Western music, what is far less acknowledged are their racialized experiences in the field. Specifically, Asian Americans exist within "deeply entrenched notions of race, class, and cultural ownership in Western classical music" (Wang, 2005, p. 25-26), where aspects of their lived experiences continue to be overlooked and unrecognized as problematic. Throughout Western music history, Asian Americans have been racially positioned as an overrepresented and homogenous minority (Kaneko, 2022; Yang, 2007; Yoshihara, 2007; Hernandez, 2021; Koh, 2021; Wang, 2009), affecting their career trajectories across performance spaces and higher education academia.

The racist perceptions and xenophobic attitudes surrounding Asian Americans have partly contributed to a "shockingly small" representation of Asian Americans in leadership and administrative positions in music organizations and schools (Yoshihara, 2007, p. 4). Data reveals that the numbers of Asian Americans with executive power, including music directors of orchestras, administrators and directors of music organizations, departmental leaders and leadership staff at schools of music, and boards of directors of important cultural institutions, are vastly disproportionate to their participation levels in the field of music (Yoshihara, 2007; Wang, 2015; Koh, 2021; Hernandez, 2021).

Asian American women in particular have disclosed experiences of discrimination unique to the intersection of their race and gender. These biases, in turn, have resulted in their invisibility around leadership positions in the workforce (Mohr & Purdue-Vaughns, 2015; Chin, 2020; Tinkler et al., 2019; Kramer, 2020; Currier, 2022). Previous studies have confirmed that Asian American women are subject to structural barriers that impede aspects of their professional advancement, despite high levels of education and competence (Huang, 2021; Chin, 2016; Gee & Peck, 2017; Yu, 2020; Danico, 2014; Rosette et al., 2016; Mukkamala & Suyemoto, 2018; Chin, 2020; Kim & Zhao, 2014; Currier, 2022; Cai-Hurteau, 2021; Hyun, 2005; Kramer, 2020; Tinkler et al., 2019; Victorino, 2020). These race and gender biases, along with the negative preconceptions of Asian Americans in music, create a double bind for Asian American women looking to ascend to positions with decision-making power in music.

This qualitative critical phenomenological study will investigate the lived experiences of Asian American women who have acquired leadership roles in music and music education. The topic will be explored through the tradition of counter-narratives and analyzed through the critical framework of Asian Critical Theory. The goal of this study is to gain a more nuanced understanding

around similar experiences around their career paths and draw out core essences of the issue, ultimately providing clarity for music institutions of the ways they can support and nurture leadership opportunities for Asian American women.

Narrative

Being a first-generation Korean American meant that *biculturalism*, the negotiating of different cultures, played a major role in my family's experiences. My father was born in Seoul, South Korea, one year after the Korean War ended, which was a time of complete destitution for the country. Despite the tumultuous environment, my parents were fortunate to have relatively stable childhoods that were typical of youthful culture: movies, secret playdates, and surviving the notoriously competitive Korean educational system. The essences of childhood for my mother and father were defined by a sense of confidence, hope, and anticipation for the future. As teenagers, my parents—like many young individuals—were imbued with a feeling that they could accomplish anything they put their mind to. When I was around a year old, they decided to move to the U.S. to start new lives due to increasing difficulties in their home country.

Their immigration journey and the shock of being immersed in an unknown culture is a lived experience that is shared by almost all immigrants. The innate values from their prior lifeworld were palpably missing, creating an impression of a harsh, seemingly unwelcoming landscape. The food they tasted was different, the language they heard was different, the behaviors they witnessed were different. Everything became a challenging barrier as they worked to survive in a new place and care for the needs of the family. Without the assistive support of technology during that period, simple tasks such as navigating to grocery stores and conversing with a cashier became arduous tasks, often accompanied by both overt and subtle racist encounters. When asked how this changed as time went

on, my father responded: “It took a lot of time getting used to… my own self didn’t change, I was just assimilated by force. I didn’t have any choice but to follow the system.”

During this time of adaptation and assimilation to a new country, music remained an integral part of our home life. My mother had previously been involved in music back in her home country, where she started off with classical training on the piano but eventually gravitated toward rock and folk music. Against her parents’ wishes and heavily gendered notions of women in popular music, my mother learned how to play the electric guitar and participated in well-known rock bands in South Korea. Along with my father’s love for the arts, I was surrounded by music since I was born, and music lessons naturally occurred when my mother began teaching me simple melodies of children’s folk tunes. Family home videos show jerky reels of me at five years old, singing along in warbly vibrato to the various genres of music being played in my home.

When I started school and began to learn the English language, my mother experienced difficulties teaching music due to increasing language barriers and the challenges of explaining concepts of music theory in English. With that realization, I headed to my first American piano teacher at age eleven, with whom I built my initial musical identity. My childhood piano lessons were a constant thread in my life that continued until I reached adulthood. Memories of inadequacy, desire for achievement, and timidity are balanced with memories of elation during triumphant moments at local competitions, as well as the comforting familiarity of my piano teacher’s home.

Year later, I attended the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and embarked on a musical career in the Bay Area. As a newly graduated musician, I worked in a variety of capacities, including freelancing, private piano instruction, and non-profit arts administration. Eventually, I was serendipitously hired as a music teacher at a prestigious independent school and became a full-time educator in a predominantly white institution (PWI). The position was instrumental in helping me

hone my craft as a classroom music teacher and participating as a stakeholder within a large institutional environment. The generous resources at the school provided significant support in carrying out important curricular aspects of the music program.

Simultaneously, I also gained insight around the pervasive microaggressions and implicit biases that are present on a daily basis at a PWI. Stereotypes, often unintentional, abounded in my daily interactions with colleagues. “You’re so organized,” I was told through the years, “you’re incredibly hard-working.” As I worked long hours to prove my worth in meeting these expectations, I stood back and proudly agreed that the extra hours, labors, and thoughtful direction were successful in driving a declining music program back to a robust enrollment.

There eventually came a time, however, when I found myself sitting in administrative offices arguing for recognition of my leadership capabilities and directorial work. This recognition became an important symbol of visibility and acknowledgement in an environment where I often felt invisible. As I sat and waited for my voice to be acknowledged, I found myself asking the question: What exactly are the characteristics and specifications of a leader? I tried to analyze the complex set of factors that led me to this question.

I think about my own deeply rooted Confucian values, stemming from my childhood home, and conflicting ideals of leadership in my environment. I think about my acculturation in speech, mannerisms, and actions to dominant cultures, cultivated since I was a young girl. I think about my diligent efforts and how they might be perceived according to common stereotypes about Asian Americans. I think about my feeling of invisibility as an Asian American female during school-wide initiatives around diversity and equity. I think about the subliminal absence of belonging in a space that proudly asserts its progressiveness and inclusion. I wonder about my constant doubts on whether

my experiences are structural or personal—whether I should accept the circumstances as "good enough."

Experiencing these struggles as a music educator provides the psychological ground for my phenomenological interest around biases of Asian American women. In the midst of reflecting on my own lived experiences, I recovered an old journal entry in which I had uttered the words, "I feel so undervalued." This statement evokes the expression I share at the beginning of this chapter: "The power of visibility can never be underestimated." I seek to uncover both privileges and oppressions Asian American women experience, and learn more about how music schools understand and address these challenges with regard to their particular intersectionality. This curiosity and personal motivation became a catalyst for pursuing a doctorate degree and conducting this hermeneutic investigation. Understanding these issues feels critical to my future journey in music education as well as the journeys of other Asian American women aspiring to leadership.

Background and Rationale

Literature on biases against women leaders have largely focused on agentic deficiency (perceptions that women have minimal leadership potential) and agentic penalty (backlash for counter-stereotypical behavior) (Rosette et al., 2016). While these biases have been treated as comparable across racial groups, researchers have increasingly focused on the effects of racial stereotypes against agentic biases, and how the experiences of people with multiple subordinate group identities (e.g., ethnic minority women) affect intersectional invisibility, patterns of privilege, and marginalization ((Purdue-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Rosette et al., 2016; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; Wong et al., 2022; Toosi et al., 2019).

Limited scholarship exists on Asian American females and is largely focused on areas such as familial roles and relationships, cultural values, and attitudes and beliefs (Kawahara, 2007). Research on Asian American females and leadership is even more scarce, but has been studied in

different contexts. Studies have been conducted on work values and communication practices of East Asian American females (Kim, 2021), and the intersection of Asian American culture and gender on leadership (Kawahara, 2007). In education, researchers have explored beliefs and practices of Asian American women in school administrative roles (Liou & Liang, 2020; Villavicencio, 2021), pathways of leadership for Asian American women educators (Liang et al., 2018; Nyugen, 2020; Mella, 2012; Siv, 2022), and impacts of race and gender for Asian American female leadership in education (Dang, 2021; Cai-Hurteau, 2021; Isabela, 2018).

Although there is a growing number of scholars investigating Asian American women leadership, there is still a striking paucity in research examining their progress as faculty in higher education (Hune, 2011). Researchers investigating the topic have called attention to the "othering" Asian American women faculty experience in their PWIs (Hune, 2011; Currier, 2022; Yu, 2020; Chin, 2020), where the "other" is represented as anyone who differs in culture, gender, class, and/or race from the majority population (Han, 2012).

Stereotyped images of Asians in U.S. culture further contradict behaviors of Asian American women in higher education, which may cause student resistance and scrutiny towards their behaviors (Hune, 2011; Cai-Hurteau, 2021; Ono & Pham, 2009; Isabela, 2018; Han, 2012). One faculty member states: "A passive Asian female instructor may be considered as lacking competence and leadership, while an Asian female instructor with solid confidence can be viewed as confronting, bitchy, and unreasonable... for an Asian American woman, teaching in a predominantly White university is not a career full of joy" (Rong, 2002, as cited in Hune, 2011).

In higher music education, Asian American women are often surrounded by conflicting social, cultural, and political factors. Scholars have noted the unique crossroads between high numbers of representation and a homogenized image of Asian Americans in the classical music

industry, where stereotypes such as the "model minority myth" affect perceptions of Asian Americans' abilities to perform Western music authentically and musically (Kaneko, 2022; Yang, 2007; Yoshihara, 2007). The widespread participation of Asian Americans in music is cited as proof that they do not experience racial discrimination, but the disproportionately small number in leadership roles is often overlooked within the field (Yoshihara, 2007; Wang, 2015; Yang, 2009; Hernandez, 2021; Koh, 2021).

The intersection of these topics creates a need for research that examines the paths to leadership for Asian American women in music and higher music education. A phenomenological study is especially suited for exploring nuances and discovering commonalities between different lived experiences. Collaborative hermeneutic conversations with participants can provoke deeper reflexivity into individual lived experiences. Ultimately, this study aims to build awareness of a complex phenomenon that has remained stubbornly persistent and inadequately addressed through the counter-narratives of current Asian American women leaders.

Theoretical Frameworks

Asian Critical Theory (AsianCrit) will be used as the main conceptual framework in this research study. AsianCrit is a group-specific Critical Race Theory (CRT) movement that emerged to address the racialized experiences of people of Asian descent (Curammeng et al., 2017). AsianCrit builds on the theoretical foundations of CRT and illuminates the unique racialization of Asian Americans beyond the Black-White binary. These differentiated analyses can contribute to both existing scholarship on serious racial oppressions in Black communities, as well as simultaneously create a more comprehensive understanding of race and racialization for different groups (Iftikar & Museus, 2018). In education, scholars have applied AsianCrit to analyze how formal institutional and social practices perpetuate marginalization and racialization of Asian Americans, resulting in

their negative treatment in schools. AsianCrit also follows the tradition of counter-narratives in CRT by centering the individual life stories and narratives of participants.

As a secondary framework, I will utilize van Manen's (2016) notion of lifeworld existentials to analyze the lived experiences of participants and understand their interactions with their lifeworlds. The *lifeworld* is the structure and existence of our world that is experienced in our everyday situations and relations with others; as a result, we build meaning through these experiences through descriptions and interpretations. van Manen (2016) names four fundamental lifeworld themes as "existentials" (p. 101), which can be used as frameworks for reflection in the hermeneutic research process: the lived space (spatiality), lived body (corporeality), lived time (temporality), and lived human relation (relationality).

Lived space is unlike our common understanding of dimensional space, such as length, height, and width. As I reflect on the lived spaces of schools of music, I will be analyzing the physical and social constructs of the environments of participants and whether they are supportive or oppressive environments for Asian American women. The *lived body* pertains to Asian American women's racial and gender identities, as well as both inward and outward perceptions of physical presence and appearance in one's space.

Lived time is described as "subjective time… our temporal way of being in the world" and the "temporal dimensions of past, present, and future that constitute the horizons of a person's landscape" (van Manen, 2016, p. 104). The individual life histories and journeys behind participants' lived experiences will help illuminate different perspectives, and the ways they have shaped these women's values and missions as leaders and educators. Lastly, the *lived other*, or relations with others, analyzes the positionality of Asian American women within the greater community of their institutions, including their interactions with colleagues, administrative staff, and students. Through

a hermeneutic exploration of these four existential themes, I hope to develop an understanding of participants' lifeworlds and, ultimately, the meaning structures behind their shared experiences.

Core tenets of Asian American feminism serve as inspiration for this study. Asian American feminist thought is committed to solidarity among all women of color and acknowledges the particular privileges that some Asian Americans hold because of anti-Blackness. Asian American feminism is rooted in action and politics that push against model minority stereotypes pitting them against other minoritized people, particularly Black women; thus, Asian American feminism defies White supremacist expectations of Asian Americans (Player, 2021). Tenets of Asian American feminism include concepts of resiliency and strength, empowerment and resistance against White supremacist expectations, personal reflexivity, power relations, and connectedness (Kawahara, 2007; Player, 2021).

Plan of Research Overview

As a researcher, I will reflect and analyze data in the form of stories, anecdotes, and lived experiences of Asian American women leaders in music through conversational hermeneutic interviews (van Manen, 2016). A sample of six Asian American women will be selected using purposeful and snowball sampling, and there will be two rounds of virtual interviews with each participant. Follow-up interviews will probe for deeper and more clarified meanings of emergent themes, establishing the hermeneutic circle of phenomenology. A focus group with all of the participants will be conducted, and all notes and observations will be documented in researcher memos and a researcher journal. Data collection and analysis for the study will take place between August to December 2023.

Problem Statement

The central issue of this study addresses the essence of structural racism in higher music education that neglect Asian American women's leadership potential. There is a need for this research due to the gap in literature on workplace diversity with Asian Americans, as well as biases, such as xenophobia and the model minority myth, experienced by many Asian Americans in music. I hope to bring increased awareness and insight to this topic through descriptions and interpretations of the physical, emotional, and anecdotal experiences of Asian American women, bringing the phenomenon of their underrepresentation in leadership more fully into our presence.

Overarching Purpose

The purpose of this hermeneutic critical phenomenological study is to understand the underrepresentation of Asian American women in leadership positions in higher music education. By interviewing current Asian American women leaders in music, I will draw from their original experience for the purpose of grasping the essential meaning of leadership for Asian American women. This pursuit of phenomenological reflection is driven by my own need to clarify and explicate the meaning of leadership, and to document this for other Asian American women music educators.

Research Questions

The central question guiding the research is: What are the lived experiences of Asian American women in leadership roles within departments and schools of higher music education? In addition, the following sub-questions guide the interview protocol to develop deeper and richer understandings surrounding the central question:

1. What are formative decisions, experiences, or defining moments in your life that have led you to a career in music and leadership?

2. What kinds of challenges and biases have you experienced in higher music education that are tied to your race and gender?
3. What factors have had a positive impact on your career advancement in higher music education institutions?

Definition of Asian American Women

The term Asian American was first coined in 1968 by University of California, Berkeley students Emma Gee and Yuji Ichioka as a broad designation for people of Asian descent (Kambhampaty, 2020). Their goal was to replace common derogatory Asian terms and increase the visibility of activists of Asian descent during a time of heightening social movements, such as the Black Power and anti-war movements of the 1960's. Before the establishment of the term, Asians generally identified themselves with their various ethnic subgroups, but the presence of too many different voices proved ineffective in political demonstrations. Therefore, the term Asian American was created as a unifying banner for a group of people who shared similar immigrant experiences and sociocultural barriers. Students from Gee and Ichioka's student organization, the Asian American Political Alliance, were the first to publicly use the term, and it was later broadened in the 1990's to Asian Pacific Islander in the official United States Census Bureau.

Although the term Asian American was established as a means toward political unity, it is important to note that it has also contributed to obscuring the enormous diversity characterizing people belonging to the Asian diaspora. Kim & Zhao (2014) state that "Asian Americans are known to be ethnically heterogeneous in language, culture, immigration status, and even phenotype" (p. 638). In particular, the term is often used as a reference to East Asians, such as people of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean descent, and has caused marginalization and erasure of other ethnic groups, such as Southeast Asians and Indians, preventing them from receiving critical policy support (Zhou,

2021). Racist tropes such as the model minority myth further exacerbate harmful effects by erasing the real disparities among Asians under the umbrella term, Asian American.

Asian American women is the designated moniker used throughout this dissertation. The historical exclusion of racial and ethnic-minority women from major women's movements, as well as gender equality initiatives and scientific research spearheaded almost exclusively by White women, has centered White women's experiences as a universal prototype (Wong et al., 2022). Acknowledging its gender normative language and the reality that there is no one prototypical Asian American woman (Ligutom-Kimura, 2013), the term Asian American women is used to signify a social justice stance that can help unify the stories of their racialized and gendered lived experiences, and contribute new visions, new understandings, and new societal perspectives on a group often labeled as the "invisible minority" (Ligutom-Kimura, 2013; Tinkler et al., 2019; Danico, 2014; Oguntoyinbo, 2014; Yu, 2020; Currier, 2022).

Researcher Positionality

My positionality as the primary researcher is that of a first-generation Korean American woman with past and current music teaching experiences, interested in pursuing leadership positions in the future. My interest in this research is both personal and professional, and my lens as a researcher was influenced by my own lived experiences living with dominant narratives of Asian American women.

Because I will be conducting a hermeneutic study using my own subjective lens, I will be making my pre-understandings, beliefs, biases, assumptions, and theories explicit so that I can be better informed of the meaning structures of my own experiences (van Manen, 2016). This will help me orient myself to all stages of the research with a phenomenological reflexivity, so that I may reflect and collaborate with my participants on interpretations I reach with the data.

Summary

Chapter I introduced the qualitative critical phenomenological study on the lived experiences of Asian American women leaders in higher music education. The author's narrative illuminates the personal motivations guiding this exploration. The purpose of the study seeks to address common challenges faced by Asian American women in higher music education aspiring for leadership and offer a critical analysis of their pooled experiences.

The history of Asian Americans in music and the common stereotypes Asian American women experience in professional settings are among several factors that warrant closer examination. The next chapter will present a literature review that helps build contextual understanding surrounding the phenomenon.

Chapter II

Literature Review

"When we say 'Asian American' we are talking about so much more than can be fit in a single stereotype."

– Ijeoma Oluo

Bob Suzuki, President Emeritus of California State Polytechnic University-Pomona, expressed this sentiment about Asian American leaders in higher education: "We don't have to give up our culture to be good leaders. For so many years, Asian Americans haven't been willing to take the risk and try. At least, now, there's widespread recognition that there are too few [Asian American] leaders and that it's a problem" (Lum, 2005, p. 47). Suzuki, along with other higher education leaders, have lamented the dearth of Asian American presidents, vice presidents, and high-ranking administrators in academia (Lum, 2005; Han, 2012). Asian Americans in higher education are rarely seen as leaders and are not included on decision-making teams; further, they may leave faculty positions due to lack of mentoring as well as tenure and promotion (Stanley, 2006). Wayne State University Dean Frank H. Wu states that "the path to leadership is important for all Americans… we should care as a society because this is a nation where anyone can rise up" (Lum, 2005, p. 49).

Since 1960, Asian immigration into the United States increased from 491,000 to nearly 12.8 million by the year 2014. Before World War II, Asian Americans experienced a period of Asian Pacific exclusion, with immigration laws that prohibited and limited their entry into the U.S. (Coloma, 2006). Legislation from the 1880s to the 1930s, including The Immigration Act of 1882, barred "strangers from a different shore" and targeted people from Japan, Korea, India,

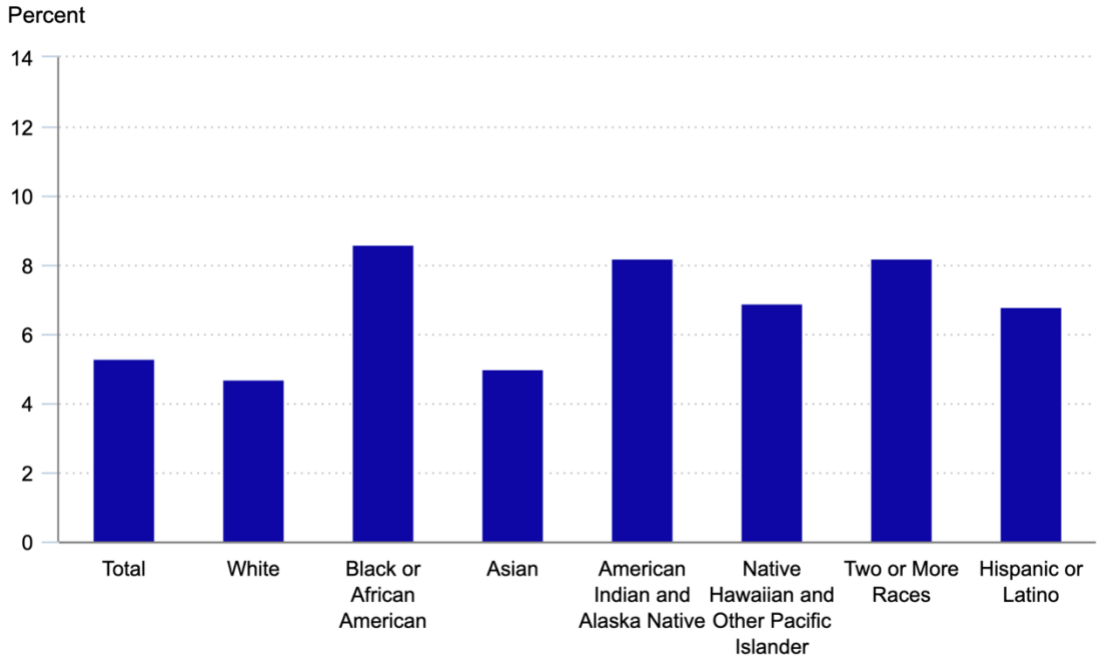
Southeast Asia, the Polynesian Islands, and the Philippines (Coloma, 2006). In addition to depicting Asian Americans as “unassimilable aliens” and a “yellow peril” to society (Wu, 2014), these exclusion acts reinforced existing segregation, such as Jim Crow policies, by further controlling racialized minority populations and protecting the cultural, economic, and political interests of Whites (Coloma, 2006).

Despite their marginalization and existence in a hostile climate, Asian Americans mobilized together to fight for their rights using the power of the legal system. Successful examples include winning the right to U.S. citizenship for those born in the country and for children of U.S. citizens, a right that was previously only open to immigrants of European descent. Passage of historic laws such as the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act further helped counter discriminatory immigration policies of non-Western ethnic groups, promoted immigration of Asians with higher educational and socioeconomic status, and led to increased participation from Asian immigrants in the labor market (Kim & Zhao, 2014).

By 2020, Asian Americans comprised 5.9% of the nation’s population at 22.6 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021), and Pew data estimates that nearly 1 in ten Americans will be of Asian descent by 2050 (Leung, 2020; Currier, 2022). In the labor market, Asian Americans experience overall lower unemployment rates among race and ethnicity groups in proportion to their population. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2023) reported that the overall national unemployment rate averaged 5.3%, with unemployment rates for Asians at 5%, Blacks and African Americans at 8.6%, Hispanic and Latinx at 6.8%, and American Indians and Alaska Natives at 8.2% (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Unemployment rates by race, 2021 annual average



Note. Adapted from *Unemployment rates by race and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 2021 annual averages*, by U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, 2023. In the public domain.

Although Asian Americans have higher employment-population ratios, as well as significant educational attainment, scholars have noted the chronic and poor representation of Asian Americans in management and leadership roles. The issue is further compounded when gender is factored in—data reveals that Asian American women are the most underrepresented group in leadership across various sectors, even compared to other women of color (Yu, 2020; Danico, 2014; Lum, 2005; Kawahara, 2013; Hyun, 2012; Kim & Zhao, 2014; Chin, 2016; Gee & Peck, 2017; Hune, 2006; Gündemir et al., 2019; Currier, 2022). This phenomenon is also

reflected in departments and schools of music, where little is known about the experiences of Asian American women working in higher music education.

This literature review examines the underrepresentation of Asian American women leadership in higher music education through three major thematic areas. The first section will address factors that scholars have identified as contributing to low representations of Asian American women in leadership. They are organized into six sub themes: a) the bamboo ceiling; b) cultural upbringing; c) stereotypes and biases; d) intersectionality of Asian American women; e) lack of mentorship; and f) diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives for Asian Americans.

The second section will focus on Asian Americans and their shared experiences in higher music education. It presents a brief history of the migration of Western music to Asia, followed by an analysis of commonplace perceptions of Asian Americans in contemporary schools of music (Koh, 2021; Hernandez, 2021; Yang, 2007; Wang, 2015; Yoshihara, 2007).

The final section will provide an overview of Asian Critical Theory (AsianCrit), the main theoretical framework that guides the analysis and findings of the study. AsianCrit is grounded in Critical Race Theory and utilizes counter-stories, narratives, and life histories of Asian Americans to counteract their invisibility in Asian American counter-majoritarian narratives. This section will describe the seven tenets of the framework and how they will be applied to understand the unique racialization of Asian American women.

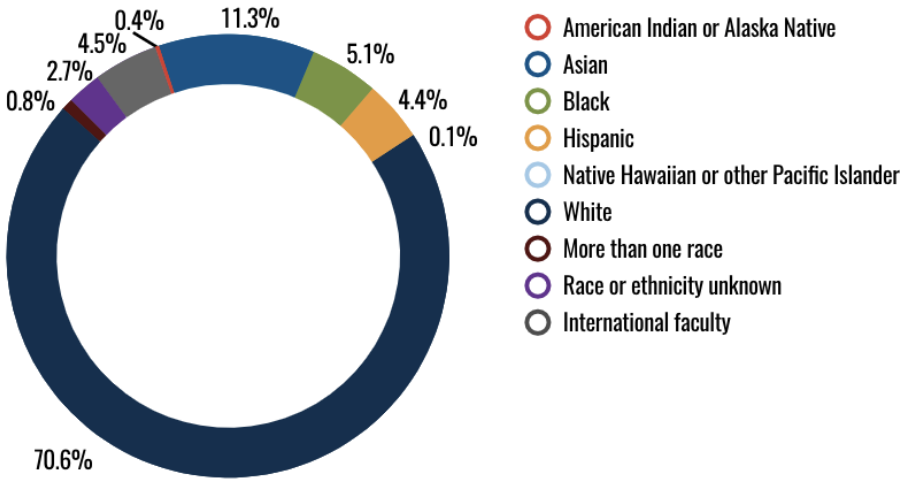
Asian Americans and Higher Education Leadership

In 2016, White males accounted for 58.2 percent of all college and university presidents, while women of color represented only 5 percent (Espinosa et al., 2019). Black women comprised 2.7 percent of all presidents, and Latinx women comprised approximately 0.9 percent. Asian American women accounted for just 0.5 percent of all college and university presidents,

with the majority presiding at community colleges, campuses in the University of Hawaii system, and for-profit degree-granting institutions (Espinosa et al., 2019; Oguntoyinbo, 2014; Lum, 2005). However, Asian Americans compose the second largest share of full-time faculty employed at both public and private higher education institutions. At public four-year institutions, Asian Americans comprise 11.3 percent of full-time faculty, with White faculty at 70.6 percent, Black faculty at 5.1 percent, and Latinx faculty at 4.4 percent (Espinosa et al., 2019). At private four-year institutions, Asian Americans comprise 9.2% of full-time faculty with White faculty at 75.5 percent, Black faculty at 5.3 percent, and Latinx faculty at 3.7 percent (see Figures 2 and 3).

Figure 2

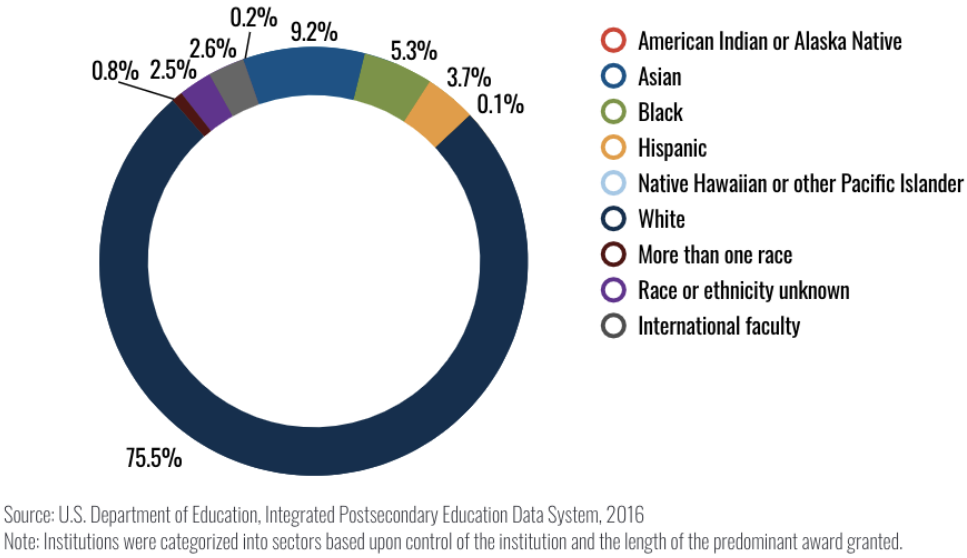
Full-Time Faculty at Public Four-Year Institutions, by Race and Ethnicity: 2016



Source: U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, 2016
Note: Institutions were categorized into sectors based upon control of the institution and the length of the predominant award granted.

