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**Tibetan American Women Leaders:
Constructing their own cultural paradigms for leadership**

By

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Requirements of the Degree of

Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership

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Abstract

Tibetan women as household leaders are not a new notion; however, in the public form, Tibetan women leaders are a recent concept. This study explores Tibetan American women leaders and how they navigate and experience their held leadership positions. The significance of the findings lies in Tibetan American women leaders' passion for leadership, which in this study was described as serving the Tibetan communities where they live. There is solid evidence that Tibetan cultural gender expectations and stereotypical views about Tibetan women have tremendously impeded and will impede those still climbing to the top. What is apparent is Tibetan American women leaders are creating new social constructs and identities. They construct their identities at the intersection of leadership, American culture, and Tibetan cultural gender roles/expectations. Though this construction is not yet fully formed in a collective way, the experiences and leadership of the participants in this study are working to create this construction through their individual efforts. I interviewed six Tibetan American women from California, Massachusetts, Washington DC, and Minnesota who self-identified as leaders and held formal leadership positions. Organically, many study subjects focused their leadership experience leading within the Tibetan American community through various vantage points. The study identified participants navigating between two dominant cultures, Tibetan and American, and how socially constructed institutions impacted their identity as Tibetan American women leaders.

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Growing up in India's Tibetan refugee communities, where I was born, women are considered compassionate, caring, advocates for social welfare, intellectual, and household leaders, just to name a few. I have seen women in many roles pertinent to the community's functionality but very few in high-level leadership positions. Whenever a discussion surrounding gender disparity surfaces, the Tibetan community members deny it, saying, “not in our community.” And when I was growing up, I believed it. As a young teenager struggling to find my identity in this new country, I still carried those beliefs. It was not until exploring higher education that these gender disparities became clearer. I learned that though women are viewed as equal partners to their male counterparts in Tibetan culture, they had expectations, unlike men. Tibetan women do not have the same representation as Tibetan men in the high-ranking leadership arena, yet women had higher standards and expectations than men in the Tibetan culture. It felt as if Tibetan women had an extra suitcase full of expectations and cultural standards that they were expected to meet. Though Tibetan women’s inequality does not resemble experiences women in other parts of the world may face, we have an experience that is our own.

Because identifying this narrative of what barriers and factors look like based on our background was so important to me, I found it imperative that I dedicate my final project for the MAOL program to this topic. Having the opportunity to contribute to a topic that can pave the way for future generations of young leaders is very rewarding to me. For myself and those women, like me, who are embarking on their leadership journeys, I was intrigued to know how Tibetan American women leaders experienced their leadership roles. By narrowing this gap, it can improve representation and emphasize the need for more concentrated studies to better understand marginalized communities.

Background and Purpose

In the last 30-40 years, the Tibetan diaspora in the United States has dramatically increased (Gilbert-Chatalic, 2012). Due to the recent influx of Tibetan populations into the US workforce, education system, and community, the experiences Tibetans have in various roles in an organization are still relatively new and understudied; thus, there were large gaps in the literature. Tibetan immigrants are a significantly underrepresented ethnic group in academia, a trend that is not surprising given the racialization of Asian Americans in the United States (Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017). Therefore, studies about Tibetan American women leaders are even more susceptible to being ignored. In my experience, studying organizational leadership through the lens of many who do not share the same complex background as a Tibetan American, it has not been easy to relate to these established theories and leadership frameworks. Therefore, this study hopes to add to the literature by focusing on the Tibetan American population in the United States and uncovering Tibetan American women's leadership stories and experiences.

Due to the lack of empirical studies on Tibetan American women leaders, this research study's challenges are unique but address a greater need for such attention and focus on this population group to many who have yet to explore this topic. To compensate for this gap in the literature, I reviewed existing studies on women in leadership, Hmong American women leaders, Asian American women leaders in the literature review, and a few Tibetan women's studies to emphasize their experience. Studying these populations is relevant because their experiences or identities as a woman leading in historically male-dominated leadership arenas can potentially provide a better glimpse of their leadership experiences through their lenses. It is particularly important to consider how the Hmong American women's leaders experience can provide a deeper understanding of Tibetan American women leaders' experiences given both communities'

recent immigration histories to the United States, traditional patriarchal system, and other overlapping characteristics.

Research on Tibetan women leaders by Nordon (2020) in the exile community, significantly contributes to understanding the current topic for this study. To build on this research, part of my study will focus on how trail blazing, has its impact on women who are leading. Nordon (2020) emphasizes the rarity of Tibetan women leaders. Research conducted through this project will also help to provide insight into how generational status and gender expectations play a role in leadership, as well as deeper insight into what drove their decision to lead. Among the key differences is the concentration of populations involved. Tibetans in exile form a diverse demographic, as they are scattered throughout the world, but this study will focus on the United States and draw its study population from there. In addition to the Tibetan communities in India and Nepal, Central Tibetan Administration in India also reported 36,000 Tibetans living in North America (Samten & Shargoe, 2020). As a result, the study of Tibetan populations in the United States has become relevant.

Many of the current studies on Asian American women leaders have addressed the understanding of barriers to leadership differently based on their cultural backgrounds (Paik et al., 2018; Moua & Riggs, 2012). Cultural gender role beliefs and their impact on women's pursuit of leadership positions and access to mentorship are crucial for Asian American women leaders' experiences (Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017). Previous studies have found that racializing Asian Americans as one big category creates more barriers for those who have immigrated to the United States much later (Moua & Riggs, 2012). Specifically, as Tibetan Americans are more recent immigrants, this study seeks to explore Tibetan American women

leaders and their experiences in their leadership roles. In spite of the lack of statistics to support this claim, Tibetan women are taking on an active role today by holding leadership positions, compared to a few decades ago (Kaul, 2021; Lokyitsang, 2014). This study aims to provide information on the unique experiences from the vantage of Tibetan American women.

A Brief Tibetan Immigration History

The Tibetan immigration history to the United States is included in order to enrich our understanding of Tibetan Americans, especially in light of recent interest in Tibetan American women in leadership positions. More than a few noteworthy incidents have occurred in the early history of US-Tibet relations (Hess, 2009; McGranahan, 2006; Gilbert-Chatalic, 2012). This is specifically important to consider when Tibet was an independent nation and after Tibet lost its independence. By keeping this research focused on Tibetan American women leader's research, I have included a section in Appendix I that provides more comprehensive information about this topic. To gain a deeper insight into the Tibetan population, it is imperative to build an understanding of how Tibetan Americans construct identity, which is better understood through an historical perspective. Additionally, as a Tibetan American student, I am personally responsible for spreading the knowledge and understanding of Tibetans who are part of the larger western society by educating readers who may not be familiar with their roots.

The 1990 Immigration Act, Tibetan Provisions, has had the greatest effect on Tibetan immigration to the United States historically. In 1989, the Tibetan U.S. Resettlement Project (TUSRP) was born out of a significant collaboration between Tibetan and American organizations, the U.S. resettlement agencies, and the Central Tibetan Administration in India (Hess, 2009). Ultimately, this collaboration led to the 1990 Immigration Act, Tibetan Provision.

It was through this initiative that 1000 Tibetans living in Nepal and India became eligible for the Immigration Diversity Visa via a lottery system (Hess, 2009; Houston & Wright, 2003). Many of these 1000 immigrants stayed with a host family as they settled in the US in the early 1990s. The number of Tibetans living in the US has increased exponentially due to the Family Reunification Law. According to the *2020 Baseline Study of the Tibetan Diaspora Community Outside South Asia*, a report published by the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) stated 35 Tibetan Associations are registered with the Office of Tibet, Washington, DC in North America. An estimated 36,000 Tibetans residing in North America; this data includes Canada (Samten & Shargoe, 2020).

