

## **ABSTRACT**

Paul Joo Hyun Koh, FINDING LEADERSHIP 정 (BELONGING): A CRITICAL RACE ETHNOGRAPHY OF ASIAN AMERICAN LEADERSHIP. (Under the direction of Dr. Matt Militello). Department of Educational Leadership, May 2023.

In a racialized America, Asian Americans are forced to be a model minority and remain perpetually foreign in one body (Kawai, 2005; Kim et al., 2011; Kim, 1999, Kim, 2011; Wu, 2014). This is a unique experience that is understudied. The study brought together 18 Asian American nonprofit and educational leaders from across the US to engage in convenings centering their experiences. Through community learning exchanges (CLEs) that were rooted in critical race ethnography (CRE) (Duncan, 2005; Woodson, 2019), CLE axioms (Guajardo et al., 2016), and elements of gracious space (Hughes, 2017), the study participants connected their experiences with the historical justice-oriented legacies of Asian American leaders. The process of this study resulted in emerging leadership tenets asserting another way to lead, away from the individualistic and instead through a collectivist lens rooted in the experiences of justice-oriented Asian American leaders of the past. The connection of the study participants' present day experiences as Asian American leaders with the demonstrated legacy of past Asian American leaders who pursued racial, social, and economic justice provides specific covenants of leadership that other researchers must consider in the theorizing and practice space of leadership research. The study contends that leadership is ultimately about love for community, our organizations, and ourselves.





FINDING LEADERSHIP 정 (BELONGING): A CRITICAL RACE ETHNOGRAPHY OF  
ASIAN AMERICAN LEADERSHIP

A Dissertation  
Presented to the Faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership  
East Carolina University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

By  
Paul Joo Hyun Koh  
May, 2023

Director of Dissertation: Matthew Militello, PhD  
Dissertation Committee Members:  
Lawrence Hodgkins, EdD  
Roshaunda Breeden, PhD  
Lynda Tredway, MA  
Christopher Janson, PhD

©Copyright 2023  
Paul Joo Hyun Koh

## **DEDICATION**

*This is dedicated to the justice-oriented Asian American/AAPI Community.*

*We've been here since 1587.*

*I love you (us).*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*You grow up hearing two languages. Neither fits your fits  
Your mother informs you “moon” means “window to another world.”*

- John Yau from *Music from Childhood*

### **Family**

To Mom, Dad, Drew, and Alice. Thank you for your love, support, and conversations throughout this process. You anchor me more than you know. Special shout out to my ㄱ (Koh), ㅇ (Lee), and Cartwright family for their support. To my friends, our friendships are true gifts and each of you are family to me. To Frida the Carolina Dog, thank you for reminding us that every day is a new day and that it's always good to start the day by going outside. I love all of you very much.

### **Community**

Dearest study participants, I hope this research honors you, and your experience as justice-oriented Asian American leaders. Thank you for the gifts of time and relationship. I will always cheer you on as each of you continue your leadership journeys on behalf of our communities, organizations, and for racial, social, and economic justice.

### **Mentorship and Learning**

To my coach Chris Janson, I have so much gratitude for your support and push to remember my voice in this process. Matt Militello, Lynda Tredway, our instructors, and Cohort III, thank you for creating a program with the openness that allowed us to pursue research with our fullest selves. Maenette Benham! You are an inspiration about what is possible in *our* work as leaders. Jean Wu! I am so fortunate that our paths crossed. You taught me so much through your wisdom and commitment to the AAPI community (and your edits).

## **Music and Writing**

Music has always been a part of my journey through life. Through many playlists, I want to thank some of the artists (in no particular order, and not limited to this list) who accompanied me through this dissertation process: Kim Jung Mi, Ross Gay/Bon Iver, Yo La Tengo, Sun Ra, John Zorn, Dave Holland Quartet, Tom Waits, Fleetwood Mac, The Magnetic Fields, Ravel, Gershwin, Biggie, Sonic Youth, Vitamin String Quartet, Brian Eno, Public Enemy, Joe Hisaishi, Air, Radiohead, Aphex Twin, The Cure, Pavement, Karen O and Willie Nelson, Wilco, Norah Jones, Stereolab, The National. Thank you for helping me step into a space where writing was possible.

## **Powerful Places**

Korea (대한민국), I haven't seen you since 2005 but thank you for giving me language, place, a history, and a family. In my discombobulating search for identity, you give me an anchor. Thank you for offering me 한 (pronounced *hahn*) and 정 (pronounced *jung*) as ancestral and spiritual fuel in my journey as an educator, leader, and human being. Bangkok, thank you for reminding me of Asian joy. Rwanda, thank you for helping me remember that leadership is about love. To The Bay, I carry you always. Durham, Wake County, and North Carolina, thank you for reminding me how to stand firm in purpose.

## **Justice-Oriented Asian American Leadership**

Grace, Yuri, and Larry, thank you for the work you did to show what justice-oriented leadership looks like. I wish I knew of you sooner. Your demonstrated legacy in leading towards racial, social, and economic justice will continue inspiring *us*.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                                               | Page |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| TITLE.....                                                    | i    |
| COPYRIGHT.....                                                | ii   |
| DEDICATION.....                                               | iii  |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....                                         | iv   |
| LIST OF FIGURES.....                                          | xv   |
| CHAPTER 1: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ASIAN AMERICAN LEADERSHIP..... | 1    |
| Ontological and Epistemological Shifts.....                   | 4    |
| Rationale.....                                                | 5    |
| Focus of Practice.....                                        | 8    |
| Analysis of Assets and Challenges.....                        | 8    |
| Macro, Meso, Micro Assets and Challenges.....                 | 8    |
| Significance.....                                             | 12   |
| Context.....                                                  | 13   |
| Purpose Statement and Research Questions.....                 | 15   |
| Research Questions.....                                       | 16   |
| Equity Focus.....                                             | 16   |
| Philosophical Framework.....                                  | 18   |
| Sociological Framework.....                                   | 19   |
| Examples of Challenges.....                                   | 19   |

|                                                                   |    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Theory of Action.....                                             | 20 |
| Proposed Project Activities.....                                  | 20 |
| Summary.....                                                      | 22 |
| CHAPTER 2: CONNECTING OURSELVES TO FORGOTTEN LEGACIES.....        | 23 |
| Model Minority and Perpetual Foreigner Concepts.....              | 28 |
| Origins and Sustaining Qualities.....                             | 30 |
| Consequences of Racist Narratives.....                            | 37 |
| Impacts on Asian American Leadership Potential.....               | 38 |
| Examples of Minor Feelings.....                                   | 39 |
| Micro Examples of Anti-Asian Racist Acts.....                     | 40 |
| Historical and Ongoing Examples of Anti-Asian Racist<br>Acts..... | 41 |
| Erasure of Asian American Activism.....                           | 41 |
| Asian American Resistance Movements.....                          | 42 |
| Justice-Oriented Asian American Leadership.....                   | 42 |
| Demonstrated Actions.....                                         | 45 |
| Grace Lee Boggs.....                                              | 46 |
| Yuri Kochiyama.....                                               | 50 |
| Larry Itliong.....                                                | 55 |
| Justice-Oriented Leadership Tenets.....                           | 59 |
| Collectivist Leadership.....                                      | 61 |

|                                                          |     |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Indigenous Roots of Collectivist Leadership.....         | 63  |
| Collectivist Leadership Theories.....                    | 67  |
| Imaginaries.....                                         | 69  |
| Cross-Racial Coalition Building.....                     | 71  |
| Asian Americans and Cross-Racial Coalition Building..... | 73  |
| Challenges of Cross-Racial Coalition Building.....       | 76  |
| Equal Status Contact.....                                | 79  |
| Actions Supporting Cross-Racial Coalition Building.....  | 79  |
| Ethnic Gradation Constructs.....                         | 83  |
| Summary.....                                             | 85  |
| CHAPTER 3: DESIGNING A SAFE AND RIGOROUS SPACE.....      | 88  |
| Qualitative Research Process and Methodology.....        | 89  |
| Elements of Research Design.....                         | 93  |
| Participants.....                                        | 93  |
| Co-Practitioner Researchers.....                         | 94  |
| Creating a Safe Theorizing Space.....                    | 95  |
| Community Learning Exchanges.....                        | 96  |
| Gracious Space.....                                      | 97  |
| Phases of Research.....                                  | 98  |
| Phase I.....                                             | 100 |
| First Convening.....                                     | 100 |



|                                                  |     |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Second Convening.....                            | 101 |
| Third Convening.....                             | 101 |
| Phase II.....                                    | 104 |
| Brainstorming Dilemmas.....                      | 104 |
| Small Group Formation.....                       | 109 |
| “On-Ramp” Dilemma CLEs.....                      | 113 |
| Continuing Small Group Dilemma-Focused CLEs..... | 116 |
| Phase III.....                                   | 119 |
| Initial Insights.....                            | 122 |
| Last CLE (for now).....                          | 123 |
| Curating Data.....                               | 127 |
| Data Generation and Collection.....              | 128 |
| Data Analysis.....                               | 129 |
| Member Checks.....                               | 133 |
| Thematic Analysis.....                           | 133 |
| Qualitative Coding.....                          | 134 |
| First Pass Coding.....                           | 134 |
| Second Pass Coding.....                          | 138 |
| Third Pass Coding.....                           | 139 |
| Codebook Evolution.....                          | 142 |
| Finalizing Codebook.....                         | 147 |

|                                                                      |     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Study Considerations.....                                            | 150 |
| Reflexivity Statement.....                                           | 152 |
| Internal Validity.....                                               | 153 |
| External Validity.....                                               | 153 |
| Confidentiality and Ethical Considerations.....                      | 154 |
| Summary.....                                                         | 155 |
| CHAPTER 4: SITUATING ASIAN AMERICAN LEADERSHIP.....                  | 156 |
| Context for Study.....                                               | 157 |
| Who We Are and What We Did.....                                      | 160 |
| CRE: Foundations for Sacred Space.....                               | 162 |
| First Pass Coding.....                                               | 169 |
| Emergent Categories.....                                             | 170 |
| Model Minority Impacts.....                                          | 170 |
| Embodying Asian American Leadership.....                             | 174 |
| Collectivist Values.....                                             | 185 |
| Cross-Racial Coalitions.....                                         | 189 |
| Reflection and Planning.....                                         | 195 |
| Planning for Next Phase of CRE Study.....                            | 196 |
| CHAPTER 5: CONNECTING WITH DEMONSTRATED LEGACIES<br>(OURSELVES)..... | 198 |
| Community Learning Exchanges: August 2021 through May 2022.....      | 201 |

|                                                                                            |     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Emerging Theoretical Relations.....                                                        | 202 |
| Leadership Tenets as Theoretical Relations.....                                            | 205 |
| Lens of Fractals.....                                                                      | 206 |
| Creating a Theorizing Space.....                                                           | 212 |
| Making Emerging Theoretical Relations Visible.....                                         | 214 |
| Leadership Tenet #1: “More Human” Human Activism .....                                     | 215 |
| Leadership Tenet #2: Working with the Oppressed .....                                      | 220 |
| Leadership Tenet #3: Develop an Ideology to Resolve Societal<br>Contradictions .....       | 224 |
| Leadership Tenet #4: Struggle Is the Work .....                                            | 228 |
| Leadership Tenet #5: Interests, Feelings, and Concerns Are a Part of<br>the Struggle ..... | 232 |
| Leadership Tenet #6: Cross-Racial Coalitions as Antiracist Actions ....                    | 235 |
| Leadership Tenet #7: Polarizations and Racism Are Real Barriers .....                      | 239 |
| Leadership Tenet #8: Build Our Aspirational World Together .....                           | 243 |
| Leadership Tenet #9: Create Collective Power .....                                         | 248 |
| Leadership Tenet #10: Leadership Is About Impact, Not Notoriety .....                      | 253 |
| Leadership Tenet #11: Building Pathways for Future Generations .....                       | 257 |
| A Demonstrated Legacy.....                                                                 | 261 |
| Emerging Leadership Connections.....                                                       | 263 |
| CHAPTER 6: CONNECTING WITH OUR FULL SELVES.....                                            | 267 |
| Revisiting Data Generation and Collection.....                                             | 268 |

|                                                           |     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Revisiting the Process of Thematic Analysis.....          | 271 |
| Coding Through Thematic Analysis.....                     | 272 |
| First Pass Coding.....                                    | 272 |
| Second Pass Coding.....                                   | 273 |
| Third Pass Coding.....                                    | 273 |
| Revisiting Codebook Development.....                      | 277 |
| Findings.....                                             | 281 |
| Acknowledge Societal Conditions to Imagine Otherwise..... | 289 |
| Acceptance is Necessary for “Unconflicted” Action.....    | 290 |
| Imagining an Antiracist School.....                       | 292 |
| Resetting Conditions through Transformational Spaces..... | 294 |
| Counternarratives to Lift Up Ourselves.....               | 297 |
| Centering Asian American Leadership Principles.....       | 297 |
| Unlearning White Supremacy Culture.....                   | 300 |
| Righteous Anger as a Counternarrative.....                | 301 |
| Enacting Social Change.....                               | 303 |
| Creating Collective Power.....                            | 303 |
| Sharing Our Experiences to Change Ourselves.....          | 305 |
| Finding Common Ground.....                                | 306 |
| Humanistic Activism and Creativity.....                   | 307 |
| Engaging in Spaces of Identity and Emotionality.....      | 307 |

|                                                                            |     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Cultivating Transformational Spaces.....                                   | 310 |
| Resolving Societal Contradictions.....                                     | 311 |
| Start Small.....                                                           | 311 |
| Pushing for Impact.....                                                    | 312 |
| Imagining Impact.....                                                      | 313 |
| Struggling Through Together.....                                           | 315 |
| Struggle and Transformation.....                                           | 315 |
| Struggling to Find Belonging.....                                          | 316 |
| Summary.....                                                               | 318 |
| CHAPTER 7: LEADERSHIP IS ABOUT LOVE.....                                   | 319 |
| Discussion.....                                                            | 320 |
| Findings and Literature Review.....                                        | 322 |
| Revisiting Model Minority and Perpetual Foreigner Concepts....             | 323 |
| Revisiting Justice-Oriented Asian American Leadership.....                 | 325 |
| Revisiting Collectivist Leadership.....                                    | 326 |
| Revisiting Cross-Racial Coalitions.....                                    | 327 |
| Asian American Leadership 보자기 (Pojagi).....                                | 328 |
| CRE Principles and CLE Design to Cultivate Transformational<br>Spaces..... | 329 |
| Unfurling the Asian American Leadership 보자기 (Pojagi).....                  | 331 |
| Connections to Research Questions.....                                     | 335 |

|                                                                                  |     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Overarching Research Question Response.....                                      | 336 |
| Responses to Research Subquestions.....                                          | 337 |
| Community of Justice-Oriented Asian American Leaders.....                        | 337 |
| Implications (Practice, Policy, Research, Limitations).....                      | 337 |
| Practice Implications.....                                                       | 338 |
| Policy Implications.....                                                         | 340 |
| Research Implications.....                                                       | 340 |
| Limitations.....                                                                 | 342 |
| Leadership Development.....                                                      | 343 |
| Conclusion.....                                                                  | 348 |
| REFERENCES.....                                                                  | 352 |
| APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL.....                             | 370 |
| APPENDIX B: CITI CERTIFICATION.....                                              | 371 |
| APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM: ADULTS (NO MORE THAN<br>MINIMAL RISK).....    | 372 |
| APPENDIX D: EXAMPLE SMALL GROUP COMMUNITY LEARNING<br>EXCHANGE (CLE) SLIDES..... | 376 |
| APPENDIX E: EXAMPLE WHOLE GROUP COMMUNITY LEARNING<br>EXCHANGE (CLE) SLIDES..... | 387 |
| APPENDIX F: CODEBOOK.....                                                        | 402 |

## LIST OF FIGURES

|                                                                            |     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Self and ontology.....                                                  | 6   |
| 2. Racial triangulation of Asian Americans.....                            | 7   |
| 3. Assets and challenges of Asian American leaders.....                    | 10  |
| 4. Timeline of CRE study.....                                              | 21  |
| 5. Literature review bins.....                                             | 27  |
| 6. Literature review bins' connections to study.....                       | 29  |
| 7. The paradox of the model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts..... | 31  |
| 8. Leadership tenets from Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong.....               | 47  |
| 9. Hierarchical and heterarchical structures.....                          | 65  |
| 10. Potential for conflicts in cross-racial coalition building.....        | 74  |
| 11. Critical Race Ethnography and Community Learning Exchanges.....        | 90  |
| 12. CRE study phases.....                                                  | 99  |
| 13. February 2021 CLE agenda.....                                          | 102 |
| 14. May 2021 CLE agenda.....                                               | 103 |
| 15. Study participant information.....                                     | 105 |
| 16. Phase II of CRE study.....                                             | 106 |
| 17. August 2021 CLE agenda.....                                            | 108 |
| 18. August 2021 follow-up GoogleForm prompt.....                           | 110 |
| 19. CLE participant dilemmas.....                                          | 111 |
| 20. CLE participant dilemma affinity responses.....                        | 112 |

|                                                                                   |     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 21. CLE participant small groups based on dilemma affinity.....                   | 114 |
| 22. November 2021 small group CLEs for “on-ramp” dilemmas.....                    | 115 |
| 23. November 2021 small group dilemma consultancy protocol.....                   | 117 |
| 24. February 2022 through May 2022 small group dilemma consultancy protocol       | 118 |
| 25. February 2022 through May 2022 small group dilemma-focused CLE agenda...      | 120 |
| 26. June 2022 whole group CLE agenda.....                                         | 121 |
| 27. August 2022 whole group CLE (final CLE).....                                  | 124 |
| 28. Sankey diagram - leadership tenet intersections (August 2021-May 2022 CLEs)   | 126 |
| 29. Data generation, collection, and triangulation.....                           | 130 |
| 30. Timeline of research study phases.....                                        | 131 |
| 31. Thematic analysis process.....                                                | 135 |
| 32. Phase I codes.....                                                            | 136 |
| 33. Phase I code groups & code occurrences.....                                   | 137 |
| 34. Phase II code occurrences.....                                                | 140 |
| 35. Co-occurrences of leadership tenet codes.....                                 | 141 |
| 36. Phase III code occurrences.....                                               | 143 |
| 37. Subcodes from third pass coding.....                                          | 144 |
| 38. Subcode occurrences for significant leadership tenet code co-occurrences..... | 145 |
| 39. Category, literature review connection, leadership tenet codes.....           | 148 |
| 40. Subcodes with two or more factors from thematic analysis.....                 | 149 |
| 41. Finalized codebook to discuss findings.....                                   | 151 |



|                                                                                             |     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 42. Study participant locations.....                                                        | 163 |
| 43. Emergent category: Model minority concept word cloud of codes.....                      | 173 |
| 44. Emergent category: Embodying Asian American leadership word cloud of codes.....         | 176 |
| 45. Emergent category: Collectivist values word cloud of codes.....                         | 186 |
| 46. Emergent category: Cross-racial coalitions word cloud of codes.....                     | 191 |
| 47. Timeline of Phase II CLE convenings August 2021 through May 2022.....                   | 203 |
| 48. Word cloud of all codes from this CRE study.....                                        | 204 |
| 49. Leadership tenets appearing in CLE transcripts August 2021 through May 2022.....        | 207 |
| 50. Framework for emerging theoretical relations.....                                       | 209 |
| 51. Visual map of theorizing space.....                                                     | 213 |
| 52. Leadership tenet codes and highest frequency co-occurring codes from Phase II CLEs..... | 216 |
| 53. Leadership tenet #1 Sankey diagram - co-occurrences with other leadership tenets.....   | 218 |
| 54. Leadership tenet #2 Sankey diagram - co-occurrences with other leadership tenets.....   | 222 |
| 55. Leadership tenet #3 Sankey diagram - co-occurrences with other leadership tenets.....   | 225 |
| 56. Leadership tenet #4 Sankey diagram - co-occurrences with other leadership tenets.....   | 229 |
| 57. Leadership tenet #5 Sankey diagram - co-occurrences with other leadership tenets.....   | 233 |
| 58. Leadership tenet #6 Sankey diagram - co-occurrences with other leadership tenets.....   | 237 |

|                                                                                                                                |     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 59. Leadership tenet #7 Sankey diagram - co-occurrences with other leadership tenets.....                                      | 240 |
| 60. Leadership tenet #8 Sankey diagram - co-occurrences with other leadership tenets.....                                      | 245 |
| 61. Leadership tenet #9 Sankey diagram - co-occurrences with other leadership tenets.....                                      | 250 |
| 62. Leadership tenet #10 Sankey diagram - co-occurrences with other leadership tenets.....                                     | 255 |
| 63. Leadership tenet #11 Sankey diagram - co-occurrences with other leadership tenets.....                                     | 259 |
| 64. Leadership tenet codes and highlighted subcodes as theoretical relations.....                                              | 262 |
| 65. Collected data for CRE study.....                                                                                          | 269 |
| 66. First pass coding.....                                                                                                     | 274 |
| 67. Second pass coding.....                                                                                                    | 275 |
| 68. Third pass coding - Leadership tenet codes.....                                                                            | 276 |
| 69. Third pass coding - Subcodes within leadership tenet co-occurrences.....                                                   | 278 |
| 70. Codebook development.....                                                                                                  | 280 |
| 71. Visual of codebook.....                                                                                                    | 282 |
| 72. Emerging findings: Acknowledge societal conditions, re-set conditions, develop counternarratives, enact social change..... | 283 |
| 73. Significant leadership tenet code co-occurrences and subcode occurrences.....                                              | 286 |
| 74. Subcode occurrences within significant leadership tenet co-occurrences.....                                                | 287 |
| 75. Subcode occurrences within significant leadership tenet co-occurrences (organized by subcode categories).....              | 288 |

|                                                                                         |     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 76. Emerging finding: Acknowledge societal conditions subcode occurrences.....          | 291 |
| 77. Emerging finding: Resetting conditions subcode occurrences.....                     | 295 |
| 78. Emerging finding: Counternarratives subcode occurrences.....                        | 298 |
| 79. Emerging finding: Enacting social change.....                                       | 304 |
| 80. Justice-oriented Asian American leadership guideposts.....                          | 321 |
| 81. Conceptual framework linking literature review, process, and emerging findings..... | 324 |
| 82. Visual of Asian American leadership 보자기 (pojagi).....                               | 332 |
| 83. Leadership covenants emerging from study.....                                       | 347 |

## CHAPTER 1: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ASIAN AMERICAN LEADERSHIP

Dear 외 할아버지 (Grandpa),

*I'm left in awe of your courage, strength, and perseverance. You stepped off the boat in 부산 (Pusan), away from your native northern soil on your own, without a family, as the Korean War was brewing. I can't imagine what was going through your mind.*

*Living through Japanese occupation, the Korean War, and restarting your life. You became a teacher, a principal, grew to be a father who raised four children, suffered a stroke, and loved your family through it all. I hope you know how much your story lives in me to act with courage even when I don't feel courageous, to hold strength and perseverance in a pursuit to create positive change in our corners of the world.*

*I'm writing to you as a fellow educator in North Carolina in the southeastern part of the United States. There's a history here that includes the colonization of indigenous people's land, creating a displacement for people who owned their native land, and then were forcibly removed. I imagine you can empathize with your own experience of having to leave the North Korea you called home. As you may know, the enslavement of Black people is another part of American history that makes it hard for us to look at ourselves. It's a brutal part of our history we don't discuss here enough.*

*These foundational experiences of the region carried on through the twentieth century, separating white people from people that didn't look like them in public spaces, schools, and even where people live. This intentional separation of people and the impacts of this atrocious history is one of the main reasons I'm continuing my journey as an educator.*

*One of the ways this lack of humanity impacted us as a family was over fourteen years ago. Back in California, 엄마 (mom), your 딸 (daughter), was in a car accident. It was a scary time for us. I was teaching tenth grade World History at the time, and I remember getting a message from 아빠 (dad) and hearing that 엄마 was "badly hurt" in a car accident. I flew down to San Diego to check in on 엄마 with 아빠 and 형 (older brother).*

*She was hospitalized with a near-severed spinal cord and had to have surgery.*

*During one morning after 엄마's surgery, while we were in her hospital room, 엄마 let us know that she had a bad experience with her nurse (a white woman). After making 엄마 go to the bathroom, the nurse kept her sitting in a chair after surgery over an extended period of time unnecessarily after surgery. 엄마 was in pain during the whole time sitting in the chair, and when the nurse finally returned, 엄마 asked her why it took so long to come back, the nurse said she was trying to make 엄마 "tougher". When 엄마 stuck up for herself and said that the nurse's actions were wrong, the nurse told 엄마 to get someone who spoke better English and left.*

*When we heard this story, I was so pissed off.*

*In this moment, 엄마's English wasn't good enough to get an explanation from the nurse on why she was getting mistreated as a patient.*

*In these moments, you come to mind, 할아버지, and I think about what courage, strength, and perseverance mean.*

*I made a complaint on behalf of 엄마 to the nurse manager, had a meeting with the nurse manager and their attorney, and asked them to make sure other patients do not have a similar experience.*

*I did my best to protect your 딸 in the best way I could, and I hope it helped to ensure that nurse treated patients with more humanity.*

*As an educator, I'm working on doing my best to confront these dehumanizing behaviors. Starting with myself, I'm doing my best to use anger productively. With these racist behaviors, there's an older root cause that comes from the policies that created belief systems that we've been conditioned to play out.*

*I'm putting the focus less on a specific person and working to create systemic changes and trying to help make the education space in North Carolina better. I'm learning how to be in more spaces with all kinds of people and create coalitions to help make positive impacts. I'm not there yet.*

*용기 (courage), 힘 (strength), and 인내 (perseverance). Your gifts to me through the story of your own journey as the Korean War started. I'll keep going with your wind of influence behind me.*

*I think of you often 할아버지, and I hope you are happy in the ether out there. I hope you feel the energy from this letter reverberating back to you from your 손자 (grandson), wherever you are. Thank you for your gifts to us.*

*I hope you are in a place full of light with 할머니 (grandma), enjoying each other's company and smiling down on your spirits living in each of us.*

*With love,*

*고주현 (my Korean name)*

*November 8, 2020*

Echoing out to my 외 할아버지 and holding his story of restarting life from the conditions of war is one ancestral guidepost reminding me of a way the *self* persists, transforming hardship into a fulfilled life. The way I make sense of *self* as a Korean, an immigrant, and an American is through my Korean language. Words like 정 (pronounced *jung*),

한 (pronounced, *hahn*), and 당신 (pronounced, *dahngshin*) that incite history, emotions, and intimacy beyond the scope of literal English translations. 정 refers to a belonging to a people, a place, and Korea that is unconditional (Kim & Yu, 1996). 한 is an eternal unrequitedness connected to grudges, regret and sadness (Kim & Yu, 1996). 당신 is how Koreans say “you”. I heard this word often between my parents when I was a child as they engaged in arguments and serious conversations. From these moments, I interpreted the purpose of the use of 당신 more intimately than the typical “you”. In my mind, as I heard 당신 from my parents, I felt a “we” and “us,” smashing the words “you,” “me,” and “us” together in my mind.

I belong to a country with a history of being invaded and occupied (from China, Mongolia, Japan, the US), with a people that firmly hold, we are still Korean (including North Korea). As an immigrant in the US, I live in a country that says, *you Asians are welcome here as long as you stay in your place*; an unrequitedness that has existed through my entire life in America. As an educator committed to a world where all can thrive, I hope for a world where we can live with 정 and 한 together in this beautiful and terrible world, and live towards the connection 당신 invokes for me. Just as I make sense of *self* as a Korean, an immigrant, and as an American through Korean language, I can more purposefully understand and enact my leadership through Korean culture and values that hold great possibilities and hope for how I can bring these elements of my identity to help build our aspirational world through racial, social, and economic justice in our schools, organizations, and communities.

This chapter reviews the ontological and epistemological shifts necessary for amplifying Asian American leadership and key factors to this study: rationale, focus of practice, an analysis of assets and challenges for Asian American leaders, significance, equity focus, critical race

ethnography design, purpose statement and research questions, and the confidentiality, ethical considerations, and limitations for this study.

### **Ontological and Epistemological Shifts**

Our current societal context is one where racism, colonialism, and capitalism require shifts in the ways we come to be (ontological) and come to know (epistemological) as leaders and researchers in the theorizing and practice spaces of leadership research. As I reflect on my dimensions of self, I see the importance of bringing together other Asian American educational and organizational leaders in order to share and examine our personal stories in order to center our experiences and co-create new ways of being and knowing to better understand how we lead within organizations and communities to free ourselves from the clutches of racism, colonialism, and capitalism.

Identity frames rooted in experiences such as my 외 할아버지's can shape a way of leading beyond our racially imbalanced societal context through learning the perspectives of Asian American leaders to expand our thinking in the theorizing and practice spaces of leadership. The story of my 외 할아버지 shaped my being through his modeling of courage (용기), strength (힘), and perseverance (인내). 외 할아버지's story connects personal values from the self that extends to transform the larger community in the ways he lived beyond the circumstances of Japanese Occupation and the Korean War through his actions as an educator, a father, and a grandfather. As the Plains people use the Medicine Wheel, which is a circle composed of large stones in the shape of a wheel, symbolizing the life cycle of all native peoples, I refer to the Medicine Wheel as an ontological framework to learn about "personal balance, wholeness with family and interconnectedness with community, and responsibility for nature [that] values personal volition, reflection on one's own hidden gifts, and living up to the

vision of one's native beliefs and values” (Benham, 2002, p. 141). Courage (용기), strength (힘), and perseverance (인내) are the gifts from my 할아버지 guiding me in how to connect my *self* with my ancestral roots to take action towards the greater good within communities, blending with the Korean words 정, 한, and 당신 to form my own ontological framework of self. Figure 1 depicts the components of my ontology from my 외 할아버지 and my Korean culture that informs and influences my approach to this research study.

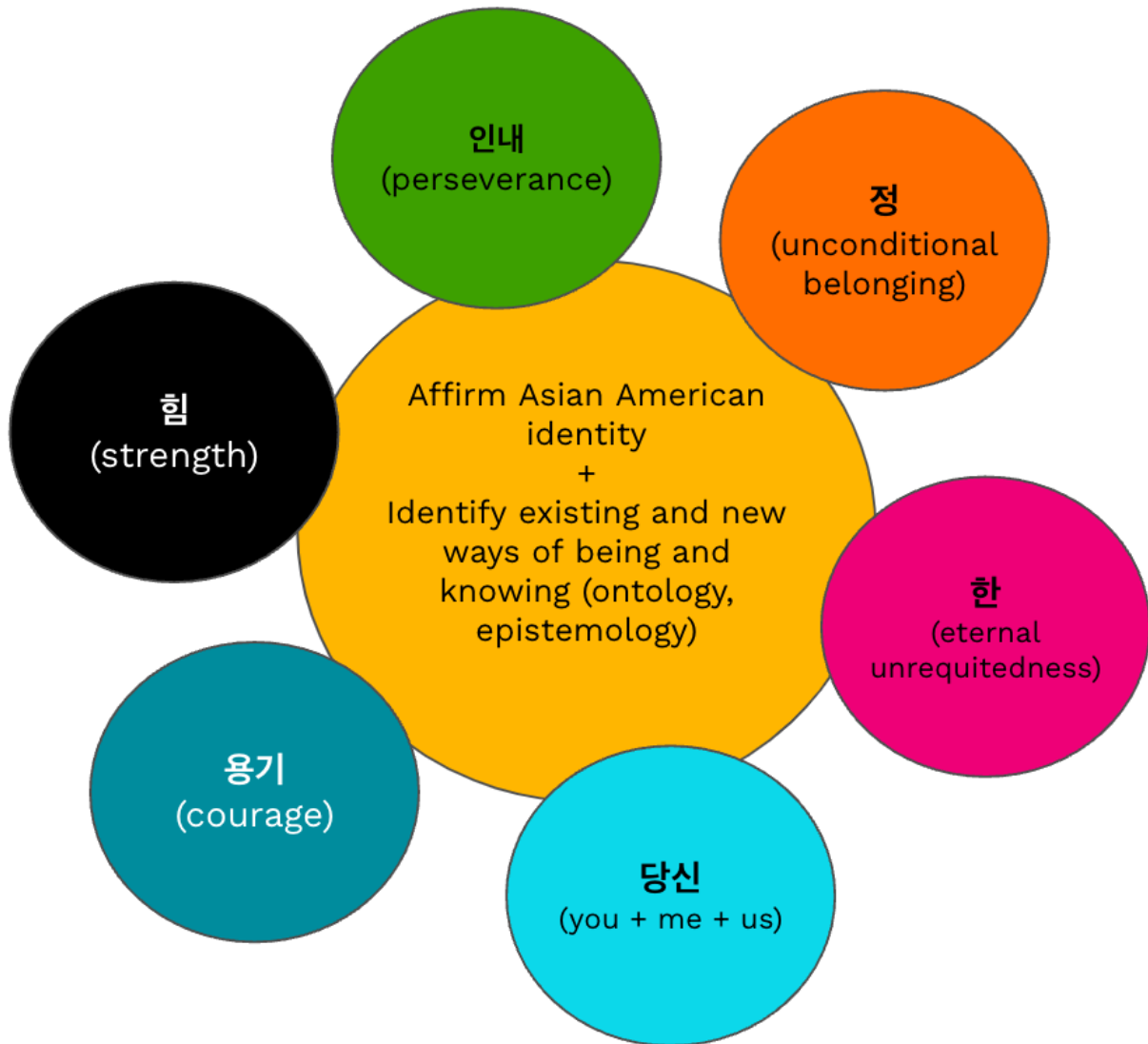
## **Rationale**

Mills’s (1997) frame of the racial contract offers an epistemological argument that the society we live in is a continuing white supremacist state, holding up a mirror to a mainstream philosophy with an evolving racial contract enacting a separate but equal system of segregation in the United States. Mills (1997) noted that one has to learn to see the world wrongly through “white epistemic authority” (p. 18). One example of seeing the world wrongly is the way Asian Americans have been racialized in America (see Figure 2). Dating back to the mid-1800s, Asian

Americans were valorized relative to Black people, pitting people of color against each other subversively in order to maintain white supremacy (Kim, 1999). Though this is a concept that should be updated, mental phenomena such as the racial triangulation of Asian Americans, is pervasive throughout the history of the US and emphasizes the need to move beyond racialized epistemologies into a space where the lens of leadership is expanded through understanding the experiences of racially marginalized groups. This experience specifically for Asian Americans will be discussed further in Chapter 2.

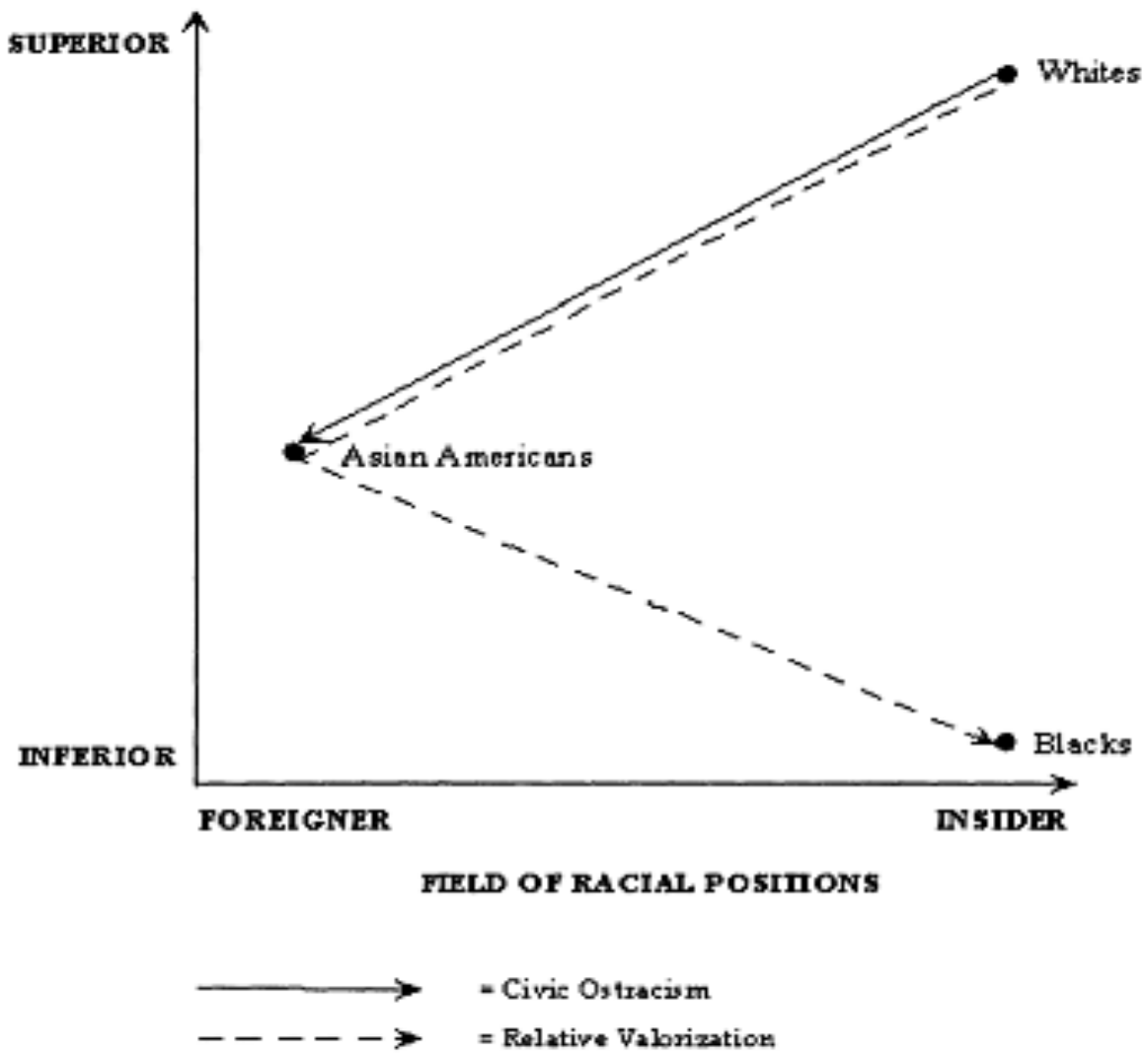
This study aims to lift up the experiences of Asian American leaders who are racially marginalized in order to understand the dynamics of oppression and its implications for leadership research (Freire, 2000). Freire (2000) reminds us that to work collaboratively and





*Figure 1. Self and ontology.*

---



*Note.* (Kim, 1999).

*Figure 2.* Racial triangulation of Asian Americans.

---

meaningfully, we must be in space together to think, act, and reflect in order to recognize and understand our experiences within oppressive contexts to then understand the actions required to overturn an oppressive status quo. Centering the experiences of justice-oriented Asian American leaders' experiences can provide emerging frameworks to suggest new ways of thinking within the theorizing and practice spaces of leadership research that are liberatory.

### **Focus of Practice**

Through this research study, I provide insight into the experiences of justice-oriented Asian American leaders as they relate to affirming their racialized experiences and the ways their experiences provide lessons in leadership that practitioners and researchers should strongly consider. Justice-oriented Asian American leaders have a significant role to play as part of America's decolonizing majority's work to enact change through racial, social, and economic justice.

### **Analysis of Assets and Challenges**

There are both tremendous assets and substantial challenges involved with Asian American leadership in educational and nonprofit organizational settings. An analysis of those assets and challenges can help Asian American leaders better understand their roles as organizational and community leaders.

### **Macro, Meso, Micro Assets and Challenges**

Three ecological levels of influence (macro, meso, and micro) inform our communities, our organizations, and self (Guajardo et al., 2016). The processes of mapping and analyzing assets and challenges are informed by the ecologies of community, organization, and self.

At the macro level is our community lens, which provides knowledge from a societal perspective (Guajardo et al., 2016). The meso level is our organizational lens, pointing us to our

families, schools, places of work, and social collectives connecting self to larger society (Guajardo et al., 2016). The micro level is the lens of self and our individual relationships that influence how we filter information and make decisions (Guajardo et al., 2016).

In November 2020, I facilitated an initial convening with thirteen Asian American leaders in order to identify assets and challenges potentially connected to the study's Focus of Practice (see Figure 3). This convening, held virtually through Zoom, was designed to identify and express assets and challenges at the macro, meso, and micro levels. The participants of this convening worked and lived in many different regions across the United States, ranging from the East Coast, the South, the Midwest, and parts of northern and southern California. Participants identified as Asian American leaders who work as public school educators, university professors, and leaders in nonprofit settings.

The convening began with us acquainting ourselves with one another through a warm up activity that included participants sharing their reasons for agreeing to join the convening. Following our responses to the opening prompt, we shared in pairs (in Zoom breakout rooms) our responses to the questions: *Where are you? Who are you? Who are your people?*. Following these paired conversations, we focused the bulk of our remaining time discussing and responding to the question: *From our notions of self, what are the assets and challenges for us as organizational leaders in a status quo that racializes us as Asian American leaders*”?

At the macro level, participants shared ideas that were categorized and conceptualized as both assets and challenges:

- our diversity as Asian Americans, where we are grouped monolithically though our families are from countries as dissimilar as India, the Philippines, China, Vietnam, Korean, and Japan,

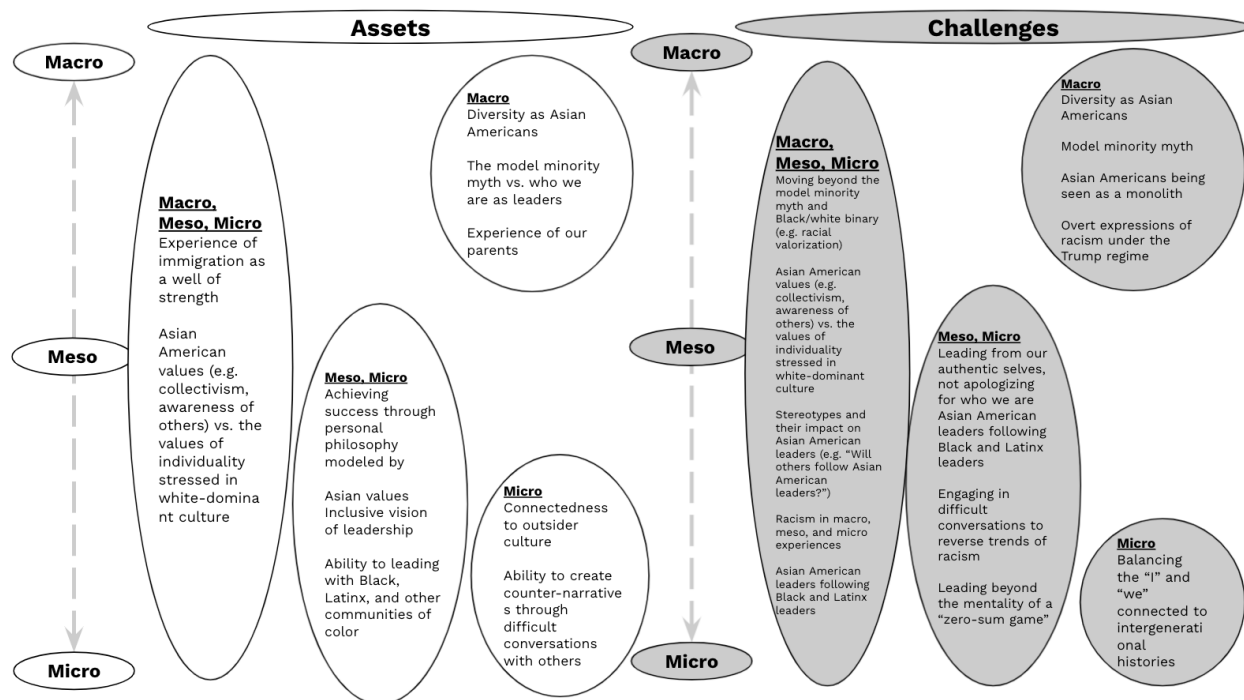


Figure 3. Assets and challenges of Asian American leaders.

- being seen as a model minority,
- the experiences of our parents as they navigated experiences such as immigration and assimilation into a new culture in America,
- Asian Americans being viewed by others as a monolith, and the overt expressions of racism under the Trump administration.

At the micro level, Asian Americans' connectedness to outsider culture (non-majority, non-white) and our ability to create counter-narratives to white dominant culture through difficult conversations were seen as assets. The balancing of "I" and "we" connected to our intergenerational histories was seen as a micro challenge. To further extend this challenge, one of the participants discussed the tension he feels knowing the privileges he has as a third-generation Japanese American, whereas his parents experienced incarceration during World War II, and he did not. This participant disclosed that this tension made him question his own authenticity in the broader movement for justice, because he did not experience the same oppressive experiences of his elders.

From this discussion, we noted that a number of assets within the meso and micro levels simultaneously:

- achieving success through a personal philosophy modeled by Asian values,
- creating an inclusive vision of leadership,
- our abilities to lead with Black, Latino/a, and other racially marginalized communities.

Similarly, we discussed challenges that also co-exist within both meso and micro levels:

- leading from our authentic selves (and not apologizing for who we are),

- following and supporting Black and Latino/a leaders in their pursuits for organizational and community change,
- engaging in difficult conversations to reverse the trends of racism,
- leading beyond the mentality of a “zero-sum game” in which people of color are pitted against each other.

Our discussions also revealed assets and challenges embedded within all three levels of the ecologies of knowing (self, organization, community) simultaneously:

- personal or ancestors’ experiences with immigration were seen as a well of strength,
- Asian American values, such as collectivism and awareness for others,

Conversely, some of the challenges at the macro, meso, and micro levels included:

- moving beyond the model minority concept (which I assumed as a researcher as a desire for participants to be in a space of existence beyond the ways they have been racialized by the model minority concept)
- the reductive and limiting Black/white binary of many conversations about race,
- the influence of Asian American values, stereotypes we experienced as leaders,
- the general experiences with racism, and
- Asian American leaders following the lead of Black and Latino/a leaders in their pursuits for organizational and community change.

## **Significance**

This study was a collectivist research process centering Asian American leaders’ experiences in the present and how their experiences connected to the justice-oriented histories of Asian Americans to expand the theorizing and practice spaces of leadership research in alignment with a pursuit to continue the building of our aspirational world through racial, social,

and economic justice. This study is significant in three key ways. First, the experience of Asian Americans being pressed to be a model minority and yet perpetually foreign in one body is a unique experience that is understudied (Kawai, 2005; Kim et al., 2011; Kim, 1999, Kim, 2011; Wu, 2014). A focus on the experience of justice-oriented Asian American leaders can disrupt inequities in the theorizing and practice space of leadership research. Second, this study used Critical Race Ethnography (CRE) as a methodology to see, understand, and learn from the way race functions as a stratifying force in organizational and community settings through the lens of justice-oriented Asian American leaders. Using the lens of CRE, this study centered the stories of justice-oriented Asian American leaders as necessary counternarratives to the white dominant discourse in the theorizing and practice spaces of leadership research (Duncan, 2005; hunter et al., 2013). Third, the results and findings which emerged from this study hold implications for all leaders within the theorizing and practice space of leadership to learn from the experiences of justice-oriented Asian American leaders.

### **Context**

Asian American leaders' identities and their experiences within education and nonprofit organizations in the current US underscore a growing recognition of the need to disrupt and decolonize white centered narratives of leadership. Decolonization seeks to reverse the effects of colonialism that physically, culturally, and psychologically dispossessed and oppressed Indigenous People (O'Dowd & Heckenberg, 2020). Decolonization is now used to talk about restorative justice through cultural, psychological, and economic freedom (O'Dowd & Heckenberg, 2020). Asian Americans are a significant part of a decolonizing majority to bring racial, social, and economic justice to education and nonprofit systems in America (Nguyen, 2020). Through this CRE study, we can better understand how the exploration of Asian



American leadership experiences and narratives lead to leading towards racial, social, and economic justice and away from white centric views of leadership that erase or mute the experiences of other racially marginalized groups.

Another important context for this study is the severe underrepresentation of Asian Americans in leadership in educational and nonprofit settings. Currently, there is a significant disproportionality between principals who are white and principals who are people of color. During the 1987-1988 school year in the US, 87% of public school principals were white, 9% were Black, 3% were Hispanic, and between 1% to 2% were American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian American or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. Over twenty years later, in the 2011-2012 school year, the disproportionality in representation remained. Though a slight decrease, roughly 80% of public school principals were white, 10% were Black, 7% were Hispanic, and 3% were all other ethnic groups (Anderson, 2016). Even as the population of Asian Americans continues to grow (estimated to be 10% of the U.S. population), Asian American leaders encompass less than 3% of all public school principals since 1988 (NYU Center for the Study of Asian American Health, n.d.). Within our current context, leadership reflecting the cultural and ethnic groups representing all of America is important for all students to see within our educational systems (Sanchez et al., 2009).

Within my school district of roughly 162,000 students, 54.6% are students of color. The 56% students of color include those who are: Native American (0.2%), Asian (9.8%), Black (22.3%), Latino/a (18.4%), or Pacific Islander (0.1%), while the remaining 45.3% of students are white. Although the student population includes close to 10% Asian students, there is not proportionate and equitable representation of Asian leaders. For instance, in the school district in which I work, I am the only Asian American on the Superintendent's Leadership Team out of 24

people and there is not one principal who identifies as Asian American out of 194 (Wake County Public School System, n.d.).

Leadership is a complex endeavor and organizations and communities are often stronger and healthier when their leadership is diverse (Militello et al., 2009). By studying and better understanding the experiences of Asian American leaders, new frameworks of leadership centered on their experiences may emerge to influence the theorizing and practice spaces of leadership with alternative approaches that are more justice-oriented (hunter et al., 2013).

One note for this study: because I too identify as a justice-oriented Asian American educational leader the use of “we”, “our”, “us” is frequent throughout the text as I saw myself both as a researcher and participant of this study.

### **Purpose Statement and Research Questions**

Efforts to identify and understand leadership qualities and practices that diverge from or even transcend the white dominant discourse in leadership research spaces should be congruent with values and approaches that are distinct from white dominant culture. In order to maintain fidelity to the purpose of such efforts, the research process must be participatory, liberatory, and culturally-honoring in ways that focus on a co-constructed process of seeing, understanding, and learning through a hopeful and liberatory inquiry (Freire, 2000). The purpose of this Critical Race Ethnography (CRE) study is to convene justice-oriented Asian American leaders and engage in learning focused on their context, identities, and dilemmas in order to surface alternative lessons in leadership that inform ways racial, social, and economic justice can continue to be pursued in organizations and communities.

## Research Questions

The CRE study is designed to address one overarching research question, along with accompanying sub-questions. The overarching research question is: *How do Asian American leaders identify existing and new ontological and epistemological frameworks to affirm their identity and engage in leadership actions pursuing racial, social, and economic justice?*

The sub questions are as follows:

- How does knowing the self affirm leaders' individual identities and inform leadership actions for Asian American leaders?
- What are the ontological and epistemological frameworks of Asian American historical leadership legacies that inform leadership actions for current Asian American leaders?
- How do these historical legacies inform the development of new ontological and epistemological relations for Asian American leaders?
- How do Asian American leaders balance their individual identities with a collective Asian American identity to inform how they enact leadership actions in their organizations (meso) and communities (macro)?
- How do CLEs, the researcher, and participants of this CRE study build a coalition of Asian American leaders who support each other to understand and implement transformative leadership actions within their organizations and communities?

## Equity Focus

The pursuit of this CRE study calls on the history and the existing legacy of Asian American leadership that is often erased from American society. Recalling the actions of Asian American leaders with how they contributed to justice-oriented leadership actions affirms Asian

American leaders as legitimate activists in the history and contemporary institutions and organizations of America (Kendi, 2019). Reviewing the actions of Asian American activists and delving into the philosophical and sociological frameworks connected such justice-oriented Asian American leadership aligns this CRE study with a focus on racial equity, asserting that racially marginalized groups are equals within the context of leadership in America.

The often overlooked history of justice-oriented Asian American leadership is particularly profound in educational settings. In 1969, the Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA) organized with The Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) at the University of California (U.C.), Berkeley to establish a Third World College, “whose curriculum would be designed for, and taught by, people of color” (*The Third World Liberation Front*. n.d.). Asian Americans co-led a movement organizing to demand a high quality education for students that allowed for the retention of their cultural identity (*Third World College Proposal*, 2017).

The organizing actions of the AAPA echo a legacy of significant justice-oriented Asian American leadership in other American historical contexts. Many Asian American leaders have contributed to this legacy. For example, decades after meeting Malcolm X, Yuri Kochiyama remained committed to causes in the Black, Latino/a, and Asian-American communities, particularly in New York City, yet she is erased from our country’s history (Wang, 2013). Elsewhere, in Detroit, Grace Lee Boggs spent much of her life advocating for civil rights and labor rights in Detroit’s Black Power movement and in some of her F.B.I. files; she was described as “probably Afro Chinese,” convoluting and obscuring her Asian American identity (Chow, 2015). In 1965, that Larry Itliong organized a strike with two thousand Filipino grape workers in the California town of Delano and persuaded Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta to join forces to help start the United Farm Workers is absent from general American and labor

history (Cowan, 2019). Each activist, each in a different geographic region within the United States, exemplified Asian Americans working with marginalized communities to transform American society. Yet, why don't more of us espouse the significance of their work? This narrative void of Asian American contributions to activism was created by white centered discourse that must be acknowledged and counternarratives must be developed in order to move us closer to living in a society where all people can thrive (Wu, 2014).

### **Philosophical Framework**

The absence of knowledge about the demonstrated legacy of Asian American leaders engaging in racial, social, and economic justice work benefits the white psyche (Mills, 1997). Mills (1997) argued that the terms of American history asserts "that nonwhite subpersonhood is enshrined simultaneously with white personhood" (p. 56). The "othering," or placing another group of human beings as less than, certifies white people to be the fullest persons in the contract of racial terms Mills described throughout American history. This overarching structure in the US creates conditions for a personal struggle for Asian American leaders and other racially marginalized leaders. Mills called this an "epistemic dimension" and that a "cognitive resistance" is necessary to fill in the crucial gaps created by white dormant discourse (Mills, 1997, p. 119). The subpersonhood and personal struggle to resist the false assertions of white theory diminishing the experience of racially marginalized groups puts Asian American leaders into a space where racialized experiences connect their experiences with other racially marginalized leaders. As the AAPA asserted,

[l]eadership, as we understand it, is effective action; it is not making good speeches, rallying people, or having charisma, per se. It is leadership when those qualities lead to effective action...Thus, we define leadership as effective action whether that action is

work, writing, speaking, talking to friends, or plain secretarial labor. What is important is getting things done [to undo colonialism, capitalism, and racism] (Asian American Political Alliance, 2017).

The overcoming of the racially marginalized confines of the Asian American identity imposed on us by white supremacy consciousness is a key element this study explored.

### **Sociological Framework**

The lens of justice-oriented Asian American leadership suggests new and expansive ways of thinking about leadership. Benham (2002) reminded us "there are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept" (p. 133). Through the prism of what leadership can be, justice-oriented Asian American leadership perspectives can press us to see beyond the white dominant discourse of leadership. As American society pushes us toward what Wilkerson described as a dominant caste structure with "arbitrary boundaries" keeping marginalized groups apart and "in their assigned places" (Wilkerson, 2020, p. 17), justice-oriented Asian Americans leaders' perspectives press us to repudiate these limiting frames of leadership, being, and knowing rooted in white supremacy. Despite the potential for justice-oriented Asian American leadership to help us pursue greater racial equity, social, and economic justice in our work as leaders, profound challenges remain in all settings.

### **Examples of Challenges**

As recently as 2015, a survey of 362 Asian American men related to discrimination in the workplace found that 82% of the respondents were recognized for working hard, but only 49% were recognized for leadership abilities (Shen, n.d.). These results seem consistent with the views expressed by Wilkerson who wrote that the American caste system "prefers an Asian-American man to put his technological expertise at the service of the company but not aspire to

CEO” (Wilkerson, 2020, p. 70). The confining of Asian American leaders to a lens encompassing only the views of white dominant culture prevents us all from seeing “leadership qualities inherent in individuals endowed with wisdom transcend[ing] traditional concepts associated with leadership,” beyond personality traits or charisma (Benham, 2002, p. 133).

### **Theory of Action**

A theory of action describes how a study is designed and includes anticipated outcomes and impacts based on theoretical assumptions. The theory of action for this CRE study is: *If we involve and engage Asian American leaders in deep examination of existing frameworks of being and knowing and connect them to a historical legacy of justice-oriented Asian American leadership, then a process through this study centered on CRE and CLEs can model a process to support the affirmation of the study participants’ identities as Asian American leaders in pursuit of racial, social, and economic justice within their organizations and communities.*

### **Proposed Project Activities**

The timeline for this CRE study (see Figure 4) and the CLEs driving the study were scheduled to occur from the Fall of 2021 through the Fall of 2022. Asian American leaders were selected for this CRE study through purposeful sampling, which involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals who are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with an area of interest (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The participants sought for this CRE study were qualified and willing to participate to discuss the perspectives of Asian American leadership from an ontological and an epistemological lens and explore Asian American identity as it relates to leadership dilemmas and understanding ways to build social change efforts with fellow racially marginalized leaders.



*Figure 4.* Timeline of CRE study.

---



## Summary

The ontological and epistemological frameworks rooted in the personal and professional experiences of Asian American educational and organizational leaders affirms a collective Asian American identity to better inform leadership practices situated within a historical legacy and pursuit centered on racial, social, and economic justice in an inequitable world. Coming together to think, act, and reflect as Asian American leaders is to step into Freire's praxis to suggest new ways of thinking about leadership that are liberatory (Freire, 2000).

Finding belonging (정) with people, a place, and within any country are the challenges for many Asian Americans through the course of our lives. The eternal unrequitedness (헛) we experience in the pursuit of belonging is seen as an unnatural normal white society tells us to accept. With the racialized experiences people of color often carry as human beings, is there a way to approach each other in the aspiration for connection (당신) to be more inclusive with a mindset of abundance instead of a narrow mindset often espoused by white centered thinking? Studying Asian American leaders' identities and experiences as leaders brings us to a Freirean praxis to pursue liberation through connection.

Chapter 2 reviews relevant literature pertinent to this CRE study, while Chapter 3 presents the methodology used. Chapter 4 situates the reader in the context of this CRE study and emerging themes from initial convenings. Chapter 5 provides an overview of emerging ideas and themes from this study. Chapter 6 shares the summary emerging findings, while Chapter 7 discusses the implications and leadership lessons learned from this CRE study.

## CHAPTER 2: CONNECTING OURSELVES TO FORGOTTEN LEGACIES

*In my loneliness, I dive beyond this haze  
fermenting something beyond anger  
and dream that I'm a weaver, a collector of  
stories, an audience of many*

An excerpt from my emulation poem of John Yau's *A Sheaf of Pleasant Voices*

During the COVID-19 pandemic from February 2020 through March 2021, the exponential rise of hate crimes toward Asian Americans across the United States harkened to a past often erased from our memory. This rise in hate crimes included a thirty-six year old Asian American man being stabbed in the back with an eight-inch knife and a thirty-year old Filipino man killed in a manner similar to George Floyd by the Antioch police (Freedman, 2021; Katersky et al., 2021). The acts of hate towards Asian Americans continued in the tragedy in Atlanta on March 16, 2021 when eight people were gunned down at three businesses by a white man who was said to be having a bad day (The New York Times, 2021). Six of the eight people were Asian women and this white man targeted specific businesses that he knew were run by Asian Americans (The New York Times, 2021). This trend, tracked by the organization Stop AAPI Hate, reported that from February 2020 through December 2021, there were 10,905 reported incidents of hate crimes reported to them (Jeung et al., 2021).

As part of this societal context riddled with anti-Asian violence, during a presentation in February 2022 to my school board in the southeastern part of the United States, I provided an update on the district mask policy. A portion, twenty-six seconds of an extensive presentation, was edited to create a new, inaccurate context for my remarks and the clip went viral on a number of social media sites and was the focus of a Tucker Carlson story on a national propaganda network. Upon the clip going viral, I was subject to racist attacks over email and social media through comments such as:

- “MESS WITH OUR KIDS YOU WILL PAY. LET’S GO BRANDON”;
- “Hey slant eye, you liking the attention?”;
- “You idiot communist pig.”;
- “you commie asswipe”;
- “If you Like china style control maybe you should buy a one way flight to china”;
- “Get the HELL out of education. YOUR A COMMIE!!!!!!!!”;
- “Shove a mask down your gook throat”.

Being part of the rising hate toward Asian American people in the United States, my own experience was part of a moment where anti-Asian American hate was thrust into the spotlight of mainstream media and into our very lives. Trevor Noah, host of *The Daily Show*, asserted “what makes it even more painful is that we saw it coming” (Noah, 2021). In a special appearance for *Late Night with Seth Meyers*, Karen Chee, a Korean-American writer for the show spoke with frustration, critiquing the national coverage trying to humanize the white man who committed the murders, instead of acknowledging the racist history of America, oriented against dehumanizing Asian Americans (Chee, 2021).

Despite the tragedy in Atlanta thrusting anti-Asian American hate into the national spotlight, there was still persistent silence among many. Even the doctoral program in which this dissertation study was being completed made no mention of the hate crimes toward Asian Americans until the tragedy in Atlanta unfolded. The pervasive silence toward racism experienced by Asian Americans, seemingly interrupted only by a moment of domestic terrorism, is appalling and echoes a national pattern rooted in two social constructs: the model minority and the perpetual foreigner concepts racializing Asian Americans for the benefit of white supremacy (Huynh et al., 2011; Kawai, 2005; Kim, 1999; Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017;

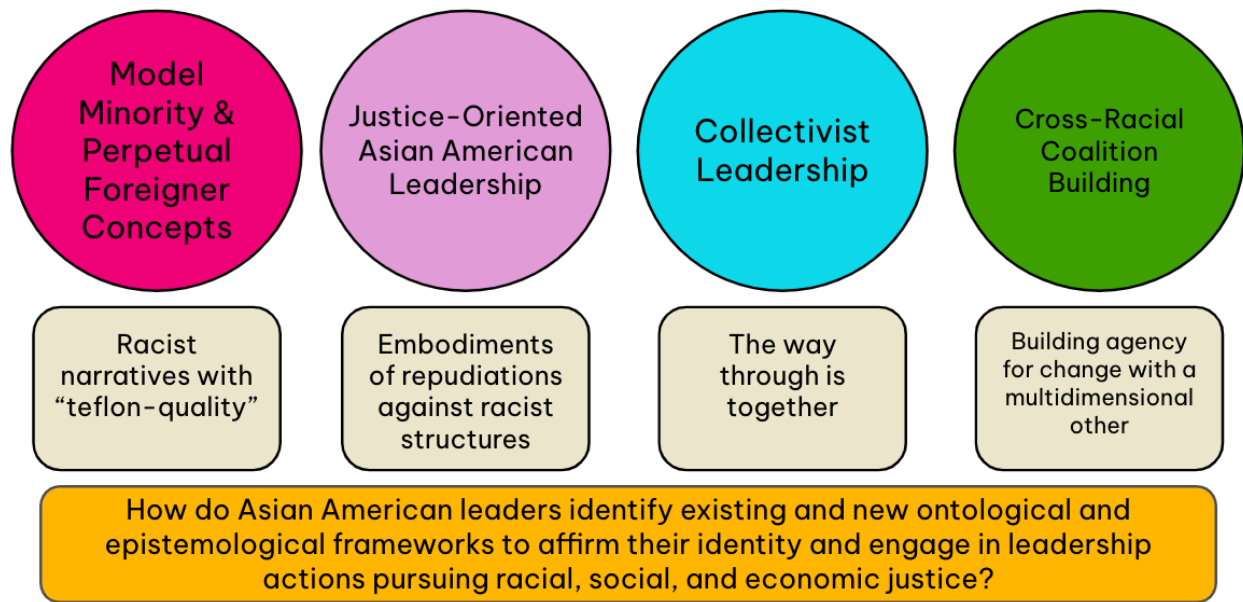
Nguyen, 2020; Wu, 2014). The model minority concept claims a falsity that Asian Americans are successful due to their self-reliance, close family ties, reverence for education, and political moderation, while the perpetual foreigner concept simultaneously places Asian Americans as *other* (Huynh et al., 2011; Kawai, 2005; Kim, 1999; Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017; Nguyen, 2020; Wu, 2014). This othering was observed by Nguyen (2020) when he asserted that “our unimportance and our historical status as the perpetual foreigner in the US is one reason the President [Trump] and many others feel they can call COVID-19 the ‘Chinese virus’ or the ‘kung flu’”.

The history of America reinforcing a paradoxical oppression of Asian Americans through the model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts is foundational to the racism Asian Americans face. While the model minority concept appears to grant special status to Asian Americans among other Americans of color, the perpetual foreigner concept serves to signify the racist idea that Asian Americans will always be something other than fully “American”. Hong (2020) described this racism and its personal impact by noting her “confidence was impoverished from a lifelong diet of conditional love and a society who thinks I’m as interchangeable as lint” (p. 9).

The literature review for this Critical Race Ethnography (CRE) study aimed to delve into the history and racial experience of Asian Americans rooted in the interplay of model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts. This chapter first reviews and examines the origins of the model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts and how their interplay impacts Asian American leadership potential. Next, this chapter explores literature related to ways Asian American leaders can be active agents of justice-oriented social change in a landscape in the US often minimizing Asian Americans in leadership spaces. This exploration of the literature

includes sections, or “bins,” pertaining to Asian American leadership, collectivist leadership, and cross-racial coalition building. For the “Asian American Leadership” literature bin, I intentionally maintain detailed biographical narratives of key Asian American leaders to emulate the *coevalness* Duncan (2005) described as the “sharing of the present time” as a necessary condition of justice (p. 93). As the legacies of Asian American leaders are often invisible and understudied, my decision as a researcher was to surface the historical legacies of Asian American leaders and the leadership lessons they have to teach us to lift up these experiences in the present.

Figure 5 provides an overview of the literature “bins” as they pertain to answering the overarching research question for this CRE study with accompanying statements highlighting a key theme to each literature bin. The historical concepts of the model minority and perpetual foreigner have an elastic and sustaining quality despite decades of scholarship in Asian American studies to counter racially coded concepts (Kim, 1999, p. 118). The second literature bin reviews the legacy of Asian American leaders who embodied leadership pushing for racial, social, and economic justice. Their actions directly repudiated the racist structures throughout the history of America. The third literature bin considers the approaches to collectivist leadership connecting the “self through the other” to create *imaginaries*, which are loose schema through which people connect aspirations to actions, for building an aspirational world away from white-Western ways often centering individuals (Benham, 2002, p. 135; Quick, 2017). The last literature bin reviews cross-racial coalition building as a way to change the white-dominant culture of the US through organizing approaches resisting gains made at the expense of others (Fujino, 2005). Cross-racial coalition building is one the ways to counteract how polarization and racism create artificial divisions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, sexual orientation



*Figure 5.* Literature review bins.

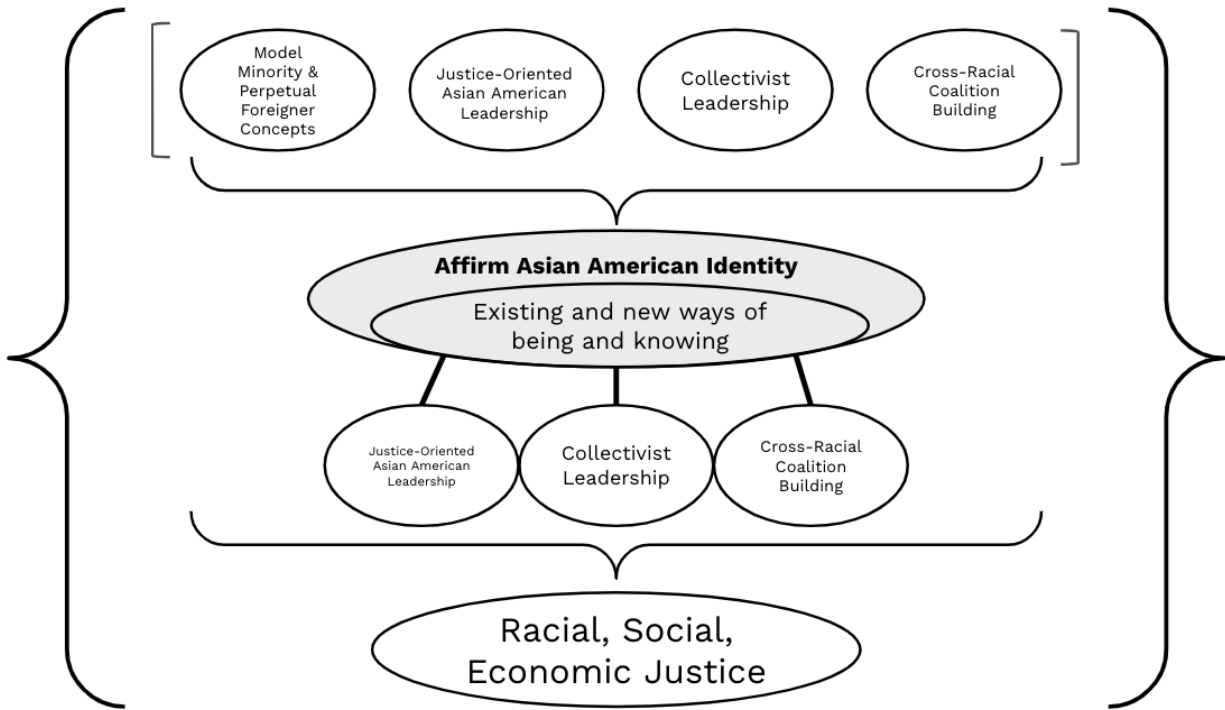
---

and class to impede our ability to see the multiple dimensions of fellow human beings (Fujino, 2005).

Figure 6 provides an overview of the connection of the literature bins to the overarching research focus for this CRE study. Through the process of this study, the knowledge from the literature bins (Model Minority & Perpetual Foreigner Concepts, Asian American Leadership, Collectivist Leadership, Cross-Racial Coalition Building) served as foundational *imaginaries*, which are loose schema through which people connect aspirations to actions (Quick, 2017) to affirm the identity of Asian American leaders participating in this study. Connecting the imaginaries rooted in the literature review of this study also supported the way leaders participating in this study framed their own ways of being and knowing as leaders within their own organizations and communities. This interweaving of the individual experiences of Asian American leaders with the legacy of Asian American leadership, collectivist leadership principles, and our pursuit to continue being part of cross-racial coalitions supported the development of our own imaginaries to continue building our aspirational world with racial, social, and economic justice.

### **Model Minority and Perpetual Foreigner Concepts**

The model minority concept maintains a historical and contemporary untruth that Asian Americans are successful due to the racialized characteristics placed on them. Some of these characteristics are that Asian Americans are self-reliant, family-centered, education-oriented, and politically moderate, separating them from fellow members of American society. The perpetual foreigner concept simultaneously places Asian Americans as something other than fully American (Cheung, 2017; Huynh et al., 2011; Kawai, 2005; Wu, 2014). The model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts work simultaneously force onto a single body to be a



*Figure 6.* Literature review bins' connections to study.

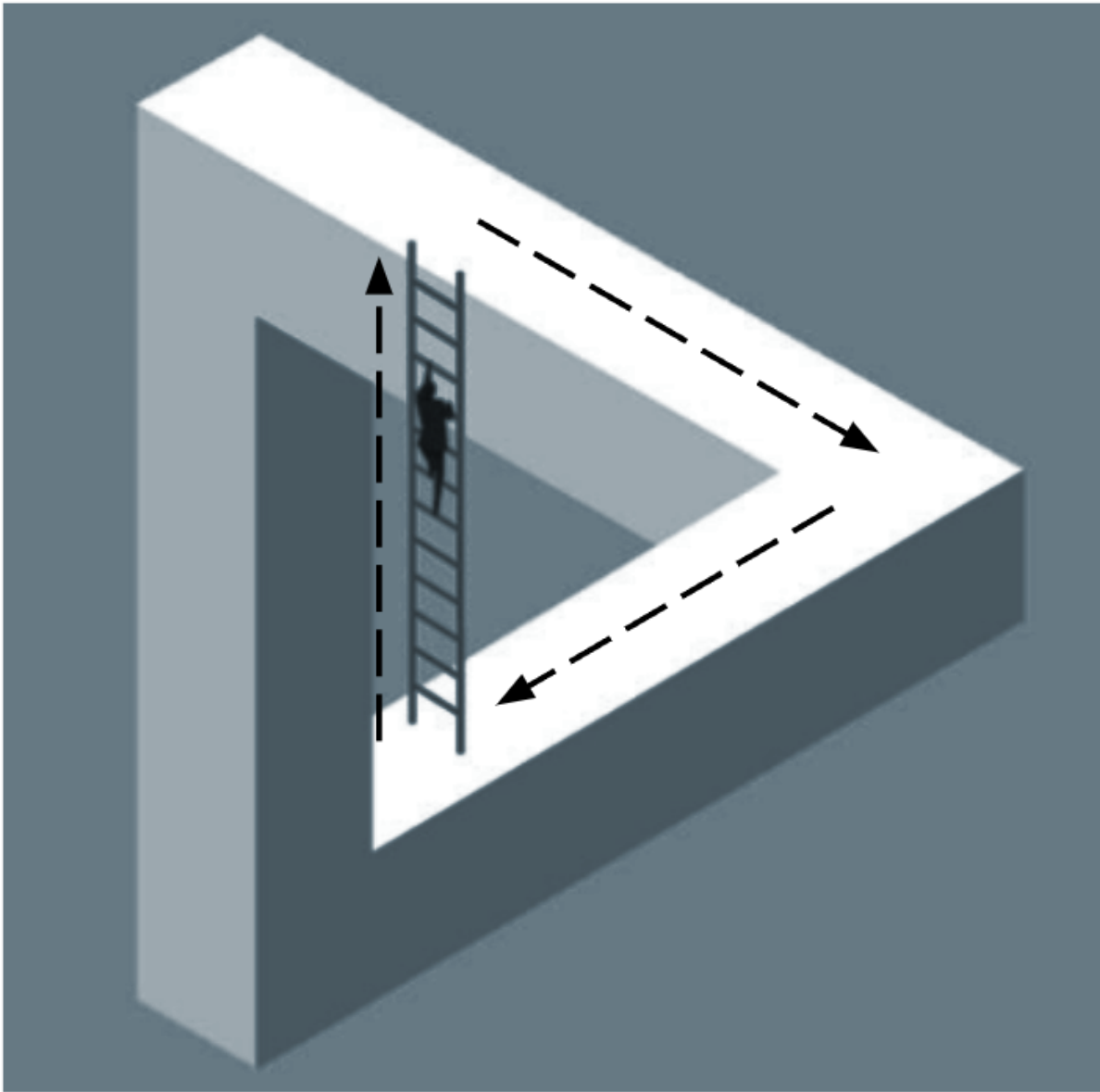


model minority and perpetually foreign in all walks of life. The interplay of the model minority and perpetual foreign within Asian American bodies perpetuates a racist narrative regarding Asian Americans reinforcing their subpersonhood in order to maintain white personhood. Mills (1997) outlined the epistemological aspect of subpersonhood by noting the racial contract in the US prescribes norms for cognition designating white people as “full persons” and the remaining “subset of humans as “nonwhite” and of a different and inferior moral status, subpersons, so that they have a subordinate civil standing in the white or white-ruled polities” (p. 11).

The concept of subpersonhood becomes paradoxical for Asian Americans, as the model minority concept places them “above” Black people (from a white-centered lens) and often other racially marginalized people, but as less than white people. Simultaneously, the perpetual foreigner concept cements Asian Americans as subpersons in America. Given the prominence of both concepts, investigating their origins and interplay, as well as the key time periods in U.S. history when these racial labels for Asian Americans were most visible and sustained, is critical to ascertaining their impact on Asian Americans and the development of justice-oriented Asian American leadership. Figure 7 represents the paradoxical nature of the model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts; I discuss the origins of these concepts and convey the impacts of both historical constructs on Asian American leadership potential.

### **Origins and Sustaining Qualities**

The origin of the interplay between the model minority and perpetual foreigner both concepts can be traced to the mid-1800s as America transitioned into a post-slavery state, using Asian Americans as a racial wedge to maintain white dominance politically and economically. During this time, white business and political elites in California faced the dilemma of being voted into the Union as a “free” state as regional economic growth boomed, intensifying a need



*Figure 7.* The paradox of the model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts.

---

for cheap and available labor (Kim, 1999). Chinese immigrant labor promised to solve this dilemma. With the influx of Chinese labor, a justification was made by racially triangulating these Asian immigrants as superior to Black people but maintaining that they will never receive full-citizenship in America (Kim, 1999). This process of racial triangulation fashioned a temporary labor force to fulfill an economic purpose without allowing the Chinese immigrants to make any “enduring claims upon the polity” (Kim, 1999, p. 109). The foundations for the paradoxical nature of being a model minority and perpetually foreign in one body were set in motion. When convenient for white America, the Chinese laborers were allowed into America to fill a gap in labor. However, later in the 19th century, white nativists began spreading xenophobic propaganda about the uncleanness and lack of hygiene of Chinese laborers’ to create momentum to pass the Chinese Exclusion Act (De Leon, 2020; Shyong, 2020). This occurred during a time the Chinese made up about 12% of the U.S. labor force, first working in the gold mines, the Transcontinental Railroad, and then becoming highly concentrated in specific sectors, such as mining, agriculture, millinery, and salmon canneries (Oh, 2022). With this concentration of Chinese labor, one of the key purposes of The Chinese Exclusion Act was to appease the white Americans who believed the Chinese were taking all the available jobs (Long et al., 2022; Oh, 2022). As this policy was made to benefit white Americans, the paradox of the model minority and perpetual foreigner swung the other way for Asian Americans (Oh, 2022). The pitting of Chinese laborers (and later other groups of people of Asian-descent) against white laborers created the beginnings of a long-lasting and still-existing racialization of Asian Americans. At white America’s whim we are a model minority, and when inconvenient for white America, we are perpetually foreign, yet Asian Americans lived and continue to live with this paradox in their single bodies every day in America.

Chinese immigrants and in later decades, other groups of Asian immigrants were racialized for the economic benefit of white America (Kim, 1999). Dehumanizing perspectives of Asian Americans were reflected across the US. For example, Stuart Creighton Miller notes that East Coast newspaper editors agreed during the mid-1800s that the Chinese were not biologically suited for America and yet “it would be fool-ish not to exploit their cheap labor before shipping them back to China” (Kim, 1999, p. 109). In addition, leading ethnologists of the mid-1800s supported and promoted the racist ranking of “Europeans first, Asians and American [Indians] in the middle, and Africans at the bottom” (Kim, 1999, p. 109). This paradoxical racialization of Asian Americans would develop enduring qualities and arise in later decades in the twentieth century to reaffirm white dominant culture (Kim, 1999).

In 1966 the first model minority articles (The New York Times, U.S. News & World Report) were published and created a false perception of Asian Americans by celebrating Japanese and Chinese Americans as model minority groups who rose from being brutally oppressed by their tight-knit family ties, law-abiding behavior, and dedication to education to becoming model citizens that other groups of Americans should aspire to become (Kawai, 2005). A *New York Times* article dated January 9, 1966 contended white ethnic minorities, such as people of Italian, Polish, and Jewish lineage were able to climb out of slums and “acquired social respect and dignity” in ways that “Negroes, Indians, Mexicans, Chinese and Filipinos” could not (Petersen, 1966). The Japanese, the article’s author explained, constituted an “outstanding exception” due to their focus on education, hard work, and pursuits in degrees such as business administration, optometry, engineering, or “some other middle-level profession” that was summed up by arguing that the Japanese were essentially “squares” who pursued the middle-class American life (Petersen, 1966). In addition, the article emphasized that the Japanese

developed a family life both “strong and flexible enough to help their children cross a wide cultural gap” and emphasized the law abiding nature of Japanese referencing a 1964 F.B.I. report citing only three Japanese in the whole country were arrested for murder” (Petersen, 1966). Of course, the report ignored the impacts on the Japanese of being terrorized, silenced, and incarcerated during World War II. Petersen’s article espoused a white-centered message to look at the Japanese Americans, who were unfairly treated, interned, and overcame those obstacles by their own merit instead of making a lot of noise. This made Japanese Americans a perfect group to hold up to other groups, especially Black activist populations (Kim, 1999). The article ignored the brutal trauma Japanese Americans endured from racist incarceration during World War II and did not consider that the quiet obedience and aspiring to the white middle class was about survival in America.

To bookend 1966, the U.S. News & World Report published an article in December, 1966 hailing Chinese Americans as another model minority, exclaiming “[v]isit ‘Chinatown U.S.A.’ and you find an important racial minority pulling itself up from hardship and discrimination to become a model of self-respect and achievement in today’s America” (U.S. News & World Report, 1966). Paradoxically, the Chinese Americans mentioned in the *U.S. News & World Report* article are the same group *The New York Times Magazine* article claimed was unable to acquire the social respect and dignity as the Japanese Americans did. However, the *U.S. News & World Report* (1966) article shared similar tropes about Chinese Americans noting a tight-knit family structure, lack of criminal involvement, and virtues of hard work through a willingness to work long hours for low pay. Similar to Petersen’s article ignoring the trauma of Japanese Americans, the *U.S. News & World Report* article ignores the impacts of Chinese Americans’ experience during the McCarthy Era where they were surveilled and deported as

communists loyal to Communist China thereby having to prove their loyalty to the United States (Brooks, 2019).

Both articles in 1966 created an Asian American myth of being built around perceived success by Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans as strong contributors to a white dominant society while disparaging the use of financial resources to “uplift Negroes and other minorities” (U.S. News & World Report, 1966). The racialization of Asian Americans as ascribed by these articles further established the model minority concept, while holding everyone in their place “in the field of racial positions without a single overtly racial claim having been uttered” (Kim, 1999, p. 119). In addition, the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 prioritized educated and skilled immigrants, many from Asian countries, which furthered the perception of “Asian Success” in the midst of a brutally racialized context for Asian Americans during this era (History, Art & Archives, U.S. House of Representatives, 1965). The interplay of the model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts functioned to reinforce and sustain a racialization of Asian Americans within a context that was excluding them and welcoming educated and skilled Asians simultaneously, further concretizing the paradoxical experience of Asian Americans. In addition, this false narrative simultaneously served to pit them against the Black activist communities during the 1960s that were promoting racial solidarity (Kim, 1999).

The perpetuation of the model minority concept is seen by some as being part of a larger trend in the 1960s that gave rise to colorblindness as a formal ideology, obscuring the continuing patterns of white dominance in the post-civil rights era. The false narratives extolled in articles at that time regarding Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans contributed to a larger strategic effort to delegitimize the Black Power movement and pause “race-conscious social programs,” both of which tacitly acknowledged and challenged white dominance. It is important to note that

*The New York Times Magazine* and *U.S. News & World Report* articles were written and published during the same year in which Stokely Carmichael popularized the phrase “Black Power” and nonviolent integrationism (Kim, 1999, pp. 118-119). This timing surfaces how the racial triangulation of Asian Americans occurred during an era in American history that served a political purpose to invalidate a Black Power movement encouraging cross-racial collaboration.