Figure 3

Full-Time Faculty at Private Four-Year Institutions, by Race and Ethnicity: 2016



Source: U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, 2016
Note: Institutions were categorized into sectors based upon control of the institution and the length of the predominant award granted.

Note. Adapted from *Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System*, by U.S. Department of Education, 2016. In the public domain.

The numbers of Asian Americans in administrative or senior leadership roles in academia are "astonishingly low" considering they are common figures as students, graduate students, and faculty members. The low numbers indicate an inadequate pathway for Asian Americans often beginning at the dean level (Oguntoyinbo, 2014, p. 2; Lum, 2005; Chao & Ha, 2020). This systemic problem is exacerbated by racist, erroneous perceptions that Asians are content being hard workers but are not interested, or appear unfit, for leadership roles (Oguntoyinbo, 2014; Chin, 2016; Hyun, 2012; Gündemir et al., 2019; Chin, 2020; Currier, 2022; Gee & Peck, 2017). Systemic barriers such as outreach and recruitment practices that do not seek out or recruit people of color, as well as isolating climates in work settings that inhibit opportunities for

advancement, contribute to this issue (Yu, 2020; Hyun, 2005; Gee & Peck, 2016; Kawahara et al., 2013).

The Bamboo Ceiling

Ever since leadership strategist and author Jane Hyun introduced the term *bamboo ceiling* in 2005, this metaphorical concept has been cited for understanding the distinctive ways Asian Americans experience discrimination in their careers. The bamboo ceiling is similar to the *glass ceiling*, a term coined in 1986 by the Wall Street Journal to describe invisible barriers faced by ethnic minorities in rising to leadership roles in corporate America (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995).

Hyun's (2005) bamboo ceiling refers to a combination of cultural, organizational, and systemic barriers, including racial biases, denial of mentoring opportunities, and lack of management training, that result in Asian Americans not being selected for leadership positions (Hyun, 2005; Hyun, 2012; Kawahara et al., 2013; Oguntoyinbo, 2014; Currier, 2022). Asian Americans are subject to a racist rhetoric that pigeonhole them as "model subjects for middle managerial and technical positions." Simultaneously, systemic barriers are "structured by internal limitations meant to prevent Asian Americans from upsetting the existing racial order" (Wang, 2015, p. 42).

The bamboo ceiling also emphasizes the role of specific Asian cultural values working against Asian Americans navigating employment. Hyun (2005) states that "while biases in the workplace do exist, this [bamboo] ceiling is not always imposed by others… Asians should acknowledge that barriers could also stem from self-limiting cultural influences on their behavior, attitude, and performance in various social and professional settings" (Hyun, 2012, p. xx). She notes that this effect may be exacerbated due to non-Asian managers' limited

knowledge on common cultural values, such as those reflected in Confucianism, and the ways they can affect well-educated, English-proficient Asians working in the U.S.

Some Asian Americans may be less inclined to seek positions in upper management roles due to the conflict between their cultural values and Western ideals of leadership (Hyun 2005; Lum, 2005). Hyun (2012) states that it is important for leaders to invest the time and effort to "understand the cultural makeup of our team members, including an exploration of their deeply embedded cultural values" (p. 15). This cultural exploration by organizations can enable them to navigate global teams, identify people who can provide innovative thinking and solutions, and reach more diverse customers in the U.S. (Hyun, 2012).

In contrast, Sakamoto et al.'s (2006) study did not find strong evidence of a bamboo ceiling hypothesis, despite the assumption that Asian Americans frequently experience these barriers. Their findings suggest that standard views of this hypothesis may not be entirely applicable to native-born Asian Americans[1]; however, the author notes that bamboo ceilings against native-born Asian Americans might still be possible, provided that data can be improved around managerial authority or the attainment of upper-level managerial positions.

Kim and Sakamoto's (2010) subsequent study found that most Asian Americans, including the native born, are actually disadvantaged. Kim and Zhao's (2014) study found that Asian American women in the labor force, regardless of their age of immigration to the U.S., are disadvantaged in areas of unemployment and number of supervisees. They determined that contradictions in gross annual earnings are fully explained by their geographic location, level of education, the labor supply, and demographic variables.

[1] Sakamoto (2006) defines native-born Asian Americans as Asian immigrants who have been schooled in the U.S. and are not handicapped in terms of English language skills, knowledge of American society, or a lack of American educational credentials.

The bamboo ceiling has also been criticized as a term invoking an image of indestructibility, whereas a glass ceiling has the potential to be shattered (Danico, 2014). Lastly, a *middleman minority theory* has also been used as a rationale for limitations set on the advancement of Asian Americans in the workplace. This theory posits that "Asian Americans can occupy positions that place them above other minority groups as long as it does not pose a threat to the dominant group," and there is a "limit in advancement to jobs that garner authority or institutional power" (Danico, 2014, p. 410).

Cultural Upbringing

Although Asian Americans are often grouped as a pan-ethnic racial category, they make up a diverse assembly of ethno-national groups with significant cultural differences and variances in customs, languages, values, and beliefs. Each ethnic group within the Asian diaspora possesses distinct migration histories that span different time periods and historical contexts in U.S. history, resulting in unique and individualized lived experiences. It should be noted here that in addition to representing multiple nationalities, languages, cultures, and worldviews, there is also considerable variability in education, class, and acculturation levels. Therefore, the descriptions of cultural values in this section are largely constructed through my own cultural lens and primarily focus on East Asian tendencies that may not apply to various other ethnic Asian groups.

There are two main components of one's cultural upbringing that can act as determinants of success for Asian Americans in the U.S. labor market. The first is that many Asian cultures tend to emphasize the importance of education and individuals may not focus enough on soft management skills, such as building visibility through networking, learning to lead and socialize, and learning how to brand yourself (Hyun, 2005). The other component involves deeply

ingrained Confucian influences, present in many East and Southeast Asian cultures, that can create a unique bicultural experience for Asian Americans in the workplace (Hyun, 2005; Chin, 2016; Paik et. al, 2018).

Cultural differences can have both positive and negative impacts on job performance, as well as affect one's understanding of how others perceive their work. Chin (2020) states that Asian Americans, particularly women, have "internalized many of the tenets of the playbook because being obedient, respectful, compliant and listening to adults are behaviors that are valued at home just as they are at school" (p. 147). Dimensions such as charisma and assertiveness, commonly associated with dominant leadership styles, may have different semantic meanings within Asian cultures (Chin, 2020).

For example, confidence in Western culture may be described as being aggressive, charismatic, and promoting one's agenda in U.S. job markets. Contrarily, Asian Americans who are raised in homes with Confucian influences develop values that include modesty, showing deference to elders, conceding to authority, placing well-being of the group over individual needs, and refraining from questions or complaints (Yu, 2020; Hyun, 2005). Individuals who were raised in homes emphasizing politeness and modesty may feel uncomfortable with demonstrations of "conviction" or "passion," and may be overlooked during promotion discussions (Hyun, 2012; Leung, 2020).

Values of collectivism in Confucian culture facilitate Asian Americans to be "loyal and diligent workers, arriving early and staying late at work, emphasizing harmony and cooperation in interpersonal relationships and an expectation that others will do the right thing (i.e., their bosses will recognize their good work)" (Kawahara et al., 2013, p. 241; Gündemir et al., 2019). Asian American leaders frequently do not associate these values as passive or non-assertive.

Rather, these characteristics are viewed as important strategies for achieving leadership goals, all the while maintaining strong interpersonal relationships and protecting others from 'losing face,' another important value in Asian cultures (Kawahara et al., 2013). Gündemir et al. (2019) further states that during periods of organizational decline, Asian Americans can be effective leaders because they may bolster group harmony, as well as assist employees by making sure material resources are available for everyone during lean times.

Another example of cultural influence that may affect Asian Americans' career goals are parental expectations and definitions of success, often experienced in childhood. These expectations stem from beliefs that a good education should yield a stable profession narrowly encompassing fields such as engineering, medicine, or law (Hyun, 2005; Poon, 2014). However, many Asian Americans today "veer from parental expectations of becoming doctors and scientists in order to pursue their passions in the humanities and fight for civil rights, whether for APAs [Asian Pacific Americans] or other people of color. And they became leaders when they realize their voices and skills could impact institutional policy" (Lum, 2005, p. 48). Important insights for Asian Americans striving for career advancement include recognizing that dominant cultures may not be aware of cultural variances, understanding how cultural lenses affect behavior, searching for institutions that employ diverse leadership, and nurturing both dominant and cultural values.

Stereotypes and Biases

Scholars Cheng and Thatchenkery found that prior to 1996, there was a significant body of research on Asian American academic achievement, but zero research on Asian Americans and workplace diversity. They suggested that the lack of political power, together with Asian Americans' reputations as 'model minorities', led prominent academic figures to conclude this

research was not justifiable (Huang, 2021). More recently, approximately one percent of articles published in five of the most widely read peer-reviewed academic journals in the field of higher education have given specific attention to Asian American or Pacific Islander college students, and research on Asian American faculty and administration is equally sparse (Museus & Kiang, 2009). Yu (2020) states that this lack of inclusion in workplace discrimination research is an example of the invisibility of Asian Americans as a minority group.

Despite their ethnic, cultural, and historical differences, Asian Americans continue to be represented as a monolithic group, and have been historically typecast with a stereotype known as the *model minority myth*. First coined by sociologist William Petersen in the *New York Times* (Peterson, 1966), this pervasive stereotype asserts that all Asian Americans are model citizens and have achieved universal occupational and socioeconomic success; therefore, they are not considered disadvantaged minorities. This perception is supported by citing Asian Americans' achievement in areas such as grades, educational degrees, and entry into some of the best colleges and universities (Kawahara et al., 2013; Hune, 2011; Oguntoyinbo, 2014; Chao & Ha, 2020). However, a closer examination of the data reveals there is insufficient support for the allegation that Asian Americans have successfully overcome systemic barriers and possess equal or greater financial, social, and educational levels as White Americans (Chao & Ha, 2020).

A (2018) Pew Research Center study found that Asian Americans were the most economically divided racial and ethnic group in the U.S. (Kochhar & Cilluffo, 2018). Because the model minority myth serves as an umbrella label for all Asian Americans regardless of their individual backgrounds, histories, and socioeconomic differences, it discounts economic disparities and obscures or minimizes the struggles faced by Asian Americans living below the federal poverty threshold (Azhar et al., 2021). It erases the reality of Asian Americans who arrive

to the U.S. as refugees, possess varying levels of education, and come from countries that are less economically developed than others.

Furthermore, the perception of Asian Americans as model minorities has led to "a sense that such groups pose a threat to other groups in terms of educational, economic, and political opportunities, and that such a sense of realistic threat may lead to negative attitudes and emotions" (Maddux et al., 2008, p. 86). Kawahara et al. (2013) states that "not only does the model minority stereotype ignore diversity among various Asian cultures, it erases racism towards Asian Americans, is harmful to the struggles for racial equality among other underrepresented groups, and positions Asians as perpetual foreigners" (Kawahara, 2013, p. 13; Yoon, 2022).

Positioning Asian Americans as a model minority involves larger political goals of perpetuating anti-Blackness and silencing other racial minorities, maintaining the dominant structure of race and power relations (Player, 2021). The model minority myth also coexists with biases of Asian Americans as having low dominance, being inarticulate in the English language, and possessing too much technical skill, rather than sociability typical of organizational leaders (Gündemir et al., 2019; Currier, 2022; Sakamoto et al., 2006).

The biases surrounding Asians portray them as being reserved, shy, passive, traditional, and placing less value on a leisurely life (implying deficiency in social skills), the very opposite of how mainstream America perceives executive leaders. This likely impacts both Asian men and women to remain below executive parity, because "Asian men are not masculine enough and Asian women are too feminine, submissive, or subservient" (Yu, 2020, p. 160; Kawahara et al., 2013; Hyun, 2005; Currier, 2022). The positive stereotypes associated with the model minority

myth, such as being hard-working, are nevertheless stereotypes, and as with any oversimplification, individuals get lost in the generality (Leung, 2020).

Asian Americans, for a variety of complex reasons, have been protected from some of the most horrific forms of racism in the U.S. Due to their uneven relationship between racial minority status, socioeconomic class, and representation in higher education as well as fields such as Western classical music, Asian Americans are often regarded as honorary Whites and seen as exempt from all impacts of racism (Wang, 2015). This perception, along with pan-ethnic views of Asian Americans, forms the basis for why Asian Americans are frequently left out of diversity initiatives in higher education. Students of Asian descent are prevented from seeking and receiving critical support because they are typically not treated as an underrepresented minority by federal agencies such as the National Science Foundation (Currier, 2022). Chin (2020) states: “This may be part of the reason why many groups, minority or other, don’t understand that Asian Americans might be subject to discrimination and hence eligible for help when it comes to combating discrimination” (Chin, 2020, p. 172).

Intersectionality of Asian American Women

Kimberle Crenshaw coined the term *intersectionality* in 1989 to explain the ways experiences change and vary as a result of memberships in different social categories, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, or social class (Crenshaw, 1991). Mohr and Purdue-Vaughns’ (2015) analysis of studies on women of color reported that most leaders who identify as women of color feel misunderstood and invisible, often experiencing issues that go beyond conscious, explicit discrimination.

The researchers state that “societal stereotypes of Black, Hispanic, and Asian American women differ, and the contexts in which these stereotypes arise also differ. Consideration of the

particular nature of these stereotypes will be important to advance future research on discrimination against women of color" (p. 392). Therefore, it is important to understand how categories, such as race, interact with other categories of identity and create unique preconceived judgments about a group of people (Mohr & Purdue-Vaughns, 2015).

When it comes to Asian American women, Yoon (2022) speaks to the constant presence of biases and microaggressions in work settings. Stereotypes are often masked as attributes of good qualities, and any perceived negative impacts are often dismissed as a result of hypersensitivity. The occurrences of racial microaggressions in Asian Americans' day to day lives get compounded into damaging effects in the workplace (Yoon, 2022), and impact Asian American women attempting to establish authority and credibility as leaders.

Many Asian American women are doubly disadvantaged due to being subjected to both gender and racial stereotypes of being submissive. This results in a *double jeopardy* that stereotypes them as doubly submissive individuals (Toosi et al., 2019; Chin, 2020; Tinkler et al., 2019; Kramer, 2020; Currier, 2022; Chao & Ha, 2020). Assuming Whiteness as the neutral construct, Asian American women's prescriptive stereotypes of deference and femininity are seen as contradictory to ideals of White, masculine leadership (Tinkler et al., 2019; Mukkamala & Suyemoto, 2018; Hune, 2006; Hune, 2011; Victorino, 2020; Currier, 2022; Toosi et al., 2019). The combination of being perceived as high in competence but low in dominance has critical implications for their leadership opportunities, and results in negative consequences when they behave inconsistently with their assigned stereotypes (Rosette et al., 2016; Currier, 2022; Gee & Peck, 2017; Cai-Hurteau, 2021; Toosi et al., 2019).

Asian American women face this double bind most heavily in positions of authority. They are perceived as being "docile colleagues who will not rock the boat and will readily

comply with whatever demands are made of them" (Currier, 2022, p. 206). When they behave authoritatively and display dominant behavior, they violate their gender-stereotypical expectations of being passive and demure. This may shape perceptions of them as being less likable, conniving, ruthless, and self-serving women (Ono & Pham, 2009; Tinkler et al., 2019; Currier, 2022; Cai-Hurteau, 2021; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010).

Scholars have documented the phenomenon of a *dominance penalty*, where Asian American women face backlash when they break their prescriptive stereotypes by acting authoritatively (Rosette et al., 2016; Tinkler et al., 2019; Gündemir et al., 2019; Toosi et al., 2019). The penalties for speaking up often come with tone policing, a form of silencing that is common for Asian American women (Nguyen, 2016). Resisting negative stereotypes and perceptions can also affect Asian American women leaders' motivation and confidence, and may further reinforce their image of leadership incapability (Isabela, 2018).

Contradictory research findings by Tinkler et al. (2019) indicate that ironically, although Asian American women face dominance penalties, they may get away with behaving authoritatively due to their relative invisibility and lesser threat to gender status hierarchies, whereas White women leaders trigger backlash more automatically. However, because of the intersectional invisibility, Tinkler et al. (2019) states that there is a likelihood evaluators may not recall details of Asian American women's contributions and behaviors. Evaluations then rely on stereotypes as a shortcut for assessing performance. Tinkler et al. (2019) also state:

> Asian American women's invisibility is not because they do not fit with the category 'Asian' but because they are non-prototypical on gender… the category 'Asian' is one in which stereotypes overlap with being relatively invisible (e.g., deferential, agreeable, and foreign). The unusual predicament for Asian Americans is that both men and women

> suffer from a relative invisibility that comes from being perceived as feminine and nonaggressive. (p. 3)

Positive stereotypes associated with Asian American women include qualities such as being hardworking and easy to get along with (Cai-Hurteau, 2021; Toosi et al., 2019), being technically proficient (Kramer, 2020; Toosi et al., 2019), and being warm, interpersonal professionals (Gündemir et al., 2019). Asian American women enjoy a privileged reputation of "getting the job done" or holding a "highly credible position in their profession" (Kawahara et al., 2013, p. 244). They are also seen as less risky hires because of perceptions that they are easy to get along with.

In a study by Hanasono et al. (2020), the researcher revealed that many women of color are eager to pursue leadership roles, with Asian American females representing the second highest percentage of participants (59.4%) who desire to ascend to academic leadership. This data provides evidence that despite negative perceptions around their leadership potential, Asian American women are eager to break through the bamboo ceiling and achieve their leadership potential, regardless of the various stereotypes and biases they encounter in their careers.

Lack of Mentorship

Asian American women are rarely seen as pioneers or notable figures, and often lack positive images and stories in the media (Ono & Pham, 2009; Chin, 2020). In addition to limited leadership development opportunities, there are few Asian American female role models present early on to help aspiring women rise to ranks of leadership. Chin (2016) found that Asian Americans who rose to top levels possessed incredible people and leadership skills. Because social skills, such as building relationships with executives and learning how to brand yourself, are necessary for entering the leadership pipeline, refining these skills via interactions with

mentors is key for achieving leadership (Chin, 2016; Oguntoyinbo, 2014; Hyun, 2012; Currier, 2022). Support and mentoring from family and friends, in addition to work colleagues, is essential to the success of Asian American women leaders (Kawahara et al., 2013).

Kawahara et al. (2013) states that "mentorship also seems to assist with the areas of actual skill performance such as assertiveness, public speaking, and interpersonal fluency that may be counter to the cultural values of collectivism (placing group interest before individual needs), harmony, respect of hierarchy of authority, and emotional constraint" (p. 246). This is significant, because adult children were often the first ones to work in a professional setting in the U.S., and parents of Asian Americans were rarely able to introduce their children to mentors that could assist with these areas of skill performance (Chin, 2016).

Asian American women in particular experience a paucity of mentors from their own identity group and are left feeling tokenized and isolated, which in turn can impact promotion opportunities. Currier (2022) speaks about her experiences as a higher education faculty member:

> Most of your colleagues cannot relate and do not understand, not because they don't want to, but because they do not have similar experiences. They simply tell you it will get better over time once you establish yourself, or these are just a few isolated cases so it will not impact your tenure or promotion. You have few or no other APA [Asian Pacific American] women in your institution to look for mentorship or guidance on teaching. (p. 209)

Minoritized groups also take on additional service responsibilities in academia, including mentoring Asian American students and colleagues in their institutions, and serving on committees within and outside of their home institutions on Asian American issues (Currier,

2022). These extra efforts may result in *racial battle fatigue*, a well-documented phenomenon experienced by minoritized individuals describing the exhaustion from constant stereotyping, microaggressions, and discrimination endured at predominantly White institutions.

There are support groups for Asian Americans that provide avenues for mentorship. The Asian Pacific Americans in Higher Education and Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics, Inc. is an organization that focuses on the advancement of qualified Asian American faculty and administrators in the academy (Oguntoyinbo, 2014). Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics (LEAPs), a national nonprofit that aims to increase empowerment for Asian Americans, offers a four-day higher education seminar. Approximately 40 percent of LEAPs participants are college administrators, managers and directors, while the rest are faculty and staff. Asian American faculty can also seek out mentors at other institutions who may be able to provide advice and perspectives on one's home institution (Currier, 2022). Coastline Community College President Ding-Jo H. Currie emphasizes the importance of expanding morale through mentorship: "In my position now, as I meet Asian American women faculty at different schools, I can see in their eyes and hear in their voices how proud they are that we–slowly–are rising to the top" (Oguntoyinbo, 2014, p. 48).

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for Asian Americans

Asian Americans have testified to the impact of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs in countering racial and sexual discrimination. Research shows DEI programs that "look to race, gender, sexual identity, and/or the differently abled as factors for inclusion make a difference in who gets to the top" (Chin, 2016). Structural solutions, such as recruitment, mentoring/sponsoring, fellowships, and management training and development programs, can

lead to accountability and ensure that women and minoritized groups, including Asian Americans, move up in their organizations and shatter the bamboo ceiling (Chin, 2020).

In some instances, Asian Americans have avoided engaging with DEI initiatives and programs, despite the potential benefits. They expressed that they did not want to be associated with the negative impression that they "might have gotten a leg up because of affirmative action or diversity initiatives" (Chin, 2016). Serving on DEI committees has also been documented to be time-consuming and detracting from essential work needed for promotions, such as focusing on one's academic writing and publishing (Currier, 2022).

Most leadership training programs emphasize a "fix the women, fix the minorities" approach to developing their diverse talent, instead of learning to work with various cultural expressions of leadership (Hyun, 2012, p. 16). Infusing cultural awareness into all levels, particularly at the middle management levels, can contribute to more diverse pathways, as well as encourage teams of people to learn about how to lead and motivate professionals from different backgrounds (Hyun, 2012). Currier (2022) reflects on school-wide diversity initiatives in academia:

> At the very basic level, we must work to train, recruit, retain, and promote diverse faculty to make a difference in the academy as a whole. While it is easy to get mired in university-wide efforts to diversify the student body, to add more courses or studies of diversity to our core curriculums, and to recruit more faculty of color, these efforts often target "underrepresented" groups, where APAs [Asian Pacific Americans] again are mistakenly excluded. (p. 214)

Asian Americans in Departments and Schools of Music

According to leading scholars of Asian Americans in Western classical music, Asian and Asian American musicians experience a unique marginalization that is shaped by both high representation and a homogenized image (Kaneko, 2022; Yang, 2007; Wang, 2015). In the sections below, I draw on research by key scholars of Asian Americans in music to present a brief description of the migration of Western music to Asia, followed by a discussion of commonly encountered experiences by Asian American musicians. Departments and traditional schools of music serve as a training ground for many of the leading higher music educators today and hosts the highest concentration of Asian Americans; therefore, this section concentrates specifically on the experiences of Western classical music education, rather than including a diverse array of genres and ensembles that are also offered in music education programs.

Brief History of Western Music in Asia

The introduction of Western European music to Asia is embedded within a larger movement of global politics, Western imperialism, and the pursuit of modernization. In particular, East Asian countries share a similar experience of how Western music was introduced to their countries. European and Japanese colonization, as well as World War II, shaped the ways in which Westernization destabilized long-established cultural practices (Yang, 2007). The migration of Western music can best be traced through the histories of Japan, China, and Korea, three countries prevalent in Western music education.

Western music first became established in Japan in the second half of the nineteenth century. Partly inspired by desires to become equal with Western militaries and technologies, the nation went through a period of vigorous modernization efforts (Yang, 2007; Wang, 2015). Institutions such as the military, churches, and public schools brought Western-style music through the exposure of Western military bands, European church music, and the expansion of

pedagogical music programs based on Western styles. In turn, the government of Japan promoted and institutionalized Western music education as part of the country's modernization, framing their efforts with Western nationalist ideologies (Yang, 2007; Yoshihara, 2007; Wang, 2015).

The introduction of Western ideals in these institutions led to uprooting of traditional indigenous cultural practices in different countries. Through Japanese colonization in other parts of Asia, including Taiwan, Korea, and parts of mainland China, similar modernization efforts were established, replacing much of these countries' indigenous musical traditions in the process (Yang, 2007). During the empire-building period in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Western music began to transform from a symbol of modernization into a tool for political and cultural independence, and for promoting Asian cultural and political values. Sociopolitical movements such as the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) banned the study and performance of European composers due to their association with foreign influences (Wang, 2015).

Beginning from the mid-twentieth century, Western music ceased to function as a political tool, and instead became associated with an expanding middle class and bourgeois ideals of refinement, Western high culture, and transnational cultural capital (Yang, 2007; Yoshihara, 2007; Wang, 2015). Newly established orchestras and prominent Asian artists, such as violinists Mitsuko Uchida and Kyung-Wha Chung, began appearing on international stages to great acclaim (Yang, 2007).

In particular, the piano grew in popularity, due to Japanese mass manufacturers such as Yamaha and Kawai. The increasing accessibility of upright acoustic pianos in middle class homes led to newfound levels of instrumental training and development in Asian countries

(Yang, 2007). Playing the piano became increasingly commonplace, and was almost regarded as a prerequisite activity for children of middle- and upper-middle-class families. For many of these families, classical music was seen as a form of cultural capital broadly linked to both individual and national socioeconomic gains (Wang, 2015).

Due to the new cultural prestige ascribed to Western music, Asian classical musicians began traveling to the United States to continue their musical training, increasing in numbers after critical U.S. immigration policies of the postwar era. This "reverse flow of music" (Yoshihara, 2007, p. 47) from Asia to the West gained traction through avenues such as instrument sales, musicians, and musical training. Japanese, Korean, and Chinese piano manufacturers began to gain prominence in the international piano market. The presence of Asian performers and conductors were increasingly seen on prestigious international stages. East Asian musicians were winning prizes at world-renowned competitions, to the great pride of their countries (Yang, 2007). The globalization of music methods, such as the renowned Suzuki method from Japan, also made an immensely successful impact on classical music. Yoshihara (2007) writes:

> … people with little or no background in Western culture could come to own a piece of symbolic and cultural class identity. The reverse flow of music, musical instruments, and musicians from Asia to the West from the 1960s onward further underscored the process of democratization and popularization of classical music. (p. 47-48)

Asian Americans in Western Classical Music Education

Western musical tradition has long proclaimed a culture of colorblindness and universalism transcending discussions of race, politics, and power (Yoon, 2022; Wang, 2015; Yoshihara, 2007; Wang, 2005; Yang, 2007; Kramer, 2018). The violinist Isaac Stern, in the

Oscar-winning documentary *From Mao to Mozart: Isaac Stern in China* (Lerner, 1979), states that great art is purely aesthetic, independent of any external social structures, and is "important for creating a civilized society" (Yang, 2007, p. 8).

Asian Americans represent a paradoxical identity in this tradition. The substantial participation of Asian Americans in music, starting from childhood lessons, have made them a normative presence in music schools. Since the early 2000s, music conservatories in the U.S. have actively recruited students from East Asian countries to fill their schools (Wang, 2015) and opened satellite schools in Asian cities (Hayes, 2020). Through these initiatives, there are large numbers of Asian Americans achieving success in classical music education compared to that of other minoritized groups, as well as a rising prominence of internationally acclaimed Asian musicians such as Sarah Chang, Mitsuko Uchida, and Yuja Wang. When looking at the impacts of the model minority myth in music, so-called "Asian" values of obedience and diligence arguably correspond with the demands of musical training, which involve long hours of practice and a willingness to follow the expert/apprentice model (Wang, 2015).

The presence and accomplishment of Asian Americans in Western music is often cited as proof that racism does not exist for this identity group in the field. However, Asian Americans have historically been positioned as racially and culturally different in higher music education institutions. They are perceived as being both overrepresented and indifferentiable, stripping them of their "distinctiveness and originality, the very traits prized in a musician" (Wang, 2015, p. 26, Wang, 2005; Hernandez, 2021). There are subtle and overt reminders of their "foreignness," musical inauthenticity, and emotive capabilities, and words such as subhuman, conformist, automatic, emotionless, and invasion are used to describe the increasing number of Asian Americans in music education (Wang, 2015; Yoshihara, 2007).

The belief that particular musical forms are the cultural property of certain racial and ethnic groups, and that certain elements like passion, expressiveness, and individuality cannot be taught, have perpetuated the racial trope of Asian Americans as technical but unfeeling participants in music (Wang, 2015; Koh, 2021; Hernandez, 2021). Indeed, in *From Mao to Mozart,* Stern states that "the Chinese are not accustomed to playing with passion and color… They have not had the experience of living with Western music for hundreds of years" (Wang, 2015, p. 37). These proclamations of the inherent shortcomings of a racial or ethnic group can impact how audiences receive the performance of Asian musicians, as well as create assumptions of their motivations for participating in Western music (Wang, 2015).