Tibetan Women in leadership

Although academic literature about Tibetan American women is rare, I was able to locate a few key articles to inform this study on understanding Tibetan women's leadership. To understand how Tibetan American women leaders navigate and experience leadership roles today, it's critical to understand historical elements within Tibetan history as well as the current experiences of the diaspora. In her piece published on the Tibetan Political Review website, Lokyitsang (2014) discusses moments in Tibetan history when women defied traditional gender expectations and took leadership positions, particularly during the Chinese invasion in the 1950s. She suggests that Tibetan women holding leadership positions have become more noticeable in the last few decades, compared to earlier historical accounts that were rare, an exception:

Women in Gyatso and Shakya's narratives were remarkable, in that they defied the gendered norms of their time period that were dictated by their communities; challenging communal beliefs and those in power. But their stories reveal that throughout Tibetan history, female leaders, prior to the Chinese invasion, were not desired but resisted.

However, the Chinese invasion and exodus to exile presented Tibetan women with opportunities to assert their own desires to become *leaders*. (Lokyitsang, 2014).

The rise of Tibetan women in leadership appears to be tied to Tibet's current political situation, particularly the desire to become the voice of Tibetans living under the oppression of China.

Tibetan women's leadership is more recognized in diasporic Tibetan movements.

Tibetan Women's Association (TWA), an organization aimed at empowering Tibetan women, pointed to March 12, 1959, Women's Uprising Day, as their founding day, upon which Tibetan women demonstrated against China's illegitimate occupation of Tibet. Tibetan women protestors were arrested, tortured, and prosecuted without trial as a result. Tibetan Women Association was formally established in 1984, with His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama's blessing (TWA, 2021). Tibetan women's groups, according to historical records, set up handmade crafts centers in India and Nepal during refugee resettlements for women to earn income and improve their lives while preserving Tibetan culture (TWA, 2021). This exhibits quality of leadership and initiative by women supporting women, while rebuilding their lives in a foreign country.

Kaul's (2021) article spoke of the historical underrepresentation of women in leadership, particularly in public affairs in Tibetan society. Tibetan women's representation as leaders through political activism returns to the forefront in Kaul's article. Her article includes interviews with women who serve on the TWA board of directors in India. A core element of TWA's advocacy is spreading awareness of the current situation of Tibet, fostering Tibetan women leaders, and engaging international leaders who can have a direct influence on Tibet's issue. She concluded, there are more prominent Tibetan women leaders rising in the mainstream leadership of Tibetan politics and on all levels.

It is the data representation of women in leadership positions found in the report published by the CTA for this research that holds significance. It was acknowledged that “Gender representation in leadership roles is still vastly skewed towards males. As of July 9th, 2020, female Presidents led only three out of the thirty-five Tibetan Associations.” (Samten & Shargoe, 2020, p.22).

In Tibetan American communities, there is a significant disparity in high level leadership in gender, the data presented by the CTA supports this fact. This was consistently echoed in Nordon’s (2020) study as well. This research becomes valuable in discovering how Tibetan American women leaders experience their held leadership positions and what influences them to lead.

Literature Review

There has been little research on Tibetan American women leaders; thus, the following contents will heavily draw from existing literature on women in leadership, Asian American women leaders, and Hmong women leaders. In this section, I describe the current literature related to my research question of how Tibetan American women leaders navigate and experience their leadership positions. I begin by defining leadership, barriers, and factors. In addition to providing an overview of women's leadership, I discuss the history of Asian American women's immigration. Next, I describe the barriers and factors that influence the development of Asian American and Hmong women leaders, factors that are pertinent to their experiences in leadership. In the final section, I discuss the two theoretical frameworks I plan to use to demonstrate the foundation and importance of this research topic.

Definition of Leadership, Barriers, and Factors

Leadership is a term that is ever-changing and is defined in many ways, historically. For this research, I used Northouse's (2019) definition, "Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (p.5). Further, a *leadership role* is someone who has attained this title, leading within an organization of private, government, non-government, and community based. To define *barriers to Asian American leadership* in this research, I concentrate on obstacles and challenges, many of which are rooted deeply within the systematic institutionalization that hinders upward mobility due to traditional expectations in racial and gender preconceptions. I also include factors as an independent element that impact one's leadership development which can result from a byproduct, whether intentionally or indirectly, through societal and familial relations, and access.

Women in leadership

The presence of women in many other aspects and accomplishments in our U.S. society is prominent, but the same cannot be said about their representation in holding high-level leadership positions. According to Warner et al. (2018), the 2010 US census accounted for 50.8% of the US population as women; women attained 57% of the undergraduate degrees, 59% in master's degrees, and 47% of the US workforce. The data reveals women in management and professional level jobs as 52% but shows significantly limited numbers in higher leadership levels, and available data reveals women in higher leadership positions are far below their men counterparts.

The Center for American Progress reports that between the 1990s and 2000s, women made up 5 percent of Fortune 500 CEOs, 7 percent of top executives in the Fortune 100 companies, and 10 percent in top management positions in S&P 1500 companies (Warner et al., 2018). In *2019 Minnesota Census of Women in Corporate leadership: How Minnesota's Top*

Public Companies rank, they noted, "Women hold 22.7 percent of the available executive officer positions across the 76 Minnesota census companies in 2019, an increase of 1.6 percentage point from 2018" (Hawthorne, 2019, p.7). In their report, the "directors of color" was an assortment of women who identified themselves as "Hispanic or Latino, black or African American, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, Asian, American Indian or Alaskan native, or two or more races" (p.6).

In the *2019 Minnesota Census of Women in Corporate Leadership: How Minnesota's Top Public Companies rank*, directors of color were reported as 3.55 percent of the 647 total board seats (Hawthorne, 2019). Of the 76 Minnesota census companies, 76.3 percent, or 58 companies, said there are no women of color on their board. This data does not further elaborate on breaking the percentile to understand where the Asian American women in leadership lie within these figures. The report also mentioned a slow, gradual increase in women in leadership positions annually, which shows growth and movement in a desirable direction. When looking at these figures, assessing where the percentiles of women in leadership and women of color in leadership are situated in the US workforce, it appears their disparities are more obvious.

An Historical View on Asian American Women

This literature review presents some facts and historical material that may assist in better understanding the current research question regarding Tibetan American women's experiences and navigating their leadership positions. According to Moua & Riggs (2015), "Immigrants from around the world now make up nearly one-eighth of the population of the United States (Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008)" (p. 20). In the 2010 census, 17.3 million people identified themselves as Asian American; this translates to 5.6% of the total US population (Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017). The term "Asian American" categorization is a combination of

30 or more diverse ethnicities, where each has its unique history in immigration to the US (Moua & Riggs, 2015). Racializing the continent of Asia, which makes up half of the world's population, is the epitome of marginalization and an ongoing, convenient act that continues to surface in US academia, census, etc. When an ethnic subgroup's immigration history is ignored, it has significant adverse effects. Looking at the historical context of Tibetan American migration to the US is essential for this study. Considering a group's ethnicity and their intention for immigration, we can understand the variances and similarities that exist. We can better understand Tibetan American women's leadership experiences and manifestations based on these findings.

Historically, Asian American immigration in the US consists of Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Filipinos, and East Indians (Moua & Riggs, 2015). Harsh immigration laws such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the Immigration Act of 1924 had their role in diminishing Asian female immigration to the US. "At the end of World War II, the number of Asian American women in the United States noticeably increased because of the return of American servicemen who brought home their "war brides" (Wong, 1997)" (Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017, p.45). According to Liang and Peters-Hawkins, in the last 40 decades, the combination of "war brides", eligibility through work visas, and refugee migrations has notably shown an increase in Asian American females in the US, 52.6% as Asian American females in the 2014 census of the total Asian American US population (Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017, p.45).