The 1980s saw a renaissance of the model minority, coinciding with the start of a conservative political campaign to undo “civil rights, affirmative action, redistricting, and social welfare programs” under the guise of promoting a colorblind society (Kim, 1999, p. 120). The Reagan administration attacked affirmative action and welfare programs during this time period and concurrently, an explosion of research on the Black underclass was conducted and published “explaining” Black failure in American society (Kawai, 2005; Kim, 1999). Wu (2014) asserted the prominence of the model minority at specific historical flashpoints which reaffirmed “[p]arables of the American Dream told with Asian protagonists dovetail[ing] seamlessly with a nationalist revival among conservatives” (p. 252). The resurgence of the model minority in the 1980s occurred simultaneously with the rise of another distorted narrative that arose in response to a changing global economic context that now included successful Asian economies such as Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan. The strengthening of these national economies and their accompanying influence globally intensified a perception that Asians in the US and across the world were “unfair” economic competitors due to the trade deficits the United States carried with noted Asian economies (Kawai, 2005). In this 1980s iteration of the ontological evolution in stereotyping Asian Americans, on one side, the model minority concept presented a silent and disciplined people who are successful, and on the other side there was an imagined threat of foreignness or *yellow peril* (popularized in the first half of the twentieth

century) scapegoating Asian Americans as un-American for a national economic context they had no control over (Kawai, 2005).

### ***Consequences of Racist Narratives***

The ever-changing nature of the model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts simultaneously asserted the success of Asian Americans as a model for all Americans and argued that Asian Americans are unfair economic competitors in cahoots with their native countries to put America in peril. This is one mystifying aspect of white dominant culture slandering racially marginalized communities with pathological rationalizations that culminate in deadly violence. Tragedies such as the fatal beating of Chinese American Vincent Chin by two white auto workers who bellowed, “[i]t’s because of you motherfuckers that we’re out of work” while committing murder; or when several white men beat Kaushal Sharan unconscious due to the perceived prosperity of New Jersey’s South Asian immigrant small business owners (Wu, 2014, p. 253) are two examples of consequences of the racialization of Asian Americans (Mills, 1997).

The myths of the model minority and perpetual foreigner are remarkably responsive and pliable to white American insecurities and fears. Just as in the 1960s, when these myths absorbed and then reflected back fears of the Black Power movement or, in the 1980s, when the model minority and perpetual foreigner narratives reverberated with white American economic insecurities, the current usage of these myths incites waves of daily anti-Asian violence that have been amplified by the national anxieties of the COVID-19 pandemic being the fault of Asians. Across these decades and the concerns and crises accompanying them, Asian Americans are paradoxically represented as model minorities and oppressed (at times murdered), reinforcing the pathological rationalizations of white dominant culture.



The continued use of the model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts from the 1960s through the 1980s reaffirm the uniqueness of the experience in America for Asian Americans. On any given day, an Asian American can be a model minority and perpetual alien in one body and the experience of living with these seemingly contradictory forced narratives yet having to operate as “normally” as possible to survive a day as an Asian American underscores the unique experience of Asian Americans (Jean Wu, personal communication, November 16, 2022). Regardless of the particular permutation, the model minority narrative and perpetual foreigner concept is espoused by American society through eras and decades for the benefit of the racial hierarchy asserted by the U.S. white-dominant culture. There have always been counterpoints and counternarratives to the model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts; however, these counterstories have often been neglected as existing fields of study for the convenience of upholding the privilege of whiteness in America (Kim, 2011; Woodson, 2019). It is imperative within the field of leadership research to pursue ways to amplify the study of counternarratives developed through those who always pursued repudiating white privilege in order to create a world with racial, social, and economic justice.

### ***Impacts on Asian American Leadership Potential***

The model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts creates a tension for Asian Americans through the model minority narrative that we can be allied with white people in a country built on white supremacy while continually being reminded that we will always be foreign in a country where Filipinos landed in 1587 (Nguyen, 2020). This tension forces Asian Americans to live on perpetually unstable ground that can give way to the whims of white supremacy at any moment and impacts all areas of life, including leadership in the workplace. Asian Americans are portrayed as “math-crunching middle managers who keep the corporate

wheels greased but who never get promoted since we don't have the right 'face' for leadership" (Hong, 2020, p. 9). This tension creates an atmosphere with invisible barriers to leadership that can result in what Hong (2020) calls "minor feelings" Asian American leaders must contend with at the micro, meso, and macro levels of knowing (Guajardo et al., 2016):

[M]inor feelings are not generated from major change but from lack of change in particular, structural racial and economic change. Rather than using racial trauma as a dramatic stage for individual growth, the literature of minor feelings explores the trauma of a racist capitalistic system that keeps the individual in place. Minor feelings are also the emotions we are accused of having when we decide to be difficult - in other words, when we decide to be honest. When minor feelings are finally externalized, they are interpreted as hostile, ungrateful, jealous, depressing, and belligerent, affects ascribed to racialized behavior that whites consider out of line (pp. 56-57)

These minor feelings are the result of white dominant racist schemas such as the model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts influencing judgements and behaviors, and through which other marginalizing phenomena build upon to perpetuate oppression. Despite these oppressive and marginalizing dynamics explored by numerous scholars, Asian Americans remain understudied in terms of the types of discrimination they face compared to other ethnic minorities (Kiang et al., 2017). Asian Americans are placed in a "claustrophobic framing of race inequality" with other persons of color existing in a strict hierarchy (Cruz, 2016, p. 921). On one end Asian Americans are racialized as a model minority and simultaneously pitted against other racial groups with societal norms determined by white supremacy culture.

**Examples of Minor Feelings.** Two concepts exemplifying Hong's minor feelings are the *code of silence* and *falling short of whiteness* that exist within an invisible hierarchy that is a

byproduct of the interplay of the model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts espousing that Asian Americans may be exempt or immune to racial discrimination through the racially stratifying nature of white supremacy culture (Benner & Kim, 2009). The *code of silence* refers to the experience of Asian American female leaders in one study who were never publicly supported for leadership advancement or maintaining their current leadership roles by their colleagues despite being in a school district landscape focused on racial consciousness (Nguyen & Morita-Mullaney, 2020). In the same study, *falling short of whiteness* was described by the experience of Asian American female leaders who felt they were rendered to a role “emulating” their white colleagues, or being the “friendlier face” of white power, while only being partially included (Nguyen & Morita-Mullaney, 2020).

**Micro Examples of Anti-Asian Racist Acts.** Such discrimination follows Asian Americans across our lifespans and although it takes different forms depending on the setting and context, the negative impact on Asian Americans is significant and traumatizing. The stress of an invisible discrimination dehumanizes Asian Americans. An anecdote described by one community member reflecting on the 2021 film *Minari* by Lee Isaac Chung, illustrates the impact of white racist discrimination of AAPIs at the family level: “[d]espite our intentionality, our daughter thinks her life would be easier if she were white. At school, classmates asked her whether she ate dogs and requested her to ‘show us your kung fu moves’” (Tung, 2021). The result of such discrimination may feel like Hong’s (2020) retelling of an experience after reading an essay from her book, where a Korean American student approached her after and noted how “alone and alienated she felt on campus” and asked for a hug, and when Hong hugged her, the student began sobbing (p. 30).

**Historical and Ongoing Examples of Anti-Asian Racist Acts.** Beyond the micro perspective, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2021) the US saw a continual rise in hate crimes targeting Asian Americans. This rising tide of hate reverberated back to an ignominious American legacy when Asian Americans were killed by mob violence (1871 in Los Angeles), expelled from their community by white people setting fire to Asian American businesses (1885 in Tacoma, Washington), and legally excluded through the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 (Allen-Ebrahimian, 2021). These acts continued with the murder of Vincent Chin in 1982 and the violence against Asian Americans in 1992 Los Angeles riots (Kawai, 2005). This history serves as a prologue to the writing of this document in 2021 at which time over 3,795 reported incidents of hate crimes were documented by the Stop AAPI Hate reporting center and crescendoed with the tragic murders of eight people in Atlanta on March 16, 2021.

### ***Erasure of Asian American Activism***

The dark legacy and present impacts of the model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts are part of a white capitalist sociopolitical infrastructure largely erasing Asian American legacies of resistance, activism, and leadership. This erasure continues the push of white supremacy culture to pit racially marginalized communities against each other to “feel frustration separately” (Hong, 2020, p. 64). One of the key pursuits of this study is to create counternarratives to the racialized conditions created by the interplay of the model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts.

One of the counternarratives I want to emphasize is the essential and persisting presence of Asian Americans in the broader American story. An unmistakable aspect of the myths of the model minority and perpetual foreigner is that they highlight the initiative of Asian Americans in defining what it means to be an American building an aspirational country that is racially,

socially, and economically just (Wu, 2014). This point raised by Wu (2014) offers a counternarrative asserting Asian Americans have always been in America building and inspiring actions to repudiate the racist legacy in America.

### ***Asian American Resistance Movements***

One recent example of Asian American leaders inspiring action to repudiate American racism in recent history was the small band of Japanese internment camp survivors who protested daily the Trump administration's plans to reopen a Japanese internment camp in Oklahoma to fill up with Latino/a children (Hong, 2020). Asian Americans are one of many groups of racialized people in the white dominant structures of America which serves the purpose of controlling and maintaining narratives of racial hierarchy and distorts the leadership contributions of others accordingly. However, Asian Americans have embodied and enacted leadership - an antiracist leadership, even at the beginnings of the history of America. Despite the distorted context of the model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts, a deeper dive into a more precise and unbiased history of America shows demonstrated actions of justice-oriented Asian American leadership that will be discussed in the next section.

### **Justice-Oriented Asian American Leadership**

*I am one of many glitches  
in this white-based story  
I tell you there are other views  
from our ancestors  
building upon each other  
And one by one these stories  
begin their ascent from  
the chambers of a lost legacy*

- my emulation poem excerpt based on John Yau's *A Sheaf of Pleasant Voices*

Through the paradoxical and historical pairing of the model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts, Asian Americans are othered in a manner minimizing their historical and

current presence as leaders. This legacy impacts the representation of Asian Americans in critical career fields and professions, including those in the public sector. The sectors of public schools and nonprofits highlight the disparity between Asian American leaders and white leaders. Between 1999 and 2018, Asian Americans represented 1% of all public school principals whereas white public school principals represented between 78% and 82% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). Within the nonprofit sector, from a recent survey in 2018 from the Center for Effective Philanthropy, 4% of surveyed Executive Directors identified as Asian, along with 4% identifying as Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian compared to 75% identifying as white (Buteau, 2019). Given that over 7% of the U.S. population is comprised of Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, and Native Hawaiians, their underrepresentation in leadership roles in public education and the non-profit sectors demonstrates this clear and alarming inequity (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021).

Given the underrepresentation of Asian Americans in key leadership positions, there has been some research exploring barriers and impediments to leadership Asian Americans experience. For instance, Balón (2004) found that in a study of 1,964 college students (including 270 Asian American students), Asian Americans were the least likely of all racial groups to self-identify as a leader and felt culturally marginalized from leadership roles (Balón, 2004). There are external barriers as well. Other researchers have found that in addition to internalized psychological barriers to leadership many Asian Americans are perceived by others as not being the “leadership type.” For example, research identified that within corporate industries there is a glass ceiling effect for AAPIs as Asian Americans are viewed by their organizational leadership as less prototypical leaders when compared to white Americans despite Asian Americans being viewed as technically competent (Sy et al., 2010). Other people of color often internalize the

racist stereotypes of Asian Americans. Within the education sphere, Asian American educators can be seen as *suspect* by other people of color as they are sometimes seen as striving to become *honorary whites*. This misperception may be promulgated through the too-frequent and prejudiced portrayal of Asian American small business owners who are in conflict with Black and Latino/a communities in urban environments because they are solely focused on profits rather than as people committed to the betterment of communities of color (Philip, 2014). Such trends reverberate an inaccurate understanding in the educational field that Asian Americans are unworthy of leadership positions. Asian Americans still have to keep proving their worthiness to whiteness and other racially marginalized communities.

A more accurate, honest, and precise approach and telling of American history reflects a legacy of Asian American leadership rooted in taking actions repudiating America's racism. Concealed within the incomplete and dishonest iterations of a white hegemonic American history exists the long standing presence of Asian Americans in America that must be excavated and recalled (Cheung, 2017). The heritage of Asian American leadership includes effective action ranging from powerful speeches to plain secretarial labor with an emphasis on "getting things done" (Asian American Political Alliance, 2017). This ethos to get things done has roots in an often unknown and infrequently taught story of a group of Filipino sailors who landed on the California coast in 1587, decades before the arrival of the Mayflower on Plymouth Rock reiterating an erased legacy of the long standing presence of Asians in America (Cheung, 2017). Following these ancestors' lead, another group of Filipino sailors leapt from a Spanish sailing vessel docked in New Orleans in the late 1700s to form a small fishing village, near current day St. Bernard Parish and was possibly the first Asian settlement in the American South (Hinnershitz, 2017).

Accompanying the long standing presence of Asian Americans is their persisting leadership for human dignity and respect. For example, in 1925 Gong Lum fought a local school district's decision in Mississippi (Bolivar County) denying his daughter's admittance to a white school, appealing the case to the U.S. Supreme Court in 1927 (Hinnershitz, 2017). In 1974, Gordon J. Lau worked to push the Lau v. Nichols decision, which was a landmark case where the Supreme Court recognized that children who did not speak English have a right to special assistance in public schools (Moran, 2009). In the 1980s when a group of Vietnamese American fishermen near Galveston Bay won a civil rights suit against the Ku Klux Klan for violation of their rights under civil rights statutes (Hinnershitz, 2017). These examples are just a few within a myriad of actions taken by Asian ancestors in America who were leaders forging a legacy of activism. These stories contribute to the more accurate counternarrative of Asian Americans actively and constantly working to find *place* in the US while simultaneously taking part in the work to create social change, including the creation of space for others who were marginalized by white American hegemony.

### **Demonstrated Actions**

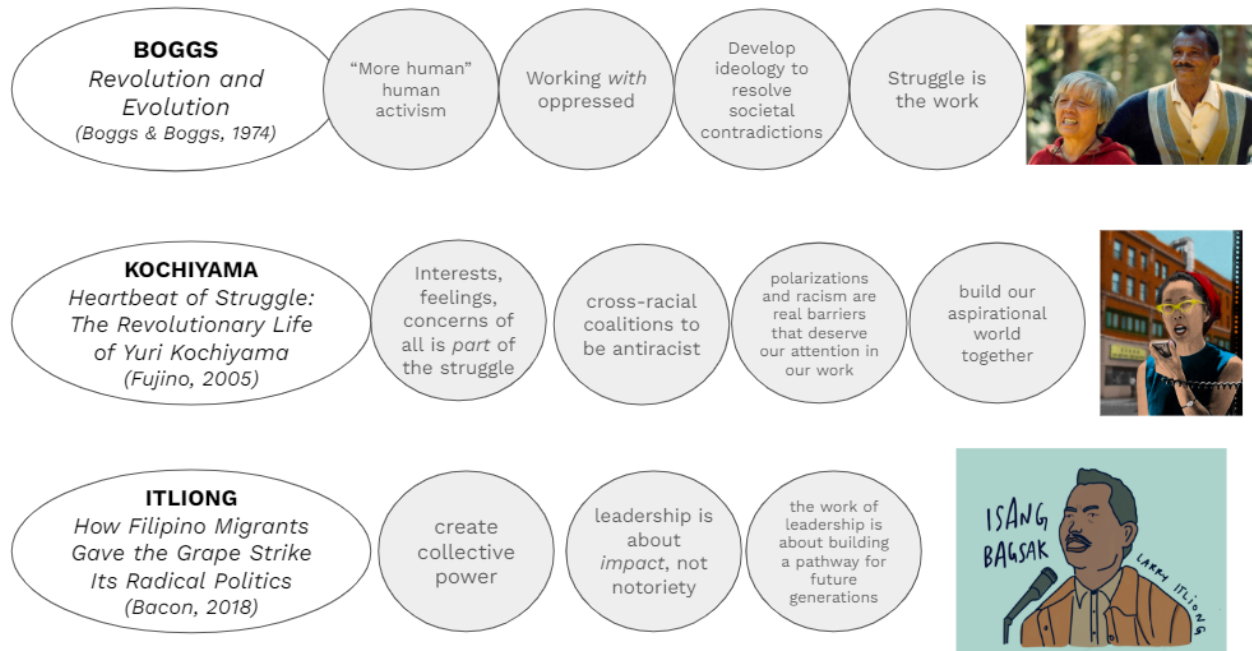
Further exploration of a more accurate recanting of the history of Asian American leaders, many more individuals bring to light a legacy of Asian American leadership, activism, and influence towards social justice and social change. The stories of Asian Americans demonstrating justice-oriented leadership actions provides a more complete history of the ways Asian American leaders have participated in and led the struggle to repudiate white American racism. The lives and leadership of Grace Lee Boggs, Yuri Kochiyama, and Larry Itliong manifest a rich heritage of Asian American activism to find *place* for themselves and their communities despite the racist barriers in America.



Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong demonstrate an ancestral lineage of Asian American leadership often invisible and thus understudied in leadership. Drawing out their stories of leadership emulates the principles of critical race ethnography to bring their experiences to a place of *coevalness* to share the “present time” in a literature review of Asian American leadership (Duncan, 2005, p. 93; Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017). Figure 8 highlights the leadership practices espoused by Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong that impart powerful lessons on how to lead, organize, and empower others in order to effect social change. The narratives and stories of Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong serve as anchoring examples of Asian American leaders who lived in service of social justice, social change, and simultaneously serve as historical figures to analyze the stories oppressed people share that “depict the conditions of injustice” Asian Americans lived through (Woodson, 2019, p. 29).

### ***Grace Lee Boggs***

Grace Lee Boggs was an Asian American leader who had the vision to ask what movements would look like if we focused on critical connections instead of critical mass (Brown, 2017). Boggs pushed a *dialectical humanism* - the cycle of collective transformation of beliefs occurring when we gather new information and experiences which over time can shift us to understand and hold a position we previously believed to be wrong (Brown, 2017). Boggs believed that “[b]uilding community is to the collective as spiritual practice [is] to the individual” (Brown, 2017, p. 89). She lived a life rooted in activism during a time when the policies and practices of legally excluding Chinese through the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 evolved to the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, creating annual limits to the number of Chinese entering the United States (National Archives, n.d.).



*Note.* (Bacon, 2018; Boggs & Boggs, 1974; Fujino, 2005).

Figure 8. Leadership tenets from Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong.

Born in Providence, Rhode Island to Chinese immigrants in 1915, Boggs studied at Barnard College and later earned her PhD in philosophy from Bryn Mawr College (Chow, 2015). After graduate school, Boggs struggled to find work and she was often met by prospective employers who noted they did not hire “orientals.” She later moved to the Midwest, finding a job in the University of Chicago’s philosophy library that paid ten dollars per week (Chow, 2015). During her time as a librarian, Boggs connected with a group of people protesting poor living conditions and came into contact with the Black community for the first time (Chow, 2015). In the 1940s, Boggs moved to Detroit to help edit the radical newsletter, *Correspondence*, and where she met James Boggs, an activist and auto worker who she married in 1953 (Chow, 2015). Together, they became two of Detroit’s most noted activists fighting for labor and civil rights (Chow, 2015). After James Boggs died in 1993, the then-78-year-old Grace Lee Boggs confronted this loss by continuing her activism (Chow, 2015). In 2005, Grace Lee Boggs began writing a weekly column for the *Michigan Citizen* (until she was 98) and helped start the James and Grace Lee Boggs School (Chow, 2015). Boggs transformed her exclusion from Academia into a life of activism, organizing, and advocacy. She not only recreated herself but lived her purpose and commitment to building community to transform society.

Boggs asserted America needed a revolution to advance our continuing evolution through practices more socially responsible and loving towards one another and to the earth (Boggs & Boggs, 1974). She advocated that time had come to develop the many racial groups which make up the US in order to contribute to a collective leadership that could be applied to the “many-sided struggles needed to revolutionize” America (Boggs & Boggs, 1974, p. xi). Boggs maintained that America was a work in progress, and its societal contradictions rooted in capitalism required constant challenge by those excluded from its promise, and it was in those

challenges that she saw hope (Boggs & Boggs, 1974). Boggs saw the Montgomery Bus Boycott as a sign of this hope when she recognized that Black Americans, who were treated as subpersons, struggled for more than a year against their dehumanization as members of the Montgomery community offering a more humanistic approach to activism (Boggs & Boggs, 1974, p. xxiv). Within this hope, Boggs also saw the possibility in coalitions noting that the Civil Rights, Black Power, and antiwar movements of the 1960s inspired and motivated “Chicanos, Native Americans, Asian Americans, gays, lesbians, and the disabled” to create their own movements for recognition and social change, reminding us that America “has not been and never will be just [B]lack and white” (Boggs & Boggs, 1974, p. xxvii). Toward this end, Boggs reaffirmed the need to combine practice with reflection, and urgency with patience in moving towards societal transformation (Boggs & Boggs, 1974).

In *Revolution and Evolution*, Boggs and her husband gave us leadership lessons forecasting ways to engage in leadership and social activism thoughtfully and emergently. One of their leadership lessons for social change was that the work of activism is revolution and a way to project the notion of a *more human* human being with a sense of political and social responsibility (Boggs & Boggs, 1974). Second, they emphasized working with those who are most oppressed to help them reimagine new ways human beings can live together in order to exercise their initiative and creativity towards positive societal transformation is the *work* (Boggs & Boggs, 1974). Third, the Boggs asked activists to develop a revolutionary ideology, or a body of ideas, analyzing the main societal contradictions they are trying to change and to project a vision of a higher form of reality in which the contradiction would be resolved (Boggs & Boggs, 1974). Fourth, in the work of leadership and activism, the Boggs emphasized that there is no “utopia, final solution, no Promised Land” and the struggle for societal change is the highest

expression of human creativity (Boggs & Boggs, 1974, p. 266). With these guideposts for leading, the legacy of Grace Lee Boggs provides us with a perspective of an Asian American leader aligning intent with impact.

### ***Yuri Kochiyama***

Yuri Kochiyama, an Asian American leader with a legacy of impact who inspired genuine love for humanity, exhibited humility in her work and approached her work as an activist with an abundant generosity (Fujino, 2005). Kochiyama's sense of justice perhaps began on December 7, 1941 when her father, Seiichi Nakahara, was taken by three white FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) agents shortly after the bombing of Pearl Harbor (Fujino, 2005). Her father's arrest, occurring just one day after he was released from the hospital for health issues, was part of America's xenophobic response to Pearl Harbor to terrorize, arrest, and imprison a few thousand Japanese Americans on the suspicion of disloyalty. Several investigations were carried out through the fall of 1941, but none found evidence that Japanese Americans were disloyal to America (Fujino, 2005).

When Kochiyama and her family were able to locate her father in a ward of a hospital bed, the only identifying information for him was a sign reading "Prisoner of War". Kochiyama and her family were concerned for his safety as they were afraid merchant marines in the same hospital would beat him (Fujino, 2005). On January 21, 1942, barely a month after being taken away by the FBI, Kochiyama's father died in his home and she attributed his death to the inadequate medical care he received during his imprisonment (Fujino, 2005). Thus, World War II launched Kochiyama's racial awakening and her activism. Even when incarcerated in Jerome, Arkansas in a US concentration camp for Japanese Americans, Kochiyama organized a letter-writing campaign for 3,000 Japanese American soldiers fighting in World War II (Fujino, 2005).

Kochiyama's personal experience with her father and the thousands of other Japanese Americans incarcerated in concentration camps inspired a life committed to social change in partnership with her surrounding community and society at large.

During her time in the concentration camp in Jerome, Arkansas, Kochiyama met her husband Bill, who served with other Japanese-American soldiers in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team (Wang, 2014). The couple married after World War II and moved to start their family in New York City, living among Black and Puerto Rican neighbors in Harlem (Wang, 2014). In 1960, Harlem was predominantly poor and Black, where the median income was 60% of New York City's median income (Fujino, 2005). Harlem was also alive with protests and activism with roots in the history of Black consciousness and cultural pride leading to rent strikes, citywide school boycotts, labor strikes, demonstrations against police brutality and the Vietnam war (Fujino, 2005).

In 1963, Kochiyama, at the age of 42, was involved with several political activities, including protesting the lack of construction jobs for people of color, supporting the candidacy of community activist Bill Epton for the New York State Senate, and joining the Harlem Parents Committee (Fujino, 2005). Kochiyama was often the only Asian American in these settings and groups that were primarily Black and secondarily Latino/a. However, through her demonstration of hard work, dependability, and enthusiasm, Kochiyama became known for her concern for the community in ways that set her activism apart from others (Fujino, 2005). With the Harlem Parents Committee (HPC) formed in 1963, Kochiyama helped set the long-term goal of quality integrated education with the belief that schools in New York City must be physically desegregated along with the development and implementation of an integrated curriculum. In addition, there was the short-term goal of upgrading the quality of education within Harlem

(Fujino, 2005). To achieve these objectives, the HPC called for boycotts of every school in Harlem starting the first day of school in September, 1963 and evolved to working with the NAACP and other civil rights groups to stage what would become the largest school boycott in the history of New York City (Fujino, 2005).

During the same year in 1963, as the HPC boycotts, Kochiyama met Malcolm X for the first time and arranged a time to meet with him to discuss his ideas about separatism. Instead of simply agreeing with his ideas, in a letter to Malcolm X, Kochiyama pushed back on his ideas by asking, “I am sure that your pronouncement for separation will be changed to integration. If each of us, white, yellow, and what-have-you, can earn our way into your confidence by actual performance, will you...could you...believe in "togetherness" of all people?” (Fujino, 2005, p. 138). Modeling openness, Malcolm X responded to her and Kochiyama accepted Malcolm X’s assertions about the Vietnam War being a struggle against “imperialism, colonialism, and neo-colonialism” (Fujino, 2005, p. 142). By the time of Malcolm X’s assassination in 1965, Kochiyama’s politics were significantly transformed, “moving from integration and nonviolence to self-determination and self-defense” (Fujino, 2005, p. 163). Her political transformation was reflective of a national shift towards radical politics, where many young people in urban areas rejected the moderate goals of the Civil Rights Movement up to that point (Fujino, 2005). Kochiyama later became a part of the Republic of New Afrika (RNA). She reflected that she appreciated statements in the RNA Declaration of Independence that they were organizing to free Black people from oppression and were promoting a transformation in the entire person (Fujino, 2005).

During this shift, Kochiyama began her most resolute area of struggle to support political prisoners (Fujino, 2005). As she had done for Japanese American soldiers in World War II,

Kochiyama felt an internal pressure to stay up until the late hours of evenings writing letters to prisoners, writing articles for publications, and organizing events to defend political prisoners. One of Kochiyama's first instances to work on behalf of a political prisoner was supporting Mae Mallory, who was falsely accused of kidnapping while supporting Freedom Riders during the summer of 1961 (Fujino, 2005). Kochiyama joined the National Committee to Defend Political Prisoners (NCDPP) which provided legal defenses for numerous political prisoners in the late 1960s and early 1970s. During this time, the NCDPP defended political prisoners affiliated with the RNA, Puerto Rican *independentistas*, the Black Panther Party, the Black Liberation Army, and others engaged in activism within Harlem (Fujino, 2005). Beyond the moral and personal concern for political prisoners, Kochiyama noted, "I cannot help but feel strongly about this...because I can never forget what we, peoples of Japanese ancestry, experienced during World War II because of hysteria, isolation, and absolutely no support...Yes, we were also political prisoners" (Fujino, 2005, p. 204).

As the Asian American movement emerged in the late 1960s, Kochiyama was a mentor to Asian American youth engaged in the work. During this time, Kochiyama's stature rose as a political leader and passionate speaker in ways it could not during her involvement with the Black Civil Rights Movement (Fujino, 2005). The Asian American movement began to emerge when Asian American activists united during a convergence of three different areas of activism: Vietnam War protests, fights for educational transformation, and efforts to create a political and Pan-Asian identity (Fujino, 2005).

The fight against the Vietnam War grew into one of the largest social movements in American history where people of all races, generations, and roles such as students, workers, clergy, nuns, intellectuals, soldiers, and veterans worked together to confront America's



imperialist interests in Vietnam (Fujino, 2005). Kochiyama was part of a group that formed in New York, Asian Americans for Action (AAA) who situated the Vietnam War as being driven by U.S. corporations looking to “create new markets and develop a cheap labor force, at the expense of democratic rights of Vietnamese people” (Fujino, 2005, p. 235). AAA began organizing anti-war demonstrations in New York and supported others in Washington, DC, establishing the first visible Asian American presence at these East Coast gatherings. Kochiyama reflected,

[t]he first time we Asian Americans organized a march against the war, only twenty or thirty came out. But every march, we asked every Asian we saw if they wanted to march in an Asian contingent. We kept increasing the numbers, till twice in New York there were two hundred of us, and at one march in DC, we hit four hundred strong (Fujino, 2005, p. 237)

Along with galvanizing others to the Asian American movement against the Vietnam War, Kochiyama left us leadership lessons centered on what Fujino terms *collective care* (Throughline, 2021). Kochiyama emphasized that the interests, feelings, and concerns of the individual within the collective struggle to fight against institutionalized racism and state power were just as important as the struggle itself. Her lens to collective care highlighted the importance of helping people connect and relate to one another and care about each other’s well-being (Fujino, 2005). Kochiyama exemplified this care for others through her activism with the Black and Latino/a liberation movements, providing an antiracist organizing approach that moved her activism away from the lens of gaining at the expense of another. Instead, Kochiyama’s activism pushed an activism that would create positive change for all involved (Fujino, 2005). In addition, Kochiyama asserted that polarization and racism create artificial

divisions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, sexual orientation, and class; and these divisions impede any movement's progress toward social justice by "separating people who might otherwise unify to resist common oppression" (Fujino, 2005, p. 253). The overarching lens of collective care that Kochiyama demonstrated reminds us to build our aspirational world together through a collective consciousness that creates collective power (Throughline, 2021).

### ***Larry Itliong***

Larry Itliong, an Asian American leader, concentrated his activism and leadership on labor rights for farm workers. In 1929, when Itliong was 15, he moved to the U.S. from the Philippines with a vision that America was a land of opportunity (Cowan, 2019). He initially lived in Seattle where one of his first experiences with his uncle was walking down King Street where Itliong saw out-of-work Filipinos waiting for the harvest season to start. This visible sign of unemployment created a shocking contrast to his vision of America as the land of opportunity (Cowan, 2019). A jolted Itliong began organizing throughout the West Coast and Alaska for 30 years as he worked on farms as a child laborer and later in Alaskan salmon canneries (Cowan, 2019; Hamilton & Hamilton, 2017). Itliong moved to California in the late 1930s, where he joined the ranks of Filipinos working in the huge agricultural fields in central California (Hamilton & Hamilton, 2017). There growers recruited thousands of Chinese, Japanese, Mexican, and Filipino workers as a cheap migratory labor supply. These laborers were paid roughly one dollar per hour with few benefits (Hamilton & Hamilton, 2017). During that time in California, Filipinos represented almost 15% of the state's agricultural workers who toiled picking crops such as celery, lettuce, asparagus, and grapes (Hamilton & Hamilton, 2017).

In 1919, Japanese and Filipino farm workers in Hawaii organized a strike and won higher wages. A little more than a decade later in the 1930s, organizers from Hawaii arrived in

California to organize for labor rights through staging strikes (Hamilton & Hamilton, 2017). Continuing this cultural and political heritage, Itliong founded the Filipino Farm Labor Union in 1956 and united Filipino vegetable and grape workers into a cohesive group in Delano, California (Hamilton & Hamilton, 2017). Under Itliong's leadership, in the summer of 1965, Filipino farm workers demanded a 17% increase in wages (from \$1.20 per hour to \$1.40 per hour) and when growers denied this request, Itliong organized perhaps his most well-known movement, linking up with the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA), led by Cesar Chavez, thereby uniting Filipino and Mexican farm workers to form the United Farm Workers Union (UFW) (Hamilton & Hamilton, 2017).

Itliong is part of a legacy of unmarried Filipino men recruited from the Philippines to work as laborers in the US during the 1920s. These men, known as *manongs*, evolved into a politically radicalized group who compared the ideals of the U.S. Constitution and Filipinos' quest for freedom in America (Bacon, 2018). Manongs were children of colonialism, being born in the Philippines when it was still a U.S. colony from 1898 to 1946 (Bacon, 2018). This colonialism pervaded many areas of life in the Philippines, including education. Even children in the most remote islands were taught English from American textbooks before learning about Filipino heroes such as Jose Rizal, Emilio Aguinaldo, and Andres Bonifacio, each of whom led Filipinos in their fight for independence against Spain and later the US (Bacon, 2018). Their shared histories in the era of a colonized Philippines influenced the political ideals of the manongs. Many were Communists who believed that the fight for better wages was part of the fight against capitalism and colonialism. Their organizing, activism, and political ideology attracted the attention of authorities. At the height of McCarthyism, more than 30 members of a

fish cannery union (Local 37) in Seattle were arrested and threatened with deportation (Bacon, 2018).

Elsewhere, in segregated barrios in towns like Stockton and Salinas, Filipinos formed hometown associations and social clubs and Itliong used these networks to organize Filipinos when they went to work in the fields (Bacon, 2018). Itliong and his comrades were often tied up with legal defense and union-busting efforts by the Federal government and conservative factions within unions (Bacon, 2018). Also, growers kept wages low by employing *bracero* contract laborers from Mexico under highly controlled and exploitative conditions (Bacon, 2018).

The U.S. Department of Agriculture worked to disrupt unity among farmworkers from different ethnic groups. For instance they threatened braceros with deportations if they joined the Filipino strikes organized by the manongs (Bacon, 2018). Despite these challenges, in 1965, Itliong led the manongs to strike in the Coachella Valley during California's grape harvest and won a forty-cents per hour wage increase from grape growers and forced authorities to drop charges against strikers who were arrested (Bacon, 2018).

Itliong and the Filipino farmworkers continued to fight in Delano, where they began organizing sit-ins in labor camps, refusing to work until conditions and pay improved. Itliong and other Filipino activists became the targets of violence. UFW founder Dolores Huerta recalled to a historian that during the first days of the Delano strike, organizers from NFWA were shocked at grower violence against the Filipino strikers (Bacon, 2018). The Filipino strikers were beaten up by growers, and the gas, lights, and water were shut off in the labor camps (Bacon, 2018). Eventually farm owners expelled striking Filipino farmers, forcing them into town (Bacon, 2018). The Delano strike occurred shortly after the bracero program had ended as a

result of Public Law 78's repeal. The sudden absence of braceros allowed strikers to force growers to negotiate and those negotiations led to farm workers forming a union and to protect workers from violence and poor work conditions (Bacon, 2018). This victory was an important political event which strengthened the resolve and political ideas shared by most Filipino farm workers who saw labor strikes "as the fundamental weapon to win better conditions" and led to important alliances between unions and communities in modern labor history (Bacon, 2018, p. 22).

Though growers had pitted Mexicans and Filipinos against each other through actions such as the bracero program, one of the key events from the Delano strikes was Itliong's Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC) and the NFWA (led by Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta) finding common ground to support each other during the strike and forming the UFW (Bacon, 2018). Prior to the formation, Filipinos and Mexican farm workers co-existed, but never understood each other or knew each other's aspirations (Bacon, 2018). Through organizing to unite over 2,000 laborers, Itliong worked with leaders such as Chavez and Huerta to form a union that fought for worker dignity and respect over five years through strikes, boycotts, and rallies. These efforts culminated with winning a fair labor contract with the Delano growers in 1970, which included base farm wages being twice the minimum wage of American workers (Hamilton & Hamilton, 2017). This labor contract included health plans that were the envy of many other unions, and when there were grievances, farm workers were able to negotiate working conditions through the union (Bacon, 2018).

Itliong embodied the manongs' legacy of leadership through radical struggles in their fight for worker's rights. As the manongs fought against colonialism in the Philippines against U.S. occupation, Itliong led a fight through strategic networking and organizing that "helped lead

a renaissance of farm labor organizing that is still going on today” (Bacon, 2018, p. 25). Itliong forged an imperfect, but robust alliance with Mexican laborers led by Chavez and Huerta to demand fair wages and working conditions for all farm workers involved in the Delano labor movement. In doing so, Itliong modeled how cross-racial coalitions could create positive social change, similar to Kochiyama’s and Boggs’s care for the collective good (Boggs & Boggs, 1974; Cowan, 2019; Fujino, 2005). Itliong’s legacy continues to influence activists and organizers of farm laborers today who use migrant community networks to organize for better working conditions (Bacon, 2018). Itliong and the manongs embodied the Asian American Political Alliance assertion that leadership is effective action (Asian American Political Alliance, 2017).

### **Justice-Oriented Leadership Tenets**

Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong were three leaders who represent a heritage of Asian American activism in a struggle to find *place* for themselves and their communities within a racist America. In doing so, Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong demonstrated important leadership practices (see Figure 8) useful for equity and justice efforts. These practices include:

- Modeling activism as a way to project a *more human* human being with a sense of political and social responsibility (Boggs & Boggs, 1974).
- Working with the oppressed to share a new way of being together and exercise their creativity towards positive societal transformation (Boggs & Boggs, 1974).
- Developing an ideology to address a specific societal contradiction and create a vision to resolve this societal contradiction (Boggs & Boggs, 1974).
- Understanding that leadership and activism are about struggle with no final solution and the struggle is the work (or our highest expression of human creativity) (Boggs & Boggs, 1974).

- Recognizing that the interests, feelings, and concerns of the individual within the collective struggle against institutionalized racism and state power are just as important as the struggle itself (Fujino, 2005).
- Honoring cross-racial coalitions that provide antiracist organizing approaches that resist gains made at the expense of others' (Fujino, 2005).
- Understanding how polarization and racism create artificial divisions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, sexual orientation, and class, impeding any movement's actions towards social justice (Fujino, 2005).
- Building our aspirational world together through the power of our collective consciousness (Throughline, 2021).
- Creating collective power and moving us beyond our polarizations through strategic networking and organizing (Bacon, 2018).
- Recognizing that leadership is about making impact, not notoriety; and the actions of leaders must create positive social change with tangible results (Bacon, 2018).
- Understanding that the work of leadership paves the pathway for future generations to build on the work of past effective leadership.

These leadership practices and understandings, derived from the lives and legacies of Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong are powerful examples of how Asian Americans can repudiate and struggle against the current backdrop of a burgeoning white supremacy culture espousing violence against Asian Americans and people of color. This includes Asian Americans who continue their search for *place* in leadership positions to enact social change in education and social services. The legacies of Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong also serve as counternarratives to

the model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts, which obscure the actual impact of Asian American leaders.

### **Collectivist Leadership**

*The rest of me - the part you know  
as it is also you -  
is sitting inside a bus station  
watching television,  
waiting for further instructions on how  
I might dig myself out of the roles  
blind biographers have stuck me in*

- Yau (*Peter Lorre Speaks to the Spirit of Edgar Allan Poe During a Séance*)

The leadership practices of Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong espoused a collectivist approach to leadership that I discuss in this section. The pursuit of place for Asian Americans required leadership actions and approaches drawn from a collectivist frame of leadership focused on creating impact for communities within and external to Asian American communities. From the late 1500s, Asian Americans were carving out settlements and villages, fighting for their children to get into local schools, and filing civil rights suits against white supremacist organizations like the Ku Klux Klan -- all in service of a collective good as counterpoints to the confinement of white dominant culture (Cheung, 2017; Hinnershitz 2017). These collectivist approaches to leadership are in contrast to western views (or white dominant frames of thinking) which often conceptualize leadership with personality traits like charisma or hinging leadership on the individual (Benham, 2002).

Benham reminds us that restricting ourselves to the western views on leadership, often emphasizing personality traits and charisma, can inhibit our ability to lead with a lens for serving all people, as there are a multitude of ways to approach leadership (Benham, 2002). Benham's (2002) perspective expands the perspective on leadership focused on a collective perspective that



embraces “the cultural and historical contexts” of knowing, learning, and leading (p. 135). This type of collectivist frame locates leadership actions in relationships between “self through the other” rooted in beliefs and a vision expanding the ideas of usefulness, collectivity, and connectivity (Benham, 2002, p. 135). Similarly, the leadership practices and approaches espoused and exemplified by Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong are grounded in the paradigm of collectivism. Collectivist leadership can be seen in Boggs’ pursuit of *humanizing activism* with political and social responsibility; deep relationships *with* the oppressed to exercise creativity; and the emphasis on developing an ideology centered on resolving societal contradictions in order to transform society (Boggs & Boggs, 1974). Collective leadership is demonstrated through Kochiyama’s concept of *collective care* for others within social justice struggles and the importance of cross-racial coalitions centered on antiracist organizing (Fujino 2005; Throughline, 2021). Collectivist leadership is exuded by Itliong’s strategic networking to create collective power using the engines of resilience to provide a pathway for future generational success as counterpoints to the individualistic tendencies within a white centered American society (Bacon, 2018).

Collectivist approaches to leadership represent a contrast to individualistic approaches, in which leaders often operate independently in their own silos to mobilize resources and followers (Quick, 2017). A psychological and sociological condition of fear often pushes the individual to embrace individualistic approaches. Focusing on how fear impacts our views on leadership, Benham reminds us that fear is generated out of a “sense of estrangement, when one no longer feels a part of a community” and when we operate from fear, we are left vulnerable and in an manipulatable state (Benham, 2002, p. 139). These states of fear contribute to the notion of leadership as a “magic concept” dependent on charismatic individuals, or “leaderly” figures, as

the reason for success or failure without any reasoned explanations as to why a leader may or may not be successful (Crosby & Bryson, 2018). Fear and magical notions can direct people to become enamored with these individualistic, heroic molds of leadership while setting aside the importance of collectivist leadership approaches, which emphasize the ethics of leadership to enact holistically beneficial actions for the collective good (Crosby & Bryson, 2018).

Instead of relying on a mythologized individual leader or magical concepts of leadership, those with a collectivist frame suggest a more authentic leadership is possible through collectivist leadership (Crosby & Bryson, 2018). From this perspective, rather than belonging to an individual, leadership is a feature of human relationship systems that creates emergent and interactive processes to cultivate group member capacity and adaptability in navigating complexity (Crosby & Bryson, 2018). Rather than considering leadership as something projected and enacted toward followers, leadership should intentionally create space for work towards a common good in ways that not only manages hierarchical demands of accountability but simultaneously welcomes the horizontal demands of participation, collaboration, and engagement of stakeholders (Benham, 2002; Crosby & Bryson, 2018). When leadership is refocused from an individualistic to a collectivist lens, more comprehensive, relational, and humanistic models of leadership arise to encourage different approaches to leadership research that consider more actors, arenas, processes, contexts, and levels of analyses to better understand collective approaches to governance, building networks of knowledge, information sharing, service delivery, and policy reform (Ospina, 2017).

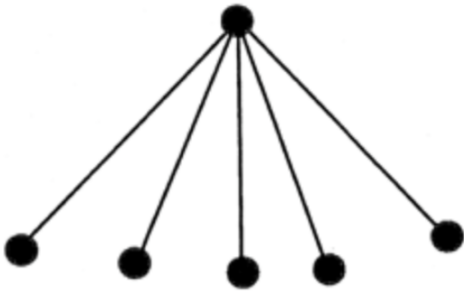
### **Indigenous Roots of Collectivist Leadership**

Collectivist leadership is deeply rooted in indigenous contexts that assume all people are potential leaders, avoiding the oppositional dualism of individual-group and leader-follower

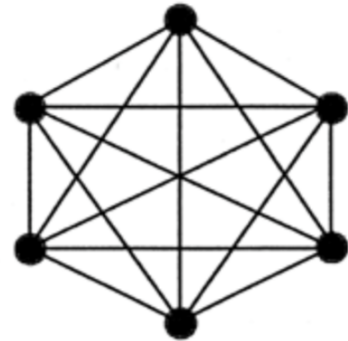
(Rosile et al., 2018). For example, ensemble leadership theory (ELT) provides “and/also” and “heterarchical” responses to hierarchy as features of indigenous epistemologies within collective tribal cultures as one model of collectivist leadership (Rosile et al., 2018). Figure 9 illustrates the difference between a hierarchical structure compared to a heterarchical structure in which leadership “depends not on position in a hierarchy, but on who has the appropriate knowledge at each point in the process” (Maccoby, 2015, p. 57).

The *and/also* response to dualism is exemplified by the “living story” concept from indigenous cultures as a counterpoint to Eurowestern stories that tend to be more static with beginning-middle-end structures and cause-effect linearities (Rosile et al., 2018). Antithetical to Eurowestern stories, indigenous stories frequently have spiraling or cyclical frameworks without beginnings or endings (Rosile et al., 2018). This difference lends indigenous stories to be more process-oriented and inviting to a collective of storytellers who all have opportunities to engage in sharing. With the concept of and/also is the notion of heterarchy encompassing “multiple interacting hierarchies” underscoring the ability of a community enacting collaborative approaches that can shape-shift between hierarchical and flatter egalitarian models of leadership (Rosile et al., 2018). The heterarchical foundations of indigenous knowledge set foundations for leadership focusing on the sacredness of relationships and the multidirectional nature of relationships that can energize and enact collectivist ways of leading (Rosile et al., 2018). Ideas from Native Science provide examples of ways to relate to the world away from individualistic towards more collectivist approaches. Native Science is an indigenous science of ecology guiding indigenous tribes to live in relationship with the natural world (Rosile et al., 2018). Within Native Science, relationships extend beyond people and move into human relationships with the natural world. This acknowledgement of people’s inherent relationships

## Hierarchy



## Heterarchy



*Note.* (Maccoby, 2000, p. 57).

*Figure 9.* Hierarchical and heterarchical structures.

---

with the world-at-large reflects an indigenous ontology and epistemology including a focus on how collective tribes live in relationship to their natural environments (Rosile et al., 2018).

Whereas a Eurowestern approach may focus solely on manipulating transactional relationships and variables to set a specific norm or seek singular outcomes (Rosile et al., 2018). Indigenous science approaches first to seek to observe the natural world for wisdom, adopting an “organic emergence of wisdom” within a relational context between and among the natural world in which human collectives are nested (Rosile et al., 2018).

The indigenous foundations for collectivist approaches to leadership moves the focus of leadership away from an individualistic leader and to collective leadership practices spread across a community. This shift differentiates a singular leader from leadership to focus on the processes and practices within a “system of relationships - the collective” (Ospina, 2017, p. 281). Within the collective, leadership emerges through decisions from individuals and collective groups, interactions, and actions that create the context where “leadership happens” (Ospina, 2017, p. 281). Benham’s (2002) work reminds us through a collective, indigenous lens that leadership is about generosity to community rather than credentials and status. She has elaborated that it is not degrees, achievements, high-powered jobs which matter in leadership, rather, what matters is how much we give to our communities (Benham, 2002). Collectivist leadership flips the assumptions about the “sources, object, and end result of leadership” by placing the primary source of leadership within a broader approach inclusive of all group members, and on the quality of relationships, and creation of environments supporting the leadership of all members (Ospina, 2017). Such collectivist leadership approaches lead to the development of “leaderful organizations” capable of generating leadership capacity for community members to effectively collaborate and produce results together (Ospina, 2017).

### ***Collectivist Leadership Theories***

Collectivist leadership theories draw from many sources in addition to indigenous wisdom and practices. These conceptual sources include thinking centered on networks, complexity, and discursive leadership. Network leadership theory views traits of members in an organization as properties of a system emphasizing informal leadership emerging or residing in “connections among people with shared work” (Cullen-Lester & Yammarino, 2016, p. 175). Complexity leadership theory emphasizes the connections among people and their actions within an organization by situating leadership as entwined within a “superstructure of planning, organizing, and missions,” moving the actions of leadership away from an individual or individuals and into a “complex interplay of numerous interacting forces” as the unit of analysis (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007, p. 302). Discursive leadership theory focuses on the complex interplay of interactions, but places emphasis on the primacy of language as a form of communication as a way to construct and negotiate meaning (Fairhurst, 2009). Through a discursive frame of leadership, leaders are viewed as people with the ability to “co-create the contexts to which they and others must respond – just as they might shape any other ‘social reality’ such as identity or legitimacy that, in turn, often vary based on how the context is being constructed in and through discourse” (Fairhurst, 2009, p. 1,608). Whether rooted in indigenous wisdom and practice or more technical analyses of systems and networks, collectivist leadership theoretical approaches provide compelling counterpoints to individualistic views on leadership. Importantly, this paradigmatic shift in leadership does not require the dismissal or diminishment of the legitimacy of other leadership theories or paradigms and does not deny the relevance of the formal leader (Ospina, 2017). Instead the collectivist leadership approaches and theories invite considerations pointing to the range of alternative sources from which leadership emerges (Ospina, 2017).

Collectivist leadership provides an essential counterpoint to narrower constructions of individualistic leadership approaches and instead focuses on collaboration and an embracing concern for the well-being of fellow human beings, their organizations, and communities. One example of collectivist leadership comes from Philadelphia Student Union (PSU), a youth organization, that views leadership not as a matter of positioning people hierarchically to make decisions for the rest of the group, instead the PSU uses a leadership structure for empowering all members of the collective to make decisions through consensus-driven discussions and altering power dynamics through creating space to hear all perspectives (a practice PSU termed “stepping up/stepping back”) (Rosen, 2016). Viewed from this example, leadership is about the creation of meaning by members of a group and translating that meaning into tangible *collective action* actions (Rosen, 2016). Hanold (2017) affirmed this perspective by asserting that “leadership occurs in a complex web of relationships in which collaboration and integration of diverse views to identify strategic priorities are paramount” (p. 455). Shotter (2011) extended the importance of collaboration beyond strategic importance for an organization and into the realm of personal development, stating that “[i]t takes...us to be fully ourselves to ourselves. Strangely, we cannot be ourselves—who we ‘are’—alone” (p. 52).

Collectivist leadership invites us to set aside our preoccupation with self-fulfillment and development as a unitary and individualist endeavor to one that requires relationships with others. Instead collectivist leadership approaches welcome a different ontology and epistemology embracing the space between the self and others (Hanold, 2017). Hanold posited that rather than carrying out individual development as an individual and private pursuit, people develop best by attending to the space between self and others. In doing so, “a shift from an intentional kind of identity/authenticity work to one where being authentic naturally emerges in moments of

complexity in the context” helps us synthesize knowledge of self and others with the interests of the collective in mind (Hanold, 2017, p. 456). Hanold used the Shotter (2011) term *withness*, to represent the shift in directionality of one’s leadership focus from trying to understand others’ experiences to allowing others’ experiences to shape who we are. Hanold elaborated the dominant *one leader-many followers* paradigm pushes leaders to think they must solve others’ problems, which Hanold terms *aboutness*. In contrast, *withness* focuses on listening and learning so that power emerges among the group through articulated thoughts and solutions that are collectively shared and developed (Hanold, 2017).

### ***Imaginaries***

Shifting from *aboutness* into *withness* connotes elements of collectivist leadership that move us away from dominant leadership ideologies, which shape some of our strongest unconscious biases, and instead into collectivist leadership approaches emphasizing relating to others and ourselves as more coherent wholes (Hanold, 2017). Others have suggested that collectivist and more individual-centered approaches to leadership need not be considered to be mutually exclusive. For instance, Quick (2017) suggested that collectivist leadership does not exist despite individualistic leadership but is more precisely a part of the process of bringing together individual-level actions as part of an emergent, collective process. However, this emergent and collective process creates a platform to create understandings through moments where we are “moved” or “struck” by something someone says, a phenomenon Shotter termed *transitory understandings* (Hanold, 2017, p. 458). When individual-level understandings evolve into emergent shared understandings to create collective impact, and as collective impact increases, a public *imaginary*, which is a loose schema through which people connect aspirations to actions, develops with *inclusive organizing* towards collective change (Quick, 2017). The



imaginary is a “loose schema through which people recursively define, identify with, or constitute an entity via plans, statistics, mottos, or other representations”, orienting individuals towards common ideals, creating frameworks to enlist potential resources, and drawing people into efforts to orient their actions for collective impact, while simultaneously reinvigorating and redefining the initial imaginary (Quick, 2017). The results of such imaginaries develop the “arising of novel and coherent structures, patterns, and properties during the process of self-organization in complex systems”, creating steps in collective actions that are open-ended, novel, and change-oriented with cohesive momentum (Quick, 2017).

The ontological and epistemological development for Asian Americans historically called for collectivist approaches to organizing in their pursuit of *place* in America against the grain of a Western-white dominant culture. Carving out settlements from the late-1500s on, fighting for Asian American children’s placement in local public schools, fighting against racist organizations like the Ku Klux Klan were driven by the need for collective resolution to affirm their right for belonging on American soil (Cheung, 2017; Hinnershitz, 2017). The historical experience of Asian Americans demanded a collectivist approach to leading in relationships between “self through the other” to create imaginaries for usefulness, collectivity, and connectivity (Benham, 2002, p. 135). The demonstrated actions of justice-oriented Asian American leadership through the examples of Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong show a legacy of pursuing *humanizing activism*, working *with* the oppressed to transform society, developing ideologies to resolve societal contradictions such as racism, enacting *collective care* for others within social justice struggles, building antiracist cross-racial coalitions, mobilizing a *collective consciousness* as collective power for Asian Americans, building strategic networks to create collective power through resiliency, and building a pathway for future generations to thrive in

America (Bacon, 2018; Boggs & Boggs, 1974; Fujino, 2005; Throughline, 2021). Collectivist approaches to leadership create a foundation to organizing cross-racial coalitions that will be discussed in the next section.

### **Cross-Racial Coalition Building**

*When we decide  
It is time  
To thank the Deity  
For our food...our shelter...our health  
We will all...no matter which  
Ideology...wrap our arms  
Around each other  
And be glad we live...at this time  
On  
This Earth*

- Giovanni (*The Past...The Present...The Future*)

Asian American leaders have long applied their collectivist approaches to leadership to find *place* within American society for future generations to thrive in America. These collectivist approaches used by Asian American leaders included creative and purposeful creation of cross-racial coalitions in order to move beyond the white-dominant culture of America in pursuit of greater equity and justice. The model minority concept that stereotypes Asian Americans as a non-political, law-abiding group achieving higher levels of success than the general population through innate talent and immigrant aspirations. The perpetual foreigner stereotype emphasizes ethnic minorities will always be seen as outsiders through the white gaze. The interplay of the model minority and perpetual foreigner created divisions between Asian Americans and people from other racially marginalized groups that must be resolved through collectivist leadership actions (Blackburn, 2019; Huynh et al., 2011).

Through the interplay of the model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts, Asian Americans were used as a racial group to maintain white dominant culture. The “exceptional

image” of Asian Americans and the subsequent changes to the 1965 Immigration Act that established immigration quotas served as “instruments of US state violence and empire” toward a pliable, socially separated production and management of “racialized migrant bodies and labor” (Chen, 2017, p. 270). This legislation and the accompanying trope of Asian American exceptionality reflected the white, colonial-gaze, which saw some groups of Americans as more productive for US sanctioned military expansion, corporate expansion, and both state and economic development (Chen, 2017). Conversely, those who were deemed unproductive were “rendered illegal, criminal, and nonproductive bodies” (Chen, 2017, p. 270). The bifurcation of racially marginalized people reinforces the white hegemonic narrative designating “personhood” and “subpersonhood” within “white-ruled polities” and applies racialized norms of Asian Americans in order to determine those who are productive, and thus full persons, and those who are unproductive, and consequently, subpersons (Mills, 1997, p. 11).

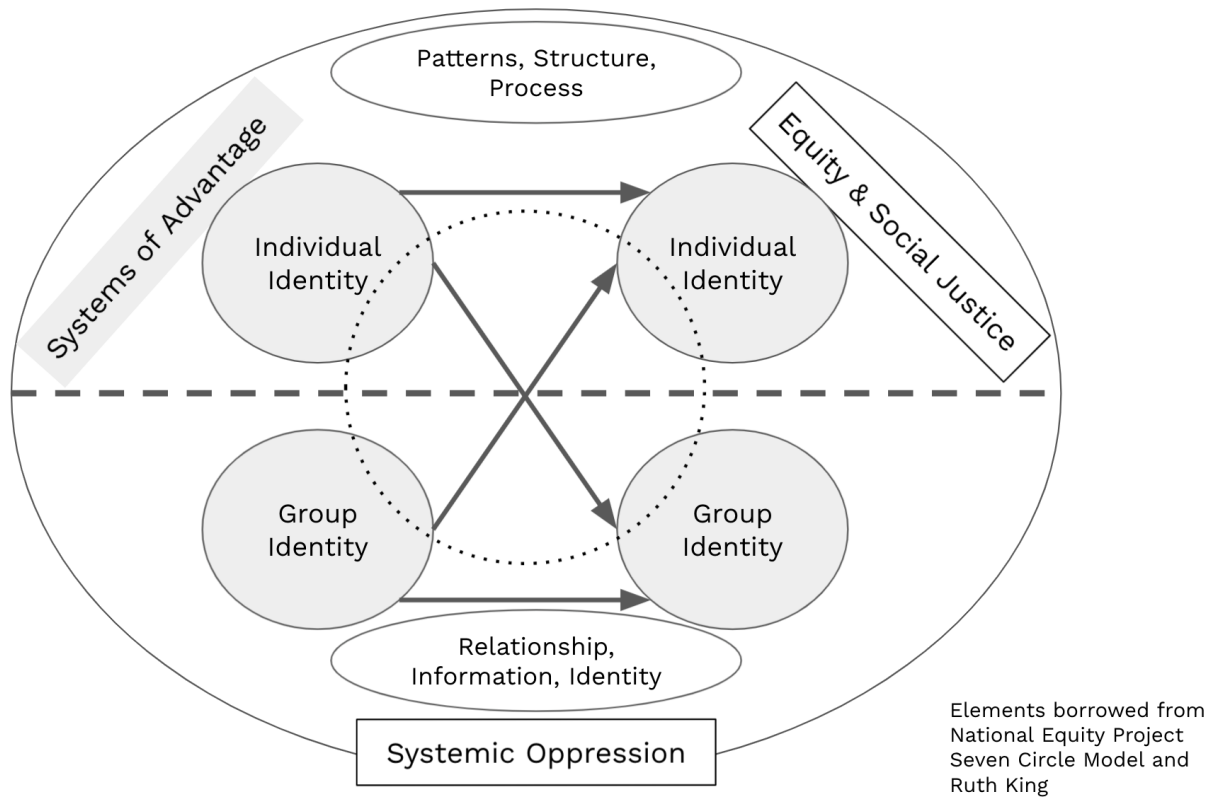
Chen (2017) prods us with questions on how Asian American epistemologies can be interrogated against the backdrop of *white-dominant-capitalistic-imperialistic-culture* which pushes Asian Americans toward an honorary whiteness and how an interrogation of our epistemologies can instead push Asian Americans into actions creating solidarities (or coalitions) for Black lives and collective liberation. Just as justice-oriented Asian American leadership legacies, and their collectivist underpinnings, historically served as counternarratives to the white-dominant-capitalistic-imperialistic hegemony of American society, an exploration of these epistemologies and how they can be applied to today’s sociopolitical landscape further informs how Asian Americans build solidarity and relationships with other racially marginalized and oppressed people within contemporary movements for liberation and justice. Asian American leadership pursuing liberation and justice provides a foundation for crucial action toward

building cross-racial coalitions in service of antiracist practices in ways that disrupt the dynamics of a racialized America often pitting people of color against each other (Fujino, 2005).

The concepts of the model minority and perpetual foreigner connote the way white supremacy organized American society strongly along racial lines, creating a belief among some that there truly is a “pecking order”. Figure 10 depicts how the pecking order established by white supremacy can create conflict within a societal structure with systems of advantage, systems of oppression, combined with the work of equity and social justice. When a person attempts to engage in social actions from their individual identity (e.g., a social justice-oriented person who happens to be white) with a person holding onto their group identity (e.g. an Asian American person who grew up not trusting white people), there is potential for misunderstanding and conflict that diminishes the ability of both people to work together for social change. This is an example of the challenge white supremacist structures place on our ability to build cross-racial coalitions. White supremacy functions to create and maintain a racist structure to society; white supremacy is “not an ideology, but a system of power relations that structures society” (Myrdal as quoted in Kim, 2020, p. 196). Just as Asian Americans have often been labeled as exemplary assimilators to this racist ideology, Myrdal similarly recommended that “American Negroes as individuals and as a group to become assimilated into American culture” (Kendi, 2019, p. 84). One way out of the assimilationist narratives proposed by Myrdal and white supremacy culture is to build cross-racial coalitions that are themselves embodiments of an antiracist action (Fujino, 2005).

### **Asian Americans and Cross-Racial Coalition Building**

Asian Americans are key members of a decolonizing majority in a changing U.S. demographic that can increase their collective capacity to create justice-oriented social change.



*Figure 10.* Potential for conflicts in cross-racial coalition building.

Asian American leaders play and must continue to play an active role in building cross-racial coalitions and strengthening historical ones in order create pathways for future generations to collectively change the white racist culture of the US. Kim and Lee (2001) noted the strong political position Asian Americans are in due to their “rapid population growth, geographical concentration in key electoral states...Asian Americans may become a swing vote that plays a pivotal role in American politics” (p. 631). For example, the increased political influence of Asian Americans was evident in the 2020 elections in America, when it was pointed out that the victory for President Biden in Georgia was due to the Asian Americans votes (Tavernise, 2020).

The ability of Asian American leaders to build cross-racial coalitions is not a new endeavor, but a continuing legacy, much like the political and civic activism demonstrated by Asian American leaders (see section on Asian American Leadership). For example, Asian Americans joined in leadership with Latino/a communities in the San Gabriel Valley of Los Angeles County during the 1990s in order to fight discrimination and political exclusion (Kim & Lee, 2001). On the East Coast, Asian Americans collaborated with both Latino/a and Black community members in New York City to promote a redistricting plan linking Chinatown to the predominantly Puerto Rican and Black Lower East Side (Kim & Lee, 2001). In the South, Asian Americans united with Black, Latino/a, and white community members in Houston to elect Mayor Lee Brown, and to defeat an anti-affirmative action measure (Kim & Lee, 2001). Each of these examples illustrates cross-racial coalitions in which Asian Americans engaged in through deep relationships and political alliances with other racially marginalized community members (Fujino, 2005).

### ***Challenges of Cross-Racial Coalition Building***

Multiracial political alliances are sometimes challenging in the face of white dominant structures that often serve to inhibit or disrupt such relationships (Kim, 1999; Wu, 2014).

However, in addition to the powerful examples of Asian American leaders like Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong who successfully built cross-racial political alliances, some research identifies the conditions and practices associated with successful cross-racial collaborations within equity and justice initiatives. For example, Kim and Lee (2001) reviewed empirical evidence produced through a review of literature focused on interactions between Asian Americans and other communities of color and found that multiracial political alliances are most likely if:

1. racial/ethnic groups set aside short-term, group-specific considerations to address fundamental issues related to social change;
2. [racial/ethnic groups] resist narrow race-based politics while at the same time recognizing the importance of race in American society;
3. individuals and organizations build and sustain relationships across group boundaries over time as a basis for promoting collaborative efforts; and
4. each group contains organizations that serve as vehicles for community mobilization, leadership training, resource building, etc. (p. 632).

As a counterpoint to these tenets, Oliver and Grant (1995) argued that cross-racial coalitions are only feasible on the local level and are likely to be issue-oriented and temporary rather than enduring. Others have identified *residential propinquity* (local spaces of interaction in which individuals from different groups develop relationships and trust) and *relative parity* in status and resources (e.g. citizenship and education) as the most important factors in building cross-

racial coalitions (Kim & Lee, 2001, p. 632). Kim and Lee (2001) noted that by these measures Asian Americans are most likely to form alliances with community members in this order: white community members, Latino/a community members, and Black community members, which is a trend that must be changed to support the work of decolonizing America from white supremacy.

Examining interracial contact helps us understand the prospects and barriers to cooperation between Asian Americans and communities of color. Sites of interracial contact including residential areas, workplaces, networks of friends, and public spaces and examining them indicates a distinct structuring of interracial contact and racial attitudes in the US (Kim & Lee, 2001). For example, Black people and white people are the most distant from one another in terms of daily contact, material conditions, and attitudes toward racism while Asian Americans and Latino/as fall somewhere in between these two poles. Coinciding with this, in aggregate, Black people live the most segregated lives of any racial group in the US while Asian Americans live in significantly less segregated lives than Black and Latino/a community members (Kim & Lee, 2001).

Group perceptions of discrimination shape not only the amount of racial contact people from various groups have with each other, but the perceptions impact the prospects for cross-racial coalition building between Asian Americans and community members of other racial groups. For example, most Americans think Black people face the highest level of discrimination of any racial/ethnic group, and Black and Latino/a people are seen to face the greatest barriers to socioeconomic advancement (Kim & Lee, 2001). A 2021 Pew Research Center report found that overall, 79% of Americans believe there is *some* (33%) or *a lot* (46%) of discrimination toward Black people, while 76% of Americans believe there is *some* (46%) or *a lot* (30%) of discrimination toward Latino/a people, and 71% of people in the same study believed there is



*some* (44%) or *a lot* (27%) of discrimination toward Asian Americans (Daniller, 2021). Just as the beliefs about the discrimination various racial/ethnic groups experience have been researched, so have the perceptions of people who have personally experienced discrimination. For example, in a 2000 survey of Asian Americans, a reported 40% personally experienced discrimination (Kim & Lee, 2001). The acknowledgement of most Americans that discrimination frequently occurs against Black, Latino/a, and Asian Americans presents an opportunity to connect the discrimination experienced by Asian Americans with the discrimination faced by members of the Black and Latino/a community as a way to figure out how to build cross-racial coalitions towards the common interest of upending racism (Benner & Kim, 2009; Kiang et al., 2017; Kim & Lee, 2001).

Despite the reality that people from Asian American, Black, and Latino/a communities all experience discrimination, the specific experiences of Asian Americans are distinct. As Asian Americans have been positioned in a “uniquely liminal, ambivalent position” through racist concepts such as the model minority and perpetual foreigner, Asian American leaders need to be mindful that being Asian American means being racialized in-between a false binary of whiteness and Blackness; thus Asian Americans should not serve as a “buffer” to whiteness in the racial hierarchy (Kim & Lee, 2001, p. 633). For example, in the 1980s, political conservatives depicted Asian Americans as victims of pro-Black affirmative action programs, when in reality all communities of color were harmed by quotas at selective universities to preserve the whiteness of college student bodies (Kim & Lee, 2001). Similarly, Proposition 209 in California was part of a politically conservative agenda that asserted Asian Americans were victims of “reverse-discrimination” through preferential treatment of Black and Latino/a people (Kim & Lee, 2001). Asian Americans need to recognize and resist these types of *ideological*

*maneuverings* so that Asian Americans support and continue to create platforms of partnership for cross-racial coalition building (Mills, 1997).

### ***Equal Status Contact***

Building cross-racial coalitions requires actions that build trust amongst community members to create what González (2016) referred to as *equal status contact*. One example noted was through highlighting Marrow's (2009, 2011) work comparing majority-white Wilcox and majority-Black Bedford Counties in North Carolina. One finding noted that cross-racial coalitions were more likely in counties like Wilcox where both Latino/a and Black community members were in the numerical minority (González, 2016). In Wilcox County, the potential threat for Black community members to be socioeconomically displaced by Latino/a community members was reported to feel less likely, whereas in majority-Black Bedford County, members of the Black community felt more likely to be socioeconomically displaced by Latino/a community members (González, 2016). Correspondingly, racial groups are less likely to work together when there are "ad hoc alliances" with the white majority as one racial group may decide alliances with white people yield greater returns than a coalition with other people of color groups (González, 2016).

### ***Actions Supporting Cross-Racial Coalition Building***

Trust is one antidote to barriers preventing cross-racial coalitions from coming together. Trust building strategies, including social events sharing food and culture provide opportunities for community members to dispel divisive stereotypes about each other (González, 2016). Beyond social functions, when trust is built through shared ethical and political commitments, groups are more able to find common ground instead of competing for perceived limited economic resources (González, 2016).

In a study of Black and Latino/a female community organizers who ranged in age from 23 to 62, González (2016) reported the thought process of one Latino/a participant who reflected on her journey to being connected with Black women in similar causes by understanding that “in some places [Latino/a women] are more palatable to White people than Black folks by virtue of not being Black” (González, 2016, p. 18). This participant reflected on her experience in Puerto Rico where she was considered white, but in the U.S. mainland, she was considered [Latino/a] (González, 2016). This study identified that for Black and Latino/a women who are organizing women of color, it is necessary to understand how others may perceive us, but “[t]his does not mean that we forget who we are or let this construct define us”, but it is important to recognize these perceptions and understand its consequences for organizing (González, 2016, p. 18).

In an ethnographic study of how Hmong and Black youth built cross-racial coalitions, Lee et al. (2020) highlighted how community-based educational spaces (CBES) provided youth with a place in which they could make sense of the injustices they faced and to imagine a better world (Lee et al., 2020). In these CBES, Hmong and Black youth thought through issues impacting their local communities and participated in community organizing in which Hmong youth demonstrated consistent support for their Black peers and vice versa (Lee et al., 2020). One key focus area for racial equity and justice activists and advocates from communities of color who are not Black within this study was to challenge anti-Blackness as a foundation to the white supremacy structures present within America. A deep understanding of anti-Black racism allowed non-Black communities members to understand their own racial positioning within a Black-white racialized paradigm in America (Lee et al., 2020). In their study, Lee et al. (2020) also identified that when Hmong and Black youth developed an understanding of anti-Blackness as a root issue and made sense of their respective injustices cross-racially, then they were better

able to organize around issues impacting their local communities and build and sustain relationships across their group boundaries. In doing so, they were better able to resist narrow race-based politics while still recognizing the importance of race in the US, while serving as community mobilizers (Kim & Lee, 2001).

In another reflective study involving Black and white female, education practitioner-researchers from a specific academic community, researchers identified some qualities of effective cross-racial dialogue (McIntyre et al., 1998). Some findings from this qualitative study included the importance of exploring the challenges of committing to a “cross-racial dialogue group” and the importance of moving beyond “talk” in order to actively address the “multidimensionality of racism” in each participant’s life (McIntyre et al., 1998, p. 3). The findings and reflections from this study highlighted the importance of confrontation, change, and action; seeing possibility for change in one another. In addition, the study noted how cross-racial dialogues provided space for white people to interrogate the meaning of whiteness in order to build sustainable cross-racial coalitions with their Black colleagues (McIntyre et al., 1998). One participant in this study noted her discomfort with confrontation and reflected, “[i]t is not part of my nature. Yet, confrontation is part of the group process. I am learning to tolerate it, to let myself be confronted without shutting down, and to take risks to both confront myself and others. I do not claim to have gone far in this journey but I have begun...with halting steps” (McIntyre et al., 1998, p. 4). Another participant noted the necessity of change and action in the group, asserting that “[c]hange and action are necessary for me...if I am to come to the table and engage in sincere dialogue...[t]he action that I have been empowered to take...is confronting racist statements and actions in real time - real time being anywhere from the immediate to a week later. I don’t let an experience fester” (McIntyre et al., 1998, p. 4). Still another participant

in this study reflected that through the dialogue of the group, she was able to “look back and track my own evolution from the woman who felt that the only good white person was a dead white person, to the woman who understands...there is potential for change within each white person. For some, I can tap into the potential. For others, it is too deeply buried, and that is okay” (McIntyre et al., 1998, p. 5).

The cross-racial conversations in this study provided important opportunities for white people to interrogate the meaning of whiteness. One of the white participants considered the importance of examining white privilege, interrogating the meaning of whiteness, and developing alliances with critical friends “who would support my efforts to develop an anti-racist practice and theoretical perspective...I strongly believe that reading about racism and white privilege and engaging in critical reflections are necessary prerequisites for participating in cross-racial dialogue” (McIntyre et al., 1998, p. 6). Several participants reflected on the importance of cross-racial dialogue, one noting Beverly Tatum’s reminders that cross-racial dialogue empowers all members of a community and the difficulty of staying in this dialogue, “confronting one another, risk sounding like a bigot, and the risk of revealing ourselves to one another” (McIntyre et al., 1998, p. 7). Another noted that “it is precisely our eclectic sessions that provide the on-going learning and teaching, talking and hearing that keeps race, gender, social class, and sexuality at the focal point of our discussions” and how these dialogues sometimes are not best structured directly because “[s]ometimes we arrive by accident” (McIntyre et al., 1998, p. 10).

The cross-racial dialogues helped participants come to understandings and hopes that Black and white women can be together to build community. The participants in this study reiterated that such talk is seldom linear, but “[t]hese conversations are circular, complicated,

frustrating, uplifting, and disheartening...I believe our exchanges have been an effort to recapture ourselves and to scrutinize the [o]ther, and it is only through this lasting tension...that will enable us to create ideal conditions of existence for our world” (McIntyre et al., 1998, p. 13). The reflections from the study constructed by McIntyre et al. (1998) provide reminders for ways to build successful cross-racial coalitions that:

- allow *confrontation*,
- aim for creating *change and action*,
- reaffirm the *possibility for change in another*,
- create space for *white people interrogating the meaning of whiteness*, and
- ensure a platform for *cross-racial dialogue* to sustain cross-racial coalitions to address the *multidimensionality of racism*.

### ***Ethnic Gradation Constructs***

As the reflections and findings from McIntyre et al. (1998) suggested, Asian American leaders have dynamics within the panethnic category of Asian American that should be acknowledged and interrogated. Lien (2014) reminds us to consider the work of Bonilla-Silva and Embrick (2006) who asserted a *tri-racial* system amongst Asian Americans categorized within the white-dominant racial hierarchy comprised of whites first, then honorary whites encompassing Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and Asian-Indian Americans, and then collective blacks including Filipino, Vietnamese, Hmong, and Laotian Americans. The racial cartography of Bonilla-Silva and Embrick (2006) is not comprehensive as they understand that group positions may change. In this cartography, “honorary” means secondary and any “voluntary whites” still face discrimination although their globalized white privilege may be experienced through a “kinder and gentler” and “colorblind racism” (Lien, 2014, p. 502).

Without awareness of ethnic gradation constructs within Asian American identities that support white dominant constructs, Asian American leaders have difficulty in espousing tenets for cross-racial coalition building with other communities of color (McIntyre et al., 1998). Within this construct of white racist structures, additional research has found that Korean, Chinese, and Japanese Americans are more likely than some white people to hold anti-Black and anti-Latino/a attitudes due to the historical tendencies of East Asian Americans to “buffer racial matters by holding more pro-white attitudes than whites themselves” (Lien, 2014, p. 502). I have seen this myself, when family members who are Korean immigrants themselves say, “I don’t see race, I like to see all people as equal”.

Ultimately, through reflections as people and leaders, Asian Americans must combat racial inequality across all communities so that they can better promote social change and policies that intersect race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and class within the work of cross-racial coalitions (Lien, 2014). Despite the differences within Asian Americans, larger social movements need the support of cross-racial coalitions to provide avenues to create long-lasting social movements (Merseeth, 2018).

Referring to the review of empirical evidence, Kim and Lee (2001) note that cross-racial coalitions involving Asian Americans and other communities of color can be more successful when:

- Cross-racial coalitions start with issues deeply felt by the community and set aside short-term, group-specific considerations to address fundamental issues related to social change (Kim & Lee, 2001).

- Cross-racial coalitions connect micro issues to macro issues resisting narrow race-based politics, while recognizing the multidimensionality of race in American society (Kim & Lee, 2001; Schulze-Oechtering, 2016).
- Cross-racial coalitions engage with the oppressed to connect with a variety of stakeholders, whereby each group of a cross-racial coalition serves as a vehicle for community mobilization, leadership development, and resource building (Boggs & Boggs, 1974; Kim & Lee, 2001; Minkler et al., 2019).
- Cross-racial coalitions encourage crossing racial boundaries for individuals and organizations to build and sustain relationships across group-specific boundaries over time, allowing people to “find each other and support each other” (Kim & Lee, 2001; Schulze-Oechtering, 2016, p. 44).

Asian Americans are key members in a changing landscape in the US of a majority of people of color who hold the ability to create political change. Thus, Asian American leaders must play an active role in building cross-racial coalitions toward justice-oriented actions to set a path for future generations to change the racist culture of the US. The guideposts from Kim and Lee (2001) remind Asian American leaders about organizing approaches that resist approaches of making gains at the expense of others and create ways to move beyond polarization and racism that often create barriers to justice movements (Fujino, 2005).

### **Summary**

The history of the United States reinforces a paradoxical oppression of Asian Americans through the model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts as a foundation to the racism Asian Americans face. The present anti-Asian violence and the dark legacy of the model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts is part of a white-dominant-capitalist-imperialistic infrastructure



that racializes Asian Americans and erases their rich history of resistance, activism, and leadership. Additionally, these concepts pit Asian Americans against other communities of color and can impede our ability as a society to form justice-oriented cross-racial coalitions. The very counterpoint asserting and affirming a more accurate narrative history of this country is that Asian Americans have *always* been in America and knowing this and speaking this truth about Asian Americans is a direct action repudiating the racist legacy of America (Wu, 2014).

Reflecting on the racialized experience of Asian Americans is one way to undo the white supremacy structures in America. Asian American leaders who worked toward and continue to work toward racial, social, and economic justice offer a legacy that must be remembered as a reference point in American history that must be amplified. This remembrance reveals leadership practices, strategies, and approaches demonstrated by Asian American leaders such as GL Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong and their many predecessors. Their lives and legacies provide leadership lessons of how Asian Americans can repudiate and struggle against the white dominant culture of America. The societal context of America notes the importance of this where only 1 to 4% of educational and non-profit organizations are led by Asian Americans (Buteau, 2019; National Center for Education Statistics, 2020).

Carving out settlements from the late-1500s, fighting for Asian American children's and children of other racial groups' rights in public schools, and fighting against racist organizations like the Ku Klux Klan were all driven by the need for collective resolve and action to affirm the right to exist and belonging on American soil (Cheung, 2017; Hinnershitz, 2017). The historical experience of Asian Americans demanded a collectivist approach to bring the racist realities in relationship to a future without racism (Tippett, 2022). The demonstrated actions of justice-oriented Asian American leadership through the examples of GL Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong

leave a profound legacy of pursuing *humanizing activism*, working *with* the oppressed to transform society, developing ideologies to resolve societal contradictions such as racism, striving for *collective care* for others within social justice struggles, constructing and maintaining antiracist cross-racial coalitions, galvanizing *collective consciousness* as collective power for Asian Americans, building strategic networks to create collective power through resiliency, and building a pathway for future generations to thrive in America (Bacon, 2018; Boggs & Boggs, 1974; Fujino, 2005; Throughline, 2021).

Chapter 3 presents the methodology used, while Chapter 4 situates the reader in the context of this CRE study and emerging themes from initial convenings. Chapter 5 provides an overview of emerging ideas and themes from this study. Chapter 6 shares the summary emerging findings, while Chapter 7 discusses the implications and leadership lessons learned from this CRE study.

### **CHAPTER 3: DESIGNING A SAFE AND RIGOROUS SPACE**

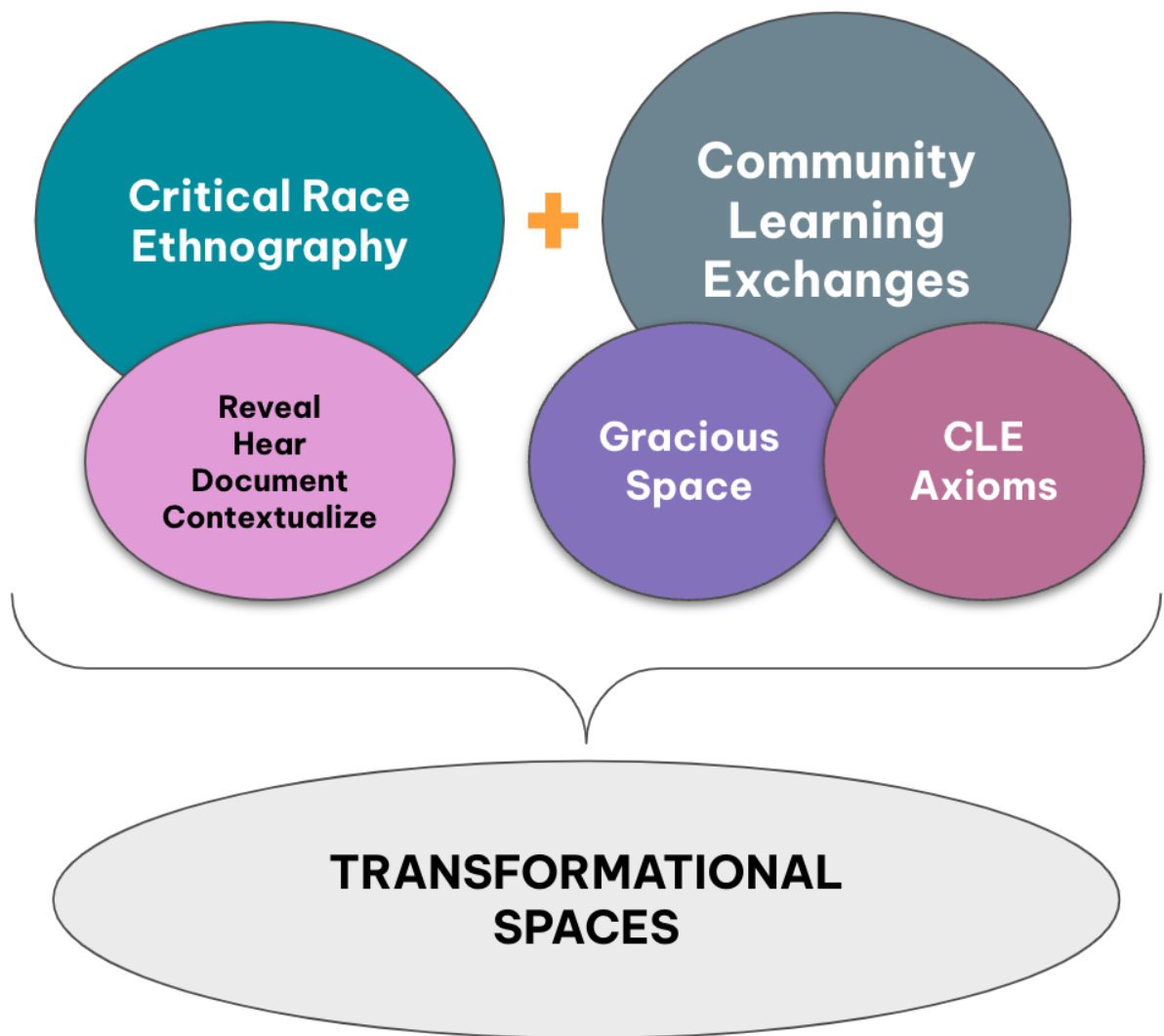
In this chapter, I explain the methodology for the critical race ethnography (CRE) study first by explaining a research design rooted in CRE frameworks and CLE practices (Duncan, 2005; Herr & Anderson, 2014; hunter et al., 2013; Guajardo et al., 2016; Woodson, 2019). Next, I explain how I used the CLE axioms (Guajardo et al., 2016) and the elements of gracious space (Hughes, 2017) to create a safe theorizing space for the study participants. In subsequent sections, I describe the phases of the CRE study, including a summary of the study's participants, describe the process of data generation and analysis, and close the chapter with study considerations, including a description of confidentiality and ethical considerations.