A 1983 issue of *Time* magazine illustrates an example of the narrative of Asian musical inauthenticity, drawing a parallel between Japan's thriving classical music scene and their growing technological industry. Journalist Michael Walsh compares the efficiency of assembly-lines producing electronic goods to photos of groups of violin students fiddling in robotic unison, implying that within a culture of imitation, the "technician" can only reach a certain level of success (Wang, 2015, p. 38). Yang essentializes the problem with this narrative: "This critical trope casts Asians on the other side of a binary opposition vis-a-vis Westerners: Asians have the technique, Westerners have the heart, the soul" (Yang, 2007, p. 14). Although Asian Americans have been highly successful in classical music for over a century, the idea that it can only be the authentic product of Europeans still prevails today.

Despite its claims of transcendence from social concerns, Western classical music is a perpetrator of the model minority myth. Furthermore, there exists an environment of xenophobia and scapegoating for Asians through exaggerated narratives and evocations of their invasion in musical spaces (Wang, 2015; Yoshihara, 2007; Koh, 2021; Hernandez, 2021). The explanation

for the substantial numbers of Asian Americans in higher music education is explained through model minority traits such as diligence, obedience, and respect for authority, while diminishing other qualities such as creativity, artistry, and love of music (Wang, 2015). The manifestation of the model minority myth in music thwarted the potential of many Asian Americans from reaching high-level ranks in music, where imagination and originality are considered essential.

The idea of Asian Americans as racial minorities also lies in conflict with the widespread perceptions of privilege and upward mobility achieved by this pan-ethnic group (Wang, 2005). Acclaimed Korean American violinist Jennifer Koh writes:

> It is highly misleading to say that Asian Americans are overrepresented in what remains an overwhelmingly white and male field… In my nearly 30-year career, I have seen not even a handful of ethnic Asians—much less Asian American women—ascend to executive or leadership positions. (Koh, 2021)

Koh (2021) is stressing that, although the percentage of Asian American students in higher music education is consistent with their overall population in the U.S., the percentage of those in decision-making roles in music is significantly lower (Koh, 2021; Hernandez, 2021; Yoshihara, 2007). A study by the League of American Orchestras (2016) also shows Asian American music directors and conductors experienced a decline from 2012 to 2016, with a momentary increase starting in the year 2014. The study findings indicate that there are fewer numbers of Asian American music directors and conductors in 2016 compared to the start of their data collection in 2006.

Asian Americans enrolled in music schools have mixed reactions around these shared experiences. Some musicians, stemming from historic societal power imbalances, have agreed to and supported the premise that Asian performers can only “recreate Western creative genius”

(Yang, 2007, p.16). Others had developed a musical identity that preceded their understanding of their racial identity (Yoshihara, 2007). Yoshihara (2007) writes: "Asian musicians are rarely conscious of their Asian identity when performing music but are made aware of it in the social aspects of their lives as musicians" (p. 91).

For many musicians, the long hours of practice, prioritizing music above all else, and engaging in depoliticized schools of music have led to racial identity as more of a descriptive category rather than one used for shared social, political, or cultural purposes (Yoshihara, 2007). Unlike Asian Americans in other fields, activism is generally not a predominant concern in music unless it is tied to musical endeavors. In addition, many musicians claim they do not feel the effects of racial marginalization or the need to organize around their racial identity, because music schools experience high volumes of Asian and Asian American students.

A study by Yang (2007) at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music contradicts these claims by reporting that although international students generally did not consider race to be a factor, Asian Americans acknowledged that race affected their musical experiences. The experiences of Asian Americans in music also varied depending on their upbringing, parental backgrounds, and meanings of cultural identity for each individual. In music, as well as society, the tendency to see this group as a monolith reflects mainstream Euro-American beliefs that have historically ignored educational, cultural, and economic differences among Asian people (Yoshihara, 2007, p. 5).

The differences in Asian Americans' attitudes can also be seen in the way they approach their musical practice. Even as classical music and instruments continue to be reserved as "White property" (Kajikawa, 2019), the activity of learning classical music has been adopted by some musicians as a way to preserve an "Asian identity within mainstream America," because

achieving success at Western music equates to maintaining their "Asian" cultural and family values (Wang, 2015, p. 52). Asian immigrant parents strive to make choices that bring their children in closer contact with both mainstream and native cultures, and Western music "provides a stable cultural link between their native and host countries as new immigrants" (Yang, 2007, p. 12).

For other musicians, music was used as a means to "rethink and redefine categories, allowing them to live beyond the identities prescribed by dominant society" (Yoshihara, 2007, p. 7). Yet for others, classical music is seen as a path to upward social mobility and distinction. Music as cultural capital is levied to push back against systemic structures that make "class demotion and invisibility a constant reality as racialized immigrants living in the United States" (Wang, 2015, p. 62; Yang, 2007).

The combination of Asian Americans' participation in music, their distinctive racialized position, and their historic underrepresentation in positions of power warrants a deeper investigation into how various factors impact their careers in higher music education. Within this group, the intersection of gender can result in greater marginalization around leadership opportunities. Examining lived experiences of Asian American women currently in leadership roles can offer valuable insights into their experiences with barriers and factors that helped them achieve professional success.

Asian Critical Theory

Critical frameworks can assist in understanding the ways that racial oppression affect various communities of people. Asian Critical Theory (AsianCrit) is a theoretical framework tailored to analyze the impact of racism specific to Asian American experiences (Iftikar & Museus, 2014). First introduced by Robert Chang (1993) as a framework for analyzing Asian

American legal scholarship, it has been widely applied to understand the challenges faced by Asian Americans in education (Iftikar & Museus, 2018). The theory's tenets are closely derived from Critical Race Theory (CRT) and draws from theoretical foundations that have been developed by prominent Black scholars and theorists. Ultimately, AsianCrit serves as a way to interrogate anti-Asian racism and its relationship with anti-Blackness and settler colonialism (Curammeng, Buenavista, & Cariaga, 2017).

CRT has been used to examine how White supremacy and racism are a fundamental part of society shaping the lives of people of color. Although CRT has been successful in centering marginalized voices and is general enough to be applied to various communities of color, it has been acknowledged that scholarship is largely focused on Black and White populations, and experiences limitations when analyzing the unique racialized experiences of different identity groups. Therefore, tailored frameworks that incorporate other racial identities have emerged to address these difficulties, such as frameworks designed for Latina/os (LatCrit), Indigenous Americans (TribalCrit), and Asian Americans (AsianCrit).

AsianCrit is firmly situated in CRT but draws on Asian scholarship to provide more nuanced insights into the specific experiences, issues, and histories of Asian Americans. Liu (2009) states that "CRT and AsianCrit frameworks foster research that considers the centrality of race and racism, along with gender and class from individual and subjective perspectives" (p. 4). AsianCrit is made up of seven interrelated tenets that can be used to critically analyze the lived experiences of Asian Americans working in higher education. The seven tenets are briefly outlined below:

1. *Asianization* refers to the racialization process of being 'Asian', arising from nativistic racist ideals produced by White supremacy. Asianization includes racialized tropes such

as the model minority myth, perpetual foreigner syndrome, yellow peril, and the individual stereotypes of Asian men and women described in the earlier sections of the literature review. Iftikar & Museus (2018) state that "these constructions serve as vehicles through which White supremacy informs laws, policies, programs, and perspectives that dehumanize and exclude Asian Americans" (Iftikar & Museus, 2018, p. 940).

2. *Transnational contexts* provide background on how White supremacy is operated through global relations, including at individual and larger policy levels. This establishes a broader context for Asian Americans' racialized experiences through the lens of past and present global economic, political, and social processes.
3. *(Re)constructive history* focuses on transcending the invisibility of Asian Americans in U.S. history through a collective historical narrative, incorporating the voices and contributions of Asian Americans.
4. *Strategic (anti)essentialism* looks at the ways race is shaped through social, economic, and political forces, such as the ways that Asian Americans are racialized as a monolithic group by White supremacy. Iftikar & Museus (2018) also emphasize that Asian Americans have, in turn, engaged in "coalition building and (re)defining racial categories to garner political power and influence in advocacy against White supremacy" (Iftikar & Museus, 2018, p. 940).
5. *Intersectionality* refers to White supremacy and other systems of oppression, such as gender bias, colonialism, and ableism, that intersect and shape the conditions and experiences of Asian Americans.

6. *Story, theory, and praxis* centers Asian American voices in education discourse. Deriving from CRT's tradition of storytelling to counter dominant narratives, these stories can offer unsmoothed narratives of Asian American experiences, which can then inform theories and praxis.
7. Commitment to *social justice* forms the final tenet of AsianCrit. This tenet highlights the commitment to end all forms of oppression, including racism, sexism, heterosexism, capitalist exploitation, and other systemic forms that contribute to the dehumanization and domination of various groups of people.

AsianCrit is used in this research study as a conceptual framework to analyze how Asianization and intersectionality uniquely affect the experiences of Asian American women in higher music education. This study centers the first-person voices of Asian American women who are able to describe their own experiences and their connections between personal and professional backgrounds (Hune, 2011). This storytelling and the use of counter-narratives can inform theories for future praxis.

Through examining (re)constructive history and broader transnational contexts of Asians in the U.S., stories of those on society's margins are used to reach deeper and more nuanced understandings about the various factors that contribute to discrimination and oppression of Asian Americans. Empowering the voices of marginalized individuals, practicing strategic (anti)essentialism, and using identity as a tool for empowerment indicates a commitment to social justice that seeks to end oppression for all marginalized groups (Liu, 2009).

Summary

Chapter II detailed challenges that Asian American women experience in career advancement. The literature review identified six major areas that present barriers to leadership.

The bamboo ceiling symbolizes both structural and cultural barriers that uniquely delineate the Asian American experience. The term describes the prevalence of racial biases and lack of opportunities for leadership training, combined with the belief that Asian Americans are content with "middle management" roles (Hyun, 2012). Asian American women experience a double disadvantage due to the structural obstacles residing at the intersection of their race and gender (Chin, 2020). The bamboo ceiling also describes the impact of certain Asian cultural values and the tension with Western masculine standards of conduct. The term acknowledges that cultural values and childhood upbringing in many Asian cultures can directly influence achievement of leadership for Asian Americans in the U.S.

Stereotypes, such as the model minority myth, continue to alienate people of Asian descent and work to divide communities of color. This false narrative alleges that all Asian Americans have achieved universal success, erasing the inequities and racialized experiences Asians continue to face in the U.S. Asian American women experience specific stereotypes of deference and femininity, and many are subject to penalties, such as tone policing, when they behave outside of the boundaries of their stereotypical expectations.

Research indicates that mentorship is a significant factor in acquiring performance skills of leadership, such as public speaking and self-promotion. Although there remains a need for greater numbers of Asian American female mentors, there are organizations that provide mentorship for those seeking a community of support. Additionally, institutional diversity, equity, and inclusion programs can lead to accountability of training and promoting Asian Americans and other marginalized groups.

Western music is a unique aspect of East Asian history. The wave of Western imperialism transformed the cultural, political, and socioeconomic landscape of countries such as

Japan, China, and Korea, and musicians from these countries continue to remain visible on the international stage and in higher music education institutions. The prominence of Asian musicians coexists with narratives of musical inauthenticity, with the perception that Asians are considered to possess technical skills but are lacking in emotive abilities. This renders Western music as the sole property of certain racial and ethnic groups and contributes to misleading perceptions around the overrepresentation of Asians in music, obscuring the reality that leadership positions in music continue to be dominated by White men.

Participation and outcomes of the labor market continue to be overlooked in research for Asian American women (Kim & Zhao, 2014). Attending to the reconstructive histories of Asian American women in music through the lens of intersectionality and strategic anti-essentialism can center the voices of a group whose truth and realities are often spoken for by dominant groups. In Chapter III, I will provide a review of the phenomenological method and the application of counter-narratives, in order to reveal a deeper understanding of Asian American women's experiences with leadership in music education.

Chapter III

Methodology

"The project of phenomenology is not to translate or reduce the phenomenon into clearly defined concepts so as to dispel its mystery, but rather the object is to bring the mystery more fully into our presence."

– van Manen

The purpose of this qualitative critical phenomenological study is to create a textual expression of the lived experiences of Asian American women leaders in music and music education. Drawing out the essence within these lived experiences allows me to understand the nature and contexts of their underrepresentation in leadership. Chapter III offers an overview of key elements of phenomenology and its application as a methodology to human science research. It will describe the hermeneutic approach that was taken to answer the central research question: What are the lived experiences of Asian American women in leadership roles within departments and schools of higher music education? The chapter will also detail participants and settings of individuals, instrumentation, pilot study findings, data collection and analysis procedures, and researcher's role and validity concerns.

Phenomenology - Key Elements and Rationale

Creswell & Poth (2018) state that qualitative research is "characterized as inductive, emerging, and shaped by the researcher's experience in collecting and analyzing the data" (p. 21). Brinkmann & Kvale (2019) describe the qualitative approach as a necessity for capturing the complexities of people's lives and experiences. The need to observe, interpret, and build meaning to various phenomena in their natural settings drives the pursuit of qualitative research,

ultimately contributing to the literature and generating a call for change (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Specifically, phenomenology is an approach that can orient a researcher to the very nature of phenomena within lived experiences, informing key aspects of data collection and analysis in the process.

Phenomenology as Philosophy

Phenomenology is, at its core, the science of phenomena (van Manen, 2016). As a methodology, it is characterized by inductive research that explores the essence of a particular, singular phenomenon through the lived experiences of a group of participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Reiners, 2012). Phenomenology acknowledges that analysis of the complex aspects of human life lay beyond what can be quantified. van Manen (2016) states that phenomenological human science is to "construct a full interpretive description of some aspect of the lifeworld… yet remain aware that lived life is always more complex than any explication of meaning can reveal" (p. 18).

Phenomenology has its origins in the Greek word for phenomenon, *Phainesthai*, which means to show itself, to appear, to manifest that it can become visible in itself (Moustakas, 1994). It was developed into a descriptive method by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) at the turn of the 20th century to challenge dominant views on the origin and nature of truth at the time. The basic tenet of the Husserlian phenomenological attitude is to bring "back to the things themselves" and to describe how the world is constituted and experienced without our pre-conceptions or interpretations (van Manen, 2016, p. 43). To engage in phenomenology is to truly question something from the heart of our existence and be steadfastly oriented to the lived experience that makes this discovery possible.

Phenomenology asserts that our most fundamental experience of the world is already full of meaning. We experience the world as meaningful because its people, its histories and cultures, and its events precedes any attempt on our part to understand or interpret it (van Manen, 2016). Less concerned with factual peculiarities, phenomenology seeks to uncover the very nature of phenomena itself, a universal essence that "may only be intuited or grasped through a study of the particulars or instances as they are encountered in lived experience" (van Manen, 2016, p. 10). The phenomenological method reveals an understanding of the essence of a phenomenon through exploring the consciousness of a person and their way of constructing meanings through their individual lived experiences (Guillen, 2019).

Essences

In phenomenology, an *essence* can be understood as the essential nature of a phenomenon of interest (Dahlberg, 2006). Essences in phenomenology indicate that everything is experienced as something and has its own way of being; thus, the essence cannot be separated from the phenomenon. The essence illuminates essential characteristics of the phenomenon, without which it would not be that phenomenon (van Manen, 2016). Husserl emphasized that essences are by no means mysterious nor an ultimate core meaning, but rather aspects or qualities of objects-as-intended that belong to the everyday experience of the world. A good description of an essence will reveal the structure of a lived experience so that readers can grasp the nature and significance of this experience in a previously unseen way (van Manen, 2016).

If essences are phenomena and phenomena are their essences, then we see essences continuously as we live in and experience the world (Dahlberg, 2006). Because essences belong to the world as essential characteristics of phenomena, they are not something that researchers explicitly add to the research. Essences in research are described through an intentional

relationship between the phenomena and researcher, with intentionality referring to seeing phenomena and their essences and disclosing them in the act of research (Dahlberg, 2006). In phenomenology, the researcher attempts to reveal the internal meaning structures of lived experiences, and the essence of a phenomenon can be described through the study of these structures that make up particulars of a phenomenon (van Manen, 2016).

Edmund Husserl

Two widely encountered schools of phenomenology include transcendental and hermeneutic phenomenology. Edmund Husserl is recognized as the pioneer of the transcendental, or descriptive, approach to inquiry. Husserl's aim for transcendental phenomenology was to capture a description of an immediate, lived experience in its origin or essence without the researcher's interpretations or theories (van Manen, 2017). Dowling (2007) states that this process is a "rigorous and unbiased study of things as they appear in order to arrive at an essential understanding of human consciousness and experience."

One of the main principles of Husserlian phenomenology is the concept of *epojé*, which is the suspension of our biases and preconceptions that is normally present in our approach to the world (Guillen, 2019). Husserl referred to *intentionality* as one's direct awareness or consciousness of objects and events, a connection between ourselves and the world. Through this fundamental premise of intentionality, we use epojé to bracket our subjective assumptions and personal beliefs so they may not mislead the understanding of meaning, thus limiting the research openness (Dahlberg, 2006; Reiners, 2012; Moustakas, 1994). Husserl argued that the *lifeworld*, such as "lived time, lived space, and lived human relation" (van Manen, 2016, p. 18), is understood as what individuals experience in the immediate, pre-reflective moment before we apply our personal assumptions and preconceptions.

Husserl regarded lived experience as the fundamental source of knowledge and intentionality as the internal experience of being conscious of something (Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, the concept of *phenomenological reduction* emerges in transcendental phenomenology when a person engages in making meaning of an experience of the world. Through the intentional process of excluding all assumptions, subjective feelings, and theories, one reduces the world to a purely phenomenal realm, thereby understanding the essential nature of a lived experience as free as possible from cultural context (Dowling, 2007; Guillen, 2019). This reduction seeks to understand the pure essence of a phenomenon—this understanding is then depicted in a description that is free of personal interpretations.

Husserlian phenomenology later evolved to a more existential philosophy. A different branch of phenomenology in the humanities is the hermeneutic or interpretive tradition, taken up in the last century by Gadamer and Ricoeur (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2019). Hermeneutics is knowledge and practice that is based on interpretation. Although similar with Husserlian philosophies of exploring human experience as lived, hermeneutic phenomenology deviates from Husserl's emphasis on description to focusing on a more personal understanding of phenomena. As an ontological approach, hermeneutic phenomenology states that lived experience is an interpretive process and consciousness cannot be intentionally separated from the world of human existence (Dowling, 2007). The primary principle is to understand the possibilities that emerge as one interprets and re-interprets a text.

Hermeneutic phenomenology relies on our understanding of the everyday world and the interpretations derived from it (Reiners, 2012). The philosophy behind the interpretive tradition expresses that "humans are embedded in their world and the researcher cannot and should not negate their prior understanding and engagement in the subject under study" (Reiners, 2012, p.

3). The use of language and the interpretation of a person's meaning-making of phenomena is central to hermeneutic phenomenology. Therefore, in this research tradition, the researcher seeks to uncover the essence of a phenomenon but does not bracket their biases and prior engagement with the topic, whereas in transcendental phenomenology, a researcher describes the phenomenon under study and always brackets their biases and preconceived opinions (Reiners, 2012).

Recent scholars have noted distinctions between traditional European phenomenological philosophy and certain North American developments often termed "new" phenomenology (Caelli, 2000; Dowling, 2007). Where Husserl was concerned with using lived experience as a tool to access descriptions of phenomena in their primordial or original form, new phenomenology seeks descriptions from the personal perspective of an individual. Table 1 outlines key differences between European and American approaches to phenomenology (Caelli, 2000).

Table 1

Key Differences Between European and American Phenomenology

European Phenomenology	**American (new) Phenomenology**
Distinctive Characteristics	
Phenomenological questions seek to search for the objective reality of the things themselves.	Phenomenological questions do not seek prereflective experience but include thoughts and experiences.
Phenomenological analysis searches for the universal meaning of phenomena and removes any cultural and inherited understandings.	Phenomenological analysis focuses on describing participants' lived experiences within the context of culture.
Lived experience is used as a tool to access descriptions of phenomena in their primordial or original form.	Focus is on the exploration and description of everyday experience itself, whether immediate or reflected on.
Core objectivizing task is to discover the essence of phenomena.	Core task is to understand the reality of subjective and situated experiences *to the person*.
Seeks to describe phenomena objectively with little organized approach to such descriptions.	Phenomenological work searches for both the differences and commonalities in the textual descriptions of phenomena.

Rationale for Hermeneutic Phenomenology

van Manen (2016) describes hermeneutic phenomenological research as a search for the "fullness of living" (p. 12), a deeply attuned thoughtfulness of the way human beings engage in their worlds. Hermeneutic phenomenology focuses on generating meanings through an individual's narratives of their lived experiences by questioning how the lifeworlds of a group of participants contributes to commonalities and differences between their subjective experiences (Lopez, 2004). As a methodology, it leads researchers to reflect on their personal experiences and professional work as they discover and analyze essential aspects of a phenomena (Guillen,

2019). This school of thought purports that researchers are not objective scientists that remove themselves from the meanings extracted from the text, but are immensely involved in the meaning making process and thus an integral part of the phenomenon.

By utilizing an interpretive process known as the *hermeneutic circle* of analysis, a researcher engages in a review and analysis between the parts and the whole of the text, fostering continuous revisions of understandings of phenomena through shared knowledge and shared experiences with participants (Reiners, 2012). The focus is on each participant and their own interpretation of their lived experience along with the researcher's interpretation of their experiences, so capturing the universal essence is not emphasized in hermeneutic or interpretive phenomenology.

Hermeneutic research is often considered more complex than descriptive phenomenology due to not having a formalized analytical method, instead relying on the philosophy that the context of the phenomenon should dictate how the data are analyzed (van Manen, 2016; Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Interviewing and analysis are considered to be intertwined phases of the research process, with the end goal always being the “bringing to speech” (van Manen, 2016, p. 32) of the nature of a phenomenon.

Reflexivity is an important component of hermeneutic, and other interpretative, phenomenologies. Reflexivity in hermeneutics refers to the researcher using empathy or relevant prior experience as an aid to data analysis and/or interpretation of meanings (van Manen, 2016). The researcher’s personal knowledge base is essential for guiding the research process and moving the inquiry in a direction that produces the most useful information, acknowledging an overlap in the experiences of the researcher and participant (Lopez, 2004). Brinkmann & Kvale (2019) state that knowledge is produced by the interaction between an interviewer and an

interviewee, and the requirement of being sensitive to foreknowledge about the topic contrasts with the presupposition-less position taken by transcendental phenomenological methods.

Phenomenological research should result in full-fledged reflective texts that engage readers through the identification, examination, and elaboration of themes describing the meaningfulness of human experiences (van Manen, 2017). In combining this application of language and thoughtfulness to a phenomenon, the researcher can move towards the prize of "illuminating, meaningful, and thoughtful insights and understandings" that drives many human science researchers to phenomenology (van Manen, 2017, p. 776). The intended outcome of illuminating rich descriptions and meanings of the lived experiences of Asian American women leaders in higher music education provides the basis for choosing hermeneutic phenomenology as a desirable method for this dissertation study.

Participants and Settings

Participants were sampled from various regions throughout the United States. Initially, I conducted a search of music schools on the web. After looking up "colleges with music programs," I investigated the leadership teams listed on the website of each college. In looking at 25 of the nation's best music schools, I was only able to find one institution with an Asian American female on the leadership team. After this preliminary search, I engaged in snowball sampling by asking for recommendations for participants from colleagues and faculty. I combined this with purposeful sampling using email and social media in order to recruit the best potential participants. The following criteria was used to determine candidates for the study:

- must identify as Asian American (native-born or naturalized citizens)
- must self-identify as female
- must currently reside in the U.S.

- must serve in some leadership capacity in music or higher music education

Due to difficulties in finding Asian American women with formal administrative titles, I defined leadership capacity more broadly to include roles such as deans, program directors, department chairs, and independent leadership experience such as executive or artistic direction of music organizations. This also ensured that I was attending to a broad range of lived experiences in music. Participants were sampled from different capacities of higher music instruction such as one-on-one studio instruction or general music education. When possible, I attempted to recruit from diverse social and environmental contexts, such as participants from different geographical regions, university and conservatory settings, and varied levels of experience working in a leadership role.

Dukes (in Creswell & Poth, 2018) recommends a pool of three to ten participants for phenomenology. For this study, a sample of six participants was recruited as a suitable representation of the phenomenon. The goal of the study was to reach saturation so that no more new data would be collected from participants around the shared phenomenon. Once each participant agreed to join the study, consent forms were emailed to all members with information on protection of confidentiality, purpose of the research, known risks and benefits, and the right to voluntarily withdraw from the study at any time. Participants were asked to sign and return consent forms prior to the first interview.

Instrumentation

This dissertation study utilized a combination of in-depth semi-structured interviews, follow-up interviews, focus groups, and memoing. A semi-structured interview allowed me to follow an interview protocol around the research topic while providing a “disciplined naturalness” to the phenomenological research that lets participants discuss other potentially

relevant information (Peoples, 2021, p. 53). In following van Manen's (2016) concept of a conversational interview method, I considered the interviews as "an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of common interest" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2019, p. 6). The key focus was to have participants illustrate their various lived experiences and participate in a collaborative conversation, in order to reach a collective understanding of the nature of the phenomenon. As the interview progressed, I reduced the risk for misinterpretation of participants' narratives by asking probing questions such as, "what was that experience like?" "Can you tell me more about that?" "Describe that a little more specifically." This ensured a depth to the descriptions of participants' lived experiences.

Follow-up interviews can provide additional insights into areas that seem incomplete, misunderstood, or have potential for deeper meanings. They allow for more detailed assessment of descriptions and emergent themes that were present in initial interviews (Peoples, 2021). Using preliminary themes from the first interview as a starting point, participants and I used follow-up interviews as an opportunity to interpret the significance of these themes in their lived experiences (van Manen, 2016).

Focus group sessions are groups of people who share an experience or background that gather to discuss a topic. Focus groups can be advantageous when participants yield generative information through their combined expertise and when individuals interviewed in one-on-one settings may be more hesitant to provide information (Creswell & Poth, 2018). They are also an opportunity for me to observe non-verbal cues, whole group dynamics, contrasts to previous beliefs, and group attitudes and perceptions, including whether the group establishes a shared identity (Kriukow, 2019). A focus group session was used in combination with one-on-one

interviews and added valuable data, due to individuals being in a supportive environment with others that have had similar shared experiences.

One-on-one interviews and focus group sessions were conducted solely through web-based communication platforms. All interviews were conducted and recorded directly on Zoom, providing me with a text transcript afterward. I used the transcription software, Otter.ai, as my primary access to high-quality transcripts. A recording and note-taking application called Noted was used to record a third backup audio recording of interviews. A log book was kept during each interview to capture my reflections and thoughts as participants shared their experiences, and I copied significant insights into my researcher journal.

An important part of completing a hermeneutic phenomenological study involves memoing to make personal biases explicit by reflecting on pre-understandings and evolutions of understandings of phenomena. Memos are "not just descriptive summaries of data but attempts to synthesize them into higher level analytic meanings" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 188). Journaling was used as an important strategy for understanding my own thinking processes and how I clarified my understanding of the topic over time. Some of the areas I explored in my memos included my relation to participants and the phenomenon, emerging patterns or concepts, and any problems that came up during the study.

Pilot Study

Discussion of Sample and Procedures

I conducted a pilot study in order to refine the interview protocol, draw preliminary findings around the topic, and test out best applications for data management. The pilot study included three participants who were Asian American women currently working in higher music education schools. The participants reside in very different political, social, and geographical

contexts, and work in studio music instruction and general music education. A written agreement was issued stating the purpose of the pilot study, confidentiality measures, and intended sharing of pilot data.

The pilot study consisted of a one-hour interview with each participant and one 30-minute focus group, conducted virtually over Zoom. Using my research questions and outlining related areas from the literature, I prepared a semi-structured interview guide before conducting the interviews.

Immediately after each interview, I wrote a detailed analytic pilot memo describing my first instincts, reactions, and any surprising or insightful moments. These memos were critically useful for revising and refining the interview questions for the intended dissertation study. I also documented process memos that helped me to improve my interview techniques. Alongside my journaling, I began the initial analysis of the transcript immediately after each interview was completed.

I started my precoding process as soon as I began to format the Otter.ai transcript. Going through the text, I highlighted significant quotes and jotted preliminary thoughts in the margins. My initial investigation included sorting data by grammatical, elemental, or affective categories. In particular, descriptive, values, and in vivo codes were used during the preliminary jotting (Saldaña, 2021).

After this first cycle of coding, I copied participant quotes from the transcript into a framework approach matrix in order to identify common categories. I chose to use Smith & Firth's (2011) framework approach for its value in analyzing cross-sectional descriptive data and investigating different aspects of the phenomena. This approach is particularly suited for a process that guides "the systematic analysis of data from initial management through to the

development of descriptive to explanatory accounts" (p. 55). Using the framework matrix, I created initial categories by analyzing patterns in data sets from the lived experiences of my participants. Next, I conducted the focus group, which provided opportunities for further comparison and reflection. Both the affirmations and moments of contrast between the participants served to paint a more nuanced picture of the topic.