Barriers to Development:

Gender Disparities, Agism, and Racism

Having to navigate a labor market where racial and gender intersectionality persist, Asian American women leaders have been affected by this disparity. In Moua & Riggs's (2015)

research in *Navigating Multiple Worlds: A Qualitative Study of the Lived Experiences of Hmong Women Leaders*, they interviewed nine notable Hmong American leaders in Minnesota and California. Their subjects touched intersectionality of barriers in their leadership development from challenges coming from poverty as their socioeconomic status, familial responsibilities, lack of strong role-models, racism, and gender disparities, to name a few of the topics. For their participants, gender disparities were explained within the Hmong culture, where leadership was viewed through the lens as male dominated. Hence, women's participation in the same arena had to combat insecurity and work harder in building trust in their relationship with their partners.

Another gender disparity that Asian American leadership studies did not discuss much was the responsibility for childbearing and how that plays a significant role in inspiration or interest in moving up the organizational ladder. Tweebeck & Lashley's (2018) article spoke of the universal expectation that women will stay at home after childbirth or return to work part-time instead of full-time after childbirth. It adds a barrier to their career development, having taken an inevitable break that is not continuous, unlike their male counterparts. Due to this inflexibility in childrearing responsibilities, many women may feel less promotable when they are working part time. Alternatively, they remain stagnant and do not pursue advancement in their careers.

In the same study by Moua & Riggs (2015), it was internal within Hmong culture and external in their workplace when it came to agism. They spoke of "Hmong culture preached respecting elders, and its power structure was based on a hierarchical pyramid from the oldest to the youngest, these women's leadership positions become insignificant most frequently in the Hmong community" (p. 16). Externally at the workplace, they experienced being challenged since most of them took a reasonably young leadership position in their 20s or 30s. In the few

studies, there seems to be this invisible acceptance or view of "stepping over" this gender line based on the type of work in play (Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017).

For the young leaders in Nordon's (2020) study, her "participants recognized the relationship between strong communication skills and leadership characteristics. Leaders who possessed strong communication skills were better able to connect, communicate, and mobilize community members. This helped community members see them as leaders" (p.44). In addition to this development, her participants also discussed losing their effectiveness as communicators if they cannot speak or are not fluent in Tibetan.

Liang & Peters- Hawkins' (2017) study consists of an in-depth interview with 15 Asian American women in school administrator positions. It explores the underrepresentation of women and minorities in the education administration leadership roles and their barriers. Their participants expressed the quality of nurturing being accepted in their leadership roles when working in elementary grade level administration due to the nature of the young population they were serving. However, the same did not apply when it came to secondary grade level administration work, where it "is more associated with order and masculinity- "a man's work," women school administrators are viewed as "stepping over" their gendered roles" (Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017, p. 56).

Hmong American women leaders described racism as criticism experienced by participants within the Hmong community over larger society on the basis that "the participants came from the same ethnic background" (Moua & Riggs, 2015). According to Liang & Peter-Hawkins (2017), racism arose from microaggressions in the form of having her participants' abilities challenged and experiencing constant pressure. Asian American women's studies have extensively discussed racism from a variety of angles, yet racism is consistently described as a

prohibiting factor in their leadership (Moua & Riggs, 2015; Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017; Kawahara, 2007).

Stereotyping, Model Minority, and The Glass Ceiling

Prominent barriers in Asian American women's leadership in these studies were elaborated by breaking these societal stereotypes. Almost all of the research and articles spoke of Asian American women's portrayal ranging from sexualization, passive, exotic, typecast docile, subservience, innocent, naive, a victim of patriarchy, aggressive, wicked Dragon lady, and Tiger mom (Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017; Li, 2014; Kawahara, 2007; Paik, Choe, Otto, & Rahman, 2018). Much of the positive impacts and marks left by Asian American women in US history have been left unrecognized (Paik et al., 2018). They also stressed the harmful effects that such stereotypes can create including barriers in career advancement. The lack of Tibetan women leaders at the highest levels of leadership could be related to gender roles, general perceptions of Tibetan women, and the narrow concept of leadership in the exile community (Nordon, 2020).

Depiction of Asian Americans as "Model Minority" within the US's racial politics is not serving the need that comes with diversity within this categorization, and lumping a large population ignores the uniqueness and specific needs for a particular group of people. Model minority myth is defined in Li (2014) as the view that Asian American have successfully integrated into American society, "through hard work, education, quietly remaining in the background, inaction in the face of injustice, and blind faith to the American dream of equality and opportunity for all" (p.156). Moua & Riggs (2015) wrote, "the term model minority was used to stereotype Asian Americans and assumed by many that they did not need academic or professional guidance or support. This resulted in society ignoring the talents and leadership development needs of this group" (p.7). Many studies express a similar result of this myth, which

neglects the disparities in the Asian American community, such as income, education, social services, and under-representation in leadership roles.

"The glass ceiling is a metaphor that refers to the artificial barriers to the advancement of women and minorities (Cotter et al. 2001)" (Li, 2014, p. 143). It's an invisible barrier that is primarily related to gender and race rather than quality in an individual's advancement (Li, 2014). However, many studies acknowledge the lack of equity in gender when it comes to prior research in the glass ceiling metaphor but hardly ever in combination with race. The glass ceiling metaphor was described in Liang et al. (2018) as, "Discriminatory policies and practices against women in credentialing, hiring, and evaluation have severely limited women's entry, advancement, and fair representation in secondary principal positions and beyond (Rousmaniere 2013)" (p.625). As a result of systemic discrimination, it is difficult to classify as a layer, but as a part of the institution's structure. Similarly, the glass ceiling is described in Li's (2014) article as a subtle and "mundane" but deeply rooted within the organizational structure that is hard to untangle (p. 144).

Like the glass ceiling metaphor, the bamboo ceiling metaphor is used to explain barriers Asian Americans face in attaining higher-level leadership positions; "despite being well represented in the workforce, Asian Americans lack proportional representation in management positions" (Li, 2014, p. 145). Due to the small sample size and misconception of the model minority myth, Yu (2020) suggests Asian American women are underrepresented in studies examining workplace discrimination. Indirectly or directly, a lack of proportional representation may not be correlated with this, but it ignores the existence of this gap.

According to Paik et al., (2018), as early development, if encouragement and support for higher achievements were introduced, the "bamboo ceiling" would not be a factor in their

advancement in later parts of their lives. In Moua & Riggs (2015), their participants spoke of cultural male-dominance norms adding another layer onto the existing glass ceiling when the concept of female leadership is new within the Hmong diaspora.

Factors in Development

Support & Mentorship

Mentorship and support from peers and family have been shown central to the studies that were reviewed for this research. There seems to be a significant correlation between support and mentorship, which led many Asian American women in these studies to pursue their leadership roles. Hence, it seems pertinent to cover this aspect of their leadership journeys in answering factors that played prominent roles in their leadership development.

"A "traditional" mentoring relationship is one in which a senior person working in the protégé's organization assists with the protégé's personal and professional development (e.g., Fagenson, 1989; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1993; Ragins & McFarlin, (1990)" (Higgins & Kram, 2001, p. 265). Mentorship can be formal, one appointed, or informal, in a sense where you work within your network based on your established relationship in the professional field.

Traditional ideas of what leadership looks like within the public-school administration left many Asian American women in the school administration field, undermotivated to pursue any leadership roles (Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017). However, encouragement and intentional push from their peers and leaders within their organizations made a significant impact on those who serve in the public-school administration in Liang & Peters-Hawkins' (2017) study. Similarly, in Kawahara's (2007) study, participants "were more often asked and/or encouraged to apply to leadership and/or management positions because others recognized their superior work and abilities as opposed to them actively seeking out a higher position or status" (p. 25).