Critical race ethnography (CRE) informed the methodological approach to the research study in which I surfaced Asian American leaders' personal and professional narratives as a way to understand their ontological and epistemological frames affirming Asian American leadership identity. CRE is a "methodological toolbox" drawing on multiple forms of data including interview, observational, archival, and statistical data, to examine racial identity and experience (Woodson, 2019, p. 29). This study's theory of action postulates that a deep examination of the experiences and narratives of Asian American leaders can reveal processes that may affirm their identities as leaders and understand the ways this affirmation helps build our aspirational world. In addition to CRE, this research study drew on the Community Learning Exchanges (CLEs), convenings with community members focused on public reflection and learning to break the isolation leaders often feel through deep relationships with other community members (Guajardo et al., 2016). With the CRE study's participants, I engaged in a series of CLEs inquiring into Asian American leaders' experiences; in the convenings, the participants investigated their leadership experiences through the lenses of self (micro), organization (meso), and community

(macro). During our CLEs, we built a coalition of Asian American leaders who supported each other to understand the possibilities in enacting transformative change within the organizations and communities they lead (Guajardo et al., 2016). The coupling of CRE principles (Duncan, 2005; Woodson, 2019) with CLE principles (Guajardo et al., 2016; Hughes, 2017) provided a rigorous and nurturing environment to engage in this study with fellow Asian American leaders (see Figure 11).

### **Qualitative Research Process and Methodology**

The purpose of the Critical Race Ethnography (CRE) study's focus of practice (FoP) was to engage Asian American leaders collaboratively in public learning focused on their contexts, identities, and dilemmas and surface existing and new ways of being and knowing (ontological and epistemological) that inform how leaders can enact racial, social, and economic justice. Against the backdrop in the current U.S. context in 2021, there is a growing recognition of the need to disrupt and decolonize hegemonic and white-centered narratives of leadership. One significant purpose for this study was to design and learn through a process affirming Asian American leaders' identities and experiences in order to impact our work as leaders in education systems and other related fields. Another significant purpose was to create a supportive coalition of Asian American leaders whose network might disrupt and even counteract the current status of leadership diversity in America where Asian Americans represent 1% of all public school principals and 4% of nonprofit Executive Directors (Buteau, 2019; National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). The CRE study is designed to address an overarching research question and sub-questions. The overarching research question is: *How do Asian American leaders identify existing and new ontological and epistemological frameworks to affirm their identity and engage in leadership actions pursuing racial, social, and economic justice?*



*Note.* (Duncan, 2005; Guajardo et al., 2016; Hughes, 2017; Woodson, 2019).

*Figure 11.* Critical Race Ethnography and Community Learning Exchanges.

---

The sub questions are:

- How does knowing the self affirm leaders' individual identities and inform leadership actions for Asian American leaders?
- What are the ontological and epistemological frameworks of Asian American historical leadership legacies that inform leadership actions for current Asian American leaders?
  - How do these historical legacies inform the development of new ontological and epistemological relations for Asian American leaders?
- How do Asian American leaders balance their individual identities with a collective Asian American identity to inform how they enact leadership actions in their organizations (meso) and communities (macro)?
- How do CLEs, the researcher, and participants of the CRE study build a coalition of Asian American leaders who support each other to understand and implement transformative leadership actions within their organizations and communities?

With these research questions as guideposts, I highlight how the study's focus coupled the use of CLEs with CRE principles represents three areas of significance for research.

First, the experience of Asian Americans in what Kim (2011) describes as a particular configuration of “palpable absence and invisible presence” suggesting Asian Americans are caught within racial hierarchies in which we are “not quite free, not quite enslaved, not quite citizen, and not quite foreign” (p. 213). This in-between space was articulated as Asian Americans being pushed to be a model minority and yet perpetually foreign in one body while trying to operate as normally as possible (Jean Wu, personal communication, November 16, 2022). This unique position of Asian American leaders emphasizes the significance of their

experiences and the responsibility they have in engaging in and enacting practices that disrupt inequities within the theorizing space of leadership with fellow racially marginalized people. Second, Duncan (2005) asserts CRE is a methodology that supports analysis of ontological categories by informing the way race functions as a stratifying force in educational and societal settings that push specific groups of people to live at the margins of society. Instead of sharing Biblical stories of false hope, CRE works to advance the stories of marginalized people as a measure to continue building ways to overcome the impacts of racism and racism's dominant discourses (Duncan, 2005). Third, capturing the struggles of Asian American leaders within white-dominant leadership contexts as a study provides emergent findings holding implications for the theorizing spaces of leadership practice and research.

Through analyses with a CRE lens, this methodology emphasizes the *coevalness*, or the “sharing of the present time” as a condition of justice, referencing Thurgood Marshall’s argument that “equal means getting the same thing, at the same time and in the same place” (Duncan, 2005, p. 93). Coevalness is denied within hegemonic and white-centered contexts where white-dominant discourse centers Western cultures, while simultaneously denying or erasing the perspective of those not considered as part of white dominant cultures (Duncan, 2005). The denying of racially marginalized perspectives is similar to Mills’ (1997) assertion that nonwhite subpersonhood is a predetermining condition enshrining white personhood. This white-dominant or *allochronic* discourse defines itself against what is not white by trivializing and erasing what is not white (Duncan, 2005).

In using CRE, we regard the stories of people of color as necessary counternarratives to disrupt the white-centered discourses in American society (Duncan, 2005). Affirming Asian American leaders through this study is one method within leadership research to surface Asian

American leaders' experiences and narratives within the context of white-dominant America to challenge white-centered narratives (Duncan, 2005; Mills, 1997). In addition, in using CRE as a method for the research study, I emphasize the emotional elements of Asian American leaders' experiences to inspire an empathy to see the world through the eyes of the justice-oriented Asian American leaders who participated in this study (Duncan, 2005).

### **Elements of Research Design**

Engaging participants in an “up-close” format to interact directly with people and seeing them behave and act is a major characteristic of qualitative research processes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This type of engagement with participants is an open-ended form of data, creating a safe space where study participants are able to share ideas freely, without the constraints of predetermined scales or instruments (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Next, I discuss the participants, co-practitioner researchers (CPR), data collection, and data analysis for this CRE study.

### ***Participants***

From February 2020 through December 2021, there were 10,905 reported incidents of hate crimes reported to the organization Stop AAPI Hate (Jeung et al., 2021). Paired with this reality was the fallout in America from the murder of George Floyd and the murders in Atlanta where eight people were gunned down by a white man ‘having a bad day’ (The New York Times, 2021). With so much tragedy created by white racist hate violence surrounding us and COVID-19 isolating us from each other, I sought out virtual spaces to connect with Asian Americans to process the events of 2020. I opted into virtual meetings with fellow Asian Americans discussing the above-noted tragedies, joined a book club to discuss Brown’s (2017) *Emergent Strategy*, and took part in virtual sessions with fellow Asian Americans to learn more



with my community about who we are and the legacies we are a part of. Through this searching, I encountered several Asian American leaders and asked those who I thought would have interest in taking part in the research study. I spoke to twenty Asian American leaders involved in education or non-profits in one-on-one conversations during September and October of 2020 to gauge their interest in the CRE study. I invited those who showed interest in taking part in this study to exploratory CLEs from November 2020 through May 2021, and I centered the discussions on the assets, challenges, and experiences of Asian American leaders.

After the exploratory CLEs and additional one-on-one virtual meetings and phone calls, I selected the Asian American leaders for this study through purposeful sampling, which involved identifying and selecting those who showed a willingness to engage in all phases of the study and showed an earnest interest in centering Asian American leadership experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The participants selected for the CRE study were self-identifying Asian American leaders in educational and other related settings who were qualified and willing to participate to discuss Asian American leadership as it relates to enacting racial, social, and economic justice. The participants work and live in many different regions across the United States. More details of this study's participants will be discussed in the Phases of Research section of this chapter.

### ***Co-Practitioner Researchers***

I recruited a smaller team of study participants as co-practitioner researchers (CPR) to guide the development of the study; they agreed to partner during small group CPR and one-on-one CPR meetings. They influenced the development of CLE sessions, collection of data, and analysis of data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I selected the CPR through purposeful sampling to

identify and select individuals from the participant group for this study who showed a strong interest in the research design and data analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The CPR team oriented phases of the CRE study to co-observe the existing ontological and epistemological frameworks and lift up new theoretical relations that surfaced as a result of the CLEs discussions (Herr & Anderson, 2014). The CPR team functioned as a group of stakeholders who provided ongoing feedback to the researcher, ensuring a process with multiple perspectives through providing alternative sources of explanations for phenomena that arose from the study (Herr & Anderson, 2014). Overall, the CPR team enhanced the study to support a process of inquiry in order to understand the experiences of Asian American leaders within the context of white-dominated organizational spaces (Herr & Anderson, 2014).

### ***Creating a Safe Theorizing Space***

Building relational trust is integral to working effectively within a community as trust enhances connections between and among individuals, providing avenues of understanding, and allowing all in a learning community to share their authentic selves and the communities they represent (Anaissie et al., 2021; Liou & Liang, 2020; Ospina, 2017; Rosile et al., 2018). Relational trust requires members of a community to maintain an understanding of their individual roles relative to others while simultaneously holding expectations of others' responsibilities in building community together (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). Through nurturing relational trust, we were able to facilitate personal connection, create space for people to bring forward their full selves and identities, encourages nonjudgmental listening, and facilitate opportunities for a community to reflect and process thoughts and emotions (Anaissie et al., 2021). For the CRE study, we used the norms and values used to develop relational trust and a

safe theorizing space based on the Community Learning Exchange (CLE) axioms (Guajardo et al., 2016) and elements of gracious space (Hughes, 2017).

### ***Community Learning Exchanges***

CLE practices break the isolation members of a community often feel when working toward organizational and community change by encouraging and deepening relationships with others in a community (Guajardo et al., 2016). Sustained CLE work encourages members of a community to engage across mental and physical boundaries to “cultivate collective leadership and local solutions to issues” (Guajardo et al., 2016, p. 4). In this spirit, as one set of norms and values, we used the CLE axioms in the study:

1. *Learning and leadership are dynamic social processes* - Leading and learning occur within the context of relationships; a leader’s responsibility is to construct the necessary conditions that nurture this development in an inviting and dignified manner.
2. *Conversations are critical and central pedagogical processes.* At the core of social learning theory is the need to create gracious spaces and healthy relationships for participants, learners, and teachers to share their stories. Storytelling and conversation are the mediating tools for the relationships that exist at the core of the learning process.
3. *The people closest to the issues are best situated to discover answers to local concerns.* CLEs are organized on specific topics, and participants share their individual and community stories, experiences, and strategies about those topics. Such engagement fosters creative agency that helps people find their power and

voice; the process responds to the need for local communities to own their collective destiny.

4. *Crossing boundaries enriches the development and educational process.* The boundary crossing that occurs at CLEs includes borders of geography, economic standing, age, culture and race, gender, faith, and personal abilities. The willingness and ability to experience a world outside our daily comfort zone is necessary to break the isolation of people, organizations, and communities.

5. *Hope and change are built on assets and dreams of locals and their communities.*

When CLE participants tell their stories, they begin to map their gifts, ideas, and hopes. This mapping process is ideological, relational, geographical, and political. The identification, construction, and naming of their assets invited CLE participants to view their lives, change efforts, and their community in new ways. Issues that may have been viewed historically as intractable immediately become opportunities for, invitations to, and points of action. In the CLEs, the shift from distress and hopelessness to hope and possibility represented radical transformation (Guajardo et al., 2016).

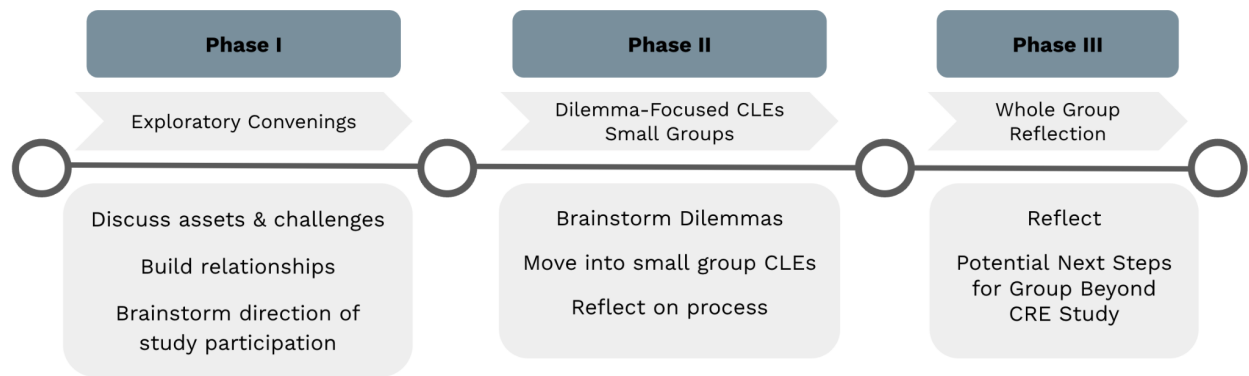
### ***Gracious Space***

Coupled with the CLE axioms, the elements of gracious space (Hughes, 2017) provided a second set of norms and values reminding us to co-construct *spirit*, welcoming each other to exude compassion, joy, hope, curiosity, and humor. *Setting* is another element gracious space brings, connected us to the physical dimensions, our five senses, and invited our sixth sense of intuition, creativity, and imagination as we worked together (Hughes, 2017). *Connecting with the Stranger/Invite the Stranger* asks us to open ourselves to new ideas and perspectives from

individuals with different backgrounds, races, genders, cultures, abilities, sexual orientations, geographic origins (Hughes, 2017). Lastly, gracious space asks us to *learn in public* through deep listening and understanding with humility, a willingness to explore assumptions, and letting go of the right way of doing things. Gracious space is based on relationships, supports both affirming and challenging conversations, is a container for transformative change, and increases our individual and collective capacity to stand in the tensions emerging from efforts pursuing transformational change (Hughes, 2017). During the course of each phase of this research study, we reviewed the CLE axioms (Guajardo et al., 2016) and the elements of gracious space (Hughes, 2017) as part of the opening for each CLE to set the norms for our collective theorizing space.

### **Phases of Research**

Using the CLE axioms and elements of gracious space to create a safe theorizing space, the CRE study included three phases of CLEs (see Figure 12). In Phase I, I convened interested Asian American leaders to build relationships, discuss the assets and challenges of our personal and professional experiences, and provide input to the direction of this CRE study. In Phase II, I gathered committed participants, who signed informed consent forms (see Appendix C) to participate in CLEs focused on participant-generated dilemmas. In addition, I engaged participants in whole group and small group CLEs in a process to brainstorm dilemmas and participate in small group consultancies centered on individual participant dilemmas. In Phase III of the study, I focused on reflection about our process and learnings in Phase II and discussed potential next steps for our group beyond the CRE study.



*Figure 12.* CRE study phases.

---

## **Phase I**

As part of the initial phase of this research, I facilitated a series of exploratory CLEs with Asian American leaders interested in this research study. In the first exploratory CLE in November 2020, I facilitated a process to identify assets and challenges potentially connected to the focus of practice (see Figure 3). In the second convening, we delved deeper into the assets and challenges from the first convening. During the third convening, we broke off into professional role-alike affinity groups to connect themes from our first two convenings with the literature review of the study.

### ***First Convening***

During the convening, held virtually through Zoom, we identified the assets and challenges at the macro, meso, and micro levels. The participants of this convening worked and lived in many different regions across the United States, ranging from the East Coast, the South, the Midwest, and parts of northern and southern California. Participants were of Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, and mixed race Asian and white descents and work as public school educators, university professors, and leaders in other related professional settings, such as non-profits. The convening began with us acquainting ourselves with one another through a warm up activity that included participants sharing their reasons for agreeing to join the convening. Following our responses to the opening prompt, we shared in pairs (in Zoom breakout rooms) our responses to the questions: *Where are you? Who are you? Who are your people?*. Following these paired conversations, we focused the bulk of our remaining time discussing and responding to the question: *From our notions of self, what are the assets and challenges for us as leaders in a status quo that racializes us as Asian American leaders”?*

## ***Second Convening***

In February 2021, during this CLE, we built connections through a prompt about our ancestors and the traditions we have to invite them into our familial space. Next I shared an overview of the research questions and rationale for the CRE study and engaged the group in a *World Cafe Conversations* protocol reviewing the assets and challenges from the first exploratory CLE, sharing experiences of leadership as Asian American leaders, sharing experiences of cross-racial alliances they engaged with, and any questions they wanted to personally discuss with other group members ranging from media representation, raising multi-racial children, and impact of colonialism. The agenda for this CLE is shown in Figure 13.

## ***Third Convening***

I hosted a third exploratory CLE virtually in May 2021 for interested Asian American leaders. During this CLE, we connected about our families and the moments where we experienced a *transitory understanding*, moments in conversation where we are moved or struck by something someone says (Hanold, 2017). We then reviewed the progress for the literature review of this study and delved into the themes from the exploratory February 2021 CLE and organized in professional role-alike affinity groups to further discuss reflections from the February 2021 CLE, and elements of this study's literature review that resonated, sparked curiosity, and caused resistance (see Figure 14).

Phase I provided an exploratory space for interested Asian American leaders to explore the assets and challenges of our experiences, including the themes underscoring the experience of Asian Americans resisting monolithic and historical omnipresent labels such as the model minority, and the overt racism expressed within American society, while critically thinking about leadership through the authentic self. In addition, the discussions in this phase of the CLEs





*Figure 13.* February 2021 CLE agenda.

---



*Figure 14.* May 2021 CLE agenda.

---

emphasized deep thinking about supporting fellow racially marginalized leaders. Lastly, there was deep reflection within the micro level themes about participants' experiences being outsiders, while concurrently thinking about the actions Asian American leaders can take through difficult conversations in pursuit of a collective consciousness building our aspirational world with racial, social, and economic justice.

## **Phase II**

For the second phase of this research study, the focus of the study shifted to the dilemmas Asian American leaders experienced. I selected eighteen Asian American leaders for this CRE study were selected through a purposeful sampling process that included initial connections over email, a one-on-one virtual meeting, and signing an informed consent form. The participants represented similar regions as the interested participants from the first phase of this study: the East Coast, the South, the Midwest, and parts of northern and southern California. Participants were of South Asian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, and mixed race Asian and white descents who are public school educators, university professors, and leaders in education-focused non-profit organizations (see Figure 15). Additionally, three of the participants agreed to be co-practitioner researchers (CPR members) to provide ongoing feedback in the development of CLE convenings, and ways to consider multiple interpretations in emerging findings from this study (Herr & Anderson, 2014).

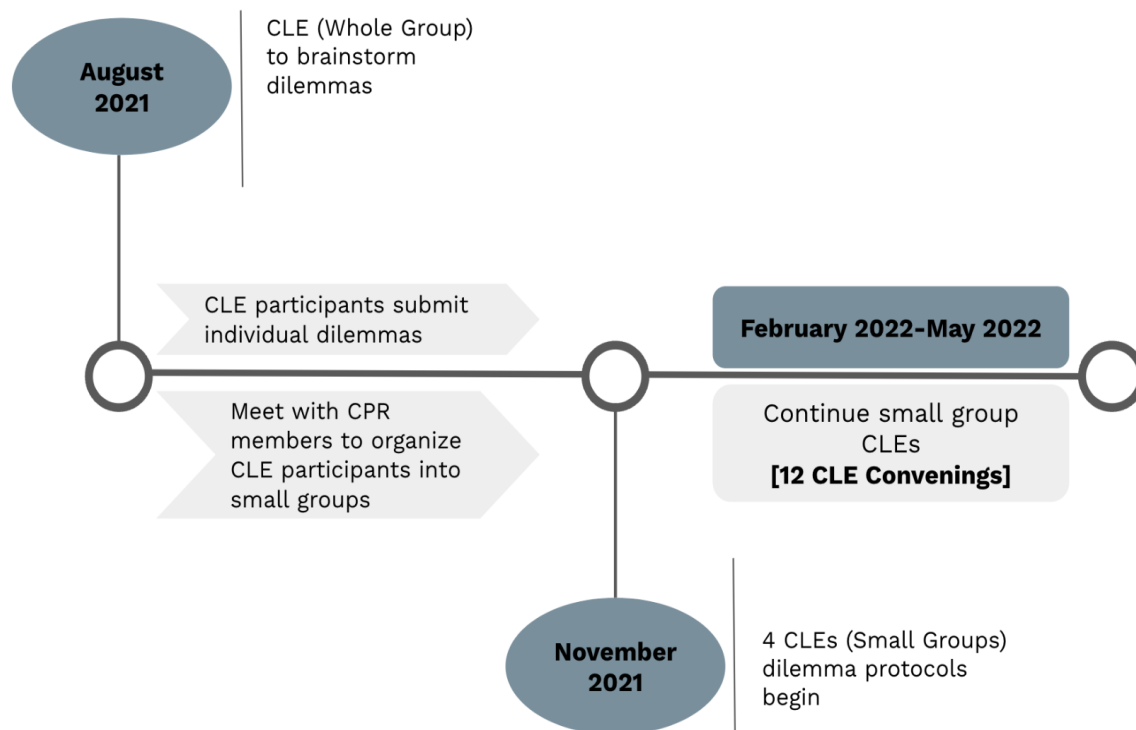
### ***Brainstorming Dilemmas***

This phase of research began in August 2021, with subsequent CLE virtual gatherings in November 2021 and between February 2022 and May 2022 (see Figure 16). In August, the whole study participant group virtually that connected participants through their personal stories centered on Jean Kim's (2012) Asian American Racial Identity Development (AARID) Model.

| Participants  | Gender | Age Group | Profession                                 | Region     |
|---------------|--------|-----------|--------------------------------------------|------------|
| Participant A | Male   | 40s       | Professor                                  | Midwest    |
| Participant B | Male   | 40s       | Program Associate for Non-Profit           | California |
| Participant C | Male   | 50s       | Assistant Superintendent                   | California |
| Participant D | Male   | 40s       | Research Fellow                            | The South  |
| Participant E | Female | 40s       | CEO for Non-Profit                         | East Coast |
| Participant F | Male   | 40s       | Public Utility Executive Fellow            | California |
| Participant G | Female | 40s       | Managing Partner for Non-Profit            | East Coast |
| Participant H | Female | 40s       | Vice-President for Non-Profit              | Midwest    |
| Participant I | Female | 50s       | Independent Researcher, Community Advocate | East Coast |
| Participant J | Female | 40s       | Co-Founder for Non-Profit                  | The South  |
| Participant K | Male   | 40s       | Director for Non-Profit                    | California |
| Participant L | Male   | 40s       | Network Superintendent                     | California |
| Participant M | Female | 50s       | Founder for Non-Profit                     | The South  |
| Participant N | Male   | 40s       | Elementary School Principal                | California |
| Participant O | Female | 40s       | Behavior Specialist                        | California |
| Participant P | Male   | 30s       | Teacher                                    | The South  |
| Participant Q | Female | 40s       | Middle School Principal                    | California |
| Participant R | Male   | 40s       | High School Principal                      | California |

*Figure 15. Study participant information.*

---



*Figure 16.* Phase II of CRE study.

---

Next, we reviewed my progress as a researcher comparing what was completed in my first year with the outlook to the work that was to be completed in the second and third year. We spent the bulk of our time brainstorming the successes, dilemmas, and questions we were grappling with as Asian American leaders. The CLE closed with an outlook of the flow of meetings for the 2021-2022 school year (see Figure 17).

During the “Delving Deeper Together” section of this CLE, participants were provided the following questions to support their reflection and discussion while in small groups:

- What are our “other avenues” (ways to subvert or infiltrate white/dominant culture) to be in our work as leaders which affirms who we are as Asian Americans and helps build cross-racial coalitions?
- What do we need to “own” as Asian American leaders in order to do the work authentically and change the institution from the inside?
- How can our collective work in this present moment help us create new ways of being and knowing (ontologies and epistemologies) as Asian American leaders?
- How can we reframe what success looks like from our lens as Asian American leaders?

From those questions, I asked participants to address these additional questions about how to best spend our time together as a group:

- Are there past or current successes you’d like to share with the group?
- Is there a dilemma at work you are grappling with?
- Are there questions you are holding at work that you want to discuss with our group?

For these questions, the criteria the CPR members and I developed for the participants were as follows:



*Figure 17. August 2021 CLE agenda.*

---

- Connected to your own identity as an Asian American leader
- The work you want to focus on is antiracist and supports policies or ideas reducing racial inequities (Kendi, 2019)
- Something you are actively working on and want to continue working on
- Willing to share with the group

I asked participants to complete their responses asynchronously through a GoogleForm (see Figure 18). Once compiled, each of the 18 responses from participants shared a dilemma or a dilemma in the form of a question which ranged from the topics noted in Figure 19.

### ***Small Group Formation***

Once I received all responses from participants, I then organized an additional GoogleForm with the following prompt for participants to complete by Friday, September 3, 2021.

1. Review all 18 questions/dilemmas (successes will come) for your own understanding
2. Select the 5 that resonate with you the most
3. Complete this by Friday, September 3, 2021
4. I'll follow up if by chance you forget to complete this from a busy week

Upon collecting all responses from CLE participants, I then met with my Co-Practitioner Research (CPR) members in October of 2021 to review the questions and dilemmas posed by the CLE participants and organize the participants into smaller groups based on dilemma affinity.

Figure 20 provides the summary of participant responses noting the five dilemmas/questions that most resonated with them. The color coding denotes participants' degrees of affinity in their responses of the small group survey and the dilemmas they wanted to discuss further including their own. We then reviewed the dilemmas/questions with the highest





## 08/28/21 CLE Aspirational Work

Questions to support our thinking...

What are our "other avenues" (ways to subvert or infiltrate white/dominant culture) to be in our work as leaders which affirms who we are as Asian Americans and helps build cross-racial coalitions?

What do we need to "own" as Asian American leaders in order to do the work authentically and change the institution from the inside?

How can our collective work in this present moment help us create new ontologies and epistemologies as Asian American leaders?

How can we reframe what success looks like from our lens as Asian American leaders?

Are there past or current successes you'd like to share with the group?  
Is there a dilemma at work you are grappling with?  
Are there questions you are holding at work that you want to discuss with our group?

Criteria

- Connected to your own identity as an Asian American leader
- The work you want to focus on is antiracist: supports policies or ideas reducing racial inequities (Kendi, 2019)
- Something you are actively working on and want to continue working on
- Willing to share with the group

pauljkoh@gmail.com [Switch account](#) 

\* Required

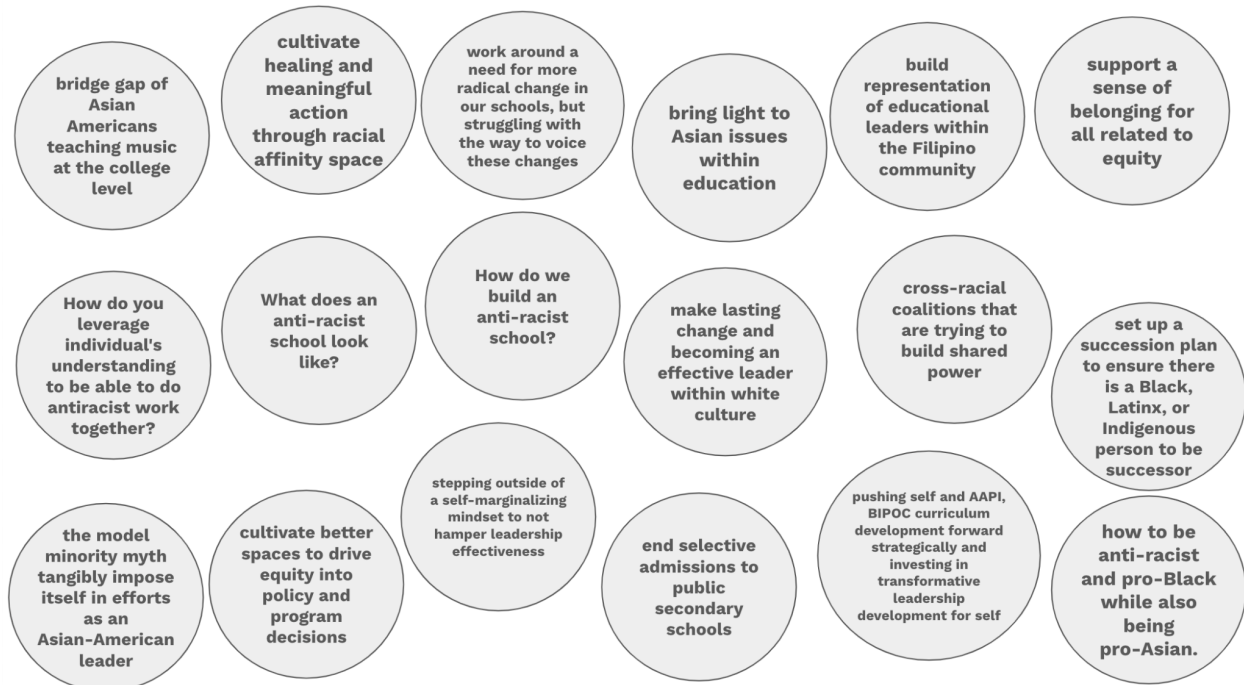
Email \*

Your email

What is the success, dilemma, or question you'd like to bring to a smaller to delve deeper into over the course of this school year? \*

Your answer

*Figure 18.* August 2021 follow-up GoogleForm prompt.



*Figure 19. CLE participant dilemmas.*

| <b>Timestamp</b>   | <b>CLE Participant</b> | <b>Choices</b>       |
|--------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| 8/29/2021 23:18:28 | Participant A          | <b>1,12,14</b>       |
| 9/2/2021 17:53:55  | Participant B          | <b>1,2,3,8,10</b>    |
| 9/5/2021 2:36:26   | Participant C          | <b>1,2,4,11,12</b>   |
| 9/6/2021 21:16:06  | Participant D          | <b>1,3,7,10,11</b>   |
| 9/1/2021 13:05:26  | Participant E          | <b>1,3,7,8,16</b>    |
| 9/5/2021 0:21:59   | Participant F          | <b>2,10,13,14,19</b> |
| 9/7/2021 12:40:20  | Participant G          | <b>2,3,4,12,14</b>   |
| 8/29/2021 22:16:59 | Participant H          | <b>2,3,7,12,13</b>   |
| 9/1/2021 10:22:21  | Participant I          | <b>2,3,7,17</b>      |
| 8/30/2021 9:59:34  | Participant J          | <b>2,3,7,8,13</b>    |
| 9/9/2021 13:02:32  | Participant K          | <b>2,3,8,14,15</b>   |
| 8/29/2021 22:09:30 | Participant L          | <b>2,8,9,10,11</b>   |
| 8/30/2021 9:50:34  | Participant M          | <b>3,4,8,10,11</b>   |
| 9/5/2021 12:54:51  | Participant N          | <b>3,5,11,16</b>     |
| 9/4/2021 22:27:04  | Participant O          | <b>4,5,9,14,19</b>   |
| 8/29/2021 22:41:13 | Participant P          | <b>4,6,7,8,12</b>    |
| 9/5/2021 1:38:05   | Participant Q          | <b>5,9,12,14,16</b>  |
| 9/5/2021 12:11:21  | Participant R          | <b>7,8,9,17</b>      |

*Figure 20. CLE participant dilemma affinity responses.*

---

frequency of selections. From both reviews, the CPR members suggested that we create our smaller groups based on the dilemmas with the most selections. Figure 21 provides a visual of what we decided to call our “on-ramp” dilemmas (those with the most interest from study participants) and the dilemmas of those that we felt as a CPR group that most aligned with each on-ramp dilemma.

### ***“On-Ramp” Dilemma CLEs***

With the decision to organize our CLE participants based on dilemma-affinity, I drafted the agenda for small group, dilemma-focused CLEs and the CPR members agreed to provide feedback asynchronously. The small groups gathered on the following dates for their first on-ramp dilemma CLEs: November 8, 2021, November 13, 2021, November 17, 2021, November 30, 2021. Prior to each of the CLEs in November 2021, I met with each dilemma presenter to ensure they understood the agenda items and intended outcomes of the CLEs. In the one-on-one check ins with dilemma presenters, I was a thought partner in clarifying their dilemmas and ensuring they were comfortable with presenting to our small groups.

Figure 22 represents our on-ramp dilemma CLEs during November 2021. We opened with an overview and purpose of the CLE, used the CLE axioms and elements of gracious space to set our norms. We then engaged in an activity to build connection through sharing an emulation poem with the sentence stems: I come from a place/I am in a place/I am going to a place, in which CLE participants wrote their emulation poems and we each shared poems in the virtual Zoom setting. To help frame our dilemmas, we watched a clip of Paolo Freire speaking to a community of educators at the Highlander; he asked members of the attending community, “are these dreams yours or also the dreams of the community you are grasping” (Stoney, 2011)? We then provided space for the participants with the “on-ramp” dilemmas to present their



Figure 21. CLE participant small groups based on dilemma affinity.



*Figure 22.* November 2021 small group CLEs for “on-ramp” dilemmas.

---

dilemma to the dilemma-focused small groups through a consultancy protocol with time for the presenter to present (see Figure 23). Next, in Round 1, participants discussed the question “what are some experiences in your leadership role that are connected to the dilemma the presenter shared?”, while the presenter and one additional member observed and listened as a “fly on the wall”. In Round 2, the observing member shared what they saw, heard, and experienced while the presenter and other participants were listeners. During Round 3, the presenter of the dilemma shared their reflections from Round 1 and Round 2. In Round 4 all small group members shared what they heard and experienced.

### ***Continuing Small Group Dilemma-Focused CLEs***

After the November 2021 CLEs, I met with the CPR group members to reflect on our first set of small group CLEs and adjusted our consultancy protocol for our subsequent CLEs from February 2022 through May 2022. For our protocol, after the presenter presents the overview of their dilemma, we added time for clarifying questions, adjusted the first round of discussions centered on the question: “what are some experiences in your leadership role that are connected to the dilemma the presenter shared?”, where the presenter remains an observer and then adjusted the second round discussion to be focused on participants sharing what they would do in the presenter’s shoes, while the presenter continued to be an observer. The third round of discussion remained the same; the presenter shared their reflections from the first two rounds of discussion, and we adjusted the fourth round of discussion to include participant reflection on next steps and actions for the presenter and reflect on connections of the discussion to other participant’s contexts (see Figure 24).

From February 2022 through May 2022, twelve small group, dilemma-focused CLEs met and used the same protocols. To help prepare each presenter, I checked in with them one-on-one

| Discussion Protocol Summary                                                                                                                                                                                                             |            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Roles:</b> Presenter, 1-2 Observers, Participants                                                                                                                                                                                    |            |
| <b>Pre Work for Dilemma</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 10 mins    |
| <b>Presenter Overview:</b> Presenter shares dilemma, context, and focus question                                                                                                                                                        | 5 mins     |
| <b>Round 1:</b><br>Participants discuss the question: What are some experiences in your leadership role that are connected to the dilemma the presenter shared?<br><br>Observer(s) listen to discussion, presenter is “fly on the wall” | 10-11 mins |
| <b>Round 2:</b> Observers share what they saw, heard, experienced. Participants and presenter are listeners.                                                                                                                            | 10-11 mins |
| <b>Round 3:</b> Presenter shares reflection from Round 1 and 2.                                                                                                                                                                         | 10-11 mins |
| <b>Round 4:</b> Whole Group reflects what was heard and experienced                                                                                                                                                                     | 10-11 mins |

*Figure 23. November 2021 small group dilemma consultancy protocol.*



| Discussion Protocol Summary                                                                                                                                                 |            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Roles:</b> Presenter, Participants                                                                                                                                       |            |
| <b>Pre Work for Dilemma</b>                                                                                                                                                 | 5 mins     |
| <b>Presenter Overview:</b> Presenter shares dilemma, context, and focus question                                                                                            | 5 mins     |
| <b>Clarifying Questions:</b> Participants ask questions that clarify the dilemma, context, focus question, and what was presented that would be helpful for rounds 1 and 2. | 5 mins     |
| <b>Round 1:</b> Participants discuss the question: What are some experiences in your leadership role that are connected to the dilemma the presenter shared?                | 10-11 mins |
| <b>Round 2:</b> Participants discuss what they would do in the presenter's "shoes".<br>Presenter is a fly on the wall                                                       | 10-11 mins |
| <b>Round 3:</b> Presenter shares reflections from Round 1 and 2.                                                                                                            | 10-11 mins |
| <b>Round 4:</b> Whole Group reflects on next steps and actions for the presenter. In addition, whole group reflects on connections to their own context.                    | 10-11 mins |

*Figure 24. February 2022 through May 2022 small group dilemma consultancy protocol.*

to ensure that each was prepared and comfortable presenting their dilemma. For each of the twelve CLEs from February 2022 through May 2022, we maintained a similar CLE agenda with an opening section covering an overview of the CLE and setting norms through the CLE axioms and elements of gracious space. Next, we spent time continuing to build connections requiring us to share some of our personal experiences and perspectives with each other. We then reviewed the dilemma consultancy protocol and began dilemma consultancies, concluding the CLE with closing reflections and appreciations, while I provided reminders for dates of future CLEs (see Figure 25). Phase II of this study focused on organizing participants into small groups to engage in consultancies about the dilemmas each were holding as Asian American leaders in their organizations. Sixteen out of eighteen participants presented their dilemmas within their small groups.

### **Phase III**

For the final phase of this CRE study, I gathered participants in whole group CLEs in June 2022 and August 2022. During the June 2022 CLE (see Figure 26), we reviewed CLE agenda, and built personal connections through listening to the song, “Conference of the Birds” by Dave Holland Quartet, accompanied by a narrative I read to the music. Upon listening, the participants gathered in smaller groups to discuss connections they made to their experiences as leaders through discussing the questions:

- What resonates for you from “Conference of the Birds”?
- What connections to your own experiences come up for you?
- What connections to our experience coming together in CLEs come up for you?



*Figure 25. February 2022 through May 2022 small group dilemma-focused CLE agenda.*

---



*Figure 26. June 2022 whole group CLE agenda*

---

After the discussion, I reviewed the frame for this study by reminding participants of Critical Race Ethnography (CRE) as a methodological toolbox to contextualize the stories of racially marginalized people which depict the conditions of injustice and reveal the conditions which hinder societal transformation (Duncan, 2005; Woodson, 2019). Next, I shared an overview of my approach to coding the conversations from our CLEs from August 2021 through May 2022 through the frame of the eleven leadership tenets from Boggs, Itliong, and Kochiyama. I explained how I used the leadership tenets as the main codes and identified examples of subcodes connected to each leadership tenet that had both the highest and lowest frequencies within the data set from August 2021 through May 2022.

### ***Initial Insights***

After providing an overview of the coding progress for the research study, I shared specific insights I gathered with the participants:

- Many conversations centered on the societal contradictions we are grappling with and trying to work around are connected to colonialism, racism, our upbringing, cultures, heritage, and gender.
- Participants discussed their struggles with understanding how the macro-level contexts (e.g. racism, colonialism) connected to the self.
- Each of the participants during our small-group, dilemma-focused CLEs exemplified models of support and projected a more human human being.
- Two study participants accomplished significant milestones (earned a \$2 million grant, signed a book publishing deal); however, though both participants shared this news, neither took time to celebrate their accomplishments in the midst of our CLE discussions.

- The lowest frequency codes were related to building cross-racial coalitions, leadership impact, and leading a pathway for future generations.
- I shared my respect and admiration in how the participants listened to each other by creating a safe space to share their dilemmas authentically.
- Our discussions centered our experiences in thinking of ways to move towards a collective impact in our work as Asian American leaders.
- We bore witness to powerful moments during CLEs where a level of humanity that is uncommon in meeting spaces, was shared by participants.
- 16 out of 18 participants shared their dilemmas, which noted a commitment to each other and this process with each other.

After sharing key insights, we engaged in dialogue sharing what resonated with us, what we were curious about, and how we might answer the overarching research question for this study: *How do Asian American leaders identify existing and new ontological and epistemological frameworks to affirm their identity and engage in leadership actions pursuing racial, social, and economic justice?* After the discussion, we closed the CLE sharing how we might want to gather in-person when the appropriate time and/or funding presented itself. In addition, we shared our appreciations for the community connections we built through the course of this study and our collective engagement to support each other through the dilemmas we work through every day as Asian American leaders.

### ***Last CLE (for now)***

The last CLE I convened with the participant group occurred on August 29, 2022 (see Figure 27). For this CLE, we opened through an overview of our agenda and established norms through the CLE axioms and elements of gracious space (Guajardo et al., 2016; Hughes, 2017).



*Figure 27. August 2022 whole group CLE (final CLE).*

---

To connect with each other, participants grouped into trios to discuss their reflections on their journeys with each other in discussing their dilemmas through the following questions:

- What's changed for you from the process of receiving feedback and giving feedback to others? How do you know?
- What changes did you notice in others during this process?
- What are the elements or factors of our CLE space that made you feel safe enough to share?

After trios connected through their dilemmas, I provided another update on my research progress. For this CLE, I shared how the leadership tenets from Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong intersected with each other through our conversations within our small group, dilemma-focused CLEs from August 2021 through May 2022 (see Figure 28). After providing example subcodes showing the intersections, I shared that I would further explore the intersections from the coding process to determine specific findings from the CRE study. I then divided the participants into trios to discuss the following questions:

- What constitutes an Asian American leadership community?
- What are the covenants (tenets, language, space, process) that determine and sustain Asian American leadership?
- What constitutes an Asian American leader?
- To what degree does the research affirm who you are as an Asian American leader?
- How does the research tell us who we are and how do we continue building and sustaining what is Asian American leadership?
- If you were to dream about where this research and our work can take us, what do you imagine?



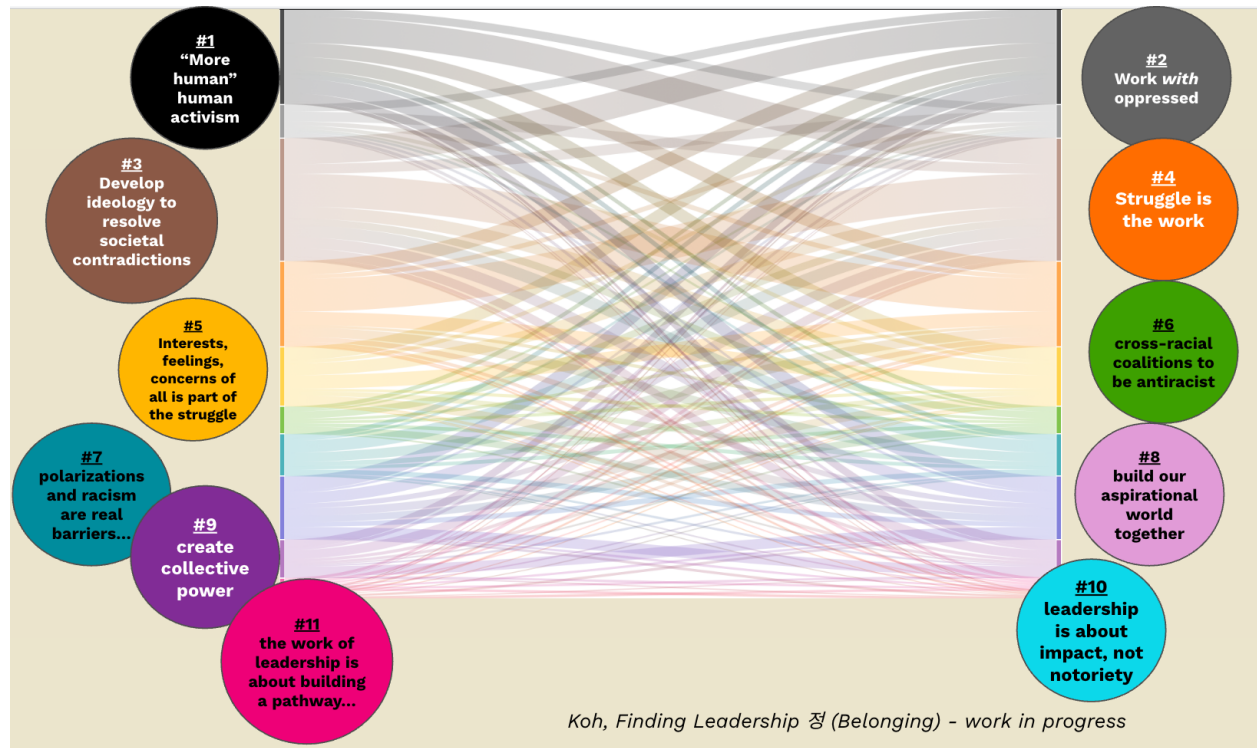


Figure 28. Sankey diagram - leadership tenet intersections (August 2021-May 2022 CLEs).

As our final act as a research group, we engaged in a closing circle sharing our thoughts from the prompt: “What have our gatherings in CLEs for the two-plus years meant for you?”. Each participant took a turn sharing reflections of their own experiences through this research study and their appreciations for each other.

### **Curating Data**

I coupled Community Learning Exchange (CLE) axioms (Guajardo et al., 2016) and elements of gracious space (Hughes, 2017) with critical race ethnography principles (Duncan, 2005; Woodson, 2019) to create a safe and rigorous space to engage in theorizing about Asian American leadership identity and experiences. The CRE study included three phases of CLEs (see Figure 12). In Phase I, I convened interested Asian American leaders virtually over Zoom to build relationships, discuss the assets and challenges of our personal and professional experiences, and provide input to the direction of this CRE study. In Phase II, I gathered committed participants, who signed informed consent forms (see Appendix C) to participate in CLEs virtually over Zoom focused on participant-generated dilemmas (see Figure 20). In Phase III of the CRE study, I focused on reflection in whole group virtual CLEs over Zoom about our process and learnings from Phase I and Phase II.

Through the development of CLEs for this study, I maintained a stance of emergent design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Emergent design holds that an initial plan for research cannot be static and that some or all phases of a research study may shift during the process of entering the field (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As we moved from Phase I of the study into Phase II and Phase III, I developed CLEs with CPR members, and in one-on-one meetings with individual participants to co-create our theorizing leadership space together to both affirm the existing knowledge of participants and to use newly identified knowledges to incorporate into

the planning of each subsequent CLE (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In Phase III of this study, participants convened in a CLE format in June 2022 and August 2022 to reflect on their roles in the CRE study and how their personal backgrounds, cultures, and experiences shaped the direction of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

### ***Data Generation and Collection***

Through each phase of this CRE study, I used a qualitative approach to generate and collect data through convening CLEs between November 2020 through August 2022 virtually on Zoom. The primary sources of data collected were:

- CLE transcripts,
- associated CLE documents and notes,
- CLE presentation slides,
- and reflective memos.

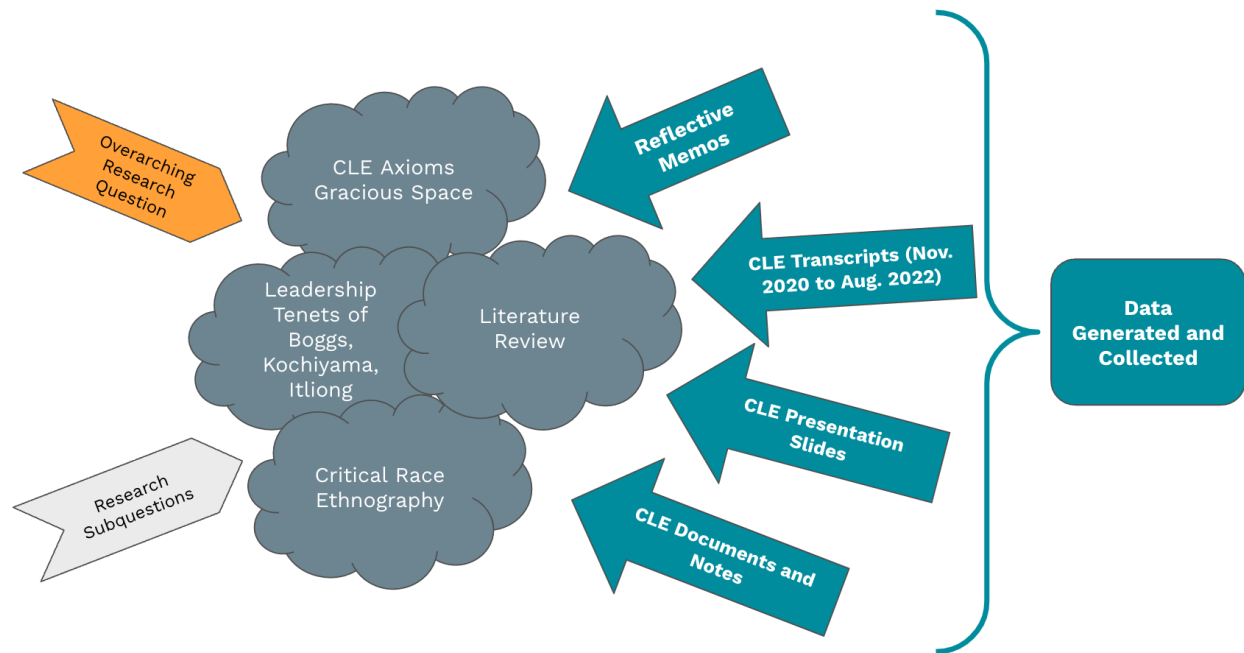
Any digital data was kept in a password-protected files and the sources of data were triangulated with each other and with the framework of this research study, intersecting generated data with the study's research questions, CLE Axioms (Guajardo et al., 2016), elements of Gracious Space (Hughes, 2017), the leadership tenets of Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong, the framework of critical race ethnography, and the components of this study's literature review (see Figure 29). I used the CLE transcripts as the primary source of data for the study, providing an opportunity to intertwine several characteristics of qualitative research within the CRE study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). First, using CLE protocols, I provided a process for gathering up-close information through face-to-face, albeit virtual, interactions with this study's participants in a safe and non-organizational setting (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As a result of the CLE process, I had an avenue to interpret my role in the study as the primary researcher. I planned and

designed CLE convenings by using protocols I developed with co-practitioner researchers (CPR) to build connections between and among study participants and delve deeply into the dilemmas and issues each brought to the CLE space. Developing the CLE protocols allowed me to record data through the CLE presentation slides as a way to interpret my role as a researcher in the CRE study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). An additional benefit of the CLE process was multiple sources of data through transcripts, CLEs notes, CLE documents, and feedback forms when relevant to the pursuits of this CRE study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As this research study is centered on critical race ethnography (CRE), the design of the CLEs created a safe space through the CLE Axioms (Guajardo et al., 2016) and the elements of Gracious Space (Hughes, 2017) to support the Asian American leaders in this study to share their experiences as racially marginalized leaders within society and their organizations with each other to reflect on their individual experiences within a collective space of Asian American leaders (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

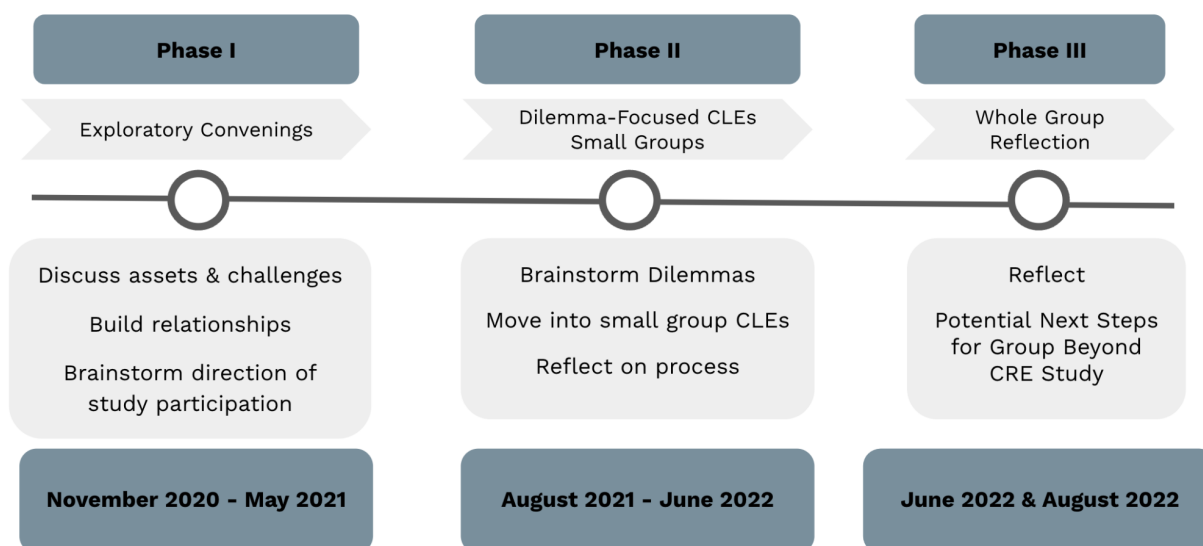
Overall, the CLEs were a safe theorizing space for Asian American leaders to develop a holistic account of Asian American leadership through multiple perspectives that was not a linear process, rather a process of human beings bring the fullness of their concepts of self to interact in a collaborative manner to center their experiences as Asian American leaders (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

### ***Data Analysis***

As shown in Figure 30, I collected data for this research study primarily through the CLEs convened during each phase of this study. Noted in Figure 29, the primary sources of data collected were CLE transcripts, associated CLE documents and notes, CLE presentation slides, and reflective memos. The process of analyzing collected data was:



*Figure 29. Data generation, collection, and triangulation.*



*Figure 30. Timeline of research study phases.*

---

1. Transcripts, relevant documents, and reflective memos were organized and uploaded in text format into Atlas.ti, a qualitative coding software.
2. Phase I data from November 2020 through May 2021 (three CLE transcripts, four associated documents) was coded inductively, resulting in 532 codes within 26 categories. The resulting codes were then preliminarily analyzed through the frame of this study's literature review bins: Model Minority and Perpetual Foreigner, Asian American Leadership, Collective Leadership, and Cross-Racial Coalition Building (Saldaña, 2016). The results of this analysis are shared in Chapter 4.

Phase II data from August 2021 through May 2022 (eighteen CLE transcripts) was coded through the frame of the eleven leadership tenets from Boggs, Itliong, and Kochiyama (Bacon, 2018; Boggs & Boggs, 1974; Fujino 2005) as the codes, resulting in 1244 instances of the eleven leadership tenets over all Phase II CLEs. Thematic Analysis was used as the rationale to use the eleven leadership tenets as the codes because these tenets were repeating themselves within both Phase I and Phase II CLE transcripts as a way for me as the researcher to identify the repeated patterns of meaning from the conversations observed through this coding process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The use of the leadership tenets became the "research epistemology" guiding my way to theorize meaning from the CLE transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 85-86). This latent approach entailed interpretation beyond surface level descriptions that was rooted in a pre-existing set of leadership embodied through the lives of Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The results of this analysis are discussed in Chapter 5.

4. Phase III data from June 2022 and August 2022 (two CLE transcripts, five transcripts of one-on-one follow conversations) was coded using Thematic Analysis through the leadership tenets of Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process resulted in 514 occurrences of codes related to the leadership tenets of Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong out of a total of 1,053 overall occurrences of all codes.
5. Phase II and Phase III were then analyzed through Atlas.ti through a co-occurrence analysis to compare where the leadership tenets intersected the most with each other to identify the most vivid themes and related leadership lessons most discussed by participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Saldaña, 2016). The results of this analysis are discussed in Chapter 6.
6. Lastly, the meaning of themes and related leadership lessons were interpreted in Chapter 6 (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Saldaña, 2016).

### ***Member Checks***

During the course of this research study, I engaged with the CPR to develop CLE agendas, review preliminary data, and reviewed quotations used in this research study to ensure I was accurately interpreting participants' perspectives. In addition, I checked in individually with participants after CLEs as necessary to ensure I clarified their perspectives as I was coding data through each phase of this study.

### **Thematic Analysis**

I used a thematic analysis process (Braun & Clark, 2006; hunter et al., 2013) to generate, collect, and analyze data from the CLEs (see Figure 30). I used a coding process that included three passes; over time, the research codebook evolved through the course of each phase of the CRE study and this evolution surfaced the patterns and themes to uncover findings.

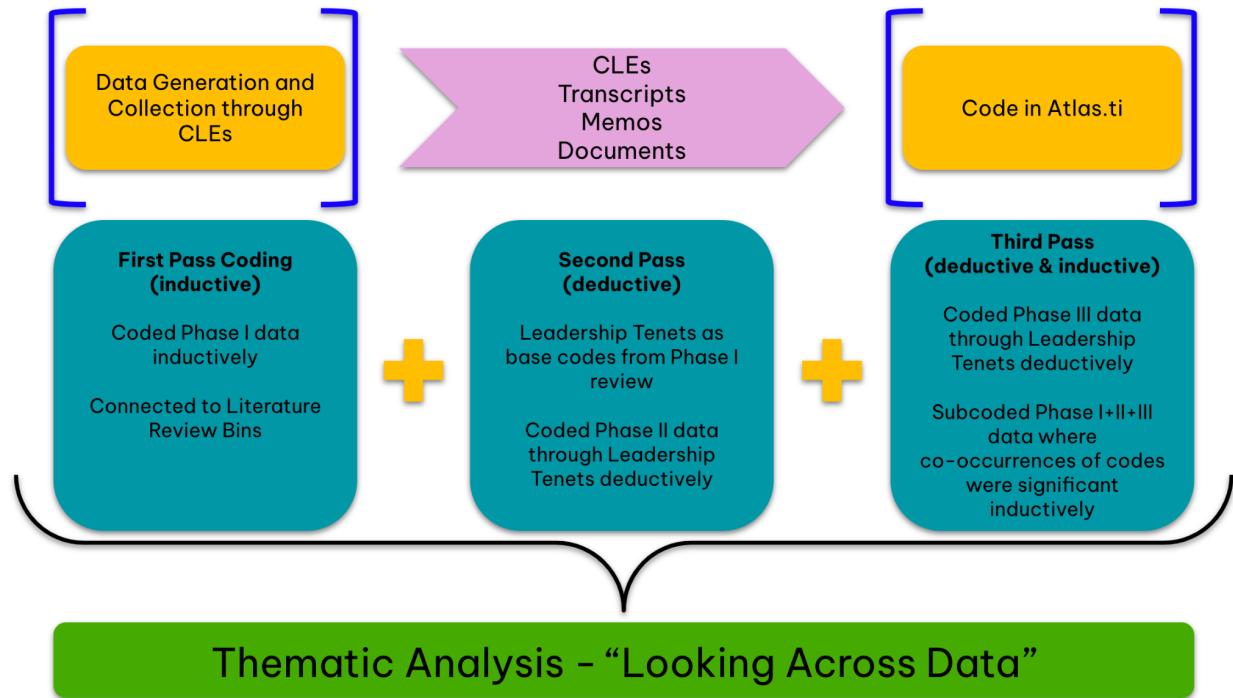


## **Qualitative Coding**

For the process of coding the data from this CRE study, I decided as a researcher to engage in thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006; hunter et al., 2013). Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and sharing themes from data of any qualitative study (Braun & Clark, 2006). An important aspect of thematic analysis is that the process of theorizing and research methods matches what a researcher is pursuing and the work of aligning theorizing, methods, and research aims are recognized as decisions a researcher makes on their research journey (Braun & Clark, 2006). After generating and collecting data for the CRE study, I made specific decisions as a researcher for coding data from each phase of this study. Those decisions are described in this next subsection (see Figure 31).

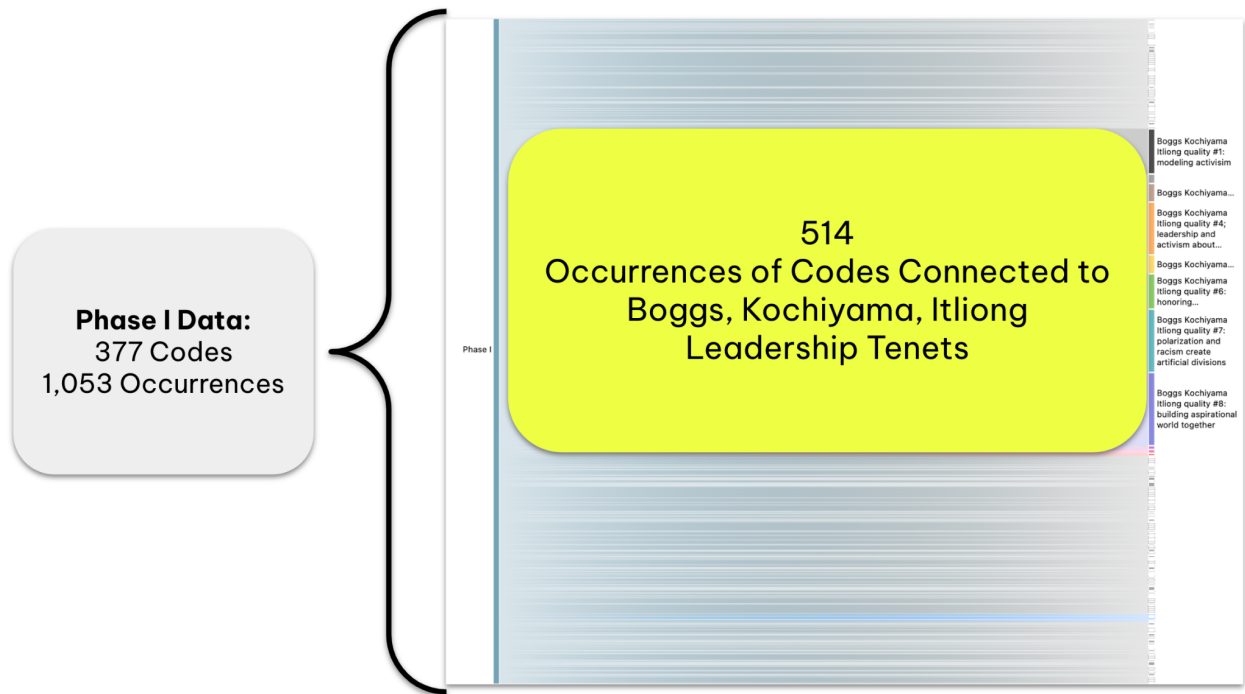
### ***First Pass Coding***

Thematic analysis involves finding patterns of meaning by searching across a data set (Braun & Clark, 2006; hunter et al., 2013). To establish a groundwork for patterns, I coded the data from Phase I inductively (sometimes called *in vivo*) to begin crystalizing meanings through my research frame with an ontology rooted in my experience as a Korean-Immigrant and educator living in America (Saldaña, 2016). This process allowed me to establish a continuum within the data set of the ideas, stories, and thoughts arising from the CLEs from Phase I of this study. In coding transcripts, documents, and reflective memos from CLEs convened over Zoom in November 2020, February 2021, and May 2021, I created a total of 377 codes. Of the 377 codes, which accounted for 1,053 occurrences of codes, 514 occurrences were related to the leadership tenets from Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong, represented in Figure 32 (Bacon, 2018; Boggs & Boggs, 1974; Fujino, 2005). When I grouped the codes from Phase I, there were 24 groups of codes, with 859 occurrences (see Figure 33).



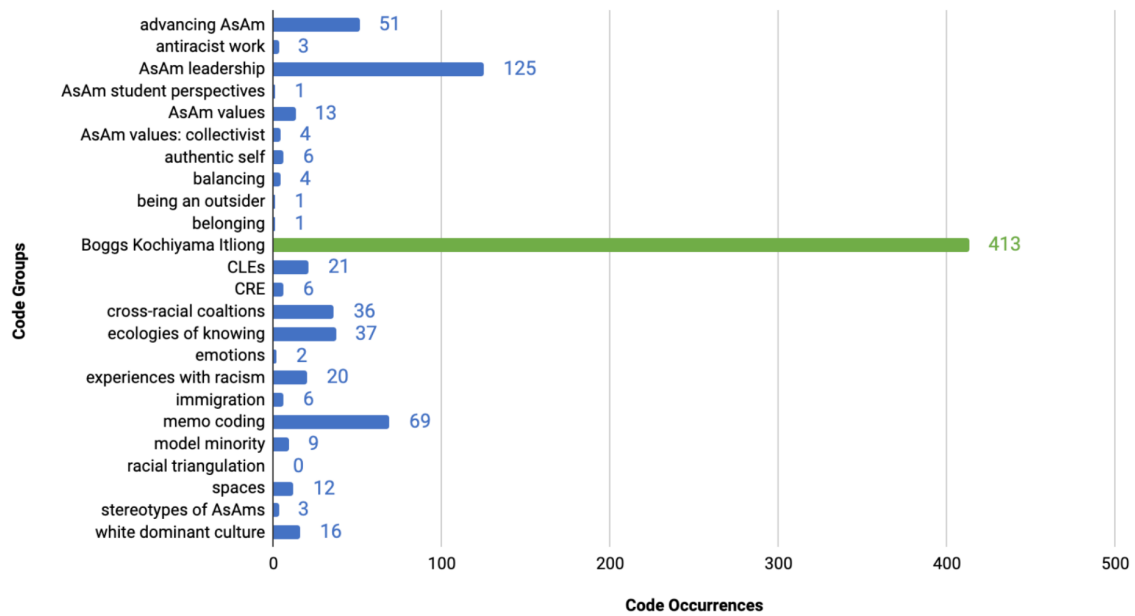
*Note.* (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018; hunter et al., 2013; Saldaña, 2016; Strauss, 1987).

*Figure 31.* Thematic analysis process.



*Figure 32.* Phase I codes.

### Phase I Code Groups & Code Occurrences



*Figure 33.* Phase I code groups & code occurrences.

In reviewing the codes and code groups from the Phase I data of this study, over 48% of the occurrences of codes related to the leadership tenets of Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong. This was the slice of data that struck me as most vivid from this first phase of the CRE study and one decision I made as a researcher was to use the leadership tenets as a representational frame to interpret subsequent data in Phase II and Phase III of this research study to see how the puzzle pieces of the data fit together (Saldaña, 2016).

The leadership tenets of Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong espouse leaders to work with oppressed people through a lens of activism that is humanizing, filled with struggle, and seeks to resolve a specific societal contradiction (Boggs & Boggs, 1974). In addition, the leadership tenets press us to build our aspirational world through a collective consciousness, through cross-racial coalitions, holding the interests, feelings, concerns of individuals as part of the work (Fujino, 2005). Lastly, the leadership tenets remind us that leadership is about impact, not notoriety to create collective power and build a pathway for future generations (Bacon, 2018). These leadership tenets helped me puzzle together a theoretical frame to pursue answers to the overarching research question for this study, which pursued ways Asian American leaders can affirm their identity and engage in leadership actions pursuing racial, social, and economic justice.

### ***Second Pass Coding***

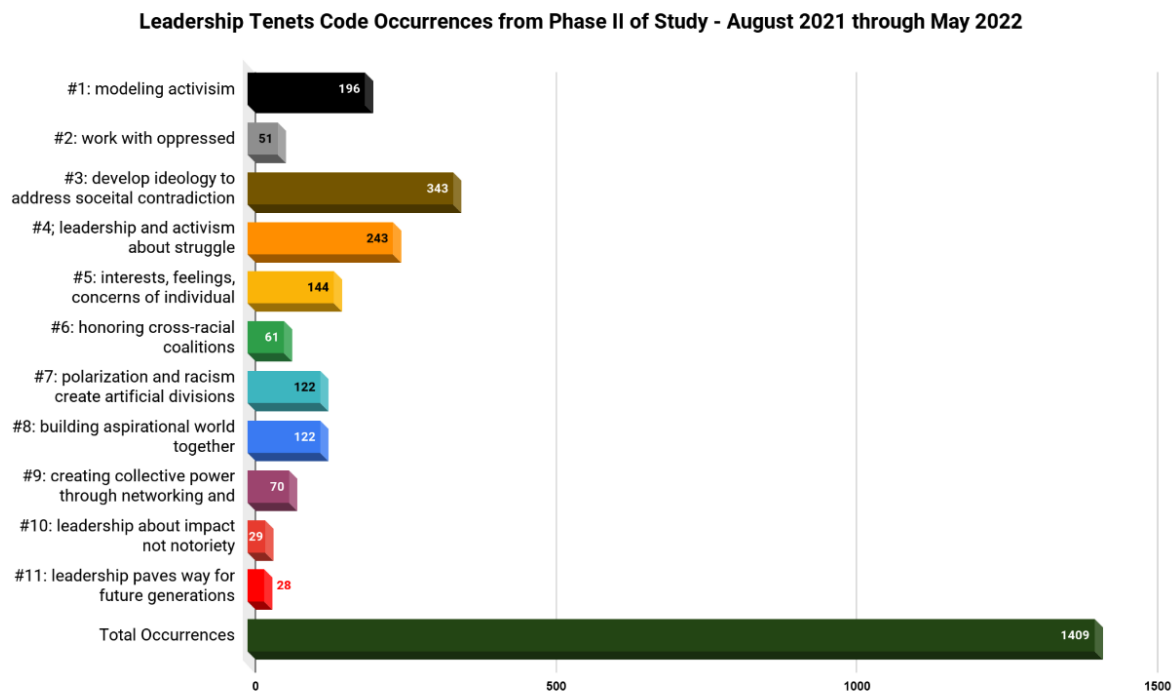
Moving from an inductive process in coding the Phase I data, I used the leadership tenets from Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong as the base codes to code the next set of data deductively as part of my thematic analysis to connect what became most vivid in Phase I to the data from Phase II of the study (Braun & Clark, 2006; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This connection

explored the possible continuum of categories arising from the study's data (Saldaña, 2016; Strauss, 1987). Through the coding process, the eleven leadership tenets as codes occurred 1,409 times within Phase II data of this study (see Figure 34).

After coding the Phase II data, I decided to review the frequency of co-occurrences of leadership tenet codes with each other across Phase I and Phase II data to get a sense of the patterns beyond code frequency. I saw this as a way to use the data in order to theorize about the ways the Asian American leaders in this study connected with the leadership legacies of Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong (Braun & Clark, 2006). Additionally, this allowed me as a researcher to inquire about ways to narrow the leadership tenets into broader themes from the data generated from Phase I and Phase II CLEs. Figure 35 depicts a visual of each leadership tenet and the degree of co-occurrences with other leadership tenets based on Phase I and Phase II coding. The highest frequency co-occurrences are represented numerically as well. I reviewed this data and made another research decision to inquire about where the co-occurrences were thickest. For example Figure 35 shows that leadership tenet #1 (modeling activism) had the highest occurrences of codes connected to other leadership tenets (404 occurrences). Delving more specifically, amongst the 404 co-occurrences for leadership tenet #1, the thickest connections were with leadership tenet #3 (83 co-occurrences) and leadership tenet #4 (69 co-occurrences). Reviewing data in this manner allowed me to connect the legacy of the leadership tenets of Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong to the narratives and stories shared by the participants of this study through my thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006; hunter et al., 2013).

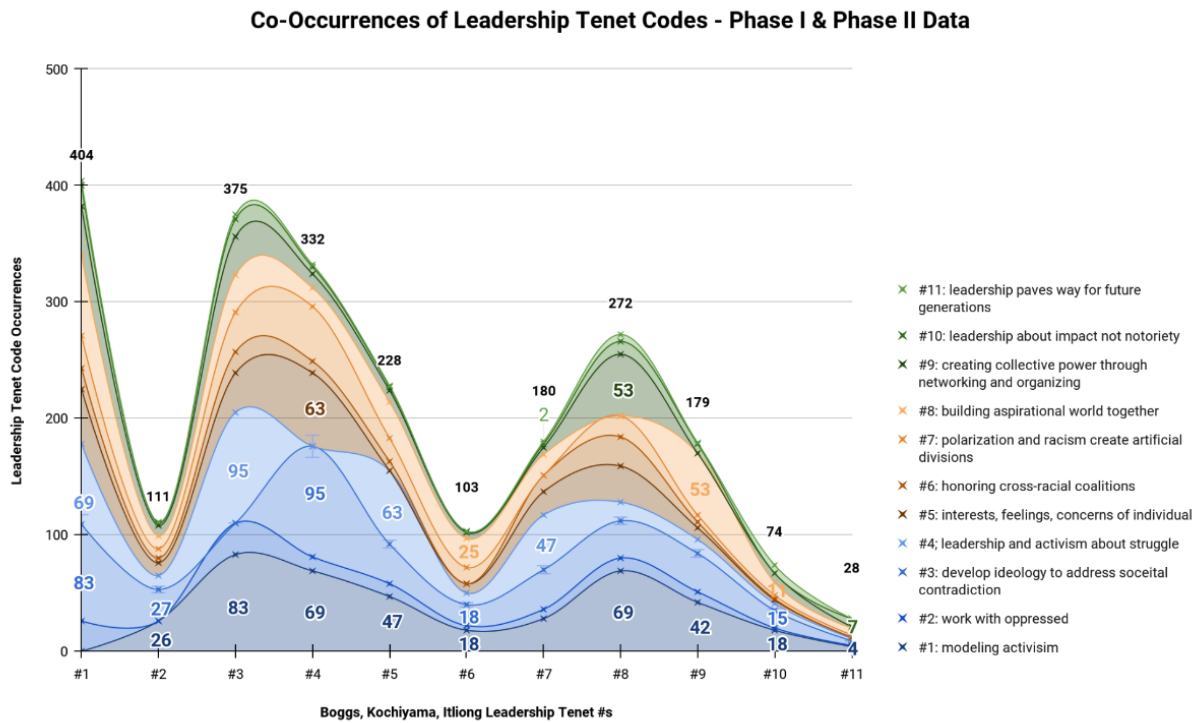
### ***Third Pass Coding***

Continuing the thematic analysis for the data from Phase III of this study, I began by



*Figure 34.* Phase II code occurrences.

---



*Figure 35. Co-occurrences of leadership tenet codes.*

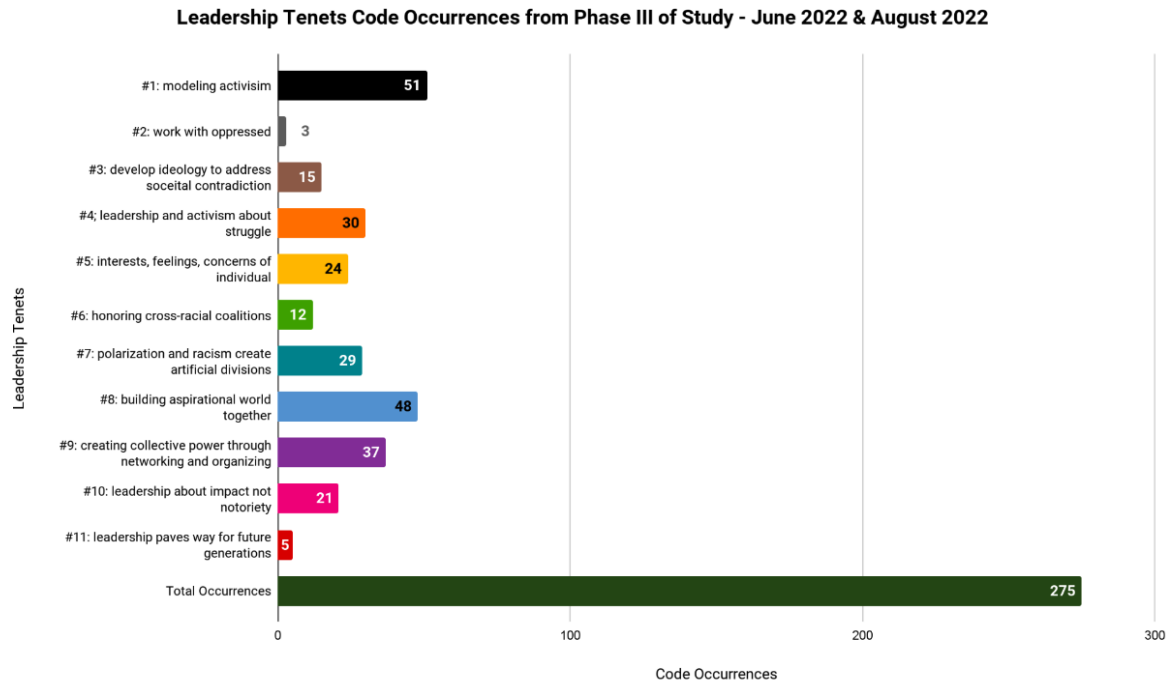


coding deductively through the leadership tenets of Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong (Braun & Clark, 2006; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Figure 36 provides an overview of the code occurrences from the start of my third pass coding process. This step was a way to create continuity of coding based on how the data guided me as a researcher from Phase I, II, and III through the course of this study.

Next, I began a process of delving deeper into the coded data from Phases I, II, and III by reviewing where the leadership tenets co-occurred significantly across my full data set. As part of this next step in coding, I created 301 subcodes when reviewing where the leadership tenets co-occurred the most and where the leadership tenet co-occurrences also intersected with codes from my first pass of inductive codes from Phase I of this study. This was another decision I made as a researcher to look across my data beyond frequency and into where significant patterns emerged (Braun & Clark, 2006; hunter et al., 2013). From this process, Figure 37 shows a word cloud of the 301 subcodes. Additionally, Figure 38 depicts the occurrences of subcodes that resulted from reviewing significant leadership tenet co-occurrences encompassing data from all phases of this study. Figure 38 reveals, for example, that at the co-occurrences of leadership tenet 1 (modeling activism) and leadership tenet 2 (working with the oppressed), there were 19 subcodes that occurred. As such, Figure 38, provides a visual of the subcode occurrences across each significant leadership tenet co-occurrence (e.g. 1+2, 1+3, and so on) and that there were 752 subcode occurrences across this subset of data.

### ***Codebook Evolution***

The evolution of the research codebook for this study began with an inductive process during my first pass coding process for Phase I (November 2020 through May 2021). The first pass process resulted in 377 codes occurring 1,053 times within Phase I data (see Figure 32).



*Figure 36.* Phase III code occurrences.

---



*Figure 37. Subcodes from third pass coding.*

---

Number of Subcodes for Significant Leadership Tenet Co-Occurrences - Phase I, II, III Data

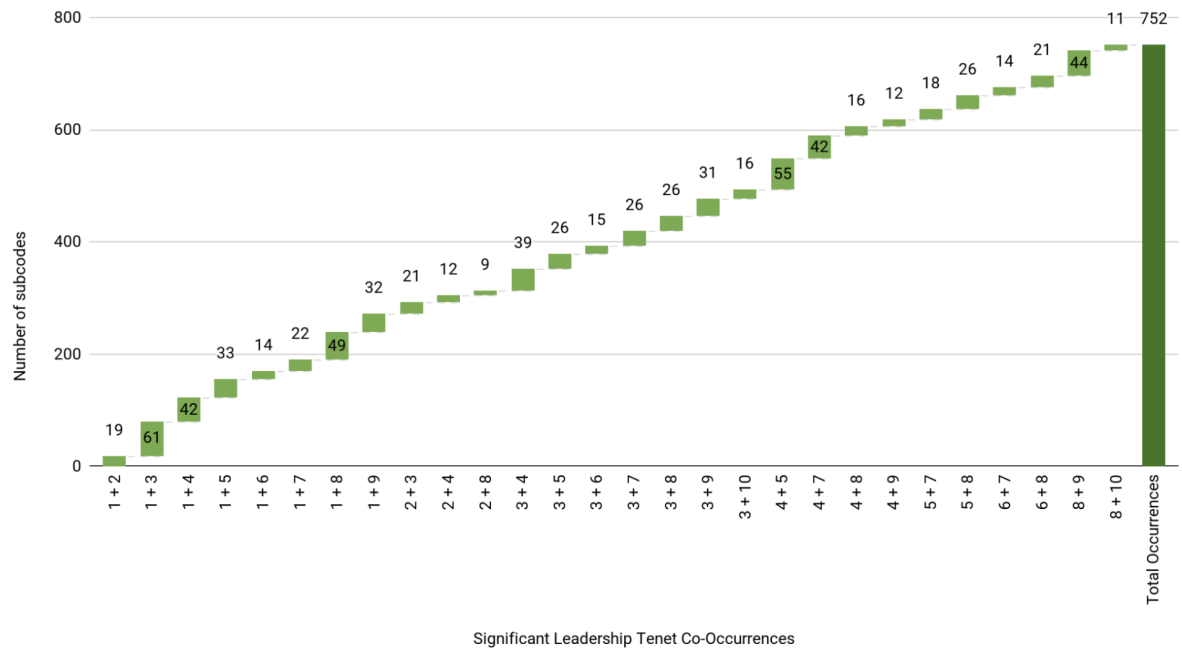


Figure 38. Subcode occurrences for significant leadership tenet code co-occurrences.

What became most vivid from the first pass of coding was that codes connected to the leadership tenets of Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong occurred 514 times within Phase I data (see Figure 32). This was a result that became most vivid for me as a researcher (Saldaña, 2016).

For the second pass process of coding the data from Phase II (August 2021 through May 2022) of this research, I decided to deductively code Phase II data centered on the eleven leadership tenets from Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong as this was a significant pattern that arose from the first pass coding process (Braun & Clark, 2006; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; hunter et al., 2013). The second pass coding process revealed that the eleven leadership tenet codes occurred 1,409 times within Phase II data (see Figure 34). In addition to the coding based on the leadership tenets, the second pass coding process indicated the frequency of how often the eleven leadership tenet codes co-occurred with each other as shown in Figure 35.

The third pass coding process involved coding Phase III (June 2022 to August 2022) data deductively through the eleven leadership tenets (see Figure 36) and then moving into subcoding data from across all phases of this research study in an inductive process reviewing where the leadership tenets most significantly co-occurred both in frequency and with the inductive codes from Phase I of this study.

Through each pass of coding, the research codebook evolved from a vast inductive set of codes that narrowed through data analysis into the codes representing the eleven leadership tenets. I then added subcodes from an analysis where the leadership tenet codes most significantly intersected across the full set of data. After the third pass coding, I moved into a process of finalizing my codebook based on the patterns looking across the data (Braun & Clark, 2006).