My final step was to analyze the data for emergent themes, then write a counter-narrative through the framework of AsianCrit. Analyses of the experiences of the three pilot participants revealed five themes, described as: 1) stereotypes, 2) invisible minority, 3) environmental contexts, 4) mentorship and support, and 5) skills and competence. I specifically focused on one particular participant, Tessa[2], whose story is highlighted below to reveal how these themes manifested in her life.

Preliminary Findings of the Pilot Study

The recounting of stories, through one's own words, provokes deeper self-reflection into lived experiences. Counter-narratives can communicate the specific feelings, sensations, and details that are important for unpacking the experiences of different groups of people. In my interview with Tessa, she described her surprise and frustration as she is mixed up with another Asian woman educator at her school. The mix-up occurs frequently and ceaselessly, whether listed publicly or in school-wide emails concerning diversity initiatives. This occurrence happens despite the striking difference between their physical appearances and the fact that they teach entirely different subjects. Tessa recalled: "that was really, really jarring for me… we do quite different work and it's just not a representation of who I am."

Social and political forces have perpetuated a monolithic view of Asian Americans, and many Asians in the U.S. are often racially marked through phenotypic features, such as the shape

[2] Name changed to protect confidentiality.

of their eyes. This view can contribute to stereotypes and reduce the diversity of Asian Americans. In Tessa's situation, the seemingly trivial occurrences effectively overrode her teaching performance and status as a unique member of the community. In essence, it erased her unique sense of self, and this invisible minority status created a dehumanizing effect for her. She felt that, despite four years of being part of a school community, she was indistinguishable from the "other teacher that is the only Asian woman in the whole building."

This monolithic stereotyping describes the essentialism and Asianization of Asian Americans, where the racialization process of being "Asian" is defined by society's perceptions and influences on Asian Americans. Relating to her experiences with stereotypes such as the model minority myth, Tessa recalled a moment when her colleague spoke about an organization and "lovingly said: Tessa, you're the wrong kind of diversity." This statement signals the denial of her minority status and dismisses her potential needs for support as a woman of color. The biased perception stems from the intersectionality of Tessa's gender and specific stereotypes associated with Asian females. Tessa was surprised at this statement, but she stated: "I also wasn't offended because deep down, I was like, wait, is that what people are really saying?"

There are important extrinsic and intrinsic contexts in Tessa's lifeworld. The extrinsic influence consists of her environmental context, specifically in relation to her geographic location and institutional demographics. Tessa described the location of the school and the students and colleagues at her institution as a "very White-heavy population." She stated that "all of my colleagues that I have met… all the interactions I've had, has been with White folks." She explained that in this particular setting, she has lacked the space to unpack her identity and her positionality within the institution. This is compounded by her status as an adjunct professor and the difficulties of hierarchies and promotions in higher education. When set against the broader context of institutional diversity and equity initiatives, which she alluded heavily favors Black

and Latinx populations, she began to question whether she is being excluded or overlooked. In reflecting on her positionality within the institution, she wonders what she needs to do to go about "showing her own diversity in the world."

Tessa also elaborated on the importance of mentorship and support. In her story about the recurrent mix-up with another Asian female, she talked about the depth of her shock and frustration. In one particular instance when this happened, she strode out of her classroom mid-lesson to seek support from her colleague Dan, a White male. Dan stepped up as an ally by immediately reporting the incident to the principal, demonstrating the knowledge of when to step up when injustice has taken place. Dan's sense of urgency and the principal's immediate action in addressing the issue was deeply meaningful to Tessa in the moment. She states that this process of becoming a strong ally happens through training and learning from other mentors. In Dan's case, he gained specific knowledge of racial and gender bias of Asian American women through his mentorship from an "incredibly fierce Asian woman" that is heavily involved in social justice work.

Tessa's intrinsic contexts revolve around her religious beliefs and values as an individual, what she terms as her "roots." Her greater mission in life is to help people, and her commitment to social justice for various groups of people is clear in her narrative. In Tessa's religion, social injustices are sometimes thought of as normal processes of life. These tensions relating to her cultural background and upbringing, along with her commitment to social justice, makes her question how one's roots influence the values in your life. With her desire to help people, she realized her music education career can be a "vehicle for that mission." She accomplishes this mission through tackling barriers to music education for marginalized communities and creating access to opportunities that were absent in her own youth. For example, when Tessa was a child as an immigrant in the U.S., she lacked the opportunity to go to "fancy summer programs,"

where her peers were making connections and gaining valuable knowledge and experience through high-level preparatory programs, such as Tanglewood. Using this experience from her roots, she created a program that enables groups of kids to attend Interlochen, a prestigious summer youth music camp. She remarked, "isn't that just the dream? That was my dream, and now I'm just so happy to be able to give it forward."

Tessa's skills and competence in the field, as well as her awareness of her mission, comes from principles attained through her graduate education and the people that she was surrounded by. She describes the impact of her lived experiences:

> I feel like I got trained into the thinker that I am through all the people that I met and all the classes I took. It took a lot of getting back to my roots to really understand what I believe in, but how does that live in the context of what I can make change with?

Her leadership journey constantly grows with her different roles, and the diverse group of colleagues and students she works with. Her growth in skills and competence with each new work opportunity helps offset the imposter syndrome that initially settles over her with a new role. She spoke about her immigrant mindset as something that is always salient in her way of thinking, and she is inspired and empowered by the struggles and the successes of her immigrant parents in the U.S. She stated: "I think it's really changed me and how I go about the world and also thinking about the professional world… I think that really is so deeply rooted."

Differences in Approach to Methodology

After following a set of procedures for the pilot study, I adjusted my methodology in the dissertation study. My plans for data collection originally included three separate interviews with each participant, but due to difficulties in scheduling meetings during a busy semester, I modified the data collection to two interviews. Throughout the entire dissertation research, I made constant revisions to my analysis scheme as I tried different approaches to coding and

theming, ultimately identifying the best approach for this project. van Manen (2016) states that phenomenological research is inherently discovery oriented and does not follow a predetermined set of fixed procedures and techniques, instead allowing the researcher to invent appropriate research methods for a particular question.

In the pilot study, I used Smith & Firth's (2011) framework approach to analyze the data. As a novice researcher, this approach helped me gain familiarity with qualitative data-coding systems, particularly the move from units of data to overarching categories or themes. The application of the framework approach includes coding portions of the data that describe important aspects of the phenomenon, jotting down preliminary thoughts, and forming initial categories. Applying these codes and memos within a table format enables the researcher to identify links between codes and categories, and categories with themes.

Inspired by the inductive process utilized in the pilot study, I followed van Manen's philosophies of identifying core aspects of the phenomena through selective highlighting and interpretive theming of the data. This theming allowed even deeper opportunities for critical reflection on participants' narratives and lived experiences by attempting to draw out the core nature of the ideas being addressed in relation to the phenomenological topic. The cyclical process of moving between holistic (whole text) and selective (parts of text) data also allowed for greater hermeneutic flexibility in understanding the essence of the phenomenon.

I experimented with various coding techniques in the dissertation study in order to apply a systematic investigation. I initially utilized a data analysis scheme that involved creating in vivo, descriptive, and process codes (Saldaña, 2021) for each highlighted segment of data. I used these coding techniques to help me answer questions of the data such as, "what are people

doing? What are they trying to accomplish? What specific means/strategies did they use? What is the broader significance of this?"

Although the coding provided a systematic and methodological approach, it moved the research process further away from an inductive quality that centers participants' narratives. After several trials experimenting with coding, my data analysis process evolved organically to best suit my research project, outlined in the section below. In the dissertation study, I also applied second-cycle coding for more complex understandings of the phenomenon. This is why final themes in the pilot study are reflective of the interview protocol, but themes of the dissertation study are much more inductively conceived.

Procedures of the Dissertation Study

This research study was designed to highlight the nature of lived experiences of Asian American women in higher music education. The significance of using the phenomenological method is that it involves reflecting deeply on everyday experiences, understanding the meaning of these experiences for each individual, and building capacity to take actions that lead to change (van Manen, 2016). In the section below, I will describe my data collection and analysis procedures that guided this process of phenomenological discovery.

Data Collection

Data for this study included two interviews for each of the six participants and one focus group session with the entire group. Interviews were scheduled for one hour on Zoom. The first interview was conducted following a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix A) that contains open-ended questions guided by the major research questions, as well as data and insights collected from the pilot study. The second interview focused on collaboratively determining "deeper meanings or themes of the experiences" that participants shared from their

first interview (van Manen, 2016, p. 99). Transcriptions, video, and audio recordings were recorded using the software described in the previous section on instrumentation.

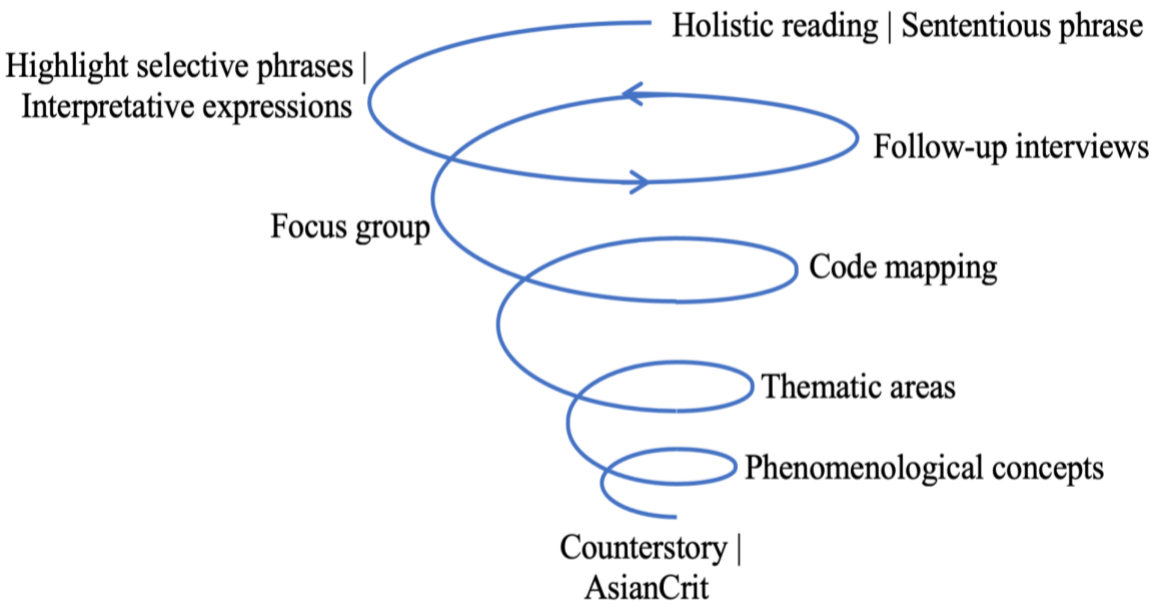
Data collection took place over a span of four months, with the first interview being scheduled in September 2023. The focus group session took place in December after all emergent themes from individual interviews had been identified. The timeline spanning the dissertation data collection and analyses, including the Institutional Review Board application and approval (see Appendix B), occurred between August through December 2023.

Analyses of Individual Interviews

The following steps were conducted as part of the hermeneutic analysis process, depicted as a data analysis spiral (see Figure 4). My analysis leans heavily on van Manen's (2016) hermeneutic phenomenological philosophies, and my methodological procedures are guided by Peoples (2021) book on phenomenological dissertation writing and Saldaña's (2021) book on coding qualitative research.

Figure 4

Data Analysis Spiral (Adapted from Creswell & Poth, 2018)



Throughout each step of analysis, I recorded detailed analytic memos in my researcher journal to document my hermeneutic reflection. I reflected on my interaction with participants, summarized the data I collected, noted what I found intriguing or surprising in the data, and wrote about any emergent patterns, links, or larger concepts (Saldaña, 2021). This personal reflection, interaction of parts and whole of the text, and the extraction, interpretation, and comparison of participants' experiences constitutes the hermeneutic circle that results in a constant revision of renewed understandings of phenomena.

In conducting the analyses, I used the qualitative data analysis software (QDAS), Dedoose, to aid in disaggregating the large amounts of data collected from the interviews and focus group session. Although many phenomenologists view technology as dehumanizing because it may hinder producing phenomenological insights (Sohn, 2017), I chose to utilize technology due to the ease in navigating and identifying meaningful patterns in texts. I used

Dedoose alongside careful holistic readings of transcripts in order to stay familiar with texts at intuitive and cognitive levels. As Sohn (2017) points out, “it is how one approaches the QDAS and coding that can make this difference” (p. 6).

After conducting the first interview, step one of the analysis involved editing the transcripts for comprehensiveness and conducting a “holistic” reading for an overall impression of the entire text. I simultaneously recorded my emergent thoughts, ideas, and clarifying questions as memos in Dedoose. I then attempted to notate an overarching thematic statement, a sententious phrase that captures the fundamental meaning of the text as a whole (see Appendix C). Researchers experienced in hermeneutic phenomenology describe the interplay between art and study within this method. The artistic element lies through the formulation of the sententious phrase, or what van Manen (2016) coins as an “artistic expression” (p. 97), while scientific talents are needed for structural analysis, and critical talents for formulating a comprehensive understanding (Fredholm et al., 2019).

The second step of the analysis involved a “selective” approach to the text by highlighting phrases, anecdotes, or quotes that were “telling”, “meaningful”, revealing, or “make explicit the structure of meaning of the lived experience” (van Manen, 2016, p. 77). Under each highlighted segment, I composed an interpretive statement that captured and elaborated on what seemed essential about the highlighted phrase (van Manen, 2016). These interpretive expressions were recorded in Dedoose as memos. Simultaneously, I assigned a descriptive code to each highlighted segment in order to better detect patterns in later stages of analysis. I also utilized affective coding methods such as emotion and values coding, in order to gain richness and depth of the subjective qualities of my participants’ experiences (see Appendix D).

At this stage of the hermeneutic phenomenological analysis, I conducted a follow-up interview with each participant using a modified interview protocol. This second interview mobilized participants to reflect on their shared experiences from the first interview and allowed me to co-construct meanings with my participants. The follow-up with participants helped strengthen the validity of the study through member checking of initial interpretations and theming of the data. All emergent meanings were consistently documented and reflected on in researcher memos. After completing the second round of interviews with participants, I repeated steps one and two of the data analysis.

In my third step, I utilized Saldaña's (2021) code mapping approach as a post-coding transition to generate findings of the study. This systematic analysis strategy helped to reinforce the credibility and trustworthiness of my analytic findings. The first iteration of this approach involved generating a list of initial codes and their interpretative statements, which was completed in step two of the analysis. In the second iteration, I focused on grouping my codes into similar categories, looking for commonalities and heaviness of code presence in participants. I eventually created seven broader areas that served as a buffet theme represented by the characteristics of their individual codes: (a) perceptions of Asian American women, (b) representation, (c) discrimination, (d) biculturalism, (e) proving oneself, (f) leader responsibility, and (g) systemic support. These seven themes are the composite of pooled experiences of participants and represent the movement from a vertical (differently situated) to a horizontal (pooled experiences) analytic process (Moustakas, 1994).

After reporting the findings using participants' narratives and anecdotes, the third and fourth iterations in Saldaña's (2021) code-mapping approach involved recategorizing the seven themes further to develop complex concepts around the phenomenon. I utilized pattern coding,

"think displays" (Saldaña, 2021), and organized interpretative statements into similar categories to help me see connections and synthesize the data into larger phenomenological concepts. The final concepts serve as the fundamental structures that describe aspects of the lived experience of the phenomenon (van Manen, p. 87). This analytic process allowed me to see the collective essence of the phenomenon while observing the rich, unique, and multi-faceted nature that characterizes Asian American women's experiences in higher music education.

The final step of the analysis consisted of writing a general phenomenological synthesis (Peoples, 2021). van Manen (2016) writes that "to do research in a phenomenological sense is already and immediately and always a *bringing to speech* of something" (p. 32). The general synthesis can be found at the conclusion of Chapter IV. In Chapter V, I related phenomenological concepts to theories and prior research and utilized the AsianCrit framework to offer a counter-narrative to normalized dialogues perpetuating stereotypes of Asian Americans (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). Chapter VI offers a final phenomenological description through the frameworks of four existential lifeworld themes—the lived body, lived relations, lived time, and lived spaces of Asian American women.

Validity, Ethics, and Qualitative Rigor

Maxwell (2013) speaks of validity in qualitative research as "giving phenomena we are trying to understand the chance to prove us wrong" (p. 123). Several steps were taken to ensure validity and ethics remained integral throughout the dissertation study process. To counter researcher bias and consequent reactivity, I made journaling a key priority throughout the entire study. Because it is impossible to completely bracket or eliminate all potential influences on the research process, I focused particularly on identifying how I may be influencing participants' responses and the ways this may affect the validity of the inferences I make with the data.

The ability to have prolonged involvement with my participants through repeated interviews allowed me to check and confirm my inferences. The prolonged involvement also helped build trust and rapport with participants, but this may have potentially increased my biases because of the possibility of shared participant and researcher assumptions. I also utilized opportunities for reciprocity by asking participants for validation of emergent themes and soliciting feedback on data. This prevented me from misinterpreting the meaning behind my participants' narratives by including their perspectives during the analysis, also helping me to identify specific biases I may have. Finally, peer debriefing was used as a way to get feedback from colleagues around my interpretations of data. This help with confirmability as data and interpretations are verified by others for objectivity and accuracy. Participants' identities were kept strictly confidential during the peer debriefing process.

The research was guided by a working research partnership with participants in a democratic and open-ended environment (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2019). Working collaboratively allowed me to obtain accurate data and generate knowledge that may be useful to participants, as well as my own research purposes. The context of each person was taken into consideration for potential philosophical and/or ethical issues. In order to deeply examine my goals, experiences, assumptions, and values as a researcher, I completed an identity memo exercise (Maxwell, 2013) before conducting the intended study as a way to reflect on how my role as a researcher may inform and influence my research. This exercise aids in keeping a professional distance from my own personal experiences with the phenomenon and those of my participants, further leading to the goal of a comprehensive investigation (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2019).

Participants' perceptions and understandings of my research were probed in order to develop useful and ethnically appropriate relationships (Maxwell, 2013). Lastly, proper digital

storage was maintained so that all participants' information would remain confidential. This digital audit trail included all audio and video recordings, transcriptions, memos, codebooks, and methodology notes, which was stored in my personal iCloud and Google Drives. I also meticulously kept an audit trail of my data collection and analysis procedures, revising my outline as changes were made to the analysis scheme. This audit trail aids in dependability for a researcher attempting to repeat the study.

As the researcher, I ensured that qualitative rigor remained a top priority. By utilizing member checks and focus groups, writing rich descriptions, documenting a meticulous audit trail of my data collection and analysis procedures, conducting peer reviews, and maintaining a researcher journal, I maintained high credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability in the study.

Summary

In Chapter III, I provided an overview of the principles of phenomenological philosophy and methodology. I discussed the participants and settings of the study, reported key preliminary findings from the pilot study, and discussed instrumentation, data collection, and analysis procedures. Finally, I detailed my strategies for testing the validity of the study, as well as considering potential ethical issues and their implications. Chapter IV will describe findings from the study after gathering and analyzing all data from participants.

Chapter IV

Findings

"To finally recognize our own invisibility is to be on the path toward visibility. Invisibility is not a natural state for anyone."

– Mitsuye Yamada

This dissertation study investigates the underrepresentation of Asian American women in leadership roles in music and higher music education. The goal of the research is to center the voices of six current Asian American women leaders in music and illuminate the distinctions and commonalities in their careers. Collaborative hermeneutic conversations rich in descriptions and metaphors provided deeper thematic meanings around their various lived experiences. A systematic analysis of the pooled transcript themes revealed the essence of the significance of their underrepresentation in leadership, in light of the original phenomenological question: What are the lived experiences of Asian American women in leadership roles within departments and schools of higher music education?

The following chapter is divided into five sections. The first section provides demographic information related to participants of this study. The second section will briefly describe my data collection and analysis process. The third section presents the findings of the study, organized by seven thematic areas. Themes provide depth and detail around the lived experiences of Asian American women while refraining from individual narratives, thus protecting participants' anonymity. The fourth section contains a description of how I maintained credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability throughout the research. The

chapter concludes with a summary of key points and main take-aways that point us to important concepts to be explored in Chapter V.

Demographics and Background Information

The six women who agreed to participate in this study are Talia, Sera, Candace, Emma, Naomi, and Julie.[3] These women reflect my original goal of including a broad array of career experiences, including roles such as deans, program directors, department chairs, and independent leadership experience such as serving as executive or artistic director of educational music programs. The diverse sample allowed me to capture the individual causes and conditions of their lived experiences while moving toward a pooled description of the essential aspects of the phenomenon.

Due to the small number of Asian American women leaders in the field, I will be protecting participants' anonymity through the use of pseudonyms and very broad demographic categories. My intention in providing this information is to build contextual awareness around the environments and circumstances surrounding my participants. I hope to focus readers' attention solely on the life stories of participants, rather than attributing characteristics to certain persons. Table 2 shows demographic information on participants' age range, education attainment, geographical location, immigration status, area of specialization, and years in higher music education.

[3] Names are changed for confidentiality.

Table 2

Demographic Information of Participants

Category		Number of Participants
Age Range	20-30	0
	30-40	0
	40-50	4
	50-60	2
Education Attainment	Doctorate	5
	Performance Diploma	1
Geographical Location	Northeast	1
	Southwest	0
	West	2
	Southeast	1
	Midwest	2
Citizenship/Immigration	U.S. Born Citizen	2
	Naturalized Citizen	4
Area of Primary Specialization	Applied Studio	0
	Higher Music Education	3
	Performance	1
	Arts Administration	2
Years in Higher Music Education	<5 years	1
	5-10 years	1
	>10 years	4

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection began in September 2023 with one-hour interviews for each of the six participants. Interviews took place virtually on Zoom and were recorded with participants' consent. Additionally, I used the software Otter.ai for transcriptions and the application Noted for backup audio recordings. Interviews were conducted using the interview protocol described

in Chapter III (see Appendix A). Subsequent interviews were scheduled three to four weeks after the first interview, and follow-up interview protocols were tailored to explore each participants' emergent themes for deeper meanings.

In my follow-up interviews with participants, I experienced a noticeable increase in rapport and trust. My shared identity and the structure of collaborative hermeneutic conversations created moments of positive and negative feelings and a curiosity into our collective shared experiences. van Manen (2016) calls this conversational relation a "hermeneutic thrust" (p. 98), where both interviewer and interviewee are oriented toward meaning-making and interpretation of a topic.

A virtual focus group session was also conducted in early December with five of the participants using emergent themes as open-ended prompts. Their dynamic conversation lasted beyond the hour, and all five women agreed it would be beneficial and rewarding to continue meeting together after the completion of this study. After each virtual session, I replaced all identifiable information in the transcripts in order to protect my participants' anonymity. Data, including storage of recordings and transcripts, was managed through my personal iCloud drive and Google Drive.

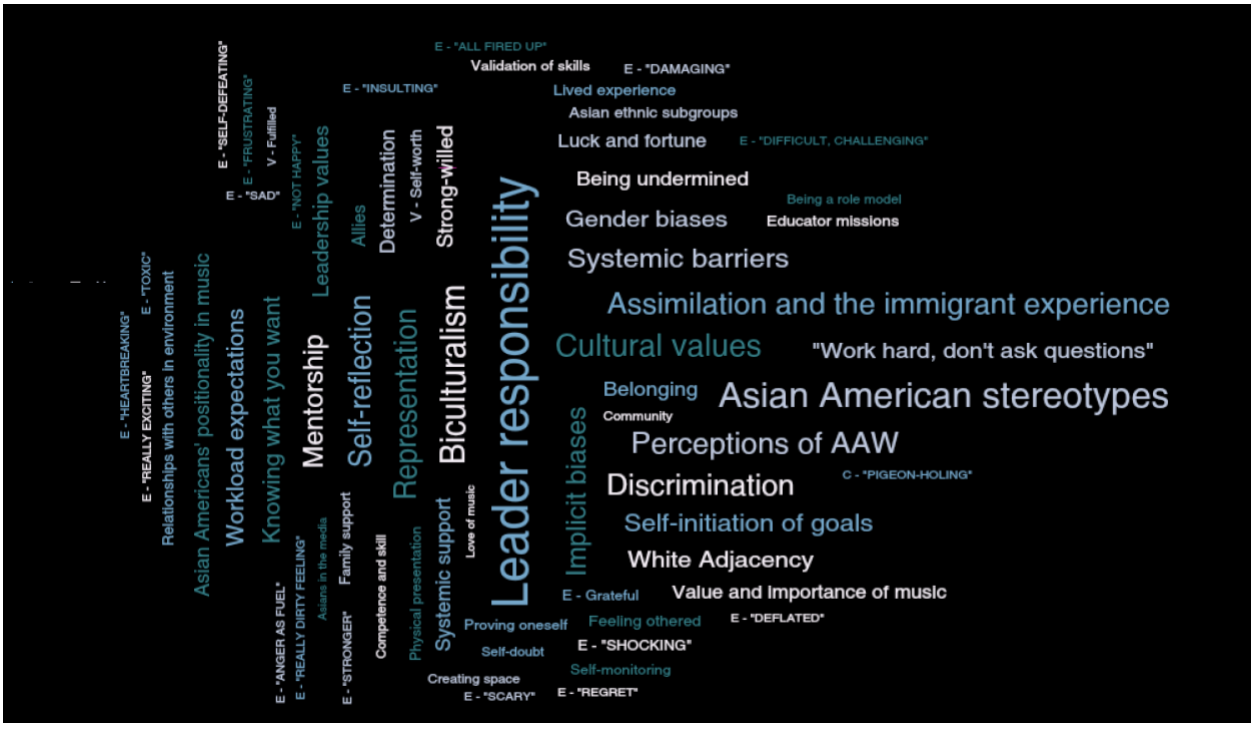
A significant part of this research study involves the constant revision of my understandings of the phenomenon. In keeping with the rigor and significance of the hermeneutic circle in phenomenology, I recorded detailed analytic memos after each interaction with participants and their data. Analytic memos included my reflections on how I personally related to participants' narratives, information I found intriguing or surprising, ideas or concepts that deviate from my pre-understandings, emergent patterns in the data, and main summarizing points from the interviews.

Brief Analysis Summary

My analysis process began with reading and editing each transcript for clarity, reflecting on an overall holistic meaning, and writing a singular thematic statement that describes my impression of the whole text (see Appendix C). My next step was theming the data using the qualitative data analysis software, Dedoose. Reading through the text again, I highlighted statements or phrases that seemed thematic or essential to my research topic (van Manen, 2016). Using the memo function in Dedoose, I attached a broad interpretive statement describing the highlighted statement, and simultaneously ascribed a descriptive code in order to better detect patterns and connections. In all, I generated 67 descriptive, emotion, and value codes along with their interpretive statements. Figure 5 depicts a "code landscaping" (Saldana, 2021, p. 285) word cloud that shows more frequent words in larger font sizes.

Figure 5

Code Landscaping Word Cloud



My post-coding transitions were guided by Saldana's (2021) code mapping approach to bring meaning and order to my findings. The first iteration of this approach is the formation of my initial 67 codes. In the second iteration, I began to compare, sort, and group similar codes into larger categories, which led to seven broader thematic areas that describe Asian American women's lived experiences in higher music education: (a) perceptions of Asian American women, (b) representation, (c) discrimination, (d) biculturalism, (e) proving oneself, (f) leader responsibility, and (g) systemic support. Thematic analysis was used because "themes are not exhaustive of a phenomenon, but they allow a systematic investigation" (van Manen, 2016, p. 168). Table 3 displays each descriptive code under their thematic category. The third and fourth iterations of Saldana's (2021) code mapping involve the interpretation of thematic categories into broader concepts as they relate to my research questions and literature review, presented in Chapter V of this dissertation.

Table 3

Thematic Categories and Matching Codes

Themes	Matching Codes
Perceptions	● Asian American stereotypes ● Positionality in music ● Physical presentation
Representation	● Belonging ● Community ● Being a role model ● Creating space ● Asians in the media
Discrimination	● Feeling othered ● Being undermined ● Systemic barriers ● Implicit biases ● Gender biases ● Lived experience
Biculturalism	● Cultural values ● Family support ● Assimilation ● Self-monitoring ● White adjacency ● Ethnic subgroups
Proving Oneself	● Strong-willed ● Determination ● Competence and skill ● Self-initiation of goals ● “Work hard, don’t ask questions” ● Self-doubt
Leader Responsibility	● Leadership values ● Educator missions ● Value of music ● Love of music ● Self-reflection ● Knowing what you want
Systemic Support	● Relationships with others ● Allies

	● Mentorship ● Validation of skills ● Luck and fortune

Introduction of Findings

The inductive analysis strategy described above and the resulting themes were used to report the findings of the study. Saldana (2021) writes that a theme conveys a meaning, which codes then illustrate and portray related variations. Each of the seven themes describes an essential aspect of the lived experiences of Asian American women leaders in music.

The first theme, perceptions, describes stereotypes and preconceptions of Asian American women in leadership roles. Many of these preconceptions reflect larger societal views of Asian American women, such as the expectation that they behave in docile and passive ways. When Asian American women break their prescribed stereotypes by speaking up or behaving assertively, they encounter backlash and punishment. Their distinct stereotypes contribute to the notion that they are not suitable candidates for positions of leadership.