Familial and spousal support in Moua and Riggs's (2015) study were defined as having a "critical role in the advancement of these women's careers" (p.14). These supports were also spoken in a way that was stepping outside of their supporters' cultural norms. Although some of the participants were discouraged by traditional parents when their priorities lay elsewhere, these participants did stress the importance of receiving support and encouragement from outside sources.

Asian American Women's Expectations

Studying how women's roles and expectations vary from culture to culture and how that impacts their roles as leaders is an important part of the study. There is vast diversity within this categorization of Asian Americans, as already described. Different cultures also share many characteristics in common. Many studies related to Asian American leadership fail to provide a deeper understanding of how these differences are manifested. A few distinctions surfaced in terms of internal expectations within their family, as well as external expectations.

Moua & Riggs (2015) and Paik et al. (2018) discussed the role of "filial piety" in Asian American women's leadership. "Filial piety, a concept originating from Confucianism requiring each person to "love one's parent, being respectful, polite, considerate, loyal, helpful, dutiful, and obedient (Huang, n.d.)" (Moua & Riggs, 2015, p. 6). According to Moua & Riggs (2015), the responsibility in the mannerism that impacts not just your family but the whole clan is valued and still practiced in the Hmong culture. However, honor and respect are expected in the sense of selflessness while still maintaining these traditional gender roles, where acceptance of women's leadership is still in the early adoption stages within their communities. In their study, the participants stressed how these expectations impede their leadership advancement when challenging the process, authority, or being assertive are viewed as disrespectful. Liang & Peters-

Hawkins (2017) wrote, “they are also expected to fulfill the needs of significant others before their own and be void of self-promotion for doing so is viewed as distasteful and arrogant (Pacis, 2005)” (p.47). Internalizing these expectations can harm their pursuit towards self-development and advocacy in career advancements.

The gender roles experienced by Tibetan women leaders were described as "double standards" in all aspects of their lives, especially in leadership positions, by Nordon's (2020) research. Specifically, Tibetan women leaders in exile expressed frustration when they had to serve tea while heading meetings. In her study, Nordon shows that they were embedded in the “social fabric” of Tibetan culture via gender norms experienced in such subtle ways.

Paik et al. (2018) mentioned, “One study found that gifted Asian American women related their early achievement motivation to a strong desire to please and not disappoint their parents (Kitano, 1997)” (p.165). There was a consensus within the studies that education is highly valued within Asian American culture. Therefore, a combination of pressure from parents and bringing honor played a role in the educational achievement of some Asian American communities.

Literature Review Conclusion

Data consistently shows that women are an integral part of the US workforce; their representation is high. Sadly, the same cannot be said about the representation of women in top-level leadership positions. According to the literature review, Asian American women leaders are faced with many barriers that add layers to achieving top leadership positions due to a deeply rooted culture and work environment within the US. Research on workplace discrimination does not take Asian American women into consideration due to their small number, a situation that is

exacerbated by the mischaracterizations created by model minority myths which excludes them from the disadvantaged minorities.

Theoretical Framework

The conceptual framework of biculturalism and social constructionism was utilized to examine the experiences of Tibetan American women leaders. While I had hoped that my studies of leadership theories and frameworks would be more relevant to the experiences of Tibetan American women leaders, this was not the case. Many of these perspectives were based upon western models which made them unsuitable. Therefore, I used biculturalism and social constructionism to guide my study's participants' leadership experiences since they had a greater role to play in their stories.

Biculturalism Theory

In order to fully grasp Tibetan American women's experiences as leaders, we need to understand the uniqueness that each individual brings from their respective backgrounds and, therefore, the theory of biculturalism serves as a backdrop when examining the experience of Tibetan American women in leadership. Generally, biculturalism is described as the negotiation of belonging to two different cultures, and how this impacts every facet of their individual's life, from how they interact with others, to how they conduct business with them (Kawahara, 2007; LaFromboise, et al., 1993; Nguyen & Rule, 2020). The biculturalism theory is effective in understanding how the participants' identities navigate between two cultures due to their identification as Tibetan Americans. Nguyen & Rule (2020) wrote, "the transformative theory of biculturalism suggests that biculturalism is a transformative process that involves the active negotiation of two cultures (West et al., 2017)" (p.2).

The Alternation Model in LaFromboise et al. (1993) also discusses biculturalism in the sense of belonging while effectively engaging within these two cultures and alternating appropriately "to fit a particular social context" (p.399). Considering the recent Tibetan resettlement in the United States, biculturalism is particularly relevant to the subject of this study. Many still have ties to family in India and Tibet, and the connection to their Tibetan identity roots is very much alive and strong. A recent paper by Nguyen & Rule (2020), discusses biculturalism through acculturation. They identified cultural orientations and strategies for further development of the theory.

The level of engagement with ethnic culture as well as the dominant culture is indicative of two different cultural orientations. And four different strategies were introduced: "integration (high orientations to both cultures), assimilation (high orientation to the dominant culture coupled with low orientation to the heritage culture), separation (low orientation to the dominant culture coupled with high orientation to the heritage culture), and marginalization (low orientation to both cultures)" (Nguyen & Rule, 2020, p.2). In their study, the authors focused on integration, where both culture orientations were high, as many previous studies found participants used this strategy. Thus, I believe this approach in the biculturalism theory is relevant since most Tibetans who have resettled in the US are relatively recent immigrants. During this study, we will explore how their dual cultural background, US culture and Tibetan heritage, may influence their leadership experience.

Social Constructionism

Understanding the complexity of Tibetan American women leader's immigration background, as described in Tibetan immigrant history, the theory of social constructionism will

serve as a foundation in understanding how these social institutions influence their perspectives in reflecting on their personal leadership stories. The general defining body of social constructionism "is a type of philosophical idealism; its opposite is realism. That means the intellectual (*geistig*) being is the reason of the material being—and not vice versa" (Van Oorschot & Allolio-Näcke, 2013, p. 735). In addition, language alone cannot reasonably interpret our society. Still, it can devise consensus within a group of how they interpret its society based on their shared experiences. This means our conceptualized reality is constructed within the social institutions that are part of us. In Tibetan American women leaders' identity, we are looking at dimensions of gender identity, Tibetan culture, leadership, and living as a minority within the dominant American culture. These dimensions concurrently construct the perceived notion of their reality, and how they navigate within each of these constructs can succinctly impact the idealism created in the other. On the other hand, does this multi-dimensional identity create a social construct of Tibetan American women leaders' identity? If so, what is that like?

Interestingly, as described in Gergen and Gergen (2004), social constructionism takes away the question of what is "true or right". When we find ourselves comparing more prominent social institutions (i.e., religion, tradition, values), this idealism may differ from one social context to the next. Bucher (2008) writes, "It is important to understand that cultural identities are socially constructed; meaning they are based on how we view and define what reality is to us. If we think something is real, it becomes real to us and has very real consequences for our lives" (p.27). Using social constructionism theory as the foundation for this research will help understand the different social contexts in which Tibetan American women leaders identify

themselves. These conceptualized roles can impact differently or similarly based on how they interact with these dimensions.

Method

I used a qualitative method approach to answer my research question of how Tibetan American women leaders experience and navigate leadership positions. According to Creswell (2021), one-on-one interviews have the potential of unlocking many components of a study's participants; it creates access to depth through clarification or follow up questions, "and establishes a personal connection with the participants that may enhance his or her willingness to open up" (p.131). The study emphasizes Tibetan American women's lived experiences in leadership. Sticking to a structured interview style would restrict potential nuance through this method. Hence, as O'Leary (2017) has highlighted, the semi-structured interview method has the potential of "being able to come away with all the data you intended but also interesting and unexpected data that emerges" (p.240). The semi-structured interview method was used for this study and has opened areas of Tibetan American women leaders' experiences that may be pertinent to their unique stories and/or similar to other women leaders.