### ***Finalizing Codebook***

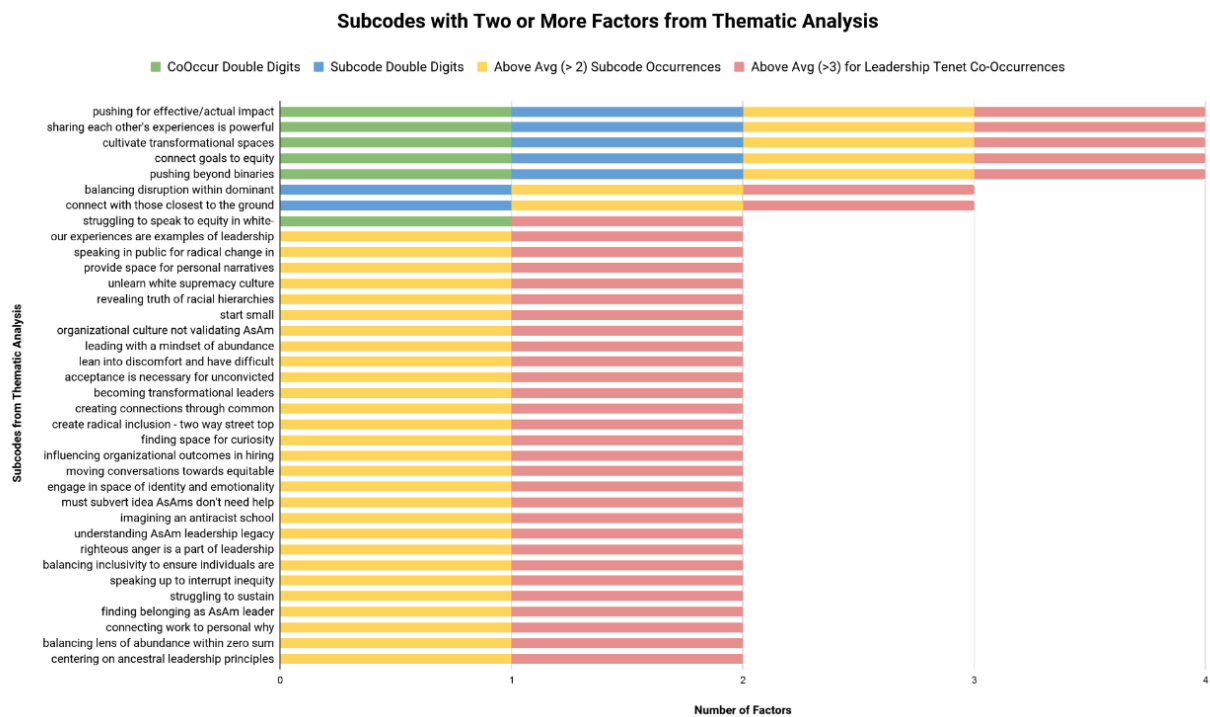
To finalize the codebook, I first reviewed the eleven leadership tenets and re-sorted them to be a part of larger thematic categories based on the leadership legacy of Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong. These categories moved leadership tenets 1 and 2 into a category titled, “Humanistic Activism and Creativity”, shortened to “HumAct” and is connected to the literature review bin Asian American Leadership from Chapter 2 (see Figure 39). Leadership tenets 3, 10, and 11 were moved into a category titled, “Resolving Societal Contradictions”, shortened to “ResolveContras” and also connected to the literature review bin, Asian American Leadership. Leadership tenets 4 and 5 were moved into a category titled, “Struggling Through Together”, shortened to “StrglTgthr” and connected to the literature review bins Model Minority and Perpetual Foreigner Concepts and Collectivist Leadership. Lastly, leadership tenets 7, 8, and 9 were moved into a category titled, “Creating Collective Power”, shortened to “CollectPower”, and connected to the following literature review bins: Model Minority and Perpetual Foreigner Concepts, Collectivist Leadership, and Cross-Racial Coalition Building.

Next, I reviewed the subcodes from the third pass coding process and compared the occurrences of subcodes with their intersections with the leadership tenet co-occurrences. I reviewed the following factors within the subcode data: subcode occurrences exceeding ten, subcodes connected to over ten co-occurrences of leadership tenets, subcodes exceeding the average occurrence (greater than 2 for this subset of data), subcodes exceeding the average of leadership tenet co-occurrences (greater than 3 for this subset of data). From this process, I aggregated the subcodes that were part of at least two of the noted factors and 36 subcodes surfaced from this analysis as shown in Figure 40.

The final codebook is derived from the analysis depicted on Figures 39 and 40, by

| Category                                           | Literature Review Connection                                                                                                               | Leadership Tenet Codes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Humanistic Activism and Creativity (HumAct)        | Asian American Leadership                                                                                                                  | 1. Modeling activism as a way to project a more human human being with a sense of political and social responsibility (Boggs & Boggs, 1974).<br>2. Working with the oppressed to share a new way of being together and exercise their creativity towards positive societal transformation (Boggs & Boggs, 1974).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Resolving Societal Contradictions (ResolveContras) | Model Minority and Perpetual Foreigner Concepts<br>Asian American Leadership                                                               | 3. Developing an ideology to address a specific societal contradiction and create a vision to resolve this societal contradiction (Boggs & Boggs, 1974).<br>10. Recognizing that leadership is about making impact, not notoriety; and the actions of leaders must create positive social change with tangible results (Bacon, 2018).<br>11. Understanding that the work of leadership paves the pathway for future generations to build on the work of past effective leadership.                                                                                                                                                |
| Struggling Through Together (StrgITgthr)           | Model Minority and Perpetual Foreigner Concepts<br>Collectivist Leadership                                                                 | 4. Understanding that leadership and activism are about struggle with no final solution and the struggle is the work (or our highest expression of human creativity) (Boggs & Boggs, 1974).<br>5. Recognizing that the interests, feelings, and concerns of the individual within the collective struggle against institutionalized racism and state power are just as important as the struggle itself (Fujino, 2005).                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Creating Collective Power (CollectPower)           | Model Minority and Perpetual Foreigner Concepts<br>Asian American Leadership<br>Collectivist Leadership<br>Cross-Racial Coalition Building | 6. Honoring cross-racial coalitions that provide antiracist organizing approaches to resist gains made at the expense of others' (Fujino, 2005).<br>7. Understanding how polarization and racism create artificial divisions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, sexual orientation, and class, impeding any movement's actions towards social justice (Fujino, 2005).<br>8. Building our aspirational world together through the power of our collective consciousness (Throughline, 2021).<br>9. Creating collective power and moving us beyond polarizations through strategic networking and organizing (Bacon, 2018). |

*Figure 39. Category, literature review connection, leadership tenet codes.*



*Figure 40.* Subcodes with two or more factors from thematic analysis.



analyzing the data from Phases I-III of this study, I had 36 subcodes connected to the eleven leadership tenets of Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong, and are organized into the categories of: Humanistic Activism and Creativity, Resolving Societal Contradictions, Struggling Through Together, and Creating Collective Power (see Figure 41). The final codebook formed the basis from which I describe the emergent findings from the CRE study.

### **Study Considerations**

As the primary researcher for the CRE study, I brought general ideas centered on Asian American leadership I wanted to study. Through conferring with my research group, institutional coach, an Asian American affinity group, and other East Carolina University faculty, I decided to focus this CRE study on the overarching research question of: *How do Asian American leaders identify existing and new ontological and epistemological frameworks to affirm their identity and engage in leadership actions pursuing racial, social, and economic justice?*

I first considered the opportunity to research Asian American leadership within my own school district of roughly 162,000 students, in which 54.6% are students of color, with close to 10% of students being Asian, the remaining 45.3% of students being white. However, I am the only Asian American on the Superintendent's Leadership Team out of 24 people and there is only one principal who identifies as Asian American out of 192 (Wake County Public School System. n.d.). With such a limited potential sample size of leaders, I instead opted to select participants using purposeful sampling to find participants who were qualified and willing to discuss Asian American identity as it relates to social change actions such as, leadership development and cross-racial coalition building (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

I completed Institutional Review Board Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (IRB CITI) certification in December 2020 to comply with the ethical requirements governing

| Category                           | Literature Review Connection                                                                                                               | Leadership Tenets | Subcodes                                                      |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Humanistic Activism and Creativity | Asian American Leadership                                                                                                                  | 1,2               | cultivate transformational spaces                             |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 1,2               | connect with those closest to the ground                      |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 1,2               | provide space for personal narratives                         |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 1,2               | finding space for curiosity                                   |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 1,2               | engage in space of identity and emotionality                  |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 1,2               | righteous anger is a part of leadership                       |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 1,2               | connecting work to personal why                               |
| Resolving Societal Contradictions  | Model Minority and Perpetual Foreigner Concepts<br>Asian American Leadership                                                               | 3,10,11           | balancing lens of abundance within zero sum culture           |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 3,10,11           | must subvert idea AsAms don't need help                       |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 3,10,11           | pushing for effective/actual impact                           |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 3,10,11           | connect goals to equity                                       |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 3,10,11           | speaking in public for radical change in schools              |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 3,10,11           | start small                                                   |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 3,10,11           | acceptance is necessary for unconvicted action                |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 3,10,11           | balancing disruption within dominant cultures                 |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 3,10,11           | speaking up to interrupt inequity                             |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 3,10,11           | revealing truth of racial hierarchies                         |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 3,10,11           | becoming transformational leaders                             |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 3,10,11           | influencing organizational outcomes in hiring                 |
| Struggling Through Together        | Model Minority and Perpetual Foreigner Concepts<br>Collectivist Leadership                                                                 | 3,10,11           | moving conversations towards equitable possibilities          |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 3,10,11           | imagining an antiracist school                                |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 3,10,11           | leading with a mindset of abundance                           |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 4,5               | finding belonging as AsAm leader                              |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 4,5               | organizational culture not validating AsAm achievements       |
| Creating Collective Power          | Model Minority and Perpetual Foreigner Concepts<br>Asian American Leadership<br>Collectivist Leadership<br>Cross-Racial Coalition Building | 4,5               | lean into discomfort and have difficult conversations         |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 4,5               | struggling to sustain                                         |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 4,5               | struggling to speak to equity in white-dominant spaces        |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 6,7,8,9           | sharing each other's experiences is powerful                  |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 6,7,8,9           | our experiences are examples of leadership                    |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 6,7,8,9           | unlearn white supremacy culture                               |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 6,7,8,9           | understanding AsAm leadership legacy                          |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 6,7,8,9           | creating connections through common ground                    |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 6,7,8,9           | centering on ancestral leadership principles                  |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 6,7,8,9           | pushing beyond binaries                                       |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 6,7,8,9           | create radical inclusion - two way street top to bottom       |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 6,7,8,9           | balancing inclusivity to ensure individuals are not alienated |

Figure 41. Finalized codebook to discuss findings.

human research. Even with these safeguards in place prior to the inception of the project, termination of the study could occur at any time, for any reason.

### **Reflexivity Statement**

Reflexivity refers to the role in a study about the researcher's personal background, culture, and experiences that holds the potential for shaping interpretations, "such as the themes they advance and the meaning they ascribe to the data" to shape a research study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 182). As noted in my introduction (see Figure 1), my ontological framework is deeply connected to the gifts from my 할아버지 (grandfather) who's own story of restarting his life from the conditions of war anchors me in his own 힘 (strength), 용기 (courage), and 인내 (perseverance) as a way to create social change within my own ecologies of knowing in self, organization, and community. The way I make sense of self as a Korean, an immigrant, and an American is through my Korean language. There are words like 정 (pronounced, jung), 한 (pronounced, hahn), and 당신 (pronounced, dahngshin) that recall a history, emotions, and intimacy beyond the scope of literal English translations. 정 refers to a belonging to a people, a place, and Korea that is unconditional (Kim & Yu, 1996). 한 is an eternal unrequitedness connected to grudges, regret and sadness (Kim & Yu, 1996). 당신 is how one might say "you" in an intimate relationship. 당신 notes a way to address another person in an intimate manner. In English, I interpret 당신 by smashing the words you, me, and us together, acknowledging the fullness of our being. The guidepost from my 할아버지 coupled with my Korean roots, influences my approach to the design of this CRE study, how data is collected, and the interpretation of data (Birks et al., 2008).

## Internal Validity

As issues of data collection and analysis can cause concern around biases of the researcher, using multiple validity procedures ensures a researcher's ability to assess the accuracy of findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As the participants of this CRE study met virtually on Zoom from November 2020 through August 2022, I used the following validity strategies to ensure internal validity:

- The researcher was actively involved with the participants for an extended time through *prolonged engagement* (Gerdes & Conn, 2001).
- Data was *triangulated* with multiple sources to establish themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).
- *Member checking* was used to determine the accuracy of qualitative findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018)
- The researcher utilized reflective memos to document methodological decisions and personal reflections related to the data for *referential adequacy* (Gerdes & Conn, 2001).
- Sections in previous chapters shared my background which informs the reader of my own experiences that shape this CRE study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018)
- The CPR participants were part of a continual *peer debriefing* process to validate the progress, design, and findings from this CRE study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

## External Validity

The CRE study was established within the scope of one researcher's work to explore the existing and new ontologies and epistemologies to affirm Asian American leaders' identities and assert the implications to enact racial, economic, and social justice in our work as leaders in

educational and non-profit settings. The study may be transferable to other studies on Asian American leadership, however caution should be taken when applying the results of this study to individual, organizational, or societal contexts. This is one study with Asian American leaders; thus, the process of the study could be replicated in other contexts, but the outcomes are not dependable across contexts and participants with differing backgrounds.

### **Confidentiality and Ethical Considerations**

Each CRE study participant and CPR members signed a consent form approved by East Carolina University's Institutional Review Board (ECU IRB) prior to participating in the study (see Appendix C). All appropriate consent for the study was in place prior to initiating the study. Participation in this CRE study was entirely voluntary.

I completed the Institutional Review Board Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (IRB CITI) certification in December 2020 to comply with the ethical requirements governing human research. Even with these safeguards in place prior to the inception of the project, termination of the study could have occurred at any time, for any reason.

Data security and the confidentiality of the participants was a priority for this study. Confidentiality was maintained through the following measures (Creswell & Creswell, 2018):

1. Important and personal papers and data files were stored in a locked file cabinet.
2. All electronic forms for data collection (including video and audio recordings) were kept in password protected files.
3. Data and copies of reports were shared with the participants and CPR team for purposes of transparency, improvement, and reflection.
4. The data collected during the study will be kept for one year after the completion of the study in a locked, secured office at 1433 Sedgefield Street, Durham, NC 27705.

Identifiers and data collected will be destroyed by being shredded upon successful completion of the study.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I discussed the approach to research design for this study informed by critical race ethnography principles in order to answer the overarching research question: *How do Asian American leaders identify existing and new ontological and epistemological frameworks to affirm their identity and engage in leadership actions pursuing racial, social, and economic justice?* Through purposeful sampling, the study's participants were Asian American leaders who shared a willingness to delve into a collective process with fellow participants to explore our unique experiences as leaders within white-dominated societal and organizational contexts. I used CLE axioms (Guajardo et al., 2016) and elements of gracious space (Hughes, 2017) to create a safe theorizing space through three phases of the study (see Figure 29). Through each phase of this study, I collected and analyzed data on an ongoing basis to ensure preliminary findings were shared with both participants and CPR members. The analysis of data involved organizing CLE transcripts, CLE notes and documents, and reflective memos into Atlas.ti to code both inductively (Saldaña, 2016) and through thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to connect the coding both to the literature review bins of this study and the leadership tenets of Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong (Bacon, 2108; Boggs & Boggs, 1974; Fujino, 2005)..

## **CHAPTER 4: SITUATING ASIAN AMERICAN LEADERSHIP**

Asian American history situated Filipinos on the California coast in 1587 (Cheung, 2017), and Koreans at Pachappa Camp in 1905 (Chang & Park, 2019). Despite being in America for centuries, Asian Americans are not seen as American (Akutagawa, 2013; Chan, 2020; Cheung, 2017; Kim, 1999; Kim, 2011; Sy et al., 2017). The search for Asian American belonging as full citizens in America reflects the impacts of the interplay of model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts which force Asian Americans to be a model minority and perpetually foreign in one body that is underscored by the terms, “palpable absence and invisible presence” (Kim, 2011, p. 213).

As Asian American leaders we must transmute our struggle for belonging into a collective action to liberate ourselves from a past and present racialized by white supremacy. This Critical Race Ethnography (CRE) study engaged participants who are Asian American leaders to co-construct a space to think, reflect, and develop counternarratives to our racialization as Asian Americans to help move the world toward racial, social, and economic justice. By coupling CRE principles with Community Learning Exchange (CLE) practices, the study engaged Asian American leaders in a process to understand how to theorize Asian American leadership tenets through self-reflection free of white dominant entrapments (hunter et al., 2013).

The use of CLEs for this study maximized the social aspect of learning experiences and amplified opportunities for conversation, reflection, and exploration as a collective learning process (Guajardo et al., 2016). The use of CLEs coupled with the principles of CRE created dynamic and generative learning experiences through relationship building amongst study participants and through the co-construction of knowledge through the lens of justice-oriented Asian American leadership (Duncan, 2005; Guajardo et al., 2016, p. 22; Woodson, 2019).

In this chapter, I review the recent context (2020-2021) for Asian Americans during the CRE study and provide an overview of study participants' geographic and personal contexts. I then discuss the first phase of this CRE study, and the initial themes that surfaced from the initial qualitative coding process. I conclude the chapter with a reflection connected to leadership from the initial themes and their implications from the first phase of the CRE study.

### **Context for Study**

One of the pursuits of the CRE study was to create a space for Asian American leaders to experience their humanness through storytelling, questioning, and moments of tension through their experiences in the CLEs (Guajardo et al., 2016, p. 27). Within the CLEs, their experiences, stories, and knowledge that are rarely made public surfaced, and I, as the lead researcher, worked to balance learning for participants through three central ecologies of knowing: self (micro), organization (meso), and communities (macro) in which they experience their personal and professional lives (Guajardo et al., 2016).

To understand the current context for Asian Americans, I analyze the community (macro), organizational (meso), and individual (micro) levels of how Asian Americans are currently situated in American society. At the community (macro) level in America, the historical legacy of the racialization of Asian Americans from the mid-1800s to the present, despite undergoing cosmetic changes in the post-1965-era, positioned Asian Americans as stuck between a model minority and perpetual foreigner in one body. The origin of the interplay between the model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts is rooted in the use of Asian immigrant labor for economic convenience for white America (Kim, 1999; Long et al., 2022; Oh, 2022). In subsequent decades when white labor was perceived to be threatened, Asian labor was vilified through xenophobic propaganda that created the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882



(Long et al., 2022; Oh, 2022). In the 1950s and 1960s, the interplay of the model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts congealed with the hysteria surrounding McCarthyism that led to additional anti-Asian violence while the 1960s saw the Immigrant and Nationality Act of 1965 which allowed skilled and educated Asians as immigrants to enter the United States. In maintaining the paradoxical racialization of Asian Americans where in one decade, they are deported for being disloyal to America and in the next decade the select skilled and educated Asians were allowed to immigrate to America, furthering the myth of Asian model minorities. In the 1980s, Asian American racialization saw a renaissance through the undoing of civil rights, affirmative action, redistricting, and social welfare programs' under the guise of reverse discrimination faced by Asian Americans (Kim, 1999, p. 120). The historical and current context Asian Americans faced and continue to face demonstrates how the concepts of the model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts for the benefit of white supremacy (Huynh et al., 2011; Kawai, 2005; Wu, 2014).

The hate from both white and Black populations toward Asian Americans in this racially polarized context results in one in five Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders being the victims of hate incidents (Jeung et al., 2021). Of the 10,000-plus respondents to a *Stop AAPI Hate* survey, 66.8% of Asian Americans and 62.9% of Pacific Islanders experienced harassment through verbal hate speech, stalking, and bullying (Jeung et al., 2021). Asian American youth (0-17 years old) report 9.9% of incidents within the *Stop AAPI Hate* September 2021 report. Such examples are not new experiences for Asian Americans; however, these recent snapshots represent a legacy of anti-Asian brutality and oppression that is the past and current context for Asians in America.

At the organizational (meso) level, Wilkerson (2020) reminds us that the American caste system “prefers an Asian-American man to put his technological expertise at the service of the company but not aspire to CEO” (p. 70). This was reflected by a 2015 survey of 362 Asian American men related to discrimination in the workplace. In this study, 82% of the respondents reported being recognized for working hard, but only 49% were reported being recognized for their leadership abilities (Shen, n.d.). Similarly, Balón (2004) found that in a study of 1,964 college students that included 270 Asian American students, Asian Americans were the least likely of all racial groups to self-identify as a leader and reported feeling culturally marginalized from leadership roles.

At the level of self (micro), a study of Asian American teens during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021 reported their hearing comments such as, “Corona-free NYC!” while walking around, and these youth often worried about violent attacks against elderly Asian Americans (Lee & Storel, 2021). Elsewhere, Suni Lee, the first Hmong American to represent the US in the Olympics and a gold medalist, reported she was pepper-sprayed in a racist attack (ESPN News Services, 2021). Steven Yeun described that when he is in America, “I can feel this constant protest, like, I’m not just a Korean person, I’m an American person”, while America continues to racialize and invalidate Asian American identity through hatred and violence (Kang, 2021).

Across the three ecologies of knowing, Asian Americans are situated as socially marginalized by white supremacy while our country overwhelmingly remains silent on the historical and present violence inflicted on us. Depicting these injustices are part of the context for Asian American leaders and noting the actions and shifts countering America’s racist tendencies is a key part of the story of finding belonging for Asian American leaders.

However, past and present time examples of Asian Americans exemplify justice-oriented leadership and repudiate the white racist structures of America. Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong (as noted in Chapter 2) demonstrated leadership committed to activism and justice; their struggles provide guidance for antiracist organizing to move our society towards racial, social, and economic justice. In the present, Michelle Wu was recently elected as the first Taiwanese, first woman, and first person of color to become mayor of Boston. Notably, Mary Lou Akai-Ferguson, who is of Japanese and Irish-American descent, managed her campaign, which was centered on training community members to organize themselves and to give them the power to make decisions (Ebbert, 2021; Platoff & Valencia, 2021). The campaign relied on a rippling and non-hierarchical strategy relying on 17 neighborhood hubs entrusting community volunteers to run their own mini-campaigns (Ebbert, 2021).

The work of justice-oriented Asian Americans past and present demonstrate how Asian American leaders have and continue to engage in leadership actions to build our aspirational world toward racial, social, and economic justice. Aspiring towards justice-oriented leadership, the Asian American leaders selected for this CRE study shared a similar desire to create change within their organizations and communities. The participants represent the East Coast, the South, the Midwest, and parts of northern and southern California; we engaged together in this study to affirm the legacy of Asian American leadership, understand our identities as Asian American leaders, and learn leadership approaches to enact change within our organizations and communities towards racial, social, and economic justice.

### **Who We Are and What We Did**

In the summer of 1968, Richard Aoki spoke at an Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA) rally and framed Asian American identity through the assertion that America is a racist

society in which Asian Americans have historically made accommodations “in order to survive” (Aoki & AAPA, 2008), n.p.). Aoki continued, “[w]e’re sick and tired of being sick and tired of being sick and tired of relating to white standards of acceptability.” and how white standards of acceptability “wreaked havoc” on Asian American cultural identity, and that the AAPA “unconditionally” supported “all non-white liberation movements” including “the struggles of Afro-American..., the Chicanos, and the American Indians in [their pursuit] to attain freedom, justice, and equality” (Aoki & AAPA, 2008). Aoki’s framing brought Asian Americans into a shared space with Black, Latino/a, and Native Americans who joined in the pursuits of freedom, justice, and equality in order to repudiate white standards of acceptability.

Many Asian Americans, though not all experiences are the same or monolithic, come from an ancestral lineage of people who had to start anew on American soil, whether it was the 1500s for Filipino sailors, the mid-1800s for Chinese immigrants brought in as a cheaper labor force after slavery, the Koreans coming to Hawaii in the early 1900s to work on sugar plantations on the heels of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, or as refugees of war throughout the twentieth century (Chang & Park, 2019; Cheung, 2017; Hinnershitz, 2017; Kim, 1999; Lee et al., 2020; Nguyen, 2020). The long ancestry of starting over again in a new land in America connects my ontological background with that of the Asian American experience.

Using this lens, in the CRE study, I depended on bringing together fellow justice-oriented Asian American leaders who shared a willingness to explore our backgrounds and histories individually and collectively to understand how we continue the legacy of our ancestors in working towards a world with racial, social, and economic justice in direct connection to the pursuits of the AAPA (Aoki & AAPA, 2008). Additionally, America’s white-centered expectations of Asian Americans is to have us fall in line and simply work within the

assimilationist, capitalistic, and white-centered culture. The 할머니 (grandmother) character in the novel, *When You Trap a Tiger*, articulates this pressure as she reflects at the end of her life, “[a]ll my life, I spend so much time, so much energy, hiding my heart...I thought I have to hide my words, because my English not so good. I thought I have to hide my heart, because I feel too much” (Keller, 2020, p. 270). The pressure and gravity to hide who we are in America is a significant shared experience that we aimed to undo in the community of Asian American leaders. Instead of emotional suppression and hiding our identity, we aimed to turn up the visibility of our ancestral leaders and their actions along with our work as leaders to continue building on Asian American leadership legacies within our communities. As such, participants expressed curiosity and desire to amplify past and present Asian American experiences.

I selected Asian American leaders in the CRE study through purposeful sampling from different regions across the United States, including the East Coast, the South, the Midwest, and parts of northern and southern California (see Figure 42). Participants were of South Asian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, and mixed race (white-Japanese; white-Korean) descent and worked as public school educators, university professors, and leaders in other related nonprofit and governmental settings. The participants self-identified as Asian American leaders in educational and other related settings and shared a willingness to participate in this study to discuss and explore Asian American leadership identity through existing and developing ontological and epistemological frameworks, and how they relate to social change actions

### ***CRE: Foundations for Sacred Space***

*I have seen too much  
I haven't seen enough, you haven't seen it -Radiohead*



*Note.* (Murphy, 2017).

*Figure 42.* Study participant locations

---

CRE is the analysis of various “ontological categories” illuminating how race is a stratifying force in school and society (Duncan, 2005, p. 95). White supremacy is the “discursive force” operating as an ontology enforcing dominant perspectives, where the white perspective regulates how non-white subjects are depicted, and denies the multitude of ontologies within the world to share time and space in bridging understandings through coevalness (Duncan, 2005). Coevalness is about “getting the same thing, at the same time, and in the same place” in a shared present time, creating counternarratives to the allochronic discourses rooted in white supremacy (Duncan, 2005, p. 93). Through this lens of CRE, Asian American leaders came together in an open shared space and had time to create a coevalness with each other and determine ways to create our coevalness in American society.

In November 2020, I facilitated an initial virtual convening with interested Asian American leaders in order to identify assets and challenges connected to the focus of practice (see Figure 3 from Chapter 1). We focused on this question: From our notions of self, what are the assets and challenges for us as leaders in a status quo that racializes us as Asian American?” The emerging themes highlighted the distinct but sometimes overlapping nature of macro, meso, and micro experiences:

- Macro: Diversity of Asian Americans despite our monolithic racial categorization, the model minority concept; the experience of our parents through immigration and assimilation; overt racism under the Trump administration.
- Meso and micro: Achieving success through Asian values; creating an inclusive vision of leadership; Asian American leaders’ abilities to lead with Black, Latino/a, and other racially marginalized community members; leading from our authentic selves; following and supporting Black and Latino/a leaders; engaging in difficult

conversations to reverse the trends of racism; leading beyond the mentality of a “zero-sum game” in which racially marginalized people are pitted against each other.

- Micro: Asian American connectedness to outsider culture (non-majority, non-white); ability to create counternarratives through difficult conversations; balancing the micro experience of self compared to the intergenerational history of one’s family through such traumas like the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II.
- Macro, meso, and micro: Personal and ancestors’ experiences with immigration; Asian American values that prioritize collectivism and awareness for others; moving beyond the model minority stereotype; engaging in conversations around race beyond the limits of the Black/white binary; analyzing the influence of stereotypes placed on Asian Americans in leadership and general experiences with racism.

The themes underscored the experience of Asian Americans of resisting monolithic and historically omnipresent labels such as the model minority concept and the overt racism expressed within American society. At the same time, participants wanted to critically think about leadership through an unapologetic Asian American self. In addition, participants reported thinking deeply about supporting other leaders of color. Lastly, the participants’ experiences as outsiders was a topic of deep reflection while they considered the actions Asian American leaders can take through difficult conversations in pursuit of racial, social, and economic justice.

The position Kim (2011) described for Asian Americans in which we are “not quite free, not quite enslaved, not quite citizen, and not quite foreign” (p. 213) paralleled the reflections from the convening in which we connected the roots of racism towards Asian Americans through the model minority concept with the actions Asian American leaders continue to struggle to create counternarratives against the historical and racist labeling of who we are (Kim, 1999;



Petersen, 1966; U.S. News & World Report, 1966). The oscillation between being labeled and taking action in order to create an antithetical narrative against racism is the unique position from which Asian American leaders engage in to disrupt white supremacy culture. The in-between space is the result of the white racist structures that are a stratifying force in America, in this study, I aimed to counteract this force through convenings affirming Asian American experiences and identities (Duncan, 2005).

I facilitated additional convenings in February 2021 and May 2021 with interested Asian American leaders to continue building community and begin surfacing tensions, dilemmas, and phenomena they were grappling with in their roles as leaders. During the February 2021 convening, participants reviewed and provided input about the assets and challenges for Asian American leaders, discussed leadership dilemmas they were currently facing in their roles, shared examples of cross-racial alliances they engaged with, the ways in which Asian Americans were depicted in the media, impacts of gender roles within Asian American community, colorism among Asian Americans, and the societal context that the children of participants had to navigate within small groups. From the whole group debrief, participants noted the following reflections:

- Having ingenuity to move through challenges of life (e.g., getting passed over for a job)
- Holding up a mirror to authority is dangerous for us as Asian American leaders
- Within cross-racial alliances, assimilating towards white culture to be more successful
- Importance of “playing the game” to infiltrate an organization as a leader and then leading from an unapologetically Asian self

- In our identities as Asians and leaders within organizations, not adhering to white dominant culture and male dominant culture as we develop our identities;
- Code switching in various spaces causes conflict in how we view ourselves and how we are viewed
- To be accepted by mainstream institutions, organizational leadership, and non-Asian colleagues, turning off some parts of who we are, causing conflict with self
- Being seen by non-Asians at times being too white, or not being white enough

As CRE studies “interrogate assumptions about foundational categories of being,” the February 2021 convening engaged participants in surfacing discussions of the unspoken conditions we experience that impact our identities as Asian American leaders (Woodson, 2019, p. 29). Naming our challenges --being passed over for a job, or noting the dangers of speaking up against authority -- while acknowledging some of the compromises we have to make in order to be in roles of leadership is an acknowledgement of the social reality of Asian American leaders working to create space and actions to lead from the authentic self.

During the May 2021 convening, participants discussed their experiences with families that were “transitory understandings,” and identified moments when they were moved or struck by the reflections of others (Hanold, 2017, p. 458). In addition, I asked participants were asked to reflect on the February 2021 convening themes and provided updates to the progress of the design of the CRE study. As a culminating activity, participants engaged in small group circles delving into scenarios they experienced connected to the model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts. Some of the examples shared from this part of the convening were:

- A white colleague at a conference asking if one of the participants needed support in racial identity development.

- A colleague at work using racist terms about Asian Americans without realizing.
- The experience of erasure as Asian Americans not being seen as a racially marginalized people.
- Asian students in Boston being left out of a racial equity planning tool because “they have high test scores”.
- When bringing up survey results noting Asian Americans were often the most dissatisfied, a colleague chastises, “how dare you bring up Asians when we are talking about equity?”.
- Experience of communities of color being pitted against each other and how to support investments that focus on Black, Latinae, and Indigenous leaders without minimizing the needs of Asian Americans.
- Organizational leader makes a statement about the need to learn about Asian American history, but does not have a predominantly white-centered organizational staff do their own identity work on how they sustain white dominant culture.

These reflections highlight two key points about the interplay of the model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts. First, all Asian Americans are viewed under the same umbrella as a monolithic, homogenous group, negating the richness in our population (Kiang et al., 2017). One participant discussed Asian American students in Boston being left out of racial equity planning tool with “they have high test scores” being the reason. This type of thinking towards Asian Americans erases the diversity among Asian American educational outcomes that shows significant gaps within Asian American populations. Between 2007 and 2009, among first-generation Asian American college students, over 70% of Taiwanese students earned a Bachelor’s degree or higher, whereas under 20% of Hmong students earned a Bachelor’s degree

or higher, with Japanese, Filipino, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian students falling between those ranges (Bitney & Liu, n.d.). Second, the interplay of the model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts connect Mills' assertion that "nonwhite subpersonhood" enshrines "white personhood," and nonwhite persons are used to uplift white supremacy (Mills, 1997). Through the model minority concept's suggestion that Asian Americans "prosper despite (and in some cases due to) their apoliticalness" (Kim, 1999, pp. 118-119), we are racialized into roles we do not want. In addition, the model minority concept also worked to disparage Black activism from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s as a conservative effort embracing colorblindness as a strategy to "delegitimize the emergent Black Power movement" (Kim, 1999, pp. 118-119). The reflections of the participants about the interplay of the model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts interrogate the foundational categories of being stemming from white America's desire to maintain white supremacy.

### ***First Pass Coding***

*What of the phenomena whose colors can only be imagined? - John Yau*

I designed the CRE study to identify current and new ontological and epistemological frameworks that affirm Asian American leaders' identities and support how they enact social change. Central to the study was the process of connecting our historical legacies with the present moment ontologies and epistemologies of Asian American leaders participating in the CRE study to imagine a future that is more just for all. From this perspective, the first steps in coding for this study began as an inductive process of building from the data from transcripts of the initial virtual convenings from November 2020, February 2021, and May 2021, and the accompanying artifacts from the convenings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The process I used for coding was *in vivo*, whose root meaning is, “in that which is alive”, and refers to a “word or short phrase from the actual language found in the qualitative data record” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 105). This is a method prioritizing and honoring participants’ voice and notes the “behaviors or process” (Strauss, 1987, p. 33) explaining to the researcher how participants resolve the questions or problems stemming from the central research question (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Strauss, 1987). From the coding of the initial convenings through this *in vivo* method, I drew out emerging analytic categories or themes reflecting the concepts from the literature review (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Strauss, 1987). The emerging themes connected to each of the literature review topics of model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts, Asian American leadership, collectivist leadership, and cross-racial coalitions, which I discuss as a part of the evidence.

### **Emergent Categories**

Based on a review of the data for the CLE convenings, I identified four emergent categories. These include: (1) model minority impacts, (2) embodying Asian American leadership, (3) collectivist values, and (4) cross cultural coalitions. In each of these categories, I identify major codes that supported each category and other evidence that may be useful in subsequent analysis. For each code, I detail specific participant quotes from the convenings that exemplify the category. In addition, I developed a word “cloud” for each category to present a visual analysis of the evidence.

### **Model Minority Impacts**

*I'll swallow until I burst  
Until I burst, until I -Radiohead*

Nguyen (2020) reminded us that the model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts creates a tension for Asian Americans that we are inevitably foreign and the temptation that we

are allies with white people in a country built on the foundations of white supremacy. This tension places Asian Americans on perpetually unstable ground that can give way to the whims of white supremacy at any moment and impacts all areas of life, including leadership in the workplace. Through the model minority concept, Asian Americans are “math-crunching middle managers who keep the corporate wheels greased but who never get promoted since we don't have the right ‘face’ for leadership” (Hong, 2020, p. 9).

The evidence from the initial convenings connected to the impact of the model minority concept on Asian American leadership and aligned to the tensions of Nguyen (2020) mentioned and Hong’s (2020) assertion of Asian Americans not belonging in the space of leadership. From the codes with the highest frequency, I noted codes and the accompanying quotes:

- we don’t count
  - “Asian Americans not being viewed as people of color, and that we are not oppressed.”
  - “the awareness is not even there for a lot of people who operate, so when they think about us as a model minority, they think, ‘oh you're one of us’, [but not] really because we don't count when decisions are made.”
- imposing itself in our efforts to be leaders
  - “And so they think of me as a model minority, which might have been a more recent view, but how do I operationalize my own personal belief? As an antiracist person and a person that interrupts inequities...”
- not seen as racially marginalized people
  - “Asian Americans not being viewed as people of color, and that we are not oppressed.”

- “Who are they referring to the marginalized group, but they don't see Asians as marginalized groups as well...”

In addition to those with the highest frequency within the model minority category, the following codes provided what Charmaz (2006) referred to as those that grabbed my attention as a researcher within the model minority concept category (Padgett, 2008):

- Asian American students need support as well: “how do I support our community, not only making sure that our kids gain access, you know, to the education that is necessary because I think it is a myth, because I was a horrible student. So I want to make sure that all Asian students have that opportunity because I could have gone the other way.”
- probationary whites: “As model minorities and probationary whites. There is that sense within the Asian community that there is a certain privilege of some Asians that others Asians don't have”
- white adjacent: “But I'm basically a white adjacent person, you know, and you know, I've had all the privilege and I have all the great schools on my resume and, you know, I mean, some of the things that they said to me, you know...”
- using assets to make progress: “APIs know how to be humble and not stick out and risk attack. How to use our assets as APIs to make progress...”

A holistic snapshot of participant quotes is shown in Figure 43 through a word cloud to visually note the words from the quotes of participants coded under the model minority emergent category. The tension in the model minority concept emergent category reveals the milieus of the participants are full of invisible barriers with which Asian American leaders must contend.



Figure 43. Emergent category: Model minority concept word cloud of codes.



Hong (2020) calls the identification of invisible barriers as “minor feelings” and Asian American leaders must grapple with tropes -- not being seen as racially marginalized people, in interpersonal, organizational, and community contexts (Guajardo et al., 2016). At the student level, the participants noted that Asian American students are not seen as needing support, coupling with this idea of “not counting”, “not being seen as people of color”, and “not needing help” because we are the model minority. Another tension pointing to the model minority concept was the idea participants expressed about being seen as “probationary whites”, or being “white-adjacent”, in which some Asian Americans are seen to have more privilege than others and at times move closer to a “whiteness” as defined by white supremacist culture, while another participant directly noted they were white-adjacent due to the privilege they grew up with. The tensions of being seen as white-adjacent or probationary whites that Asian American leaders contend and grapple recall the interplay of the model minority and perpetual within the bodies of Asian Americans. Another participant from the first convenings for this study asked a question wondering how we use the legacy of Asian American leadership and activism to push for progress, noting a desire to move beyond the tensions and into the spaces of leadership possibilities to repudiate the impacts of the model minority concept (Quick, 2017; Wu, 2014).

### **Embodying Asian American Leadership**

*Be constructive with your blues - Radiohead*

Traditional power holders in institutions, both historically and presently, minimize Asian American leadership, impacting the representation of Asian Americans in critical career fields and professions, including those in the public sector (Buteau, 2019; National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). In Balón's (2004) study of 1,964 college students (including 270 Asian American students), Asian Americans were the least likely of all racial groups to self-

identify as a leader and felt culturally marginalized from leadership roles (Balón, 2004). Sy et al. (2010) found the perception of Asian Americans by others as not being the “leadership type” and the study identified that within corporate industries there is a glass ceiling effect as Asian Americans are viewed as less prototypical leaders as compared to white Americans despite Asian Americans being viewed as technically competent. Within the education sphere, other people of color view Asian American educators as suspect because they are sometimes seen as striving to become honorary whites (Philip, 2014), missing the important ways we are capable of contributing to cross-racial alliances. The emergent category of Asian American leadership connects to the lack of representation of Asian American leaders, the historical and present perceptions that Asian Americans are not seen as leaders, and the challenge of being seen as allies with fellow people of color in the work of leadership (see Figure 44). These codes and quotes exemplify this category:

- space to come together [as Asian American leaders]
  - “excited to get to work with all of you to think about what leadership needs to look like in order to like [to] live out that particular way of being.”
  - “Just the ability to tell a story like that, based on the prompt about...our families and our history, just really opened up a whole different you know vein of connection.”
  - “trying to make connections with other Asians, different levels of vulnerability. We will grow to “fight the system”
- being the only Asian American
  - “There are so few of us...in this space and just learning about your stories and experiences and the things that have shaped our lives together...”



“we always joked that we were members of the KMTA which is the Korean Male Teachers Association with an enrollment of two and that has kind of been the joke underlying the fact that there aren't many of us in the space...”

- “We are kind of like in a bubble [in San Francisco] and we have some Asian American leaders, but there's just not enough, you know, representation.”
- “[Being] the only API in her organization...educating others around her experiences.”
- being in the back of senior leadership room
  - “if you're relegated to the back of the room that's when...it gets more complicated...to me it's about that optionality.”
  - “So it just kind of blew my mind how...they [leadership] [are] making this space as a show to let people know that ‘hey we are thinking about you’, but yet no one...is thinking about you as a leader when they don't even think about who's at the table...”
  - “Director group: Latina, one Asian; trying to develop scope and sequence for PD for site leaders - framed as an introvert and structures don’t allow a place to share input; didn’t get to frame how I feel; being marginalized; being invisible or erased”
- belonging
  - “Of us out in the field and also have a place to be able to share our own experiences”
  - “So I am really interested in, and your pathways and where you feel you belong in this leadership space as an Asian American”

- “But then, as you become older wanting to identify with that other half of us who you are but not really knowing where you fit and I think as Asians wherever we are there's always this sense of ‘do I fit in this leadership role?’.”
- “Initiatives that need a flag carrying leader, and if that is not an option, because we don't have the right to be perceived that way.”
- serving Black and Latinx communities
  - “You know anti-Black racism and you know what I can do to be a stronger ally. And honestly, whether or not I should really be in the role that I'm in. I'm the only Asian American in my entire organization and I'm the president and CEO and you know, I've had some complicated feelings around that and I am really just starting to work through that and think about who my successor should be.”
  - “Made me very curious and made me realize that this is an important space for me to be in were realizations that my own identity very seldom plays a role in my leadership...serving predominantly African American, Latino community”
  - “especially when I'm leading a community that is almost entirely black and brown and has such a different lived experience than I”
- Leadership qualities of Boggs (Boggs & Boggs, 1974), Kochiyama (Fujino, 2005), Itliong (Bacon, 2018)
  - “Building our aspirational world together through the power of our collective consciousness”
    - “what is the reframing of a shared identity that can capture the parameters of who gets to reframe our collective identity. And I was really struck by how many of you were on the webinar with us today when he [Viet Thanh

Nguyen) brought up this idea that people of color might really be all a part of a decolonizing majority. That is our actual shared identity. We have all suffered.”

- “And I wonder if, we often miss that second part, that we're supposed to be living out a different world and we can only do that by cultivating collective consciousness about the world we're trying to make.”
- “How do we create a collective consciousness about what's possible?”
- “there's something that you said around the collective consciousness in the awareness that everybody there has the authority to create.”
- “how much do we need to embody tenets for cross-racial coalition? Create a collective consciousness with various backgrounds?”
- “Developing an ideology to address a specific societal contradiction and create a vision to resolve this societal contradiction”
  - “Fight white dominant culture by working across difference by identifying and interrupting racist policies and practices in schools (Eurocentric celebrations, historically marginalized groups, teaching for liberation rather than banking model)”
  - “explicitly naming that new space and then...connecting that idea of developing an ideology at the grain size of the desired change and having clearly named what that is and yeah those are some really powerful ideas”
  - “Boston exam schools admissions policy recommendations. Political hot-button issues that pits POC against each other. Need to work together.

Need to provide counternarrative to the vocal minority of Chinese against reform.”

- “Understanding that leadership and activism are about struggle with no final solution and the struggle is the work (or our highest expression of human creativity)”
  - “You know I think the part of our work here is that it's never ending in they may be tiring but that that's why we're here right that's why we're fighting the good fight”
- “Recognizing that the interests, feelings, and concerns of the individual within the collective struggle against institutionalized racism and state power are just as important as the struggle itself”
  - “I think we need to invite each other to name [institutionalized racism] in a way where a space is established where it [institutionalized racism] could be potentially called out”
  - “We can exercise authority by establishing spaces a certain way - feelings are just as important as the movement itself; taking away protocols creates a white dominant space”

In addition to those with the highest frequency within the Asian American leadership category, I took note of the codes as a researcher in this emergent category because these themes might reappear in subsequent evidence (Padgett, 2008):

- when is the right time to speak up?: “I'm curious as to when is the right time and place to speak up because sometimes you don't want to do that just out of nowhere and all the times like just a regular teacher meeting.”

- advocating for special education: “specifically in my job...I would like, for them (students in special education program) to not be like the redheaded stepchild all the time right so they're so hyper focused on being a five star school with...high test scores and then sped [special education] sucks like they got shit you know and so to try to kind of work on that...”
- being allies and following “Supporting other leadership in the sense of like there's leading, and then there's following. So there's also a place for us being allies and following black leadership and Latin next leadership.”
- bringing along white allies: “the most important thing is why identities around relationships and not being against any group, including our white allies. I think we need to bring them along”
- capacity for reimagining: “Within our work, where is the capacity for reimagination? At [Midwestern University], there’s a move towards doing away with standardized testing requirements. Is that practice trickling down to other institutions of higher learning? How much or how little movement is there across universities?”
- centering on ancestral leadership principles: “we went from the scenarios, but then looked at the leadership principles [of Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong]...for me, it was an experience of like disequilibrium because it made me realize that some of the things that I was poised to do...really should be informed by these leadership principles...”
- covert groups within organizations: “also has a B-Ops group (use an encrypted texting app called Signal); also has a covert group text of women of color on the English Learner Task Force for BPS [Boston Public Schools]”



- danger of holding authority figures accountable by Asian Americans: “Holding up mirror to authority is dangerous as who we are”
- developing self-criticality and self-consciousness: “Self-criticality and self-consciousness is something we need to develop and how do we develop this to transform? What is the content that is transformational in how we lead our leaders? To be culturally responsive...”
- lacking frameworks to affirm AsAm leadership: “in our small group [shared] ideas that there aren't many frameworks for us to really recognize these features or these traits of ourselves and have our heritage and our ancestry and that we're essentially not tapping into an essential part of who we are and how we can help the next generation or the current generation.”
- racially marginalized people not trusting Asian Americans: “in alternative education trying to connect with Black, Hispanic, and other minorities. They feel like we don't understand them because we are Asian. There is an assumption that because we are Asian, it [equity work] doesn't happen.”
- playing the game to be at the table: “I imagine all three of us here, you know, to a certain extent you play the game. Be more strategic. I don't know because at the end of the day, [the colleague I know is] not in [our district] anymore, partly because she chose to leave. But she said she also tarnished her own reputation with too many folks here [by not playing the game].”
- we can easily fall back to white supremacy: “If you don't recognize that you are actually operating from an internalized racism we can so easily fall back to the white supremacy [in] how we enact leadership...”

- what are the archetypes of leadership needed?: “What kind of archetypes of leadership do we want to advance in this time and maybe, just like the flag carrying front of line leader is not actually the kind of leadership we want or need in this time and then what's the role of different types of leadership?”

The undervaluing of Asian American leadership was apparent in the lack of representation of Asian American leaders across institutions Asian Americans are perceived as not being the “leadership type” and then marginalized in leadership roles (Balón, 2004; Buteau, 2019; National Center for Education Statistics, 2020; Sy et al., 2010). Complicating the underestimation of Asian Americans as leaders is the perception of other people of color that some Asian Americans are striving to become *honorary whites* (Philip, 2014). Within the emergent category of Asian American leadership for the CRE study, the participants of the initial convenings shared similar sentiments within the areas of representation (“being the only Asian American”, creating “covert groups within organizations”, “lacking frameworks to affirm Asian American leadership”, “playing the game to be at the table”), being marginalized as leaders (“being in the back of the senior leadership room”, questioning “belonging”, “danger of holding authority figures accountable as Asian Americans”), and being cautious to not become honorary whites (“racially marginalized people not trusting Asian Americans”, “we can easily fall back to white supremacy”). The participants’ reflection of these three areas reflect some of the key challenges ingrained into any leadership role within America for Asian Americans.

Despite these hindrances, the participants focused on the need to develop a space that is Asian American-centric in order to create the counternarratives to the barriers Asian Americans face in leadership roles (Duncan, 2005; Woodson, 2019). The participants’ noted the importance of needing to develop an affinity space to come together as Asian American leaders and find

belonging through connecting with each other. In addition, the participants noted the importance of having awareness through this Asian American space in how to work in service of the Black and Latino/a communities they serve in their roles.

The participants referred to the historical leadership guidance represented by Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong, who emphasized the need to: develop a collective consciousness and an ideology to address specific societal contradictions while maintaining awareness that struggle is the work and perhaps the highest expression of human creativity (Boggs & Boggs, 1974; Fujino, 2005). Additionally, the participants noted the importance of recognizing the interests, feelings, and concerns of the individual within the collective struggle of leadership was essential to recognize as part of the process of leading (Fujino, 2005).

Reflecting on this emergent category of embodying Asian American leadership, the participants of the initial convenings for this CRE study asked each other powerful questions during our initial CLE convenings wondering:

- When is the right time to speak up?
- How do we best advocate for special education as an Asian American leader?
- How can we best be allies and follow other leaders from racially marginalized communities?
- How do we center our leadership on our ancestral leadership principles?
- How do we bring along our white allies?
- How do we develop our capacity for reimagining our world?
- How do we develop self-criticality and self-consciousness within our struggle?
- What are the archetypes of leadership needed to affirm who we are as Asian American leaders?

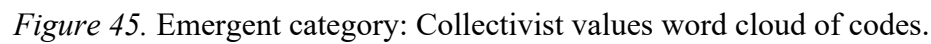
These questions surfaced the ways that Asian American leaders participating in the CRE study reflected on the ways to create counternarratives to white dominant discourses. In order to lift up their perspectives, Asian American leaders needed a space to center their experiences and collectively learn how to disrupt the white supremacist culture in leadership practice and research (Duncan, 2005).

### **Collectivist Values**

*This is what you'll get  
When you mess with us - Radiohead*

Restricting ourselves to the western views on leadership narrows Asian American ability to lead with a lens of abundance aimed at serving all people (Benham, 2002). Benham's (2002) stance on leadership focuses on a collectivist perspective, promoting compassion and spiritual knowing by embracing "the cultural and historical contexts of knowledge, leading, and learning" (Benham, 2002, p. 135). From a collectivist frame, leadership actions are located in relationships between the self and others rooted in shared beliefs, and a vision expanding the ideas of usefulness, collectivity, and connectivity (Benham, 2002). Similar to Benham's urging, the emergent category of collectivist values underscores the participants' reflective desires about the importance of collectivism within the self as it connects to the work of Asian American leaders within their organizations and community. From the codes with the highest frequency (see Figure 45), the following codes and the accompanying quotes highlight:

- collectivist culture
  - "when I think about assets and challenges in this piece stuck out to me loyalty and obedience to authorities...discouragement [of] egocentricity so what I think I know about Asian cultures, it's, it's the collective good. Right. There's very much a sense of the collective good."



- “I think that you know what sets us apart was a loan thing [our parents used with fellow Koreans called “kye”] where they would use cash and then there was no interest... [everything this was] under the table. And so it was just...they [Korean immigrant parents] relied on each other. There was like a really collective group kind of thinking, where a bunch of Korean immigrant people from church and they would put money in a pot, but that was the sole reason that my parents think they were able to get their own business and buy a car and all of that.”
- “That the idea of being raised by a village versus being just raised by your parents.”
- “the collectivism is something that resonates with me, in my own lab I try to foster a culture where we're all supporting each other and helping each other instead of trying to figure out who's going to be successful, who isn't and try to foster the idea of risk taking.”
- Boggs Kochiyama Itliong quality #8 - collective consciousness
 

“And I wonder if, like we often miss that second part, that we're supposed to be living out a different world and we can only do that by cultivating collective consciousness about the world we're trying to make.”

  - I'm just thinking about how much we need to embody these. These things you know it's like it's going to be a cross racial coalition, but how do I set the stage for that, and how does, how does our team set the stage for that. How do we create a collective consciousness about what's possible?”
  - “there's something that you said, like the collective consciousness in the awareness that everybody there has the authority to create.”

- “#8 - building our aspirational world together with collective consciousness; naming and dismantling racist behavior; enlisting people in the vision in what is supposed to replace; model an equitable world; we’re supposed to be living out different world and collective consciousness;”
- “how much do we need to embody tenets for cross-racial coalition? Create a collective consciousness with various backgrounds”

In addition to those with the highest frequency within the collectivist values category, this statement may be useful in subsequent evidence (Padgett, 2008):

- collective enterprise for a greater world: “everybody's genius and differences value right and has something to contribute to like the collective enterprise [of] this...greater world...we're trying to model”

The participants highlighted the importance of collectivist values, including caring for the collective good, being raised by a village, and fostering a culture where all support each other. They cited collectivist approaches to how money is attained for recent immigrants as an example of collectivist values in action. Additionally, the participants noted how significant and essential defining a collective consciousness with others is to build a world of possibility for all. One of participants noted how this collective consciousness is perhaps a precursor to building cross-racial coalitions. Collective consciousness provides a lens to see a world in which everyone has something to contribute to the collective enterprise of the greater world we’re trying to model, and though people are often labeled as the *minority*, at the prompting of Viet Thanh Nguyen, Asian Americans are actually a part of a decolonizing majority to change the hierarchical dynamic within white supremacist structures, into structures of mutuality and abundance (Quick, 2017). In the power of a collectivist approach to leadership whereby *imaginaries*, which are

loose schema through which people connect aspirations to actions work, orient leaders towards common ideals, enlisting resources to generate new ones, and “draws people into an effort and orienting their action [toward] collective impact” (Quick, 2017, p. 465).

### **Cross-Racial Coalitions**

*In a deep, deep sleep  
Of the innocent  
I am born again - Radiohead*

Asian Americans are key members in a changing landscape in the US of a majority people of color who hold the ability to create political change. Thus, Asian American leaders must play an active role in building cross-racial coalitions to set a path for future generations of a world built on solidarity across all races to transform the white-dominant culture of the US. In this pursuit, Asian American leaders can use organizing approaches that resist making gains at the expense of others and organize in ways to create spaces that prevent polarization and racism from reaffirming artificial divisions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, sexual orientation, and class. These divisions only impede our abilities to form cross-racial coalitions pursuing social justice (Fujino, 2005). In this pursuit, the emergent category of cross-racial coalitions emphasized participant viewpoints, which aligned to guidance from McIntyre et al. (1998) who remind us that in order to build successful cross-racial coalitions, members must be willing to:

- allow *confrontation*,
- aim for creating *change and action*,
- reaffirm the *possibility for change in another*,
- ensure a platform for *cross-racial dialogue* to sustain cross-racial coalitions to address the *multidimensionality of racism*.

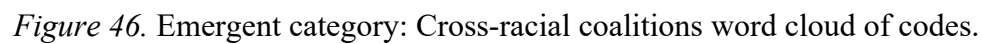


From the codes with the highest frequency (see Figure 46), the following codes and the accompanying quotes highlight:

- enlisting people in the vision of a different world
  - “if we can declare that a particular space is a space of not only dismantling racist patterns of behavior which can be modeled from the top. But also enlisting people in the vision of what's supposed to replace that. It's a world where everybody's genius and differences are valued. And each person has something to contribute to the collective enterprise of the greater world we're trying to model.”
  - “enlisting people in the vision in what is supposed to replace the status quo”
- racially marginalized people pitted against each other
  - “The social dynamics works is that people of color are placed in positions to be pitted against each other to go against each other so that the white majority can remain the dominant figures and dominant leaders in our society.”
  - “Produce a result to pit communities of color against each other.”

In addition to those with the highest frequency within the cross-racial coalitions emergent category, I documented codes that were of interest (Padgett, 2008):

- building diverse coalition intentionally: “The appointees from the department...are like the big wig people you know, like head of the NAACP like the blue ribbon commission people and then there's like a third that's an application and we've already got like 200 applications and opened like three days ago. And then there's a third of this coalition that's actually being pulled in through random selection, so we did a poll



from the Kentucky data systems and [asked the] sample 45 people and just sent them an email and said, will you like, to be a part of this coalition and [what] this coalition is going to generate.”

- conversations creating change: “As an antiracist person and a person that interrupts inequities and interrupts any conversations that are occurring immediately. How I can operationalize what people perceive into my own personal beliefs. One of the things that I am is an instructional coach. And so one of the things that I do is make a manifesto of myself...[noting] the things that I have committed to and be able to have those conversations with an open heart so that I can try to change paradigms and ideas.”
- creating space for parents: “We had a situation that I'm trying to help a parent and help one of our site leaders to think about how to make space for that parent and, mind you both individuals are African American but, yet the parent felt marginalized by the principal because she didn't feel like she has a way to assert herself, so it comes down to power, who is who is empower who is not empowered.”
- everybody has authority to create: “there's something that you said...like the collective consciousness in the awareness that everybody there has the authority to create.”
- forming covert groups within organizations: “Formed a B-Ops cross-race and cross-level group, modeling counter-cultural ways of working. Before a meeting, we plan how a meeting will not get siloed or hierarchical (like who takes notes)”
- immigrant experiences vs. the Black experience: “we're kind of developing with different ways of approaching and teaching and working with communities of color

that have been enslaved versus communities of colors of newly arrived immigrants. Because I think the propensity of newly arrived immigrants really believe in the American dream. They come here because they believe in America. Right? If you are from an enslaved family, you do not believe in America. Right? So I think just like that inherent mistrust or distrust of institutions and systems in the United States creates a completely different paradigm. And so Asian Americans like my parents know America is not perfect but they drink the Kool-Aid of meritocracy. This is a different perspective, right?”

- not aligning with whiteness:
  - “How do we elevate our own places and identities without tokenizing, taking too much space, or on the other hand aligning ourselves with whiteness. As AAPI folks, how can we effectively lead DEI/anti-racist work? How do we navigate that facilitation?”
  - “I’m just really struck by this idea [from the Kim & Lee, 2001 article] that Asian leaders create an allyship with whites first and then go through this kind of racial hierarchy. And it seems in doing that, there’s probably an implicit theory that we amplify the parts of our identity and ways of being that align most closely to white culture at the expense of other attributes of our cultural heritage.”
- promoting people from communities we serve: “We need someone from the communities that we serve, you know, to have that experience to be the person up front”
- talking about anti-Asian violence without being anti-Black: “How to talk about anti-Asian violence without being anti-Black. Many convos are regressive, reductive.” -

The participants reaffirmed ways to build cross-racial coalitions by enlisting people with a vision of a world different from a vision defined by white supremacist culture. In order to do this, the participants noted the importance of aligning the work of Asian American leaders with the guidance presented by McIntyre (1998):

- Allow *confrontation*, by acknowledging and confronting that we are in a reality where racially marginalized people are pitted against each other and confronting our tendency as Asian Americans to create allyship with white people first (Kim & Lee, 2001).
- Aim for creating *change and action*, by enlisting people in the vision of the world that will replace the world centered on white supremacist tendencies through working to build diverse coalitions in our work of leadership intentionally, empowering parents to become partners in our work of educating students, and developing a collective consciousness where everybody has authority to create change,
- Ensure a platform for *cross-racial dialogue* to sustain cross-racial coalitions to address the *multidimensionality of racism* by ensuring we note the differences in the Asian American immigrant experiences as compared to the Black experience of enslavement to ensure we respect the differences with fellow Black community members who have endured this trauma, establishing ways to talk about anti-Asian violence without being anti-Black, so that conversations do not become regressive or reductive, promoting people from communities we serve to be the ones up front and leading, particularly those that are from other racially marginalized communities, and through forming covert groups within organizations to model counter-cultural ways of working so that meetings are not siloed or hierarchical.

Participants focused on how much the work of building cross-racial coalitions is complicated, frustrating and simultaneously uplifting and disheartening, but the struggle to build these conversations is necessary and should be one of the key foci of any leader's work (McIntyre, 1998; Boggs & Boggs, 1974).

### **Reflection and Planning**

In the CRE study, I aimed to identify the personal and professional stories of Asian American leaders that recognize the existing ways of being and knowing. In addition, in the process, I aimed to co-construct a space to develop new reflections on the ways of being, knowing, and leading that affirm the individual and collective identities of Asian American leaders in pursuit of racial, social, and economic justice. The themes from the emergent categories underscored the tensions experienced by Asian Americans due to the model minority concept which simultaneously distances Asian American experiences away from the experiences of other racially marginalized people and pushes Asian Americans towards whiteness. Secondly, as Asian American leaders, the participants reflected on the ways to create counternarratives to the white-centric allochronic discourses to privilege the perspective of Asian American leaders to regard the Asian American *self* as a way to disrupt white supremacist culture in leadership. Thirdly, the participants accentuated the importance of collectivist values to build a world where everyone has something to contribute to the collective enterprise of building a more just world. In addition, the participants also noted the importance of understanding that Asian Americans are actually a part of a decolonizing majority in America to change the dynamics of white supremacist structures in this society as noted by Viet Thanh Nguyen. Lastly, the participants highlighted how complex the work of building cross-racial coalitions is; they noted that the work can be uplifting, and simultaneously disheartening. However, they confirmed this is a necessary

struggle. Through these reflections, Asian American leaders must contend and grapple with finding our assets as leaders to make progress and work with fellow community members to create *imaginaries*, which are loose schema through which people connect aspirations to actions. By imaginaries, I mean bringing the current racialized context for Asian Americans into relationship with the possibilities for change through a collective action continuing to build our aspirational world toward racial, social, and economic justice (Quick, 2017).

### **Planning for Next Phase of CRE Study**

Continuing the work from the Phase I convenings and shifting into the CLE spaces required planning to bring participants together to build community with Asian American leaders. In a country where the histories and contemporary realities of Asian Americans continue to be suppressed, hidden, or ignored, the search for belonging for Asian American leaders is part of the work to liberate ourselves from a white-constructed reality and to uncover the ontologies and epistemologies that are *ours*. When people “come to the realization...there is no utopia...and that humankind will always be engaged in struggle”, we demonstrate “the highest expression of human creativity” (Boggs & Boggs, 1974, p. 266). In the Critical Race Ethnography (CRE) study, I endeavored to engage participants in the struggle to uncover who Asian American leaders are through their own counternarratives. In bringing their experiences to the space of leadership and ensuring the experience of Asian American leaders were present, we collectively gained valid lessons in the creative expression and struggle to lead organizations and communities. Ultimately, I hoped this study continued to create an abundant space with racial, social, and economic justice in our world through a collective consciousness.

Through coupling CRE principles with Community Learning Exchange (CLE) practices, I engaged Asian American leaders in a process to understand the experiences of Asian American

leaders through self-reflection as a way to reduce their own entrapment in the racialized context of America (hunter et al., 2013). Because the CLE process maximizes the social aspect of learning experiences and amplifies opportunities for conversation, reflection, and exploration as a collective learning process (Guajardo et al., 2016), we were able to co-create a dynamic and generative learning environment. Additionally, the use of CLEs provided a way to examine Asian American leaders' racial identity and experience through the overarching research question: *How do Asian American leaders identify existing and new ontological and epistemological frameworks to affirm their identity and engage in leadership actions pursuing racial, social, and economic justice* (Woodson, 2019)?



## CHAPTER 5: CONNECTING WITH DEMONSTRATED LEGACIES (OURSELVES)

*thank you  
the ancestor who loved you  
before she knew you*

-Ross Gay from *Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude*

From the increase in hate crimes against Asian Americans (Jeung et al., 2021), to the lack of representation in educational leadership positions (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020), and the epistemologically unique position of being in-between whiteness and Blackness and belonging and not belonging (Kim 1999; Kim, 2011; Wu, 2002), Asian Americans are in a historically and presently ambiguous and tenuous place. As Asian Americans, we are perpetually on indeterminate ground and trying to figure out ways to transform our racialized placement into a fulfilled life.

My 외 할아버지's (maternal grandfather's) story from Chapter 1 -- in which he stepped off a boat in 부산 (Pusan), away from his native North Korea, without his family, as the Korean War was brewing -- reminds me that my own ancestors embodied strength, courage, and resilience as they moved through and beyond challenging societal contexts. 외 할아버지 lived through Japanese Occupation, and in a new moment, he had to figure out a way to restart his life. A teacher's credential certified under the Japanese government provided a way for 외 할아버지 to continue his journey as a teacher; later he became a principal of school. During that time, he met my 외 할머니 (maternal grandmother), helped raise a family with two daughters and two sons. In the latter part of his life, he survived a stroke – perhaps the effects of war and restarting his life caught up to him. Or the universe said, “now it's time for others to take care of you.”

외 할아버지's story of surviving occupation, restarting his life under conditions of war is love being sent back to me through his spirit reminding me how we can persist to transform

hardships into a fulfilled life. This love from 외할아버지 is enmeshed in my identity as a Korean, immigrant, Korean (or Asian) American, and educational leader. My homeland continues to survive a history of invasion and occupation (from China, Mongolia, Japan, and the US) while I live in a country that historically and presently says, *you are welcome here as long as you stay in your place*.

Though Asian Americans live on the fragile ground of being identified by the society they live in as not belonging to it, we are, as a community, connected to a heritage in Asian America of civil rights and social justice activists who demonstrated the pathways to a life fulfilled in the face of precarity (Asian American Political Alliance, 2017; Bacon, 2018; Boggs & Boggs, 1974; Fujino, 2005; Hinnershitz, 2017). The legacy of Asian American leadership and amplifying the justice-oriented work of Asian American leaders past and present creates a way to repudiate white supremacy structures and reimagine the relationship between Asian Americans and the theorizing space of leadership.

Focusing on specific leadership tenets from an Asian American leadership lineage connects each of our concepts of self to a community that worked tirelessly to undo white supremacy structures and enact racial, social, and economic change. Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong embodied and manifested an Asian American heritage of activism in their struggles to find *place* for themselves and their communities within the racist context in America (Bacon, 2018; Boggs & Boggs, 1974; Fujino, 2005). In doing so, Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong demonstrated important leadership practices exemplifying a legacy of Asian American leadership and activism (see Figure 8). Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong provide current Asian American leaders powerful lessons on how to lead, organize, and empower in order to effect societal change, and connects Asian American leaders to those who engaged in practices in

service of racial equity and social justice to repudiate the white dominant culture of America.

Their leadership tenets include eleven guideposts that we can use to examine Asian American leadership:

- Modeling activism as a way to project a *more human* human being with a sense of political and social responsibility (Boggs & Boggs, 1974).
- Working with the oppressed to share a new way of being together and exercise their creativity towards positive societal transformation (Boggs & Boggs, 1974).
- Developing an ideology to address a specific societal contradiction and create a vision to resolve this societal contradiction (Boggs & Boggs, 1974).
- Understanding that leadership and activism are about struggle with no final solution and the struggle is the work (or our highest expression of human creativity) (Boggs & Boggs, 1974).
- Recognizing that the interests, feelings, and concerns of the individual within the collective struggle against institutionalized racism and state power are just as important as the struggle itself (Fujino, 2005).
- Honoring cross-racial coalitions that provide antiracist organizing approaches that resist gains made at the expense of others' (Fujino, 2005).
- Understanding how polarization and racism create artificial divisions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, sexual orientation, and class, impeding any movement's actions towards social justice (Fujino, 2005).
- Building our aspirational world together through the power of our collective consciousness (Throughline, 2021).

- Creating collective power and moving us beyond our polarizations through strategic networking and organizing (Bacon, 2018).
- Recognizing that leadership is about making impact, not notoriety; and the actions of leaders must create positive social change with tangible results (Bacon, 2018).
- Understanding that the work of leadership paves the pathway for future generations to build on the work of past effective leadership.

In this chapter, I review the frameworks that emerged from engaging in Community Learning Exchanges (CLEs) (Aug 2021 -May 2022) with Asian American leaders centered on their dilemmas. Additionally, I review the emerging themes, ideas, or fractals (Brown, 2017) connected to the overarching research question. This chapter concludes with reflections on leadership stemming from emerging themes, ideas, or fractals through the lens of critical race ethnography (CRE).

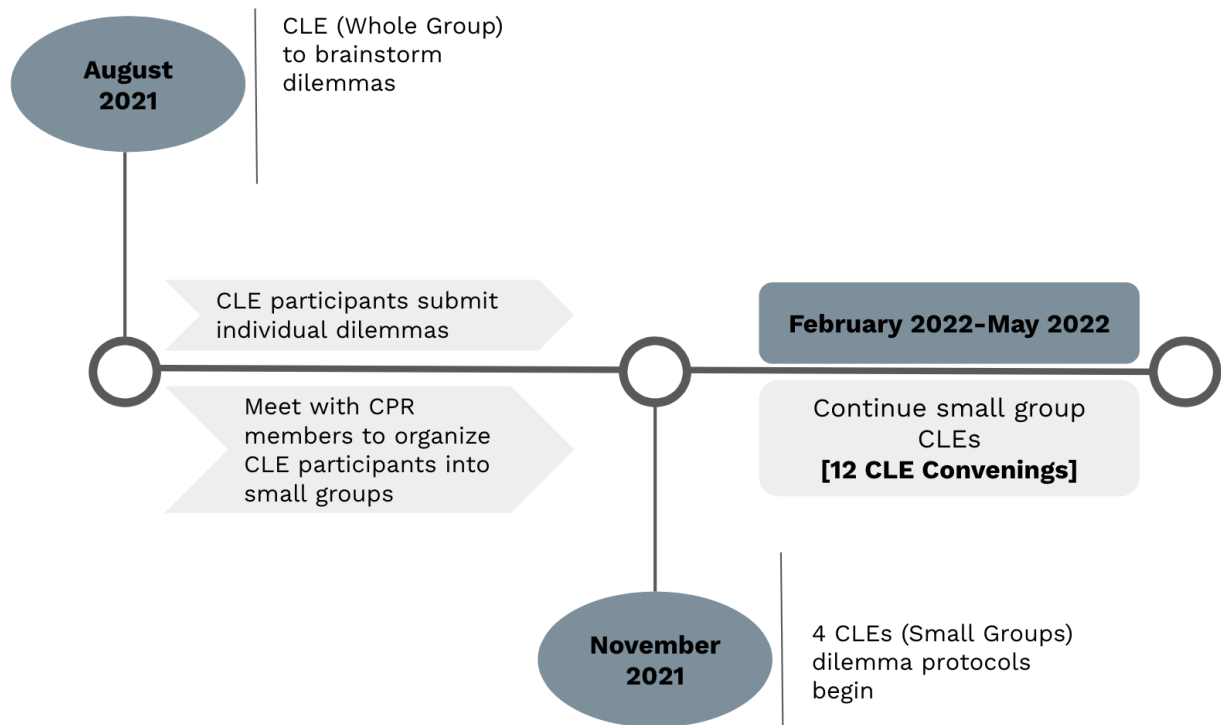
### **Community Learning Exchanges: August 2021 through May 2022**

In using CRE, I aimed to reveal the conditions hindering societal transformation and present ethnographic data that reveal the values and practices normalizing racism in society (Woodson, 2019). In addition, because CRE emphasizes the importance of storytelling, I underscored the “aesthetic and emotional dimensions” that activate an imagination inspiring empathy through vicariously experiencing the world through the eyes of the oppressed (Duncan, 2005, p. 102). In the CRE study, I revealed the perspectives of Asian American leaders as they understood the conditions they face and utilized the conditions they describe to inform how to counteract the historically racist structures oppressing Asian American leaders. To draw out the stories of Asian American leaders, the CRE study participants engaged in CLEs as a process to understand theoretical connections through reflective storytelling; by sharing personal narratives

about being an Asian American leader within the organizational and community structures of a white-dominant society (hunter et al., 2013), we uncovered the ways in which our stories and dilemmas of practice connect us to each other within the transformational space of CLEs and our roots of justice-oriented Asian American activism. Guajardo et al. (2016) assert that CLEs maximize the social aspect of learning experiences and amplify opportunities for conversation, reflection, and exploration as a collective learning process. In Chapter 4, I reviewed the CLE process in which I gathered interested Asian American leaders in convenings in November 2020, February 2021, and May 2021; we centered the convenings on relationship building and ideating our experiences as Asian American leaders. In Phase II of the CRE study, I gathered 18 Asian American leaders between August 2021 and May 2022 to engage in CLEs centered on their dilemmas of leadership (see Figure 47).

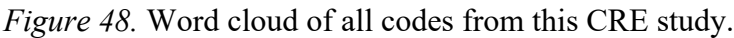
### **Emerging Theoretical Relations**

After holding sixteen dilemma-focused CLEs virtually from November 2021 through May 2022, each convening was transcribed and uploaded to Atlas.ti. The first pass coding was completed through an in vivo process for the transcripts from November 2020 through May 2021. From that process, I described the emerging codes and themes in Chapter 4. By reviewing the codes from the Phase I CLEs (November 2020 through May 2021), I created a word cloud of codes (see Figure 48). Within the Phase I codes of this study, the leadership tenets from Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong showed the highest frequencies. To move from a vast set of codes into a salient set of emerging theoretical relationships, I used thematic analysis to derive meaning from this universe of codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Using thematic analysis, I searched across a data set for repeated patterns of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For this phase of the study, I connected the data from Phase II of the study to the leadership tenets arising from the literature review



*Figure 47. Timeline of Phase II CLE convenings August 2021 through May 2022.*

---



described in Chapter 2. This specific research epistemology supported how I theorized meaning; leading me to the leadership tenets from Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Using the leadership tenets embodied by Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong as the codes for Phase II of this CRE study was a latent approach entailing interpretation beyond description, within an “already theorized” set of knowledge represented by the leadership tenets from Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84).

### ***Leadership Tenets as Theoretical Relations***

Moving from a large set of codes to uncover emerging theoretical relations within the codes, I used the leadership tenets embodied by Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong to provide an ontological and epistemological framework derived from the study’s literature review. By specifically reviewing the lives and actions of Asian American leaders who embodied ways to lead and enact social change with a lens for equity and social justice, I determined a theoretical relationship to the overarching research question: *How do Asian American leaders identify existing and new ontological and epistemological frameworks to affirm their identity and engage in leadership actions pursuing racial, social, and economic justice?*

To connect the leadership tenets demonstrated by Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong to the conversations and stories shared during the dilemma-focused CLEs, I took the following steps:

- First, I coded the transcripts and documents from the Phase II CLEs (August 2021 through May 2022) using the eleven leadership tenets from Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong as codes.
- Second, based on this coding, I reviewed the codes to identify emerging patterns connected to the leadership tenets of Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong. As a result, I developed codes and sub-codes in which participant language was useful in

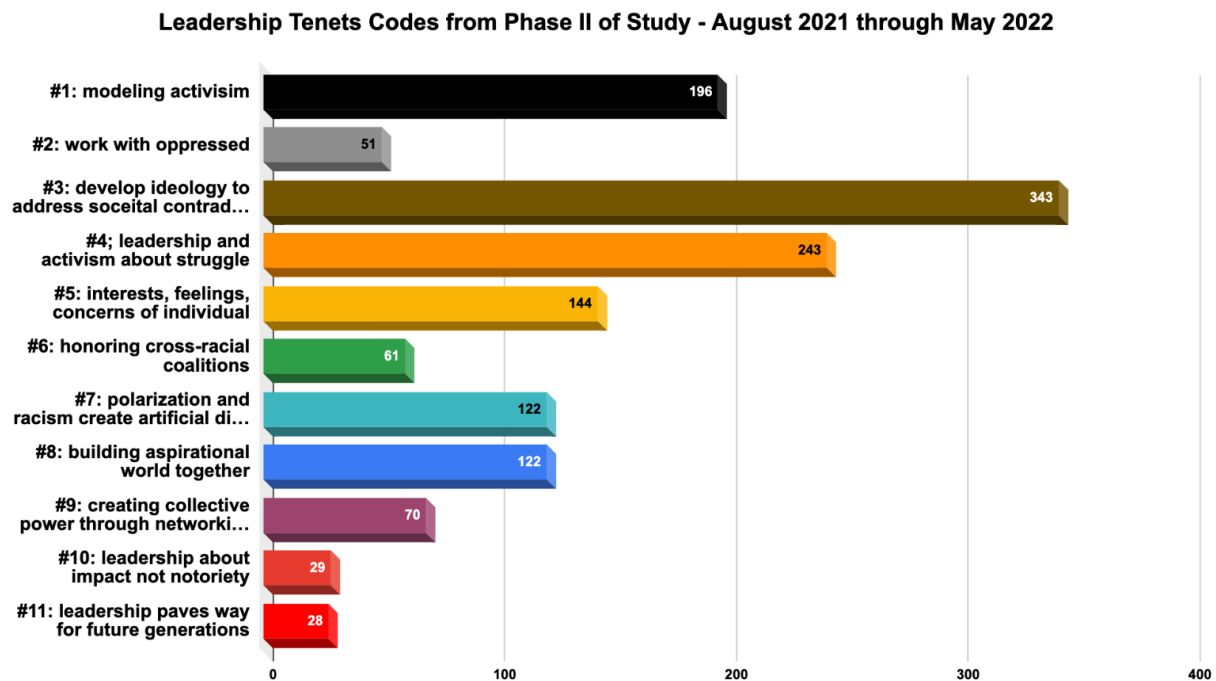


connecting their specific stories and dilemmas to the leadership tenets, CLE axioms, and gracious space attributes.

Figure 49 provides an overview of the number of leadership tenet codes appearing in dilemma-focused CLE transcripts from August 2021 through May 2022. By connecting the narratives and storytelling from the dilemma-focused CLEs to the eleven leadership tenets, I revealed the narratives in which Asian American leaders in the study expressed the psychological and societal conditions they faced (Hunter et al., 2013; Woodson, 2019).

### ***Lens of Fractals***

As one way to begin exploring the connections between the leadership tenets of Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong, I used Brown's (2017) lens of fractals to determine a nonlinear research framework to surface findings from this study. Brown (2017) described fractals as never-ending patterns that are infinitely complex, self-similar across different scales, and created by repeating a simple process over and over in an ongoing, iterative way. Viewing research from the lens of fractals provided an approach to sensing adaptive, non-linear, interconnected, yet decentralized patterns of how participants in the study connected past leadership of justice-oriented Asian Americans connected to their present-day leadership (Brown, 2017). Using fractals as a lens allowed me to weave specific elements from the Chapter 2 literature review (Model Minority/Perpetual Foreigner Concepts; Asian American Leadership; Collectivist Leadership; Cross-Racial Coalition Building), key elements from CRE (revealing conditions, stories, and narratives of oppressed people), the leadership tenets from Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong (see Figure 6), and the CLE axioms (see Chapter 3, Figure 28) to draw out the fractal-like findings emerging as potential theories or claims as they relate to this study's research questions (Bacon,



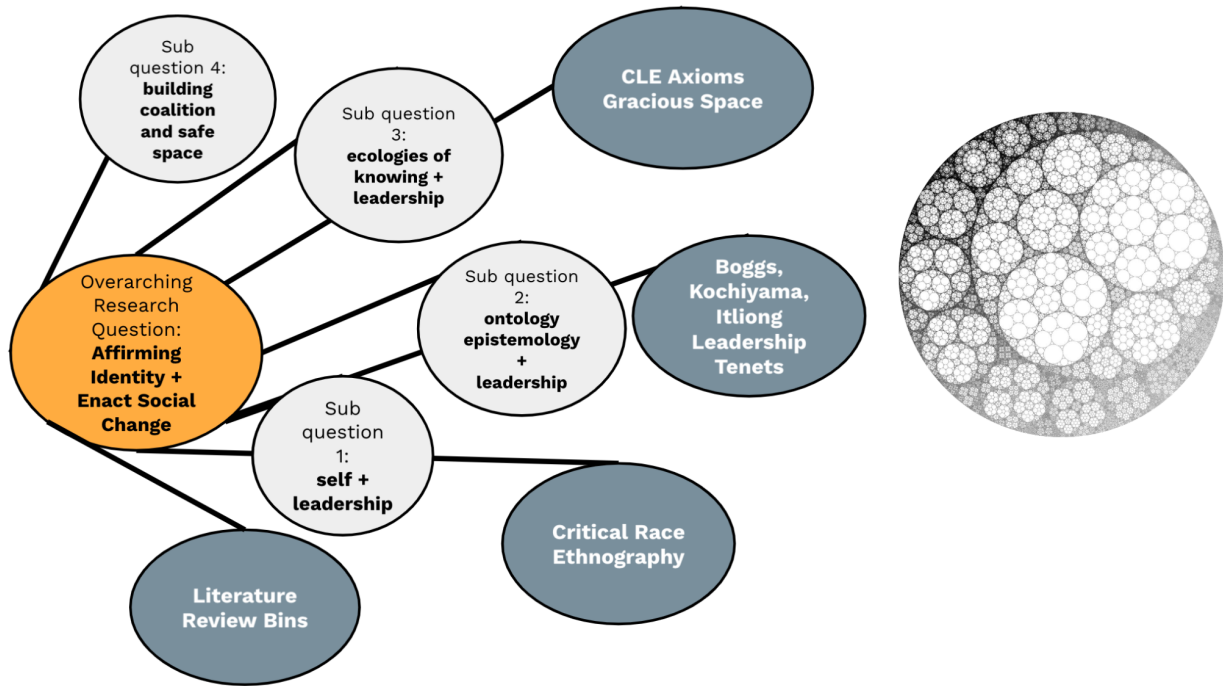
*Figure 49.* Leadership tenets appearing in CLE transcripts August 2021 through May 2022.

2018; Boggs & Boggs, 1974; Duncan, 2005; Fujino, 2005; Guajardo et al., 2016; Paris, 2021; Woodson, 2019).

As a reminder to the reader, the overarching research question for this study asks: *How do Asian American leaders identify existing and new ontological and epistemological frameworks to affirm their identity and engage in leadership actions pursuing racial, social, and economic justice?* And the sub questions are as follows:

- How does knowing the self affirm leaders' individual identities and inform leadership actions for Asian American leaders?
- What are the ontological and epistemological frameworks of Asian American historical leadership legacies that inform leadership actions for current Asian American leaders?
  - How do these historical legacies inform the development of new ontological and epistemological relations for Asian American leaders?
- How do Asian American leaders balance their individual identities with a collective Asian American identity to inform how they enact leadership actions in their organizations (meso) and communities (macro)?
- How do CLEs, the researcher, and participants of this CRE study build a coalition of Asian American leaders who support each other to understand and implement transformative leadership actions within their organizations and communities?

In Figure 50, I depict a framework for how the overarching research questions, sub questions, literature review, CRE, the leadership tenets from Boggs, Kochiyama, Itliong, and the CLE axioms spiral together to support theorizing the data arising from this study. One component of the spiral providing the fractal-like relations is the literature review of the CRE study, in which I



*Note.* (Bacon, 2018; Benham, 2002; Boggs & Boggs, 1974; Fujino, 2005; González, 2016; Huynh et al., 2011; Kawai, 2005; Kim & Lee, 2001; Lee et al., 2020; McIntyre et al., 1998; Merseth, 2018; Nguyen, 2020; Ospina, 2017; Quick, 2017; Rosile et al., 2018; Uhl-Bien et al., 2007; Wu, 2014).

*Figure 50.* Framework for emerging theoretical relations.

first explored the interconnectedness of Asian American leaders to historical legacies often forgotten or intentionally erased from academic research. Using this lens of analysis, I could determine how the leaders discussed the societal conditions set by the model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts and their impacts on Asian American leaders' ability to attain and sustain leadership positions (Huynh et al., 2011; Kawai, 2005; Wu, 2014). By relying on the literature review that delved into the demonstrated leadership of Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong within the context of oppressive societal structures created by white supremacy (Bacon, 2018; Boggs & Boggs, 1974; Fujino, 2005), I could further assert the importance engaging in leadership actions to serve all people; that substantiated a turn away from the individualistic western views of leadership toward a more a collectivist approach (Benham, 2002; Ospina, 2017; Quick, 2017; Rosile et al., 2018; Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). On reviewing conditions and actions that promote or hinder cross-racial coalition building as Asian Americans, participants demonstrated how we are key members in a changing landscape in the US of a decolonizing, non-white majority who hold the ability to create political change (González, 2016; Kim & Lee, 2001; Lee et al., 2020; McIntyre et al., 1998; Merseth, 2018; Nguyen, 2020). Each of these lenses are critical to understanding how Asian American leaders can affirm their identities and understand how to enact social change.