The second theme, representation, emphasizes concepts of community and belonging. Belonging includes the representation of diverse people in positions with decision-making power. Most participants expressed their desire for more representation of Asian Americans on administrative teams and other areas of leadership, in order to properly address the needs of Asian students in music schools. Creating space and belonging informs participants' values and missions as educators and leaders.

The third theme, discrimination, illustrates the multi-faceted and often insidious ways discrimination emerges for Asian American women. They encounter daily microaggressions and are positioned as honorary Whites, thereby being excluded from important policy and diversity

initiatives. Gender discrimination was particularly prevalent due to their positions as female leaders in higher education, and the intersectionality of their race further exacerbates these biases.

The fourth theme, biculturalism, depicts rich, bicultural experiences that impact participants' careers to music and leadership as they assimilate to dominant cultures. Participants were often "othered" in their childhoods, and music helped to bridge a connection between their home lives and their foreign environments. Their conflicting cultural values influence their leadership experiences, such as learning to speak up, code-switching, and self-monitoring their behavior in front of others.

The fifth theme, proving oneself, demonstrates Asian American women's strong sense of purpose, determination, and commitment to excellence and quality work, while grappling with unrealistic expectations and workload burdens from others. Participants are highly motivated to pursue their vision in music but acknowledge their feelings of needing to prove themselves and the potentially harmful example this may present to future women of color leaders.

The sixth theme, leader responsibility, describes participants' individual leadership values, born out of a deep love of music and commitment to social justice. Examples include advocating for others, creating a positive institutional culture, and providing representation and support. Their high-level reflexivity and experiences with othering help determine their priorities and responsibilities as leaders in their field.

The last theme, systemic support, describes aspects that have had a positive impact on participants' pathways to leadership, including building key relationships with others, identifying allies, and receiving validation and positive affirmation of their skills and contributions. The lack

of mentorship by other Asian American women, together with their determination, built a sense that important moments in their careers were often a result of fortuitous circumstances.

The overview of themes serves as an organizing framework for presenting detailed narratives of the themes in participants' day-to-day lifeworlds. When indicating how many participants share a theme, I used the term "most" for a saturated theme, "many" for half of the participants, and "some" for a theme that was unsaturated but relevant (Peoples, 2021). Findings are presented through participants' words, metaphors, and rich descriptions, in order to harness their narrative power and evoke the personal memories and feelings within each thematic area.

Perceptions of Asian American Women

Most of the participants encountered stereotypes and biases that affected the perception of them as competent women leaders. Candace alludes to her own cultural values as well as common stereotypes of Asian American women (AAW) that impact her experiences in leadership.

> I think there are confines within our own culture, but I also think that is mimicked in how American society views Asian women. Somehow, I think Asian women are to be quiet and subservient, not leading but following. So I think those two factors make it difficult for a person of color, of our heritage, to think of themselves in leadership roles.

Emma corroborates these feelings, stating, "I was definitely treated differently, and people really reacted strongly when I spoke up because I'm supposed to be docile. And they react so much stronger and worse than any other would." She recalled the repercussions that followed when her actions broke prescriptive stereotypes.

> People were surprised when I spoke up as they expected me to be docile. My responsibilities kept being pulled away from me. And when responsibilities get taken

> away from you, they also take authority from you, because you're no longer in charge of X, Y, and Z.

When Emma spoke up in her workplace, she was perceived as an "angry woman." She states, "I was trying to be collaborative. Just because I spoke up, I think people thought that I was being uncooperative." She continued to try to be effective at her job but was often obstructed, which she expressed was "the most painful thing… that I wasn't allowed to do my job because I didn't fit the stereotypical Asian woman that they needed me to be." As a leader, she acknowledges it is very important "that you don't care if you're always liked. I think being docile also means that you're liked by everybody. And therefore everybody loves you because you're just this supporter and you don't stir the pot."

Julie had a similar sentiment, stating, "I think the expectation is that I would not be that blunt and direct. And so I think there's much more of a strong reaction to that as a result of the stereotype." She further notes, "some of us feel that it's important to say the truth, which means that there will always be people that don't like you, and that you accept that." Naomi recalled her experience of receiving a jarring email response when she made an inquiry about her workload.

> The response I got was a very authoritative response that made me feel like I was the Asian being crushed down. Like wait, you have to remember where your place is, because that's initially what the first sentence said, what it felt like it said. I think my typical response prior to that might not have been as straightforward and neutral and questioning authority. So I think it was the change of my behavior that set that off.

She specifically questioned the intention and wording in the email, saying, "I felt that if I were one of the other male colleagues, would you have written that?" Talia also expresses her frustrations, stating that "it's the preconceived notions that people have, especially towards

women who are Asian, that I feel like we're constantly battling. Just to get to zero, if that makes sense." She talks about the expectations that are connected to her stereotypes as an AAW.

> American society views Asians as very effective and sturdy workers, and talented, and smart, and trustworthy. That's our role is to be the worker bee…. he basically let me know that [a certain role] is not really something that is suitable, either for my personality or being a woman or Asian or whatever it is. I clearly understood from him that my place and where I was most effective, in his opinion, is as a collaborative pianist.

The above experience demonstrates that AAW, due to the distinct positive and negative stereotypes associated with them, are frequently not seen as suitable candidates for positions of leadership. Sera describes stereotypes she encountered in her lived experiences.

> You bear those stereotypes of everyone's imagination about Asians. You are polite, you're permissive to a certain degree. You're cute. You're petite. You are small, physically and mentally. You don't take a lot of space, either physically or verbally. You have a number, you show quality, you are reliable.

Stereotypes of AAW are also based on physical appearance. Talia explains that "women who appear to have characteristics that are similar to men have a much easier time being heard or respected, or to have their ideas valued." She remembers seeing a tall White woman in a leadership role receiving favorable reactions from colleagues compared to that of an Asian woman of smaller stature. Candace talks about the influence of movies and media, and how AAW have been historically portrayed as geishas and sexually desirable objects. She states, "then for that object to have thoughts and leadership qualities and aggressiveness, might be jarring to society at large. And of course, you're also taking that internally."

Sera describes her processes of self-reflection as she navigated through her career in higher music education.

> I had to observe myself and then analyze what possibly happened, then I came to the conclusion that when I show a certain quality, which my culture or my tradition or my upbringing tells me is great, those behaviors were not rewarded as I'm used to growing up. Like being polite or listening, not interrupting people.

She states her self-reflections led to “that lightning moment, that I can’t create the image that I'm an easy pushover. That is what my colleagues perceived as a pushover, I learned that's their version of a pushover.”

Most participants discussed the connection between perceptions of AAW and their underrepresentation in leadership in music and higher music education. Julie notes that this underrepresentation continues to endure because “the larger powerbrokers in classical music are White.” Emma shares her thoughts on the issue:

> People probably think it's enough that usually half the string section is Asian. I think they probably say, Okay, that's good enough, and move on. But orchestra CEOs, I don't know any of them to be Asian. I can't think of one. Not to mention women in general. So there's a lot of work to do.

Candace also speaks to this phenomenon.

> What I actually find curious about the classical music space for Asian Americans is that so many Asian Americans excel in this space as performers, especially women. Yet, yet. When it comes to leading an organization, let's say a Dean of a music school, or leading the New York Philharmonic, I don't see very many Asian women representation in those fields.

Representation

Most participants emphasized their need for community and belonging in the workplace, but the concept of belonging was interpreted in different ways. Naomi spoke about the importance of "a sense of belonging, belonging someplace" in her life. This sense of belonging informs her values and mission as an educator.

> Whether I am working with college students or adults, how do we take them from where they are? How do we make them feel comfortable in a space that may not be so comfortable, so that they can feel that sense of belonging? Because I think that's something that I lacked, or I didn't experience in a lot of areas of my life.

For Naomi, belonging became central to her life when she immigrated to the U.S. She states, "I think the biggest thing for me was when I came into the United States, I didn't speak English." She reflects further:

> I'm an immigrant and also a first-generation student as well. The one in my family to actually get higher education. So I was kind of the one, from that sense, not belonging, I kind of did my own thing.

Talia describes her own mission for belonging for her students: "If our students of color, female-identifying, and other underrepresented students don't feel like they belong and they don't have a voice or aren't up for the same opportunities… What kind of experience is that?"

Many participants revealed that they associated belonging with representation for marginalized groups. They asserted that representation within all constituents of a music school, including faculty, staff, and leadership, will contribute to the overall equity and inclusivity of music schools. Candace spoke about the implications of a leadership team without diversity.

> I started to think about who's in power, who's in charge? How is that impacting the ones

> who are not at the table? How can those who are literally not at the table participate in creating an organization or a set of values when they're not there?

Emma describes her feelings when she realized, “there was nobody that looked like me” in roles that have decision-making power. She recalls her experiences as a music student that led her to a path in leadership:

> I realized that I didn't feel like I fully belonged. And then I realized, it's because the people who actually make decisions that matter to me in terms of my day-to-day life as a student and my friends… There was nobody that looked like me that voiced these opinions that mattered to sometimes more than half of the students, or just a large chunk of the students.

Emma describes her desire for adequate representation of Asians and Asian Americans on administrative teams and other areas of leadership, in order to properly address the needs of one of music’s largest minority populations. She talks about the positive impact of “friends who look like me and who would understand my struggles, day-to-day struggles,” and wishes that they were part of her work community. She continues:

> When I look at the administration, nobody looks like me. I didn't go to a school where one person looked like me. So I didn't think that anybody was speaking for me, for my culture. And it really confused me that they were trying to diversify their staff but they go straight to other minority communities, which there's nothing wrong with. But I believe that you should first reflect how your students look, and then work on what you lack. It was just really confusing to me as a student.

Conversely, Sera did not see representation as an important factor while she was a student, stating, “I never needed to seek people who look like me.” However, her anecdote

shows that representation matters to her Asian-identifying students in her current workplace, particularly those who have grown up in predominantly White communities.

> One day I realized suddenly that now I have so many more Asian-identifying students than before, when I first started. One student and I were chatting and I said, Hey, I just noticed that now we have more Asian students in the orchestra, and I don't think it was like this when I first started. And then he said, Yeah, because we wanted to be in a place where the teacher is someone like me, like us.

Some participants acknowledged "the doors are slowly opening" through shifts in Hollywood and other forms of media. They determined that the exposure of Asian Americans in movies and music has helped people better understand cultures and traditions of Asian Americans beyond stereotypical tropes. One participant pointed out that more theater companies are open to diversity and have implemented non-traditional casting in their shows.

Discrimination

Discrimination emerged as a multi-faceted phenomenon in most participants' narratives. Sometimes, they showed up in overt ways, as Emma states: "I was reminded that I was a minority every day." Other times, discriminatory instances were more nuanced and subtle, but "just as damaging." Candace alludes to this issue.

> The part that I find very challenging to define is the implicit bias and discrimination. How do you point a finger at that? It's hard to prove when it's not violence and when it's not an actual verbal threat or other types of derogatory, racially charged words. When it's none of those, what do you point to and say, that's how I was discriminated against?

Candace states that she has begun to question certain experiences she had initially attributed to her own actions, such as not working hard enough. She states, "now that I'm looking

at it through a different lens, I think it's entirely conceivable that those challenges that I've encountered over the course of my career were a result of discrimination." Some participants struggled to convey the distress around their lived experiences. Sera points out that "there are things you can't really understand what it means when people aren't actually living it. But the lived experience is totally different. And the perception is also totally different."

One participant who serves on a leadership team in a higher music education institution revealed that data on minorities used for policy decisions frequently excluded Asians. It was important to her that she was at the decision table to speak up on behalf of the issue, because "nobody had been at that table who looked like me, not even male." She recalled:

> Oftentimes, we were just considered as White-passing. And when people talked about minority, it often excluded Asians, and I've made it a point to ask people to clarify what they mean by minority. And when they say, it doesn't mean your kind, I go, can you please specify that? You mean like an underrepresented minority? And I just kindly explain that whenever you say something like that, it makes me disappear. It makes my identity disappear.

Julie noted how this exclusionary practice can be seen in faculty demographics at one particular institution:

> The first thing I think you can do is actually have open searches at your music school, because I know for sure that they're not open. No, I've heard that they're not open. Otherwise, how can you have an all-White faculty? I mean, that's just amazing to me.

Of my participants, Emma, Talia, and Sera strongly believed that gender was the predominant factor behind their discrimination. As one person declared, "I'm a person who

believes that America is more sexist than racist." Emma describes an incident at her music school:

> I had a male faculty member scream in my face, saying that I don't tell him what to do. It was clearly a gender thing because he had been either going over my head or he would only talk to male workers. And to be screamed at like that and be disrespected like that was a very difficult thing, something I didn't think that I would experience at this age. After I said no one too many times, he decided never to speak to me ever again. And so I'm like, I can't do my job if there's no communication.

She talks about her struggles as a female with society's perceptions of an ideal leader: "I want to be a leader people can trust and talk to. But I think as a female leader, that's a really tricky thing to balance. It's so easy for them to not take you as seriously, because you're friendly." She adds, "it's a very White man's world and we live in it. And I was supposed to be thankful."

Talia also reflected on her experiences as a female leader. She tells me about some of her observations:

> I've seen this happen in meetings where a woman will raise her hand and make a point. And then the chair of the committee, who was a man, basically just ignored her comment and said, "Okay, thanks", and then didn't acknowledge it. When her ideas were brought up later, he never gave her credit for those ideas.

She remarks that most women in leadership encounter these microaggressions, and "when you add the layer of race on top of that, it's exacerbated." Talia's own lived experiences have been subtle and insidious.

> I have a colleague who over the past year, when I would make any kind of omission in an

> email, just the most minor things, he would frequently correct them in front of other people. Basically, unless I am literally perfect in all of my verbal and written communication, I'm going to be called out for that.

She talks about her struggles with another male colleague who frequently interrogates her about her background and experience, often in a passive-aggressive, demeaning way. She states that these are some of the difficulties in being a woman leader: “We can't be too good. We can't be too good and we can't be horrible. Because I mean, you'll never get there. But you also need to be careful. You can't show how much you know.”

Sera describes her experiences around her intersectionality:

> I will say being an Asian American woman is something newer to me. Because for the first half of my career, my battle was more about being a woman leader. I was fighting that gender fire, that gender war.”

Some other examples of gender discrimination that participants faced included being called by their first name as the head administrator, while subordinate male colleagues would automatically be referred to by their titles or honorifics such as Dr. or Mr. When taking requests from people, participants described that the person would not take no for an answer, but if a male colleague said no, that was uncontested. Other undermining behaviors included being treated as an administrative assistant or getting “ad hominem statements” such as being introduced as the “current Chair, for now.”

Many participants brought up the impact of larger systemic barriers, both around their gender and race. Sera alludes to the perceptions of Asian Americans as model minorities:

> We are the good immigrants. So whenever there is a problem, it's very often deemed as an individual thing, not a systemic thing. But from my observation and from what I

> have experienced, with the Latinx and Black American communities, we tend to think more as a system breaking down.

Talia states that for more prestigious institutions, “there's more gatekeeping and exclusionary practices, and policies that are set up to benefit those who are in power and to keep that power within the grasp of those who have it.” Julie shares her poignant views on discrimination and empathy:

> The only reason I don't think anybody should have gone through the childhood that I did is because it was terrible. But if I look at it, it taught me empathy. It taught me the importance and value of other human beings. And I really understand what it is to be an outsider and a minority. So that's the mission in my life as an adult now. When I come across racism, I reflect, how do I help so this experience doesn't happen to somebody else?

Biculturalism

When asked about the journeys as Asian Americans, participants shared rich, diverse, and complex stories. Much of their experiences are pivotal to their paths in music and leadership. Most participants were born in different countries and immigrated to the U.S. at various ages. One participant was born in the U.S. but immediately moved back to her home country, affecting her “right to feel like I belonged” in either place. Another participant spoke about belonging to two different ethnic cultures and being perceived by others as different from being Asian: “The Asian me sometimes feels like that's even more hidden, like I'm invisible.”

Another participant journeyed around different parts of Asia before coming to the U.S., where her native language and traditions were largely absent in her home. She states that she

finds her journey and transitions meaningful and challenging in retrospect because they were formative in how she saw herself in American culture:

> My experiences as a young Asian girl was growing up in America and going to a very small high school, where basically my sisters and I were the only Asians in the school. And there was the continuation of that feeling of being othered, which I think definitely has a cumulative effect on a person's psyche.

When another participant recalled growing up in a very rural part of the country, she tells me about her earliest memories:

> We were like the only family of color for miles. I think to some degree, it probably looked like a family of aliens that landed in the middle of this farm field. It was the 80's, and there was a lot of resentment against the Japanese because of the economic situation. But one of my first conscious thoughts was, I'm getting out of here. I mean, that's actually one of the first memories I have, which was that I have to leave here.

As an Asian American born in the U.S., one participant told me about her perspectives around othering and belonging:

> The interesting thing is that my mom would say, oh, it's harder for you. Because she accepted when people called her a foreigner, to go back to her country. She was like, okay, I came here, so I'm a foreigner. But she said it's different for you because you were born here. And when people say that to you, it's like you have no home. So I think that our parents, for whatever reason they left their countries, they still grew up as the majority.

In their early years, most participants experienced robust support and exposure to music education. Talia says, "my mother loved music and she would always sit with us to practice. So

that was really important." Sera also shares something similar: "My mom really loves music, she loves singing. But she didn't have the opportunity when she was growing up… so she was very determined that she wanted her kids to learn music." Julie talks about the critical support and mentorship she received from her childhood music teacher, who drove her to and from lessons an hour away from home, and the wider network of musicians who helped introduce her to important mentors and teachers.

Participants' cultural backgrounds and their experiences with biculturalism have been influential to them as leaders. One recurrent cultural value that most participants experienced in their childhoods was the emphasis on being polite and refraining from complaining. This resulted in feelings of not knowing when to speak up, particularly as women in leadership roles. I asked Emma about her thoughts:

> In terms of what Asian or Asian American musicians feel day-to-day… would be that we probably don't know when we could speak. Nobody told us not to speak either. That's also a thing. But probably it is hard to tell when we could speak up.
>
> Naomi tells me about an anecdote from her childhood:
>
> It's like in Chinese food, you take chopsticks and you take from the plate of food. And there's a plate full of food and everybody shares it, and I chose the one I wanted. I was very rude and I chose from the one further away from me, and I remember being yelled at for that, instead of having a choice.
>
> And so sometimes I forget that I can make choices on my own and not try to please others. I've been in a lot of leadership roles, but I still forget that sometimes I'm still succumbing to, oh, don't speak up. It's hard for me to speak up, hard for me to feel

like I have a voice, hard to be heard. So that's definitely a challenge for me. Every day, even now.

Talia also experienced these cultural values in her childhood home that constantly reminded her: “Don't ask any questions, keep your head down, work hard and do your job. Don't get in trouble and don't be the troublemaker. And don't bring shame to the family.” Candace says: “When I was growing up in my household, I was a very spirited child. I laughed too loud, or I talked too loud, or I talked back, and those were big no-no's for a woman to do.” She reflects, “I think part of it is our culture, our own culture of not seeing women as you know, strong leaders but followers.”

These cultural values in some Asian communities affect the qualities and aspects of their relationships with others. Candace talks about *code switching*, alternating and adjusting one’s conscious and subconscious behaviors and actions to a dominant group.

How do I code switch? You know, you convey respect, you don't approach elders in the same way. You even bow your head a little bit and have a more subservient posture versus a more assertive posture. So when we think about leadership roles and the body language, already you're grappling with two different ways of even physically existing and interacting with people. So I'm thinking about when you walk into, let's say a boardroom, or having to be assertive as a leader, how does my body language convey my discomfort or conflict in the way that I exist?

Code switching went hand-in-hand with what many participants described as a form of self-monitoring. Candace continues, “I'm thinking about what effect that had on me to have to suppress how I just impulsively react to something, versus thinking one step further about how it's perceived and how I'm supposed to behave.” Talia remarks, “I feel like there's always this

need to check myself before I say anything." Naomi explains further: "It takes a lot of self-monitoring and watching myself from a different perspective to say, am I really being reflective before I choose to speak, or am I being submissive? You know, because of normally being dominated."

Naomi acknowledges that there are positive aspects to self-monitoring. She states, "the way I sometimes operate is I work better when I observe first, I observe first before I act." Sera noted that she wasn't equipped with the "coping mechanisms" that some Asian Americans developed because she immigrated at a later age. She states, "You don't know what it is you're doing, how you were taught, until you're in a different culture." When she suddenly found herself in a different culture with different expectations, Sera recalls:

> I had to relearn some social cues. And also find a way that is still genuinely me, because I can't just ditch all the politeness or the education that I had. You need to learn how your behaviors are interpreted and perceived. I think we need to find a way to show our strength that is both acceptable for us and for our colleagues.

Another commonality that most participants spoke about was being perceived as a White-adjacent race. However, participants had different experiences in how they perceived themselves as a minority. Emma states that "we're considered White-passing, so we're not even considered as a group of needs." Sera recounts her experiences in applying for a program that "welcomed communities from historically underrepresented communities, and Asian was not one of them. So it was like, if you're White or Asian, you're not diversity." Julie talks about grappling with the idea of White adjacency, stating:

> Why does it feel so complicated? Our presence? And then you look at some of the successful Asians in classical music, and you see examples of total White adjacency. And

> what I realized is, the people that are very well known, they were the stereotypes of how White people see Asians.

She goes on to say that due to the clear placement of racial hierarchy in this country, she truly believes, “it's about staying true to yourself.” Sera tries to epitomize the positionality of Asian Americans: “You are not a minority while you are a minority.” She goes on to say:

> Minority is a really complicated issue because it's not just about numbers, it's also about resources and perceptions and the system. Asian Americans are in between, you're like sandwiched. You have advantages because you don't cause problems. So to maintain your advantage and your resources, you have to continue being great. But a lot of times, you're not really receiving the real advantages. It's just the shadow of someone else's privilege. And then they give it to you and you have to be grateful, and to be the leader of all immigrants and all people of color. So yes, we are a minority but a lot of times we can't really act like a minority.

Talia talks about the positive sides of the issue, stating: “I feel like I've learned a lot about having the recognition that that is what I am. I'm White-adjacent. And I need to be conscious of that positionality and all the intersectionalities of being Asian and a woman.”

Candace had a different experience throughout her career, saying, “I never actually perceived myself as a BIPOC leader. That was something that only more recently I've come to be aware of, because I lived and existed in a White community for so long.” She was initially hesitant about her beliefs and opinions about what being a BIPOC leader entailed. She further notes that part of the reason she was not aware of or thinking about her identity was because she felt she had to assimilate, in order to survive. She states: “It wasn't like I wasn't seeing it. Maybe

I knew it deep down but didn't want to spend time or waste energy fighting that battle. Maybe because by ignoring it, it doesn't exist."

The idea of Asian Americans as White-adjacent runs parallel with seeing them as a monolithic group. Within higher music education schools, Emma states:

> Asian students who come from Asia go through very different things, their struggles will be very different, right? It's a completely different language, different culture, and the people who look like them but don't really speak their language. And so you need to cater to both groups of students.

Julie reiterates this issue, saying that "there are very broad and sloppy categorizations of race in the United States that categorize Asians in this one space. But I mean, the Hmong have a totally different experience from a Korean American or a Chinese American."

Proving Oneself

Many participants grappled with work obligations that they felt were connected to stereotypes of being docile and hard workers. Candace states, "I can tell you in general terms that because of my background, people expect me to work a lot without thinking that people have limits. It's somehow just expected." However, this is juxtaposed with participants' own determination to meet expectations regardless of personal sacrifice. Candace believes there is an internal and external relationship:

> I do expect to work hard and do whatever I'm doing to the best of my ability. So then when a project is done well, of course you're going to be asked to do something else. You take that on because you're accustomed to saying yes to things instead of no. The inner expectation of wanting to do the best you can, and then you're asked to do more, it's just sort of a self-fulfilling, self-curse kind of thing. When

you're efficient and you do it well, then you get more projects. More responsibilities.

Talia and Candace reflect on their own complicity in meeting unreasonable work demands, potentially setting an unhealthy example for other women of color. They have observed their White male counterparts draw appropriate boundaries for themselves, where "they've just simply said, I'm not going to do it for this amount of money. This is beyond the scope of my position."

Talia tells me, "I was always taught from a very early age that even if you're unhappy with the situation, you just put your head down, work hard. Don't ask any questions." However, she notes that this has sometimes resulted in assumptions about Asian Americans being "the worker bees" that will "always produce, always bring glory to the institution." She reflects:

> When I'm looking back over the years, I feel a sense of regret that I didn't stick up for myself during those early years. I didn't ask the questions that I should have asked. I didn't have any kind of a questioning attitude as a music professional in higher education to begin with.

Candace states something similar:

> One thing is just the amount of work that was expected of me without any additional compensation, and that I did it furthermore, without asking for more. That's on me. I fell into that model of just shut up and work, you know? And I think that's my responsibility of not being able to put my foot down from the onset. And I don't think I'm setting a good example for future leaders: female, BIPOC, all of that. So I am aware that my behavior is not helping further the field or further minority leaders.

The data also revealed that all six participants possess a very strong sense of purpose, drive, and willpower. Emma describes herself as a "fearless person in terms of experiencing life

and career options," with a "laser focus and vision." She was determined to learn everything there was and "jumped at opportunities" that enabled her to gain a wide variety of experience. She states: "I've had a few bosses who'd make ridiculous asks because they have no idea what it takes to do that kind of job. And so I wanted to become a boss who understood all the inner workings." Sera suggests that the music profession is difficult, saying, "you have to be so tough and determined to even just stay in this profession. Otherwise a lot of people quit." She describes her tenacity:

> I am almost always really strong-willed. And I go after what I want. I think it might be that I know I have to make something happen for myself, otherwise it won't happen to me. In terms of my dreams, I told myself, I can't ignore it anymore. I need to face it, I need to do something about it.

Naomi tells me about pursuing her goals, saying, "no one can tell me to do that, right? I've always been very motivated like that. Maybe because I've always had to do things on my own." Naomi also candidly voices her occasional feelings of self-doubt: "It really is the Asian in me, and it's like, are you good enough? Are you articulate enough with your language? Are you smart enough? Are you all of these, are you enough?"

Talia states: "I wanted to prove myself. Maybe I should take responsibility for these feelings of needing to prove myself. Maybe it's just me wanting to do everything. Be excellent, and wanting the highest quality possible in everything I do." Candace similarly speaks to the need for excellence and quality in her work: "When I find a challenge, I'm going to try to overcome it and do the best I can. Quality, right? I really enjoy challenges and solving problems, and I am truly passionate about music education for all people." Julie indicates that "this career

is not a sprint, this is a marathon. You have a vision and a philosophy and a mission, and you don't stop until you get there."

Leader Responsibility

Participants' interests in music evolved from a deep, instinctive love of music-making. Significantly, those who had experienced instances of othering and conflicting cultural values regarded music as a source of connection to their environments. Talia describes her feelings:

> It's where I feel most at home because through music, I'm able to say whatever I want and I don't have to censor myself, which in retrospect, thinking about my childhood, I do feel like I was constantly censoring myself because that's what I was taught. That the best way to thrive and be alive in this world is just to watch what you say and say very little.

Emma holds a similar perspective on the role of music in her life:

> Music is a way of communicating without words. And so I was able to be with people, communicate, and just collaborate with friends without having to speak a lot of words. And yes, there were really tough moments, but I think without that kind of connection, they would have been a lot tougher.

One participant tells me about her memories listening to a popular Western song sung in her native language. She listened to this song repeatedly when she was very young and describes it as "a transitional object that helped me bridge the gap into this new world, this new culture from where I was. The song was sort of my sense of comfort and transition into the world." Another participant conveys that "a world without Arts is really dull. I can't imagine living without that beauty in your life, whether it's music or dance or visual arts. I just loved music, I just wanted to play." Sera shares an evocative anecdote:

> I went to a concert by Berlin Philharmonic and I sat on the choral bench, just behind the

> timpanis. And even though they were ignoring the conductor, they were just having so much fun and they played beautiful music. I only recognized a few tunes, but I felt I was a part of it. And that was such an *amazing* [emphasis added] thing. So I thought, this is where I should be, this is where I really belong.

All six Asian American women share a strong sense of responsibility as current musicians and leaders in their fields, which in turn inform their views and career experiences. Their beliefs will be summarized below according to each individual.

Julie - Advocating for Others

Julie's foremost mission as an educator and musician is to speak up against injustice: "I wish it wasn't me, but if I don't say anything, it's never going to change. Someone has to say something." This remains one of Julie's most important responsibilities as a leader in the arts. She believes the most satisfying thing in life is to advocate for other people, not just herself. Acknowledging that "everyone is busy," she states, "but making that decision to help somebody else... I think that's what I learned is the most important part in my life at this point. That you actually have a life mission that's not just about yourself." She hopes to "be able to help advocate for enough people so that being a complex, complicated person at the center is the norm. That you have the freedom to be that." Julie, like other participants in the study, sees her charge as not only helping Asian Americans but "all artists-of-color, women, and non-binary" folks.