Participant Recruitment

An advertising flyer was created (see Appendix B) to reach out to the five Tibetan communities in the United States that are densely populated: California, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, and Washington, DC. Email requests were sent to these Tibetan organizations (see Appendix A). As a recruitment tool, I used a pre-survey to identify potential participants. Tibetan American women living in any of those five states between the ages of 25-75 were my target. On the flyer, participants are directed to the link to participate in the pre-survey.

A total of four Tibetan community organizations agreed to assist with the promotion of the survey by distributing the flyer through their email distribution lists or by posting on their social media pages. Several prominent Tibetan organizations in the United States were also given promotional flyers. In addition to these channels, I also shared them on my social media page, Facebook, specifically. This was done on my social networks and on the pages of people in my circles.

Pre-Survey

First, participants completed a pre-survey, found in Appendix C. The pre-survey was used as a recruitment tool and to assess who would be interested in this research. The use of the pre-survey results determined whether they were eligible to take part in the study. The pre-survey consists of nine questions, served as a pre-screening for collecting generic demographic information, identifying themselves as leaders if they would be interested in participating in this research, and their contact information for a follow-up. This study aimed to recruit 4 to 10 Tibetan American women who self-identify as leaders or held leadership positions.

A total of 26 Tibetan women responded to the pre-survey. Approximately 77% of the respondents were identified as currently living in Minnesota. Massachusetts and New York each contributed eight percent, while California and Washington DC each contributed four percent. Twenty-five of the respondents indicated they identified themselves as Tibetan American women. A total of 42 percent identified their age as 25 to 34 years old. Twenty-four of the 26 participants indicated that they are currently employed. A majority of participants were in the healthcare industry, as indicated in their comments. According to 61 percent of participants, they currently hold leadership positions, and 73 percent described themselves as leaders. After the previous section, a follow-up question asked participants if they identified themselves as leaders

by holding a leadership position, self-identifying as a leader, or both. While the responses varied based on the options provided, 37% reported holding current positions, 37% reported both, and 26% reported being self-identified as leaders. The final question asked whether participants would be interested in participating in a study on Tibetan American women in leadership positions. A total of 11 participants indicated their interest, while 10 offered their contact information.

The use of the pre-survey results determined whether they were eligible to take part in the study. Of the ten participants who reported they were interested in participating, nine qualified and became eligible to participate. One of the ten respondents said they did not identify themselves as a leader, which was the central quality of this research; therefore, they weren't considered for the study.

All nine eligible participants received an invitation email (see Appendix D). Of the nine eligible participants, only six responded to the invitation by agreeing to take part in the study. In the case of the other three individuals who initially indicated through the pre-survey that they would be interested in participating in this research, multiple attempts were made before accepting no response as a rejection from the decision to continue the research. As soon as the six participants confirmed their participation in this study, the date and time for the virtual interviews were scheduled. An email containing the intention of collecting informed consent and demographic information was distributed to participants more than 24 hours before our appointment.

Challenges

More than a few challenges were experienced during the different phases of the recruitment process. The contact information for these five Tibetan organizations was readily

available on the Office of Tibet's website under their "local contacts" link, which helped pave the way to connect with these five organizations and was a valuable resource for this study. This information is available to the public on their website. They serve as the central hub in North America, located in Washington DC, as a direct branch of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) in India, the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile. The challenges came from the contacts; some of the information online was outdated. The board members changed every two years and varied depending on when that took place for these different organizations. To overcome these emails that were not being replied to, my research adviser advised me to call these organizations directly, which worked well. Many, who answered, shared the new contact information for the new board members and supported my efforts. I connected with all five organizations either through email, phone call, or text.

The Tibetan community board in the New York area, which serves the Tibetan population in the New York and New Jersey area, politely declined my request. Their reason for objection was primarily due to policies in place regarding promoting anything in favor of an individual's interest, which was justified as creating problems for accommodating all individuals. Despite proposing a compelling reasoning to reassess their current policy and clarifying how the purpose of the study intends to serve the larger Tibetan community, the decision remained the same. Through my network in the New York area, I was able to gain access to having the flyer shared through their social network, however, not the larger community. Therefore, the data collection will represent participants from the four remaining states.

Another challenge, realized after the first publication of the survey, was a few of the questions required manual entry of comments. Surveyor # 1 missed entering their contact information after marking "Yes" for the participation question. After that, I was able to edit this

function as a combined field, where they answered "Yes" by entering their contact information. This worked successfully for all other 25 participants of this research.

Semi-Structured One-on-one Interview

In July 2021, I conducted semi-structured one-on-one interviews with the six participants who agreed to participate. The duration of the interview was between 60-90 minutes. The interview consisted of nine questions (Appendix G), but the last question served as a feedback loop rather than a specific theme. Before the interview, time was determined, taking both of our availability into consideration. Additional information on the consent process was shared before the interview (see Appendix E).

Data Collection

The interview gathered information relevant to the research study by asking participants about their experience as Tibetan American women leaders. I collected the signed informed consent (Appendix F) and the completed demographic information (Appendix G) via email as an attachment or an electronically scanned photo of the forms on the interview day. Before I asked each participant the official research questions, we took up to 15 minutes to go over the consent form to make sure each element was discussed. Because of the sensitivity involving digging into their experiences, as a researcher, it was vital for me that the participants clearly understood what I was asking of them and what the study entails. In addition to using this time to review the informed consent form, we also used this time to build rapport, as it can set the tone and give space to share a bit of each of our backgrounds and, most importantly, how I ended up doing this study. This allowed me to present my credibility and establish solid connections before delving into the research study's complexity.

Those who consented to participate in my research were voluntarily interviewed for 60-90 minutes via video call through Google Meet. The benefit of this platform was connecting with participants across state lines, as participants resided in four different states. Secondly, this created a sense of security and safety with the growing number of cases surrounding COVID-19 during that time. This allowed both the researcher and the participant to feel comfortable without worrying about transmission of COVID, which could have overshadowed doubts of safety, and possibly hindered our tone, and taken away any premise of openness that we enjoyed.

Data Analysis

I transcribed the video call interviews, and notes were taken during interviews to add context, such as non-verbal cues aligning with the audio. I had initially hoped to transcribe the recording by sourcing it to a transcription service; however, that was not viable. The cost was too high. Therefore, I completed the full transcribing of the recording of the interviews. I used Quirkos for data coding to make this process easier. However, I quickly realized that I needed to adapt this process to my comfort and learning style. After that, I started coding using both Quirkos coding software and combined this with manual coding. By making multiple copies of the highlighted transcripts and examining them line-by-line, I was able to reduce the raw data for analysis by organizing the transcript by themes and categories. Once this was built, I used Quirkos to polish my work, which saved space and made the data much more readable and transferable in my view. Furthermore, I utilized my memos and interview recordings to make relevant links to the themes and categories.

Challenges

During the semi-structured interview process, some minor challenges were experienced. I did not consider different time zones during the interview appointment scheduling. Therefore, I

had at least one appointment where this realization came too late, as I imagined it was a no-show. We quickly resolved this by effectively communicating with a fast response bouncing back and forth. Encountering this issue early on helped avoid repeating this mistake, and time-zone consideration when scheduling an interview appointment became a priority.

Google Meet was used as an instrument to communicate during all the virtual interviews. We experienced poor Wi-Fi signal from one of our ends, leading to poor visuals and glitches during the virtual interview; this led to asking for clarification or repeat statements that were not comprehensible. While I had my external audio recording device running simultaneously with the video interview, it became difficult to recall some of the verbal statements during transcribing due to lagging and breakage. This was not the case during most of the interviews; however, one of the interview's videos lagging became so significant that we ended up resorting to a phone call interview. This later added more challenge transcribing as well.