Another component of Figure 50 is CRE, which is the research methodology I used for this study. In using CRE, I aimed to reveal the conditions hindering societal transformation and present ethnographic data revealing the values and practices normalizing racism in society (Woodson, 2019). Understanding the values, practices, and conditions normalizing racism in society through the perspective of Asian American leaders is a key aspect of how this study is rooted in CRE. By using CRE, I could create an understanding of the experiences, stories, and

narratives of the conditions Asian American leaders must navigate across the ecologies of knowing: self, organization, community to inform ways all leaders can counteract racism and enact social change (Guajardo et al., 2016; Woodson, 2019).

Another component of this spiral is the leadership tenets from Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong. Their experiences provide current Asian American leaders powerful lessons on how to lead, organize, and empower in order to effect societal change (Bacon, 2018; Boggs & Boggs, 1974; Fujino, 2005). The leadership tenets draw out the forgotten or intentionally erased legacy of the demonstrated actions of justice-oriented Asian American leadership providing a way for Asian American leaders to understand their ancestral heritage of impact in driving social, economic, and racial justice.

The CLE axioms and gracious space are intertwined as another component in this spiral as I used these values and norms to create a safe, nurturing, purposeful, and rigorous space to learn from each other and in public (Guajardo et al., 2016; Hughes, 2017). From the beginning of this CRE study in November of 2020 through the end of the dilemma-focused CLE process, I used the CLE axioms and elements of gracious space to remind the study's participants that the CLE space was a place for Asian American leaders to come together and connect in order to support the work of each other as Asian American leaders and share our stories to affirm each other, hear our dilemmas, and move towards enacting social change.

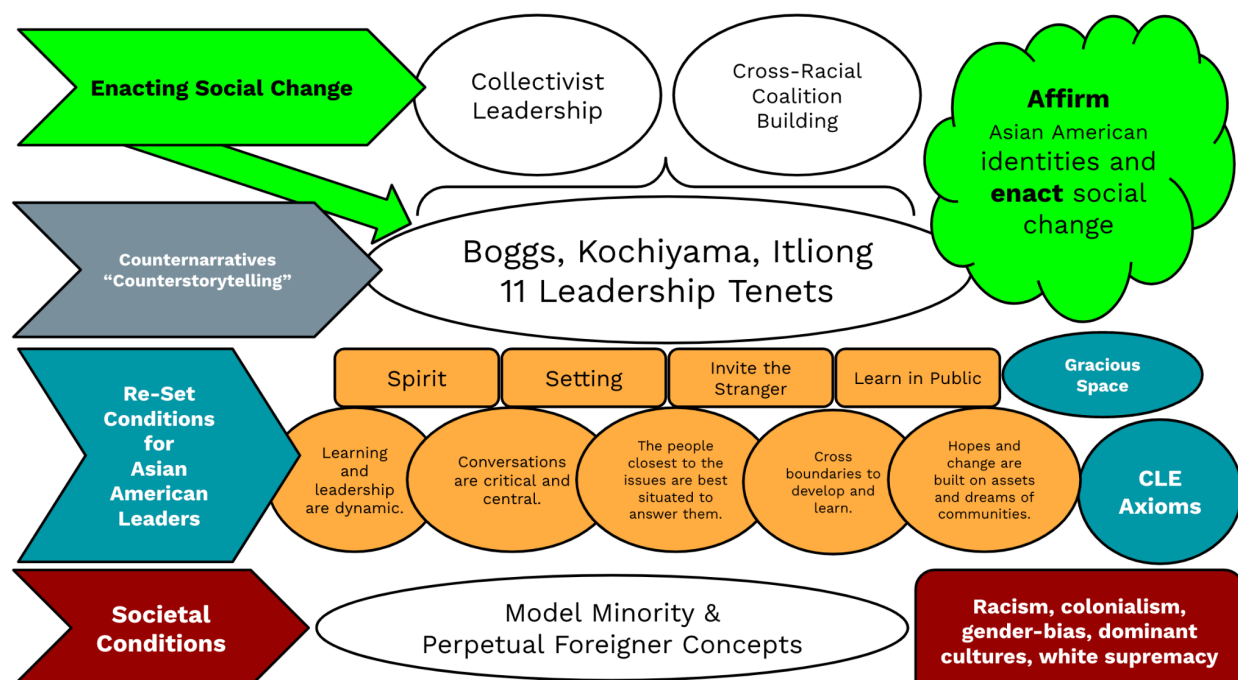
For the CRE study, using the framework from Figure 50 provided a map to begin making fractal-like connections with the overarching research question asking how Asian American leaders affirm their identity and enact social change. As a result, they explored self and leadership and their ontologies, epistemologies, and leadership perspectives; examined ecologies of knowing and leadership; and built a coalition and a safe space to examine our leadership.

These conditions and practices interlink with the conceptual elements from the CRE study's literature review, the key principles from CRE, the leadership tenets from Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong, the CLE axioms, and elements of gracious space. These connections underscore the fractals of knowledge emerging from this study through the codes from the Phase II CLE transcripts of the CRE study. As indigenous science approaches first seek to observe the natural world for wisdom, I took a similar approach by looking for an "organic emergence of wisdom" from the CLEs and participants of this CRE study (Rosile et al., 2018, p. 323).

### ***Creating a Theorizing Space***

In using the eleven leadership tenets from Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong as the main codes (see Figure 49), I intersected these with the framework from Figure 50, which provided a holistic, non-linear approach to consider the emerging theoretical relations from participants' stories within the narratives of white dominant culture while simultaneously revealing "constructionist epistemology" seeking "to understand the socio-cultural contexts and structural conditions that enable an individual's account of experience and meaning" (hunter et al., 2013, pp. 114, 118).

In Figure 51, I visually depict my approach to begin the theorizing process from the CLE participants' stories, and narratives to reveal potential responses to the overarching research questions and sub questions. In the visual, I connect the societal conditions with the model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts and their connections to racism, colonialism, gender, culture, and heritage (Huynh et al., 2011; Kawai, 2005; Kim, 1999; Kim, 2011; Wu, 2014). The next level connects the ways the CLE axioms and elements of gracious space set safe, nurturing, and rigorous conditions to be in space with fellow Asian American leaders (Guajardo et al., 2016; Hughes, 2017). In the next level up, I show how the leadership tenets from Boggs,



*Note.* (Bacon, 2018; Benham, 2002; Boggs & Boggs, 1974; Fujino, 2005; González, 2016; Guajardo et al., 2016; Hughes, 2017; Huynh et al., 2011; Kawai, 2005; Kim & Lee, 2001; Lee et al., 2020; McIntyre et al., 1998; Merseth, 2018; Nguyen, 2020; Ospina, 2017; Quick, 2017; Rosile et al., 2018; Uhl-Bien et al., 2007; Wu, 2014).

*Figure 51.* Visual map of theorizing space.



Kochiyama, and Itliong are counternarratives for the societal conditions Asian American leaders must contend with (Bacon, 2018; Boggs & Boggs, 1974; Duncan, 2005; Fujino, 2005; Woodson, 2019). Both the leadership tenets and the last level of the visual depicts the ways Asian American leaders can enact social change (González, 2016; Kim & Lee, 2001; McIntyre et al., 1998; Merseth, 2018; Nguyen, 2020; Ospina, 2017; Quick, 2017; Rosile et al., 2018; Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). One theorizing answer from this visual to the overarching research questions is clear: when Asian American leaders are in a safe and rigorous space through elements from the CLE axioms and gracious space and connect their experiences to leadership legacies of their ancestors and aspire towards collectivist leadership, cross-racial coalitions, Asian American leaders affirm who they are and move towards enacting social change (Guajardo et al., 2016; hunter et al., 2013).

### **Making Emerging Theoretical Relations Visible**

I provide the overview of the codes derived from the dilemma-focused CLE transcripts (see Figure 49). However, in reviewing the eleven leadership tenets from Boggs, Kochiyama, Itliong that make visible the fractal-like connections within these codes and subcodes, I developed a framework to delve deeper into the study data (see Figure 51). As part of the theorizing process, Saldaña (2016) notes *structural coding* is appropriate for qualitative studies with multiple participants to gather major categories or themes. Structural coding allows for coding and initial categories for a data set to corresponding commonalities, differences, and relationships within a qualitative study (Saldaña, 2016). Generally, structural coding results in the identification of “broad topics” that form the footing for in-depth analysis within or across concepts emerging from a qualitative study (Saldaña, 2016, p. 100). Similar to what is being described in Figure 39, the eleven leadership tenets are anchor concepts intersecting with each

other; I combined these tenets with codes derived from the literature review, the elements of CRE, CLE axioms, and elements of gracious space.

In this section, I describe the intersections of these theoretical relations arising from the eleven leadership tenet codes connected with the dilemma-focused CLE transcripts. Previously (see Figure 41) I provided an overview of the leadership tenets as codes deriving from Boggs, Kochiyama, Itliong, and their highest frequency co-occurring leadership tenet codes shown numerically and matched in color with the corresponding leadership tenet from the dilemma-focused CLE transcripts. This was the first step I took to visualize vivid codes (Saldaña, 2016).

Reviewing the leadership tenets and comparing their co-occurring leadership tenets during the dilemma-focused CLEs provided a pool of codes from which I could draw subcodes. In Figure 52, I provided an overview of leadership tenets and the most frequently co-occurring leadership tenets to look across the study's body of data to begin articulating the CRE study's emerging theoretical relations (Saldaña, 2016). In this, I describe each leadership tenet and present emerging subcodes from transcript excerpts, which is represented through a Sankey diagram for each leadership tenet (Google, n.d.). A Sankey diagram is a "visualization to depict flow from one set of values to another" to show mapping between domains, many-to-many connections, or "multiple paths through a set of stages" (Google, n.d.).

### **Leadership Tenet #1: "More Human" Human Activism**

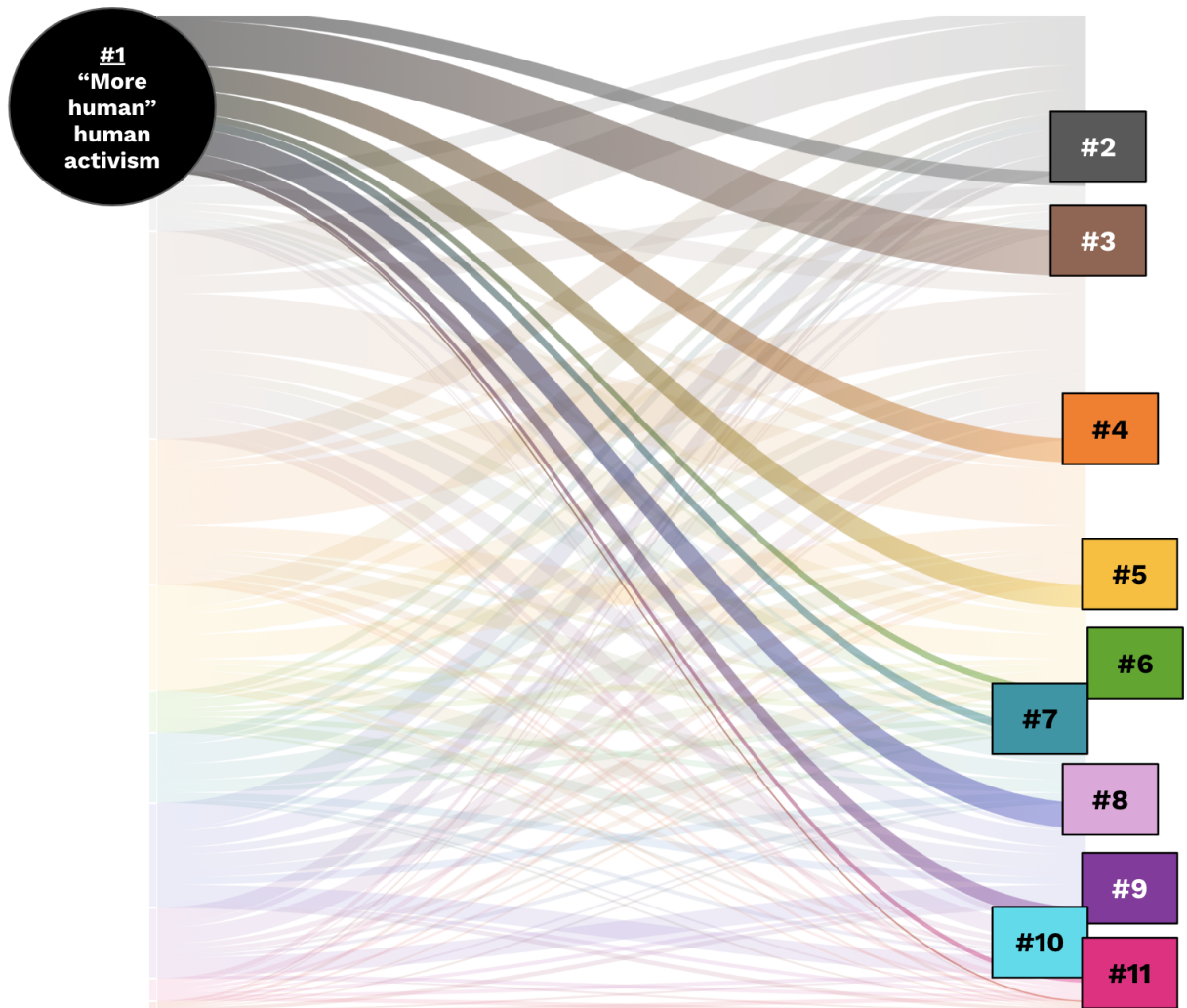
Intertwining leadership tenet #1 from Boggs and Boggs (1974) with the CLE axioms, and elements of gracious space provides one theoretical relation in response to the overarching research question from this CRE study: *How do Asian American leaders identify existing and new ontological and epistemological frameworks to affirm their identity and engage in*

| BOGGS, KOCHIYAMA, ITLIONG LEADERSHIP TENETS CODES               | HIGHEST FREQUENCY CO-OCCURRING CODES |   |    |   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|----|---|
| #1: modeling activism                                           | 3                                    | 4 | 5  | 8 |
| #2: work with oppressed                                         | 1                                    | 3 |    |   |
| #3: develop ideology to address societal contradiction          | 4                                    |   |    |   |
| #4: leadership and activism about struggle                      | 3                                    |   |    |   |
| #5: interests, feelings, concerns of individual                 | 1                                    |   |    |   |
| #6: honoring cross-racial coalitions                            | 1                                    | 3 | 8  |   |
| #7: polarization and racism create artificial divisions         | 3                                    | 4 |    |   |
| #8: building aspirational world together                        | 1                                    |   |    |   |
| #9: creating collective power through networking and organizing | 1                                    | 3 | 8  |   |
| #10: leadership about impact not notoriety                      | 1                                    | 3 | 8  | 9 |
| #11: leadership paves way for future generations                | 3                                    | 8 | 10 |   |

*Figure 52.* Leadership tenet codes and highest frequency co-occurring codes from Phase II

CLEs.

*leadership actions pursuing racial, social, and economic justice?* Boggs and Boggs (1974) asserted that activism and leadership or what they term revolution is not just for correcting past injustices; rather this type of activism and leading begins with us projecting a “more human human being” engaging in the work with creativity, self and collective consciousness, and a sense of political and social responsibility (p. 19). Aligned with this leadership tenet is the first CLE axiom reminding us that “learning and leadership are a dynamic social process” where relationships are the core of process and it is necessary to set conditions nurturing the development of leadership (or more human human-ness) in an “inviting and dignified manner” (Guajardo et al., 2016, p. 21). Gracious Space asks us to bring our *spirit* to exude compassion, joy, hope, curiosity, humor, while simultaneously reminding us to establish settings which appeal to our five senses along with sixth sense of intuition, creativity, and imagination (Hughes, 2017). Taking the subset of codes with co-occurrences from Figure 53 for the first leadership tenet and reviewing the data appearing in dilemma-focused CLE transcripts, begins to show potential theoretical relations in the intersections between leadership tenet #1 (modeling activism), CLE axiom #1 (learning and leadership are dynamic social processes), and gracious space elements (spirit and setting). Two subcodes reveal the ways Asian American leaders can envision and use cognitive dissonance as an opportunity to think and reimagine ways to lead more justly. I portray the potential connections in Figure 53 through the connections between leadership tenet #1 (“more human” human activism) and its strong connections to leadership tenet #3 (resolving societal contradictions). By envisioning how Asian Americans are models of leadership and imagining ways to lead away from the white racist structures of America are significant emerging findings to consider in leadership research.



*Figure 53. Leadership tenet #1 Sankey diagram - co-occurrences with other leadership tenets.*

*Envisioning an Asian American leader* was a subcode from a November 2021 small group, dilemma-focused CLE where one of the participants affirmed another CLE participant:

I obviously have not gone through what you have gone through. Just really, really look up to the way that you're able to play out those situations with as much integrity as possible. I think being attacked personally is obviously a very difficult thing, especially in public, so in a way it almost reinforces what I envision an Asian American leader to be. Being able to [bear] witness is powerful for me. So thank you for sharing your story.

Within the structures of a dilemma-focused CLE, the excerpt noted within the subcode, *envisioning an Asian American leader*, was the result of a conversation about a dilemma in which the participant asked for our input as a group on how to approach the continued effort to try to end selective admissions to public secondary schools in a school district in The Northeast of the United States. When the dilemma-sharing participant shared about being personally attacked publicly for a stance against selective admissions policies, this excerpt captures a moment in which another CLE participant saw the projection of integrity and what an Asian American leader is supposed to be.

*Using cognitive dissonance in service of imagining and new possibilities* was another subcode from a February 2022 small group, dilemma-focused CLE from a participant discussing cognitive dissonance:

I'm just thinking about the power of cognitive dissonance. The key ingredient is dissonance right? You have to perturb the system to create the curiosity and imagination and the flow. And what I appreciate about this space is how sustaining and nurturing it is. But [this space] is not exactly the same as inviting cognitive dissonance. Because, sometimes by inviting [cognitive dissonance] we can create a false dichotomy of not

being caring and nurturing and supportive. I'm wondering how we balance that when we engage in a consultancy. We're here to support you, because life is tough, it's tough out there. And yet we want to be in a place where we're still playing that critical role and creating that cognitive dissonance so that some of this imagination and consideration of new possibilities can happen.

Within the structures of different dilemma-focused CLEs, the excerpt from a CLE participant under the subcode *using cognitive dissonance in service of imagining and new possibilities* shared a different perspective about projecting a more human human being. During an opening discussion about productive ambiguity, participants engaged in discussing how “ambiguity becomes productive when our encounters with difference stimulate curiosity, imagination, and consideration of new possibilities and perspectives” (Shipe, 2019). Within this discussion, a participant wondered how our group can be a supportive consultancy, invite cognitive dissonance, and hold the CLE space with tension so that we can imagine possibilities without falling into a false dichotomy that inviting dissonance means we are not being caring or nurturing.

## **Leadership Tenet #2: Working with the Oppressed**

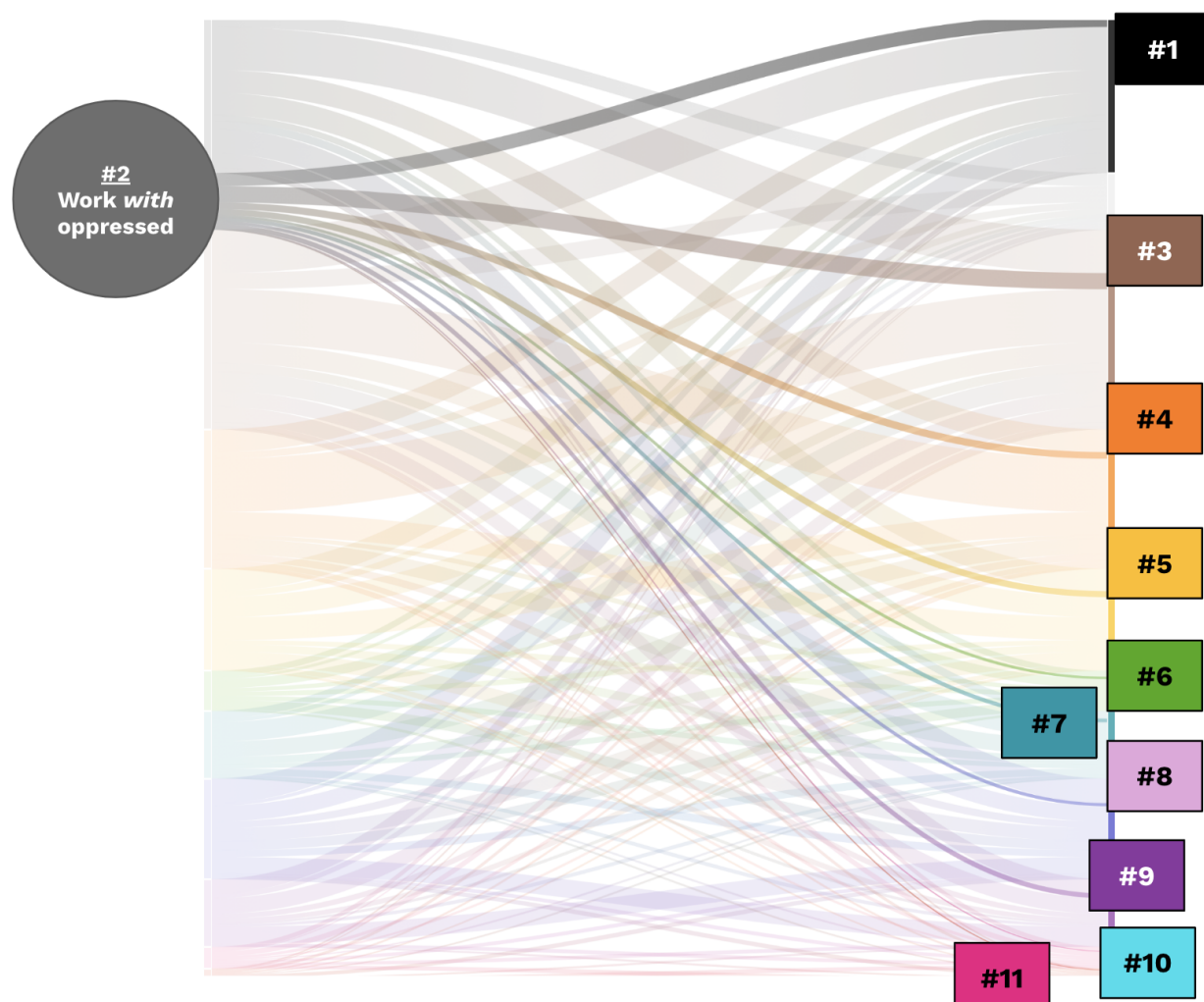
The second leadership tenet, working with the oppressed, aligns with the third CLE axiom, which asserts that people closest to the issues are best situated to discover answers to local concerns (Guajardo et al., 2016). Boggs and Boggs (1974) remind us that in the wake of activism in the 1960s for civil rights, Black Power, and antiwar movements, marginalized groups (women, Chicanos, Native Americans, Asian Americans, the LGBTQ community, and disabled) were “creating their own movements for recognition and social change” and their “vitality and creativity” remind us to create movements beyond the Black-white binary (p. xxvii). These

movements abandoned the typically hierarchical structures of leadership based on charismatic male archetypes of leaders and created a more participatory form of leadership within a flattened hierarchy (Boggs & Boggs, 1974). Taking the co-occurrences from Figure 54, I reviewed the subcodes and co-occurring subcodes that appeared in the dilemma-focused CLE transcripts that begin to show potential connections between leadership tenet #2 (working with oppressed), CLE axiom #3 (people closest to the issues are best situated to discover answers to local concerns) to address the overarching research question by uncovering ways to ensure there is an intentional, co-constructed space for all members in a community to be empowered to create change. This is shown visually in Figure 54 through the connections between leadership tenet #2 (work with oppressed) and its connections to leadership tenet #1 (“more human” human activism) and leadership tenet #3 (resolving societal contradictions). Working with the oppressed requires us to co-construct a space with them, and the space must have a purpose to both humanize members of a community and to act toward racial, social, and economic justice.

*There is a space for all of us* was one subcode from a November 2021 small group, dilemma-focused CLE transcript. One participant, who is mixed-race (white and Korean) noted that in their work, “Asians are generally not seen as a minority” and that “there is space” for all of us “Asian, Latino/Hispanic, Black and Brown” to not have to tread carefully around a majority of leaders who are white men or women. The excerpt in full states:

It's never a question of whether or not equity is important, it's, are they comfortable having the conversations with white males or white females? So they feel they need to tread carefully. [In] my leadership experiences, Asians are generally not seen as a minority, which I think is a challenge, because I would agree that there is space for all of us Asian, Latino/Hispanic, Black and Brown [people]. Where do we find the time and the





*Figure 54. Leadership tenet #2 Sankey diagram - co-occurrences with other leadership tenets.*

space and how do we get individuals to see why [discussing racial equity is] really important, because I think if you're a white male or female, or people think you're a white male or female, they're really struggling with what what's happening and not understanding it completely.

The second leadership tenet asks us to work with the oppressed in order to provide space for the oppressed to exercise their creativity towards positive societal transformation (Boggs & Boggs, 1974). The subcode, *there is space for all of us*, echoes the spirit of this second leadership tenet. When we are in spaces that are predominantly white-dominated, it is important for racially marginalized groups to find time and space to find ways to express the importance of racial equity in organizational and community spaces.

*Ensuring different groups become part of the story* was another subcode from a February 2022 small group, dilemma-focused CLE transcript where the participant presenting about their dilemma was reflecting on how issues are often framed for Black and Brown children, but the participant wonders how Asian children, neuro-diverse children, and children with other disabilities become part of the story. The full excerpt states:

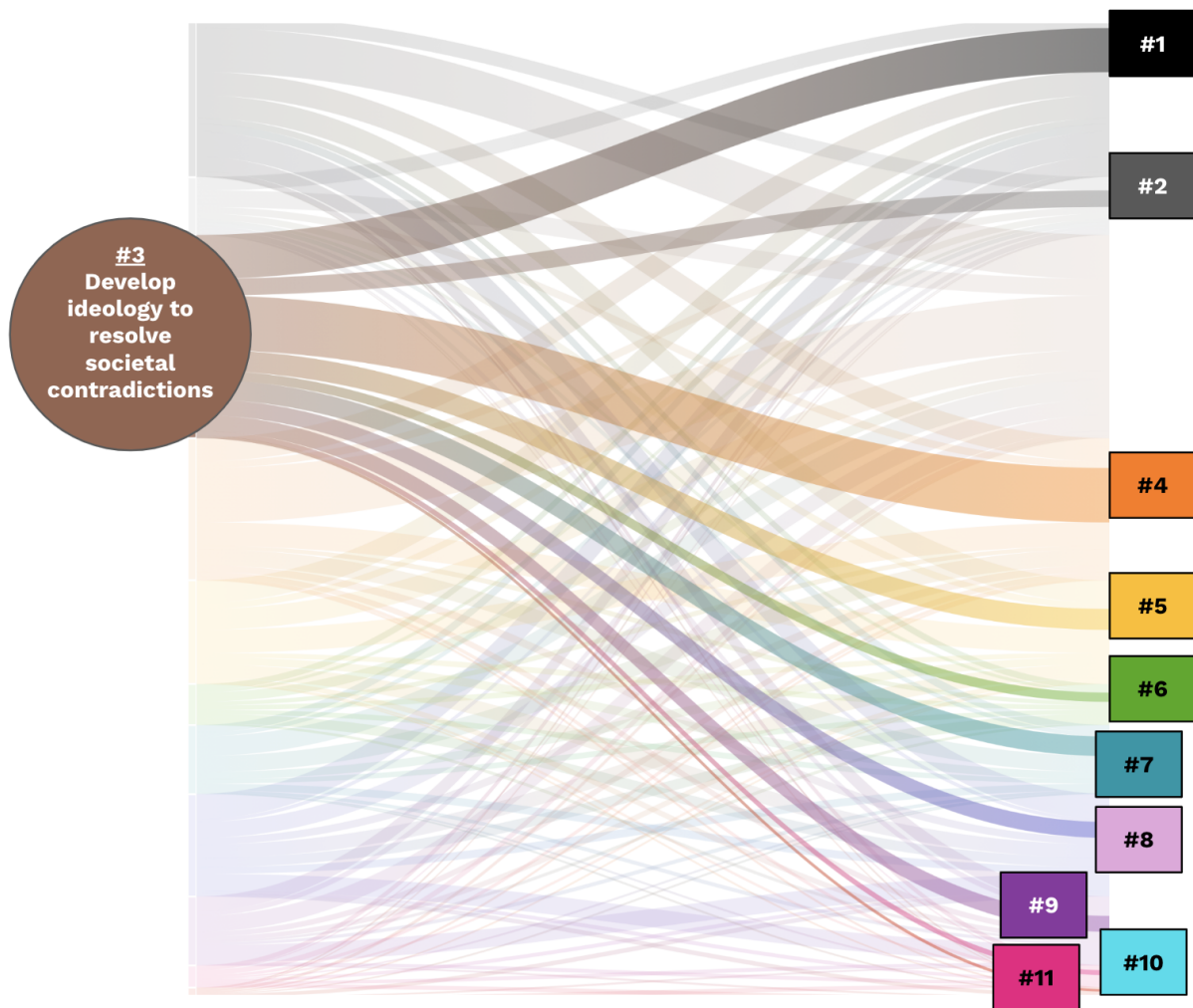
I've always framed issues as what we need for Black and Brown children. That's where I've always talked about things professionally. How do Asian children become part of the story? Neurodiverse children and other [children with] disabilities? You know there's so many other groups. How do we frame it in those ways, how do we advocate for the fact that schools are broken for many and advocate for the fact that we need to focus especially on the ways that they've hurt Black and Brown children?

Additionally, the second leadership tenet asks us to create movements with oppressed people beyond the Black-white binary and perhaps beyond all binaries (Boggs & Boggs, 1974). The

subcode, *ensuring different groups become part of the story*, highlights the need to see beyond binaries that unnecessarily narrow our lens to the experience of people who are oppressed. Instead, as this participant noted, understanding the theoretical relations of oppression within schools for Black, Brown, Asian, neuro-diverse, and other children with disabilities is a more abundant approach to understand the grain size of oppression more fully in our country.

### **Leadership Tenet #3: Develop an Ideology to Resolve Societal Contradictions**

The third leadership tenet asks leaders to develop an ideology, noted as a set of ideas based on analyzing the main contradictions of society that leaders are attempting to change, the work of leadership requires a visioning of a “higher form of reality” resolving the main contradictions leaders seek to resolve (Boggs & Boggs, 1974, p. 129). The leadership tenet connects to the social change aspect of the CRE study’s overarching research question and the sub question pertaining to the new ontological and epistemological frameworks potentially informing leadership actions. With this third leadership tenet, the participants were still grappling with the societal contradictions and, although they did not share fully-developed ideologies, they had ideas about grappling with societal contradictions. Taking the subset of codes with co-occurrences from Figure 55 and reviewing the data appearing in dilemma-focused CLE transcripts, the study participants had perspectives on resolving societal contradictions through highlighting the importance of seeking out each other’s wisdom, acknowledging the system of white supremacy, and lifting up Asian American marginalization. In Figure 55, I represent the connections among leadership tenet #3 (develop ideology to resolve societal contradictions) with leadership tenet #1 (“more human” human activism) and leadership tenet #4 (leadership and activism about struggle). The start of developing ideologies to resolve societal contradictions



*Figure 55. Leadership tenet #3 Sankey diagram - co-occurrences with other leadership tenets.*

such as racism, require that we engage in humanistic activism and struggle through the process of leading and activism in order to sustain change.

One subcode from a November 2021 small group, dilemma-focused CLE noted the importance of *gathering wisdom and advice to develop clear steps*. The excerpt states:

Since this is my dilemma, I would really like to be proactive. You know, gather your advice and your wisdom, so that I can develop clear steps about this particular question of selective schools and how I can use my platform [to] push to make things much more equitable for all kids than they are now.

The third leadership tenet is centered on projecting a vision of a higher form of reality to support the resolving of societal contradictions and connecting the projection of this vision to forces supporting leadership and change (Boggs & Boggs, 1974). From this participant's lens, the CLE participants engaging in the discussion about selective schools in public school districts is one force for change in the participant's pursuit of resolving the contradiction on inequity in schools. This participant explains that gathering the advice and wisdom allows for the development of clear steps so that the participant can use a platform to create equitable situations for all students.

*See the system driven by white supremacy* was another subcode connected to the third leadership tenet from a large group CLE held in August 2021, in which one participant shared the experience of anger as he worked through the inequity of access to water and power driven by white supremacy. The excerpt for this subcode states:

Yeah I think the anger piece is something that I'm sort of working through. I mean in corporate America and consulting you know there, there was sort of a sense of helplessness and perhaps anger at the system. Here in this work [equitable distribution of

water and power] that I'm doing, [there is] just a broad system that's sort of driven by white supremacy [that] has created inequities. It's pretty frustrating.

This CLE participant's reflection was an important step to acknowledge as it relates to the third leadership tenet asking us to project a higher form of reality beyond the societal contradictions we see. This participant named anger at how much white supremacy drives access to water and power as the starting place for his work in resolving the inequities of how water and power are distributed.

*Lift up Asian American marginalization to reveal the well-hidden prejudices in society* was a fourth subcode connected to the leadership tenet that asks us to see a reality more clearly to reveal the hidden prejudices in society driven by white supremacy. The excerpt for this subcode comes from a large group CLE held in August 2021 and states:

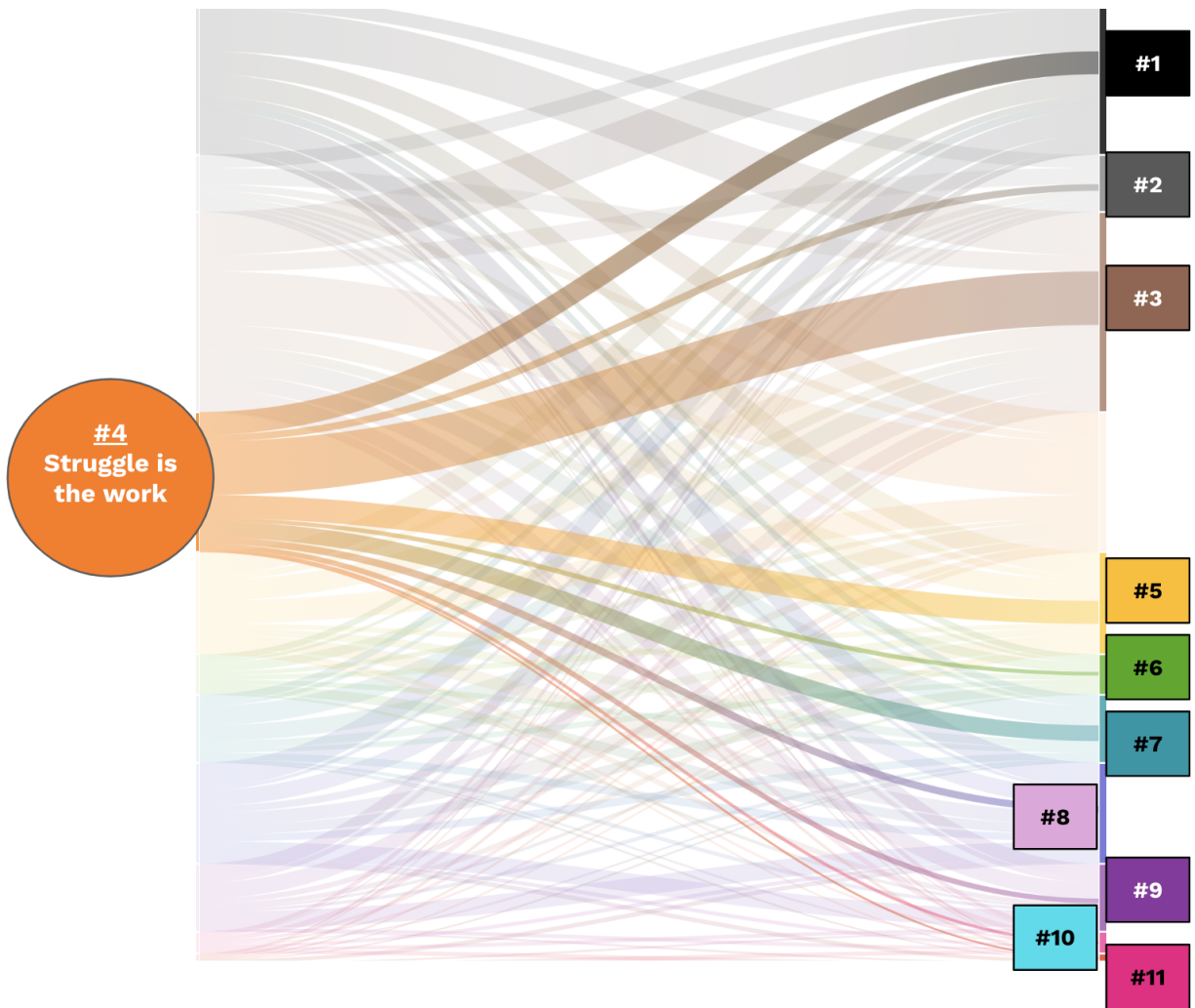
It's interesting in a university setting. We often talk in much more objective terms that makes it feel like conversations about white supremacy or conversations about how Asians are marginalized become not muted, but maybe trivialized to some extent, which I think is dangerous. And I feel like I'm still very young and trying to even understand my own ethnic awareness, let alone trying to get to the place where I can somehow incorporate myself in a healthy way you know, to contribute to a more equitable society. I thought [one participant] said something really helpful, where it seems that the ways that our society is prejudiced is through a mode which hides itself very well. It doesn't reveal itself in obvious ways.

This participant noted the challenges of working in a university setting where conversations about white supremacy or conversations about Asian marginalization become dangerously trivialized. The participant wondered how to incorporate an individual perspective in a “healthy

way” (which I see as ways to not hold everything and not get fired as one of the few Asian American faculty members) to contribute is a challenge connoting the ways white supremacy culture hides prejudice well. And as racially marginalized leaders, one of the projections of a higher reality we must work toward is to make visible the trivializations continuing to allow prejudices within our society to be kept hidden.

#### **Leadership Tenet #4: Struggle Is the Work**

The fourth leadership tenet reminds us that leaders and activists should abandon the concept of seeing themselves as victims and instead “acquired confidence in their own capacity” to persist by understanding that struggle is “in fact the highest expression of human creativity” (Boggs & Boggs, 1974, p. 266). The leadership tenet connects to the element of gracious space related to inviting the stranger and alternative perspectives and the sub question for the study connected to self and leadership (Hughes, 2017). In gracious space, we need to face the stranger within us and others when considering complexity and innovation (our struggle in the case of this leadership tenet), and our work/struggle requires us to understand the ways to broaden our viewpoints for ideas that can initially be strange to ourselves and others (Hughes, 2017). In Figure 56, I represent the connections between leadership tenet #4 (struggle is the work) and its links to leadership tenet #1 (“more human” human activism) and leadership tenet #3 (resolving societal contradictions). These connections emphasize the hard road of leading and emphasize the amount of struggle it takes to effect change in organizations and society. Then I share the study participants’ perspectives on struggle by describing the struggle of making things work despite challenging contexts, struggling to reveal truths about prejudices, and asking the question to ascertain how school systems are quietly destructive for students.



*Figure 56. Leadership tenet #4 Sankey diagram - co-occurrences with other leadership tenets.*



*You kind of plug the holes making it successful* was one subcode that appeared through an excerpt from a CLE participant during a large group CLE held in August 2021 that states:

So I almost want to be like rather than kind of creating havoc I almost want to [be] behind the scenes [to] show that this works quietly right and then like see that it's successful and then be like 'Oh, you know look, you know just more than before... You kind of plug the holes making it successful and [show] it's successful rather than [just saying it].

The struggle of the individual leader (who is a special education leader in a suburban district in California) being uncertain about whether it is valid that they work behind the scenes, plugging holes to create success within their special education services, hoping it makes sense for what success looks like. The CLE participants shared their individual struggles in their pursuit of enacting change within their school systems. The importance of being vulnerable individually in a safe space amongst fellow Asian American leaders is one theoretical relation connecting how reflecting on self in front of others affirms our leadership struggles (Hughes 2017).

*It takes a lot of work to reveal the truth* was another subcode articulated through an excerpt from a CLE participant during the same large group CLE held in August 2021 that states:

[The hidden prejudices] kind of manifests being in this racial hierarchy and it takes a lot of work to reveal the truth. And I appreciated that [idea of looking for hidden prejudices] and it helps me want to get to know more about how to reveal the truth and what we can do about that truth [about the prejudices in society].

Sometimes the struggle sounds simple; however, when a university professor wonders about how to do the work to reveal the truth about the hidden prejudices within our society driven by many white supremacy structures as an Asian American leader, the work is complex and potentially

dangerous. As Asian American leaders, are we the one to bring to light the racial prejudices that exist at the risk of our jobs, public scrutiny? If the answer is yes, how do we go about enacting change allowing everyone around to see the prejudices and want to act to change our world for the better?

*Where in school is it quietly destructive for students?* was another subcode connected to this fourth leadership tenet from a small group, dilemma-focused CLE in which the participant (who is a principal in an urban district in California) states:

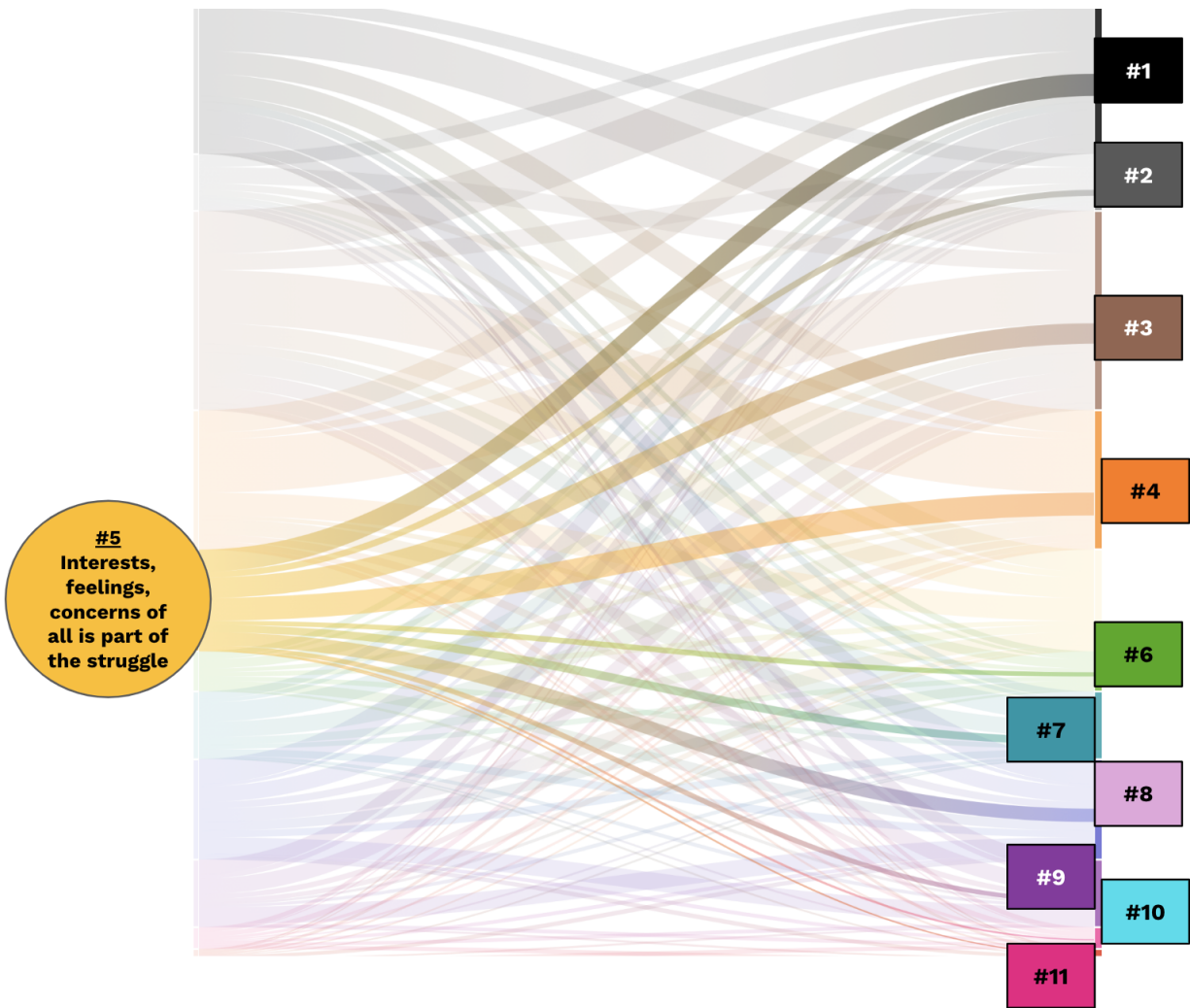
This morning I spent suspending or following up the families of about 20 different Black students, mostly male. That I either had to kick out or engage with law enforcement, or you know, like there was just a lot that happened last night. And I really don't know how [or] what I would have done differently. I don't know what the things are that we would have to do to avoid being in a place of like reacting to a crisis situation. And so I think for me it's like you know what does that look like? And so that's really about discipline and safety right? But I think, where I see it be more destructive, like quietly destructive for our students, is in other systems that exist in the school, [like] grading polic[ies]. [Are] students being rewarded for being compliant as opposed to demonstrating learning or showing a creative way of thinking about curriculum? [My school] [has] a significant teacher of color population. We have a fair amount of Black and Brown teachers, many of whom are from [our city]. And yet the curriculum, their curriculum is still often traditional. So it's very didactic and I'm amazed at how often our history teachers of color are still perpetuating a Eurocentric curriculum. What are the decisions that I make as a leader that could inherently be racist or anti-Black that I just can't see and then also like

where am I where can I better call out or lead our school to address inequities and policies?

Balancing safety and discipline with what true learning can be for students is a struggle. This principal discussed having to suspend 20 different students who are mostly Black and male and acknowledged the school response probably would not change and then delved into wondering about how a Eurocentric curriculum and didactic teaching is perhaps more destructive to students than being suspended, kicked out, or referred to law enforcement.

### **Leadership Tenet #5: Interests, Feelings, and Concerns Are a Part of the Struggle**

The fifth leadership tenet asserts the importance of valuing the interests, feelings, and concerns of the individual as much as the work and struggle of societal change (Fujino, 2005). Fujino (2005) explains how activists increasingly lost the ability to connect with one another “in human terms” and that Kochiyama emphasized the importance of the “interests, feelings, and concerns of the individual” in the midst of working “collectively and militantly” to undo institutionalized racism and white supremacist state power (p. xxv). This leadership tenet underscores the CLE axiom #2, which reminds us that conversations are critical and pedagogical processes; the conversations occurring in a CLE create a space for the interests, feelings, and concerns at the individual level to be shared and heard. By intertwining CLE axiom #2, and the study’s data regarding building coalition and safe space; the Asian American leaders in the study exemplify Kochiyama’s fifth leadership tenet (Fujino, 2005; Guajardo et al., 2016). In Figure 57, I noted the study participants’ perspectives about how we co-created a safe space for the interests, feelings, and concerns of individuals. The connections between leadership tenet #5 (interests, feelings, concerns of individual) and leadership tenet #1 (“more human” human activism) in combination with leadership tenet #3 (resolving societal contradictions), and



*Figure 57. Leadership tenet #5 Sankey diagram - co-occurrences with other leadership tenets.*

leadership tenet #4 (leadership and activism about struggle), illustrate how we modeled this tenet in our convenings. These connections highlight the emotional components of leadership and the necessity of having spaces for common understanding in which we can co-create room for the expressions of feelings and concerns often muted in typical organizational settings. *There's a huge emotional component, but we don't want to go to an emotional place in leadership* was one subcode connected to this fifth leadership tenet from a November 2021 small-group, dilemma-focused CLE where a participant states:

I think there's a huge emotional component. I heard [in our discussion] is like an undercurrent from both the presenter and the commenters. I don't know what the proper term is, but there was a lot more space devoted in the discussion to strategies and sort of like an identity- free or emotion-free sort of discussion of like, 'how do we create a solution?' Which again just makes me wonder if there's just a general level of discomfort or lack of space that we've all gotten used to in discussing [emotions]. Like [in] some of our leadership work. Because it's just not the place that I think people want to go to. It's a much, much more uncomfortable space to think about both the identity issue and the emotionality, the painfulness of it.

This participant lifted up the CLE small group's tendency to speak of the strategies connected to our leadership dilemmas while showing a "general level of discomfort" about sharing about our emotions connected to our identities in our work of our leadership work. The participant notes, "it's just not the place I think people want to go" and continues to reiterate that speaking about our identities, the emotions connected to our work as leaders, and the "painfulness" of this type of discussion is hard for us to discuss. And perhaps, the participant is reiterating these points because they too see what Kochiyama saw --speaking about our interests,

feelings, and concerns should be part of our holistic approach to working on leading and struggling against racism and white-centered institutionalized power.

*There's going to be a common understanding* is another excerpt from a different small group, dilemma-focused CLE in February 2022 in which a participant states:

I just want to, like all I keep thinking over and over is like oh my God, I feel so affirmed like so thank you and it's just a reminder of why [this] space is so important. I have a partner in my consulting work, who is a white woman, amazing, love her. I kind of talked to her through this [dilemma] consultancy to get her thoughts [and she thought] 'there's so much theory to explain about some of these pieces' and I was like I don't think with this group there's actually that much to explain. Like there's just...going to be a common understanding when I say my parents didn't get why I wanted to be a teacher. I don't need to say anything more than that, that's all that needs to be said. Just really appreciate that kind of feeling [and being] seen for how complicated this [my life and identity] is.

Connecting this participant's articulation of feeling affirmed and reminding us why the CLE space with fellow Asian American leaders was "so important" connects to the fifth leadership tenet about the importance of feelings, interests, and concerns of individuals. The experience of being affirmed connected to the assumption that a space with Asian American leaders offers a space with common understanding about the importance of allowing individuals to feel seen and affirmed in leadership spaces as we try to fight racism and institutionalized power.

#### **Leadership Tenet #6: Cross-Racial Coalitions as Antiracist Actions**

Asian American leaders are often forgotten as key members of cross-racial coalitions in American history who enacted social change (Fujino, 2005; Kawahara et al., 2013; Kim, 2011; Wu, 2014). Fujino (2005) noted how Asian American youth are searching for role models in

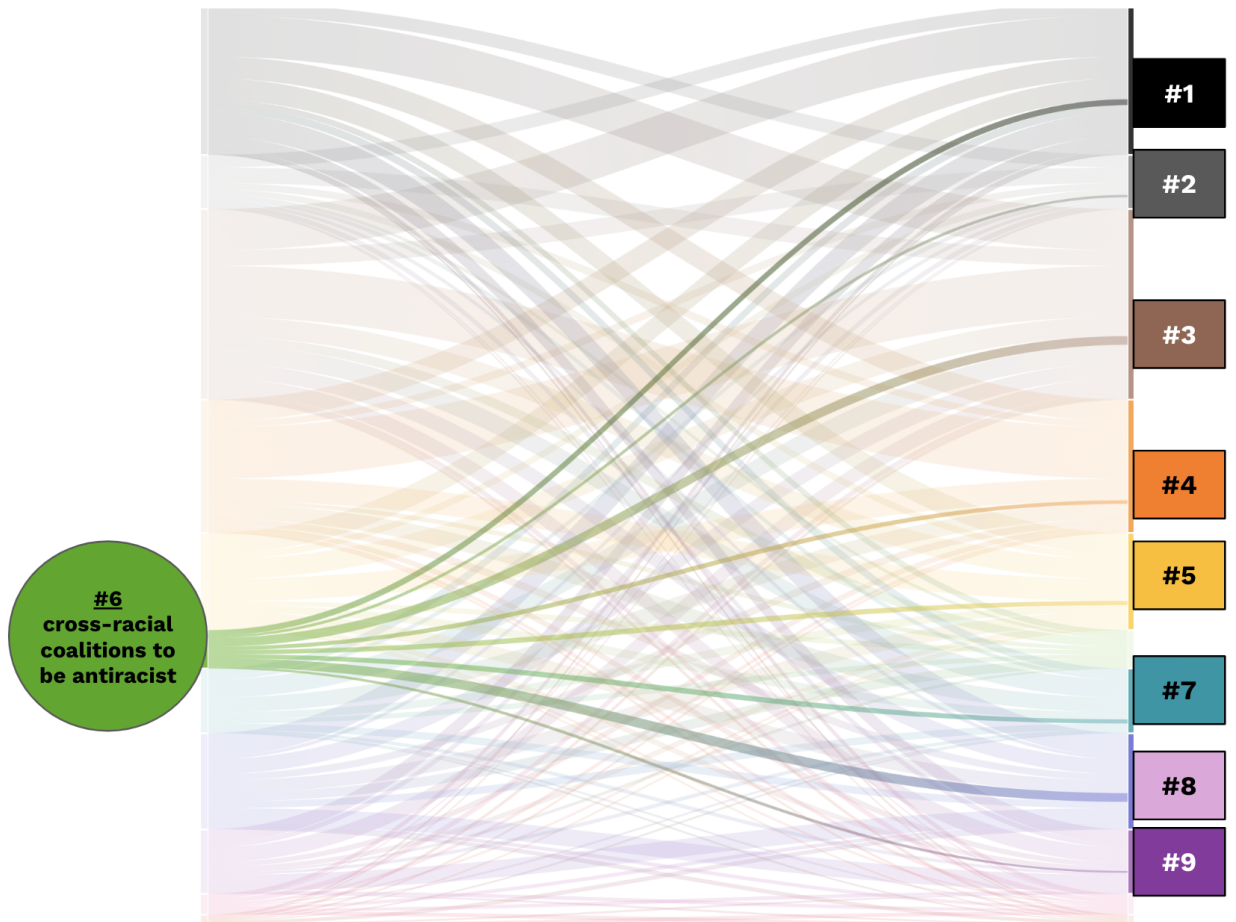
communities devoid of female political heroes and how Yuri Kochiyama's life exhibited a "long-standing and principled commitment to justice" through her work with Black and Latino communities providing living proof of an Asian American leader engaging in antiracist organizing resisting gains made at other group's expenses (Fujino, 2005, p. xxvii). In this leadership tenet, honoring cross-racial coalitions through antiracist organizing principles connects to the gracious space element of inviting the stranger and to the study's overarching research question about how Asian American leaders can affirm their leadership and personal identities in service of social change benefiting all who are oppressed (Hughes, 2017). In Figure 58, revealed perspectives honoring cross-racial coalitions as an antiracist leadership action. I represent the connections among leadership tenet #6 (cross-racial coalitions to be antiracist), leadership tenet #1 ("more human" human activism), leadership tenet #3 (resolving societal contradictions), and leadership tenet #8 (building our aspirational world together) in Figure 58. These connections highlight the importance of bringing in other perspectives, building solidarity with others, and being part of a decolonizing majority as people of color.

*There is space for both in the conversation* was a subcode from a participant's dilemma developed during a large group CLE in August 2021 which states:

As a leader in equity, how do I navigate, strategize, and bring light to Asian issues within education? How do I subvert the idea that Asian populations are doing 'good enough'?

How do I show that pro-Asian and pro-Black/Brown work is not at odds, and that there is space for both in the conversation?

This participant questioned how to bring up issues that Asian populations experience in education, subverting the idea that Asian students are doing "good enough", and expressed that



*Figure 58. Leadership tenet #6 Sankey diagram - co-occurrences with other leadership tenets.*



advocating for Asian students does not have to be at odds with advocating for Black or Brown students in education. This participant was asking all of us as Asian American leaders who are participants in this study how we might approach our work as leaders to ensure advocacy is through a lens of abundance that is supportive of students who are Asian, Black, and Brown within education systems.

*Building shared power through solidarity, shared experience, and distinct stories* was another subcode that arose from a large group CLE in August 2021, where a participant shared their dilemma:

When leading cross-racial coalitions that are trying to build shared power, when do you build that power through solidarity in a shared experience across racial groups and when do you build solidarity by focusing on distinct stories of different racial groups?

This participant asked the participants in the CLE how we might “build shared power” as leaders leading cross-racial coalitions so that one part of building coalitions is through balancing a “shared experience across racial groups” with the “distinct stories of different racial groups”. Leaders working within cross-racial groups need to view the work through a lens of abundance; emphasizing our shared experiences and distinct stories can coexist within a group’s space and ensure one group’s story is not amplified more than others.

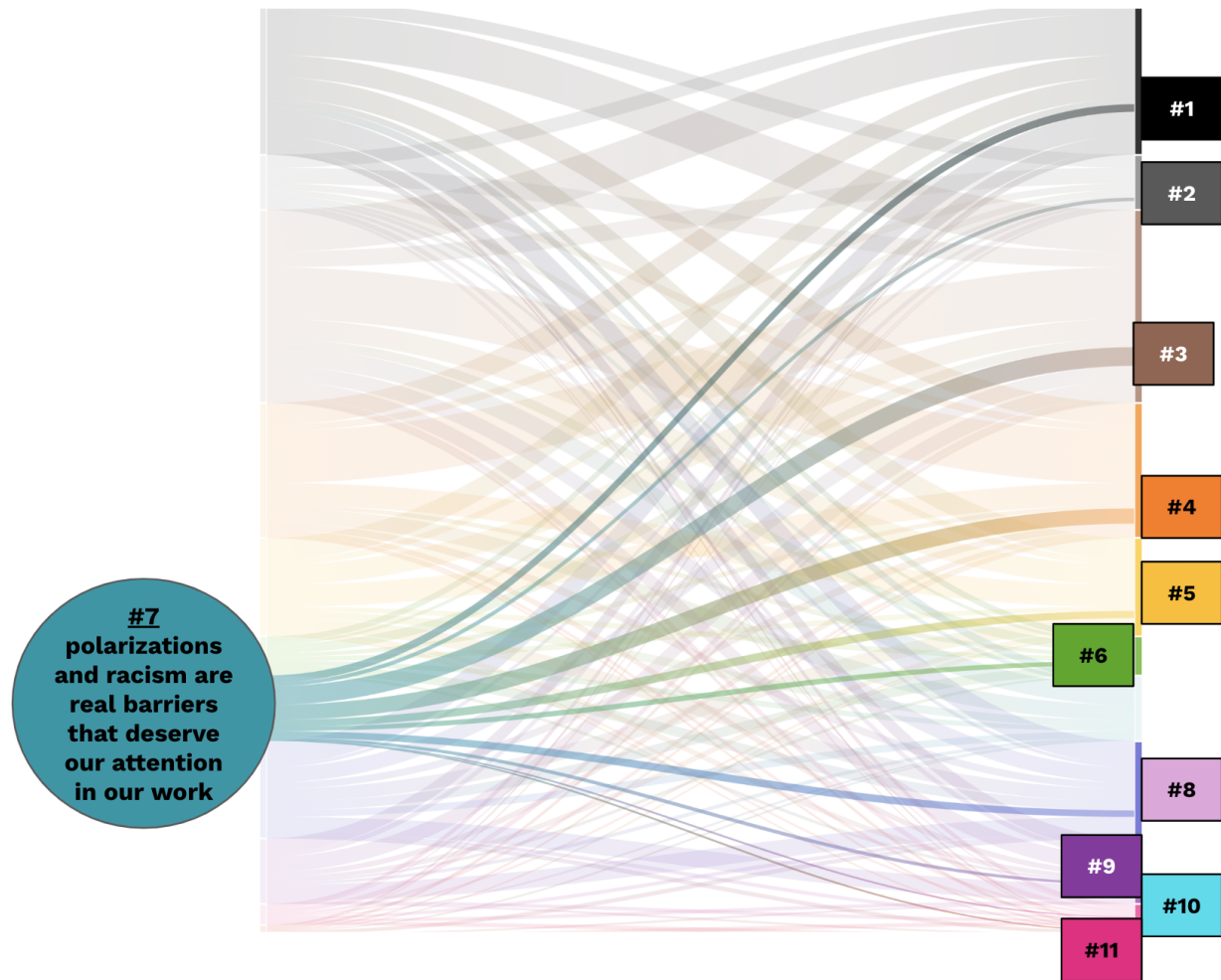
*We are all part of a decolonizing majority* was another subcode from a large group CLE in August 2021 where a participant shared:

On a webinar with Viet Thanh Nguyen, he used a term that I thought was really powerful. That we are actually all part of the decolonizing majority. I found that very interesting right? Like the roots in this racial hierarchy that comes from this original act of setting up this colonization frame globally.

Racially marginalized groups are often pitted against each other throughout American history (Kim, 1999; Lee, 2021; Wu, 2014). However, as this participant reminded us through Nguyen's (2020) assertion, those of us who have been oppressed, including Asian Americans, are part of a "decolonizing majority" attempting to undo the impacts of colonialism, which established racial hierarchies throughout the world. When members of a community see that racially marginalized people, like Asian Americans, are part of a majority attempting to decolonize the world, perhaps we can see a way to lead together and not at the expense of others.

### **Leadership Tenet #7: Polarizations and Racism Are Real Barriers**

The creation of "artificial divisions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, sexual orientation, class, and so forth", a staple of American history, is one major problem Kochiyama noted as a factor impeding movements of social justice that separates people who might otherwise unify to resist oppression (Fujino, 2005, p. 253). As Asian American leaders, and leaders in general, maintaining awareness of how white supremacist structures divide and polarize all of us is essential in the work to ensure cross-racial coalitions seeking racial, social, and economic justice are not broken through white supremacy's desire to maintain white personhood through non-white subpersonhood (Mills, 1997). The work of leadership must bring individuals together within organizations and communities despite our polarized and racialized context, to struggle towards justice for all people (Bacon, 2018; Boggs & Boggs, 1974; Fujino, 2005; Guajardo et al., 2016). In Figure 59, I share the study participants' perspectives on how polarizations and racism impede our work as leaders. Figure 59 visually represents the connections among leadership tenet #7 (polarization and racism create artificial divisions) and leadership tenet #3 (resolving societal contradictions) and leadership tenet #4 (leadership and activism about struggle) are visually represented in Figure 59. These connections underscore



*Figure 59. Leadership tenet #7 Sankey diagram - co-occurrences with other leadership tenets.*

some perspectives of participants who struggled with the model minority concept imposing itself into their lives, structures of inequality being held up by other community members despite change efforts, struggling to develop a non-hierarchical world, and weighing personal experiences of racism with the racism permeating through the whole of American history.

*Tangibly imposes itself* was one subcode connected to this seventh leadership tenet which was a result of a participant's dilemma shared during a large group CLE in August 2021. The dilemma asked: "How does the model minority tangibly impose itself in your efforts to be an Asian-American leader? How do you overcome these forces?" The model minority concept stereotypes Asian Americans as a "polite, law-abiding group who have achieved a higher level of success than the general population through some combination of innate talent and pull-yourselfes-up-by-your-bootstraps immigrant striving" (Blackburn, 2019). The perpetual foreigner stereotype views members of ethnic minorities as outsiders to the white dominant society of the US (Huynh et al., 2011). The interplay between both concepts is conceptualized by the racial triangulation of Asian Americans, traced back to the mid-1800s as America transitioned into a post-slavery state (Kim, 1999). Part of what the participant was asking relates to the legacy of the racial triangulation of Asian Americans being imposed on us as leaders as the participant seeks ways to overcome the forces of being placed below whiteness, but above Blackness, in service of white supremacy (Kim, 1999). These polarizations are present as we continue learning how to be leaders as Asian Americans with fellow racially marginalized groups of people.

*Maintaining structures upholding inequity* was another subcode from a small group, dilemma-focused CLE from November 2021, during which a participant explains:

As you all know, there's a fight against affirmative action in higher ed and selective schools around the country. We're not just talking about [my city], basically every large city is having this fight in its own context. I was very out there with my opinion and the other members of the task force were more centrist or you know they wanted reform, but only in incremental ways, so they could say they were moving towards equity, but really maintaining the structure that upholds inequity.

The excerpt from a CLE participant emphasized how much we have to contend with efforts maintaining the structures upholding inequity. In this case, the participant pointed to the fight against affirmative action in higher education and selective schools around the country and how task force members looking to make change are looking only to make incremental reform upholding inequitable structures (Lemann, 2021). This assertion points to the seventh leadership tenet asking us to maintain awareness of how much the forces of polarization and racism are sustaining barriers to equitable change.

*Advance into that world of no hierarchy* was another subcode from a small group, dilemma-focused CLE in November 2021 from a participant who shared:

Getting into your comments [about an anti-racial hierarchy] I fundamentally agree and [that] relates to my spiritual kind of practice and studying. I think it's important to understand identities. But I think it's also important not to assume that any identity is better than another, and the challenge I find with it building off of that is how do you advance into that world of no hierarchy when there are existing hierarchies that have to be addressed? Which gets into my thinking personally about my relationship with authority, because I think these things start to connect when you talk about hierarchy and authority.

This participant connected to a comment from another participant who discussed the ideas of an anti-racial hierarchy and asked the CLE participants, “how do you advance into that world of no hierarchy?”, when we live in a world with hierarchies maintaining polarizations and racism? Advancing into a world of no hierarchy or an anti-racial hierarchy are two potential aspirations to change the sustained polarizing and racial hierarchies within American society.

*The experiences I’ve had, weighing it against the racist history of America* from another participant stated:

And so there's also that bit that I wonder. Like the experiences that I've had you know within all places, things that I grew up with, ‘chinky eyes’ and slurs and things like that. [My experience] it's legitimate and it was hurtful. But at the same time you're weighing this against this massive thing [racism] that's been part of American history.

This participant weighed their personal experience (and perhaps an internalized racism) against the weight of America’s racist history, wondering if the individual-level experience can be weighed “against this massive thing” that’s been a part of American history. By providing a clear example of how the experience of racism can be isolating, in which an individual wonders how an experience should count against the backdrop of American racism, I underscore this seventh leadership tenet of how racism can isolate us from seeing that the collective experience is connected to the individual experience (Guajardo et al., 2016).

### **Leadership Tenet #8: Build Our Aspirational World Together**

Kochiyama dedicated her life to both individuals in a movement and the communities of movements with a love and what we might call “collective care” (Throughline, 2021).

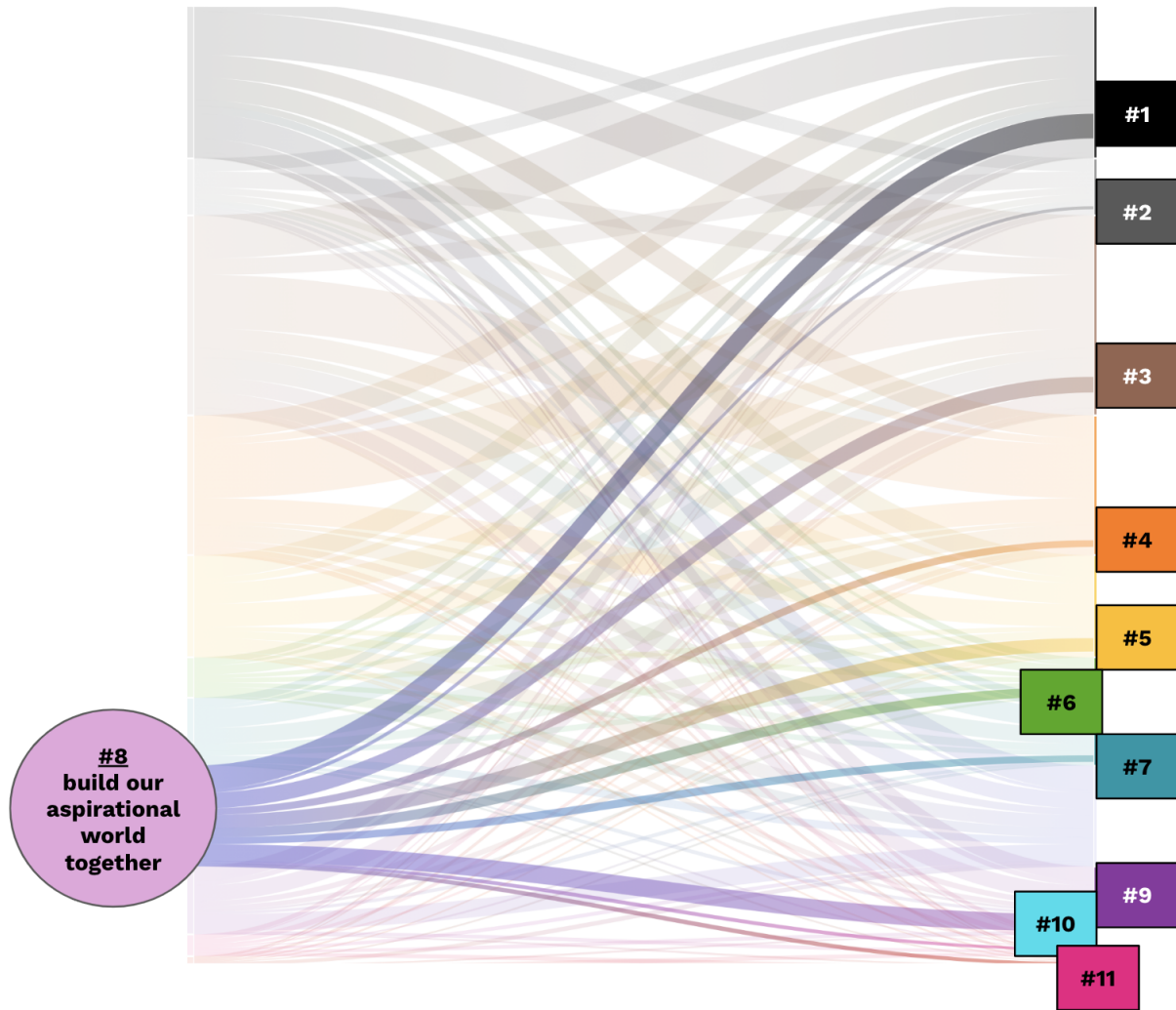
Kochiyama reminded us that “consciousness is power” and collective consciousness is how we demand change and build our world together (Throughline, 2021). The concept of collective care

becoming a collective power to change the world connects to the CRE study's overarching research question asking how Asian American leaders affirm their identities through connecting with each other and our histories in order to enact social change collectively. The eighth leadership tenet reminds all leaders that building our aspirational world together through the power of our collective consciousness is a key purpose in leadership. In Figure 60, I share the study participants' perspectives on how to build our aspirational world together and visually represent the connections among leadership tenet #8 (building our aspirational world together) and leadership tenet #1 ("more human" human activism), leadership tenet #3 (resolving societal contradictions), leadership tenet #5 (interests, feelings, concerns of individual), and leadership tenet #10 (leadership about impact not notoriety). These connections reflect the importance of cultivating safe spaces for dialogue, embracing liberatory design in taking leadership actions, and finding common ground with each other in the work of leadership and activism.

*Open self up in a space that's safe, that's receptive* was one subcode from a small group, dilemma-focused CLE in November 2021 where one participant stated:

I mean, I think, I think, for me, what I want to do, or what I want for myself is to be as honest and not really concerned about whether it's TMI [too much information]. And I think that the idea is that if I open myself up, [which has been] a barrier for me, I can do so in a space that's safe, that's receptive that can build upon you know the things that I present out.

This participant described a desire to share in an unguarded manner – to “open myself up” in a space that was “safe” and “receptive” in order to “build upon” what is presented to fellow CLE participants share. The participant's desire is an example of building our aspirational world through the power of our collective consciousness. An individual trusts a group enough to



*Figure 60.* Leadership tenet #8 Sankey diagram - co-occurrences with other leadership tenets.



vulnerably share their ideas, and fellow group members helped create a safe and receptive space to hear an individual's unguarded thoughts in order to build upon their ideas

*Embrace liberatory design* was another subcode from a different small group, dilemma-focused CLE in November 2021 where another participant shared:

For me, it kind of comes down to one simple question with regard to why, like how that clip [Paolo Freire speaking at Highlander Institute about community dreams compared to individual dreams] sort of overlays my participation in this group. I'm supposed to sort of take on the organizational dream, but the organizational dream and vision doesn't necessarily align with my own personal one. And then, like, does it even matter what either of those dreams are or visions are if our teachers that we work with don't share those? I mean we can come up with organizational vision statements, all we want and personal vision statements, all we want, but ultimately it is going to feel heavy-handed, it is going to feel like we're agenda setting. And so, how do we reverse that, how do we embrace like liberatory design?

This participant asked fellow participants to think about how we contend with vision statements and organizational dreams that come from a hierarchical, “heavy-handed” place when working with fellow human beings (in this case teachers). The participant asked us to move away from “agenda setting” and into a place of “embracing liberatory design” in which we develop dreams collectively.

*Conversations where people can be real about their personal experiences* was another subcode from a small group, dilemma-focused CLE in November 2021 where one participant shared:

[One participant] brought up [sharing] personal narratives which I think would be a nice step to be able to have those conversations [hard conversations about equity] and actually maybe propose and think a little bit more about affinity groups. And have conversations where people can be real around their own personal experiences. We did try a while ago, but some people are uncomfortable around it. It might be good to be able to bring that back and think about how to be able to have engaging conversations to drum up some ideas and thinking.

This participant echoed the eighth leadership tenet -- creating spaces where “people can be real around their own personal experiences”. A space in which, despite discomfort, people can engage in conversation to “drum up some ideas and thinking” towards building our aspirational world together.

*Capturing our commonality despite our differences* was another subcode emerging from a small group, dilemma-focused CLE in February 2022 where another participant stated:

I think one of the things that resonated for me is well, our community is hugely diverse as a whole, the political lines of Asian Americans, as well as this group is a microcosm of a pretty diverse group from the standpoint of our backgrounds, experiences. There's [still] a lot of commonality. And that this poem [found poem exercise based on Richard Aoki's speech] and our subsequent poems captured in many ways a lot of that commonality of our experiences, despite our differences.

This participant reminded us that the Asian American community is “hugely diverse” along political lines and within this small group of CLE participants. However, the participant included the point that “despite our differences” we have commonality and a collectivity to build on as

Asian Americans and as leaders working within our organizations and communities to build our aspirational world.

### **Leadership Tenet #9: Create Collective Power**

Within the labor movements in California leading up to the Delano strikes, the Filipino Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC), led by Itliong coexisted with the Mexican National Farm Workers Association (NFWA), led by Cesar Chavez; however, the group members did not fully understand each other nor understand each others' aspirations (Bacon, 2018). Despite this context, through Itliong's collaborative leadership, one of the key events for the Delano strikes was uniting over 2,000 laborers of Filipino and Mexican descent to form a union fighting for worker dignity and respect over a five year period (Bacon, 2018). Strikes, boycotts, and rallies under the newly formed United Farm Workers Union (UFW) resulted in UFW winning a fair labor contract with the Delano growers in 1970 (Bacon, 2018; Hamilton & Hamilton, 2017).

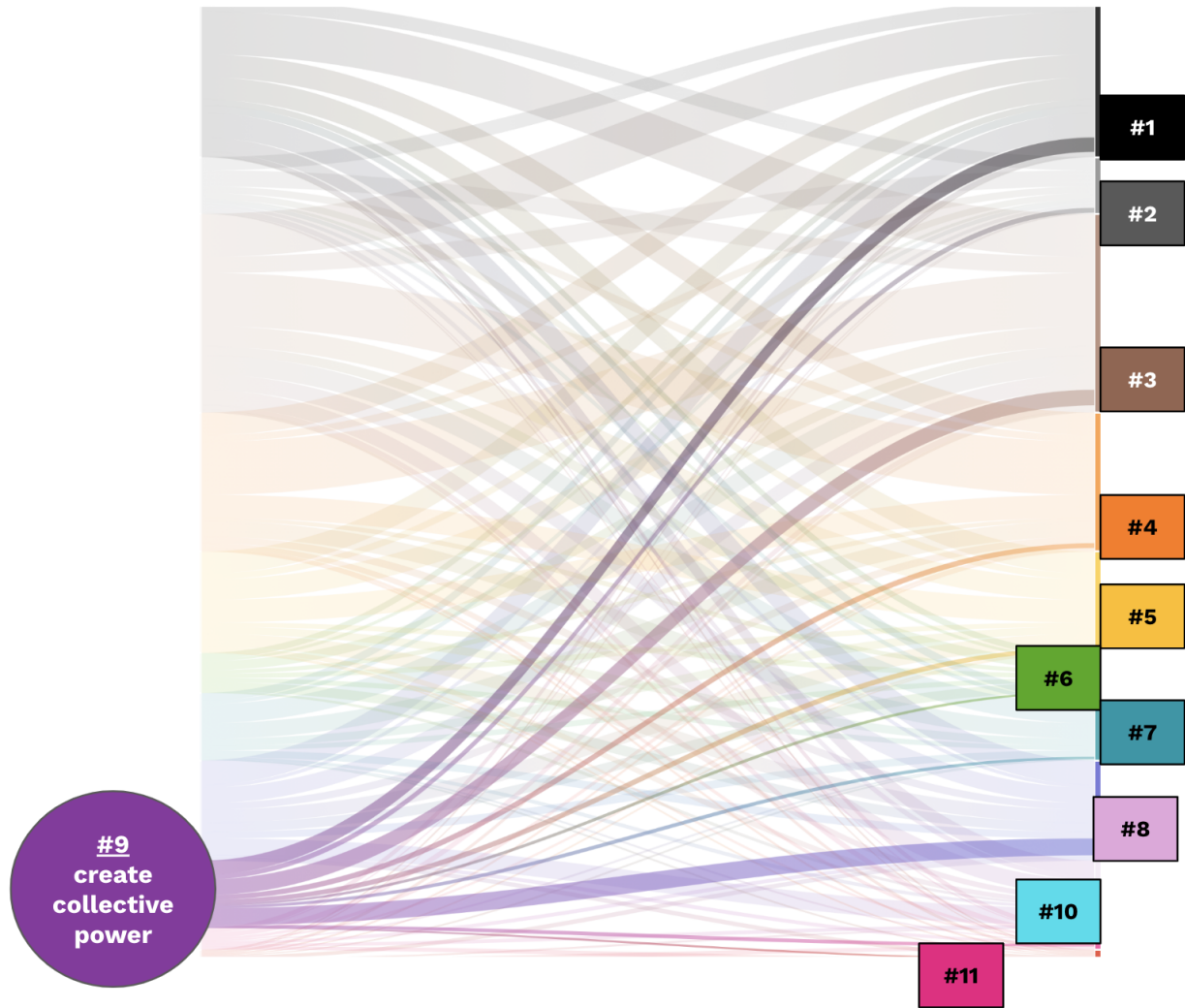
Prior to the Delano strikes, Mexican laborers and Filipino laborers were pitted against each other. The U.S. government set up bracero programs (laborers brought in from Mexico to take Filipino jobs), and the government threatened the Mexican braceros with deportation if they joined Filipino strikes organized by the Itliong and the Filipino manongs (Bacon, 2018). The systemic wedges were meant to create polarizations and divisions between two oppressed groups; however, Itliong worked with Chavez to strategically organize the UFW to win a model labor contract through strategic labor organizing that is still the envy of many unions today (Bacon, 2018). Within this partnership, Cesar Chavez is often given credit for forming the UFW; however, if it wasn't Itliong forging an imperfect, but robust alliance with Mexican laborers, the impact of the UFW may never have come to pass (Bacon, 2018). The work of Itliong and the

Filipino manongs, though often removed from American labor history (Araiza, 2009) reminds us of the importance of this ninth leadership tenet -- organize and network strategically to move beyond polarizations and divisions to build our aspirational world together.

Larry Itliong has been systematically erased from labor history and lifting up his demonstrated leadership to ensure the work toward ending structural inequity continues. For example, Araiza (2009) leaves out the history of manongs in her review of the connection between the UFW and the Black Panthers. The legacy of leadership connects to a study question about how the ecologies of knowing -- self, organization, community -- connect to leadership actions by navigating beyond the individual and organizational needs to do right by the community of laborers deserving of fair wages and working conditions (Bacon, 2018; Guajardo et al., 2016). Additionally, the work of Itliong and the Filipino manongs connects to the gracious space element of inviting the stranger to explore new possibilities in our work towards a better world (Hughes, 2017). In Figure 61, I visually represent the connections among leadership tenet #9 (create collective power), leadership tenet #1 ("more human" human activism), and leadership tenet #8 (building our aspirational world together). These connections highlight the tensions one may feel in trying to create collective power; however, by recalling the indigenous, antiracist tenets that live within justice-oriented Asian American leaders, we can create spaces to act, reflect, nurture and support leadership endeavors.

*These stances feel in tension to one another* was one subcode from a large group CLE in August 2021, where one participant shared:

How to be antiracist and pro-Black while also being pro-Asian. There are times when these stances feel in tension with one another and I subordinate pro-Asianness to pro-Blackness and I struggle with my own positions and how I may be compromising my



*Figure 61.* Leadership tenet #9 Sankey diagram - co-occurrences with other leadership tenets.

own identity and beliefs at times. In other words, I'd like to get to a clear and unconflicted perspective about advancing Asianness in a place where persecution and discrimination against Black and Indigenous people, in particular, are part of the founding story of this nation.

This participant asked fellow CLE participants how to balance being antiracist, pro-Black, pro-Indigenous “while also being pro-Asian”. The participant noted that these stances feel in tension with each other and how pro-Asianness is often subordinated to pro-Blackness and wonders if they are compromising their “own identity and beliefs” within a context of racism and polarizations. The participant closes the thought wanting to “get a clear and unconflicted perspective about advancing Asianness” in a country where “persecution and discrimination against Black and Indigenous people” is part of the country’s founding story.

*There is an antiracist guidebook within us from a collectivist, indigenous culture* was another subcode from a small group, dilemma-focused CLE in November 2021 where another participant shared:

For me as an antiracist and an equity warrior, I challenge everything that is presented in front of me and challenge myself, because I am part of the system. I am part of this racist system and I grew up in this racist system. The system [promotes] efficiency and maximizing resources. Everything in the system is designed for that. “I think inherently that's what we're trying to liberate ourselves from right? So you know I feel like there is an antiracist guidebook [within us] from a collectivist-indigenous culture.

This participant explained the need to challenge the racist system and everything that is presented by the system, as we are all “part of the system”. The participant underscored how much this system promotes “efficiency” and “maximizing resources” and that we need to liberate

ourselves from the gravitational forces of this racist system. One way to do this from the participant's lens is to look for our own antiracist guidebook that resides within us and derives "from a collectivist, indigenous culture."

*Create an experience balancing acting, reflecting, nurturing, supporting* was another subcode from a small group, dilemma-focused CLE in February 2022, where a participant shared:

So I think if you come into it with a bias towards action and also learning and sustaining and all the things. Like this CLE experience has been a really good one for me because it balances these pieces of acting and reflecting and nurturing and supporting. Can you create that for people? You know does that in and of itself stop you from despair [that] is so solitary? And actually having a community where you're thinking about what to do [can] get you out of that hole.