Sera - Facilitation

Sera's leadership values are defined by a collectivist approach and involve facilitating for others. She states that a leader is "someone who facilitates a group of people in completing certain things, either completing a project or meeting a goal." This facilitation can mean standing in front of others and giving a speech, or giving a pep talk and encouraging her staff and

students. Alternatively, it could also mean "being there, silently supporting, and your presence makes something." She acknowledges that at this stage she is not certain how this facilitation works with other components of leadership, but she states that it is a "process, and it does require leadership skills and personal skills." Interestingly, she has learned throughout her career in leadership to center herself more in her various projects and organizations, rather than portray her accomplishments as a larger group effort.

Naomi - Creating Space

Naomi's objective in higher music education is creating space for others. She aspires to create a path for people's ideas and voices so that they can contribute and make things stronger. At the same time, she talks about the importance of having a vision, and "knowing how to filter that information for what the vision is and say, Okay, what is going to be most helpful for this situation?" She talks about leadership as "having a certain amount of initiative, a certain amount of independence and problem-solving skills," as well as "finding ways to figure it out, or people to help you, or resources to help do that." She states that a leader must constantly be "learning and evolving," and sometimes puts in extra work and effort in order to meet her intentions with students: "I have to do the back work, I have to do all of that stuff to prepare, while also creating space for other people."

Talia - Culture

Talia's leadership philosophy centers on cultivating a culture of equity and inclusivity. She states, "we have a charge to provide a meaningful educational and musical experience." She spoke about prior leaders she admired who asked tough questions and nurtured an inclusive sense of culture. She believes that "anyone who is in a position of leadership has a responsibility of setting the tone in the classroom, in the department, in the group." As a woman in higher

education, it is her mission to “expose these faulty ways of thinking that are insidious” and lead to discriminatory practices. She expresses, “I have to live my life in this leadership position having self-respect, and also educating those around me about how I should be treated.” She continues to stay true to herself in a career that often demands another approach, saying, “This is my lane. So this is how I'm going to approach it.”

Candace - Vision

One of Candace’s foremost beliefs is “having a vision, a conviction and a vision of why you are doing what you're doing.” As a leader, one must be energized and passionate. Optimism is also an extremely important quality, because “things are difficult when you're leading an arts organization,” and there needs to be an “ability to be persuasive, that comes through in your passion.” A good leader recognizes that relationship building is partly the ability to empathize with the duties of various staff, so “connecting with people” and learning about their line of work helps understand the level of commitment and hard work it takes. She states, “I'm thinking more about how I focus my time and energy in such a way that it has the greatest impact on the field.” Some initiatives include getting students more involved in the arts education by providing affordable lessons and tuition-free programs and being conscious of the difficulties of immigrant families.

Emma - Representation and Support

For Emma, leadership means, “not leading people from the front, but supporting from behind. Shielding your people from unnecessary things, protecting them so that they can do their work.” Her first and foremost mission is representing musicians, but as someone at the decision table, it also means “having uncomfortable conversations,” such as helping people understand different perspectives, educating students about biases and prejudice, and “making changes or

offering to make those changes by yourself." She asserts that her actions are sometimes "uncharted territory," and she will make a lot of mistakes and be okay with it, "because at least others will be able to learn from that." She feels proud to be able to care for students behind the scenes. As a current leader secure in her role, she realizes she must "step up more" so that the onus of speaking up is not put on those who are beginning their careers.

Systemic Support

Most participants attributed "pure luck" as a component in their formative years and early career success. Naomi states:

> I think I'm really fortunate because as far as when I went to college and studied music, I was very new to music. So how I got here, I don't know because it was just pure luck that I ended up taking on this role. So it was just pure luck."

Talia emphasizes that "fortunate is an understatement… the incredible blessings in my life when it comes to these fortuitous events surrounding musical training." She continues about her present career: "It all kind of just came my way. I don't really believe in accidents but if I were to describe it, it would seem like these were just arbitrary things that came into my life." Emma describes the same feeling:

> I'm very lucky that I was able to figure things out on my own and just follow what my gut instinct told me. That's just a series of luck and, of course, hard work and tying my passion with my skills. It's definitely to me just a series of lucky events, all happenstance and random events that I was able to make lemonade with.

The subject of luck and fortune led to identifying other factors that helped guide the early stages of their careers, such as mentorship. Out of the six participants in the study, most did not experience any mentors who shared their identity. Furthermore, they expressed awe at this new

awareness as they reflected on the absence of AAW teachers, colleagues, or role models in their past experiences. When asked about avenues of support and mentorship specifically as an Asian American woman looking for career advancement, Emma replied:

> None. Oh, I just got so sad. Yeah, none. All I had was my instincts. Yeah, I think I definitely had just me. That's so bad. Yes, so depressing. I can't think of one.

Mentorship felt crucial to the participants because they often felt isolated in their early careers. Talia tells me her lessons:

> I think the negative part is just having to find my own way. Trial by fire and learn from my own mistakes in not having proper boundaries, not standing up for myself, not teaching people how I wanted to be treated. I didn't learn that until very, very late in my career. And if I had learned that at the outset, I think it would have been a huge help. Or if I had even seen it modeled by someone.

The wisdom needed to navigate higher education as a woman is something that a mentor could provide a person beginning their career. Additionally, the lack of AAW mentors leads to a barrier in pathways to mentorship. Emma describes this phenomenon:

> Those who are more established had to create and find a path for themselves, so they're not programmed to help others. Because they had to figure everything out on their own and be independent, and had to be strong. And so, I just feel like there's not a lot of passing down kind of thing. And also, there's not a lot of people to pass it down to.

Although most participants did not experience AAW mentorship as students, they talked about systemic implementations that were influential in their careers. Naomi states that having a senior faculty mentor, although not an AAW, has been very helpful and valuable. She feels comfortable because "she's very neutral and giving and helpful, and knows exactly who to reach

out to, whether or not you have questions or need help." Talia similarly speaks about an administrator who is supportive because "he is a really good listener… he listened to both of us tell our sides of the story and asked a lot of questions. I think he just kept it very logical."

Sera attests that "for a mentorship program to succeed, you need funding and very strong support from the top." She explains that mentorship takes skills, and if there is no support system for people to develop into a better mentor, it can deteriorate. She states, "for something to be successful, you need a support system. It's not enough for one person just wanting to mentor others." She described a particular program at her school that provides two mentors for every new faculty member, including those outside of the new faculty member's department. The goal behind having two different mentors was to provide a variety of opinions and offer different feedback. When advocating for these types of programs, Sera tells me:

> What I need to do is to find an ally. I need to go partner with my chair and find resources for this to happen. I'm not going to say, hey, I need mentors, you need to give me money. That is not going to work. I need to strategize it and make it become a thing that is beneficial for the entire school and not just me, even though I want it.

Allies are an important part of equity and inclusion and may sometimes be a valuable substitution for mentorship. Sera explains, "find other women to talk to… what I found is, that is a really useful thing. Even if they're not women in your field or at your institution." Naomi tells me about allies in her network:

> I have a very good friend who is Asian and who, before I took on this role, has helped me in understanding how things work in academia, especially for women of color and of Asian descent. That has been very helpful. So while I did not have a professor, I do have a peer who has been not just a wonderful friend, but also in the know of how these things

work. And experienced struggles themselves.

Talia recounts her own experience with an ally:

> I remember making a statement during a meeting that was related to discomfort. My colleague, who I wasn't friends with yet at that point, reached out and said, Oh hey, if you ever want to get coffee, if there's anything I can do to help, I'm here. So that felt really great, especially coming from someone who has been at the place for a long time and understands some of the politics. Since that year, we've worked together on a lot of initiatives related to DEI, and I always feel like he has my back.

Ultimately, Naomi reminds AAW to follow our own instinctual feelings. “I go with my internal instinct and say, I know. I think somehow inside we know. That's the trust too, and also saying, I'm enough. Trust in me.”

Qualitative Rigor

I maintained qualitative rigor by ensuring credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability throughout my research. Credibility involves understanding phenomena through knowledge and meanings construed by the participant. I established credibility by conducting member checks with each participant and asking them for their views on the findings and interpretations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The prolonged engagement with each participant assisted with collaboratively finding deeper meanings within the data. The use of a focus group session is also a component of validity due to the shift of power to participants, thus preventing me from drawing preliminary conclusions about the data (Conway, 2020).

I enhanced transferability, the ability to transfer results to other contexts, by writing rich, thick descriptions of participants’ experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Readers will be able to judge whether results are transferable to their own settings by reading the rich descriptions and

contexts provided in this dissertation and determining whether there are shared similarities that can be transferred to their own environments.

Dependability is based on whether a study would generate the same results if repeated. Throughout the study, I meticulously identified and documented my data collection and analysis procedures in an outline. I repeatedly revised my outline as changes were made to the analysis scheme, creating an audit trail of the changes in the process. This audit trail provides a clear guideline for a researcher attempting to repeat the study.

Confirmability indicates whether results of a qualitative study can be confirmed or corroborated by others. Having a peer review with my fellow doctoral colleagues assisted with rechecking my methodology and discussing emerging, sometimes contradictory conclusions throughout the analysis. An important component of confirmability are the memos in my researcher's journal, which I used to record my biases about the study and how it may influence coding and interpretative analysis. The role of reflexivity during the research process helped me to understand my own pre-understandings, and how I used these to move toward new interpretations of aspects of the phenomenon.

Researcher Bias

As stated above, I used my researcher's journal to document my biases, particularly due to the parallels between myself and the participants. Validity in qualitative research concerns the potential influence of a researcher's values and expectations on both the study process and its conclusions (Maxwell, 2013). Because this was hermeneutic research, my goal was not to eliminate my beliefs and preconceptions; rather, I wanted to maintain research integrity by clearly naming my biases, in order to understand their potential effects on aspects of the study—for example, the design of interview questions or data analysis.

I initially recorded goals for the research and the assumptions I had about the study. My goal was to capture the unique characteristics of my participants' lived experiences, in order to understand the rich, multi-faceted nature of the phenomenon. My primary assumption was that I would discover results that were similar to those found in previous studies on Asian American women, due to commonly shared experiences in Western society. This assumption was further reinforced after findings from the pilot study confirmed what was reported in the literature review.

After this confirmation from the pilot study, I attempted to reduce further influence on the research by keeping the interview protocol as open-ended as possible, in order to solicit the most authentic and inductive responses from participants. For the pilot study, my interview protocol was structured around key areas outlined in the literature review. While conducting the dissertation study, I addressed these areas in my questions, but left them much more open, allowing participants the freedom to talk about what they felt was most significant in their lived experiences. An example of an open-ended interview question is: "Can you tell me about your current role? Is this a role you have always desired?" This question asks participants about their career trajectories, but allows them to name factors, as well as emotions and observations, that have been influential in their individual journeys to leadership.

Another strategy I used was a researcher identity memo, which helped me examine my goals, experiences, assumptions, feelings, and values (Maxwell, 2013). In completing the identity memo, I journaled about specific prior experiences, how these experiences and my pre-existing assumptions led me to this topic, and how I was approaching the project. I also outlined potential advantages and disadvantages that my goals, beliefs, and experiences could present during the study. Investigating my own personal descriptions of lived experiences helped me to

articulate how others might share them, and I gradually built and practiced my self-awareness around my conscious and unconscious biases. I also utilized memoing to note biases from others that I observed in my surroundings.

Finally, this hermeneutic study required me to be aware of the structures of my own experiences in order to begin to discover meanings behind the text (van Manen, 2016). As I conducted my data analysis, I interpreted findings through my subjective perspective and my own hermeneutic reflections as an Asian American woman; put differently, I formed my interpretations of the data through my personal racial, gendered, and cultural lens. I strove to remain open to new meanings and thematic material from participants' accounts while attending to the essence of the experience, and I oriented my reflexivity to the topic as an intersubjective experience for all Asian American women.

Final Phenomenological Synthesis

Asian American women leaders in higher music education experience internal and external influences in their everyday lifeworlds. In the music field, they encounter common stereotypes of Asian American women, such as being docile, passive, and submissive. In higher music education, such typecasting negatively affects how others perceive their competence and ability to lead, because their prescriptive stereotypes are contradictory to ideals of male White leadership. It has also contributed to the paucity of Asian American women leaders in decision-making roles in higher music education.

Asian and Asian American students lack a sense of belonging in their spaces because they are not represented by people in positions of power who can make decisions that matter in their day-to-day lives. Both Asian-identifying students and faculty have noted that it is important to have people "who look like me" in all positions in the academic hierarchy; otherwise, they

feel they are partitioned into their "own corner" that does not include certain positions or ranks in the discipline.

Beyond stereotypes and typecasting, Asian American women face both overt and subtle instances of discrimination. Women in high-level roles are especially prone to biases that discredit female leadership; often, they find that their ideas ignored, or that they are unfairly and acutely judged for their actions. For Asian American women, their race often intersects with these gender biases, as they face such common racialized experiences as being characterized as White-adjacent, and being subject to the model minority myth. These perceptions lead to their exclusion from important institutional policies, and pigeonhole them into the roles of reliable "worker bees." Although Asian women might be considered honorary Whites, they are also often typecast as the "designated colored person" in their music schools; as such, they are reminded of their minority status, all the while not being considered as members of a group with needs. In sum, they experience painful lived experiences that are often implicit and difficult to articulate comprehensively.

Beginning with often remarkable immigration journeys, Asian American women's childhoods are dominated by the will to belong in a society that sees them as the "other." The foreignness of their environments is tempered by the communal nature of music-making, which can bring them a sense of belonging and comfort. As these young women navigate through their childhoods and into their careers as adults, they begin to analyze the complex duality between the cultural values they experience in their home, versus the dominant cultures and behaviors they encounter in the workplace.

Because of cultural values dictating that they "work hard, and don't ask questions," they often accept disproportionate amounts of work, no matter the personal cost. Certain other

cultural values, such as the importance of not complaining or speaking too loudly, become barriers to landing and managing a leadership role. Asian American women subsequently begin to self-monitor their behavior in public spaces, often thinking pre-reflectively about how their body language or behavior may reinforce prescriptive stereotypes. The dual internal/external influences emerge as foundational for Asian American women in leadership, as they battle their twofold conflicts in Western society.

These conflicts around belonging and adapting to dominant ideals enable Asian American women to develop determination, independence, and a strong sense of purpose in their careers. In addition, there are two other aspects of their unique lifeworlds that help fuel that resolve and sense of individuality. For one, although they experienced difficulties as immigrants, these women acknowledge their privilege in having had access to quality music education, and are compelled to believe that this privilege, along with a series of seemingly serendipitous events, eventually led them to a career in music. Coupled with the general lack of support from colleagues, including insufficient mentorship by other Asian American women, these women develop an outlook characterized by self-agency and self-efficacy. They are women who "figure things out on their own" in order to assimilate, adapt, and thrive in their environments.

Another noteworthy aspect of these women's determination is the degree to which it is guided by a strong sense of purpose, along with a vision of fighting not only against anti-Asian sentiment within higher music education, but for social justice against White supremacy. They defy people's preconceptions about them by speaking up about injustice, seeking to create space for every person to have a meaningful experience in music education. They use their rich lived experiences to educate others about the complex histories and positionalities of Asian Americans, while actively supporting other marginalized groups at the same time. Together with

allies, they form an important coalition that is dedicated to bringing equity and inclusion to higher music education.

Chapter IV outlined key thematic areas that define Asian American women leaders' experiences in higher music education and provided a final phenomenological synthesis of the research findings. Next, Chapter V brings historical and social context to these findings by introducing previous scholarship on Asian American women. van Manen (2016) reminds us that in thematic analysis, themes overlap and implicate meanings' dimensions with each other, rather than standing alone as separate entities. In particular, the issues of gender biases, presence of fortuity, and White adjacency emerged as meaningful patterns that warrant deeper consideration in the discussion. Finally, the chapter will end with a critical counter-narrative that utilizes AsianCrit to depict Asian American women's fight for social justice.

Chapter V

Discussion

"Our ultimate objective in learning about anything is to try to create and develop a more just society."

– Yuri Kochiyama

My goal for this dissertation project was to learn more about Asian American women leaders in music and higher music education. To do so, I collected stories from six participants around the country in order to synthesize essential aspects that define Asian American women leading in America. Participants shared the ways in which racialized and gendered experiences from their childhoods, many of them traumatic, significantly shaped their career paths and interactions with others. Deeper analysis of the findings revealed three broad concepts related to adaptation to American culture, struggles for recognition within higher music education, and subsequent development of leadership values.

Crenshaw (1991) indicates that socially constructed categories have different meanings, values, and consequences that foster and create social hierarchies, which is an important consideration for research on women of color. Findings from the study support literature on Asian American women in higher education and the "common struggle" toward literation, as well as the "recognition of common interests that unite women cross-culturally, rather than an assumption of shared oppression" (Chowdhury & Philipose, 2016, p. 13). Specifically, preconceptions of Asian Americans as an overrepresented group, as well as stereotypes of being highly technical while lacking in creativity, have existed in higher education institutions for decades. In music, these stereotypes become double penalties since characteristics of creativity

support the very foundation of what it means to be a successful artist and leader. This is the first study focusing on the intersectional lived experiences of Asian American women in musical leadership, and I hope to add additional perspectives and insights to the literature on Asian American women's experiences in higher education.

My initial overarching purpose drives the central question in my research study: What are the lived experiences of Asian American women in leadership roles within departments and schools of higher music education? Three additional sub-questions helped to build context around the various facets of lived experiences:

1. What are formative decisions, experiences, or defining moments in your life that have led you to a career in music and leadership?
2. What kinds of challenges and biases have you experienced in higher music education that are tied to your race and gender?
3. What factors have had a positive impact on your career advancement in higher music education institutions?

As detailed in Chapter I, Asian Americans comprise a large portion of students in many schools of music, sometimes accounting for nearly half of the school population (Wang, 2009). Asian Americans are represented at higher numbers among music faculty than their other minority counterparts, although they are still not at parity with the number of Asian American students. Despite their success as performers and teachers, Asian American faculty and students are still subject to damaging stereotypes and xenophobic attitudes that are often ignored or unchallenged in higher music education (Yang, 2007; Yoshihara, 2007; Wang, 2009). These racial stereotypes, along with gender-based biases, have led to the underrepresentation of Asian American women in leadership roles—something that persists in performing arts organizations

and higher music education to this day (Yoshihara, 2007; Wang, 2015; Koh, 2021; Hernandez, 2021).

In Chapter IV, I described my process of code-mapping (Saldaña, 2021) and presented the findings of the study through seven thematic areas. In the third and fourth iterations of the code-mapping approach, I recategorized the thematic areas further by applying pattern coding, sorting selective interpretative statements into common concepts, and creating "think displays" to map out a visual analytic synthesis of the findings (Saldaña, 2021, p. 290). Eventually, the seven themes were transformed into three major concepts that capture the essence of Asian American women leaders' lived experiences in music, summarized in Table 4.

Table 4

Concepts of Asian American Women's Leaders' Lived Experiences

Concept	**Definition and Example**
The sense of self: Biculturalism and fortuity	**Definition:** Contradictory cultural values and dominant norms shaped career experiences. Luck and fortuity contributed to career aspirations and success. **Examples:** Participants learned how to speak up and assert their opinion, although cultural values in their home taught them otherwise; participants described being extremely "fortunate" to have access to quality music education and other opportunities in their childhoods.
The Asian American experience: Discrimination	**Definition:** Experiencing both overt and implicit race and gender biases as Asian American women. **Examples:** Participants experienced extreme workload burdens as female faculty; participants were left out of policy and diversity initiatives due to being perceived as model minorities and honorary Whites.
The path to social justice	**Definition:** Having a strong sense of responsibility for diversity and inclusion. Describing systemic structures that help with achieving DEI goals. **Examples:** Participants used their lived experiences to create better and more equitable experiences for students; funding and institutional programming helped participants to develop greater diversity initiatives for students.

The first section of Chapter V presents these three concepts in relation to each of the three sub-questions of the study. In the second section, I will expand on my interpretations by

discussing related theories in the literature. The last section utilizes AsianCrit, the main conceptual framework of this study, to provide a critical counter-narrative of Asian American women.

Concepts by Research Questions

Sub-question 1: The Sense of Self: Biculturalism and Fortuity

The first concept addresses the first sub-question of the study: What are formative decisions, experiences, or defining moments in your life that have led you to a career in music and leadership?

Belonging vs. Leadership Values

All six participants described their bicultural experiences as being formative parts of their journeys to becoming leaders in music. Whether immigrant or native-born, they spoke of growing up alongside a *perpetual foreigner* stereotype—the tendency to view Asian Americans as unassimilated foreigners deviating from mainstream culture, due to prototypes of Americans conceptualized in dominant narratives of Whiteness (Wu, 2002). This othering that participants experienced in their daily lives added to the lack of belonging that they often felt, both in their home countries and in the U.S.

Geographically grounded cultural differences, such as variances in racial diversity across the country, impacted how intensely participants experienced these feelings in their childhood. Regardless of these differences, participants made clear that instances of othering and the struggle for belonging were central to their development of community-based leadership values—among them, empathy, resilience, representing marginalized voices, creating space, pragmatism, and building strong relationships with others.

During interviews, music emerged as an important tool for cultivating a sense of belonging. Participants connected music to community and collaboration, and described it as an intuitive, formative conduit to their surrounding environments. They all experienced music in different ways; for example, by hearing children's songs in their native language, being connected to others through playing music together, or engaging in the act of listening to music and practicing an instrument. Across the board, these women's passion and love for the arts eventually carried them into a lifelong career in music.

The participants' love for music and belief in its value were instilled early in their childhoods with strong family support. One woman explained, "Music is a way of communicating without words. And so I was able to be with people, communicate, and just collaborate with friends without having to speak a lot of words." This expression captures the essence of the value of music in stressful circumstances. As the participants made clear, exposure to music education from a young age had a formative role in engaging them collaboratively in a trusting environment—a place where they did not have to be constantly on guard.

Cultural Values vs. Dominant Norms

Certain cultural values instilled in participants from an early age, such as modesty and presenting a deferential attitude, were formative in how they perceived their adaptation to dominant masculine White norms. As Asian American women currently in leadership roles, they struggled daily with conflicting lived body experiences of navigating between two different ways of thinking and acting. The tension between wanting to stay true to oneself and feeling the need to conform to dominant ideals was a challenge that resulted in habitual, and often unconscious, self-monitoring and self-reflection on their behaviors and presentation to others, especially within the leadership context.

Examples of lived body tensions included relearning body language in the presence of others, observing and changing social cues (such as speaking up within a large group), and "checking" oneself before making a comment. Some participants actively practiced being vocal and cultivating a diplomatic, assertive voice. They described observing cultural norms in their workplace and adjusting their behaviors, learning how to "turn off and turn on certain aspects" of themselves in the workplace (Hyun, 2005, p. 52). Speaking up was a particularly important part of breaking the barrier to advancement and resisting stereotypes of Asian American women as being passive and docile.

This dual internal/external conflict captures the essence of these women's struggles to reconcile their cultural values with society's perceptions and typecasting of Asian American women. In music, participants encountered similar stereotypes of Asian Americans as being shy, less creative, and less expressive than their White counterparts. Some experienced racial battle fatigue from being seen as the "designated colored person" in music schools. The dual internal (conflicting cultural values) and external (stereotypes and perceptions) influence was a recurrent theme in conversations with participants, and is confirmed through scholarship on bicultural experiences of Asian Americans in the workplace (Hyun, 2005; Chin, 2016; Paik et. al, 2018).

Fortuity vs. Self-Agency

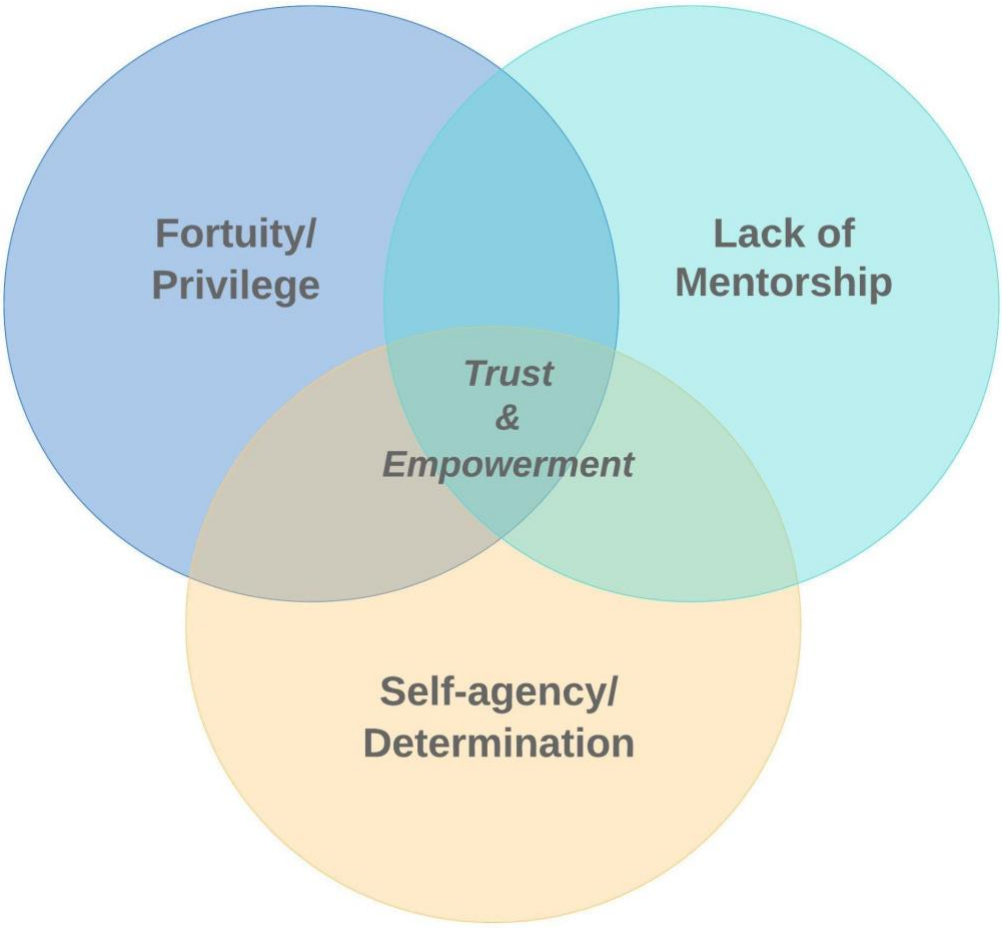
Participants cited fortuity as a defining factor in reaching their career aspirations in music. Almost all of them asserted in their narratives that "pure luck" had played a role in their success; this was one of the study's more surprising findings. Fortuity and privilege were consistently tied to positive experiences such as having access to quality music education and being introduced to key members of the music community. Due to their experiences as

immigrants in this country, participants may have seen their locus of control as more external to them, and less as something that they themselves could impact.

Because they felt they had less internal control over their circumstances, they developed a strong sense of self-efficacy and self-agency. The participants' lack of access to mentorship in the field further reinforced this self-agency, because "figuring everything out on their own" caused them to become "strong, independent, and determined" individuals. This unique trifecta of environmental circumstances represents the development of self-trust and empowerment in Asian American women leaders (Figure 6).

Figure 6

Trifecta of Environmental Essences



Sub-question 2: The Asian American Experience: Discrimination

The next concept addresses the second sub-question: What kinds of challenges and biases have you experienced in higher music education that are tied to your race and gender?

"Strong Will" vs. Work Expectations

As stated above, each of the six participants displayed remarkable self-agency, determination, and purposefulness. They commanded high-quality work from themselves and others, and possessed an unwavering focus, likely explaining their success as current leaders in their field. However, they also maintained that commitment to excellence and quality while battling their typecasting as "quiet, hardworking, and docile people who don't rock the boat" (Hune, 2020).

Because of their individual work ethics along with perceptions of them as being submissive and diligent, participants were frequently burdened excessive workloads. Those expectations align with research findings about unequal workloads that women in positions of power experience, regardless of their race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status, due to the privilege of White patriarchy (Misra et al., 2021). Beyond that, these biases intersected with—and were exacerbated by—racialized expectations that American women should "work hard, and don't ask questions." When they raised concerns about their workload, they were often met with backlash or consequences.

Stereotypes of Race vs. Gender Biases

Participants' encounters with racial and gender-based biases were often implicit and subtle, but nonetheless oppressive and traumatic. Discrimination was frequently disguised in a seemingly positive context through the stereotype of the "model minority" (Museus & Kiang, 2009), which often limits Asian Americans to technical roles while excluding them from creative

or leadership positions (Gündemir et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2022). Regardless of their cultural, ethnic, and political differences, participants all experienced model minority stereotypes being applied to them.

The model minority stereotype asserts that Asian Americans have overcome all barriers due to their hard work and high levels of education (Hyun, 2005); therefore, they do not require any of the assistance or special treatment that other minorities receive. The stereotype creates unrealistic expectations and pressure for Asian Americans, and erases the varying political statuses of Asian Americans as immigrants, citizens, aliens, colonized nationals, refugees, and racial minorities (Coloma, 2006). Within participants' respective schools, Asian faculty and students were regularly excluded from important policy and diversity initiatives due to their perception as White-passing model minorities. This preconception was especially prominent in music, where Asians make up a large percentage of students, thus adding to the false perception.