Participants

To best protect my research participants' identities, I used pseudonyms with descriptors to create better protection in concealing their identities. The descriptors I used were based on the characteristics presented by the participants during our interview as well as the essence of their leadership styles based on the experiences they shared. The inclusion of information regarding their occupations and where they reside in the state of residence can identify my participants quickly, since the Tibetan communities are small and the sharing of identifying information can threaten their sense of anonymity. I therefore decided not to include this information in the paper. I put together Table 1 in order to give an overview of my participants based on similar tables from previous studies.

Table 1*Interview Participants' Pseudonym and Descriptors*

Interview Participant Pseudonym	Descriptors
Karma	Efficient, Independent, Inspirational.
Palzom	Outspoken, Creating Space, Great Communicator.
Sonam	Courageous, Patient, Resilient.
Tsomo	Pioneer, Mentor, Strategic, Building the next generation.
Pema	Confidence, Calm, Professional.
Nima	Evolving, Youngest, Driven.

Findings

The purpose of this research was to explore Tibetan American women leaders and how they navigate leadership in their held leadership positions. Through data analysis, four key themes were derived with two to five sub themes that correlated with each other or the central theme. The themes of Tibetan cultural characteristics and gender expectations, leadership, challenges, and empowerment are highlighted in the findings.

Tibetan Cultural Characteristics and Gender Expectations

The first theme describes Tibetan cultural characteristics, specifically in gender expectations context. Participants in this research define Tibetan cultural characteristics and gender expectations with their identity as Tibetan Americans and experiences that resulted from active engagement within their Tibetan communities in the diaspora. Many participants described Tibetan cultural characteristics and gender expectations as women having more

expectations than men, yet not getting the same acknowledgment, or being raised in a culture where strong values are tied to service to others.

Several women mentioned stereotypes or expectations of Tibetan women when leading in the Tibetan community. According to the participants' experiences, these stereotypes or expectations emerged from and within the Tibetan community rather than from an external lens. As described by the participants, an ideal Tibetan woman should be: modest, reserved, quiet, submissive, and reserved; she should not argue back and should do as she is told without dispute, stay at home, cook, and clean the house. While leading, there are still these expectations of gender stereotypes. It seems that women's leadership is characterized by meeting certain ideal Tibetan women qualities, while serving as a supporting role in the leadership realm. Those experiences are shared below under sub themes of responsibilities and serving tea.

Responsibilities. The participants defined responsibility as taking on additional roles/duties compared to those they have led with or taken on grown-up roles at a young age to help their families, which were unique in their experiences. Some participants reported feeling well prepared for their leadership roles having had early experiences in versatility, being multi-faceted, and adaptable in these different expectations.

When leading within their Tibetan community for Sonam, she experienced “double standards.” Her experience was that male leaders were under less pressure than women; she felt obliged to do more in her role while achievement was not publicly acknowledged. Her role as a young, educated woman leader gave her greater versatility, but added more workload on her pile.

The participants described taking on responsibilities in a unique way based on their needs and their environment as new immigrants in this new country without a large network or extensive support system. When she was nine, Karma talked about how she was responsible for

helping her father as an interpreter and paying bills; as the oldest child, she felt responsible for her younger sibling. As a result, she now views these experiences as an acquired skill contributing to her leadership, which shaped how she took on additional roles in the community. To provide support to her father, she had to shoulder these responsibilities. While she is in her current leadership role, she feels the same constant responsibility to be multifaceted and versatile.

Palzom describes, as young as age 13, instead of doing what a typical 13-year-old does after school, watching TV, or hanging out with her friends, she regularly went straight to their family's business and helped her parents. It went on like this to this day, she said:

And so I think you know, when you look at your counterparts who might not be immigrants themselves. They might not understand why a young child might have to take on the responsibilities to shoulder those responsibilities and so I think that's what really makes us unique. I know it's not a uniquely Tibetan experience, but I think it's one that's characteristic of the immigrant narrative, immigrant story.

Her experience was that these responsibilities were a means of assisting her parents in running their business by being a source of communication with the diverse community they served. As an immigrant, she believes these responsibilities are shared by many others.

Serving Tea. In virtually every community event, tea is served. Many Tibetan gatherings offer tea to the audience and to those attending the event. Many different tea distribution methods can be observed during different occasions, with individuals collecting their tea from the tea station. A more significant event usually consists of people serving tea to the

attendees. In addition to having layers of cultural influences, serving tea encompasses aspects of respect, contribution, and the reasons why many serve it.

In the interview, the topic of consistently serving tea came up; every participant had her own reasons for finding it frustrating. Serving tea took place in the context of a larger community gathering for them. There seems to be a message here that women can do more than serve tea, that they are equals with their male counterparts who are also leading. It seems for all of these Tibetan American women leaders, regardless of where they lead, they are all bound by this expectation of serving tea in some way. Many of them described this as their own personal experience. According to Sonam, she was expected to serve tea within the leadership arena while working with male colleagues. In addition, she said she was the youngest on the board. According to her, her male counterparts bluntly expressed this expectation as: "Because you are a girl, you have to serve tea or something like that." Other women, on the other hand, said that this practice is repeated in their community during large gatherings.

Tsomo challenged the idea of serving tea at the next community gathering by making an intentionally deliberate decision to ensure those female volunteers were equal to male volunteers at the gathering. In addition to promoting gender equity, this approach also creates space for reflection and observation, sometimes in a pilot mode, about how our actions impact the environment. In retrospect, the diaspora community is not aware of the extent to which serving tea is strengthening women's gender expectations, she explains. According to her analysis of the act of serving tea and how it reflects women's capacities, the community does not question the reason behind the way things are, suggesting that we need to approach these changes with cultural sensitivity while being assertive.

As Palzom has observed in her experience, women as public figures are consistently portrayed as supporting rather than leading. In Tibetan communities, women rarely hold high leadership positions, says Palzom. She says,

the face is always the male, whether it's, you know, on a press release or speaking to the community at large, it's never, it has never been a woman up there on stage, and the women are always running back and forth from the kitchen to the community hall and they'll still be at the meetings, but they're also expected to have this additional responsibility of making sure everyone has tea for some reason, and it's never a question, and I think we've ever been taught to question it.

In this study, Tibetan American women leaders described Tibetan women are often seen only as supporting roles rather than considered serious candidates at the top levels of leadership, and this seems to frustrate several of the participants.

Leadership

The second theme of leadership focuses on where and with whom they are leading. Then, two more questions for this part are: what makes them so passionate about their leadership roles, and how did they get there.

Participants emphasized their leadership experiences from their roles as leaders within Tibetan communities in the United States over their work in external organizations. With the exception of one participant, none of the participants had held leadership positions in their professional lives outside of Tibetan communities. Participants framed leadership in various ways in response to the interview question, how do they define leadership? According to their own experience and values, leadership is defined as caring for people, taking risks, taking accountability and responsibility, serving others, using flexibility in their thinking, and making

them better. The participants displayed examples of these qualities in their leadership style based on their awareness of these qualities.

Male Dominance. It was consistently mentioned by participants that there were few women leaders in the Tibetan communities, whether in the United States, where most of them are currently residing, or in India or Nepal, where they grew up. Their stories and experiences steadily reported a lack of women leaders' representation in the Tibetan community. While there are some women leaders in the Tibetan diaspora, participants view this as an imbalance within the current structure. The Tibetan American women leaders often worked together with male-dominated board members. According to five of the six participants, this reality seems to be current and similar. According to Sonam,

I got to work closely with some of the older Tibetan men because it's a predominantly male oriented kind of committee right, most positions of leadership tend to have more males than females. And then on top of that, older people.