This participant asked fellow CLE participants if we can break out of our own solitary confines of despair within our contexts to create an experience balancing "acting", "reflecting", "nurturing", and "supporting" within our communities. The participant asserted that "having a community" in which one is able to think "about what to do" can break us out of the "hole" of despair.

*We learn from reflecting on experience* was another subcode from a small group, dilemma-focused CLE in February 2021 where a participant articulated:

Yeah I mean, I think, like you, reference to the way that we talk about education. We don't learn from experience [solely], we learn from reflecting on experience. And just like the fact that this space is offered to be able to give reflection and give opportunities for others to be able to pose their own thoughts in terms of experience is super helpful. I do

think that, while we don't necessarily come out of the experience with a fully fleshed out answer [to our dilemmas] we...have the thoughts and discussion from other people in the field.

This participant shared that learning from “reflecting on experience” and engaging in a space where people are able to provide reflection and “pose their own thoughts” from their experiences was helpful in learning within the context of education. Though the discussions do not lead to “fully fleshed out” answers to our dilemmas, the thoughts and discussions with people in the field of education are helpful to reflect on our leadership capacities and possibilities.

### **Leadership Tenet #10: Leadership Is About Impact, Not Notoriety**

A key result from the organizing efforts between the Filipino manongs and Mexican laborers from the Delano strikes was winning a fair labor contract, which included farm wages twice the minimum wage of American growers (Bacon, 2018; Hamilton & Hamilton, 2017). This contract included health plans, and processes for grievances that became the envy of other unions (Bacon, 2018). Though Itliong spearheaded this work, he received little to no credit for his historical legacy of organizing one of the most effective labor movements in American history (Bacon, 2018). Though the work of remembering Itliong’s work has been recognized only recently (Newsom, 2022) and more work must be done to expand America’s memory of Itliong, his legacy reminds us that leadership is about impact, not notoriety. There was no Larry Itliong Day until October 2022, although there should have been one decades ago. Yet when we focus on the life Itliong lived, he is a model of a leader pursuing positive impact on behalf of those in need. This example provides Asian American leaders and all leaders an embodiment of what enacting social change looks like: a fair labor contract with wages doubling those of the average worker with health plans and processes for grievances. In the CRE study, I inquired about



affirming our identities as Asian American leaders and learning how to enact social change; Itliong's leadership through this tenth tenet provides an exemplary guidepost. In Figure 62, I represent the connections among leadership tenet #10 (leadership is about impact, not notoriety), leadership tenet #1 ("more human" human activism), and leadership tenet #3 (resolving societal contradictions). These connections reflect the notions of impact for study participants who emphasized creating multiple pathways toward success for students, supporting second language learners, and changing testing policies for school admission as important impacts to pursue as leaders.

*Create multiple pathways to success for targeted group of students* was one subcode from a small group, dilemma-focused CLE in November 2021, where one participant noted:

We recently went through a process where we actually kind of modified our ultimate objective outcome for our work with our [students]. In the 10 years I've been here [at my organization], [we've evolved from] college matriculation to college graduation to post-secondary completion to now something that we now call multiple pathways to success. Which is that maybe you don't necessarily need a [college] degree, came into play for us. And it was really hard for so many of us, myself included.

This participant, a nonprofit CEO that supports students, highlights the evolution of the organization from defining success as college graduation into what the organization terms "multiple pathways to success" that does not necessitate a college degree. Provided that the national undergraduate 6-year graduation rates for colleges and universities in the US sit at 64% as of 2020, this organizational shift is an evolution of an organization this participant helped lead to ensure students they support see more varied pathways to life success (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.)

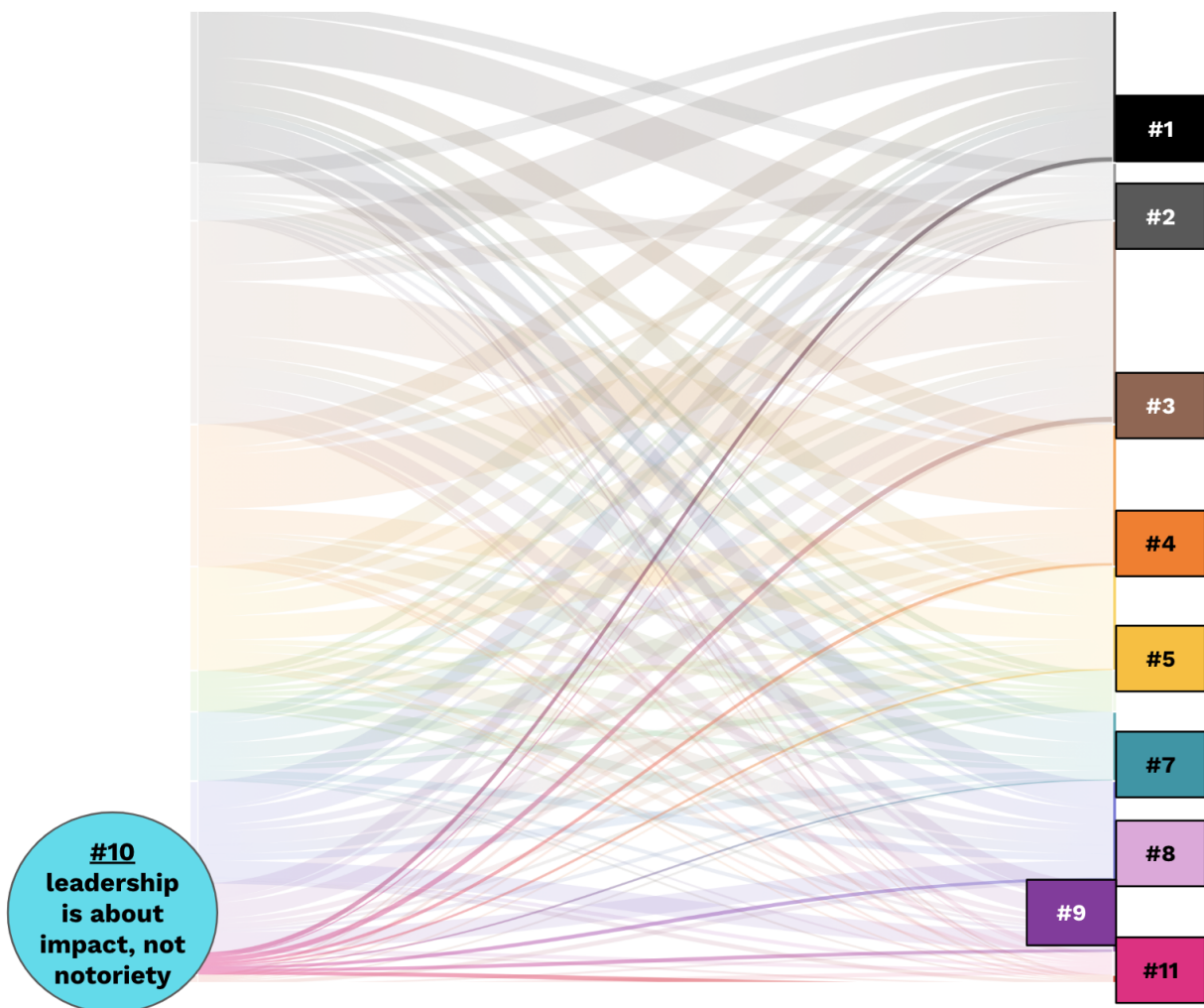


Figure 62. Leadership tenet #10 Sankey diagram - co-occurrences with other leadership tenets.

*Second language learners and newcomers need exposure to core and grade level content*

was another subcode from a small group, dilemma focused CLE in May 2022, where another participant explained:

As I stated earlier, I think standard-based instruction is not as evident. There is just a huge focus on foundational skills which is critical for second language learners and newcomers don't get me wrong. But I think there has to be some exposure [to] the core content and grade level content and [we need to] leverage kids' assets and their knowledge. [And] that is not happening [at this school].

This participant, who is a district leader working with principals in a public school system, explained the importance of providing standards-based and core content for second language learners and newcomer students. The participant explained that the teaching focus in one school was more on foundational skills, which was noted as critical; however, this participant reiterates the need for students to be exposed to standards-based curriculum and content. Extending the thought further, the participant paired the need for standards-based curriculum with educators valuing the assets and knowledge of students who are English learners. At all levels, leaders need to identify the grain size of impact to focus on understanding the type of impact leaders are aspiring to make within a school district.

*Changing testing policy for exam schools in a public school district* was another subcode that arose from a small group, dilemma-focused CLE in November 2021, where a participant explained their impact while serving on an exam school task force:

It was quite a victory actually. We managed to pass a no test policy for this coming year [for exam schools in a major U.S. city]. And then in the future, it used to be 50% test and 50% grades, and we managed to do 70% GPA and 30% test and we got the test changed

to one that's aligned with the [school district] curriculum. And then we also made it possible, made it much more likely that kids from neighborhoods that had more indicators of poverty, had a higher chance of getting in [to exam schools] and we ran simulations to show that will likely be the case. So all in all it was a victory, but it didn't go as far as [I, as a task force member] wanted it to go.

As a member of a task force focused on exam schools in a public school district, this participant highlighted the changes she was able to enact in a public forum, in which a testing policy was put on pause for one year and they shifted the weighting of requirements for exam schools so that students from neighborhoods with higher indicators of poverty had a higher chance of being admitted into exam schools, often perceived as elite public schools with higher concentrations of white and Asian students (Vaznis, 2021).

### **Leadership Tenet #11: Building Pathways for Future Generations**

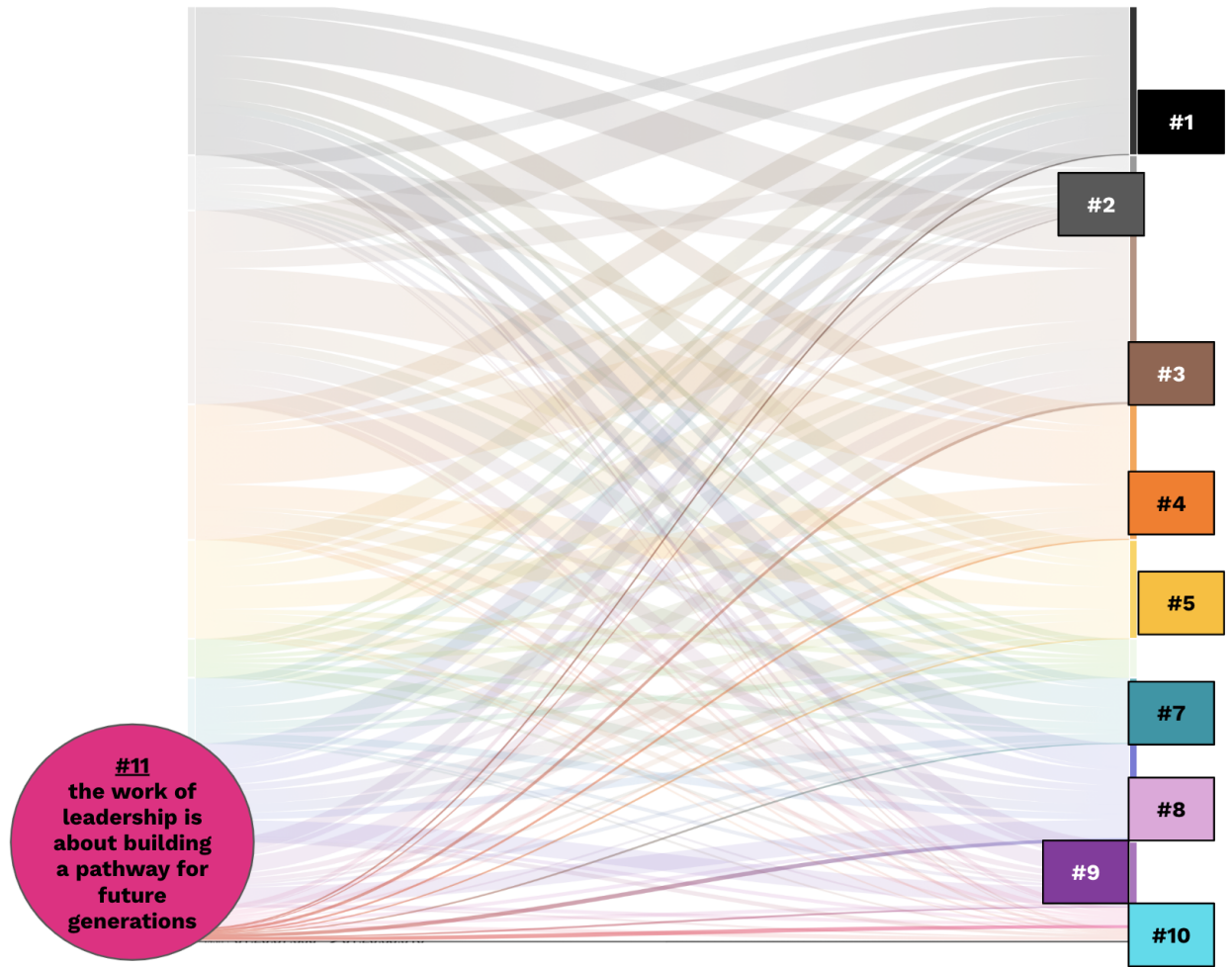
Itliong embodied the manongs' legacy of leadership: fighting against colonialism, fighting for workers' rights, and community organizing (Bacon, 2018). Itliong is credited with leading a "renaissance of farm labor organizing that is still going on today" (Bacon, 2018, p. 25). Itliong forged an imperfect alliance and in doing so, modeled how cross-racial coalitions create positive social change to the benefit of current and future generations through labor contracts including double the average wage, health benefits, and processes for grievances all farm laborers engaged in the Delano Strikes (Bacon, 2018; Hamilton & Hamilton, 2017). His legacy continues to influence activists and organizers of farm laborers currently, who use migrant community networks to organize, much like Itliong did, for better working conditions on behalf of farm laborers (Bacon, 2018). In the CRE study's overarching research question, I inquire about Asian American leaders enacting social change; thus I connect this inquiry to the eleventh

leadership tenet suggesting all leaders need to work in service of creating pathways for future generations as a core action in any leadership endeavor. In Figure 63, I represent the connections among leadership tenet #11 (leadership paves way for future generations), leadership tenet #9 (creating collective power through networking and organizing), and leadership tenet #10 (leadership about impact not notoriety). These connections emphasize the importance of being proud of Asian American traditions and cultures, the responsibility of caring for our families and communities, and struggling to support children and their dreams.

*We should understand and be proud of our traditions, culture, and background* was one subcode from a large group CLE in August 2021, where a participant explained:

I'm engaging my kids even though they're really young in those types of conversations [identity, political, societal], so they have a better understanding of it. But I don't think it's going to be that type of experience [like I had], where I had to go through this process of [becoming] okay to be Filipino and be proud of that. You should understand those traditions and the culture and your background and kind of like how you grew up because I separated that [understanding of my own identity] with my white friends. I need[ed] to act a certain way when I'm with my cousins and going to a holiday gathering. [With my family] I can relax a little bit and I don't have to put up this, not an act, but there was just a different way that I behaved around [my cousins compared to my white friends].

This participant reflected the importance of engaging their children in conversations connected to identity, political views, and societal views to ensure their children understand “those traditions...culture...background...how you grew up”. The participant continues to explain that when they were growing up, they had to separate their understanding for their white friends, whereas with their cousins, it was “okay to be Filipino” and be proud of being Filipino.



*Figure 63. Leadership tenet #11 Sankey diagram - co-occurrences with other leadership tenets.*

*We have the responsibility to care for our family and community* was another subcode from a small group, dilemma-focused CLE in November 2021, where a participant shared in their emulation poem from the prompts: “I come from a place/I am in a place/I am going to a place”:

I come from a place that is steeped in history and more glimpses reflected in my conversations with my father, my mother, my family [form] an insecurity that remains about who I am. I am in a place where I have the responsibility to care for my family and my community.

This participant reflected on the balancing act of coming from a place “steeped in history”, while simultaneously contending with an insecurity remaining “about who I am”. Despite this duality, the participant continues to note the importance of owning “the responsibility to care for” family and community in alignment with this eleventh leadership tenet.

*Struggle every day to the do the right thing to support our children and encourage their dreams* was another subcode from a small group, dilemma-focused CLE, where a participant expressed:

Right and so, then I have this amazing child [transgender and neurodiverse] who is not going to be seen as the pride of the family. So, it's very hard [to] balance, to sort through. And I struggle every day with my belief that we, me and my husband, are doing the right thing by supporting them and encouraging their dreams.

This participant explained that their “amazing child” who is transgender and neurodiverse, is not “going to be seen as the pride of the family” and how difficult that was to “sort through”. However, the participant continues to struggle and inquire about ways her and her husband are doing all they can to support and encourage their children’s dreams.

## **A Demonstrated Legacy**

Reviewing each of the eleven leadership tenets from Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong for this CRE study and demonstrating the intersections with the data from the CLE discussions from August 2021 through May 2022 provided a lens into the CRE study's research story. Part of the story was connecting the ancestral leadership tenets from Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong with Asian American leader participants of this study who shared insights connected to these leadership tenets through engaging in CLEs (Saldaña, 2016). In Figure 64, I provide an overview of the leadership tenets as codes and the highlighted subcodes showing the emerging themes from this chapter. Through capturing connections between this CRE study's participants and Asian American ancestral leadership is a way to provide "critical descriptions" of the dimensions of being that give meaning to the lived experiences of Asian American leaders (Woodson, 2020, p. 571).

In addition, the connection of Asian American ancestors to the CRE study participants presents both the "emotive power" of storytelling to counter the conditions that entrap Asian American leaders within the confines of white supremacy culture (Woodson, 2019, p. 29). Even further, the revealing of the emotive power of sharing counternarratives to America's racist context and sharing systemic critiques about America's racial hierarchy help racially marginalized people disrupt the white dominant culture narratives and help us occupy the theorizing space of leadership beyond whiteness (Duncan, 2005; hunter et al., 2013).



| Leadership Tenet Codes                                          | Highlighted Subcodes as Emerging Theoretical Relations                       |                                                                                    |                                                                                                 |                                                                                        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| #1: modeling activism                                           | Envisioning An Asian American Leader                                         | Using Cognitive Dissonance In Service Of Imagining And New Possibilities           |                                                                                                 |                                                                                        |
| #2: work with oppressed                                         | There Is A Space For All Of Us                                               | Ensuring Different Groups Become Part Of The Story                                 |                                                                                                 |                                                                                        |
| #3: develop ideology to address societal contradiction          | Gathering Wisdom And Advice To Develop Clear Steps                           | Righteous Anger                                                                    | See The System Driven By White Supremacy                                                        | Lift Up Asian American Marginalization To Reveal The Well-Hidden Prejudices In Society |
| #4: leadership and activism about struggle                      | You Kind Of Plug The Holes Making It Successful                              | It Takes A Lot Of Work To Reveal The Truth                                         | Where In School Is It Quietly Destructive For Students?                                         |                                                                                        |
| #5: interests, feelings, concerns of individual                 | There's Going To Be A Common Understanding                                   | There's Things That Are Hard To Measure                                            | There's A Huge Emotional Component, But We Don't Want To Go To An Emotional Place In Leadership |                                                                                        |
| #6: honoring cross-racial coalitions                            | There Is Space For Both In The Conversation                                  | We Are All Part Of A Decolonizing Majority                                         | Building Shared Power Through Solidarity, Shared Experience, And Distinct Stories               |                                                                                        |
| #7: polarization and racism create artificial divisions         | Tangibly Imposes Itself                                                      | Maintaining Structures Upholding Inequity                                          | Advance Into That World Of No Hierarchy                                                         | The Experiences I've Had, Weighing It Against The Racist History Of America            |
| #8: building aspirational world together                        | Open Self Up In A Space That's Safe, That's Receptive                        | Embrace Liberatory Design                                                          | Conversations Where People Can Be Real About Their Personal Experiences                         | Capturing Our Commonality Despite Our Differences                                      |
| #9: creating collective power through networking and organizing | These Stances Feel In Tension To One Another                                 | There Is An Antiracist Guidebook Within Us From A Collectivist, Indigenous Culture | Create An Experience Balancing Acting, Reflecting, Nurturing, Supporting                        | We Learn From Reflecting On Experience                                                 |
| #10: leadership about impact not notoriety                      | Create Multiple Pathways To Success For Targeted Group Of Students           | Changing Testing Policy For Exam Schools In A Public School District               | Second Language Learners And Newcomers Need Exposure To Core And Grade Level Content            |                                                                                        |
| #11: leadership paves way for future generations                | We Should Understand And Be Proud Of Our Traditions, Culture, And Background | We Have The Responsibility To Care For Our Family And Community                    | Struggle Every Day To Do The Right Thing To Support Our Children And Encourage Their Dreams     |                                                                                        |

Figure 64. Leadership tenet codes and highlighted subcodes as theoretical relations.

## Emerging Leadership Connections

*Damn was it somethin' I said?  
Pretend you don't see so you turn your head  
Race scared of its shadow, does it matter?*

- Public Enemy from *He Got Game*

Chuck D from Public Enemy shares a verse in the song, *He Got Game*, “pretend you don’t see so you turn your head”, noting the ease with which we might engage in ignorance when facing the difficult context of a racist society (D & Stills, 1998). Asian American leaders engaged in the struggle towards building our aspirational world must not engage in this ignorance and instead must turn to face our racist society. From this acknowledgement of a racist reality, we must bring our reality into relationship with the imaginaries of a world free of racism.

Asian Americans stand on tenuous ground both historically and presently. Our context as a people is considered epistemologically unique because we are a people who were made to be palpably absent, invisible, and pitted between whiteness and Blackness in a way that makes us “not quite free, not quite enslaved, not quite citizen, and not quite foreign” (Kim, 2011, p. 213). Thus, we must face the historical legacy of how the history of America along with the model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts placed Asian Americans in this position of tenuousness (Kim, 1999; Kim, 2011; Wu, 2014).

Once we accurately face this context, we can see how Asian American leaders from the past saw this racist context and set the foundations for ways to move beyond the white supremacist creations of a racial hierarchy. The leadership tenets from Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong connect past Asian American leadership to the struggle that current Asian American leaders contend with and provide a unifying anchor for building our aspirational world with fellow human beings from cross-racial backgrounds. This connection with our legacy provides

us a way to embody two of the CRE objectives: (1) present the emotive power of counterstorytelling and (2) present our systemic critiques of the racial hierarchy of America (Woodson, 2019). As we engaged in the emotive power of sharing our narratives and dilemmas, we found daring ways to critique a racist society and move toward the aspirational world Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong were struggling to build. The leadership tenets are compass points for leaders as they face the societal contradictions rooted in racism and colonialism; simultaneously, the leadership tenets offer ways that bring Asian American leaders back to themselves as the leaders they are looking to for guidance.

One of the ways we can live the leadership tenets is to engage with each other through questions, sharing dilemmas, and our stories within a safe space through CLEs to make sense of self and how we lead within our organizations and communities (Guajardo et al., 2016). The eleven leadership tenets from Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong provide us reminders on how we can lead as Asian American leaders *with* fellow human beings in pursuit of our aspirational world. The leadership tenets come from us (Asian Americans) and it reminds us how to lead with fellow human beings of all backgrounds. The engagement with the participants of the CRE study in CLEs and the stories they shared about how they try to model a more human human, work with oppressed people, develop ideologies to solve societal contradictions, struggle, honor the interests, feelings, concerns of others, build cross-racial coalitions, fight against racism and polarizations, create collective power, pursue positive impact in service building our aspirational world for present and future generations is way of leadership that should be amplified within leadership literature.

*it will make you gasp.*  
*It might make you want to stay alive even, thank you;*  
- Ross Gay from *Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude*

Asian Americans are constrained in a space between whiteness and Blackness in America in a society in which “people strive to be something other than Black to avoid the sting of white supremacy” (Wu, 2002, p. 34). In my pursuit of an aspirational world free of racial, social, and economic injustice, I call back to my ancestry and make sense of *self* as a Korean, an immigrant, an American, and an educational leader through my Korean roots.

Though Asian Americans leaders lead on fragile ground in America, as a community, we are connected to an ancestral heritage in America of civil rights and social justice activists who embodied ways to solve the societal contradictions rooted in racism and colonialism. This legacy of Asian American leadership and lifting up the actions of justice-oriented Asian American leaders creates a way to repudiate white supremacy structures and reimagine the relationship between Asian Americans and all communities.

Gathering with Asian American leaders through CLEs and connecting our conversations to the eleven leadership tenets from Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong brings emerging theoretical relations in how the self connects to the community in service of building our aspirational world by embodying a more human human, working with oppressed people, developing ideologies to solve societal contradictions, struggling as our work, honoring the interests, feelings, concerns of others, building cross-racial coalitions, fighting against racism and polarizations, creating collective power, pursuing positive impact in service building our aspirational world for present and future generations. This connection manifests the historical legacy of Asian American leadership presence through the present actions of Asian American leaders in this CRE study.

In this chapter, I reviewed the emerging theoretical relations from the process of CLEs from August 2021 through May 2022 and provided reflections on leadership from the process of making visible the theoretical relations arising out of the qualitative data from the CLEs

convened during this phase of research. In Chapter 6, I review the findings and leadership lessons from the CRE study, and, in Chapter 7 I reflect on my leadership journey as a researcher through the course of this study.

## CHAPTER 6: CONNECTING WITH OUR FULL SELVES

*I tried to follow in your footsteps, but they turned to water  
The town has started sinking back into its commercial*

- John Yau, from *Music from Childhood*

My journey as an Asian American principal of a school began with confinement. In my first year, I was incredibly lost. I knew I needed to support a school that had many threats: enrollment, community members seeking to shut it down, and some staff that viewed our students who were Black, Latinx, immigrant, Pacific Islander, and low socioeconomic status through a deficit lens. More veteran principals coached me to “own” my school. Some told me to make the decisions I needed in isolation because I was the person in charge. I went through a year trying to be in charge of things, taking on things I should have collaboratively done with the staff; I forgot about building our vision and capacities collectively, such as developing professional development agendas, master scheduling, and budgeting. Perhaps my confinement came from following western views of leadership centered on individualistic concepts of personality traits or charisma and divorcing my leadership from a lens informed by a collectivist approach. The fuller version of myself as a leader emerged when I fostered partnerships and collaboration with staff, students, and families in the actual visioning and re-building of our school from one with a bad reputation to one that aspired to become a transformational school. This experience was a reminder of how to ensure that in building communities, collectivist leadership is emphasized over individualistic leadership to bring together a network of individuals, organizations, and a community in the purpose of serving all students.

Similarly, during the critical race ethnography (CRE) study, I pursued a research process to amplify a way to build a network of Asian American leaders who often felt isolated as leaders within their organizations into a community of leaders. Through this process, the study

participants underlined the importance of a collectivist approach to support each other's journey to unlearn the racialized conditions often pressing us to be a model minority while remaining perpetually foreign. In this research study, we engaged in 22 CLEs to build relationships, shared leadership dilemmas, and reflected collectively on the power of coming together as a community of Asian American leaders.

In this chapter, I discuss the findings from this study of Asian American leaders' exploration to affirm personal and leadership identities while simultaneously engaging in conversations on how leaders pursue racial, social, and economic justice within our organizations and communities. In the first section, I provide a summary of the data generation and collection. Next, I summarize the process of thematic analysis connected to the coding methods described in Chapter 3 (Braun & Clark, 2006). In the third section, I describe the process of developing a codebook for this study; in the final section, I discuss the emerging findings from the study.

### **Revisiting Data Generation and Collection**

As shown in Figure 65, in each phase of this CRE study, I generated and collected data through CLEs convened between November 2020 through August 2022 virtually on Zoom. During Phase I of this study, I collected and analyzed (a) three transcripts of whole group CLEs from November 2020, February 2021, and May 2021 convenings and (b) World Cafe Conversations from February 2021. I used this protocol to review the assets and challenges from the first exploratory CLE (November 2020) as the leaders shared experiences of cross-racial alliances they engaged, and any questions they wanted to discuss with other group members ranging from media representation, raising multi-racial children, and impact of colonialism. I generated the second document during the May 2020 CLE in which the participants discussed questions related to subverting white dominant culture, organizational leadership, the possible

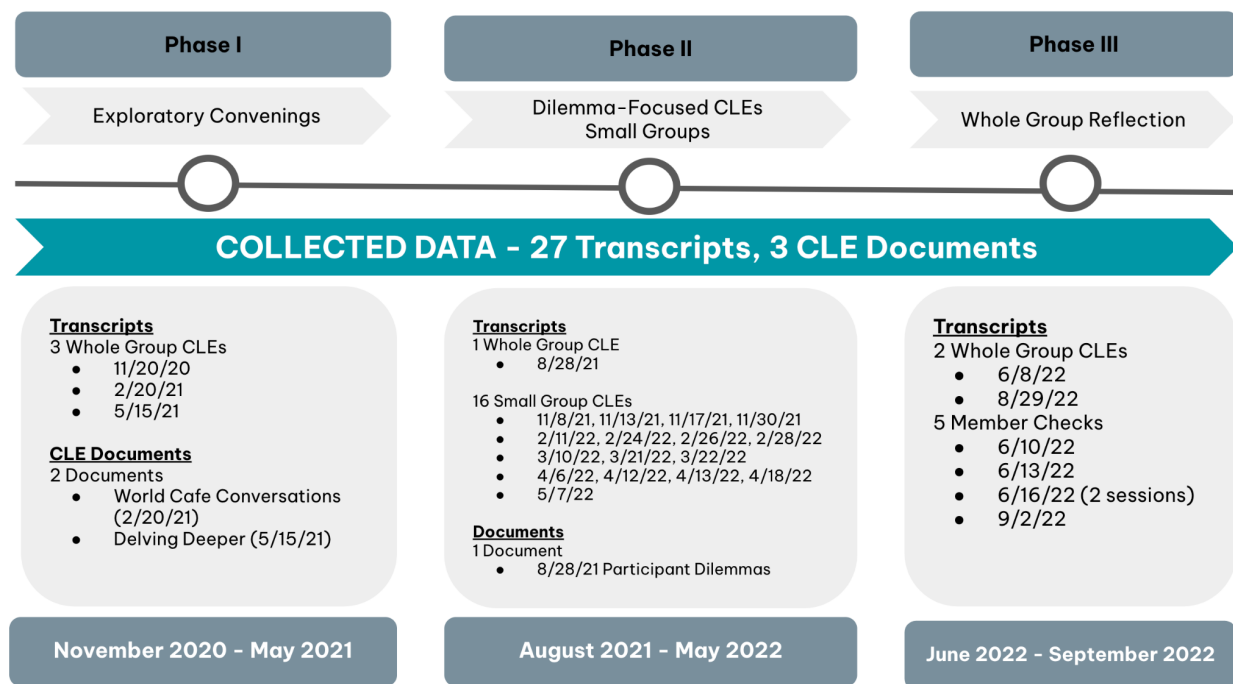


Figure 65. Collected data for CRE study.



collective work of the CLE group as a whole, and the dilemmas they wanted to discuss in future CLEs.

During Phase II of this study, I generated and collected seventeen transcripts and one CLE-related document. Of the transcripts, one was from a whole group CLE in August 2021, while the other sixteen transcripts were from small group CLEs convened between November 2021 through May 2022. The additional document was a collection of participants' drafted dilemmas from an August 2021 whole group CLE.

As we moved into Phase III of this study, I generated and collected transcripts from two whole group CLEs convened in June 2022 and August 2022 and transcripts from five one-on-one check-ins held between June 2022 and September 2022.

I triangulated the generated and collected data with the emergent framework of the research study, intersecting generated data with the study's research questions, CLE axioms (Guajardo et al., 2016), elements of gracious space (Hughes, 2017), the leadership tenets of Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong, the framework of critical race ethnography, and the components of this study's literature review.

I used the CLEs as the primary spaces to gather data for the study and the CLEs provided a way to intertwine several characteristics of qualitative research within this CRE study: up-close information gathering, interpreting my role as the primary researcher with study participants, creating multiple sources of data (transcripts, CLE presentation slides, CLE documents, and reflective memos), and amplifying the meanings participants expressed through the process of this study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Using the principles of critical race ethnography (CRE) (Duncan, 2005; Woodson, 2019), and the design of the CLEs (Guajardo et al., 2016; Hughes, 2017), we collectively created a safe space to support the Asian American leaders in this study to

share their experiences as racially marginalized leaders within society and their organizations in one space (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Throughout this study, I maintained an approach of emergent design through each phase of the study. Emergent design holds that an initial plan for research cannot be static and that some or all phases of a research study may shift during the process of entering the field (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As we moved from Phase I of the study into Phase II and Phase III, I developed CLEs with study participants to co-create our theorizing space together with the intention to both affirm the existing knowledge of participants and to use newly identified knowledge to incorporate into the planning of each subsequent CLE (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Overall, the CLEs became a safe theorizing space for Asian American leaders to develop their holistic account of Asian American leadership by sharing multiple perspectives and in a nonlinear process rooted in emergent design. Leaders brought their concepts of self to interact in a collaborative manner to center the experiences of the Asian American leaders engaged in the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

### **Revisiting the Process of Thematic Analysis**

I consistently used thematic analysis as the data analysis process for the study; the thematic analysis process involved generating and collecting data from the CLEs convened from Phase I through III in the study (see Figure 65) (Braun & Clark, 2006; hunter et al., 2013). In addition, the process of thematic analysis involved a coding process of three passes; as a result, I evolved the research codebook through the course of each phase of the CRE study in order to surface the patterns and themes to uncover findings.

### ***Coding Through Thematic Analysis***

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and sharing themes from data of any qualitative study (Braun & Clark, 2006). An important aspect of thematic analysis is that the process of theorizing and research methods matches the key pursuits of a researcher and the work of thematic analysis is about aligning the approach of theorizing and methods towards research aims which involves specific decisions a researcher must make in order to draw out the emerging findings from the data (Braun & Clark, 2006). In my case, the research aim was centered on the overarching research question: *How do Asian American leaders identify existing and new ontological and epistemological frameworks to affirm their identity and engage in leadership actions pursuing racial, social, and economic justice?* Thus, after generating and collecting data for the CRE study, I made specific decisions as a researcher to code data from each phase of the study to shape the analysis towards answering this overarching research question.

### ***First Pass Coding***

Finding patterns of meaning across a data set is a central tenet in thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006; hunter et al., 2013). To establish a groundwork for patterns, I coded the data from Phase I of this study inductively (sometimes called *in vivo*) to begin crystalizing meanings through a researcher frame rooted in my experience as a Korean-Immigrant and educator living in America (Saldaña, 2016). The process allowed me to establish a continuum within the data set of the ideas, stories, and thoughts arising from the Phase I CLEs of this study. In coding transcripts, documents, and reflective memos from CLEs convened over Zoom in November 2020, February 2021, and May 2021, I created a total of 377 codes. Of the 377 codes,

which accounted for 1,053 occurrences of codes, 514 occurrences were related to the leadership tenets from Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong, represented in Figure 66.

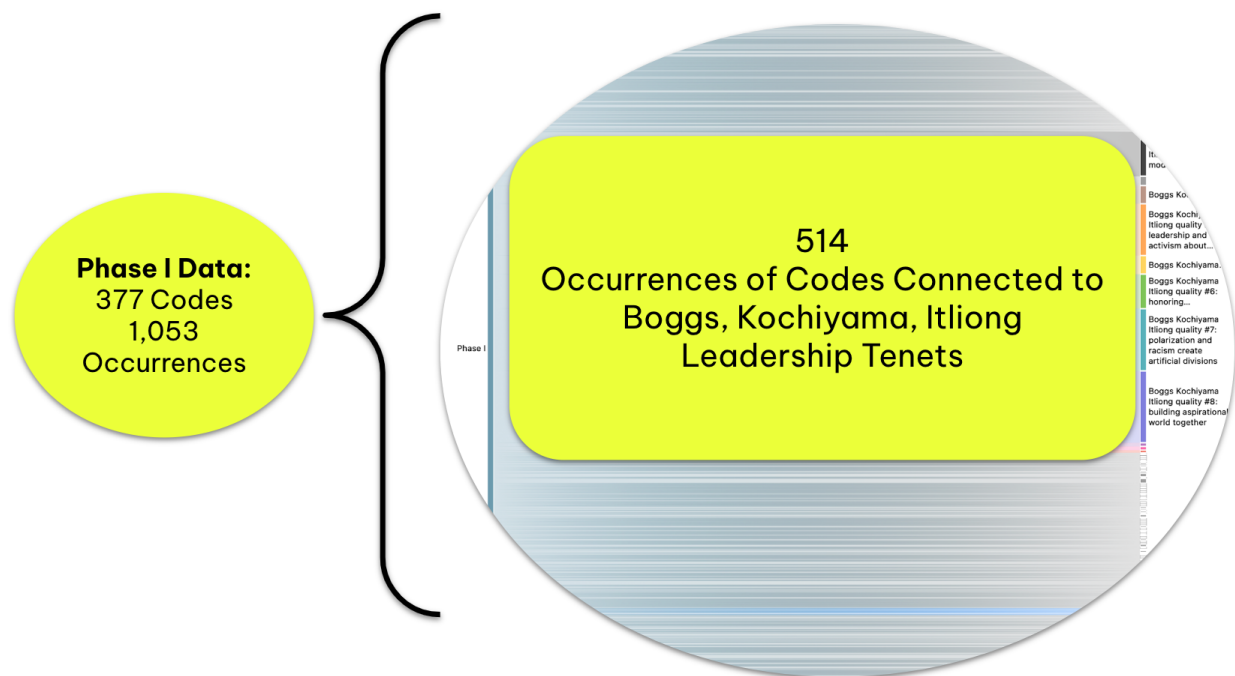
### ***Second Pass Coding***

From my inductive process in coding Phase I data of this study, I made a research decision to use the leadership tenets from Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong as base codes to code data from Phase II of the study. This decision informed the process of deductively coding the data from Phase II and connecting what was most vivid in Phase I to the data from Phase II (Braun & Clark, 2006; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Based on this connection, I generated code occurrences that were connected specifically to the leadership tenets of Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong, arising from the literature review of this study (Saldaña, 2016; Strauss, 1987). The coding process resulted in eleven leadership tenets as codes that occurred 1,409 times within Phase II data (see Figure 67).

### ***Third Pass Coding***

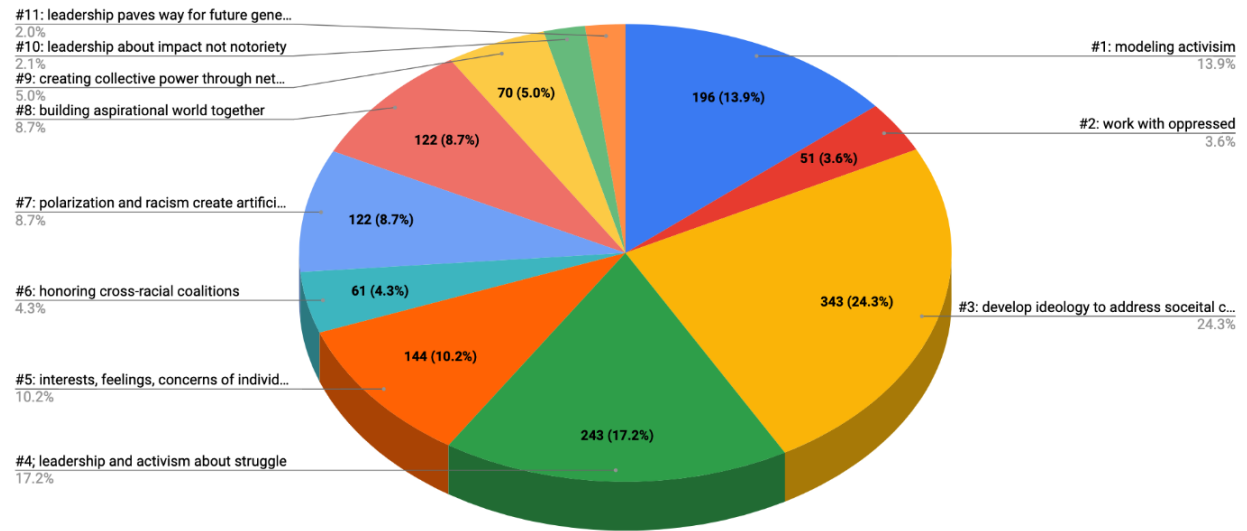
In the third pass coding process, I began by coding deductively the data from Phase III using the leadership tenets of Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong, to maintain consistency with the second pass coding process (Braun & Clark, 2006; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In Figure 68, I provide an overview of the code occurrences from the start of the third pass coding process. This step was a way to create continuity of coding based on how the data guided me as a researcher throughout the three phases of the study.

Next, I delved deeper into the coded data from the three phases by reviewing where the leadership tenets from Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong co-occurred significantly across my full data set through the steps noted.



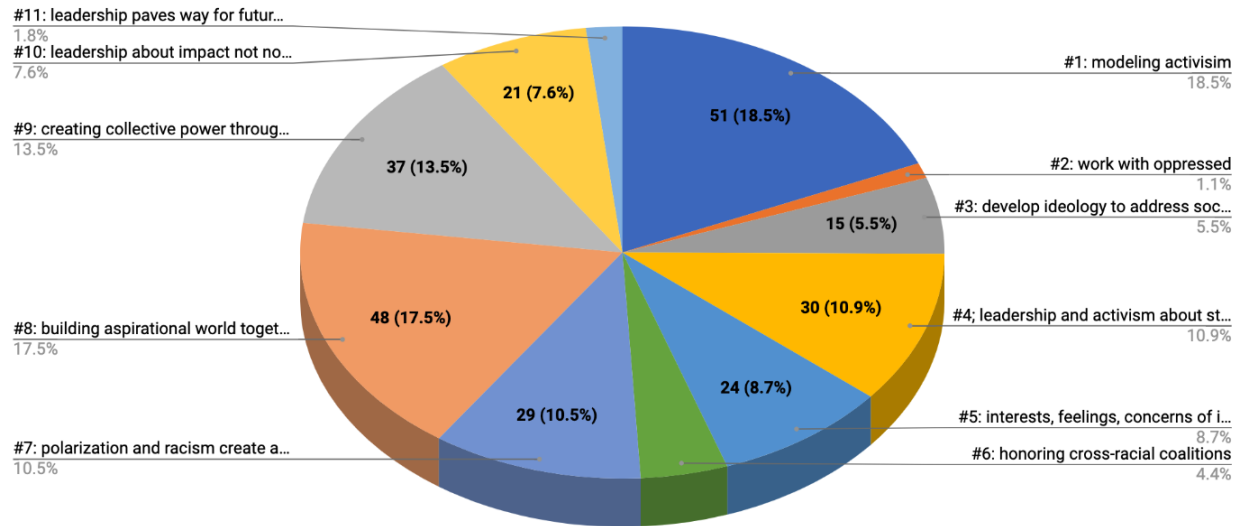
*Figure 66. First pass coding.*

**Second Pass Coding - Leadership Tenet Code Occurrences**  
**Total Leadership Tenet Occurrences = 1,409**



*Figure 67. Second pass coding.*

**Third Pass Coding - Leadership Tenet Code Occurrences**  
**Total Leadership Tenet Occurrences = 275**



*Figure 68.* Third pass coding - Leadership tenet codes.

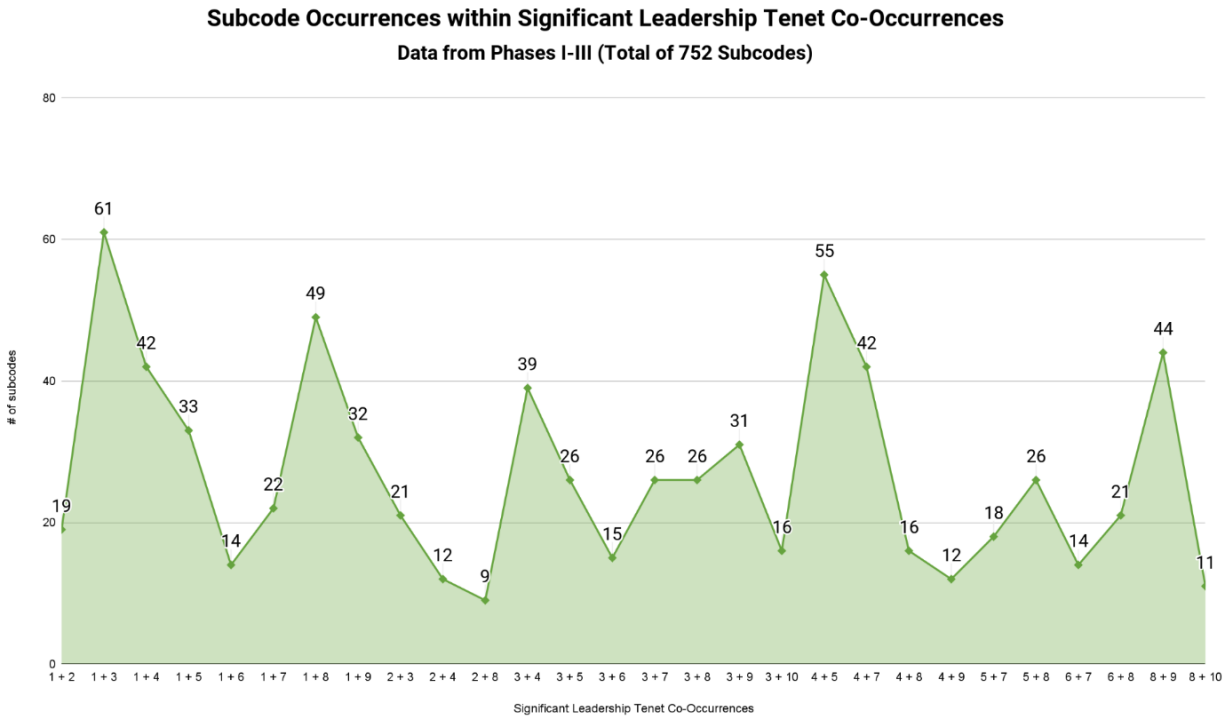
- Created 301 subcodes when reviewing where the Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong leadership tenets codes co-occurred the most.
- Additionally, reviewed and created subcodes (as part of the 301 subcodes noted in the previous step) where the Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong leadership tenet codes intersected with codes from the first pass coding process in Phase I.
- The resulting analysis is depicted in Figure 69 that visually represents the number of subcodes across the significant Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong leadership tenet codes co-occurrences. For example, at the co-occurrences of leadership tenet 1 (modeling activism) and leadership tenet 2 (working with the oppressed), there were 19 subcodes that occurred. As such, in Figure 69, I provide a visual of the subcode occurrences across each significant leadership tenet co-occurrence (e.g. 1+2, 1+3, and so on) and that there were 752 subcode occurrences across this subset of data.

### ***Revisiting Codebook Development***

To develop the study codebook, I took the following steps:

- Started with an inductive process during my first pass coding process for Phase I (November 2020 through May 2021) resulting in 377 codes occurring 1,053 times within Phase I data (see Figure 66).
- For the second pass process of coding the data from Phase II (August 2021 through May 2022) of this research, I decided to deductively code Phase II data centered on the eleven leadership tenets from Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong (Braun & Clark, 2006; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; hunter et al., 2013) (see Figure 67).





*Figure 69.* Third pass coding - Subcodes within leadership tenet co-occurrences.

- The third pass coding process involved coding Phase III data (June 2022 to August 2022) deductively through the eleven leadership tenets (see Figure 68) and then moving into subcoding data from across all phases of this research study in an inductive process reviewing where the leadership tenets most significantly co-occurred both in frequency and with the inductive codes from Phase I of this study (see Figure 69).

Through each pass of coding, the codebook evolved from a vast inductive set of **codes** that narrowed through thematic analysis into the **codes** representing the eleven leadership tenets. I then added **subcodes** from an analysis where the Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong leadership tenet **codes** most significantly intersected across the full set of data. After the third pass coding, I moved into a process of finalizing my codebook based on the patterns looking across the data (Braun & Clark, 2006).

To finalize the codebook, I first reviewed the eleven leadership tenets of Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong and re-sorted them to be a part of larger thematic categories. The categories moved leadership tenets 1 and 2 into a category titled, “Humanistic Activism and Creativity”, shortened to “HumAct” and is connected to the literature review bin Asian American Leadership from Chapter 2 (see Figure 70). Leadership tenets 3, 10, and 11 were moved into a category titled, “Resolving Societal Contradictions”, shortened to “ResolveContras” and also connected to the literature review bin, Asian American Leadership. Leadership tenets 4 and 5 were moved into a category titled, “Struggling Through Together”, shortened to “StrglTgthr” and connected to the literature review bins Model Minority and Perpetual Foreigner Concepts and Collectivist Leadership. Lastly, leadership tenets 7, 8, and 9 were moved into a category titled, “Creating Collective Power”, shortened to “CollectPower”, and connected to the following

| Category                                           | Literature Review Connection                    | Leadership Tenet Codes                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Humanistic Activism and Creativity (HumAct)        | Asian American Leadership                       | 1. Modeling activism as a way to project a more human human being with a sense of political and social responsibility (Boggs & Boggs, 1974).                                                                              |
|                                                    |                                                 | 2. Working with the oppressed to share a new way of being together and exercise their creativity towards positive societal transformation (Boggs & Boggs, 1974).                                                          |
| Resolving Societal Contradictions (ResolveContras) | Model Minority and Perpetual Foreigner Concepts | 3. Developing an ideology to address a specific societal contradiction and create a vision to resolve this societal contradiction (Boggs & Boggs, 1974).                                                                  |
|                                                    | Asian American Leadership                       | 10. Recognizing that leadership is about making impact, not notoriety; and the actions of leaders must create positive social change with tangible results (Bacon, 2018).                                                 |
| Struggling Through Together (StrglTgthr)           | Model Minority and Perpetual Foreigner Concepts | 11. Understanding that the work of leadership paves the pathway for future generations to build on the work of past effective leadership.                                                                                 |
|                                                    | Collectivist Leadership                         | 4. Understanding that leadership and activism are about struggle with no final solution and the struggle is the work (or our highest expression of human creativity) (Boggs & Boggs, 1974).                               |
| Creating Collective Power (CollectPower)           | Model Minority and Perpetual Foreigner Concepts | 5. Recognizing that the interests, feelings, and concerns of the individual within the collective struggle against institutionalized racism and state power are just as important as the struggle itself (Fujino, 2005).  |
|                                                    |                                                 | 6. Honoring cross-racial coalitions that provide antiracist organizing approaches to resist gains made at the expense of others' (Fujino, 2005).                                                                          |
|                                                    | Asian American Leadership                       | 7. Understanding how polarization and racism create artificial divisions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, sexual orientation, and class, impeding any movement's actions towards social justice (Fujino, 2005). |
|                                                    | Collectivist Leadership                         | 8. Building our aspirational world together through the power of our collective consciousness (Throughline, 2021).                                                                                                        |
|                                                    | Cross-Racial Coalition Building                 | 9. Creating collective power and moving us beyond polarizations through strategic networking and organizing (Bacon, 2018).                                                                                                |

*Figure 70.* Codebook development.

literature review bins: Model Minority and Perpetual Foreigner Concepts, Collectivist Leadership, and Cross-Racial Coalition Building. From the step of categorizing the leadership tenets from Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong, the final codebook was derived from an analysis taking the following steps:

- Reviewed factors within the subcode data (752 occurrences) from Figure 69 that were connected to the following criteria:
  - subcode occurrences equaled ten or more within Boggs, Kochiyama, Itliong leadership tenet co-occurrences
  - subcode occurrences equaled ten or more within the full set of 752 occurrences
  - subcode occurrences exceeded the average of occurrences (greater than two)
  - subcode occurrences exceeded the average of occurrences within leadership tenet co-occurrences (greater than three);
- Aggregated the subcodes that met two of the above-noted criteria and this analysis surfaced 36 subcodes visually represented in Figure 71.

The final codebook formed the basis from which I will describe the emergent findings from this CRE study in the next section.

## **Findings**

In Figure 72, I represent another version of the theorizing space. In each level of the visual, I represent key emerging findings from the CLEs convened over the course of the study. In the first level, I depict the importance of acknowledging the societal conditions Asian Americans face to imagine a different reality. Without acknowledging our racialized experiences (e.g. model minority and perpetual foreigner) that are rooted in racism, colonialism, and white

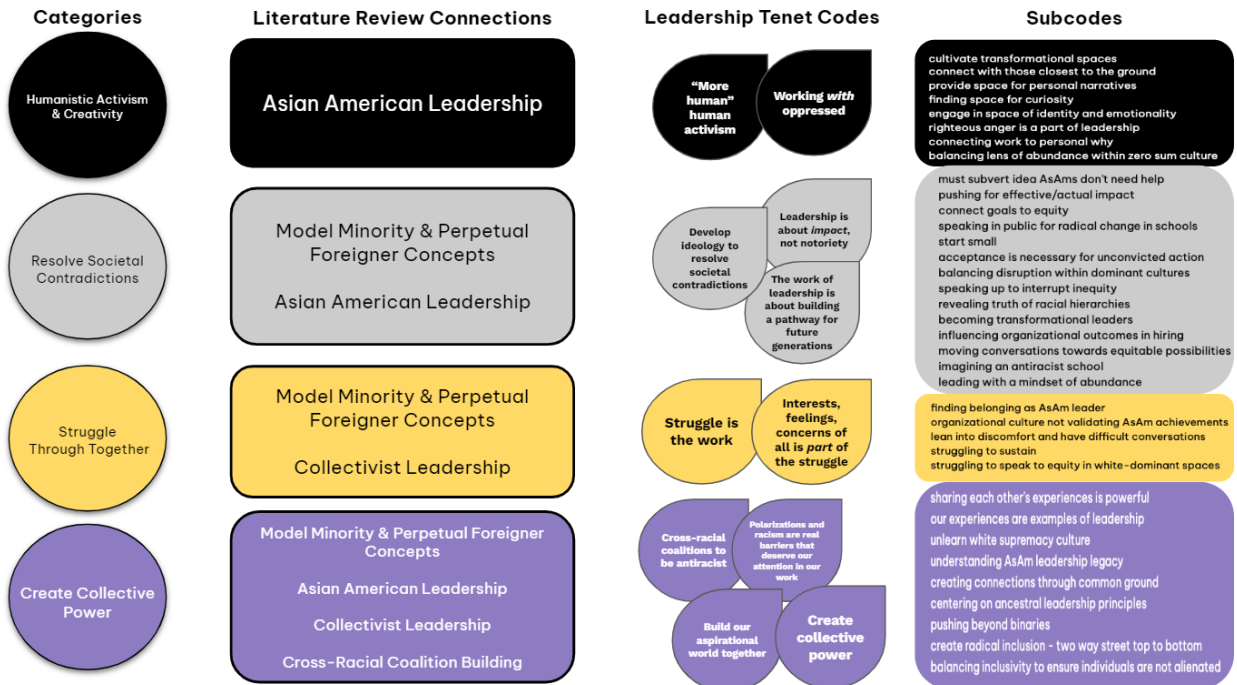
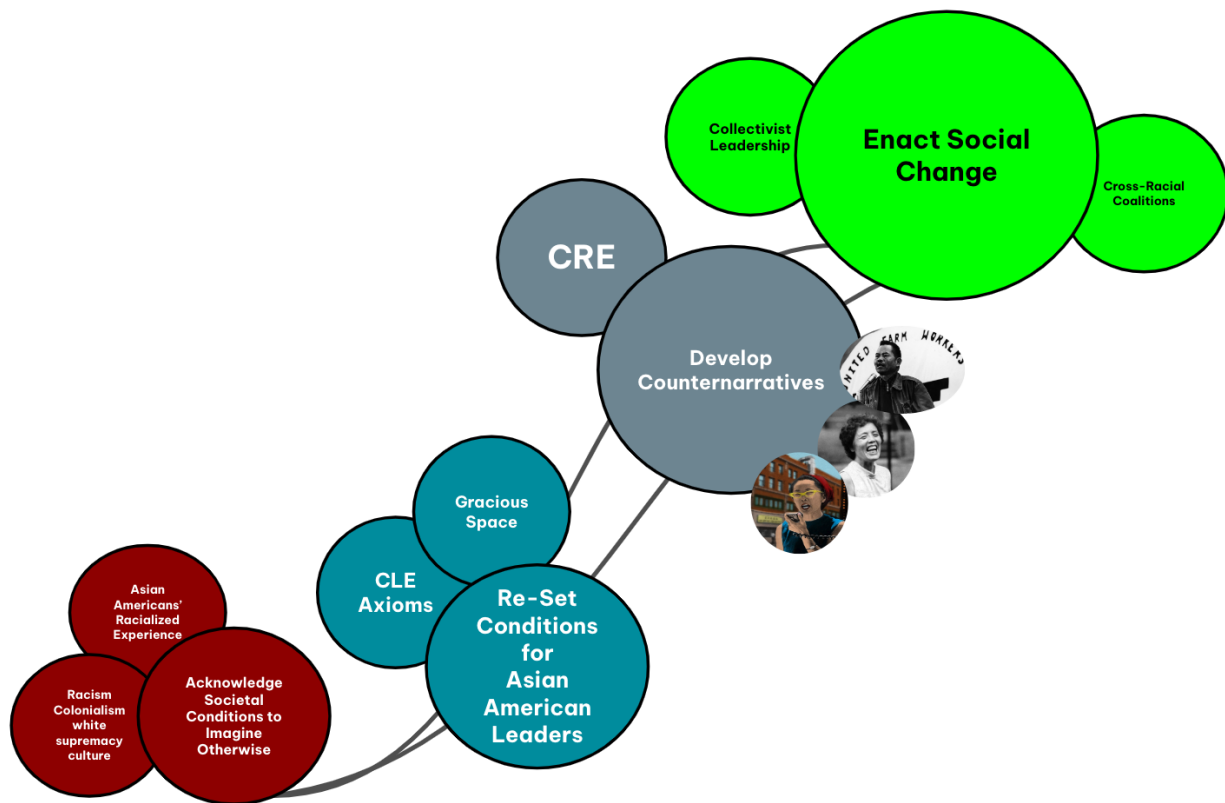


Figure 71. Visual of codebook.



*Figure 72.* Emerging findings: Acknowledge societal conditions, re-set conditions, develop counternarratives, enact social change.

---

supremacy culture, we could not imagine a changed reality. In the second level, I emphasize resetting conditions for Asian American leaders beyond their racialized conditions through CLEs and creating transformational spaces through CLE axioms (Guajardo et al., 2016) and the elements of gracious space (Hughes, 2017). In the third level, I highlight the significance of developing historical and justice-oriented Asian American counternarratives to counteract the racist dominant narratives of us in current American society. By amplifying enacting social change through collectivist leadership and cross-racial coalitions to build our aspirational world toward a common good, I present a fourth level of action.

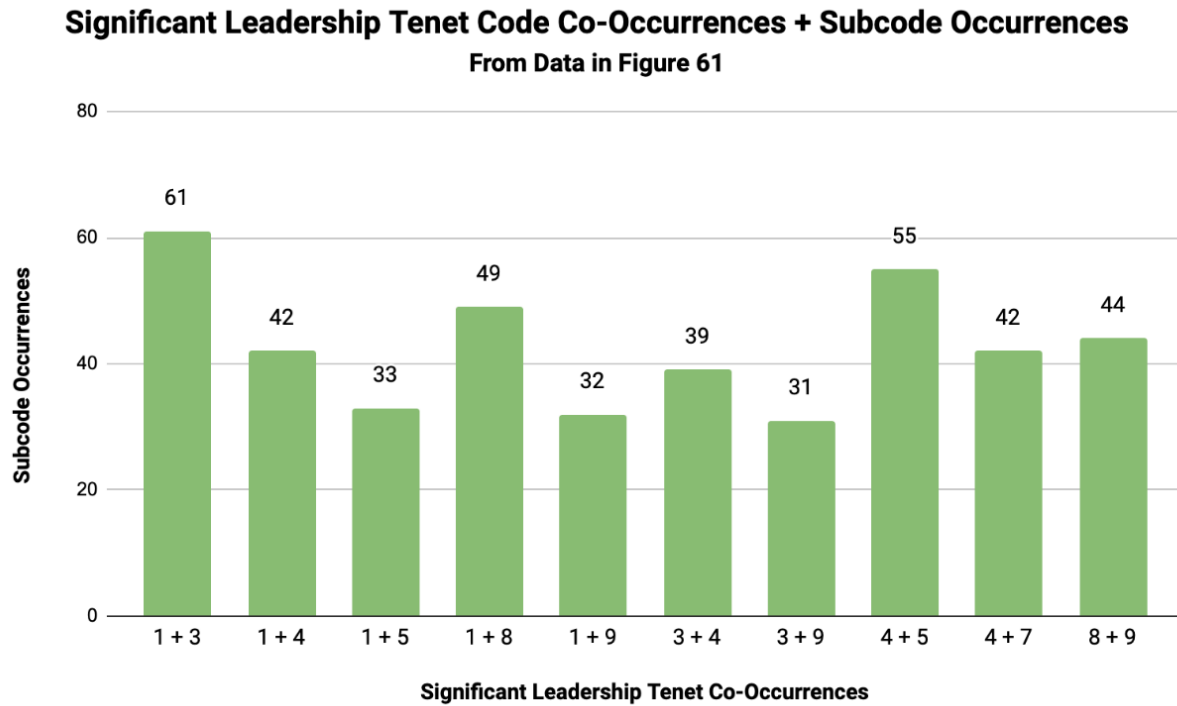
One throughline I maintained as a researcher was to share my progress as a researcher with study participants; thus, the eleven leadership tenets from Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong was one aspect of the research that resonated with them. When the participants' narratives connected with the legacy of Asian American leaders such as Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong, an example of social change that we engaged in as a group was making the connections as a way to reinforce the counternarratives that Asian Americans have long been a part of justice-oriented leadership in America. The study participants were often isolated as the only or one of a few Asian Americans within their organizations; thus, convening together throughout the course of this study to connect their isolated experiences with the leadership legacy of justice-oriented Asian Americans provided a way to see that they are not alone in the spaces of leadership historically, nor in present time. By gathering and connecting their conversations to the historical legacies of Asian American leadership, we realized that we are continuing the justice-oriented work within our organizations and communities started by leaders such as Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong. These realizations occurring within the spaces of CLEs over the course of this study began the process of understanding how deeply we are a part of an Asian American justice-

oriented legacy and how we might continue the work of building racial, social, and economic justice.

Braun and Clark (2006) describe that identifying “keyness” within data is a necessary step in the process of thematic analysis (p. 82). Keyness is described as an idea from a study’s data that does not necessarily derive only from quantifiable measures, rather from the significance of its connection to the overall research question of any study (Braun & Clark, 2006). To move to a place of uncovering this keyness, I analyzed the subset of data from Figure 73 to identify the co-occurrences of Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong leadership tenets which had an above average frequency of subcode occurrences (the average was 27 subcode occurrences). The analysis resulted in the leadership tenet co-occurrences shown in Figure 73. The purpose of this step was to get to a finer tuned set of leadership tenet co-occurrences in order to connect them to the 36 subcodes noted in Figure 74. Then, I intertwined the data from Figure 71 with Figure 73, which helped me capture the degree of ebbs and flows of the 36 subcodes from the finalized codebook and how they intersected with significant leadership tenet co-occurrences. This intertwining resulted in what is portrayed in Figures 74 and 75.

Both figures show the frequency of the 36 subcode occurrences within the set of whittled-down leadership tenet co-occurrences displayed in Figure 73. This process helped me connect participants’ espoused leadership tenets to the leadership tenets of Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong that have been discussed significantly over the course of this study. Although this delving deeper into data could continue indefinitely, I stopped at this point and used the results from the thematic analysis to pull key connections from the data I generated and collected over the course of this study. Though a deep analysis of each of the subcodes from Figure 74 and 75 was considered, to create a more succinct throughline between the data from





*Figure 73.* Significant leadership tenet code co-occurrences and subcode occurrences.

| Category       | Subcode                                                       | Number of Subcode Occurrences within Significant Leadership Tenet Code Co-Occurrences from Figure 65 |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ResolveContras | pushing for effective/actual impact                           | 10                                                                                                   |
| CollectPower   | sharing each other's experiences is powerful                  | 8                                                                                                    |
| ResolveContras | connect goals to equity                                       | 8                                                                                                    |
| HumAct         | cultivate transformational spaces                             | 6                                                                                                    |
| HumAct         | provide space for personal narratives                         | 5                                                                                                    |
| ResolveContras | speaking in public for radical change in schools              | 5                                                                                                    |
| ResolveContras | start small                                                   | 5                                                                                                    |
| ResolveContras | acceptance is necessary for unconvicted action                | 5                                                                                                    |
| CollectPower   | our experiences are examples of leadership                    | 4                                                                                                    |
| CollectPower   | unlearn white supremacy culture                               | 4                                                                                                    |
| CollectPower   | understanding AsAm leadership legacy                          | 4                                                                                                    |
| HumAct         | finding space for curiosity                                   | 4                                                                                                    |
| ResolveContras | balancing disruption within dominant cultures                 | 4                                                                                                    |
| ResolveContras | speaking up to interrupt inequity                             | 4                                                                                                    |
| StrglTgthr     | lean into discomfort and have difficult conversations         | 4                                                                                                    |
| CollectPower   | creating connections through common ground                    | 3                                                                                                    |
| CollectPower   | centering on ancestral leadership principles                  | 3                                                                                                    |
| HumAct         | connect with those closest to the ground                      | 3                                                                                                    |
| HumAct         | engage in space of identity and emotionality                  | 3                                                                                                    |
| HumAct         | righteous anger is a part of leadership                       | 3                                                                                                    |
| HumAct         | connecting work to personal why                               | 3                                                                                                    |
| ResolveContras | revealing truth of racial hierarchies                         | 3                                                                                                    |
| ResolveContras | becoming transformational leaders                             | 3                                                                                                    |
| ResolveContras | influencing organizational outcomes in hiring                 | 3                                                                                                    |
| StrglTgthr     | organizational culture not validating AsAm achievements       | 3                                                                                                    |
| StrglTgthr     | struggling to sustain                                         | 3                                                                                                    |
| CollectPower   | pushing beyond binaries                                       | 2                                                                                                    |
| CollectPower   | create radical inclusion - two way street top to bottom       | 2                                                                                                    |
| HumAct         | balancing lens of abundance within zero sum culture           | 2                                                                                                    |
| ResolveContras | moving conversations towards equitable possibilities          | 2                                                                                                    |
| ResolveContras | imagining an antiracist school                                | 2                                                                                                    |
| StrglTgthr     | struggling to speak to equity in white-dominant spaces        | 2                                                                                                    |
| CollectPower   | balancing inclusivity to ensure individuals are not alienated | 1                                                                                                    |
| ResolveContras | must subvert idea AsAms don't need help                       | 1                                                                                                    |
| ResolveContras | leading with a mindset of abundance                           | 1                                                                                                    |
| StrglTgthr     | finding belonging as AsAm leader                              | 0                                                                                                    |

Figure 74. Subcode occurrences within significant leadership tenet co-occurrences.

**Connected to Figure 74 and Sorted by Subcode Categories**

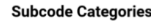


Figure 75. Subcode occurrences within significant leadership tenet co-occurrences (organized by subcode categories).

the study's thematic analysis to the theorizing space of this study, I discuss the data that were most compelling as part of the process to surface the key emergent findings from the study. Additionally, I refer to Figures 74 and 75 frequently as part of the discussion related to the emerging findings.

“You have to bring that imagination into relationship with reality”.

- adrienne maree brown from *On Being* (podcast)

Next, I discuss the specific emerging findings that underscore the importance of acknowledging societal conditions of Asian Americans to imagine a more just reality, resetting conditions for Asian American leaders through cultivating transformational spaces, developing counternarratives to lift up our past and present leadership legacies as Asian American leaders, and approaches to enacting social change pursuing racial, social, and economic justice.

### **Acknowledge Societal Conditions to Imagine Otherwise**

Identifying the factors creating barriers for Asian American leaders and acknowledging them as part of the societal conditions for Asian Americans was an important step in this study. As the Asian American leaders in the study recognized the social realities for Asian Americans in the US, they were able to confront conditions that are often unrecognized by the general public. As discussed in Chapter 2, Asian Americans have been racialized through concepts such as the model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts that reinforce an oppressive state in which, on one side, we are told that we are model minorities and, simultaneously, we are reminded that we will always be foreign (Cheung, 2017; Huynh et al., 2011; Kawai, 2005; Kim, 1999; Petersen, 1966; U.S. News & World Report, 1966; Wu, 2014).

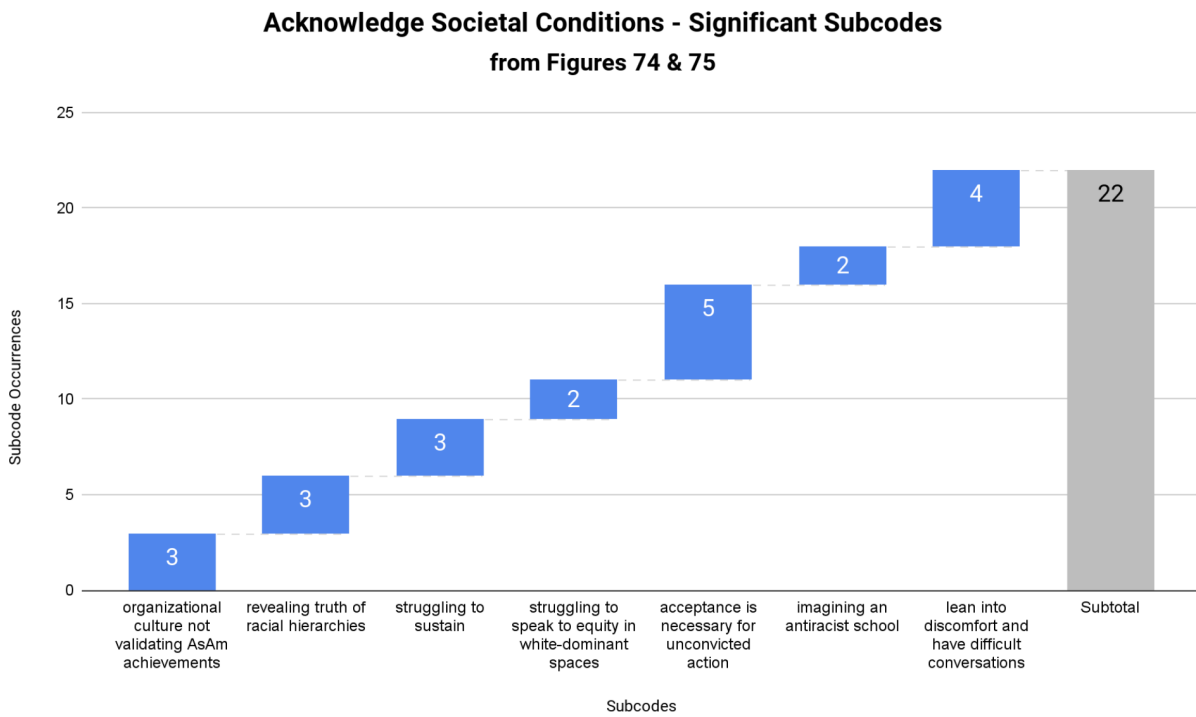
Knowing and acknowledging this context allowed study participants to think about the specific aspects of the racialization we needed to work on as Asian American leaders within our

organizations and communities to undo. The acknowledgement of a paradoxical oppression Asian Americans exist within provided a place to begin our work as Asian American leaders to move beyond. The subcodes noted in Figure 76 underscore the ways the Asian American leaders in this study acknowledged a racialized context.

### *Acceptance is Necessary for “Unconflicted” Action*

After acknowledging a racialized context for Asian Americans, our work as leaders is to take unapologetic actions to undo the racialized structures in America. Understanding that our country is a work in progress that is constantly challenged by its racist, colonialist, and capitalistic tendencies, excluding groups of people is part of the work of leadership (Boggs & Boggs, 1974). The leaders acknowledged the balancing act of suffering and struggling past racism, colonialism, and capitalism in our pursuit of helping our society evolve towards racial, social, and economic justice (Boggs & Boggs, 1974). For example, one study participant, reflecting on the impact of the 2016 Presidential Elections, shared during a February 2022 small-group CLE that one of the main ways for her to process the devastating results of Trump becoming president was to meditate and noted that peace was not the goal of her meditation, but rather her goal was to get to a point where she could say, “come what may”. This mantra guided her and brought her to a moment of clarity about our current context, where she shared, “acceptance is necessary for unconflicted action”, and continued:

basically for the last six years I've been exploring this concept of acceptance, what does it mean, and I think I say all of this to say: what I have grown to understand about acceptance is that acceptance doesn't mean that you are saying ‘it's okay’. Acceptance means that you are literally recognizing, this is the reality of the situation. And with that



*Figure 76. Emerging finding: Acknowledge societal conditions subcode occurrences.*

it can help you actually resist more strongly, it can help you resist from a place of uncomfortableness.

*Acceptance is necessary for unconflicted action* is a key tenet from the study participant asking all of us, not just Asian American leaders, to accept the current state of our context and move toward unconflicted actions from a place of discomfort. This leadership tenet pushes us to answer the question, “Given this context, how shall we live”? Are we going to live in a world where we pretend racism doesn’t exist or that Trump was not our president? Or will we accept there is a long, deep, and rich history of counteracting the racialization for all racially marginalized communities and figure out a way to take the steps to go to “any length” to restore our community (Boggs & Boggs, 1974, p. xxvi)?

Within the research data, the tenet *acceptance is necessary for unconflicted action* was one significant subcode in the category of resolving societal contradictions and appeared five times within the significant leadership tenet co-occurrences noted in Figure 76 from this study’s thematic analysis. This guidepost for unconflicted leadership pushes leaders to know that acceptance is essential to act precisely towards a justice that undos the racialized structures of our society, continuing the legacy of justice-oriented Asian American leadership.

### ***Imagining an Antiracist School***

Another part of acknowledging a racialized context is to acknowledge the environment in schools in order to imagine possibilities for change. The work of balancing acknowledgement with possibilities involves projecting a future that is more humane and just for all people in our society (Boggs & Boggs, 1974). Starting with seeing the present, we can then imagine a future of human beings living together, not excluding others (Boggs & Boggs, 1974). Another participant during a small-group CLE in November 2021 presented his dilemma about understanding what

an antiracist school looks like. This participant was a principal who is mixed-race Asian American (Japanese and white) and served a school community that was predominantly Latinx, and Black. The participant reflected:

I wanted to be more broadly antiracist and maybe not explicitly focused on pro-Asian or only thinking about Asian leadership and identity. Mainly because the community I support and my position within it, I do not look like or represent. I'm from a pretty much white suburb, that is a very different lived reality than what my mostly Latino and Black students experienced. And I think what gets in the way for me, sometimes is just not knowing if I'm doing things that are perpetuating classist, racist, sexist, you know patriarchal; all the things that might be my blind spots are things that I just embody because that's what I know. So I think for me I'm really curious, and I think we talked about this last time. I don't think there is such a thing as an antiracist school, but what are the elements that different schools do really well [to be antiracist]? How do we learn from those?

This participant inquired about other schools he could learn from to move his school toward a vision of schools that could better serve the racially marginalized populations of student communities who have been historically and presently underserved by school systems in America.

*Imagining an antiracist school* was another key tenet emerging from this study from a participant who is recognizing his own upbringing of growing up in a predominantly white suburb and contrasting that experience with the student community he serves; he understands that he does not represent his students' experiences. This initial acknowledgement moved the participant to wonder whether he perpetuates the many *isms* related to class, race, and gender as



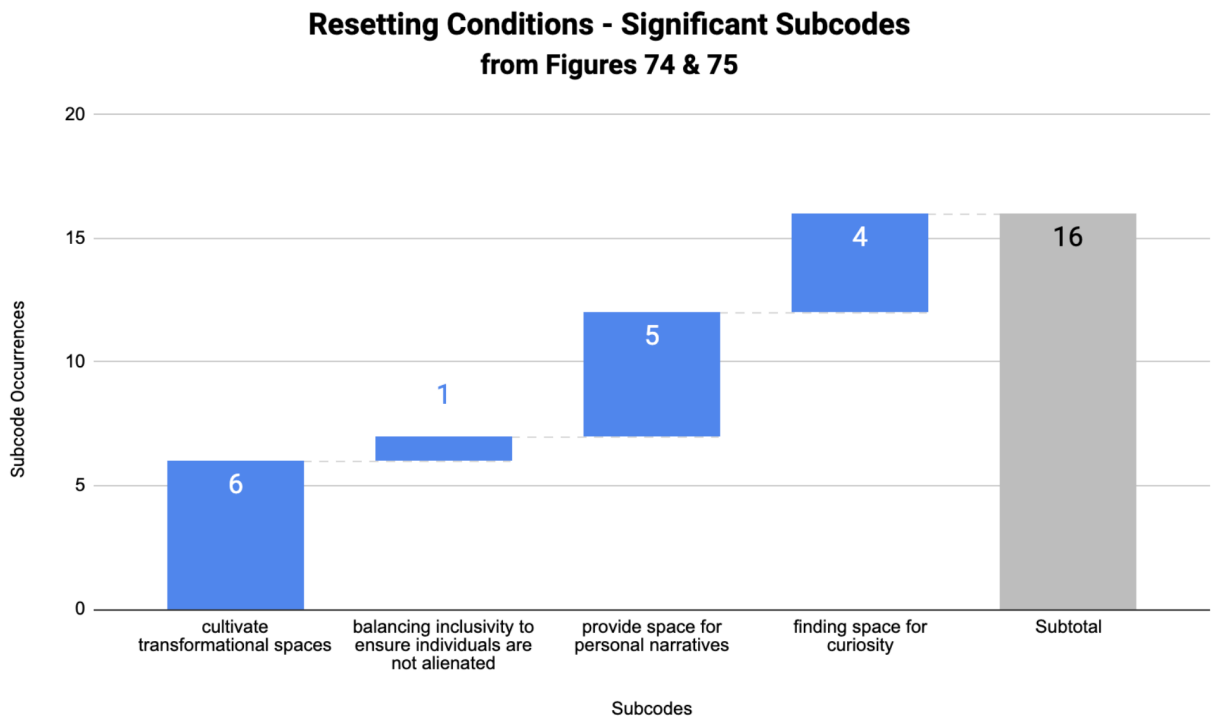
part of his blind spots as a principal. From this acknowledgement of potentially maintaining oppressive conditions for his predominantly Black and Latinx community, he shared with his CLE group about imagining what an antiracist school can look like and expressed a desire to learn from other schools to support antiracism at his school. The thought process of balancing a challenging reality both in self (as a mixed-race Japanese and white person) and in position (as a principal serving Black and Latinx students) is complex. He needed to imagine with others how to create a future in schools that ensures that all students graduate PreK-12 school systems in America with equitable opportunities for life success.

The participant's tenet of *imagining an antiracist school* was another significant subcode within the category of resolving societal contradictions. Acknowledging our reality and taking action to counteract a racist reality sometimes looks like thinking and imagining what is possible because it is through this process that we are able to create the social momentum to deconstruct the racist structures within our organizations and communities.

### **Resetting Conditions through Transformational Spaces**

The steps we took as a group to develop a space for Asian American leaders was another way we moved beyond an ever-present oppressive context. The importance of developing a transformational space to reset the conditions for Asian American leaders is noted in Figure 77, emphasizing ways to cultivate transformational spaces, balancing inclusivity, providing space for personal narratives and for curiosity. The subcode of *cultivate transformational spaces* will be discussed in detail in the next subsection.

Grace Lee Boggs asked what social movements might look like if we focused on “critical connections instead of critical mass” (Brown, 2017). In this study, creating critical connections



*Figure 77.* Emerging finding: Resetting conditions subcode occurrences.

was a focus amongst the participants to cultivate transformational spaces. One participant noted during a small-group CLE in March 2022:

I just appreciate that everybody was willing. [You] (talking to another participant) setting the tone and then everybody kind of going *there*. Sharing things that you know were clearly confidential. Not just your own situation, but others sharing the scars from decisions. You're sharing of that and your experiences [both] positive and negative. And [as the facilitator] constantly creating the space for all of this, creating the holding container in Heifetz language, so just really appreciate this group.

The concept of *cultivate transformational spaces* was another emerging finding directly connected to this participant's reflection of setting a tone to allow all in a group to share the positive and negative experiences, along with any "scars" from the prior decisions leaders had made. In order to move beyond an oppressive context, it is essential that a collective group, like the participants in this study, co-construct a space where all can share their experiences in an unguarded manner. This can guide how leaders can intentionally create spaces to move beyond the racialized societal context for Asian Americans or reset oppressive conditions for Asian American leaders. In addition, the resetting of conditions so that frank discussions can occur are essential components which can transform the theorizing and practice space of leadership that is racialized through white dominant discourse.

I coded this participant's reflection from a March 2022 small-group CLE as *cultivate transformational spaces* which was categorized under Humanistic Activism and occurred six times within the significant leadership tenet co-occurrences (see Figure 77). Beyond the data occurrences, the participants sharing and "going there" by divulging confidential matters and having a "holding container" or a safe space to do so provided a way for participants in this study

to reflect on their experiences as leaders within racist and paradoxical conditions. Additionally, these transformational spaces support the learning participants engaged in with each other about the oppressive relationships we must undo within our organizations and communities to take steps towards transformational change (Boggs & Boggs, 1974).

### **Counternarratives to Lift Up Ourselves**

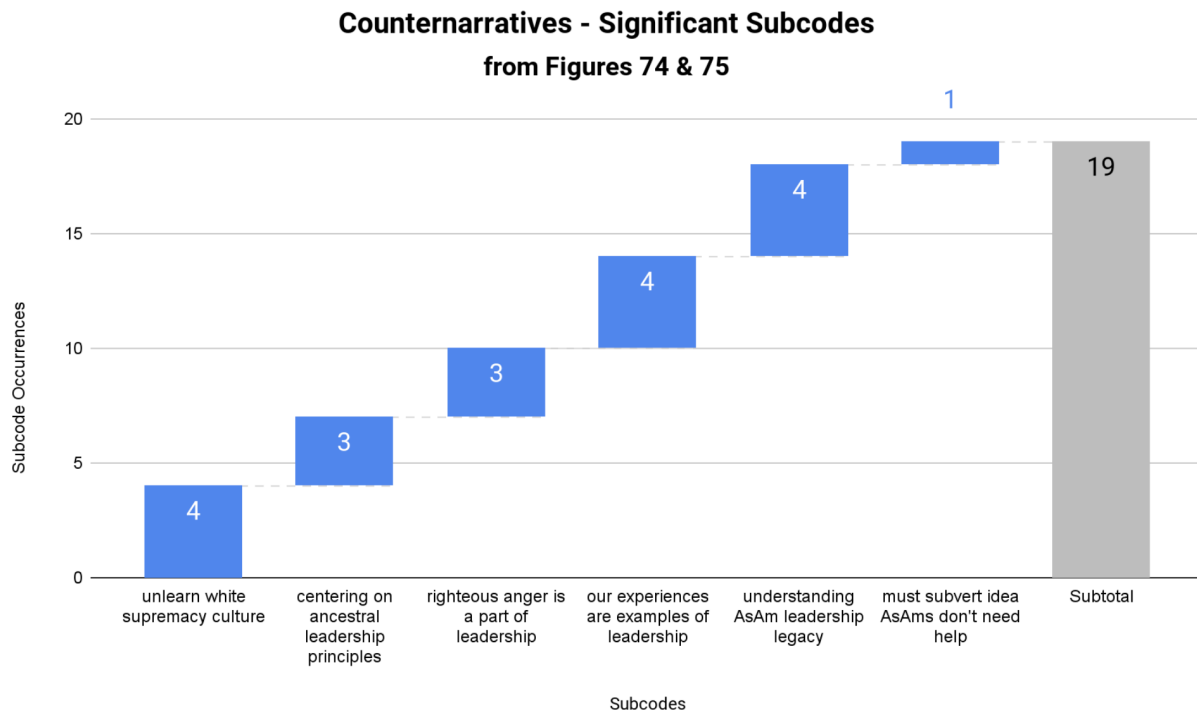
The transformational space of CLEs provided safety for study participants to share in an unguarded manner about their perspectives as leaders that they would not in a typical organizational space. Having a space to share vulnerably about their experiences as Asian American leaders created a pathway for participants to connect their individual perspectives with other study participant's perspectives. Participants sharing their perspectives with one another served to affirm counternarratives to the conditioning Asian Americans often experienced through model minority stereotypes and how Asian Americans are not "leaderly", but get things done efficiently (Shen, n.d.; Wilkerson, 2020). In the face of such untruth about Asian Americans, engaging in transformational spaces to speak to a leadership legacy rooted Asian Americans' experiences, unlearning white supremacy culture, and being unapologetic for a righteous anger are three of the counternarratives represented in Figure 78 that I discuss next.