The racial discrimination participants faced was frequently overshadowed by gender discrimination and sexism. The experiences that they recounted further reflect broader societal notions about women not being perceived as suitable leaders. Gender discrimination was particularly dominant for participants due to their positionality as leaders, which confirms previous scholarship on biases women in higher education face regardless of race and ethnicity (Maranto et al., 2011). Often, these biases manifested in the form of microaggressions from colleagues, and interfered with their ability to perform their work to their fullest abilities.

Sub-question 3: The Path to Social Justice

The final concept addresses the third research sub-question of the study: What factors have had a positive impact on your career advancement in higher music education institutions?

Representation vs. Responsibility

Participants expressed immense satisfaction and gratitude at being able to enact positive change, due to their being among the few Asian American women representatives in leadership. One participant stated that the representation of Asian Americans, particularly women, in decision-making roles is especially important because of the large numbers of Asian and Asian American students in higher music education. Music schools, she explained, must go beyond implementing standard diversity protocols, and begin by recognizing their own communities; namely, by ensuring that Asian Americans are represented in leadership so they can adequately speak up for the needs of the Asian and Asian American student population.

Participants' experiences with othering motivated them in their missions to expand diversity and inclusion in music schools, and create a fair and equitable experience for all students. In addition to advocating for the Asian community, they were deeply attuned to the experiences of other marginalized groups, including Black and Latinx students, females, students from lower socioeconomic classes, students from mixed-race backgrounds, and students from the LGBTQ+ communities. They were sensitive to the historical, structural, and subtle forms of racial disparities among different groups of people, and noted that inclusion or acknowledgement of Asian American discrimination should not be interchangeable with excluding or denigrating others—for example, the unique experiences of African Americans. Their awareness of social responsibility correlates with Coloma's (2006) suggestion that "a closer examination of history reveals that Asian Americans are both active subjects that determine their own directions as well as racialized objects that are subjected to conditions which impact their lives and communities" (p. 3).

Lack of Mentorship vs. Support and Community

Although several participants had mentors who were not Asian American women, and some reported having senior faculty mentors who positively impacted them during their early higher education careers, none of the six participants had even a single Asian American woman mentor in higher music education. Because of the absence of role models who looked like them and had experienced similar issues, they found it challenging to navigate aspects of higher music education related to their gender and race. This is consistent with research on women faculty of color, which has found that they often lack support, including mentorship (Han, 2014). Furthermore, the dearth of Asian American women mentors, and their consequent development of independence and determination, further discourages their mentorship of younger Asian American women—because success was something each woman had to figure out on their own.

Without mentors of their own race and gender, identifying and working with allies became a significant source of support for participants in their career development. They spoke about the importance of seeking out relationships with other women, even outside of their department, and building a community of trusted colleagues. In schools that hosted mentorship programs, their sustainability depended on systemic support in the form of funding and programming. Participants also noted that funding for programs like these often led to other important diversity and equity initiatives, due to the collective action of many individuals.

Interpretations and Related Literature

The following section expands on these concepts by introducing related theories from existing literature. In particular, I used Valverde and Dariotis's (2020) concept of *privileged oppressed communities* to help unpack the meaning of participants' stories alongside a broader narrative of Asian American women in higher education.

Asian American Women and the Privileged Oppressed

Valverde and Dariotis (2020) situate Asian American women as being among the *privileged oppressed* in higher education institutions. Asian American women are seemingly given model minority privileges, yet they also play the specific roles of "pacified workers that is assumed will comply to hegemonic mandates of control and oppression of others and ourselves" (Valverde & Dariotis, 2020, p. 36). Furthermore, though they are positioned as honorary Whites, they are not seen as intellectual innovators or leaders in the way White males are depicted as the "ideal academic" (Valverde & Dariotis, 2020, p. 44). This echoes participants' experiences with being seen as the "designated colored person" or "diversity hire" within institutions that viewed them as ideal representatives of diversity, all the while expecting complicity, passivity, and silence. Valverde and Dariotis (2020) also document the "shockingly low rates of tenure and promotion" along with the physical and mental health impacts associated with the stresses that Asian American women face within higher education institutions (p. 35).

During periods of U.S. colonialism and imperialism, Asian women were frequently used as a buffer between White elites and enslaved Black Americans. There are clear parallels between this historical positioning of Asian women as the privileged oppressed and the way they are situated in present day Western society (Danico, 2014; Valverde & Dariotis, 2020). White-adjacency and the model minority myth continue to be exploited as a wedge to divide and maintain oppression of both Asian Americans and other people of color (Kawahara et al., 2013; Player, 2021). Further, the excessive and consistent labeling as "White-passing" that participants reported is related to the broader positioning of Asian American women between dominant and minority categories, thus preventing a proper accounting of their histories and narratives (Valverde & Dariotis, 2020). This has also played a role in the keen sense of invisibility that Asian American women feel in higher education.

Microaggressions and Stereotypes

Participants described the insidious subtlety of everyday implicit biases in music and higher music education, which Candace portrayed as being "like water… you can't hold on to it. It slips through the fingers." These are *microaggressions*, or "derogatory slights or insults directed at a target person or persons who are members of an oppressed group" (Torino et al., 2019, p. 3). Microaggressions are the manifestation of biases in both implicit and explicit ways. Sue (2007) talks about the difficulty of "describing and defining racial discrimination that occurs via 'aversive racism' or 'implicit bias'; these types of racism are difficult to identify, quantify, and rectify because of their subtle, nebulous, and unnamed nature" (p. 272). Asian Americans frequently experience microaggressions because there is a wider socioeconomic range among the population, ranging from middle-upper class to refugees. Participants' various stories of microaggressions, and the ways in which they create unwelcoming and invalidating environments, echo the findings of previous research on hostile climates in higher education due to cultural or racial practices (Han, 2014; Hune, 2006).

The ambiguity of microaggressions, along with stereotyping as honorary Whites and model minorities, makes it challenging for Asian American women to break cycles of discrimination. Because Asian Americans seemingly belong to dominant categories and Asian students are amply represented in music schools, people who report discrimination and microaggressions are often met with disbelief, shrugged off as misreading the actions of others (Sue, 2017; Lee & Molina, 2023), or having incidents dismissed as an individual anomaly (Valverde & Dariotis, 2020). Participants described receiving strong backlash, pushback, or punishment when they spoke up on issues of equity for themselves and other marginalized groups. Valverde and Dariotis (2020) note that the model minority narrative is meant to focus

attention away from social injustice, and that Asian American women are "quickly evicted when they fail to conform to that stereotype by breaking the silence" (Valverde & Dariotis, 2020, p. 45).

Designating Asian Americans as White-adjacent is significant because it results in their exclusion from policy, decoration, programs, and research that represents other racial groups; this is also termed *microinvalidation* (Sue, 2007). Participants revealed that, in their institutions, Asian faculty and students were excluded from policy initiatives meant to expand diversity and inclusion in music schools, largely because initiatives were built on Black/White paradigms. Because under the model minority myth "Asian Americans are perceived to be relatively more economically and academically successful than other people of color" (Lee & Molina, 2023), participants' efforts to address discrimination and xenophobia towards Asian American music students were frequently ignored or silenced due to positive associations of the stereotype. The view that all Asian Americans are successful and possess social and economic capital also contributes to the phenomenon of their underrepresentation in leadership, because no one except Asian Americans themselves raises awareness of the issue.

Intersectionality

Talia stated in her interview that "the most immediate influences in my mission as an educator in the past 20-plus years have been as a result of my personal experiences as a woman of color in higher education." Examining the privileged oppressed status of Asian American women requires an understanding of their specific intersectionality in higher education. The unique histories of racial and gendered diverse people affect implicit biases—and the ways they are oppressed—in specific, nuanced, and varied ways (Valverde & Dariotis, 2020). Historically, narratives of gender have been predominantly based on the experience of White, middle-class

women, while narratives of race are based on the experience of Black men (Crenshaw, 1991). As Crenshaw (1991) asserts, "women of color experience racism in ways not always the same as those experienced by men of color, and sexism in ways not always parallel to experiences of White women;" therefore, antiracist and feminist discourses on their own fundamentally lack the ability to fully describe the experiences of women of color (p. 1244).

The intersectionality of participants' experiences as members of a racial minority group exacerbated the gendered biases they encountered as female leaders; Talia, for her part, evoked the image of "weights on my shoulders that just doubled as I'm making this climb." Accounts of backlash and negative perceptions of their leadership abilities affirm findings from previous research on the double jeopardy of Asian American women, who are subject to racial and gender stereotypes of being docile and submissive. Because this typecasting originates from being both female and Asian, it results in a double disadvantage for Asian American women when it comes to leadership opportunities; they are perceived as high in competence, but low in dominance (Toosi et al., 2019; Chin, 2020; Tinkler et al., 2019; Kramer, 2020; Currier, 2022; Chao & Ha, 2020).

Participants may have been perceived as easy targets for heavy consequences after breaking with prescriptive stereotypes of them as being passive and docile, which is consistent with prior research on dominance penalties for women who behave authoritatively (Rosette et al., 2016; Tinkler et al., 2019; Gündemir et al., 2019; Toosi et al., 2019). Some participants recalled that they were seen as angry or uncooperative, confirming Hune's (2011) findings on perceptions of assertive Asian American women leaders as less likable, conniving, or ruthless. Despite their vulnerability as the privileged oppressed, past studies show that Asian American women do not passively accept their positionality; rather, they actively resist systemic

oppression, a characteristic demonstrated by participants of this study. Participants recognized the power they could derive from perceiving structural inequities and promoting profound structural change, but knew their actions to do so could result in heavy penalties (Valverde & Dariotis, 2020).

Gendered Organizations

Participants' stories of experiencing exorbitant workload burdens and gender biases as female leaders correlate with Acker's (1990) theory on *gendered organizations*. This theory posits that organizations, such as universities, create and maintain gender inequality through uneven division of labor, gendered expectations of different types of work, and unfair recognition and reward systems. Similarly, Misra, et al. (2021) found that on average, women faculty in higher education perceive their workloads as being less equitable, and are often expected to engage in campus service activities. By contrast, men are often tasked with more problem-solving, visioning, and strategic planning tasks, and spend more time on valued work such as research (O'Meara et al., 2017; Misra, et al., 2021).

The expectation to "always produce and bring glory to the institution" may be the result of stereotypes of Asian American women coinciding with the structure of gendered organizations. Participants observed their White male counterparts creating boundaries around their work, and wondered whether the expectations were the same for them. During interviews, some of the women made clear their awareness that, by meeting these standards without complaint, they might be projecting potentially harmful messages to younger women of color to "work hard, and not ask questions." Some, too, demonstrated internalized oppression, justifying the blame for what others project onto them by attributing flaws to their own work ethic or abilities (Nadal et al., 2021). Similarly, Valverde and Dariotis (2020) state that Asian American

women are often made to think that a poor outcome is the result of their failure as an individual, and a measure of the quality of their teaching or work.

Research on gendered organizations shows that women of color often face the burden of even more excessive workloads than their White counterparts. O'Meara et al. (2017) emphasize that intersectionality is an important factor here, because in addition to fulfilling traditional female roles within institutions—such as that of an "academic mother" (p. 1160)—women of color also face unusually high mentoring workloads, as students of color often seek their support. University reward systems often undervalue campus service and diversity work (Misra et al., 2021; Currier, 2022), leading to cumulative career disadvantages. Participants in this study described high workload burdens, but not the expectation of doing campus service or diversity work; this may be due to the focus on musical practice and performance, and the absence of affinity groups and extracurricular activities, in most conservatories and music schools.

In another divergence from previous studies, although O'Meara et al. (2017) indicate that female faculty in gendered organizations are frequently tasked with "organizational housekeeping" duties that are less prestigious (p. 1159), participants in this study reported being asked to complete more essential work in their institutions, thus contradicting this idea. For example, Talia shared that she was asked to serve on committees that were "quite challenging," naming graduate advisory committees as an example. There, she was tasked with reading large numbers of doctoral exams and making curricular decisions or approvals. Service on such committees was often more time-consuming than serving on the library or wellness committee, and Talia's workload burden frequently exceeded her colleagues. She acknowledged that she was unsure if this was due to gendered and racialized perceptions, or merely a case-by-case situation. Based on the study findings, Asian American women leaders in higher music education

experience considerable workloads, similar to female faculty in other gendered organizations, but are not expected to complete campus service or diversity work.

Recognizing Cultural Values

Examining the role of biculturalism in Asian American women leaders' lived experiences led me to Honneth's (1995) theory of recognition, which captures the numerous intersectional struggles of Asian American women. According to Honneth (1995), *recognition* is the realization that other people are essential in our everyday interactions because their beliefs, attitudes, and reactions confirm the realization of our own identity (Fleming, 2022), characterizing the reciprocal nature of Asian American women's cultural values and dominant cultural norms. Unlike Hyun (2005), I do not believe that Asian Americans should view their cultural values as self-limiting. Rather, I use recognition theory to call out the ways higher education institutions have historically suppressed and isolated Asian American women. We can also utilize the theory to analyze how Asian American women have internalized ideas of their own inferiority due to the othering they have experienced because of their cultural values.

Honneth (2014) asserts that in order to change society, we must attend to each individual's struggles for recognition, which depends on the "recognition of their needs, beliefs, and abilities in order to take part in social life" (p. 48). For example, tensions surrounding Asian American women's physical appearances stem from differences between standard White male normative physical appearance, language use, speech patterns, interactional modes, and teaching styles in higher education, and Asian American women's bodily posture, management, dress style, skin color, and/or foreignness (Han, 2012, 2014). We begin to understand how the lived experiences of marginalized groups, seen as individual and isolated, are interconnected within their social contexts. This theory is useful for reconnecting the personal with the social—an

important component of counter-narratives of Asian American women—and provides the grounding for reflection on how dominant cultures can recognize the unique struggles of Asian American women (Fleming, 2022).

Within a musical context, prior research indicates that biculturalism may not be an important factor because some Asians and Asian Americans separate their musical identity from their ethnic and cultural identity, while others may be less conscious of their Asian identity when performing music (Yoshihara, 2007). This may be attributed to music schools' lack of recognition of Asian Americans' distinctive individualism, and the "Whitewashing" of their contributions to fit traditional Western European narratives. Contrarily, participants in this study recognized their racial positionality and the interconnections of their identities within higher music education. They demonstrated an acute reflexivity and relentlessly called out questionable actions, while also examining their own implicit biases. This strong reflexivity may be linked to their status as leaders, since being in decision-making positions gives them the ability to enact change and reverse discriminatory practices.

Recognition must be connected to direct actions and gestures, such as engaging in discourse together for common understandings. Hyun (2012) notes that organizational leaders can invest time and effort to recognize and understand the various cultures of their team members, which may inform both their knowledge of particular cultural values as well as the rich, heterogeneous differences in traditions and personalities within the Asian American population. Furthermore, recognition in higher education includes acknowledging the personal and emotional narratives of women scholars of color that document the oppressive systems in academia, and ultimately holding educational systems accountable for the perpetuation of discriminatory practices against women of color (Valverde & Dariotis, 2020).

Honneth's theory asserts that when a person is finally recognized by others, they may gain better self-confidence (feeling affirmed or acknowledged), self-respect (feeling entitled to the same status and respect as others), and self-esteem (feeling valued for one's capabilities). These tenets "provide the conditions for successful identity development" and form the underpinning for many social movements, such as advocacy for gay rights and Black Lives Matter (Fleming, 2022, p. 569). Similarly, Valverde and Dariotis (2020) state that when Asian American women recognize their own oppression and abuses as part of a larger systemic pattern rather than a result of their own purported weaknesses, they realize they are not alone in their experiences. In doing so, they awaken to acts of resistance not only for themselves, but for their students, families, and communities.

Fortuity and Personal Agency

Self-agency and efficacy refer to acting with intentionality and forethought, as well as having a capacity for self-reflection and self-reactiveness. Participants displayed self-agency as they moved through their day-to-day lifeworlds with intentionality, as demonstrated through actions such as analyzing one's own body language and thinking about behaviors pre-reflectively. For example, Sera described discerning the best time to speak up during administrative meetings. Based on her observations, she decided to jump in sooner with her thoughts; when others interrupted her, she decided to intentionally say, "Please let me finish." This consciousness is at the core of personal agency, where purposeful deliberation over information leads to constructing and evaluating a course of action (Bandura, 2001).

Personal agency is connected to fortuity and serendipity because agency relates to exercising a measure of control over one's environmental circumstances, whereas fortuity is unplanned and unforeseen. On fortuity, Bandura (2001) writes that "some of the most important

determinants of life paths occur through the most trivial of circumstances" (p. 11). Participants characterized factors such as access to prestigious music programs and training as fortuitous events, which their hard work then facilitated. There may also be a connection between luck and the idea of having to be grateful when something is given by someone of privilege. Though the theme frequently appears in this study, similar studies on Asian American women do not appear to touch on it.

The presence of the fortuity theme in all participants' narratives demonstrates the tension of the characteristics of minoritized women attributing their success to luck, rather than a direct result of their hard work and talent. Their perceptions of the role of luck in their careers may partly be due to their marginalized status and their perceived lack of control of external elements. Further, it may be present in women generally and in people of other races or ethnicities, given the reality of White male privilege and power in Western society. The fact that every participant noted luck, privilege, and fortuity in the study caused me to self-reflect on my own lived experiences, and whether I describe similar attributes to my successes. After reflection, I realized that I too consider luck and fortuity to be significant factors in my career path.

Bandura (2001) also notes that fortuity does not always equate to uncontrollability, and that people can make chance work for them by "cultivating their interests and enabling self-beliefs and competencies" (p. 12). As members of the privileged oppressed, Asian American women can develop their awareness of their power to question and resist oppressive systems, which may help to counter feelings of a lack of control around their external influences. Becoming aware of our own tendencies and increasing reflexivity around the theme of luck may further counter the tension between fortuity, and the power and self-agency we hold in our personal and professional pathways.

Sera's Story

Every so often, a researcher might encounter a participant in their study that is an outlier from the others. People like these cause us to reflect on what makes the individual different, and to ask questions about the data. In many ways, my study participant Sera was an outlier. She did not mention bearing others' expectations to take on an excessive workload, did not feel an urgent need for Asian American representation as a student, and knew what she wanted to do from a very early age. Sera is also tremendously self-analytical, driven, and able to self-initiate changes in negative situations.

While I was member-checking my data with Sera, she provided some important insights that may explain these differences. To begin, she first immigrated to the U.S. for graduate study as an international student, and so was fully aware that "things would be 'foreign' to me—I didn't expect teachers, staff, or administration to be Asian American because I was just here studying, being a guest." She noted that this was a completely different setting and set of expectations from those of others who may have been born in the U.S. or who immigrated at a much earlier age.

During her interviews, Sera mentioned some culturally shocking moments from her studies and career, and offered subsequent self-reflection on why she encountered what she did. Being exposed to these moments gave her knowledge of and context for cultural differences, and she employed systematic ways to ensure that her voice was heard and her leadership skills shone through. As an adult, Sera was able to simultaneously focus on being authentic and genuine and on relearning new social cues. In many ways, she embodies the same qualities as the other participants, but her evolution as an Asian American woman leader was not essentially shaped by profound experiences of othering in the way the other women experienced.

It was also interesting to document how Sera talked about the changes over time in her thinking about leadership. As someone who was precocious and displayed natural leadership skills from a young age, she believed that a leader was someone who facilitates a group of people's completion of tasks or projects. However, her understanding of leadership as accomplishing something collectively as a group began to evolve as she learned more about Western culture; now, Sera practices positioning herself to be more prominently seen as the leader of the group, and not always as someone supporting from behind. The essence of this evolution lies in Sera's recognition of how important it is for a leader to be seen, in addition to her facilitating and developing personal and leadership skills.

Critical Counter-Narrative

The stories of the six participants demonstrate the numerous ways in which they have been subjected to unique forms of oppression and exclusion. As Han (2014) describes it, "AsianCrit acknowledges and empowers Asian Americans' and immigrants' own voices so that their particular historical accounts and experiential knowledge are told by them against biased versions of master narratives" (p. 131). AsianCrit addresses the invisibility of Asian Americans' exclusion and oppression in general racial narratives throughout U.S. history by revealing how the Asian American minority group experiences racism differently. This forms the basis for why I utilized it as my main conceptual foundation throughout the research to understand and analyze participants' counter-narratives. Below, I present a final counter-narrative that illustrates the third concept of the study and seventh tenet of AsianCrit: Asian American women's fight for social justice.

Participants fought back against Asianization and essentialism of Asian Americans in higher music education. Asianization exists within the social processes of schools of music,

perpetuating specific racialized ideas, such as the model minority myth, that dehumanize and exclude Asian Americans from policies and programs. Participants employed strategic anti(essentialism) to challenge the biases they encountered in their day-to-day lives. For example, Emma defied essentialist views of Asian Americans by standing up to her administrative team and pointedly asking them for their definition of the word "minority" when Asian Americans were excluded from important policy initiatives. By contradicting her colleagues' stereotypical, essentialist views of Asian Americans, she showed how White supremacy works politically to racialize Asian Americans as a monolithic group. Chang (1993) stresses that anti(essentialism) acknowledges the diversity within the Asian American diaspora, along with our need to bring together our voices and speak ourselves out of oppression.

AsianCrit focuses on the specific racialized identity of "Asian," grappling with the unique opposition between the "nativism" of White Americans and the eternal "foreignness" of Asian Americans (Liu et al., 2022, p. 2981; Han, 2014; Chang, 1993). Nativism refers to opposition to the "other" due to their foreign connections and physical appearances (Han, 2014). These concepts of nativism and foreignness are perfectly reflective of the racism and othering that Asian Americans encounter in higher music education. When Julie said, "trust me, they remember that you're Asian" in describing the experiences of Asian Americans in music, she referred to the binary opposition of Asians and Westerners in higher music education, and the narratives of musical inauthenticity that Asians and Asian Americans continue to endure in music schools.

This pervasive narrative reflects broader historical perceptions of Asians in Western society, where dominant voices have constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed the Asian racial category. However, Julie counteracted these perceptions by presenting accurate portrayals

of Asian Americans' racialized experiences, starting from the 19th century and continuing into recent times. She sought to educate those around her about important historical events such as the start of Korean immigration, Japanese internment in the 1940s, racial harassment of Chinese labor workers, and mass anti-Asian violence in the 19th century American West. Through this (re)constructive history, Julie reclaims the historical narratives and experiential knowledge of Asian Americans from the storytellers who have rendered invisible the voices and contributions of Asian Americans throughout history.

The stereotypes of Asian Americans in music continue to oppress them in higher music education. Chang (1993) tells us that "exclusion has many faces. Its harms are insidious and its methods multifarious" (p. 1287). The exclusion or othering that Asian Americans experience in music comes from normalizing these harmful stereotypes and perceptions, which Chang (1993) refers to as a method of silencing. Yet, through their stories and counter-narratives, Asian American women fight back against the silencing of their voices by providing raw, unsmoothed narratives of their real oppression by dominant groups. Furthermore, Asian American women understand that intersectionality causes dual systems of oppression. They consider their positionality within a racial hierarchy understood as White racism against Black people, and situate their counter-narratives as an issue of White supremacy working in tandem with anti-Blackness, colorism, and the minoritizing of all people of color.

Participants in this study depicted tenets of Asian American feminism in their efforts to free themselves from dominant Western categories and stereotypical labels of Asian American female identity. Through their optimism and vision as leaders, and their commitment to widening the path to belonging for all marginalized groups, they fight for social justice. These women recognize the need for their greater representation in positions of power, and use their platforms

to speak up and work in solidarity against discriminatory practices. They feel pride and joy in representing their identity, and utilize the impact of their words to tell counter-narratives of their unique experiences, informing their praxis as leaders. Their leadership style is based on principles of self-respect, and the importance of educating others about Asian Americans beyond the dominant monolithic perceptions.

Ultimately, the counter-narratives of these Asian American women are acts of resistance, and the assertion of their own individual, complex self-identities (Liu et al., 2022). They care for students by being bosses who understand the inner workings of their institutions, and by being brave enough to question the culture there. They expressed that being a leader involves representation and enacting change, while also having the opportunity to fight against essentialist perceptions of Asian American female leaders. The value of belonging that defined their childhoods also defines their values as educators and leaders, and they move forward with this vision in their commitment to ending all forms of oppression.

Limitations

One of the limitations of a homogenous sample is that there are not enough people with different demographics to compare findings. Therefore, it is difficult to make clear statements about patterns that are unique to Asian American women versus other women, including White women and other women of color. I recognize that these categories, just like that of "Asian Americans" as a descriptor, are not homogenous themselves, and that further research would be needed to confirm specific findings.

Because phenomenology aims to construct an evocative description of human actions, behaviors, and experiences (van Manen, 2016), generalizability is not a priority. However, there may be other Asian American women who share the same characteristics as the participants in

this study, and who may see their own experiences reflected in it. This is reasonable; as Peoples (2021) states, “generalizability and a small participant pool will be the case for nearly every phenomenological study, and generalizability is not the purpose of a phenomenological study” (p. 103).

This research study features a sample of participants who are all over the age of 40, and their age group gives them the ability to trace shifts in experiences over time. Younger people in these roles might simply be feeling as though they are in the midst of chaos as they grapple with similar, but unanticipated, challenges. Therefore, the participants’ age demographics proved to be unexpectedly beneficial for drawing out detailed self-reflections and evocative descriptions of lived experiences within higher music education.

Chapter V summarized the findings of the study and connected the broad concepts uncovered to related theories and prior research. It concluded with a counter-narrative of Asian American women and their fight for social justice using the AsianCrit framework. The final chapter of the dissertation illustrates my hermeneutic reflection and addresses the implications after completing the study.

Chapter VI

Implications

"Change happens when it starts from within."

– Candace, participant

This hermeneutic critical phenomenological study set out to discover the essence of leadership for Asian American women in music, in order to understand their historic and ongoing underrepresentation in these roles. Narratives of current Asian American women leaders depicted dual internal/external influences at play in their struggle for recognition in Western society. Cultural values within the Asian community that contradict male White ideals of leadership weigh heavily on Asian American women as they move through defining moments in their careers. They grapple with their internal cultural influences along with external influences from colleagues in the form of stereotypes, perceptions, and expectations of Asian American women in academia.

Although participants varied on how deeply they identified with being Asian, each realized that, whether on stage or in a boardroom, it was "very obvious to others that I'm Asian… they remember that I'm Asian," as one participant stated. This description is the lived embodiment of othering by the dominant group. Asian American women are seen as privileged yet passive, and often not viable in leadership; in these roles, they experience daily microaggressions and heavy workload burdens. Unique to their specific racial identity was the essence of their positionality as White-passing, which Sera symbolized as "being in the shadow of someone else's privilege." Their White adjacency worked to erase their narratives and

experiences by replacing them with harmful stereotypes, and interfered with access to resources and support.

The essence of participants' leadership style can be seen in the ways they discuss their vision and passion for making space for others, even as higher music education continues to gatekeep many of the traditions of music as White property (Kajikawa, 2019). Conscious of their role as the privileged oppressed within higher education, they are aware that their positions as current leaders will not lead to more inclusive practices without systemic action. These women are highly motivated to use their leadership status to counter discriminatory practices targeting underrepresented communities, echoing pillars of responsibility similar to other women of color (Turner et al., 2008). A trifecta of environmental circumstances consisting of seemingly fortuitous events, a lack of mentorship, and strong inner determination became catalysts for developing trust in their own leadership abilities. Naomi provides us with a beautiful maxim: "I have learned to trust myself that I am good enough. I am good enough, and I am enough."

Hermeneutic Reflexivity

My hermeneutic phenomenological reflection during this research study was often accompanied by feelings of sorrow, uncertainty, and other visceral reactions and emotions. For example, as one participant narrated her memories, I recalled my own earliest recollections of identity development:

> Every morning, my elementary school art teacher mocked and ridiculed my foreign name while calling roll, setting off a chain of teasing and bullying from classmates. I was confused about this ritual and unsure of what it meant as a young child. One morning, I was compelled to tell a friend about it at the bus stop, a kind-hearted boy named Mohamed who was somehow wiser than his years. His reply was unexpected and

> striking: “Of course she does. She makes fun of mine too.” He then went on to describe the word “racism” and why I was subject to this curious phenomenon because of the way I looked to others.

One of the most personally meaningful moments in this study was Julie’s emphatic advice to “stay true to yourself, it’s the right thing… accept who you are.” Asian Americans live in a lifeworld defined by their bicultural experiences (Yu, 2020; Hyun, 2005; Chin, 2016; Paik et. al, 2018). As a child, the urgent need to assimilate and adapt to American culture made it difficult for me to believe in myself and my dual experiences—the very structures of meaning in my lifeworld that comprise the essence of my authentic being. My own struggles for recognition were largely shaped by this sense of duality, described by Julie as a feeling that “something is wrong with you, versus trusting in yourself.” This feeling stayed with me throughout my K-12 education and into my teaching career, and I would often repress feelings of dissonance that I sensed in my environment as I moved through my lifeworld.