As far as her experience is concerned, she identified as the youngest board member while serving with the Tibetan community leaders, and women were certainly underrepresented. Consequently, she was more conscious of gender expectations and had to strategize ways to be heard.

As Tsomo has experienced, Tibetan women leaders in the diaspora are under-represented, but even more so because the community fails to challenge this inequality. A question she asked is, "Why haven't we produced one single recognizably national level some kind of leader in a female form? It's really, really important. Why has every single cabinet so far in diaspora been gender unequal and hugely imbalanced?" For most cultures, Tsomo says, there are few opportunities and expectations for women to become leaders. Still, she is optimistic, as she believes that the number of women leaders will slowly increase.

Pema explains that Tibetan society is patriarchal, and that men are traditionally viewed as the leaders in Tibetan society. During her leadership role, she discusses the importance of using her voice and having influence to bring about change, a feature traditionally enjoyed by men.

Community Service. The community leadership arena within the Tibetan communities in the United States is volunteer-based. While these organizations are structured without any financial incentives for their leadership roles, the rewards do not equate to any amount of money. Many of the participants identified leadership in the sense of volunteerism through their community service leadership or leading for a more significant cause than any individual gain. In speaking of using this platform to create space, participants described it as tackling uncomfortable conversations, building the next generation, and creating space for social change. Many of the participants shared how they are creating space for the younger/next generation or the importance of a leader's role in instituting this opportunity to be inclusive.

Leadership within the Tibetan community was described by all participants as a way to give back to the community. The central theme to this study's participants' passion for leading appears to be service to others, either by inherent Tibetan cultural values or by Tibetan Buddhist culture. It appears that the motivation to practice service leadership ignited differently based on opportunities they had in their own life experiences.

Throughout Karma's experience, she cited self-motivation to keep involved with community leadership as a way to stay productive. She mentioned she did not possess the skills required of an ideal Tibetan woman to cook and clean around the house; however, after serving in many volunteer leadership positions in her community, she was drawn into her current leadership role. Nima's involvement in the community led her to envision opportunities to take initiative for the changes and improvements she wanted to see, which, in turn, led her to take on

leadership roles. For Tsomo, in leading her organization, she drew inspiration from her parents who "raised us with a very strong sense of values and service to others. I think it's a very common notion or ideal in our culture."

Appointed/Assumed leaders. Tibetan community-based organization board members are typically elected by community members, but some may differ. Participants discussed leadership experiences in Tibetan organizations. There are many Tibetan-led organizations with well-known missions in these small Tibetan communities across the US. The Tibetan Women's Association, Tibetan Youth Congress, Tibetan Nurses Association, and Tibetan Community Associations, the largest Tibetan organizations, are among some of the leading Tibetan organizations.

The people in Tibetan communities and organizations elect board members. Normally, those elected to the board serve two consecutive terms; however, if reelected, that can be extended to four consecutive years; that's two terms. It is possible that different organizations maintain their boards in slightly different ways. Board elections usually follow this structure. Upon being elected, new board members have the option of declining this offer or accepting it. Board members that accept determine which position to fill among themselves. Nima said, "When I joined the organization, I initially was trying to join as like a secretary or PR or something, but I was kind of thrown into the president's role because no one else wanted to be it."

As a result of seeing her mother lead like this, she became inspired and confident to take on the role of president. Palzom had to assume multiple roles after losing half the boards to other priorities, resulting in her and the remaining small board helping to fill the void. She said, "I guess most successful experiences and events and opportunities come up when you're sort of

thrust into the position and really have to rise to the occasion.” A board member's role is positioned according to the member's professional background, prior/current leadership experience, and skills needed for the position. Upon describing Karma's role in her organization, the suggestion was made for her to assume the position of president in her second term. Due to a lack of fluency in Tibetan, she has challenges in assuming this role. (I discuss Tibetan language proficiency and its relationship to leadership under the third theme of challenges.)

Trail Blazers. As new immigrants or members of a generation that has roots dating only a few decades back, all participants shared their experiences of trailblazing as both empowering and challenging. Their experience was largely characterized by a sense of loneliness. There is no established structure to find information about a particular area of interest when trying to find connections within the Tibetan community, and they stressed the importance of facing these challenges alone so they may guide those coming behind them. Pema describes the feeling of loneliness when exploring uncharted territory, having no one by her side, someone who looks like her or going through similar experiences. But she also highlights that:

so, the loneliness can be I feel like empowering because there aren't other Tibetans. So, it definitely is a natural strength I would say, that definitely pushes you to choose this path and do this work because there any other Tibetans doing it so you definitely feel empowered that you might be the first one and kind of setting this career path for others.

Behind you, so definitely lonely, but also very empowering.

Most participants seem empowered by the challenges to explore this new territory and conquer, so they can be a resource for those yet to come. Some participants find comfort in knowing they are not alone in pioneering a field. Education, professions, and leadership are expanding into new areas for many, as the participants have acknowledged in the Tibetan diaspora.

Understanding the pressure and frustration of maneuvering through these experiences alone felt empowering to some of the participants.

Challenges

In the third theme, participants are able to discuss some of the challenges associated with their leadership journeys. Participants identified challenges as a barrier that hindered their experience. They were described as facing challenges as a young leader, leading with elder men who were resistant to change while their ideas being devalued, and lack of confidence with their Tibetan language fluency. Each of these challenges will be discussed below in the subthemes of agism and generational gaps, and Tibetan language proficiency.

Agism and Generational Gap. Younger participants frequently brought up gender and age intersectionality. It presented a greater challenge for some participants to deal with elders' perceptions of youth leaders in the Tibetan community. According to some of the participants, youth leaders have been viewed by elders as threats to the established system of operation within Tibetan communities, as their approach to community development is regarded as risky, while others expressed feeling unheard. Most of them spoke of their experiences in leading as young leaders; however, they also pointed out generational gaps in their experiences of leading with elder Tibetan men leaders. The generation gap was described as young leaders having their ideas challenged or discounted and elders' resistance to change.

Karma and Sonam both spoke of times when they led the Tibetan community; both were the youngest and considered "well educated"; therefore, much of the work ended up on their pile of work, and they were expected to be versatile and able to change roles. On the contrary, Pema's experience as a younger leader shows that sometimes, it is perceived as a threat to the

organization's structure. Particularly among those who have been running the organization for many years. Adding to that, Pema said:

I feel like, not so much gender, and maybe being a younger professional, that sometimes things can get in the way where people kind of undermine your capacity or your ability to contribute, whether it's your perspective or like a bigger change.

Having to face challenges as a young leader certainly has a similar impact on Nima. In order to create volume and show they are serious about building community and having a leadership position, she felt the need to join forces with other young leaders during community events. According to Palzom, when working with elders, there is a tendency to be comfortable doing things in the same way as they have always been done, and a lessened interest in taking risks and a willingness to try something new, which many younger leaders want to do. She said:

I think other members of our community might feel like youth, especially youth who've been raised here in the States, lack, sort of the fundamental understanding of Tibetan history, Tibetan culture and so they're almost dismissive, I feel. So, I think that has its challenges.

According to Palzom, there is an alienation within the Tibetan community for those raised here, which could impact how they perceive community-based leadership. In Tibetan organizations that are dominated by men, Tibetan women leaders have to work extra hard to make their voices heard or make room for others. Raised in the US, Palzom learned to speak up, to question authority, and to openly oppose. She finds these cultural and generational gaps more apparent when leading in the Tibetan community with older men. Sonam therefore believed that it was essential who said what during meetings, which was not her. In the Tibetan community, where she was leading with older men, it was difficult for her to be heard as a young leader. Her

ideas were often unacknowledged but interpreted and appreciated differently when they came from a male counterpart. It made her stronger, taught her to speak out in real-time about these events and hold them accountable for their actions.