### ***Centering Asian American Leadership Principles***

During a June 2022 member check, one participant described the importance of recentring on the histories of Asian American leadership legacy when he noted:

It's always really grounding to re-center in those histories of [our leadership legacy].

What I'm also thinking about is there's the avoidance of grounding in those stories. And then there's also the reflexive, instinctual deference and kind of a dialing down of our



*Figure 78. Emerging finding: Counter narratives subcode occurrences.*

own accomplishments that's also a part of this is fractal. We don't see ourselves [as leadership models]. We just constantly defer in this way - 'oh I'm just I'm just doing the best I can but it's never good enough.' sense that exists, both as a group, but also lives within each individual and that's the thing to turn around right? If we can feel like actually we are from a deeply powerful lineage and also be proud of our own individual accomplishments but also hold some humility, that's not self-aggrandizement.

This participant shared his perspective that as Asian Americans we tend to not ground our present-time leadership in the leadership stories of past Asian American leaders. He also saw Asian American leaders as tending to dial down our own accomplishments, perhaps subconsciously reinforcing our social conditioning to not see ourselves as model leaders.

However, if Asian Americans grounded themselves in the “deeply powerful lineage” of past Asian American leaders and be proud of our present leadership accomplishments, we begin to take steps to affirm that we are leadership models for others to look towards beyond the typically white-Western leaders who dominate the theorizing space of leadership (Benham, 2002; hunter et al., 2013).

Thus, *centering on ancestral leadership principles* was another leadership tenet emerging from the study that reminds Asian Americans leaders to know the justice-oriented legacies of leaders such as Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong (Bacon, 2018; Boggs & Boggs, 1974; Fujino, 2005). When Asian American leaders know this more accurate past of Asian Americans leading toward justice in American history (Asian American Political Alliance, 2017; Hinnershitz, 2017; Throughline, 2021; Wu, 2014), they valued their own leadership in the present and affirmed that they are leading from a legacy of Asian American social justice activism. I coded this participant's reflection as *centering on ancestral leadership principles*, categorized under

Creating Collective Power and occurred three times within the significant co-occurrences of leadership tenets (see Figure 78).

### ***Unlearning White Supremacy Culture***

During a small-group CLE in February 2022, another participant shared her reflection on the influence of her family that supported white supremacy culture until she realized that these white supremacy tenets were cultural norms she had to unlearn. The participant noted:

In my family, I was told if you follow this little playbook you'll be good, you'll be fine.

And I think I never really questioned that until I got to college and I started to understand the system that we were working in. And began to think really critically about everything that had ever been presented to me as the norm. I think the best part of that is that critical thinking then came back and I applied it to the system. [I wondered] why does this system have to be this way? And so that was really a revolutionary moment for me.

Within the Asian American community we know we are used by the white racist structure to provide cover for their guilds. To provide comfort in their complicity, to provide a wedge against others to provide a false symbol of hope because that's how I have come to view our utility to the white supremacists structure that we're in, and that's kind of my whole evolution of the past couple of years, where I realized all of these things that I thought were...I don't even know what to say...or it has just been my drinking the Kool-Aid and accepting elitism and all these different structures and having to unlearn all of that. All of them.

This participant articulated her “revolutionary moment” as a moment that I interpreted as a researcher was a deliberate action she engaged in to create her own counternarrative in redefining success away from how white supremacy culture defines success. The participant

noted that in college and thereafter, she applied her own critical thinking to understand that Asian Americans often provide “cover” for white people as a racial shield (Lee, 2021) and she had to unlearn all of the facets of her racialized conditioning. This participant went through a process of recovering her life from the push to assimilate to the colonial and white supremacy structures that invisibilize the Asian American experience. This process of unlearning contributed to the study’s emerging finding that is not emphasized enough, nor defined clearly in the theorizing space of leadership. This participant exemplified a way to unlearn white supremacy culture through recalling of her own experience of unlearning.

*Unlearn white supremacy culture* was another emerging finding from this study, highlighting another way to develop counternarratives to bring Asian American leaders back to the legacy of justice-oriented ways to lead. *Unlearn white supremacy culture*, categorized under Creating Collective Power, occurred four times within the significant co-occurrences of leadership tenets (see Figure 78).

### ***Righteous Anger as a Counternarrative***

Asian Americans have often been targets of microaggressions throughout the course of American history (Huynh et al., 2011). Microaggressions of racial hate can come in the form of hate crimes, being blamed for the COVID-19 pandemic, to outright murders (Freedman, 2021; Jeung et al., 2021). This experience can lead to a victimhood producing anxiety, stress, helplessness, frustration, and anger (Huynh et al., 2011). During a whole group CLE in August 2021, a participant reframed this experience for Asian American leaders, when he asserted: “[t]his feeling of victimhood. It’s a way to sort of hold on to some level of righteous anger and that can be very motivating and can be very empowering.” This assertion by the participants reframes a common experience for Asian Americans, where we are typically taught by our



family structures to “not rock the boat” (Aoki & AAPA, 2008). Instead, the participant shares the importance of using a justified anger that motivates and empowers Asian Americans to not just accept this current state, which recalls Aoki’s speech from 1968, where he expresses this righteous anger that:

Asian-Americans believe that American society has been, and still is, fundamentally a racist society, and that historically we have accommodated ourselves to this society in order to survive [and] [w]e’re sick and tired of being sick and tired of being sick and tired of relating to white standards of acceptability.

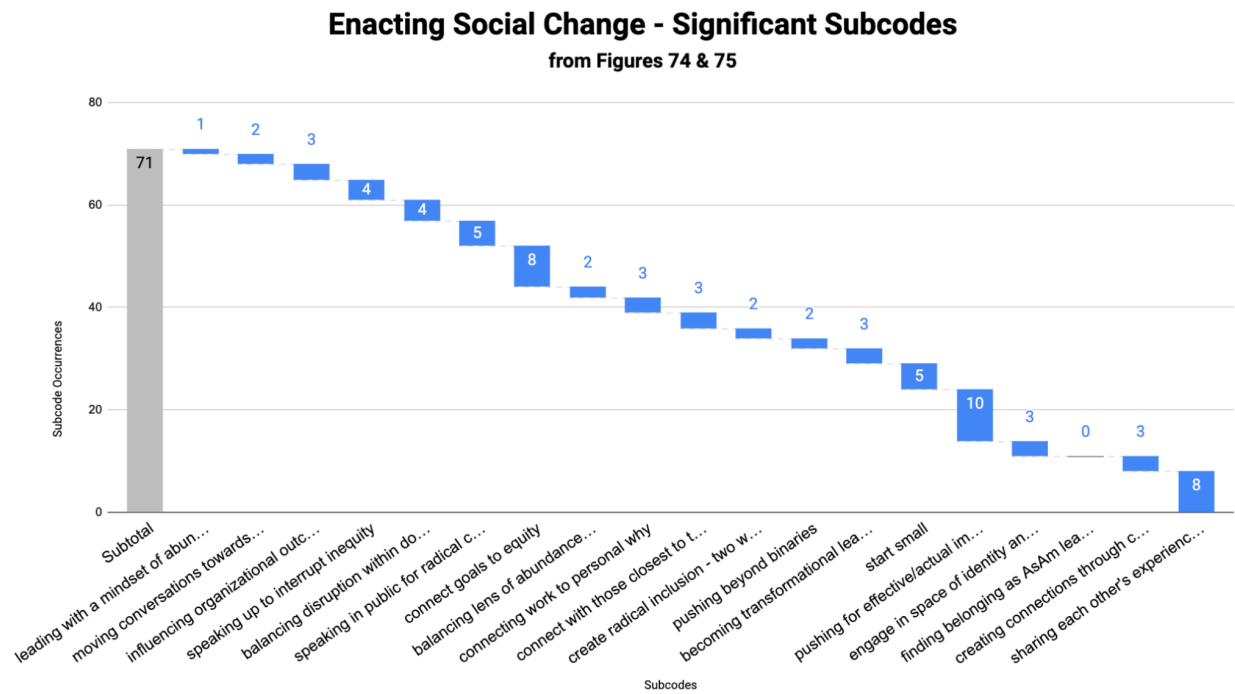
Both the participant and Aoki remind us that *righteous anger is a part of leadership* as a leadership tenet. Being angry and outspoken about our dissatisfaction with the racialized experience of Asian Americans can be a way for Asian American leaders to become unapologetic about our own justice-oriented leadership. The racialized experience of Asian Americans is part of the multifaceted U.S. system of racial violence (Jeung et al., 2021). This participant’s reflection was subcoded as *righteous anger is a part of leadership*, categorized under Humanistic Activism and Creativity and occurred three times within the significant co-occurrences of leadership tenets (see Figure 78). The reframing of victimhood and using a justified anger pushed all of us in the CLE space to think about ways we could push towards a more just society and use righteous anger as motivation to resolve our dilemmas in the racialized contexts Asian American leaders experience on a daily basis. Combining the centering of Asian American leadership principles and unlearning white supremacy culture with a righteous anger are counternarratives developed by the Asian American leaders in this study form foundations of a social force for change towards racial justice (Boggs & Boggs, 1974).

## **Enacting Social Change**

Enacting social change pushes us to create possibilities to counter assumptions that there are only a few set paths to resolve societal contradictions (Boggs & Boggs, 1974; Brown, 2017). Enacting social change is messy and non-linear; as a society we have to often walk many paths at once to get there (Boggs & Boggs, 1974; Brown, 2017). The CRE study participants shared their leadership experiences and reflections that aligned with the leadership tenets of Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong (Bacon, 2018; Boggs & Boggs, 1974; Fujino, 2005) and approaches to enacting social change represented in Figure 79. Next, I describe nine of the significant subcodes connected to enacting social change will be described in the next subsection.

### ***Creating Collective Power***

The eleven leadership tenets exemplified by Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong are grounded in a collectivist leadership model. Collectivist leadership can be seen in Boggs' pursuit of a humanistic activism centered on political and social responsibility to others, deep relationships with the oppressed, and the emphasis on developing an ideology centered on resolving societal contradictions in service of transforming society towards racial, social, and economic justice (Boggs & Boggs, 1974). Collective leadership is demonstrated through Kochiyama's concept of *collective care* for others within social justice struggles and the importance of cross-racial coalitions centered on antiracist organizing (Fujino 2005; Throughline, 2021). Itliong exudes collectivist leadership through his emphasis on strategic networking to create collective power using the engines of resilience in a labor movement to provide a pathway for sustainability for future generations (Bacon, 2018). Approaching social change through a collectivist approach roots the work of change within the community rather than relying on a singular individual (Benham, 2002; Quick, 2017; Rosile et al., 2018). I documented two subcodes – *sharing our*



*Figure 79. Emerging finding: Enacting social change.*

*experiences to change ourselves* and *finding common ground* -- that emerged from the study and connected to creating collective power in a community.

**Sharing Our Experiences to Change Ourselves.** One way to create collective power is by sharing our experiences as leaders to understand the struggles we face as Asian American leaders. Sharing our experiences leads to learning about one's self through others' reflections on our experiences. During a small-group CLE in February 2022, one participant shared:

I really, really appreciate this process of hearing myself tell this story and then have you all reflect back was really powerful and I appreciate your perspectives. I think the one thing I heard and I think I realized this in some ways, was about giving the work back to [my team]. I've taken on too much of the work. I need to give it to them to do the work. In part I'm not doing that because I'm hyper-aware of needing to prove myself in this environment. And I feel like letting them fail at something is a bad reflection on me. I'm one of three people of color in the entire office [that is] 90% white men. I just feel like there's a lot of fear in me [trying] to prove myself as a new person, an outsider but also, as a woman of color.

I coded this participant's reflection was subcoded as *sharing each other's experiences is powerful* and categorized this code under creating collective power, noting eight occurrences within the significant leadership tenet co-occurrences (see Figure 79).

Sharing and then hearing other participants' reflections was powerful for this participant. She was able to realize that she has taken on too much work and that she did so from a place of fear; she works in an organizational context in which 90% of the staff are white men, and she is one of three people of color in the entire office. In addition, in the participant's reflection, she realized that being afraid has motivated her to "prove" herself as a new person, an outsider, and

as a woman of color. As a result, she then identified that she was holding on too tightly to her work and not delegating her to her team members.

The participant reflected that one of her needed actions as a leader was to give the work back to her team. Having the space, safety, and fellow participants to hear her story, allowed her to identify what was happening in her work environment as a leader, why it was happening, and potential next steps to take as an Asian American organizational leader. As a researcher, I thought this important point was a critical part of how we were bearing witness to a change in her thinking as a leader moving the work away from the “I” into the “we” of her team despite her fears as an Asian American leader.

**Finding Common Ground.** Sharing our experiences provides us with another way to create collective power and to find common ground. During a small-group CLE in May 2022 a participant reflected on her appreciation of digging into individual dilemmas and their impacts on her thinking when she shared:

It was nice to able to dig into the one very specific situation and get lots of broad themes. It's making me think a lot about questions of, when you can see what's wrong so clearly, how do you help others see that too? It's just making me think about the power of making those connections. Is it like an angle of joy as the common ground, or is it pointing out what's wrong? How do you help people see? It's the art of getting people to see something when they might not want to see it.

I coded this participant’s reflection as *creating connections through common ground* and categorized the code under creating collective power; I noted three occurrences within the significant leadership tenet co-occurrences (see Figure 79).

The question this participant posed, “how do you help people see?” is important to consider when engaging with others about enacting social change. Our conditioning from white supremacy culture often pushes us to think that change efforts hinge on individual efforts, when there are infinite, collectivist pathways to co-construct change efforts with organizational and community members (Benham, 2002; Brown, 2017; Quick, 2017). In change efforts, mandates are often top-down, driven by hierarchical positions centered on transactional change efforts (Eubanks et al., 1997; Liou & Liang, 2020; Neri et al., 2019; Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). This participant offered that the work of change is an “art” about helping people to see? In her case, her art involved perhaps helping others see something they might not want to see. As a part of the change efforts we undertook, we must help people to see a collectivist whole and build a collective consciousness within organizations and communities to understand the ways to build our aspirational organization with others (Fujino, 2005).

### ***Humanistic Activism and Creativity***

James and Grace Lee Boggs (1974) left us with leadership lessons advocating for a process of social change through a more humanistic activism that is centered on social and political responsibility. They emphasized working with those who are oppressed to help reimagine ways human beings can live together in order to exercise their initiative and creativity towards positive societal transformation (Boggs & Boggs, 1974). Participants shared one way to connect to a more humanistic way of leading was during the November 2021 and April 2022 CLEs, where they discussed engaging in spaces where elements of identity and emotions could be shared.

**Engaging in Spaces of Identity and Emotionality.** During a small-group CLE in November 2021, a participant reflected the importance of acknowledging the emotional and

identity-related components in our conversations and how much we were initially avoiding this emotional component:

I think there's a huge emotional component. Like an undercurrent from both the presenter and the commenters I don't know what the proper term is. But there was a lot more space devoted in the discussion to strategies. And sort of like an identity-free or emotion-free sort of discussion on creating solutions. Which again just makes me wonder if there's like just a general level of discomfort or lack of space that we've all gotten used to discussing our leadership work. Because it's just not the place that I think people want to go to. It's a much more uncomfortable space to think about both the identity issue and the emotionality, the painfulness of it.

As this small-group CLE was one of the first for study participants to delve into individual participant dilemmas, this participant revealed her observations about the general discomfort group members seemed to have with the emotional or identity-related aspects of the discussion. She shared that more time was devoted to the discussion of strategies rather than the “painfulness” of how the study participants traversed their leadership work as Asian American people. I coded this participant’s reflection from the November 2021 CLE as *engage in space of identity and emotionality* which I categorized under humanistic activism with three occurrences (see Figure 79).

In a later CLE in April 2022, within the same small group, another participant (who is a professor) appeared to have taken the advice of the previous participant and shared his insights about how the treatment from his supervisor was impacting the way he supported graduate students when he noted:

I often think about the parable in the Bible, where the person who's given you some money to for his debts to be forgiven, can't exercise the same generosity to the person who owes him money, and I think there's something about the human condition. It's like the Stanford prison experiment. The delighting in others' misery. I don't know how much of that is taking place, but the question is, if I was being treated the way I want to be treated by my supervisor or my senior investigator, would I behave differently to my students? That's the question. I would probably say no, because I believe that the reason that I become so frustrated with my students has a lot to do with my interactions with my dad when I was growing up, or my interactions with my peers, when I first immigrated. That's the way I connect those two things, but it is possible that it's more superficial and that my interactions with my senior colleague is affecting my capacity for patience and empathy.

This participant's connection of Biblical values to the concept of delighting in others' misery to his experience as an immigrant being factors influencing his support of graduate students was a moment of engaging in a space of identity and emotionality. His reflection on Biblical values and the concept of delighting in others' misery to his experience as an immigrant showed how the CLE space for this small group evolved into one in which participants were able to share the more human elements of their experiences as organizational leaders. I coded this reflection as *engage in space of identity and emotionality* and revealed this participant's psychological, political, and organizational conditions influencing his ability to support students as a professor (Duncan, 2005; Woodson, 2019).



**Cultivating Transformational Spaces.** Although I identified this topic earlier, part of leading humanistically entails co-constructing transformational spaces. During a member check in June 2022, one participant shared his appreciation for our CLE space:

I do think it was super-valuable when you're convening a group to talk about problems [in leadership] because a lot of them have similarities. It's important and valuable to be able to see the similarities that occur, no matter what geographic area, age, or ethnicity. I think it's really good to be able to have that. I was thinking about this macro-micro piece in the influence across and I started to think a little bit more about a Venn diagram. Around the individual reflection that's important to be considered that transfers over into a small group. And then from there a whole societal piece that is like a combination that would be more of a transformative space. That is the place where people realize they're doing their own work. They have this small group, and they can use that to be able to think about the necessary transformations that are occurring or should be occurring in a society in order to make it a more equitable and just system.

I coded this participant's reflection from the June 2022 member check as *cultivate transformational spaces*, which I categorized under humanistic activism with six occurrences within the significant leadership tenet co-occurrences (see Figure 79). This participant discussed his reflections on the CLE space through the perspectives of the self, small group, and society. He noted that the transformative space is the one in which there is an intersection of the self, small group, and society. Collaboratively cultivating this type of transformative space was noted by this participant as the "place where people realize they're doing their own work" as leaders to help build a just and equitable world.

Engaging in a space centering reflections on identity and emotions, and co-constructing a transformational space to acknowledge our experiences helped us realize that the work of leadership does not have to follow a traditional path. To enact social change through a humanistic activism helps us see a process for change rooted in our ability to creatively rethink the pathways for change, not by being told what to do but to look to each other as Asian American leaders.

### ***Resolving Societal Contradictions***

Developing an ideology, a body of ideas to analyze the societal contradictions we are trying to resolve, is a key step in enacting social change (Boggs & Boggs, 1974). Without understanding the specific and intended size of impact, leaders can get lost in the bevy of responsibilities within a change process. Instead of focusing on the abstract or theoretical, the study participants offered more practical suggestions on how leaders might approach resolving societal contradictions.

**Start Small.** During a small-group CLE in March 2022, one participant shared her approach to change by planting seeds of change instead of just telling people what to do. In this reflection, I inferred that the participant was frustrated but was trying a metered approach despite the challenging context. She shared:

It's so hard. I get a lot of pushback. They're just stuck with how their [special education] programs should be run, but also just how behavior intervention should be. So they use a lot of punishment procedures, which is not legal. It's a fucking nightmare. What I'm trying to do about it is that I'm trying to plant seeds. Instead of going in there and telling them what to do.

This participant shared that instead of going into a context of a nightmare and telling schools what to do, she is trying to “plant seeds” of change. Boggs and Boggs (1974) maintained the importance of suffering, patience, and going through the “labor of the negative” as key to our evolution as a society (Boggs & Boggs, 1974, p. xxiii). In this way, the participant reminds us that despite challenging circumstances, despite the nightmares we must contend with, we still have to start small with where the context places us and do the work through planting seeds rather than autocratically telling people what to do. I coded this participant’s reflection as *start small*, which I categorized under resolving societal contradictions, and noted five occurrences within the significant leadership tenet co-occurrences (see Figures 79).

**Pushing for Impact.** Part of the work of planting seeds is understanding the impact or desired state we are pushing for as leaders. One impact a participant discussed during a small-group CLE in March 2022 centered around influencing organizational hiring practices. As an outgoing CEO, she shared her efforts to ensure her organization hired a successor who represented the communities her organization served. This participant shared:

In January I shared with my board that I want to take this year to plan for my transition away from my [current role]. I was very clear that I’m giving them until the end of this year. And in my ideal world, I would overlap with whoever’s next in the seat for at least three months so that we could work side by side and set them up for success as much as possible. And I was very clear that I think that the person should be Black or Latino because there are several people within the organization that I think could be good for the role.

In a previous CLE, this participant shared her views that Asian Americans are often utilized within white supremacy structures to be “a wedge against others to provide a false symbol of

hope” and in the past couple of years, she worked to unlearn this conditioning of white-supremacy culture Asian Americans experience. A next step in this participant’s evolution was to push her organization to hire a CEO who represented the Black and Latinx communities her organization served. Later during the course of this research, this participant informed me that her organization hired a CEO who is Black and that she was very pleased with the results of the hiring process, which she saw as a significant shift in her organization that never had a CEO who was not white or Asian American. I coded this participant’s reflection as *influencing organizational outcomes in hiring* and categorized it under resolving societal contradictions with three occurrences within the significant leadership tenet co-occurrences (see Figures 79).

**Imagining Impact.** Though all participants did not share the changes as specifically as the aforementioned participant, in other CLE spaces, some participants shared specific ways they were thinking about creating impact. One participant in a small-group CLE in February 2022 considered what change efforts should look like:

In a perfect world you'd have the core of whatever strategies in place and then that reflects down all the way down to the metrics. And then you know your folks will know they are underperforming but also look at these dimensions that really matter now and into the future. But that's not the case, and so it still seems like the specific personality issues aside, it's really about participating in that journey to ensure that equity becomes core and central. To not only use the strategies, but also the metrics and you know easier said than done.

This participant was reflected on how to move from a core set of strategies and connecting them to the measurable metrics to ensure there is equitable impact at the center of all leadership actions. The participant notes the challenges of such an endeavor as “easier said than done”; yet

his imagining of what actual impact should look like, down to the metrics, is an important leadership tenet in how leaders approach resolving unjust societal contradictions. The same participant reflected on seizing opportunities during a small-group CLE in March 2022 after sharing his own dilemma:

I think that the idea of potentially going beyond my comfort zone and pushing in ways that may or may not necessarily work. That's one of the things that I'm sort of hearing. You got just a few moments, seize the day and that's the best [for now] and perhaps that's okay.

In aligning core strategies with equitable impacts, this participant also reminded himself (and us) of the importance of moving beyond our comfort zone and pushing organizations beyond their comfort zones in order to enact change.

During a member check-in in June 2022, another participant noted the importance of pushing for organizational change and intertwining those efforts with our individual development as burgeoning antiracist leaders:

How we continue to think about our own identities, both as Asian American leaders, but also just as leaders trying to find a way to do good antiracist work. We're all in the sort of beginning stages of that or the intermediate stages of that, and trying to do great work that also advances our organizations to an extent. For instance, like with [another participant] doing work that advances organizational goals also advances his own personal success, but that also advances in a more liberatory way of thinking and designing when it comes to education.

This participant connoted the importance of embracing our identities as Asian American leaders and antiracist leaders and interweaving our personal success to antiracist organizational

endeavors. I coded the participant reflections as *pushing for effective/actual impact*, categorized under resolving societal contradictions, which occurred ten times within the significant leadership tenet co-occurrences (see Figure 79). Starting small, pushing for specific impacts, and imagining what impact should look like when we take on the work of resolving societal contradictions rooted in a racialized society are all important steps in enacting social change. Without understanding and imagining the size of impact we are looking to make or at least imagining it, our change efforts will not have a direction to move toward.

### ***Struggling Through Together***

In the work of leadership and activism, Boggs and Boggs (1974) emphasized that there is no utopia or promised land, rather the struggle for societal change is the highest expression of human creativity. In a society in which people are seeking concrete results, leaders are often discouraged from reflecting on their struggles and understanding that struggles are often worthwhile. Struggles are often invisible work that eventually leads to impact in building our aspirational world. Brown (2017) asks us to push for a world where “we can feel ourselves and do less harm” to generate more freedoms for all people (p. 106). The study participants remind us that social change is at times quiet, invisible, messy, and nonlinear; as a result, we must take varied paths to push for actual impact.

**Struggle and Transformation.** One participant noted in a small-group CLE in February 2022 the importance of struggling and transforming her perspective on what impactful change looks like. She shared:

I feel like being in this community and also just the experience with working through these dilemmas made me realize that I have implemented [and] I have changed without even recognizing and realizing it because I feel like a part of what I was trying to do for

so long as a leader was to get shit done. There's something tangible that you [must] accomplish. [I've] been relaxing away from that and realizing the most impactful changes are invisible. It's like this cultural piece. It's a relational piece, you know. It's shifting mindsets right, and there's things that are hard to measure.

This participant's reflection was subcoded as *becoming transformational leaders*, categorized under Resolving Societal Contradictions, and occurred three times within the significant co-occurrences of leadership tenets (see Figure 79). This participant shared that social change is often “invisible”, “cultural”, “relational”, and that it is not always big and loud, but more subtle and might even be a small fractal that we might not notice (Brown, 2017).

**Struggling to Find Belonging.** Another lens in the struggle of Asian American leaders is about finding belonging within organizations. One participant in a small group CLE in April 2022 noted:

And so I'm trying to figure things out. Where my sense of belonging is and how I can contribute to make effective positive change, so the three components that I want to reach out to focus on regarding my Asian American experience has to do with one, my predilection for seeking affirmation so that's something that we touched on in previous meetings where being an Asian American, we tried to assimilate to the American culture. And in assimilating, at least from my from my experience, what I saw throughout my life and continue to seek affirmation that I'm doing a good job. That I'm fitting in. That I am doing the right things to be accepted. Or doing my due diligence to make things work and not rock the boat.

In addition, during a whole group CLE in May 2021, another participant shared a story of a community member she knew who was never considered as someone to be on the senior leadership team of his organization:

Yes, and I think there's the optionality [for Asian Americans] that that's missing. So there may be moments in time or organizations that need a flag carrying leader. Initiatives that need a flag carrying leader, and at times that is not an option, because we don't have the right to be perceived that way [as the flag carrying leaders]. It's fine to see a white CEO and it's fine to see a senior team that's a mix of Latinx, Black, and white individuals. But an Asian leader [I know] was never mentioned as a potential member and was the one in the back of the room because of his servant leadership attitude.

For both of these examples, I coded participant's reflection within the theme of struggling to *find belonging as AsAm leader* under the category creating collective power and documents six co-occurrences of all leadership tenets, specifically within leadership tenets 3 and 5 (see Figure 79)..

Finding belonging as Asian American leaders is another part of the struggle in moving to enact social change in the racialized context of America. The first participant mentioned in this subsection noted that his experience of being assimilated in America was connected to his search for affirmation, which drives him to believe he is doing a good job by not “rocking the boat” in his organization. In the second participant's reflection, she described the experience of a community member not having the “optionality” to be a member of a senior team within his organization. The organization normalized Black, Latinx, and white team members being part of the senior team but never mentioned the need for an Asian American to be on the team. These struggles are part of the work we must see and understand in order to understand what we are trying to unlearn as Asian American leaders.



## Summary

As Asian American leaders, white supremacy culture confines Asian Americans and sends the message that Asian American people are model minorities who are always foreign (Kim, 2011). The study participants journeyed with me to move our own concepts of self and our Asian American leadership into a different space centered on Asian American leadership legacies of past and present. In the journey of the CRE study, we acknowledged the impact on us of being racialized as Asian Americans; as a result, we can redefine contexts for ourselves through co-constructing a safe space for us to share in an unguarded manner. This safe space, in turn, allowed us to share our experiences in order to develop counternarratives that confront the racialized false narratives of us in society and helps us reclaim the leadership tenets we believe and espouse to enact social change within our organizations and communities. Our safe spaces provided room for transformation to occur for ourselves as leaders and for our organizations and communities through our leadership. Across each phase of the research study, we engaged in 22 CLEs to build relationships, shared leadership dilemmas, and reflected collectively on the power of coming together as a community of Asian American leaders. Our coming together through our CLEs embodied James Boggs's reminder that it is through relationships with others and many individuals that we become the fullest versions of ourselves (brown, 2017). Through the connection with our past and present selves as Asian American leaders we were able to affirm who we are as leaders through each other.

## CHAPTER 7: LEADERSHIP IS ABOUT LOVE

*What societies really, ideally, want is a citizenry which will simply obey the rules of society. If a society succeeds in this, that society is about to perish. The obligation of anyone who thinks of [themselves] as responsible is to examine society and try to change it and to fight it — at no matter what risk. This is the only hope society has. This is the only way societies change.*

- James Baldwin (1963) from *A Talk to Teachers*

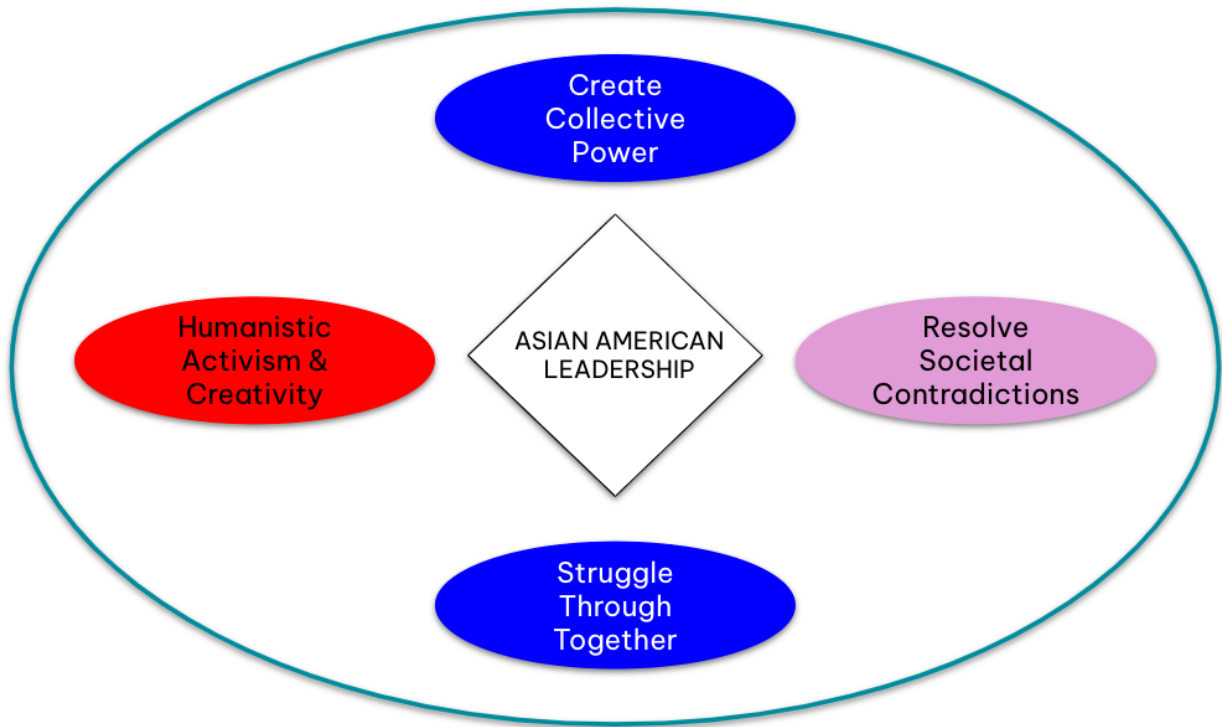
Maylon Hanold (2017) defined *withness* as the shift in directionality of one's leadership focus from trying to understand others' experiences to allowing others' experiences to shape who we are. Through the critical race ethnography (CRE) study, I focused on being in spaces with fellow Asian American leaders, centering their experiences, and listening for the ways their experiences can add to and influence the space of leadership research. Centered on the overarching research question, *How do Asian American leaders identify existing and new ontological and epistemological frameworks to affirm their identity and engage in leadership actions pursuing racial, social, and economic justice?*, I co-constructed community learning exchange (CLE) spaces with study participants to create safety and relational trust so that the Asian American leaders participating in this study were able to share their experiences in an unguarded manner. Merging the tenets of CRE (Duncan, 2005; Woodson, 2019) and CLEs (Guajardo et al., 2016; Hughes, 2017) provided me a researcher's lens to facilitate convenings centered on Asian American leaders' experiences and lift up their stories within the space of leadership research in order to assert the lessons justice-oriented Asian American leadership brings into the space of leadership research.

용기 (courage), 힘 (strength), 인내 (perseverance) are ancestral guideposts from my 외할아버지's (maternal grandfather) life, and 정 (unconditional belonging), 한 (eternal unrequitedness), 당신 (you + me + us) are ontological guideposts for my development as a human being. Affirming who I am and finding direction as a human and an educational leader,

the CRE study drew out and amplified guideposts of leadership arising from fellow Asian American leaders merged with our recognitions of the rich historical legacy of justice-oriented Asian American leadership (see Figure 80). The CRE study both adds to and asserts ways to occupy the theorizing and practice space of leadership often solely occupied by white men through this lens of *withness* (Hanold, 2017; hunter et al., 2013). In this chapter, I revisit the literature reviewed for this study in Chapter 2 and make connections to the study's findings. I then share implications of this study for related research, educational policy, and leadership practice. Finally, I discuss study limitations, as well as the influence of this study on my own leadership development.

### **Discussion**

My development as a Korean, immigrant, and educator in America deeply influenced my approach to the CRE study. Referring back to Figure 1 (from Chapter 1), 용기 (courage), 힘 (strength), 인내 (perseverance), 정 (unconditional belonging), 한 (eternal unrequitedness), and 당신 (you + me + us) shaped and continue to shape the way I feel connected to self and community through a spiritual wholeness that honors the familial and cultural heritage I come from. As the society of America is a continuing white supremacy state (Kendi, 2019; Mills, 1997; Wilkerson, 2020), honoring racially marginalized research lenses from self and community are ever more important in our work of leadership research. In the research study, I invited leaders to co-create transformational spaces centered on safety and trust by merging tenets of CRE (Duncan, 2005; Woodson, 2019) and CLEs (Guajardo et al., 2016; Hughes, 2017). In addition, through this study, I provided a process through which we co-constructed transformational spaces using CLEs where Asian American leader participants were able to share



*Figure 80.* Justice-oriented Asian American leadership guideposts.

---

their experiences of leadership. This sharing resulted in a pathway to add their perspectives on leadership. By designing a safe and rigorous leadership research space, we developed counternarratives and shared dilemmas of practices. Then we could co-construct the culturally consonant Asian American leadership practices for use in spaces that so often erase and minimize Asian American leadership presence (Benham, 2002; hunter et al., 2013). Next, I describe the connections of the emerging findings to the study's literature review, summarize specific claims, and revisit the research questions.

### **Findings and Literature Review**

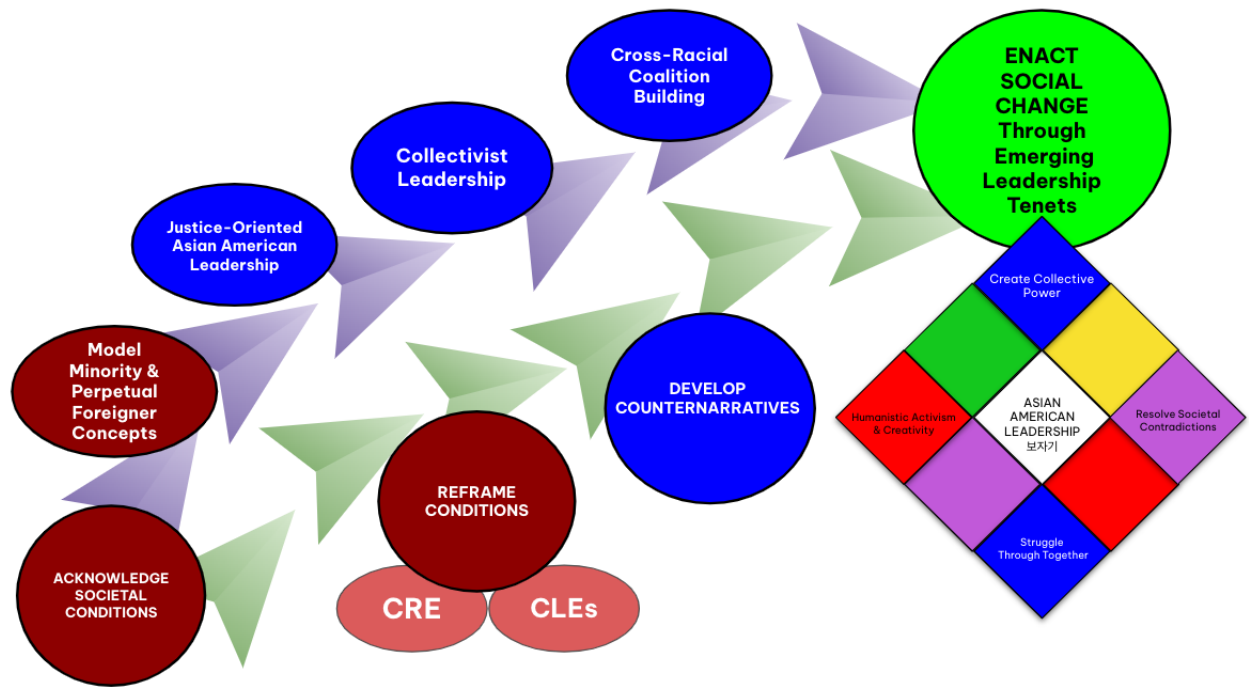
For Asian Americans in the United States, our presence as a people is continuously invisibilized, erased, and racialized as a model minority while simultaneously, we are treated as a perpetual foreigner within one body (Kim, 1999; Kim, 2011; Jean Wu, personal communication, November 16, 2022). From the rise in hate crimes against Asian Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic (Jeung et al., 2021) to the outright murders of Asian American people (Freedman, 2021; Katersky et al., 2021; The New York Times, 2021), and general erasure of Asian American leadership historical legacies (Hinnershitz, 2017; Kim, 2011; Sy & Jackson, 2021), we and others fail to acknowledge the critical perspectives of Asian American leaders. Responding to this violent context requires a reimagining of the ways the experience of Asian Americans and how they lived legacies (both historical and present) of leading organizations and communities become more visible within the practice and theorizing spaces of leadership. The emerging findings from this study provide pathways to consider as a part of the discussion to diversify the space of leadership research by including the experiences and perspectives shared by the Asian American leaders who engaged in this study.

In Figure 81, I provide a visualization of the literature review with the actions taken through this study to reframe conditions for Asian American leaders through CRE, CLEs, and the guideposts emerging from this study are visualized in Figure 81.

Next, I discuss the connections between such perspectives and the literature review topics from this study: Model Minority and Perpetual Foreigner Concepts, Justice-Oriented Asian American Leadership, Collectivist Leadership, and Cross-Racial Coalition Building.

### ***Revisiting Model Minority and Perpetual Foreigner Concepts***

In the first section of the literature review, I focused on the persistent and paradoxical impacts of the model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts (Benner & Kim, 2009; Cheung, 2017; Huynh et al., 2011; Kim, 1999; Nguyen, 2020; Wu, 2014; Wu, 2002). The impacts of the model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts connected to study participants' own reflections about how they might undo the impact of these racializations. The participants emphasized unlearning white supremacy culture, reminding each other that Asian American leaders' experiences are legitimate examples of leadership, continuing our struggle to find belonging, pushing beyond binaries, revealing the truth of racial hierarchies, and contesting ideas that Asian Americans do not need help. Over the course of this study, we worked together in CLEs to acknowledge the societal conditions that Asian Americans face and identify how the study participants experienced them. As a critical step, we identified how white racist structures create such barriers (Cheung, 2017; Huynh et al., 2011; Kawai, 2005; Kim, 1999; Petersen, 1966; U.S. News & World Report, 1966; Wu, 2014). Because we acknowledged the paradoxical oppression, we had a conceptual foundation for the specific oppressions we were working against and needed to overcome in order to help move our organizations and communities towards racial, social, and economic justice.



*Figure 81. Conceptual framework linking literature review, process, and emerging findings.*

### ***Revisiting Justice-Oriented Asian American Leadership***

In the second section of the literature review, I centered my research specifically on Asian American leadership and the historical legacy of leadership that espoused collectivist leadership principles in efforts to build cross-racial coalitions with racially marginalized communities and their allies (Asian American Political Alliance, 2017; Bacon, 2018; Fujino, 2005). Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong, key figures in my research, lived and led this way. Their lives and work repudiated racist structures in America through leadership actions that encouraged all people to model activism as a way to project humanistic approaches to political and social responsibility. Thus we needed to work with the oppressed to exercise activist creativity; develop ideologies to address specific societal contradictions; understand that leadership and activism are about struggle rather than a utopian destination; tend to the interests, feelings, and concerns of individuals within collective struggles against racism; honor cross-racial coalitions as an antiracist organizing approach supporting all involved; understand how polarization and racism create artificial divisions amongst all people; build our aspirational world through encouraging a collective consciousness; create collective power through strategic networking and organizing; recognize leadership is about making impact, not notoriety; and exemplify that the work of leadership is about paving a pathway for future generations (Bacon, 2018; Boggs & Boggs, 1974; Fujino, 2005; Throughline, 2021).

I connected the leadership tenets espoused by Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong and throughout the course of this study, and participants shared their experiences echoing the leadership tenets which I categorized through this study's thematic analysis under *create collective power, engage in humanistic activism and creativity, resolve societal contradictions, and struggle through together* (see Figure 74 and Figure 75 from Chapter 6).



### ***Revisiting Collectivist Leadership***

In the third section of the literature review, I focused on collectivist leadership, which locates leadership away from the white views of individualist styles on leadership, which do not embrace cultural and historical contexts, and critique leadership styles rooted in other cultures as inherently inferior (Mills, 1997). Collectivist leadership connects to the historical and present ways Asian American leaders have led and continue to lead centered on human relationships (Crosby & Bryson, 2018). When Yuri Kochiyama joined in the protests noting the lack of construction jobs for people of color, and when she joined with the Harlem Parents Committee to set the long-term goal of a quality integrated education system in New York City, she demonstrated the connection between collectivist leadership and Asian American leadership (Fujino, 2005). When Larry Itliong helped find common ground between Filipino and Mexican migrant workers to form the United Farm Workers' (UFW) union to organize over 2,000 laborers to stage the Delano Grape strikes resulting in a labor contract with wages twice the minimum wage of American workers and included health plans and grievance processes for all laborers working on Delano grape farms, he fortified our sense of what collectivist justice-oriented leadership could be (Bacon, 2018). Both examples connect to collectivist leadership principles, emphasizing ways leaders can work together to impact their communities collectively and positively through justice-oriented actions (Rosile et al., 2018).

Through the course of this study, participants engaged within CLEs as transformational spaces in which they shared their experiences as Asian American leaders in unguarded ways by exploring and espousing ways to lead through collectivist principles. I highlighted how study participants worked to create collective power by bringing *imaginaries*, a loose schema through which people connect aspirations to actions (Quick, 2017) into their work of building collectivist

leadership within their work as organizational leaders. The participants emphasized creating connections through common ground, pushing beyond binaries, creating radical inclusion, and balancing inclusivity to ensure individuals are not alienated. These imaginaries reinforce ways to support the leadership of all members of a society within a mainstream reality that pits so many racially marginalized communities against each other (Kawai, 2005; Kim, 1999; Kim & Mauldin, 2022).

### ***Revisiting Cross-Racial Coalitions***

In the last section of the literature review, I explored the ways we can effectively develop cross-racial coalitions. Asian Americans are key members of a decolonizing majority that is part of a changing U.S. demographic. This decolonizing majority has the potential to enact justice-oriented social change with racially marginalized communities and fellow allies. Asian Americans playing a key role in building cross-racial coalitions is not a new endeavor; rather, the study participants now realize they are part of a continuing legacy of justice-oriented Asian American leaders. For example, Asian Americans joined with Latinx communities in the San Gabriel Valley in Los Angeles County in the 1990s to fight discrimination and exclusion (Kim & Lee, 2001). In another example, Asian Americans collaborated with Latinx and Black community members in Houston in the late 1990s to elect Lee Brown as mayor and defeat an anti-affirmative action measure (Proposition A) (Kim & Lee, 2001). Both examples highlight the legacy of Asian Americans working with other racially marginalized communities to create justice-oriented change. Similarly, the study participants in this study emphasized the importance of unlearning white supremacy culture, creating avenues for common ground with other marginalized communities, practicing radical inclusivity, and pushing for effective impact when creating social changes on behalf of communities.

Similar to the limitations noted about collectivist leadership research identified in this study, we, as Asian Americans, need to inquire further about how we may have created barriers historically and undo the barriers in the present by building cross-racial coalitions. For example, many Asian Americans supported anti-affirmative action movements (Wu, 2022). Similarly, a study noting that Asian Americans are most likely to form alliances first with white people, then Latinx people, and lastly, Black people suggests that Asian Americans must do more work in order to unite more closely with the communities of people who experience oppression from white supremacy culture (Kim & Lee, 2001).

Revisiting the literature review for this study reinforced the connections between it and the emerging findings from this study. In describing these connections, I emphasized the further research required to expand the field of Asian American leadership in further alignment with justice-oriented actions pursuing racial, social, and economic justice. Next, I review the emerging claims that I hope adds value to the theorizing and practice space of leadership and affirm the importance of justice-oriented Asian American leadership contributing to the work of building a world with racial, social, and economic justice.

### **Asian American Leadership 보자기 (Pojagi)**

When I visited Korea as a fourth grader, I remember my 외할머니 (maternal grandmother) would take me and my brother to visit my paternal family members. Often, my 외할머니 would wrap home-cooked food or a modest gift in a 보자기 (pojagi, a wrapping cloth) to bring with her on visits as a sign of gratitude and respect to my paternal family members for receiving her grandsons. In Korean culture, 보자기 was often constructed of fabric scraps made into artistic designs by women for everyday use and often is used to carry both functional items and gifts (Kim & Yu, 1996). My 엄마 (mom) shared with me that 보자기 s are used to store

valued possessions (such as a son's first set of clothes or family heirlooms) and spiritually represent the gifts that a collective group of people can share (Mary Koh, Personal Communication, December 13, 2022). Usually on the floor or a living room table, **보자기** s are unfurled to reveal the gifts and offerings as conversations begin.

The process of developing and engaging in this study with fellow Asian American leaders revealed the gifts of relationships and leadership lessons emerging from the conversations we engaged in during our CLEs. Each CLE unpacked a **보자기** of experiences and knowledge that provided the theorizing and practice space of key leadership learnings for researchers to consider. The first of these is about the process of merging CRE principles with CLE design to cultivate transformational spaces.

### **CRE Principles and CLE Design to Cultivate Transformational Spaces**

Merging principles of CRE (Duncan, 2005; Woodson, 2019) with CLE design (Guajardo et al., 2016; Hughes, 2017) throughout the study provided steps for Asian American leaders to co-create transformational spaces with community members. In Chapter 6, I discussed the themes that emphasize the importance of supporting study participants who are Asian American leaders to acknowledge and affirm the racialized contexts they exist within. In addition, we coupled this process with cultivating transformational spaces by recreating a different transformational space through CRE and CLE principles. As a result, study participants shared and developed their own counternarratives to the racializing narratives of them in America. As the participants surfaced their counternarratives and connected them to the historical legacy of justice-oriented Asian American leadership rooted in collectivist leadership and in building cross-racial coalitions to undo racial, social, and economic inequalities, the gathering space for Asian American leaders became a space where we affirmed our current work in pursuit of justice

as leaders by learning and reclaiming a past legacy of activism and leadership that is often erased from America's memory.

I submit that these steps can be replicated to support the leadership development of other racially marginalized leaders in their development as leaders. During our final whole group CLE in August 2022, one study participant reflected on the power of the spaces we co-created, stating:

[As a practitioner], I have rarely created the kind of space that you [the researcher] were able to create here. There were choices you made by centering your own story and harkening back to the ancestral experience of Asian American leaders really helped me enter into our space differently. There was a meta-layer to the whole construct.

Sharing my experiences as an Asian American leader and developing consistent ways during CLEs to share the research I was encountering, especially the research that offered counternarratives to the racialized context Asian Americans are forced to live in, modeled one way to invite fellow study participants to share their experiences and make connections to the justice-oriented legacies of Asian American leadership. From this experience, I bring into the theorizing space of leadership the following process that I believe can support ways to create transformational spaces for racially marginalized leaders:

- Design spaces where leaders can see their oppression within society and acknowledge this context (Duncan, 2005; hunter et al., 2013; Woodson, 2019).
- Cultivate transformational spaces through CRE (Duncan, 2005; Woodson, 2019) and CLE principles (Guajardo et al., 2016; Hughes, 2017).
- Utilize the transformational spaces to co-develop and share counternarratives, amplifying the stories of the oppressed (Boggs & Boggs, 1974; Duncan, 2005).

- Connect the counternarratives to the historical legacies of racially marginalized leadership communities who pushed for collectivist leadership and built cross-racial coalitions to move the world towards racial, social, and economic justice (Duncan, 2005; hunter et al., 2013; Woodson, 2019).

A space in which acknowledging racial, social, and economic oppression is normalized and imagining what is possible in leadership for racially marginalized groups provides a pathway to bring our imaginaries into relationship with the realities of an unjust society (Quick, 2017; Tippet, 2022). The leadership lessons from this study's participants will be discussed in the next subsection.

### ***Unfurling the Asian American Leadership 보자기 (Pojagi)***

As a researcher, I felt honored and privileged to be in space with other justice-oriented Asian American leaders in this study. Each offered me gifts of time and relationship in the course of our two-plus years together. In each CLEs we offered up stories and learnings that moved me away from white individualistic views of leadership toward a reimagined leadership hearkening back to the historical legacy of Asian American leaders who pursued racial, social, and economic justice through collectivist leadership and cross-racial coalitions (Benham, 2002; Bacon, 2018; Boggs & Boggs, 1974; Fujino, 2005).

In Figure 82, I depict the emerging findings from this study based on the experiences of the Asian American leaders who engaged in this study. Much like unwrapping a 보자기, these lessons in leadership add to the theorizing and practice space of leadership research. In Figure

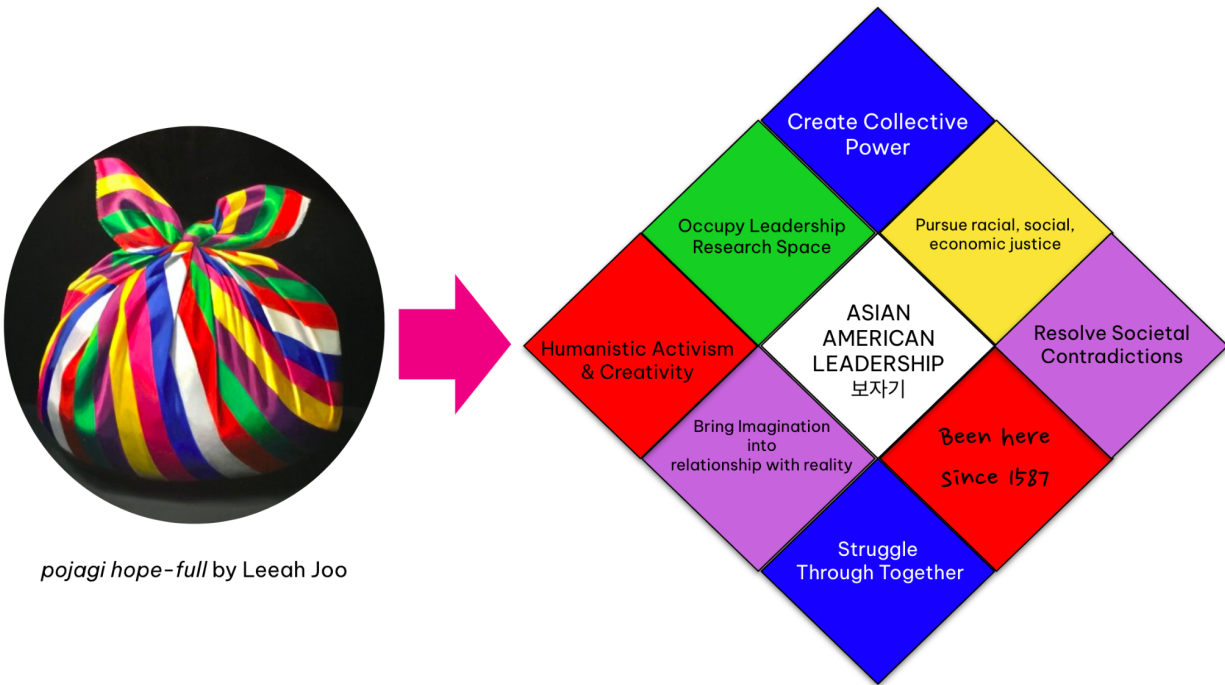


Figure 82. Visual of Asian American leadership 보자기 (pojagi).

82, what we hold as Asian American leaders from this study is represented by the **보자기** artwork, “pojagi hope-full” by Leeah Joo that then unfurls into the leadership lessons shared by the participants in this study.

The four outside points share the leadership tenets from this study’s participants:

- create collective power (northern blue square),
- humanistic activism and creativity (western red square),
- resolve societal contradictions (eastern light-purple square), and
- struggle through together (southern blue square).

The leadership tenets from this study also derive from the eleven leadership tenets of Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong (Bacon, 2018; Boggs & Boggs, 1974; Fujino, 2005; Throughline, 2021). In the middle of the unwrapped **보자기**, central guideposts about the purpose of leadership connected to the demonstrated legacies of Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong are presented: occupy leadership research space (green square), bring imagination into relationship with reality (light-purple square), pursue racial, social, and economic justice (yellow square), while we remind ourselves that Asian Americans have been in America since 1587 (red square). Each element of the **보자기** provides guidance on how to lead that is connected to the legacy of a justice-oriented Asian American leadership.

The key tenets of leadership I draw out as leadership learnings from this study that can add to and amplify the justice-oriented Asian American presence in the practice and theorizing space of leadership are:

- Create Collective Power - find common ground, push beyond binaries, unlearn white supremacy culture, understand the historical legacy of leadership from racially marginalized communities and remember to affirm that the experiences of racially



marginalized people are examples of leadership (Bacon, 2018; Benham, 2002; Fujino, 2005; Hanold, 2017; Quick, 2017; Rosen, 2016; Rosile, 2018; Throughline, 2021).

- Humanistic Activism and Creativity - engage in spaces where emotion and the elements of our identities can be freely discussed, provide spaces where personal narratives can be shared, find space for curiosity in others and their perspectives, connect with those closest to the dilemmas, and that an unapologetic anger can be part of leading and activism (Bacon, 2018; Boggs & Boggs, 1974; Brown, 2017; Fujino, 2005).
- Resolve Societal Contradictions - start small, connect goals to equity, reveal the truth of racial hierarchies, disrupt dominant cultures, accept our current context to take intentional leadership actions towards racial, social, and economic justice, move conversations towards antiracist-justice-oriented possibilities, and push effective, actual impact that moves our organizations and communities towards racial, social, and economic justice (Bacon, 2018; Boggs & Boggs, 1974; Fujino, 2005; Quick, 2017).
- Struggle Through Together - lean into discomfort, speak to equity and justice in white-dominant spaces, and continue the work to sustain ourselves and our work of justice (Bacon, 2018; Benham, 2002; Boggs & Boggs, 1974; Fujino, 2005; Kim & Yu, 1996).

Each of the leadership lessons that form the four corners of the Asian American leadership

보자기 provide the essence of the leadership lessons emerging from the study participants as

they connect to the historical legacy of justice-oriented Asian American leadership. In the next

subsection, I describe the connection of the Asian American Leadership 보자기 elements to the research questions for this study.

### ***Connections to Research Questions***

In responding to the research questions, I was deeply influenced by Brown's (2017) lens of *fractals*, which provided me with a nonlinear research framework to begin surfacing findings from this study. Brown (2017) described fractals as never-ending patterns that are complex and created by repeating a simple process over and over in an ongoing, iterative way. Viewing research from the lens of fractals rooted my approach to answering research questions through an adaptive, non-linear, and yet interconnected framework. The use of fractals provided an approach from which I could weave specific elements from this study in an iterative way. With an overview of fractals, I discussed how these research questions guided a way to develop transformational spaces to connect the study participants' experiences as Asian American leaders to the historical legacy of justice-oriented Asian American leadership and the ways in which this study supported the building of a community of justice-oriented Asian American leaders.

The overarching research question for this study was: *How do Asian American leaders identify existing and new ontological and epistemological frameworks to affirm their identity and engage in leadership actions pursuing racial, social, and economic justice?*, and the accompanying sub questions asked the following:

- How does knowing the self affirm leaders' individual identities and inform leadership actions for Asian American leaders?
- What are the ontological and epistemological frameworks of Asian American historical leadership legacies that inform leadership actions for current Asian American leaders?

- How do these historical legacies inform the development of new ontological and epistemological relations for Asian American leaders?
- How do Asian American leaders balance their individual identities with a collective Asian American identity to inform how they enact leadership actions in their organizations (meso) and communities (macro)?
- How do CLEs, the researcher, and participants of this CRE study build a coalition of Asian American leaders who support each other to understand and implement transformative leadership actions within their organizations and communities?

### ***Overarching Research Question Response***

Focusing on the Asian American leadership *보자기* elements, the lessons in leadership from the study participants remind leaders to *create collective power, engage in humanistic activism and creativity, resolve societal contradictions, and struggle through together* as emergent responses to this study's research questions. These leadership tenets arose through my collaboration with the study participants to co-construct a transformational space through CLEs, that were centered on CLE (Guajardo et al., 2016; Hughes, 2017) and CRE (Duncan, 2005; Woodson, 2109) principles. Through the creation of space with CLEs, Asian American leaders shared their experiences, identified Asian American leadership ways of being and knowing both past and present, and affirmed who they are as organizational and community leaders. Being able to share leadership and personal stories about the experiences of being Asian American in an unguarded manner and connecting these experiences to the historical legacy of justice-oriented Asian American leadership in CLE spaces was one way the study answered how Asian American leaders can affirm self and others and act collectively to pursue racial, social, and economic justice.

### ***Responses to Research Subquestions***

Over the course of CLEs in the study, each participant was able to center the Asian American self within a collective of Asian American leaders that informed how we continued developing as leaders rooted in the fullness of our Asian American cultures. This process addressed ways Asian American leaders can affirm who they are as leaders with each other and the connections to the justice-oriented historical legacies of Asian American leadership. In addition, the leadership tenets emerging from this study: *create collective power, engage in humanistic activism and creativity, resolve societal contradictions, and struggle through together* were the results of this study's participants connecting the leadership lessons from their own experiences with the historical legacy of justice-oriented Asian American leadership.

### ***Community of Justice-Oriented Asian American Leaders***

Most important, throughout the study, the space of CLEs was a space to build safety, trust, and relationships as a community of Asian American leaders who are now connected to each other and hopefully will stay connected beyond this study to reach out to each other for support and sustaining their leadership energy in their organizations and communities. Further, I plan to stay connected with the study participants to see how we continue building on the work we did together to further center the ways Asian Americans can sustain their work toward racial, social, and economic justice.

### **Implications (Practice, Policy, Research, Limitations)**

The experiences of Asian American leaders in this study, who work in nonprofit organizations and education systems across the US, are significant because their experiences emphasize the growing need to diversify the theorizing and practice space of leadership. Asian Americans are racialized uniquely because they are pressed to be the model minority and yet

remain perpetually foreign in one body. The paradoxical experience is part of the reason why we see in America that, since 2000, only 1% of public school principals were Asian (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020) and only 8% of non-profit executive directors identified as Asian American or Pacific Islander (Buteau, 2019). Even in my context, in a school district of 160,000 students, where 11% identify as Asian, there is not one principal who identifies as Asian American. Thus, capturing the experience of Asian American leaders in this study plays a critical role in figuring out ways to increase the representation and emphasize the key role Asian American leaders play in nonprofit and education systems. The study of these experiences adds to the theorizing and practice space of leadership to model alternative ways to lead beyond those in white dominant discourse (hunter et al., 2013).

### **Practice Implications**

Merging the principles of CRE (Duncan, 2005; Woodson, 2019) and CLE design (Guajardo et al., 2016; Hughes, 2017) provided a process to engage in space with racially marginalized Asian American organizational and community leaders in this study. In the Asian American Leadership **보자기** (Pojagi), the themes emerging from this study emphasize the importance of cultivating transformational spaces that first acknowledge racialized contexts for any racially marginalized community, then cultivating a different, transformational space for leaders to have safety. By doing this, we can create a transformational space for racially marginalized leaders to share their experiences in an unguarded manner. In these transformational spaces, counternarratives to dominant societal contexts develop. Through the use of counternarratives, we can connect to the historical legacies of racially marginalized community members who demonstrated justice-oriented leadership, and leaders can reclaim their histories and full selves. That we are not the racializing labels defined by white dominant

American society, rather, our story is deeply connected to a legacy of Asian Americans who have struggled and have demonstrated the ability to enact racial, social, and economic justice in America.

The next step in this process is to figure out the “how.” The study participants emphasized the importance of *creating collective power, engaging in humanistic activism and creativity, resolving societal contradictions, and struggling through together* (see Figure 82). The process of cultivating transformational spaces and working towards the building of our aspirational world required designing CLEs with a lens to support justice-oriented Asian American leaders and their experiences. This meant that I had to bring my own perspective as a practitioner and researcher who is Asian American to help indigenize the CLEs with supportive elements such as:

- intentional openings asking leaders to reflect on self;
- adding an element within CLEs to include ways leaders can build connections with each other;
- framing and listening to specific dilemmas leaders experience within their organizations and communities;
- providing time and space for leaders to reflect on their experiences with each other and how the experiences impacted their individual thinking;
- closing each CLE with specific next steps and ensuring leaders know where we are going and how to provide feedback (see Appendix D and E).

The resulting leadership tenets within the Asian American Leadership **보자기** (Figure 82) assert a practice rooted in collectivist leadership principles and provides a leadership counternarrative to the white dominant discourse within the theorizing and practice spaces of leadership research.

## **Policy Implications**

In addition to implications for practice, this study highlights the importance of recognizing how severely Asian Americans are underrepresented in leadership positions within education and non-profit spaces. We need a deeper understanding of the experiences of Asian American leaders and how we can support practices that in turn support the development of Asian American leaders. As a result, the representation of Asian American leaders in educational and non-profit spaces should be prioritized in a country where the Asian population increased 35% between 2010 and 2020 (United States Census Bureau, 2021).

Policies that increase the representation of Asian American leaders must be pursued to support the building of a more just America. For example, creating organizational and academic institution partnerships that provide ways for Asian American students to be connected to justice-oriented Asian Americans who are in leadership positions within nonprofit and educational systems can help a younger generation of Asian Americans see the possibilities in leading within organizations for the benefit of all in our communities. The growing population of Asian Americans deserve to be represented by members in our community who lead with the leadership tenets emerging from this study. Further, how can academic institutions review the enrollment of Asian Americans in education and community-focused programs to determine ways to recruit, educate, and inspire a new generation of Asian Americans to be teachers, principals, district leaders, and nonprofit organizational leaders who want to continue the work of racial, social, and economic justice?

## **Research Implications**

The Asian American leadership **보자기** emerging from this CRE study aims to occupy the theorizing and practice space of leadership research (see Figure 82). This pursuit connects

with one of key guideposts within the Asian American leadership *보자기*, emphasizing the importance of bringing imagination into relationship with reality to build possibilities of a world with justice. By *creating collective power, engaging in humanistic activism and creativity, resolving societal contradictions, and struggling through together*, this study reiterates that building a better world is possible. Justice-oriented Asian American leaders must play a critical role in building this aspirational world. Emphasizing the importance of researching justice-oriented Asian American leadership is a pathway to create counterstories (Duncan, 2005) in the theorizing and practice spaces of leadership so often occupied by white people (hunter et al., 2013). The model minority and perpetual foreigner concepts in one body is understudied research area. Researching these experiences provides a way to disrupt inequities in the current white dominated discourse of leadership research. Further, this step to focus on justice-oriented Asian American leadership supports the undoing of racial hierarchies that have long persisted in the research academies in America.

In addition, this study showed how CRE and CLEs can be used as a methodology to understand the experiences of racially marginalized groups. As CRE focuses the research lens on revealing, hearing, documenting and contextualizing the experience of racially marginalized groups, CLEs emphasize axioms to create transformational spaces where safety and trusting relationships allow space for racially marginalized groups to share their experiences in an unguarded manner (Duncan, 2005; Guajardo et al., 2016; Woodson, 2019). This study intertwined both lenses of CRE and CLEs to show a pathway to cultivating safe, transformational spaces for racially marginalized groups where data generation comes from the participants and centers the importance of their cultural empowerment and affirmation. This emerging finding from this study should be further studied as a method to regard the stories of



racially marginalized people and amplify their experiences as counternarratives within the racialized society of America and not refer to the experiences of racially marginalized groups from a white dominant lens.

Research should consider the ways race functions as a barrier for racially marginalized groups like Asian Americans. Similar to Balón's (2004) study connecting Asian American students' experiences and self-perceptions about leadership potential vis a vis their societal experiences, additional studies focused on the racialized experiences of justice-oriented Asian American leaders within organizations and communities should be further studied to add additional perspectives to the theorizing and practice space of leadership research.

### **Limitations**

This study can educate us and suggest how to frame, see, and understand the experiences of Asian American leaders, however a newly designed research study would be needed if one wanted to study another group of people. In addition, my current ontological framework is based on the elements of my identity that influences the type of world I want to help continue developing. The shaping of this CRE study, and interpretation of research findings were influenced by a desire to understand both the individual and collective experiences of Asian Americans as a racially marginalized group who are understudied, underrepresented, and frequently erased from the history and present time as justice-oriented leaders who sustain the work of build an aspirational world with racial, social, and economic justice.

Another limitation I identified through my review of the existing literature regarding Asian American leadership is absence of a clear definition as to what effective and justice-oriented Asian American leadership looks like. While there is ample literature exploring and discussing what Asian Americans experienced (Hinnertshitz, 2017; Kim, 1999; Kim, 2011; Liang

& Peters-Hawkins, 2017; Liou & Liang, 2020), future scholarship that more clearly defines what effective and justice-oriented Asian American leadership looks like could be useful.

A third limitation from this study highlights the need to understand Asian American leadership actions which are not justice-oriented. Future historical research might explore those moments in American history when Asian Americans behaved in ways that supported white supremacy structures by aspiring to be honorary whites, often through leadership practices antithetical to collectivist approaches (Lee, 2021; Lien, 2014; Philip, 2014). This is an important aspect to scrutinize further in the study of Asian American leadership, because we need to understand the conditions that drive racially marginalized communities to emulate white supremacy structures. By examining this pull toward the emulation of white supremacy structures and the leadership practices that help sustain them, we might better understand how even well-intentioned leadership efforts with justice aims can push or encourage racially marginalized communities toward a collective assimilation toward whiteness.

### **Leadership Development**

Through the course of my leadership journey as a teacher, a principal, and a district leader, understanding the dimensions of my Korean-immigrant-educator-American identity and its importance to my leadership identity was difficult. I am first Korean, born in 원주 (Wonju), South Korea, raised around my maternal family, while my dad was in Europe or Saudi Arabia trying make a salary that could sustain our futures. Despite my dad's absence, I felt belonging (정) in Korea. Perhaps being around family who unconditionally loved me and my brother, or it was my 외 할아버지 (maternal grandfather) taking me and my brother to a peak in 원주 and describing the city to us, I never wondered if I should be there.

As a six-year old, this sense of belonging shifted. I became an immigrant with my mom, dad, and older brother, strangers in America. In elementary school, I remember being asked by white people, “Are you Chinese? Japanese?”, and when I answered no to both, there was silence and confusion. When I said, “I’m Korean,” the clever white men asked, “North Korea or South Korea?!” During my first experience in an elementary school cafeteria, I remember the entire cafeteria making fun of me and my brother’s Peter Pan lunch boxes in unison and I just looked up at him and with no words, we sat down to eat our Korean lunch. There was no 정 in that moment, except my brother.

At the age of twenty-four, I said “enough!” to the corporate world and became a history teacher. This decision led me on a path to understand the power of educating our youth. From learning mantras like, “if a student can’t say hello to me, how can I expect them to let me teach them?” Then learning how to design learning experiences that support our students to graduate with plans for life success. Through these learnings, I realized that becoming an educator was a vocation. The work as an educator is centered on building relationships with students and families, designing learning experiences that support them with plans for successful lives, and not just in theory, but in actuality. When a student does not graduate with plans for life success, we have to reflect why and work to get better in our relationships and pedagogy. Thus, being an educator who believes that this is possible, our entire life becomes intertwined with that of being an educator. It becomes a part of our identity. When I became a principal and then a district leader, I did my best to align good intentions to actual, equitable impact for all students, and I am still working on that. Education systems in the US are designed to be inequitable, so I am still working on how to create impact for all students within education systems as part of my life’s work.

When I was twenty-five years old, I was naturalized as a citizen of the United States. Until then, a “Resident Alien” card was an important document, especially when we traveled outside of the United States. Becoming American in a country that often reminded me that I was a *gook*, a *chink*, a *walking wanton*, or just not quite American enough was a significant step for me in retrospect. Travel became easier, but more importantly, I held documents noting that I was as American as any person in this country. I could vote and hold a passport that did not require me to wait in an immigration services line for a stamp to be allowed to travel outside of America. These are some of the rights of citizenship that I did not get to exercise for nineteen of the previous years growing up in America.

Each of these experiences of being Korean first, then becoming an immigrant, then becoming an educator and finding purpose, and then becoming a “naturalized” citizen of the US, recall a journey that was rooted in 정 (belonging) and recreating 정 for ourselves as a family over our first few decades in America. Continuing to create 정 in the world for myself and others was a guidepost for this study.

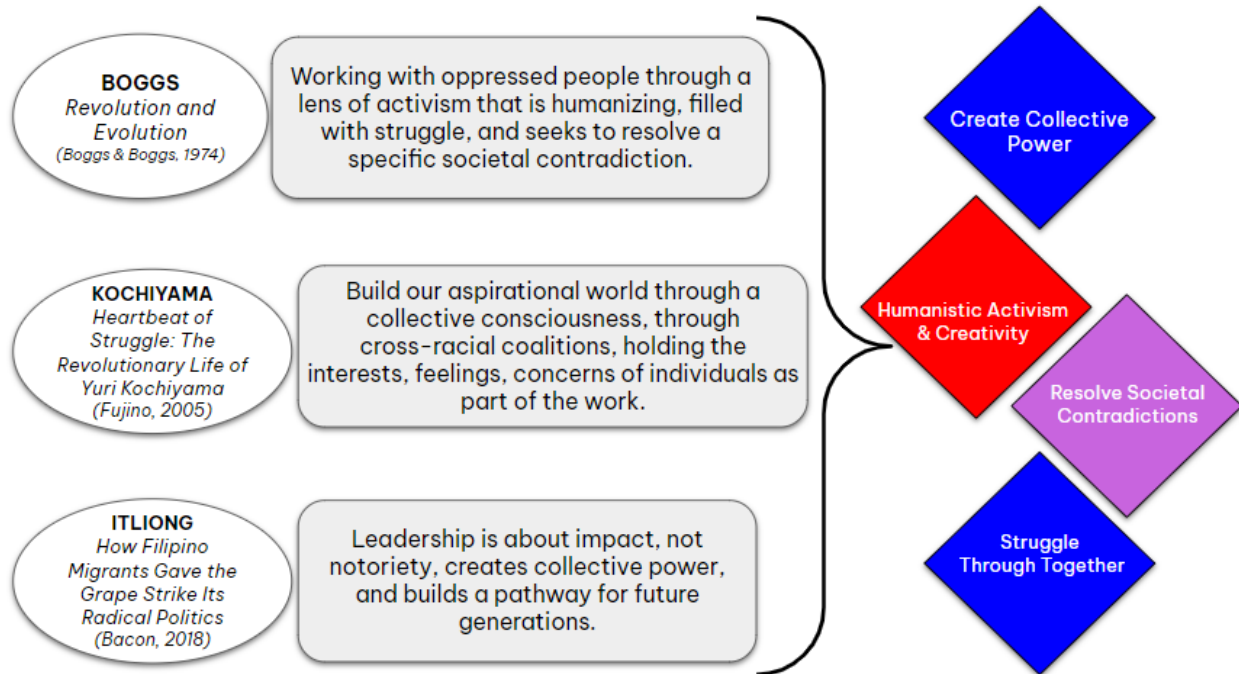
Each dimension of being Korean, an immigrant, an educator, and an American, and their importance to my leadership identity came into focus through being in space with fellow Asian American leaders. At the start of this CRE study, when I thought about the concept of self, I was a bit confused and discombobulated. Now at the end of this CRE study, I know that understanding and affirming our concepts of *self* for Asian American leaders are essential to our work as educational and organizational leaders.

As Asian Americans are pushed to be the model minority and yet remain perpetually foreign in one body (Jean Wu, personal communication, November 16, 2022), justice-oriented Asian American leaders understand the paradox of this type of racial marginalization well. In

current America, where women's autonomy over their bodies is in jeopardy (Lazzarini, 2022) along with affirmative action being threatened (Liptak & Hartocollis, 2022), the continued violence towards Asian Americans (see Chancellor Keon from Purdue Northwest) (Heyward, 2022), and the continued push against educating our youth with accurate accounts of America's past and present (Sawchuk, 2021), justice-oriented Asian American leadership is essential. The Asian American leader participants of this study pursuing racial, social, and economic justice are a group of people to learn from. The study participants are part of a legacy both past and present centered on leadership work that partners with racially marginalized communities and their allies to continue the building of our aspirational world of racial, social, and economic justice.

From the examples of historical Asian American leaders, I identified eleven tenets; the study findings provide us four tenets that are a redux of the eleven tenets (see Figure 83). The resulting four tenets from this study: *create collective power*, *humanistic activism & creativity*, *resolve societal contradictions*, and *struggle through together* present this study's emerging leadership covenants others can follow. Connected to a historical and present-day justice-oriented Asian American leadership story of leadership, the covenants of leadership from this study expand the available approaches to leadership to navigate and counteract the current state of America where white supremacy structures continue its push for limiting rights and espouse a continued hate towards racially marginalized communities.

In our racialized society, we must continue to create spaces where the experiences of racially marginalized people like Asian Americans are centered. When we center their stories, we learn lessons similar to the lessons emerging from this study as counternarratives that move



*Figure 83. Leadership covenants emerging from study.*

us towards social change. If one of the purposes of justice-oriented leadership is to lead towards a common good, then we must restore the erased histories and racialized identities of those who have been most oppressed. As researchers, we hold a responsibility to see, understand, and share the truth of a multiracial America and the justice-oriented Asian American leadership expressed through this study is one of those truths that must be shared, emphasized, and further studied in our pursuit of a more just America.

And there is no time to waste. Those of us who choose to engage in the theorizing and practice space of leadership research, if we are justice-oriented, must understand that the purpose of leadership is to undo the systems of racism, colonialism, and capitalism. We can do this by bringing our imaginations of a better world into relationship with our racialized context. We cannot only imagine or only despair at our current state. Connecting imagination with our realities helps us see where we are and where we want to go. Then we can think about how we get to our aspirational world. There is no savior gearing up to correct the racist, colonialist, and capitalist harms in society. It is up to each of us to build a collective, cross-racial social force to move us step by step into a world where racial, social, and economic justice is a reality. I implore all of us in society to continue and sustain the demonstrated justice-oriented legacies of leaders like Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong. The Asian American Leadership 보자기 (see Figure 82) and the leadership covenants (see Figure 83) emerging from this study provide guideposts for us to build a more just world.

### Conclusion

*Soon it will be over,  
which is precisely what the child in my dream said,  
holding my hand, pointing at the roiling sea and the sky  
hurtling our way like so many buffalo,  
who said it's much worse than we think,  
and sooner; to whom I said*

*no duh child in my dreams, what do you think  
this singing and shuddering is,  
what this screaming and reaching and dancing  
and crying is, other than loving  
what every second goes away?*

-Ross Gay  
from *Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude*

The experience of engaging in this study convinced me that leadership is about love. The history of justice-oriented Asian American leaders in the past and those that engaged in this study have shown me this. This is not a type of love that is wrapped in the consumerism of roses, diamonds, and chocolates. Rather, this type of love emphasizes purpose and struggle for the sake of the communities that we all love. It's like the love my 외할아버지 (maternal grandfather) demonstrated after stepping off a boat in 부산 (Pusan) to restart and sustain a life beyond the Korean War. This love is about how he raised a family with two daughters and two sons, despite never seeing his immediate family again.

Ross Gay (2015) rhetorically asks us, “what do you think/this singing and shuddering is,/what this screaming and reaching and dancing/and crying is, other than loving/what every second goes away?” The singing, shuddering, screaming, reaching, dancing, and crying are the acts of love the poet implores us to consider in this short life (Gay, 2015). Similar to the leadership exuded by the leadership covenants highlighted in Figure 83, the work to *create collective power*, to engage in *humanistic activism & creativity*, to *resolve societal contradictions*, and *struggling through together* require the singing, shuddering, screaming, reaching, dancing, and crying that Gay (2015) reminds us to do as we continue our journeys in life.

Creating collective power is about loving each other enough to trust each other and share power to build a world for the common good. Engaging in humanistic activism and creativity is



about creating transformational spaces where we can engage lovingly with each other and share our struggles in order to create counterstories that tell us, “and yet, we can move forward”. Resolving societal contradictions is to love our communities so much that we will step into organizations and communities to work through the challenges that colonialism, capitalism, and racism bring. Struggling through together is about looking each other in the eye and saying, “you’re not alone, I’m here with you” and providing a collective energy and social force to ensure persistence turns into possibility, so that effective impact can occur in our change efforts.

The love that I connect to leadership is deeply connected to the Korean 정 (belonging), which is an indigenous guidepost from my culture reminding me to commit to create a world where people feel unconditional belonging. Whether for was the students and families I worked with as a teacher, or the community I served as a principal, or the school system I represent and work for currently, 정 reminds me to create spaces where belonging is unconditional. Through 정, I wanted to support the ways Asian Americans could find leadership belonging in their invisibilized and racialized contexts in America. The title of this study, “Finding Leadership Belonging (정)”, emphasized a pursuit to find belonging for a justice-oriented Asian American leadership that historically and presently pursues an unconditional belonging for all within organizations and communities.

Leadership of this kind is rooted in collectivism, or what Hanold (2017) called *withness*. By investing in and completing this study, I represent and espouse a leadership that shifts us away from leading through positionality or individualism to leadership that is inclusive, collectivist, and cross-racial. This study focused on co-constructing a space with justice-oriented Asian American leaders and centering their experiences to unfurl the ways their experiences can add to and influence the theorizing and practice space of leadership. The study expresses and

continues to amplify a hope for our world where the many prisms of Asian American leaders' experiences and identities become a reference point that is an integral part of a decolonizing majority's continuing struggle to undo the white supremacy structures in America. By occupying the theorizing and practice spaces of leadership through a leadership that centers on a love that asks us to sing, dance, cry, shudder, scream, reach, in pursuit of 정 for all members of our communities, we can see a way to continue the building of our aspirational world beyond the clutches of racism, colonialism, and capitalism.

## REFERENCES

- Akutagawa, L. (2013). Breaking stereotypes: An Asian American's view of leadership development. *Asian American Journal of Psychology*, 4(4), 277-284.  
<https://10.1037/a0035390>
- Allen-Ebrahimian, B. (2021). *2020 saw steep rise in attacks against Asian-Americans*. Axios.  
<https://www.axios.com/asian-american-attacks-72e797b7-1edf-42b5-9552-cac954d87a02.html>
- Anaissie, T., Clifford, D., Wise, S., Cary, V., & Malarkey, T. (2021). *Liberatory design: Mindsets and modes to design for equity*. <http://www.liberatorydesign.com/>
- Anderson, M. D. (2016, June). *Where are all the principals of color?* The Atlantic.  
[https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/06/principals-of-color/488006/?utm\\_source=share&utm\\_campaign=share](https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/06/principals-of-color/488006/?utm_source=share&utm_campaign=share)
- Aoki, R., & AAPA. (2008, January 15). Asian American Movement 1968: AAPA Rally July 28, 1968. <http://aam1968.blogspot.com/2008/01/aapa-rally-july-28-1968.html>
- Araiza, L. (2009). "In common struggle against a common oppression": The united farm workers and the Black Panther Party, 1968-1973. *The Journal of African American History*, 94(2), 200-223. <https://10.1086/JAAHv94n2p200>
- Asian American Political Alliance. (2017). *Asian American Political Alliance General Statement*. The Berkeley Revolution. <http://revolution.berkeley.edu/asian-american-political-alliance-four-point-philosophy/>
- Bacon, D. (2018, May 1). How Filipino migrants gave the Grape Strike its radical politics. *Dollars & Sense (Somerville, Mass.)*. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/2069032921>

Baldwin, J. (1963). *A talk to teachers*. Zinn Education Project.

<https://www.zinnproject.org/materials/baldwin-talk-to-teachers/>

Balón, D. G. (2004). *Racial, ethnic, and gender differences among entering college student attitudes toward leadership, culture, and leader self-identification: A focus on Asian Pacific Americans*.