My hermeneutic journey in this research project is a transformative experience that brought me to new levels of awareness of both me and others. van Manen (2016) acknowledges the effects of human science research:

> Phenomenological projects and their methods often have a transformative effect on the researcher. Indeed, phenomenological research is often itself a form of deep learning, leading to a transformation of consciousness, heightened perceptiveness, increased thoughtfulness and tact, and so on. (p. 163)

I think of what Carl Jung (1969) refers to as *individuation*, the process in which we become aware of who we are and how we relate to others. Individuation is the manifestation of one’s authentic being and unique personality that is fully integrated in its inner and outer worlds

(Spear, 2014), correlating with the significance of internal/external dimensions of Asian American women. It occurs as we constantly renegotiate our relationship with others while attending to our underlying emotions and responses, often resulting in a deeper understanding and appreciation of ourselves apart from the pressures of social and cultural contexts (Dirkx, 2006). The idea of being your authentic self is the ability to "express the genuine self within the community, consistent between values and actions, relationships with others, and maintaining a critical perspective" (Dirkx, 2006, p. 29), with criticality in this sense being about critical reflection upon oneself and others.

Dirkx (2006) states that a person grappling with a dilemma often experiences a "draining away of psychic energy, while its resolution through conscious realization and reworking is often accompanied by deeper insights into the self" (p. 17). This emotional dynamic describes my hermeneutic experience as I reflected in my journal and gave space to unconscious thoughts, memories, insights, and emotional responses. Journaling allowed me to register these responses even as I struggled to interpret or analyze their meanings. As Spear (2014) tells us: "The willingness to listen to the unconscious does not require an immediate understanding, only that we observe, register, and accept them" (p. 231). I arrived at shifts in my awareness of being in the world through the process of acknowledging emotional responses that had previously been repressed (Dirkx, 2006), and by engaging in critical self-reflection on these responses in relation to my prior beliefs, values, and feelings (Mezirow, 2000).

Self-reflection refers to thinking about and analyzing one's thoughts, feelings, and actions, and is an important personal resource for people of color (Wei et al., 2016). A qualitative study of Korean immigrants, for instance, revealed that those who reflected on cultural differences and acculturative stress resulting from cultural conflict between two cultures gained a

more empathic cultural awareness (Kim & Kim, 2013). Their self-reflection may have enabled them to be more aware of cultural differences, and to take different cultural perspectives during moments of acculturative stress. In Mezirow's theory of transformation, critical self-reflection can result in recognition of one's discontent and an exploration of new roles, relationships, and actions (Mezirow, 2012). This, he states, involves a difficult emotional struggle as old perspectives are questioned, challenged, or transformed.

In my own time spent working in a predominantly White institution, self-reflection was an important coping mechanism. Because discrimination and biases are often implicit and subtle, the ability to reflect on instances after the fact helped me to learn to adapt to microaggressions in my environment. Through my critical reflections, I learned that I tended to internalize the blame for any shortcomings and did not fully consider the uneven power dynamics related to my identity. I continued to internalize feelings of unfairness and wrongdoing because I felt they were too "ambiguous," or that I was not in a position to speak out. I also continue to hold feelings of powerlessness and guilt at the ways I too have internalized or participated in systems of oppression.

In Valverde and Dariotis's (2020) manifesto, they state that Asian American women often experience internalized ideas of inferiority resulting from colonialism and imperialism that have oppressed Asian Americans. I learned from this study that my experiences are not unique; rather, they are part of a much larger systemic pattern, and Asian American women draw on these experiences to enact positive change and lead others with compassion and empathy. Discovering that stories like mine are so widely shared was both distressing and validating, but Dirkx (2006) tells us that self-understanding is grounded in these powerful feelings along with critical reflection to develop a "greater sense of self" (p. 30). After completion of the study, I

have been reflecting on the ways that its themes have manifested in my own life as an Asian American female musician and educator. Because I was also taught to "work hard, and don't ask questions," the advice to speak up and draw boundaries feels foreign and counterproductive.

When I listened to participants talk about their vision for leading with equitable and inclusive practices, I began to reframe the "work hard, and don't ask questions" maxim as "know your goals and priorities, know how to self-reflect on them, and know that your voice is your power." This captures my hermeneutic evolution in understanding the essence of leadership in Asian American women. My journaling process during the research helped me to recognize and connect my own life experiences, with all of their specific emotions, with this hermeneutic transformation. I realize that I need to continue to grow my network, seek out mentors and allies, and continue to engage in self-reflexivity—of my self with the external world—in order to grow into a responsible leader. Through investigation of the literature, I learned about the complexity and diversity within the Asian American community and the racial, sexual, and social stereotypes they have historically encountered in academia. My research also taught me that, in addition to my own transformative journey, I must strive to build community by forming a coalition of voices, in order to resist dominant ideologies and dismantle oppressive structures.

Implications

My research process has been informed by my personal lens and shifting hermeneutic framework. Therefore, my discussion and implications are not objective but rather situated within my sociocultural position. Acknowledging that the path to equity is a journey and that no domain or institution will ever achieve perfection, I address my suggestions to Asian American women as well as schools of music.

Asian American Women in Music

Asian American women are uniquely positioned to offer resistance and make powerful contributions to the collective empowerment of faculty (Valverde & Dariotis, 2020). In her interview, Emma commented: “I think I use anger as fuel. To do more, do better. Speak up more. Be out there more. I think that's the only way I know to use that energy efficiently.” Past Asian American and Pacific Islander American activists have similarly argued that fear teaches inaction, while anger, directed appropriately, leads to action (Valverde & Dariotis, 2020). Lorde (2007) asserts that anger is an appropriate response to racism and sexism, but its purpose is constructive and generative, rather than destructive.

Anger can be redefined as power to bolster diversity and resist normative ideologies. Asian American women, due to their cultural values as well as their stereotyping as docile model minorities, have often feared expressing their frustrations, concerned that they might look unprofessional, speak too loudly, or act “out of place.” However, Valverde and Dariotis (2020) tell us that “pain” and the ability to empathize with others can be a way of knowing and a form of wisdom we offer to others, while our emotional and personal narratives are a necessary balance to the “academic rationality” within higher education that often lacks the ability to connect feelings with real political concerns (p. 55). Leaders are especially well positioned to resist the status quos by refusing to be silenced, and by speaking to their value and worth in higher education.

Returning to Emma’s interview, she specified of her role as a leader that “it's as simple as just being okay with having uncomfortable conversations.” Asian Americans can recognize their power in speaking up not only for themselves but for others. Many of the participants expressed that they have been so repressed that oftentimes they become emotional when they do speak up. Lorde’s (2007) anger theory shows us that it is exactly this kind of emotional response that can

be used to fuel transformative actions as well as fighting against stereotypes of us as being weak and silent. Hyun (2005) supports this belief, stating that "it's okay to show your emotions… leaders are usually passionate and their expressiveness is charismatic" (p. 53). Many of the participants knew their opinions came with consequences, but—as one emphasized—also understood that "you don't have to be liked by everyone if it means that you are speaking up about injustice."

Valverde and Dariotis (2020) describe actions that Asian American women can take to gain justice for themselves and others. This includes rejecting false labels, like not being perceived as leadership material, and resisting oppression by:

> Speaking our truth to others; providing investigative research to prove our inklings are real; gathering empirical data to forward our cases; formulating alternative and liberatory pedagogies, policies, and practices; and taking our grievances through every institutional channel and ultimately into the open legal system. (p. 424)

Asian American women in music can further wield their power and voice through their creative channels of art and music.

Asian Americans' cultural values around collectivism and community can be an asset in building visibility and transforming "silence into language and action" (Valverde & Dariotis, 2020, 428). When subjected to model minority narratives, Asian Americans have historically been cut off from associations and alliances, not only with other oppressed groups but also with themselves, due to their "middleman" positioning within the racial hierarchy (Valverde & Dariotis, 2020; Danico, 2014). In this study, the participants identified the gathering of networks and allies as a vital resource that eventually led to combined efforts around structural change. Valverde and Dariotis (2020) assert that directing our grievances collectively makes us stronger,

enabling us to “turn the tides of flawed systems” through our “inner strength, imagination, hope, and fire” (p. 435).

Asian American women in particular should strive to find other women to talk to and share ideas with, even if they do not share our identity or are not in the same department or institution. We can also actively seek out local, regional, and national affinity groups that support career development for Asian Americans (see Appendix D). The study’s participants, too, are working to create their own official group of Asian American women leaders in music after their discussion in the focus group. These acts of solidarity open up pathways for equity, justice, and radical change. Coloma (2006) states that because Asian Americans are generally absent in narration of U.S. national history and race relations, they may fail to recognize the “often undocumented ways in which [Asian Americans] have contested racial prejudice and discrimination through individual actions, community building, and intra- and inter-racial solidarities” (p. 3).

Figuring out the dynamic of how things work together, and of how people support each other, are important for building a strong community within the oppressive structures of academia. Due to our intersectionality, it is critical for Asian American women to understand our privileged oppressed position in society, and the implicit biases we may either harbor ourselves or have internalized from others. Eberhardt (2019) states that "to form categories is to be human, yet our unique cultures play a role in determining what categories we create in our minds, what we place in them, and how we label them" (p. 26). Building a deep awareness of, and staying vigilant about, how injustice takes place for different groups of people sets the groundwork for demanding policy change at the departmental, organizational, or college-wide level. Valverde and Dariotis (2020) highlight the *colonized mindsets* that both Whites and people of color may have—the superiority leading us to view the “other,” or even those within our own group, as

inferior. Ultimately, Candace reminds us that "change happens when it starts from within," starting with recognizing our own implicit biases in the mission for social justice.

Another implication raised by the study is the need for current Asian American women leaders to take a more active role in mentoring younger generations, even if we are not conscious of the need (or "programmed") to support others in this way. Having access to a platform as a leader means that one is in a valuable position to speak up against all kinds of inequity in higher education, and model this for others who have similarly been historically silenced or made invisible. As mentees progress in their careers, Asian American women mentors can strive to foster an ongoing, supportive relationship. Valverde and Dariotis (2020) state: "By modeling for our students and communities the kind of respect and empathy upon which social justice is built, we make a commitment to take collective action to change this dysfunctional, destructive system" (p. 426).

Lastly, participants talked about the implications of advocating for adequate resources and support, and of placing more reasonable expectations around workload. Candace introduced me to the concept of *radical rest*, which emphasizes structural change in wellness through fostering trust in oneself and the collective, contemplation and embodiment, and rest (radical rest, 2023). Particularly for communities of color, rest is a crucial component for creating space, time, and leisure to think about the best way a person can utilize their finite time and energy. This harkens back to my hermeneutic reflections, where I describe the essence of leading with equitable practices as "knowing your goals and priorities, knowing how to self-reflect on them, and knowing that your voice is your power." Just as Naomi stated "I am enough" when she discussed trusting herself, Valverde and Dariotis (2020) remind us that our power is derived from supporting ourselves and others.

Schools of Music

I introduce my implications for schools of music by sharing a passage from tenor Nicholas Phan's blog:

> There are serious issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in classical music that must be addressed, and anyone who has amassed any power in our industry needs to work in solidarity with all communities of color to bring about these changes. While we discuss issues of racial inequity in classical music, please stop whitewashing Asian contributions. To do so is racist. It is ignorant of the complex and terrible history our people have faced, and it grossly minimizes the importance of the presence we Asian musicians do have on classical music and opera stages. (Phan, 2020)

Schools of music can use the findings of this study as a starting point to build better sensitivity and awareness around the complex stereotypes surrounding Asian American faculty and students. Narratives rooted in the model minority myth tend to evade discussions on meanings and definitions of success. Success in music can be defined as having access to ivory towers of exclusive conservatories, having ample student representation within an identity group, or achieving positive student graduation rates. Schools of music have increasingly turned to real-world considerations for music students, such as finding jobs and learning practical skills as indicators of achievement, but success in music is still dominated by tradition-based notions that emphasize quality of musical performance.

I therefore urge administrators in music schools to restore their discussions on preconceptions of Asian Americans in music. If we are perpetuating blanket narratives about the success of Asians and Asian Americans in music, we must also grapple with the radical disparities between the numbers of Asian American students and faculty—much less those in

leadership positions—that continues to persist. As stated in previous chapters, the urgent need to address access to quality music education for other marginalized communities should not be made interchangeable with acknowledging racist biases towards Asians in music, but rather the focus should be on building an integral institution that is committed to the well-being of all of its members.

Oftentimes, workplaces will adopt a "fix the women, fix the minorities" approach when it comes to addressing diversity issues in the workplace (Hyun, 2012). By contrast, study participants spoke about the need for higher education institutions to recognize their own systems of oppression and use cultural-specific frameworks to guide questions and inquiries on diversity and equity. It is not enough to identify individual harmful behaviors, attitudes, and implicit biases; schools of music must extend tangible resources and enact policies that impact access to administrative power, advancement, and tokenization of marginalized community members. Sera stressed that, in order for important initiatives such as structured mentorship programs to succeed, they need "funding and very strong support from the top." Pathways to different roles in leadership should be made clear, and music schools can work with national organizations that represent a wide range of ethnic racial groups to assist with hiring and retention of diverse leaders.

Hernandez (2016) stresses the importance of racial equality representations in leadership and administration that match student enrollment. As Emma expressed in her interview, leaders' voices need to represent the student population they serve. In institutions that serve a large population of Asian and Asian American students, such as schools of music, this means being intentional about including Asian American voices in leadership and administrative positions to help shape decisions on institutional policies. Supporting training and professional development

in leadership for women of color may further assist in destabilizing racist and patriarchal practices and policies.

Institutions must develop protocols, such as hiring rubrics built on diversity and inclusion principles, in order to build strong and inclusive communities within their spaces. Being intentional about search committees by making sure there is diverse committee representation, including members of the student body, will help to pollinate diversity and bring in new people who share the same values; thus, committees should include faculty and administrators of color who bring their "other" perspectives to the deliberations (Han, 2014). Music schools in particular need to systematize transparent job postings, as there is a history of nepotism for high-ranking roles and a tendency to frame and perpetuate leadership in White male ideals.

Schools of music are also not exempt from implementing implicit bias training, which must be made mandatory for every faculty and staff member—not just for hiring or tenure promotion review committees—as well as students. Mandated training may help music students and faculty better understand what implicit bias is, and how it may be affecting people in their day-to-day lives. It is important to acknowledge that, as human beings, it is natural and normal to hold certain biases, but educating people on a critically conscious level allows them to see the degree to which their worldviews, actions, and decisions impact the lives of others, and to understand the boundaries that are necessary to advance fairness and inclusivity.

I conclude the implications with a reminder that music has historically been promoted as a universal language (Kaneko, 2022), but conservatories and schools of music nevertheless participate in social engineering and oppressive structures (Valverde & Dariotis, 2020). The very fact that the damaging model minority stereotype has kept Asian American women from access to all levels of the academy indicates that their privileged oppressed status is not relieved by a

so-called "meritocratic" system. Schools of music must acknowledge that systemic and institutionalized racism and sexism continues to endure, and counter-narratives such as the ones provided in this dissertation can allow White students, educators, and administrators to see through the eyes of "others" (Han, 2014). It is imperative to address diversity and inclusion as not only a binary initiative, but as an investigation of the nuanced ways that different groups of people are situated; for instance, by examining the coexistence of the privilege and oppression of Asian American women. Valverde and Dariotis (2020) remind us:

> This revolution is not about replacing White men with women of color at the head of the same failing structure but about decentralizing and democratizing power while redefining what "power" means. Hence, the first acts of resistance against the powers of oppression involve extending kindness, justice, and empathy to those in need. (p. 425)

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on what I have learned from this research study, I present the following recommendations for future research that can deepen our understanding around these issues:

- Future research can utilize themes and patterns from this study and conduct similar research with a larger sample.
- Future researchers can talk to White leaders about their perspectives on the lack of Asian American leadership.
- Future studies may wish to change the research questions to go beyond intersectional literature into Asian male leadership. Asian American men need to have the same conversations, but they may have different lived experiences due to their gender.
- Tangentially, more studies are needed exploring the experiences of Asian and Asian American students in higher music education, as the literature remains scarce.

Researching and learning about students' experiences may better inform administrators of the specific needs of students that can be addressed by a more diverse faculty.

- A logical next step after having collected initial patterns of lived experiences might be to extend the current phenomenological study into a grounded theory study. Grounded theory helps to develop and name a phenomenon grounded in data from the field (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A grounded theory study may be a particularly useful method due to the lack of concrete knowledge regarding specific factors of Asian American women's experiences.

Conclusion

This dissertation tells the stories of Asian American women leaders in music and utilizes their counter-narratives to highlight the essential aspects of their chronic underrepresentation in leadership roles. Identifying the unique characteristics of each person's story helped me to uncover the rich and multi-faceted nature of the issue while identifying larger common themes underlying their experiences. I modeled the study through the phenomenological philosophies of van Manen (2016) and qualitative research methodologies of Saldaña (2021) and Peoples (2021); I utilized AsianCrit as my main conceptual framework, and frameworks of the privileged oppressed and Asian American feminism as theoretical tools for analysis.

The thematic meanings contained within these narratives are powerful because they give shape to the complex experiences Asian American women often find difficult to articulate. Each theme describes a core notion within the composite of Asian American women's experiences in the ways they are lived through individual times, spaces, bodies, and relations with others. Thus, their experiential structures will be summarized in this conclusion through the four existential themes—the lived body, lived relations, lived time, and lived space—considered to belong to the

fundamental structure of all human beings' lifeworlds (van Manen, 2016). These existentials function beyond historical, cultural, or social contexts; paradoxically, they may also create the historical, cultural, or social lived experiences of human beings from their significance in how one experiences the world. Within each existential theme is the phenomenological essence that depicts the nature of Asian American women leaders' experiences in music and higher music education.

The "Other"

Asian American women exist in dual complexity within Western society. Their life journey opens them to new perspectives and foresight about their being in the world in a dual struggle between othering and belonging. Under the gaze of colleagues, media, and society at large, their bodies are reduced to petite and subservient embodiments, taking up polite amounts of space. Furthermore, they experience their own lived bodies in conflicting ways. While their body language is informed by a culture underscored by modesty and respect for elders, the gaze of the other demands a far more assertive reorientation in how they present themselves to the world as leaders.

The Push Against Invisibility

The lived relations that Asian American women have with others are navigated through acute observations and adjustments of their own behaviors in accordance with Western ideals. This self-monitoring becomes complicated as they are defined as being adjacent to a dominant group to which they do not belong and with whom they do not identify. When their bodies are subjected to society's monolithic gaze, Asian American women feel far from the complex, complicated, and individualistic people that they are. Their self-monitoring becomes a lived

reality: a subconscious, day-to-day task that helps them maintain their relations with others within the interpersonal space of music schools.

Transformation

Throughout their lived experience as leaders, Asian American women adhere to the highest standards in their work, using their determination and willpower. The temporal nature of lived time unfolds new and transformed realities and reinterpretations of being in the world as they continue to observe their environments and comprehend experiences that let them know their "place" among others. Over time, their self-reflexivity evolves and becomes self-knowledge; self-knowledge becomes power, and power finally becomes self-empowerment. The mantra is transformed: "I'm enough, and I trust myself in anything that I do."

Commitment to Social Justice

Asian American women's experiences and rich life histories culminate in values centering equity and inclusivity for the future generation. These women understand the hegemonic lived spaces in music schools that have affected the way they feel and move in their day-to-day lives. Using their experiences of being seen in their lived bodies as the "other," they advocate for social justice in their work so that students may feel a sense of belonging, representation, and inclusion. The lived space becomes *felt* space: one where not only do bodies exist, but also where voices are heard and valued.

Closing Thoughts

The findings of this study highlight harmful stereotypes and essentialism of Asian Americans in music, which need to be acknowledged beyond the smoothed narratives of Asian Americans as having reached superior echelons in higher music education. I also continue to reflect on my own personal growth and reflexivity as an Asian American woman researching the

lived experiences of others who share my identity. Throughout the research, I felt hurt and dismayed along with my participants about the ways they have been oppressed or discriminated against, and many of their experiences resonated with my own. Although I was positioned as the researcher, I could not forget that I was having real, human conversations about human thoughts and feelings, facilitated by personal trust and empathy. Through these uncomfortable discussions, I was able to gather the rich nuggets of insights that provide clarity around the essence of Asian American women's lives in the U.S. The theme of being a changemaker embodied by participants reflects the goals of research projects that seek truth and demand a call to action.

I began this research study by conducting a Google search of leadership teams in several higher music education schools, and I invite others to repeat this search in order to reveal how inequitable schools of music really are. Do not rely on a superficial look at the data that claims Asian Americans are doing well because they are well represented as students. The notion of who is at the table defines many inequities in American society, and I call on schools of music to begin bringing change to their institutions that defy current hierarchies of power. My calls for reform do not only belong to me, but to all women of color experiencing injustices of the music academy. Our storytelling is a political action of speaking truth to power, and I end with a quote from Valverde and Dariotis's (2020) manifesto:

"*Speak truth to power. So from the bravery and action of a few, justice may finally be served.*"

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Research Question	Interview Questions
Opening Question	Can you start by telling me about your current role? Is this a role you have always desired for? a. Specifying question: What was your journey like getting to where you are?
Bamboo Ceiling	What challenges or hurdles have you experienced while working towards leadership in higher music education? Are there any moments that stand out for you in particular? a. Probing question: Can you describe one specific instance of encountering a barrier of some sort? What sort of challenges have you experienced in your music school that you think relates specifically to your identity as an Asian American woman? b. Follow-up question: Do you feel acknowledged by music school administration? Why or why not?
Stereotypes	How have you personally experienced biases? How have these biases affected your musical career and overall life? a. Follow-up question: Can you describe an example of how you experienced a microaggression during a typical day in a music school? Can you describe a moment where you felt someone in your music school either reinforced or challenged the stereotype of you as an Asian American woman? What was this like for you? a. Probing question: Has this or another experience

	impacted the way you thought about your overall positionality within the music school?
Values of Leadership	I would now like to move to a different topic. Could you tell me about aspects of your upbringing that have felt important to you as a present leader in music? a. Probing question: Whom do you think had the most influence on you? b. Follow-up question: Tell me about an instance where you felt your "Asianness" clashed with values in your school or work environment. How was this a learning experience for you? In your experience working in higher music education, can you tell me about how you've experienced the way your cultural background fits in in your career?
Mentorship	Have you experienced much support and interaction during your higher music education career? a. Specifying question: What environments for support and mentorship have music schools provided for you as an Asian American woman? Have you had experience serving on committees that support diversity and inclusion issues in various music schools or organizations? If yes, could you tell me more about these experiences through your lens as an Asian American woman?
Recommendations	What have been some of the most important lessons for you as you built your career as an Asian American woman? What life experiences stand out as pivotal influences? Can you complete this sentence? "If I were a stakeholder in the hiring, training, and retaining of diverse faculty in

	departments and schools of music, I would do the following…"
Closing Questions	Can you tell me about one instance you felt proud of in your career when you overcame an obstacle?
Ending	Is there anything else you'd like to talk about that may enable me to learn more about this topic?

Appendix B

Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

Attachments:
- Kim_FinalInformedConsent.pdf
- Expedited Review Approved by Chair - IRB ID: 23-386.pdf

TEACHERS COLLEGE
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Teachers College IRB *Expedited Approval Notification*

To: Rachel Kim
From: Kailee Kodama Muscente Part Time Research Compliance Manager
Subject: IRB Approval: 23-386 Protocol
Date: 07/30/2023

Please be informed that as of the date of this letter, the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at Teachers College, Columbia University has given full approval to your study, entitled "*Pushing Against Invisibility: Asian American Women's Leadership in Music and Music Education*," under **Expedited Review** on 07/30/2023: Category (7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior

The approval is effective until **07/29/2024**.

The IRB Committee must be contacted if there are any changes to the protocol during this period. **Please note:** If you are planning to continue your study, a Continuing Review report must be submitted to either close the protocol or request permission to continue for another year. Please submit your report by **07/15/2024** so that the IRB has time to review and approve your report if you wish to continue your study. The IRB number assigned to your protocol is **23-386**. Feel free to contact the IRB Office (212-678-4105 or irb@tc.edu) if you have any questions.

Please note that your Consent form bears an official IRB authorization stamp and is attached to this email. Copies of this form with the IRB stamp must be used for your research work. Further, all research recruitment materials must include the study's IRB-approved protocol number.

As the PI of record for this protocol, you are required to:

- Use current, up-to-date IRB approved documents
- Ensure all study staff and their CITI certifications are on record with the IRB
- Notify the IRB of any changes or modifications to your study procedures
- Alert the IRB of any adverse events

You are also required to respond if the IRB communicates with you directly about any aspect of your protocol. Failure to adhere to your responsibilities as a study PI can result in action by the IRB up to and including suspension of your approval and cessation of your research.

You can retrieve a PDF copy of this approval letter from Mentor IRB.

When your study ends, please visit the IRB Mentor site. Go to the Continuing Review tab and select "terminate" from the drop-down menu.

Best wishes for your research work.

Sincerely,
Kailee Kodama Muscente
Part Time Research Compliance Manager
askirb@tc.edu

Appendix C

Table of Holistic Themes

Participant	Holistic Interpretative Statement
Talia	*"Asian American women leaders face a variety of discriminatory behaviors in their environment, but they are also in the position to open pathways for greater equity and inclusion in higher education schools."*
Sera	*"As strong-willed and ambitious women, it is shocking to experience inhibiting treatment from others based on assumptions about Asian American women, but we can also observe and slowly reverse some of these treatments by pushing against stereotypes."*
Candace	*"Despite the often invisible and nuanced, insidious discrimination upon Asian American women, there lies a deeper mission to bring one's passion and optimism to a leadership role."*
Naomi	*"An Asian American woman is, by definition, diverse in ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds, and lived experiences. Based on our collective experiences of othering, we must do what we can in our roles to cultivate a sense of belonging for all persons."*
Emma	*"In a world where belonging is a complex process, putting oneself at the "table" enables you to be able to create that sense of belonging for everybody."*
Julie	*"Experiences of othering are foundational to your philosophies and missions. It cultivates a vision to advocate for others, and not stopping until you get there, because as artists, it's important to speak the truth."*

Appendix D

Emotion and Values Codes

CODE	CONTEXTS
E - “ALL FIRED UP”	I get all “fired up” by patterns of racist and sexist inequity.
E - “ANGER AS FUEL”	I use my “anger as fuel” to speak up and do better.
E - “DAMAGING”	Exorbitant work expectations without additional compensation feels very “damaging.”
E - “DEFLATED”	It’s easy to be “deflated” in a leadership position, especially when you’re about to do important things.
E - “DIFFICULT, CHALLENGING”	English as a second language was “difficult and challenging.”
E - “FEEL CONFIDENT”	Playing music can make you “feel confident” that you belong in that space.
E - “FRUSTRATING”	I have a different understanding because of my background, but people assume I don’t understand what they are talking about.
E - “HEARTBREAKING”	Recognizing that resistance and pushback aren't connected to competency or qualification is “heartbreaking.”
E - “INSULTING”	Biases of Asians in music are extremely “insulting” and negates the individualism of each one of those artists.
E - “NOT HAPPY”	I was “not happy” because I felt the workload was ridiculously high.
E - “REALLY DIRTY FEELING”	I was a diversity hire. And that's a really, “really dirty feeling.”
E - “REALLY EXCITING”	They played beautiful music, and it was “really exciting” that they were having so much fun.
E - “REGRET”	There’s a sense of “regret” that I didn’t stick up for myself during those early years.
E - “SAD”	I just got so “sad.” There were no mentors, all I had were my instincts.
E - “SCARY”	I’ve had to push back myself, it worked out for me but it was very “scary” to know what it’s going to mean for me.

E - “SELF-DEFEATING”	I keep saying I’ll do more, it’s “self-defeating” but I still do it.
E - “SHOCKING”	Things were culturally “shocking” for me.
E - “STRONGER”	Just knowing things are shifting and being okay with it, it makes you “stronger.”
E - “TOXIC”	I had a “toxic” and challenging work situation with colleagues.
E - “GRATEFUL”	I'm very “grateful” for the life that I have.
V - “FULFILLED”	I’m all about small changes leading to big changes, that’s where I feel most “fulfilled” with my role and life in general.
V - “SELF-WORTH”	I believed in myself enough to say, I'm not taking this.

Appendix E

Support Groups for Asian American Educators

1. Asian Pacific Americans in Higher Education

   http://apahenational.org/

   Hosts national conferences that promote the hiring, retention, and advancement of qualified Asian and Pacific American faculty, staff, and administrators.

2. Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics, Inc. (LEAPs)

   https://www.leap.org/

   Focuses on the advancement of qualified Asian American faculty and administrators in the academy. In addition to annual conferences, offers workshops and presentations, podcasts, and opportunities for avenues for mentorship.

3. Ascend Foundation

   https://www.ascendleadership.org/

   Comprised of a network of professionals and executives that help to develop, support, and empower Pan-Asians throughout their careers. Offers lifecycle and cross-industry networking and mentorship opportunities, and development and leadership programs.

4. Center for Asian Pacific American Women & Asian Women's Leadership

   https://capaw.org/

   A national non-profit dedicated to enriching leadership skills for Asian American and

Pacific Islander women through education, networking, and mentorship. Their signature program is a three-week intensive leadership training institute.

5. Asian American Women's Alliance

   http://aawalliance.com/

   Non-profit that seeks to create opportunities for mutual learning and nurturing, mentor relationships, career and leadership development, personal and group support, and engagement in community services.

6. Asian Americans Advancing Justice

   https://www.advancingjustice-aajc.org/

   Non-profit that centers the voices of Asian Americans in the community and advances civil and human rights of Asian Americans for a fair and equitable society for all.