Benham, M. K. P. (2002). An alternative perspective of educational leadership for change: Reflections on native/indigenous ways of knowing. In K. Leithwood & P. Hallinger (Eds.), *Second international handbook on educational leadership and administration* (pp. 133-166). Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Benner, A., & Kim, S. Y. (2009). Intergenerational experiences of discrimination in Chinese American families: Influences of socialization and stress. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 71(4), 862-877. <https://10.1111/j.1741-3737.2009.00640.x>

Birks, M., Chapman, Y., & Francis, K. (2008). Memoing in qualitative research. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, 13(1), 68-75. <https://10.1177/1744987107081254>

Bitney, C., & Liu, C. (n.d.). *Asian American first generation college students*. Asian American Psychological Association. [https://aapaonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/AsAmFirstGen\\_factsheet\\_web-Bitney.pdf](https://aapaonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/AsAmFirstGen_factsheet_web-Bitney.pdf)

Blackburn, S. (2019). *What is the Model Minority Myth?* Teaching Tolerance. <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/what-is-the-model-minority-myth>

Boggs, J., & Boggs, G. L. (1974). *Revolution and evolution*. Monthly Review Press.

Bonilla-Silva, E., & Embrick, D. (2006). "Black, Honorary White, White: The future of race in the United States?" In D. Brusma, *Mixed messages: Multiracial identities in the "color-blind"* (pp. 33-48). Lynne Rienner Publishers.

- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. <https://10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Brooks, C. (2019). *Numbed with fear: Chinese Americans and McCarthyism*. PBS: American Experience. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americaneexperience/features/mccarthy-numbed-with-fear-chinese-americans/>
- Brown, A. M. (2017). *Emergent strategy*. AK Press.
- Budiman, A., & Ruiz, N. G. (2021). *Key facts about Asian Americans, a diverse and growing population*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/04/29/key-facts-about-asian-americans/>
- Buteau, E. (2019). *Reflecting on leadership diversity in today's nonprofit sector*. The Center for Effective Philanthropy. <https://cep.org/reflecting-on-leadership-diversity-in-todays-nonprofit-sector/>
- Chang, E. T., & Park, C. K. (2019). *Korean Americans: A concise history*. The Young Oak Kim Center for Korean American Studies at the University of California Riverside.
- Chee, K. (Director). (2021, March 19). *Karen Chee Addresses the Atlanta Shooting*. [Video/DVD] Late Night with Seth Meyers. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1eECOWT1T5M>
- Chen, J. N. (2017). Blacklivesmatter and the State of Asian/America. *Journal of Asian American Studies*, 20(2), 265-271. <https://10.1353/jaas.2017.0019>
- Cheung, D. (2017). Becoming authentically Asian American. *Asian American Policy Review*, 27, 8.
- Chow, K. (2015). *Grace Lee Boggs, activist and American revolutionary, turns 100*. NPR.org. <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2015/06/27/417175523/grace-lee-boggs->

- Cowan, J. (2019, Oct 21). A leader of farmworkers, and Filipinos' place in American History. *New York Times (Online)*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/21/us/larry-itliong-farmworkers.html>
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). International student edition. ed.). SAGE.
- Crosby, B. C., & Bryson, J. M. (2018). Why leadership of public leadership research matters: And what to do about it. *Public Management Review*, 20(9), 1,265-1,286. <https://10.1080/14719037.2017.1348731>
- Cruz, A. (2016). On the job: White employers, workers of color, and racial triangulation theory. *Sociology Compass*, 10(10), 918-927. <https://10.1111/soc4.12406>
- Cullen-Lester, K. L., & Yammarino, F. J. (2016). Collective and network approaches to leadership: Special issue introduction. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 27(2), 173-180. <https://10.1016/j.leaqua.2016.02.001>
- D., C., & Stills, S. (1998). *He got game on he got game soundtrack*. Def Jam Recordings.
- Daniller, A. (2021). *Majorities of Americans see at least some discrimination against Black, Hispanic and Asian people in the US*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/03/18/majorities-of-americans-see-at-least-some-discrimination-against-black-hispanic-and-asian-people-in-the-u-s/>
- De Leon, A. (2020). *The long history of racism against Asian Americans in the US*. PBS News hour. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/the-long-history-of-racism-against-asian-americans-in-the-u-s>

- Duncan, G. A. (2005). Critical race ethnography in education: narrative, inequality and the problem of epistemology. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 93-114. <https://10.1080/1361332052000341015>
- Ebbert, S. (2021, November 7). Michelle Wu's campaign manager also broke the mold - The Boston Globe. *Boston Globe* <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2021/11/07/metro/wus-campaign-manager-also-broke-mode/>
- ESPN News Services. (2021). *Gymnast Lee says she was target of racist attack*. ESPN.com. [https://www.espn.com/olympics/story/\\_/id/32609877/olympic-gold-medalist-suni-lee-says-was-pepper-sprayed-racist-attack](https://www.espn.com/olympics/story/_/id/32609877/olympic-gold-medalist-suni-lee-says-was-pepper-sprayed-racist-attack)
- Eubanks, E., Parish, R., & Smith, D. (1997). Changing the discourse in schools. In P. Hall (Ed.), *Race, ethnicity, and multiculturalism* (pp. 162-179). Garland Publishing, Inc. <https://10.4324/9780203054598-11>
- Fairhurst, G. T. (2009). Considering context in discursive leadership research. *Human Relations (New York)*, 62(11), 1,607-1,633. <https://10.1177/0018726709346379>
- Freedman, W. (2021). *Family: 30-year-old Navy vet died after Northern California police placed knee on his neck*. ABC11 Raleigh-Durham. <https://abc11.com/10366915/>
- Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed, 30th anniversary edition* (30<sup>th</sup> ed.). Bloomsbury Academic.
- Fujino, D. C. (2005). *Heartbeat of struggle: The revolutionary life of Yuri Kochiyama*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Gay, R. (2015). *Catalog of unabashed gratitude*. University of Pittsburgh Press (Bibliovault). <https://10.2307/j.ctt1287p67>

- Gerdes, D. A., & Conn, J. H. (2001). A user-friendly look at qualitative research methods. *The Physical Educator*, 58(4), 183-190. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1437939230>
- González, B. (2016). How can I trust you if you don't know who you are? The consequences of a fluid identity on cross-racial organizing between African American women and Latinas in Atlanta. *Societies (Basel, Switzerland)*, 6(2), 13. <https://10.3390/soc6020013>
- Google. (n.d.). *Sankey Diagram*. Google Charts. <https://developers.google.com/chart/interactive/docs/gallery/sankey>
- Guajardo, M. A., Guajardo, F., Janson, C., & Militello, M. (2016). *Reframing community partnerships in education*. Taylor and Francis.
- Hamilton, N., & Hamilton, N. A. (2017). Itliong, Larry. *American biographies: American social leaders and activists*. Facts on File.
- Hanold, M. (2017). Toward a new approach to authentic leadership: The practice of embodied dialogical “thinking” and the promise of shared power. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 19(4), 454-466. <https://10.1177/1523422317728940>
- Herr, K., & Anderson, G. L. (2014). *The action research dissertation: A guide for students and faculty*. Sage Publications.
- Heyward, G. (2022). *A university chancellor apologized after mocking Asian languages in his speech*. NPR. <https://www.npr.org/2022/12/16/1143222095/purdue-northwest-chancellor-mocks-asian-language>
- Hinnershit, S. (2017). *A different shade of justice*. The University of North Carolina Press. [https://10.5149/9781469633701\\_hinnershit](https://10.5149/9781469633701_hinnershit)



- History, Art & Archives, U.S. House of Representatives. (1965). *Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965*. History, Art & Archives, U.S. House of Representatives.  
<https://history.house.gov/Historical-Highlights/1951-2000/Immigration-and-Nationality-Act-of-1965/>
- Hong, C. P. (2020). *Minor feelings*. Penguin Random House LLC.
- Hughes, P. (2017). *Creating gracious space in the workplace*. Professional and Organizational Development - University of Washington.  
<http://www.washington.edu/admin/hr/publications/email/pod/convio/leadingedge/au17/gracious-space.html>
- hunter, l., emerald, e., & Martin, G. (2013). *Participatory activist research in the globalised world*. Springer.
- Huynh, Q., Devos, T., & Smalarz, L. (2011). Perpetual foreigner in one's own land: Potential implications for identity and psychological adjustment. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 30(2), 133-162. <https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.2011.30.2.133>
- Jeung, R., Yellow Horse, A., Popovic, T., & Lim, R. (2021). Stop AAPI Hate National Report. Stop AAPI Hate.  
<https://secureservercdn.net/104.238.69.231/a1w.90d.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/210312-Stop-AAPI-Hate-National-Report-.pdf>
- Kang, J. C. (2021, Feb 3). The many lives of Steven Yeun. *The New York Times*  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/03/magazine/steven-yeun.html>
- Katersky, A., Shapiro, E., & Deliso, M. (2021). *Asian man stabbed in back in Chinatown, suspect charged with attempted murder*. ABC News. <https://abcnews.go.com/US/asian-man-stabbed-back-york-citys-chinatown-suspect/story?id=76133248>

- Kawahara, D. M., Pal, M. S., & Chin, J. L. (2013). The leadership experiences of Asian Americans. *Asian American Journal of Psychology*, 4(4), 240-248.  
<https://10.1037/a0035196>
- Kawai, Y. (2005). Stereotyping Asian Americans: The dialectic of the model minority and the yellow peril. *The Howard Journal of Communications*, 16(2), 109-130.  
<https://10.1080/10646170590948974>
- Kendi, I. X. (2019). *How to be an antiracist* (1<sup>st</sup> ed.). One World.
- Keller, T. (2020). *When you trap a tiger*. Random House Children's Books.
- Kiang, L., Huynh, V. W., Cheah, C. S. L., Wang, Y., & Yoshikawa, H. (2017). Moving beyond the model minority. *Asian American Journal of Psychology*, 8(1), 1-6.  
<https://10.1037/aap0000070>
- Kim, C. J. (1999). The racial triangulation of Asian Americans. *Politics & Society*, 27(1), 105-138. <https://10.1177/0032329299027001005>
- Kim, C. J., & Lee, T. (2001). Interracial politics: Asian Americans and other communities of color. *PS, Political Science & Politics*, 34(3), 631-637.  
<https://10.1017/S1049096501000993>
- Kim, E. H., & Yu, E. (1996). *East to America*. New Press.
- Kim, J. (2012). Asian American racial identity development theory. In C. L. Wijeyesinghe & B. W. Jackson (Eds.) *New perspectives on racial identity development* (pp. 138-160 ). NYU Press.
- Kim, J. J. (2011). Objects, methods, and interpretations: Imperial trajectories, haunted nationalisms, and medical archives in Asian American History. *Journal of Asian American Studies*, 14(2), 193-219. <https://10.1353/jaas.2011.0019>

- Kim, S. Y., Wang, Y., Deng, S., Alvarez, R., & Li, J. (2011). Accent, perpetual foreigner stereotype, and perceived discrimination as indirect links between English proficiency and depressive symptoms in Chinese American adolescents. *Developmental Psychology*, 47(1), 289-301. <https://10.1037/a0020712>
- Kim, T., & Mauldin, C. (2022). Troubling unintended harm of heroic discourses in social justice leadership. *Frontiers in Education (Lausanne)*. <https://10.3389/feduc.2022.796200>
- Lazzarini, Z. (2022). The End of Roe v. Wade — States’ power over health and well-being. *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 387(5), 390-393. <https://10.1056/NEJMp2206055>
- Lee, E., & Storel, M. (2021, October 17). Asian American teens navigate being themselves as their communities are targeted. *The Picture show: Photo Stories from NPR*. <https://www.npr.org/sections/pictureshow/2021/10/17/1038076107/asian-american-teens-navigate-being-themselves-as-their-communities-are-targeted>
- Lee, P. (2021). Rejecting honorary Whiteness: Asian Americans and the attack on race-conscious admissions. *Emory Law Journal*, 70(7), 1,474-1,506.
- Lee, S. J., Xiong, C. P., Pheng, L. M., & Vang, M. N. (2020). “Asians for Black lives, not Asians for Asians”: Building Southeast Asian American and Black solidarity. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 51(4), 405-421. <https://10.1111/aeq.12354>
- Lemann, N. (2021, July 26). Can affirmative action survive? *The New Yorker*. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2021/08/02/can-affirmative-action-survive>
- Lien, P. (2014). When race no longer predicts minority status and identity. *Politics, Groups & Identities*, 2(3), 500-505. <https://10.1080/21565503.2014.940543>
- Liang, J., & Peters-Hawkins, A. L. (2017). I am more than what I look alike. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 53(1), 40-69. <https://10.1177/0013161X16652219>

- Liou, D. D., & Liang, J. G. (2020). Toward a theory of sympathetic leadership: Asian American school administrators' expectations for justice and excellence. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 00(0), 1-34. <https://10.1177/0013161X20941915>
- Liptak, A., & Hartocollis, A. (2022, Jan 24). Supreme Court will hear challenge to affirmative action at Harvard and U.N.C. *New York Times (Online)*.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/24/us/politics/supreme-court-affirmative-action-harvard-unc.html>
- Long, J., Medici, C., Qian, N., & Tabellini, M. (2022). The impact of the Chinese Exclusion Act on the U.S. economy.
- Maccoby, M. (2015). *Creating network competence*. Creating Network Competence.  
<http://www.maccoby.com/Articles/CreatingNetworkCompetenc.shtml>
- Marrow, H. B. (2009). New immigrant destinations and the American color line. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 32(6), 1,037-1,057. <https://10.1080/01419870902853224>
- Marrow, H. B. (2011). *New destination dreaming: Immigration, race, and legal status in the rural American south*. Stanford University Press.
- McIntyre, A., Colley, B., Jones, S., Smith-Mumford, P., Weaver, B., Weaver, M., & Wilson, C. (1998). Engaging in cross-racial dialogue: Does/can talk lead to action? *Transformations*, 9(2), 81-99. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43587110>
- Merseth, J. L. (2018). Race-ing solidarity: Asian Americans and support for Black Lives Matter. *Politics, Groups & Identities*, 6(3), 337-356.  
<https://10.1080/21565503.2018.1494015>
- Militello, M., Rallis, S. F., & Goldring, E. B. (2009). *Leading with inquiry & action:: How principals improve teaching and learning*. Corwin.

- Mills, C. W. (1997). *The racial contract*. Cornell University Press.
- Minkler, M., Rebanal, R. D., Pearce, R., & Acosta, M. (2019). Growing equity and health equity in perilous times: Lessons from community organizers. *Health Education & Behavior*, 46(1\_suppl), 9S-18S. <https://10.1177/1090198119852995>
- Moran, R. F. (2009). The story of Lau v. Nichols: Breaking the silence in Chinatown. *UC Irvine School of Law Research Paper no. 2009-20*, p. 111. [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/Papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1377962](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/Papers.cfm?abstract_id=1377962)
- Murphy, C. (2017). *Brain teaser time! Only one letter in the alphabet is not in any U.S. state's name*. Simplemost. <https://www.simplemost.com/alphabet-letter-not-in-state-name/>
- National Archives. (n.d.). *Chinese Exclusion Act*. DocsTeach. <https://www.docsteach.org/documents/document/chinese-exclusion-act>
- National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d.). *Undergraduate graduation rates*. National Center for Education Statistics. <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=40>
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2020). *Characteristics of public school principals*. The Condition of Education. [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator\\_cls.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cls.asp)
- Neri, R. C., Lozano, M., & Gomez, L. M. (2019). (Re)framing resistance to culturally relevant education as a multilevel learning problem. *Review of Research in Education*, 43(1), 197-226. <https://10.3102/0091732X18821120>
- The New York Times. (2021, March 19,). Atlanta Shootings Live Updates: Suspect Had Visited Targeted Spas Before, Police Say. *The New York Times* <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/03/18/us/atlanta-shootings-massage-spa>

- Newsom, G. (2022). *Governor Newsom proclaims Larry Itliong Day 2022 | California Governor*. Office of Governor Gavin Newsom.  
<https://www.gov.ca.gov/2022/10/25/governor-newsom-proclaims-larry-itliong-day-2022/>
- Nguyen, N. T., & Morita-Mullaney, T. (2020). Asian-American female leaders navigating institutional racism in schools: The lapdog syndrome. *Unpublished Manuscript*. (Northeastern Illinois University and Purdue University Faculty).
- Nguyen, V. T. (2020). *Asian Americans are still caught in the trap of the 'model minority' stereotype and it creates inequality for all*. Time. <https://time.com/5859206/anti-asian-racism-america/>
- Noah, T. (Director). (2021, March 17). *Why we should've seen the Atlanta shootings coming*. [Video/DVD] Comedy Central.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SDPgZDk2oVo>
- NYU Center for the Study of Asian American Health. (n.d.). *Asian Americans in the US*. NYU Center for the Study of Asian American Health. <https://med.nyu.edu/asian-health/about-us/asian-americans-us>
- O'Dowd, M. F., & Heckenberg, R. (2020). *Explainer: What is decolonisation?* The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/explainer-what-is-decolonisation-131455>
- Oh, K. S. (2022). *Nancy Qian underscores economic damages of the Chinese Exclusion Act in thirteenth annual NT Wang Lecture*. Columbia Weatherhead East Asian Institute.  
<https://weai.columbia.edu/news/nancy-qian-underscores-economic-damages-chinese-exclusion-act-thirteenth-annual-nt-wang>

- Oliver, M. L., & Grant, D. M. (1995). Making space for multiethnic coalitions: The prospects for coalition in Los Angeles. In E-Y. Yu & E.T. Chang, *Multiethnic Coalition Building in Los Angeles*. Institute for Asian American and Pacific American Studies.
- Ospina, S. M. (2017). Collective leadership and context in public administration: Bridging public leadership research and leadership studies. *Public Administration Review*, 77(2), 275-287. <https://10.1111/puar.12706>
- Padgett, D. K. (2008). *Qualitative methods in social work research* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Sage.
- Paris, D. (2021). *I wish we framed it as “theoretical conversations” or “relations” vs “theoretical framework,” esp. early in a line of work (a dissertation proposal, grant proposal). “Framework” connotes a sense of finality, finished connections when I’m interested in the conversations we’re entering.* Twitter.  
[https://twitter.com/django\\_paris/status/1456294386707226624](https://twitter.com/django_paris/status/1456294386707226624)
- Petersen, W. (1966, January 9). Success story, Japanese-American style. *The New York Times Magazine*.
- Philip, T. M. (2014). Asian American as a political-racial identity: Implications for teacher education. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 17(2), 219-241.  
<https://10.1080/13613324.2012.674024>
- Platoff, E., & Valencia, M. J. (2021). *Michelle Wu wins historic Boston mayor’s race, marking a new era for the city - The Boston Globe*. BostonGlobe.com.  
<https://www.bostonglobe.com/2021/11/02/metro/boston-brink-historic-change-mayors-race/>
- Quick, K. S. (2017). Locating and building collective leadership and impact. *Leadership (London, England)*, 13(4), 445-471. <https://10.1177/1742715015605348>

- Rosen, S. M. (2016). Identity performance and collectivist leadership in the Philadelphia Student Union. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 19(2), 224-240.  
<https://10.1080/13603124.2014.954628>
- Rosile, G. A., Boje, M. D., & Claw, C. M. (2018). Ensemble leadership theory: Collectivist, relational, and heterarchical roots from indigenous contexts. *Leadership (London, England)*, 14(3), 307-328. <https://10.1177/1742715016652933>
- Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). SAGE.
- Sanchez, J. E., Thornton, B., & Usinger, J. (2009). Increasing the ranks of minority principals. *Educational Leadership*, 67(2). <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/oct09/vol67/num02/Increasing-the-Ranks-of-Minority-Principals.aspx>
- Sawchuk, S. (2021). What is Critical Race Theory, and why is it under attack? *Education Week*, 40(34), 4. <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/what-is-critical-race-theory-and-why-is-it-under-attack/2021/05://search.proquest.com/docview/2562862119>
- Schneider, B. (2003). *Trust in schools: A core resource for school reform*. ASCD.  
<https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/trust-in-schools-a-core-resource-for-school-reform>
- Schulze-Oechtering, M. (2016). The Alaska Cannery Workers Association and the ebbs and flows of struggle: Manong Knowledge, Blues Epistemology, and Racial Cross-Fertilization. *Amerasia Journal*, 42(2), 23-48.  
<https://search.proquest.com/docview/1845690178>
- Shen, J. (n.d.). *The Asian American man study*. The Asian American Man Study.  
<http://www.theasianamericanman.com/about.html>



- Shipe, R. (2019). *Exploring arts based research and productive ambiguity*. Transdisciplinary Inquiry, Practice, and Possibilities in Art Education Proceedings from the Penn State Seminar @50. <https://openpublishing.psu.edu/arteducation50/content/exploring-arts-based-research-and-productive-ambiguity>
- Shotter, J. (2011). *Getting it: Witness-thinking and the dialogical in practice*. New York, NY: Hampton Press.
- Shyong, F. (2020, February 3). Column: Coronavirus, the outbreak narrative and how our fear fuels our Xenophobia and racism. *Los Angeles Times*.  
<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-02-03/coronavirus-outbreak-narrative-xenophobia>
- Strauss, A. L. (1987). *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*. Cambridge University Press.  
<https://10.1017/CBO9780511557842>
- Stoney, G. (Director). (2011, October 17). *Myles Horton and Paulo Freire*. [Video/DVD] New York, New York: New York University. <https://vimeo.com/30654803>
- Buried past' of America's first Koreatown uncovered in California's Riverside*. Sy, S. and Jackson, L. I. (Directors). (2021, November 16,).[Video/DVD] PBS Newshour. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/buried-past-of-americas-first-koreatown-uncovered-in-californias-riverside>
- Sy, T., Strauss, J., Tram, S., Whiteley, P., Shore, L. M., Shore, T. H., & Ikeda-Muromachi, K. (2010). Leadership perceptions as a function of race-occupation fit: The case of Asian Americans. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 95(5), 902-919. <https://10.1037/a0019501>

- Sy, T., Tram-Quon, S., & Leung, A. (2017). Developing minority leaders: Key success factors of Asian Americans. *Asian American Journal of Psychology*, 8(2), 142-155.  
<https://10.1037/aap0000075>
- Tavernise, S. (2020, Nov 25). *A new political force emerges in Georgia: Asian-American voters*. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/25/us/georgia-asian-american-voters.html?referringSource=articleShare>
- Third World College Proposal*. (2017). The Berkeley Revolution.  
<http://revolution.berkeley.edu/third-world-college-proposal/>
- The Third World Liberation Front*. (n.d.). The Berkeley Revolution.  
<http://revolution.berkeley.edu/projects/twlf/>
- Throughline. (2021). *Our own people: Throughline*. NPR.org.  
<https://www.npr.org/2021/03/29/982274384/our-own-people>
- Tippett, K. (2022). *We are in a time of new suns*. On Being.
- Tung, R. (2021). In 'Minari,' I saw my family. But Hollywood has made Asian Americans outsiders, once again. *Cognoscenti*.  
<https://www.wbur.org/cognoscenti/2021/03/12/minari-golden-globes-best-motion-picture-qualify-foreign-language-rosann-tung>
- U.S. News & World Report. (1966, Dec 26). Success story of one minority group in US. *U.S. News & World Report*, 61, 73.
- Uhl-Bien, M., Marion, R., & McKelvey, B. (2007). Complexity leadership theory: Shifting leadership from the industrial age to the knowledge era. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 18(4), 298-318. <https://10.1016/j.leaqua.2007.04.002>

- United States Census Bureau. (2021). *Race and ethnicity in the United States: 2010 Census and 2020 Census*. United States Census Bureau.  
<https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/race-and-ethnicity-in-the-united-state-2010-and-2020-census.html>
- Vaznis, J. (2021, July 14). Boston School Committee unanimously approves sweeping changes to exam school admission criteria following tense public debate - The Boston Globe. *Boston Globe*. <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2021/07/14/metro/with-wednesday-night-vote-looming-parents-both-sides-bostons-exam-school-admission-debate-step-up-lobbying-efforts/>
- Wang, H. L. (2013). *Not just a 'Black thing': An Asian-American's bond with Malcolm X*. NPR.org. <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2013/08/19/209258986/the-japanese-american-internee-who-met-malcolm-x>
- Wang, H. L. (2014). *Yuri Kochiyama, activist and former World War II internee, dies at 93*. NPR.org. <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2014/06/02/318072652/japanese-american-activist-and-malcolm-x-ally-dies-at-93>
- Noah, T. (Director). (2021, March 17,).[Video/DVD] Comedy Central.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SDPgZDk2oVo>
- Wake County Public School System. (n.d.). Wake County Public School System.  
<https://www.wcpss.net/domain/100>
- Wilkerson, I. (2020). *Caste: The origins of our discontent*. Random House.
- Woodson, A. N. (2019). Racial code words, re-memberings and Black kids' civic imaginations: A Critical Race Ethnography of a Post-Civil Rights Leader. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 50(1), 26-47.

- Woodson, A. N. (2020). Don't let me be misunderstood: Psychological safety, Black girls' speech, and Black feminist perspectives on directness. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 112*(3), 567-578.
- Wu, E. D. (2014). *The color of success*. Princeton Univ. Press.
- Wu, E. D. (2022, November 2). Asian Americans helped build affirmative action. What happened? *Slate*. <https://slate.com/human-interest/2022/11/affirmative-action-proportionality-history-activism.html>
- Wu, F. H. (2002). *Yellow*. Basic Books.

## APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



**EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY**  
**University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board**  
4N-64 Brody Medical Sciences Building· Mail Stop 682  
600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834  
Office 252-744-2914 · Fax 252-744-2284 ·  
[rede.ecu.edu/umcibr/](http://rede.ecu.edu/umcibr/)

### Notification of Exempt Certification

From: Social/Behavioral IRB  
To: [Paul Koh](#)  
CC: [Matthew Militello](#)  
Date: 7/26/2021  
Re: [UMCIRB 21-001524](#)  
Finding Leadership ? (Belonging)

I am pleased to inform you that your research submission has been certified as exempt on 7/26/2021. This study is eligible for Exempt Certification under category # 2a.

It is your responsibility to ensure that this research is conducted in the manner reported in your application and/or protocol, as well as being consistent with the ethical principles of the Belmont Report and your profession.

This research study does not require any additional interaction with the UMCIRB unless there are proposed changes to this study. Any change, prior to implementing that change, must be submitted to the UMCIRB for review and approval. The UMCIRB will determine if the change impacts the eligibility of the research for exempt status. If more substantive review is required, you will be notified within five business days.

| Document                                                | Description                             |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Community Learning Exchange Protocol(0.01)              | Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions |
| Data Collection Sheet(0.01)                             | Data Collection Sheet                   |
| Group Interview Protocol Revised(0.02)                  | Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions |
| Individual Interview Protocol Revised(0.02)             | Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions |
| Informed Consent Form - No More Than Minimal Risk(0.01) | Consent Forms                           |
| Koh Dissertation Proposal(0.01)                         | Study Protocol or Grant Application     |

For research studies where a waiver or alteration of HIPAA Authorization has been approved, the IRB states that each of the waiver criteria in 45 CFR 164.512(i)(1)(i)(A) and (2)(i) through (v) have been met. Additionally, the elements of PHI to be collected as described in items 1 and 2 of the Application for Waiver of Authorization have been determined to be the minimal necessary for the specified research.

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

## APPENDIX B: CITI CERTIFICATION



Completion Date 30-Dec-2020

Expiration Date 30-Dec-2023

Record ID 40131006

This is to certify that:

**Paul Koh**

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

**Human Research**

(Curriculum Group)

**Group 2.Social / Behavioral Research Investigators and Key Personnel**

(Course Learner Group)

**1 - Basic Course**

(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

**East Carolina University**

**CITI**  
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at [www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wf51d8618-6af6-4a09-a195-f0a664a1d5ee-40131006](http://www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wf51d8618-6af6-4a09-a195-f0a664a1d5ee-40131006)

## APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM: ADULTS

### (NO MORE THAN MINIMAL RISK)

*Title of Study: Finding Leadership ʘ (Belonging): A Critical Race Ethnographic Study On Asian American Leadership Identity Affirmation And Enacting Social Change*



#### **Informed Consent to Participate in Research**

Information to consider before taking part in research that has no more than minimal risk.

Title of Research Study: *Finding Leadership ʘ (Belonging): A Critical Race Ethnographic Study On Asian American Leadership Identity Affirmation And Enacting Social Change*

Principal Investigator: Paul Joo Hyun Koh

Institution, Department or Division (*As Applicable*): East Carolina University, Department of Educational Leadership

Address: 1433 Sedgefield Street Durham, NC 27705

Telephone #: 510-681-4943

Study Coordinator (*If Applicable*): Dr. Matthew Militello

Telephone #: 252-328-5279

---

Researchers at East Carolina University (ECU) study issues related to society, health problems, environmental problems, behavior problems and the human condition. To do this, we need the help of volunteers who are willing to take part in research.

#### **Why am I being invited to take part in this research?**

The purpose of this research is to explore how the current and new frameworks connected to the identity of Asian American leaders can impact the affirmation of their identity and their ability to enact social change..

You are being invited to take part in this research because you are qualified and willing to participate as you currently hold a leadership position, or self-identify as a leader in an educational or other related settings.

The decision to take part in this research is yours to make. By doing this research, we hope to learn about the current and new identity frameworks that affirm Asian American leadership identity as it relates to social change actions.

The overarching research question for this study is: *How do Asian American leaders identify current and new ontological and epistemological frameworks to affirm their identity and enact social change?*

If you volunteer to take part in this research, you will be one of about 17 people to do so.

#### **Are there reasons I should not take part in this research?**

I understand I should not volunteer for this study if I am under 18 years of age or if I do not work in an educational or other related setting.

#### **What other choices do I have if I do not take part in this research?**

You can choose not to participate.

*Title of Study: Finding Leadership ʒ (Belonging): A Critical Race Ethnographic Study On Asian American Leadership Identity Affirmation And Enacting Social Change*

**Where is the research going to take place and how long will it last?**

The research will be conducted virtually during scheduled days and times. The Community Learning Exchanges will take place every three months from the Fall of 2021 through the Spring of 2023. Each Community Learning Exchange will be scheduled for two to three hour sessions and be held roughly every three months, beginning in August 2021 through February 2023.

Opportunities for in-person sessions will be discussed with the research group ahead of time and be scheduled accordingly.

The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this study is roughly thirty to forty hours over the next three years.

**What will I be asked to do?**

You will be asked to do the following:

- Participate in Community Learning Exchanges (CLEs) that will be held virtually where the researcher will collect qualitative data based on the activities in which the participants engage at each CLE.
- The data will be in the form of electronic documents, electronic feedback/survey questions, and through recordings of the virtual CLE sessions.
- Each CLE will capture participants engaging in activities, discussions, and prompts related to the following research questions:
  - Overarching research question:
    - How do Asian American leaders identify current and new ontological and epistemological frameworks to affirm their identity and enact social change?
  - Sub questions:
    - How do the ecologies of self (micro) inform leadership choices or inform identity for Asian American leaders?
    - What are the new ontological and epistemological frameworks that inform leadership actions (e.g. leadership development and cross-racial coalition building)?
    - How does the collective Asian American leadership identity (micro) inform how persons operate in their organizations (meso) and communities (macro)?
    - How does the CLE and CPR build a coalition of Asian American leaders who support each other to understand and implement transformative leadership actions within their organizations and communities?
- All digital files, including recordings of CLE sessions will be secured in password-protected folders.

**What might I experience if I take part in the research?**

We don't know of any risks (the chance of harm) associated with this research. Any risks that may occur with this research are no more than what you would experience in everyday life. We don't know if you will benefit from taking part in this study. There may not be any personal benefit to you but the information gained by doing this research may help others in the future.

**Will I be paid for taking part in this research?**

We will not be able to pay you for the time you volunteer while being in this study.

**Will it cost me to take part in this research?**

It will not cost you any money to be part of the research.



*Title of Study: Finding Leadership ʘ (Belonging): A Critical Race Ethnographic Study On Asian American Leadership Identity Affirmation And Enacting Social Change*

**Who will know that I took part in this research and learn personal information about me?**

ECU and the people and organizations listed below may know that you took part in this research and may see information about you that is normally kept private. With your permission, these people may use your private information to do this research:

- Any agency of the federal, state, or local government that regulates human research. This includes the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the North Carolina Department of Health, and the Office for Human Research Protections.
- The University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB) and its staff have responsibility for overseeing your welfare during this research and may need to see research records that identify you.

**How will you keep the information you collect about me secure? How long will you keep it?**

- Important and personal papers and data files will be stored in a locked file cabinet.
- All electronic forms for data collection will be kept in a password protected file.
- Data and copies of reports will be shared with the CPR group for purposes of transparency, improvement, and reflection.
- Any digital video or audio-recordings from this study will be secured in a password protected folder. These recordings will be used for the purposes of coding.
- The data collected during the study will be kept for one year after the completion of the study on a locked, secured office at 1433 Sedgefield Street, Durham, NC 27705. Identifiers and data set collected will be destroyed by being shredded upon successful completion of the study.
- No identifiable information will be shared within this research or in presentations related to this research.

**What if I decide I don't want to continue in this research?**

You can stop at any time after it has already started. There will be no consequences if you stop and you will not be criticized. You will not lose any benefits that you normally receive.

**Who should I contact if I have questions?**

The people conducting this study will be able to answer any questions concerning this research, now or in the future. You may contact the Principal Investigator (Dr. Matthew Militello) at 252-328-5279 (Mondays through Fridays, between 9am and 5pm).

If you have questions about your rights as someone taking part in research, you may call the Office of Research Integrity & Compliance (ORIC) at phone number 252-744-2914 (days, 8:00 am-5:00 pm). If you would like to report a complaint or concern about this research study, you may call the Director for Human Research Protections, at 252-744-2914.

**I have decided I want to take part in this research. What should I do now?**

The person obtaining informed consent will ask you to read the following and if you agree, you should sign this form:

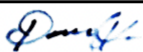
- I have read (or had read to me) all of the above information.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions about things in this research I did not understand and have received satisfactory answers.
- I know that I can stop taking part in this study at any time.
- By signing this informed consent form, I am not giving up any of my rights.
- I have been given a copy of this consent document, and it is mine to keep.

|                            |           |      |
|----------------------------|-----------|------|
| Participant's Name (PRINT) | Signature | Date |
|----------------------------|-----------|------|

*Title of Study: Finding Leadership ʘ (Belonging): A Critical Race Ethnographic Study On Asian American Leadership Identity Affirmation And Enacting Social Change*

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|

**Person Obtaining Informed Consent:** I have conducted the initial informed consent process. I have orally reviewed the contents of the consent document with the person who has signed above, and answered all of the person's questions about the research.

| Person Obtaining Consent (PRINT) | Signature                                                                         | Date      |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Paul Joo Hyun Koh                |  | 8/28/2021 |

---

*[Optional; unless required by the protocol]*

| Principal Investigator (PRINT) | Signature | Date |
|--------------------------------|-----------|------|
|                                |           |      |

---

*(If other than person obtaining informed consent)*

## APPENDIX D: EXAMPLE SMALL GROUP COMMUNITY LEARNING EXCHANGE

### (CLE) SLIDES



### **Asian American Leaders Community Learning Exchange**

February, March, April, June 2022 Small Group CLEs



### **Why We're Here...**

A place for Asian American leaders to come together and connect

Support the work of each other as Asian American leaders in self, organizational, and community spaces

Come together to ask what is possible as Asian American leaders

Support the work of an aspiring researcher

*Koh, Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging) - work in progress*

## What We're Continuing Today

In smaller groups,

- We will continue connecting with each other
- We are beginning our work to delve into the dilemmas we've identified
- We will vision together what we want to be true about our individual selves and our group by May 2022

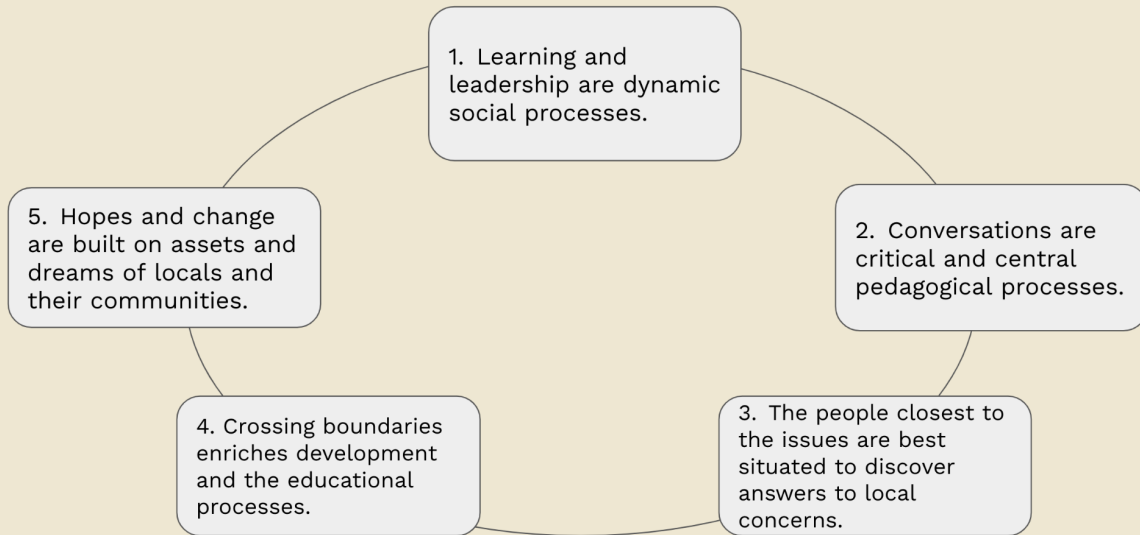
*Koh, Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging) - work in progress*

## Overview for Today



*Koh, Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging) - work in progress*

## Community Learning Exchange Axioms



*From Guajardo et al., 2016 - Reframing Community Partnerships in Education*

## Gracious Space

**Spirit** - compassion, joy, hope, curiosity, and humor

**Setting** - appeals to the five senses and invites a spirit of the sixth sense of intuition, creativity, and imagination

**Connect with the Stranger/Invite the Stranger** - inviting the 'stranger' often means opening up to include a new idea or perspective

**Learn in Public** - requires humility, a willingness to explore assumptions, let go of the "right way" of doing things, and being willing to change one's mind

A container for transformative change

Based on relationships

Supports tough conversations

Increases individual and collective capacity of people to stand in the tensions that emerge out of efforts to make change

Is NOT conflict-free

[Link to Gracious Space Overview](#)

*From ECU Project i4*

## Building Connections: Richard Aoki “Found Poem”

Pull out five words, phrases, or lines from the excerpts of Aoki’s speech that resonate with you and create your own “found poem”.

Share with the group why those stood out to you and are there any personal and professional experiences that connect to your chosen words from Aoki’s speech?

5 mins to create “found poem”

10 mins to share in groups

[Richard Aoki 1968 Speech Excerpt](#)

[Richard Aoki In Memoriam by Diane Fujino](#)

*Koh, Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging) - work in progress*

## Building Connections: Productive Ambiguity

How has the experience of dilemmas and the discussions influenced your thoughts on leadership and leadership actions within your own context or organization?

How has the experience of hearing each other’s dilemmas impacted you personally?

*Productive Ambiguity as the ability to transform tensions that disrupt our current understandings into opportunities for personal growth.*

*Influenced primarily by Dewey’s (1934) description of aesthetic experiences and Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990) notion of flow, my current understanding of this concept relates to how ambiguity becomes productive when our encounters with difference stimulate curiosity, imagination, and consideration of new possibilities and perspectives.*

**- [from Rebecca Shipe](#)**

*Koh, Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging) - work in progress*

## What We've Done and Where We're Going...

### November 2021



First meeting in small groups

Emulation Poems

On-Ramp Dilemmas

### February 2022 through May 2022



Continue meeting in small groups

Continue building connections

Provide space for all dilemmas to be presented

9

## Dilemma Protocol

Pre Work for Dilemmas (5 mins)

Presenter provides an overview of dilemma (5 mins)

Clarifying Questions (5 mins)

Rounds 1-4 (45 mins)

*Koh, Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging) - work in progress*

## Pre Work for Dilemma (5 mins)

[Link to protocol document](#)

[Link to dilemmas](#)

Go into the link for our protocol document and on your own...

- Think about your dilemma.
- Do some reflection about your dilemma.
- Go back and/or redevelop what your focus question would be

***\*This section is to warm up our own minds with your individual dilemmas and how our dilemmas might connect with the presenter's.***

*Koh, Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging) - work in progress*

## Dilemma Protocol: Presenter Overview (5 mins)

Give us the context surrounding your dilemma.

What are the key issues on your mind with this dilemma?

Share your focus question.

*Koh, Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging) - work in progress*



### **Dilemma Protocol: Clarifying Questions (5 mins)**

Participants ask questions that clarify the dilemma, context, focus question, and what was presented that would be helpful for rounds 1 and 2.

*Koh, Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging) - work in progress*

### **Dilemma Protocol: Round 1 (10-11 mins)**

Participants discuss:

***What are some experiences in your leadership role that are connected to the dilemma the presenter shared?***

Presenter listens

*Koh, Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging) - work in progress*

## **Dilemma Protocol: Round 2 (10-11 mins)**

Participants discuss what they would do in the presenter's "shoes".

Presenter listens.

Some sentence starters to consider:

- "From what we've heard, in the presenter's role, I would think about..."
- "This reminds me of a time where I had to..."
- "An experience of mine that resonates to the presenter's dilemma is..."

*Koh, Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging) - work in progress*

## **Dilemma Protocol: Round 3 (10-11 mins)**

Presenter shares reflections from Round 1 and 2.

Some sentence starters to consider:

- "What I heard..."
- "An idea that resonates is..."
- "Some elegant next steps might be..."

*Koh, Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging) - work in progress*

## Dilemma Protocol: Round 4 (10-11 mins)

Whole group reflection on what we heard and what we experienced through Rounds 1-3

Question for consideration:

What are some next steps, actions, or explorations for the presenter?

What are you thinking about for yourself and your context?

*Koh, Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging) - work in progress*

| Discussion Protocol Summary                                                                                                                                                 |            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Roles:</b> Presenter, Participants                                                                                                                                       |            |
| <b>Pre Work for Dilemma</b>                                                                                                                                                 | 5 mins     |
| <b>Presenter Overview:</b> Presenter shares dilemma, context, and focus question                                                                                            | 5 mins     |
| <b>Clarifying Questions:</b> Participants ask questions that clarify the dilemma, context, focus question, and what was presented that would be helpful for rounds 1 and 2. | 5 mins     |
| <b>Round 1:</b> Participants discuss the question: What are some experiences in your leadership role that are connected to the dilemma the presenter shared?                | 10-11 mins |
| <b>Round 2:</b> Participants discuss what they would do in the presenter's "shoes". Presenter is a fly on the wall                                                          | 10-11 mins |
| <b>Round 3:</b> Presenter shares reflections from Round 1 and 2.                                                                                                            | 10-11 mins |
| <b>Round 4:</b> Whole Group reflects on next steps and actions for the presenter. In addition, whole group reflects on connections to their own context.                    | 10-11 mins |

## Next Steps

March 2022

April 2022

May/June 2022



Continue creating space for each other's dilemmas  
Continue building community with each other

Paul will reach out to those who have not yet presented dilemmas to connect and prep them for presenting to their small groups

Time for small group CLE for dilemmas

Time for small group CLE for dilemmas

Time for Whole Group end-of-year CLE

19

## Latest Schedule Iteration for Asian American Leaders CLEs

### 2021

- ✓October - optional reading group
- ✓November 2021 - small group meetings

### 2022

- ✓February - small group meetings
- April/May 2022 - small group meeting
- May 2022 - whole group meeting

August 2022 - tbd  
November 2022 - tbd

### 2023

February 2023 - tbd  
In-person meeting - tbd (acquiring funding for travel and lodgings)



*Koh, Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging) - work in progress*

### **Feedback for today's CLE and Future CLEs**

One on ones for feedback - Paul will reach out.

Thank you for your time and engagement again!

Please reach out if you have any additional thoughts or feedback.



*Koh, Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging) - work in progress*

## APPENDIX E: EXAMPLE WHOLE GROUP COMMUNITY LEARNING EXCHANGE

### (CLE) SLIDES



## Asian American Leaders Community Learning Exchange

August 29, 2022 CLE



### Why We're Here...

A place for Asian American leaders to come together and connect

Support the work of each other as Asian American leaders in self, organizational, and community spaces

Come together to ask what is possible as Asian American leaders

*Koh, Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging) - work in progress*

## What We're Doing Today

- Continue connecting with each other
- Receive update on research progress
- Engage in meaning making from research progress
- Engage in closing circle

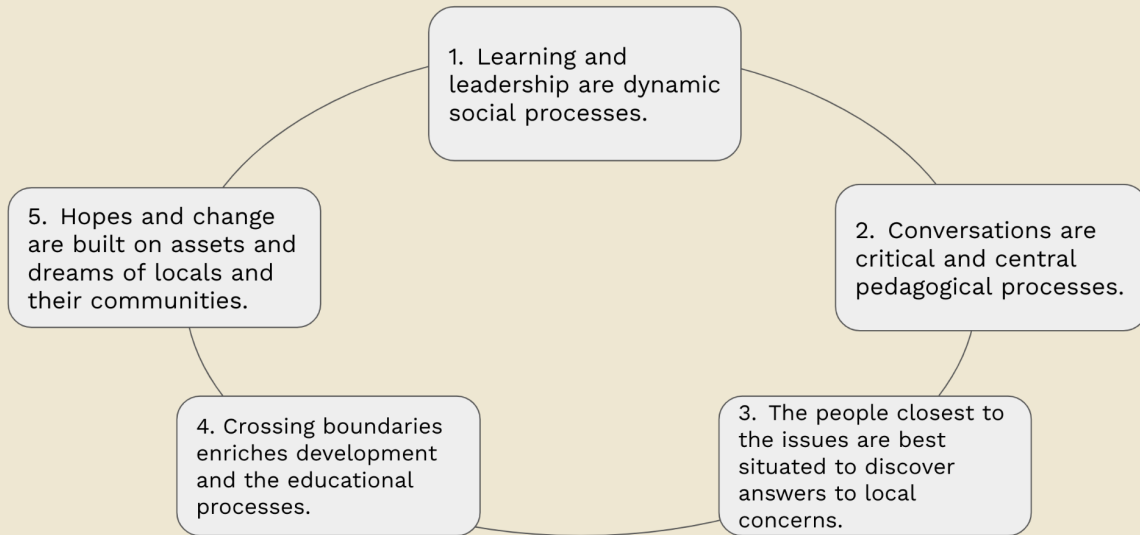
*Koh, Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging) - work in progress*

## Overview for Today



*Koh, Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging) - work in progress*

## Community Learning Exchange Axioms



*From Guajardo et al., 2016 - Reframing Community Partnerships in Education*

## Gracious Space

**Spirit** - compassion, joy, hope, curiosity, and humor

**Setting** - appeals to the five senses and invites a spirit of the sixth sense of intuition, creativity, and imagination

**Connect with the Stranger/Invite the Stranger** - inviting the 'stranger' often means opening up to include a new idea or perspective

**Learn in Public** - requires humility, a willingness to explore assumptions, let go of the "right way" of doing things, and being willing to change one's mind

A container for transformative change

Based on relationships

Supports tough conversations

Increases individual and collective capacity of people to stand in the tensions that emerge out of efforts to make change

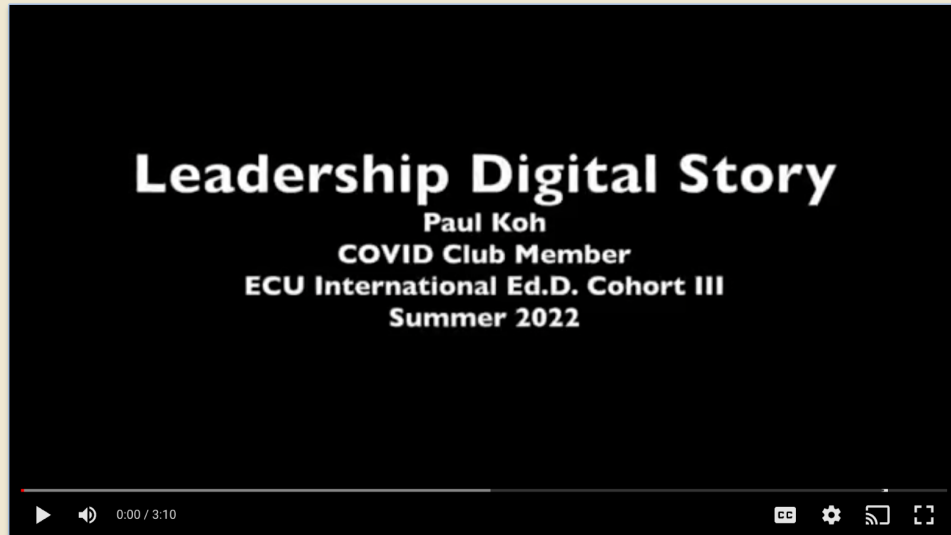
Is NOT conflict-free

[Link to Gracious Space Overview](#)

*From ECU Project i4*



## Building Connections: Sharing Where We Are At



*Koh, Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging) - work in progress*

## Building Connections: Check In About Dilemmas

- What's changed for you from the process of receiving feedback and giving feedback to others? How do you know?
- What changes did you notice in others during this process?
- What are the elements or factors of our CLE space that made you feel safe enough to share?

Round 1: Start in Dilemma-based Groups (10 mins)

Round 2: Trios (10 mins)

*Koh, Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging) - work in progress*

## Framing: Critical Race Ethnography (CRE)

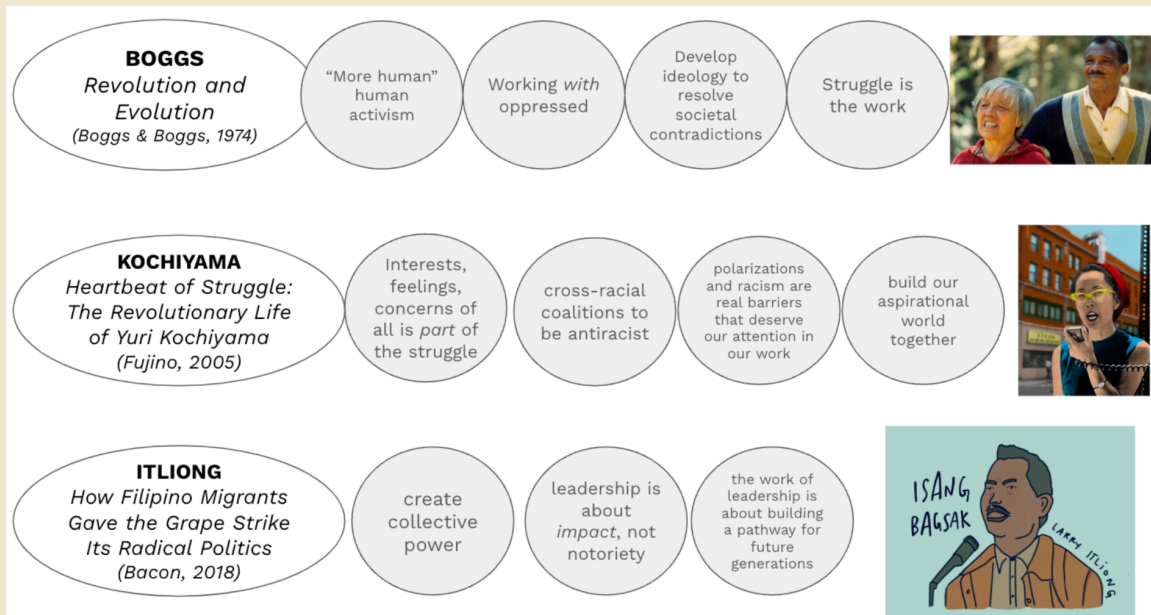
### Methodological Toolbox

Hearing, documenting, contextualizing stories depicting conditions of injustice

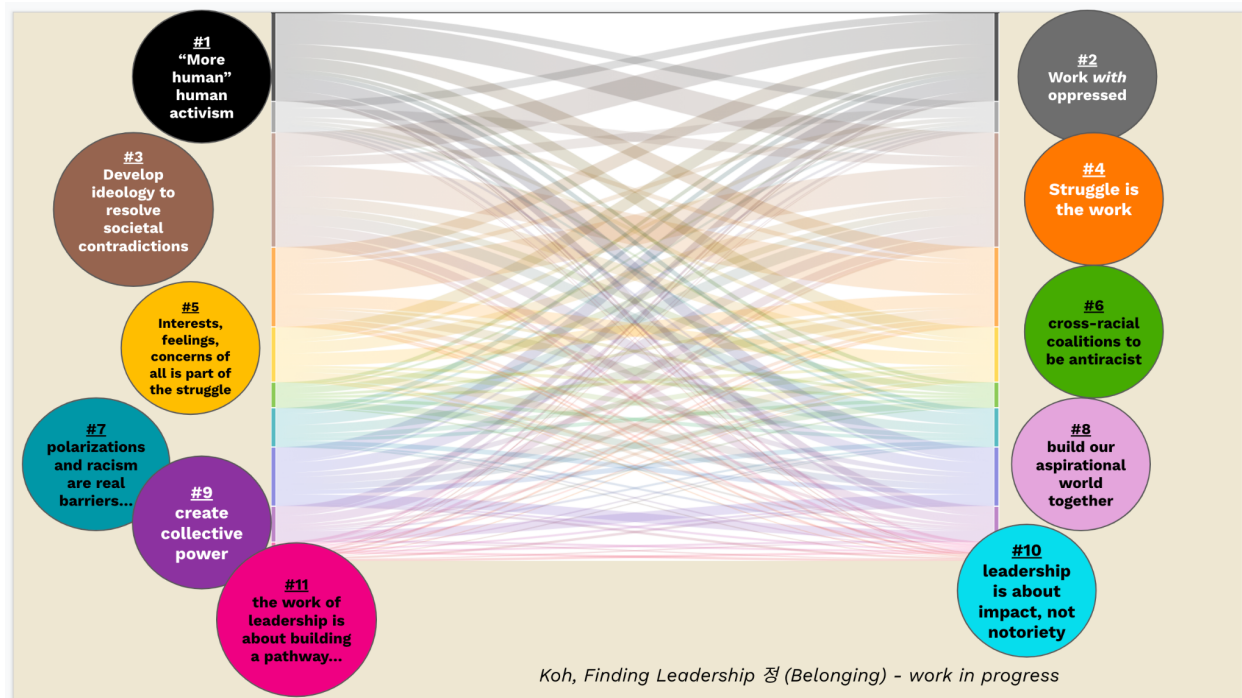
Reveals the psychological, material, political or social conditions that hinder societal transformation



Koh, Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging) - work in progress



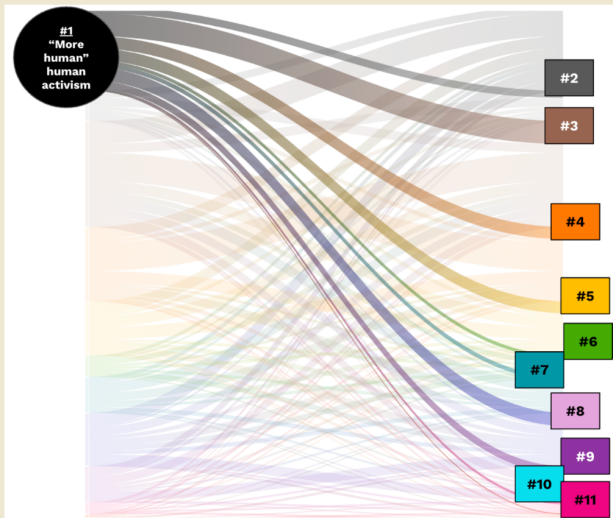
Koh, Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging) - work in progress



| Leadership Tenet Codes                                          | Highlighted Subcodes as Emerging Theoretical Relations                       |                                                                                    |                                                                                                 |                                                                                        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| #1: modeling activism                                           | Envisioning An Asian American Leader                                         | Using Cognitive Dissonance In Service Of Imagining And New Possibilities           |                                                                                                 |                                                                                        |
| #2: work with oppressed                                         | There Is A Space For All Of Us                                               | Ensuring Different Groups Become Part Of The Story                                 |                                                                                                 |                                                                                        |
| #3: develop ideology to address societal contradiction          | Gathering Wisdom And Advice To Develop Clear Steps                           | Righteous Anger as an Ideology                                                     | See The System Driven By White Supremacy                                                        | Lift Up Asian American Marginalization To Reveal The Well-Hidden Prejudices In Society |
| #4: leadership and activism about struggle                      | You Kind Of Plug The Holes Making It Successful                              | It Takes A Lot Of Work To Reveal The Truth                                         | Where In School Is It Quietly Destructive For Students?                                         |                                                                                        |
| #5: interests, feelings, concerns of individual                 | There's Going To Be A Common Understanding                                   | There's Things That Are Hard To Measure                                            | There's A Huge Emotional Component, But We Don't Want To Go To An Emotional Place In Leadership |                                                                                        |
| #6: honoring cross-racial coalitions                            | There Is Space For Both In The Conversation                                  | We Are All Part Of A Decolonizing Majority                                         | Building Shared Power Through Solidarity, Shared Experience, And Distinct Stories               |                                                                                        |
| #7: polarization and racism create artificial divisions         | Tangibly Imposes Itself                                                      | Maintaining Structures Upholding Inequity                                          | Advance Into That World Of No Hierarchy                                                         | The Experiences I've Had, Weighing It Against The Racist History Of America            |
| #8: building aspirational world together                        | Open Self Up In A Space That's Safe, That's Receptive                        | Embrace Liberatory Design                                                          | Conversations Where People Can Be Real About Their Personal Experiences                         | Capturing Our Commonality Despite Our Differences                                      |
| #9: creating collective power through networking and organizing | These Stances Feel In Tension To One Another                                 | There Is An Antiracist Guidebook Within Us From A Collectivist, Indigenous Culture | Create An Experience Balancing Acting, Reflecting, Nurturing, Supporting                        | We Learn From Reflecting On Experience                                                 |
| #10: leadership about impact not notoriety                      | Create Multiple Pathways To Success For Targeted Group Of Students           | Changing Testing Policy For Exam Schools In A Public School District               | Second Language Learners And Newcomers Need Exposure To Core And Grade Level Content            |                                                                                        |
| #11: leadership paves way for future generations                | We Should Understand And Be Proud Of Our Traditions, Culture, And Background | We Have The Responsibility To Care For Our Family And Community                    | Struggle Every Day To The Do The Right Thing To Support Our Children And Encourage Their Dreams |                                                                                        |

Koh, Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging) - work in progress

## Leadership Tenet #1 - “More Human” Human Activism

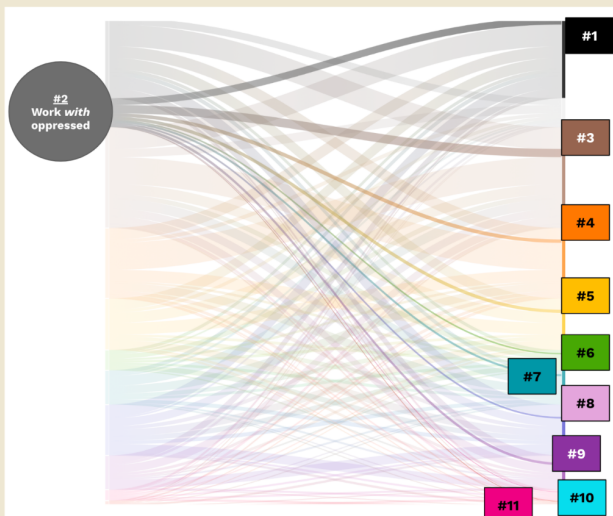


“you’re able to play out those situations with as much integrity as possible...in a way it almost reinforces...what I **envision an Asian American leader to be**...being able to [bear] witness...is...powerful”

“And yet we want to be in a place where we’re still playing that critical role and creating that **cognitive dissonance** so that some of this **imagination** and consideration of **new possibilities** can happen”

Koh, Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging) - work in progress

## Leadership Tenet #2 - Work with Oppressed

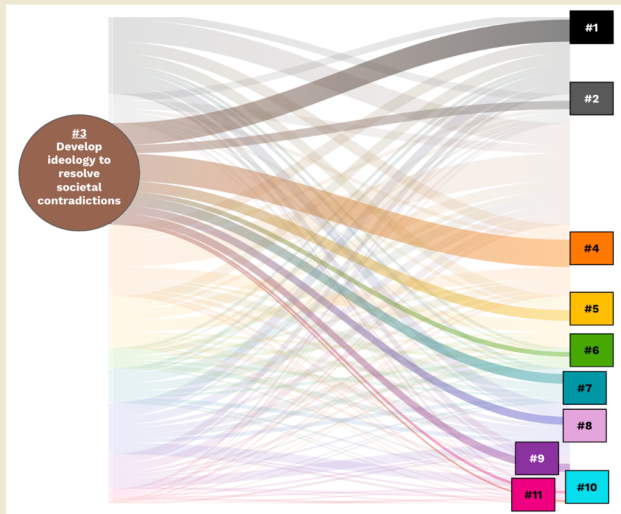


“are they comfortable having the conversations...with...white males or white females?...Asians are generally not seen as a minority, which I think is a challenge, because I would agree...that **there is space for all of us** Asian, Latino/Hispanic, Black and Brown [people]...”

“I’ve always framed issues as what we need for Black and Brown children...How do **Asian children become part of the story...neuro diverse children and other [children with] disabilities**...you know there’s **so many other groups**”

Koh, Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging) - work in progress

### Leadership Tenet #3 - Develop Ideology for Societal Contradictions

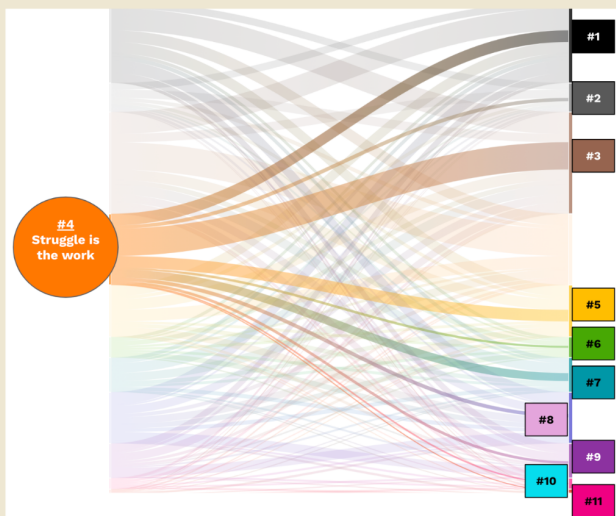


“gather your advice and your wisdom, so that I can develop clear steps...about this particular question of selective schools...and how I can use my platform [to] push to make things much more equitable for all...kids than they are now”

“related to what [was] brought up earlier around this feeling of victimhood...Like it's a it's a way to sort of **hold on to some level of like righteous anger**...and like that can be very **motivating** and can be very **empowering**”

Koh, Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging) - work in progress

### Leadership Tenet #4 - Struggle is the Work



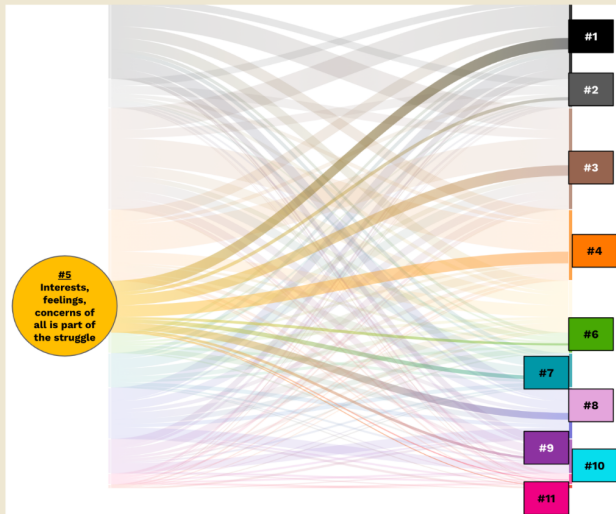
“So I almost want to be like rather than kind of creating havoc I almost want to [be] behind the scenes [to] show that this works quietly right...i'm not really making sense, but it makes sense in my head...**you kind of plug the holes making it successful**”

“[The hidden prejudices] kind of manifests being in this racial hierarchy and **it takes a lot of work to reveal the truth**...and it helps me want to get to know more about how to reveal the truth and what we can do about that truth”

Koh, Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging) - work in progress



## Leadership Tenet #5 - Interests, Feelings, Concerns of All is Part of the Struggle

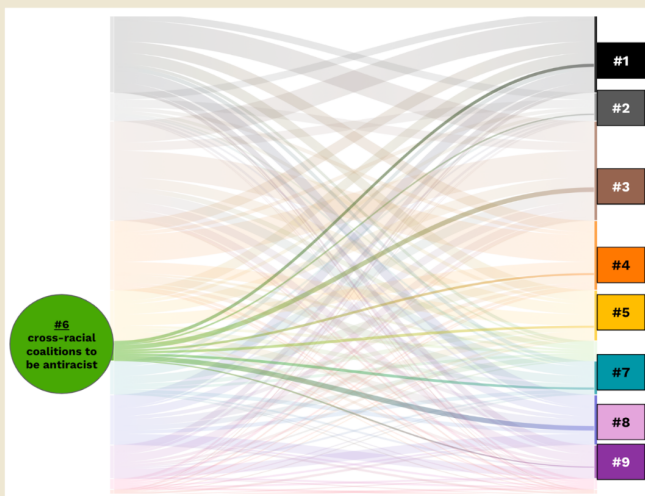


"I just want to, like all I keep thinking over and over is like oh my God, I feel so affirmed like so thank you and it's just a reminder of why [this] space is so important...**there's just...going to be a common understanding** when I say my parents didn't get why I wanted to be a teacher..."

"it's like this **cultural piece**, it's a **relational piece**, you know. You know it's **shifting mindsets** right, and you know **there's things that are hard to measure.**"

Koh, *Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging)* - work in progress

## Leadership Tenet #6 - Cross-Racial Coalitions to be Antiracist

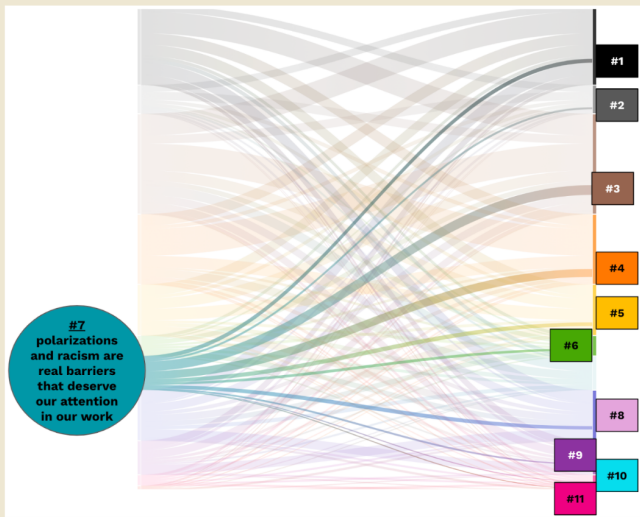


"How do I show that **pro-Asian and pro-Black/Brown work is not at odds**, and that **there is space for both** in the conversation?"

"When leading cross-racial coalitions that are trying to **build shared power**, when do you build that power through **solidarity in a shared experience** across racial groups and when do you build solidarity by focusing on **distinct stories** of different racial groups?"

Koh, *Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging)* - work in progress

## Leadership Tenet #7 - Polarizations and Racism are Real Barriers

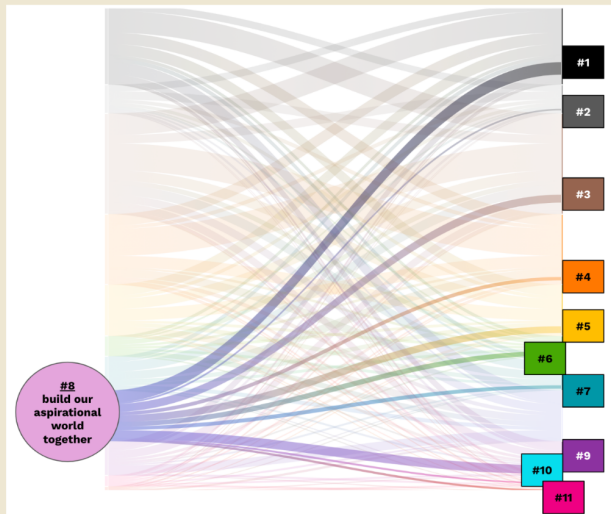


“How does the **model minority myth tangibly impose itself** in your efforts to be an Asian-American leader? How do you overcome these forces?”

“I was very out there with my opinion and the other members of the task force were more centrist or you know they wanted reform, but only...in incremental ways, so they could say they were moving towards equity, **but really maintaining the structure that upholds inequity.**”

Koh, *Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging)* - work in progress

## Leadership Tenet #8 - Build Our Aspirational World Together

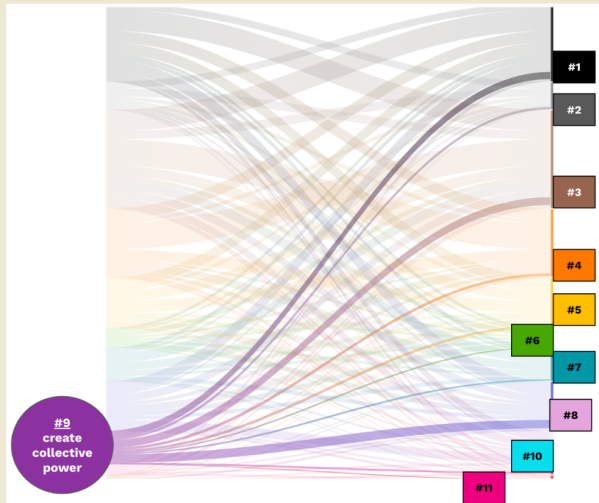


“I mean we can come up with organizational vision statements, all we want...and personal vision statements...but ultimately it is going to feel heavy-handed...And so, how do we reverse that, **how do we embrace like liberatory design?**”

“And, and I think that the idea is that **if I open myself up**, that it's been a problem, or at least a barrier for me...in a space that's safe, that's receptive...**[I] can build upon...the things that I present out.**”

Koh, *Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging)* - work in progress

## Leadership Tenet #9 - Create Collective Power

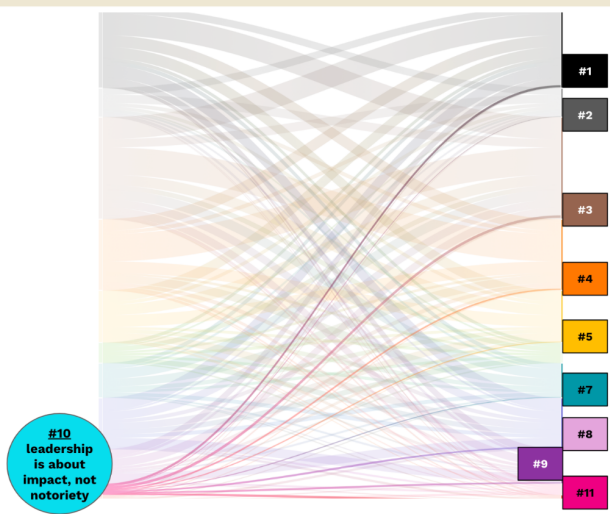


"In other words, I'd like to get to a clear and unconflicted perspective **about advancing Asianness** in a place where **persecution and discrimination against Black and Indigenous people**, in particular, are part of the founding story of this nation."

"I am part of this racist system and I grew up in this racist system."  
 "...the system [promotes]... efficiency ...and maximizing resources...I think inherently that's what we're trying to liberate ourselves from right?...I feel like **there is an antiracist guidebook [within us]...from a collectivist indigenous culture.**"

Koh, *Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging)* - work in progress

## Leadership Tenet #10 - Leadership is about Impact, Not Notoriety



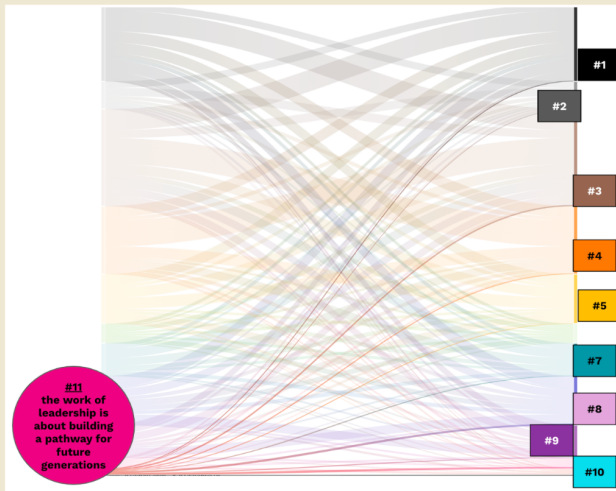
"...in the 10 years I've been here [at my organization]...[we've evolved from] college matriculation to college graduation to post secondary completion to now something that we now call **multiple pathways to success**, which is that maybe you don't...need a [college] degree...it was really hard...for so many of us, myself included..."

"there is just a huge focus on...foundational skills which is critical for second language learners and newcomers don't get me wrong...but I think there has to be some exposure **[to] the core content and...[we need to] leverage kids' assets and their knowledge...**[and] that is not happening [at this school]."

Koh, *Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging)* - work in progress



## Leadership Tenet #11 - Work of Leadership...Pathway for Future Generations



"I come from a place that is steeped in history and more glimpses reflected in my conversations with my father, my mother, my family [form] an insecurity that remains about who I am. I am in a place where I **have the responsibility to care for my family and my community.**"

"I have this amazing child [transgender and neurodiverse] who is not going to be seen as the pride of the family...so...it's very hard [to] balance, to sort through. And I **struggle every day with my belief that we...me and my husband, are doing the right thing by supporting them and encouraging their dreams.**

Koh, Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging) - work in progress

## adrienne maree brown

**Tippett:** A minute ago you were talking to me about your childhood, and you said your parents having an interracial marriage in the '70s, **they were making a world that didn't exist.** And that's what visionary fiction does, that's what fiction does, and I hear you saying that's what organizing does.

**brown:** And there's a way — just like I think my parents ran into, it's like, **you have to bring that imagination into relationship with reality** — and that can be devastating — **being with what is and then figuring out how do we make more possible.**

**From: On Being podcast episode: adrienne maree brown "We are in a time of new suns" - June 23, 2022**

Koh, Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging) - work in progress

## My own reflections from our work thus far...

We live in a tenuous context as Asian Americans

“not quite free, not quite enslaved, not quite citizen, and not quite foreign” (Kim, 2011, p. 213)

The ways white supremacy placed us through the model minority myth, perpetual foreigner status, and racial triangulation, we must figure out ways to transform this placement and commit to building our aspirational world with fellow human beings from all backgrounds.

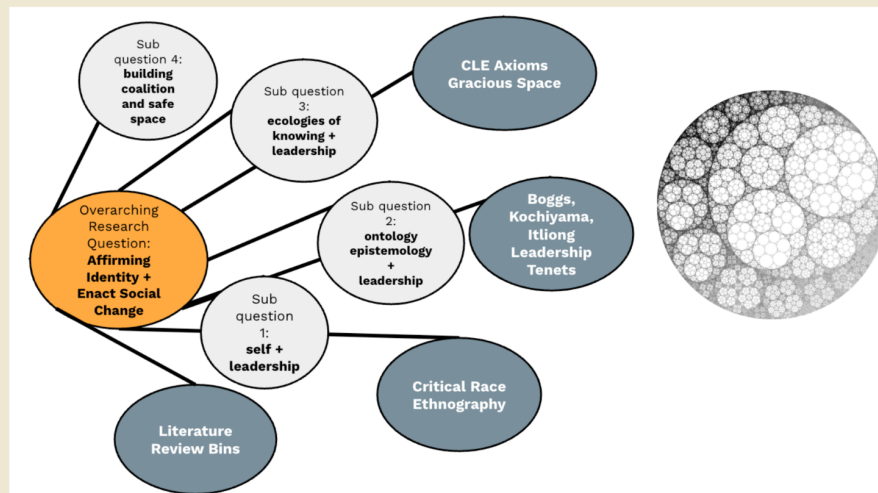
We are connected to an ancestral heritage in America of activists who pursued racial, social, and economic justice. Lifting up and amplifying this heritage creates a way to repudiate who supremacy structures and reimagine our relationship as Asian Americans with all communities.

Engaging in CLEs and connecting our conversations to the leadership tenets from Boggs, Kochiyama, and Itliong brings emerging theoretical relations (see subcodes on slide 12) in how the self connects to the community as leaders building our aspirational world.

This connection manifests the historical legacy of Asian American leadership presence through our present actions as Asian American leaders.

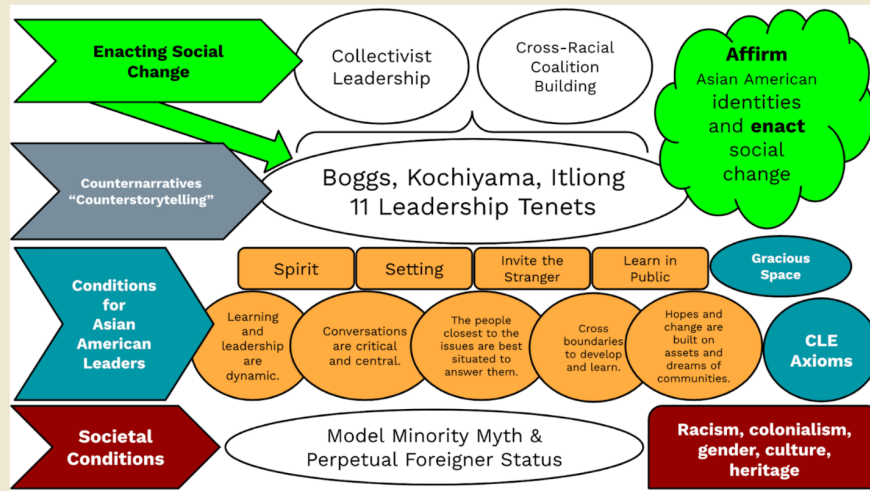
*Koh, Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging) - work in progress*

## Where The Research is Going



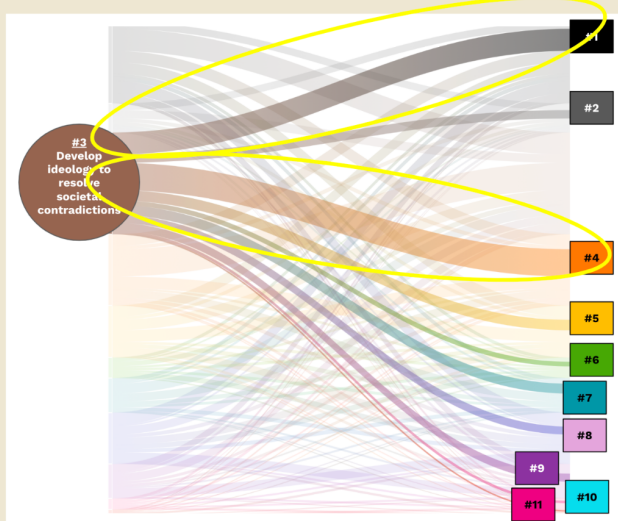
*Koh, Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging) - work in progress*

## Where The Research is Going



Koh, *Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging)* - work in progress

## Where The Research is Going



UCEA 2022 Annual Convention  
 "Forgotten Embodiments of Leadership: Boggs, Itliong, and Kochiyama"

**uc ea** University Council for Educational Administration  
 Quality Leadership Matters since 1954



Explore Next Steps for our CLE Convenings both in-person and virtual

Koh, *Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging)* - work in progress

## Delving Deeper: Trios (30 mins)

Choose 3 Questions to Discuss and [Record Notes on This Google Doc](#)

1. What constitutes an Asian American leadership community?
2. What are the covenants (tenets, language, space, process) that determine and sustain Asian American leadership?
3. What constitutes an Asian American leader?
4. To what degree does the research affirm who you are as an Asian American leader?
5. How does the research tell us who we are and how do we continue building and sustaining what is Asian American leadership?
6. If you were to dream about where this research and our work can take us, what do you imagine?

*Koh, Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging) - work in progress*

## Closing Circle

What has us gathering for the last two-plus years meant for you?

Circle Order:

V  
D  
J  
S  
D  
R  
S  
W  
J  
T  
C  
A  
S  
L  
W  
M  
E



*Koh, Finding Leadership 정 (Belonging) - work in progress*

## APPENDIX F: CODEBOOK

| Category                           | Literature Review Connection                                                                                                               | Leadership Tenets | Subcodes                                                      |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Humanistic Activism and Creativity | Asian American Leadership                                                                                                                  | 1,2               | cultivate transformational spaces                             |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 1,2               | connect with those closest to the ground                      |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 1,2               | provide space for personal narratives                         |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 1,2               | finding space for curiosity                                   |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 1,2               | engage in space of identity and emotionality                  |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 1,2               | righteous anger is a part of leadership                       |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 1,2               | connecting work to personal why                               |
| Resolving Societal Contradictions  | Model Minority and Perpetual Foreigner Concepts<br>Asian American Leadership                                                               | 1,2               | balancing lens of abundance within zero sum culture           |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 3,10,11           | pushing for effective/actual impact                           |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 3,10,11           | connect goals to equity                                       |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 3,10,11           | balancing disruption within dominant cultures                 |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 3,10,11           | speaking in public for radical change in schools              |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 3,10,11           | revealing truth of racial hierarchies                         |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 3,10,11           | start small                                                   |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 3,10,11           | leading with a mindset of abundance                           |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 3,10,11           | acceptance is necessary for unconvicted action                |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 3,10,11           | becoming transformational leaders                             |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 3,10,11           | influencing organizational outcomes in hiring                 |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 3,10,11           | moving conversations towards equitable possibilities          |
| Struggling Through Together        | Model Minority and Perpetual Foreigner Concepts<br>Collectivist Leadership                                                                 | 3,10,11           | imagining an antiracist school                                |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 3,10,11           | speaking up to interrupt inequity                             |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 4,5               | struggling to speak to equity in white-dominant spaces        |
| Creating Collective Power          | Model Minority and Perpetual Foreigner Concepts<br>Asian American Leadership<br>Collectivist Leadership<br>Cross-Racial Coalition Building | 4,5               | lean into discomfort and have difficult conversations         |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 4,5               | struggling to sustain                                         |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 6,7,8,9           | sharing each other's experiences is powerful                  |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 6,7,8,9           | pushing beyond binaries                                       |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 6,7,8,9           | our experiences are examples of leadership                    |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 6,7,8,9           | unlearn white supremacy culture                               |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 6,7,8,9           | organizational culture not validating AsAm achievements       |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 6,7,8,9           | creating connections through common ground                    |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 6,7,8,9           | create radical inclusion - two way street top to bottom       |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 6,7,8,9           | must subvert idea AsAms don't need help                       |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 6,7,8,9           | understanding AsAm leadership legacy                          |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 6,7,8,9           | balancing inclusivity to ensure individuals are not alienated |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 6,7,8,9           | finding belonging as AsAm leader                              |
|                                    |                                                                                                                                            | 6,7,8,9           | centering on ancestral leadership principles                  |