Leading an organization for Tsomo meant valuing those young leaders who devote time and energy to her organization. With appreciation for their talent and time, she cultivates an environment that ensures everyone is valued and heard.

Tibetan Language Fluency. Speaking fluent Tibetan language added this invisible layer of credibility and instantaneous respect/admiration in this study's participants' experience. Some participants talked about the lack of Tibetan language skills hindering their leadership, yet they had a motivation when people complimented their efforts. Having immigrated to the United States at a very young age, many participants discussed how their Tibetan language proficiency does not equate to those of elder Tibetans. Some participants who are fluent in Tibetan felt they did not have enough adequate vocabulary to best express their ideas. Palzom identified the different levels in the Tibetan language. She felt confident in speaking Tibetan fluently; however, she thought it was a challenge to get her message across adequately when speaking in formal Tibetan. And to add to this wound, half of the participants said they left feeling disempowered after being criticized, whether directly for their lack of Tibetan language proficiency or people providing harsh criticism for those who use non-Tibetan language to get their message across.

There seems to be a disconnect regarding Tibetan language proficiency expectations without considering that many of these leaders live in multi-dimensional communities. For Nima, these community criticisms were highly challenging as she identified herself as a second-generation Tibetan American and made continuous efforts in learning the Tibetan language.

After one of her public speeches in English, an older Tibetan woman approached her and recommended that she speak in Tibetan next time. She reflects on that moment, making her feel devalued for what she had to say, her message, while overlooked by instruments used to convey her point. While the essence of these impacted significantly to the participants, the majority of them spoke of wanting more encouragement and motivation in their intentional efforts for learning and when trying to communicate in Tibetan.

The consensus among the participants is that the Tibetan language is essential. However, in their leadership experience, they found it discouraging that a leader's Tibetan language fluency is valued over what they can do for the community.

Empowerment

As we have learned, there are layers and layers of unpacking deep-rooted challenges and factors in Tibetan American women leader's experiences; equally, there were many aspects of their experience that showed characteristics of empowerment. Empowerment was defined as a catalyst of inspiration in the participants' leadership journeys. Their experience was described as empowering due to their access to mentorship, inspiration from role models, and support from their families and networks, as well as recognition for their contribution to projects and developments in the community. Three sub themes that emerged from the analysis were access to mentors, role models and support, and acknowledgment.

Mentorship. Many of the participants spoke of access to mentorship in various ways; however, the consensus is that when they had mentors, whether direct or indirect intentions, this was characterized as crucial to their leadership development. One thing that became clear was that because the number of Tibetan women in leadership is already scarce, this factored in limitation in access to women who could provide guidance. The women spoke of their leadership

experience within the Tibetan community; however, this study did not mention access to mentorship through other Tibetan women leaders. Both Karma and Pema experienced formal mentors through their work. They spoke of a few women mentors who helped them navigate within their organization in learning through their experience as a mentor. Palzom said, “I think that for me personally, the mentorship aspect is not there but I think it's not because of a lack of people caring, I just think it's because everything is so new.” Mentors in leadership is not a new concept. In the Tibetan American women leader's experience, these might have taken place more organically and indirectly.

In her experience, Sonam spoke of working with different board members during her term (in her Tibetan community). The significant difference that she experienced was the indirect mentorship she described as a form of encouragement and valuing her contribution during discussions, giving her the space and platform to thrive. Tsomo spoke of having access to both Tibetan and non-Tibetan mentors and said, “You learn different things from different people in some cultures, different languages I think all of it is due to understanding of things of the world. So, I've had mentors in both worlds. I wish I had more.” These mentors primarily came through the academic environment. Nima described having her mother's support and close family friends. Tibetan women who have served as community board members in the past have been tremendously impactful when navigating her leadership role.

Role Model and Support. Most of them spoke of their parents as positive role models and support from their families, making leadership practice possible for them. More externally, many expressed there were not many Tibetan women in leadership to look up to as role models. Many of the younger participants spoke of other young women leaders through the Tibet movement (activist). Some are actively seen in the community or social media platforms in the

Tibetan diaspora as robust role models. Tsono spoke of her parents and sister being active and positive role models in her experience. She said, “So, they did not come from wealth or influence. And yet, they had the, the courage and vision to think that they could make a contribution to others.”

Despite achieving high accolades in academia, her sister's contribution and service to the community have been inspirational. Intentionally choosing community service work over a comfortable, well-paying profession directly impacted her own leadership journey, as Tsono found these same values in her practice. Parents instilled a strong sense of confidence and family values in community service, helping others activate her passion for service leadership.

For Sonam, his holiness the Dalai Lama, was described as her biggest role model. His commitment and service towards his people were expressed as something she did not realize until adulthood. This has inspired her to lead and serve her community. She also mentioned community-held leadership summits. She got to see and hear from other attendees, motivating young leaders, and this has influenced her to do more within her community. The key takeaway was that if they can do fantastic work and positively impact their community, then why can't she.

Most of the participants reported having strong family support, working with supportive leaders they are leading with, and peers who made their leadership experience impeccable. Karma said her family's and spouse's support made staying late for meetings or being an active leader in the community possible, while he provided child support and stepped in for her. Without their support, especially her husband taking on additional roles when she could not, she would not be where she is today. Palzom and Tsono shared working with male leaders who are supportive in being receptive, encouraging, and open-minded, which was impactful in their

leadership development. Participants found support through peers and cohort mates who found their experience relatable when support was not available through their immediate environment.

Acknowledgment. Participants find validation when they are recognized for what they do or are striving for by the community. From the perspective of Tibetan American women leaders, acknowledgment consists of being trusted, valued, and respected by their community, and a little acknowledgement goes a long way. Karma spoke about how she felt respected and valued when she was trusted to lead an important event in the community. This occurred after having more exposure to leading and working hard. Pema commented that "it takes time to gain the trust of people and then become a leader in the community." This became easier for her because she had strong roots and ties to the community she led. Due to this history, she was able to "create small changes or bigger changes in the community."

Nima said that when her efforts in speaking Tibetan were recognized, it validated everything she had done up until that point. Acknowledgement boosts her confidence and encourages her to continue working and leading in her community.

Summary

The findings from this research highlighted four major themes surrounding the Tibetan American women leader's experience: Tibetan Cultural Characteristics and Gender Expectations, Leadership, Challenges, and Empowerment. The following will explore the correlation between these findings with the literature review and theoretical framework.

Discussion

The majority of the findings from the research are consistent with what has been found in literature reviews. Additionally, this study documented the leadership experiences of participants within Tibetan communities in the United States. The participants indicated their overall

leadership was organically shaped by their experience in community service leadership. Drawing on the literature review, the theoretical framework, and the findings of this paper, I discuss two main themes. The first is barriers to leadership. I then discuss factors that contribute to leadership. As a result of this study, the significance of the findings lies in Tibetan American women leaders' passion for leadership, which in this study was described as serving the Tibetan communities where they live. The evidence suggests that Tibetan cultural gender expectations and stereotypical views about Tibetan women have tremendously impeded and will impede those still climbing to the top. In essence, Tibetan American women leaders are creating new social constructs and identities. Their identity is constructed at the intersection of leadership, American culture, and Tibetan cultural gender expectations. Although the construction has not yet been fully developed collectively, the experiences and the leadership of the participants in this study are contributing to the development of the construction through their own efforts.

Barriers to leadership

The findings of this study reveal that Tibetan American women face more than a few barriers to their leadership, which is consistent with the literature review of Tibetan women leaders, Asian American women leaders, Hmong American women leaders, and the women in leadership literature review. Even though women make up half the population, the number of women occupying high-level leadership positions in the US and Asian American populations lags far behind their male counterparts (Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017; Hawthorne, 2019; Warner et al., 2018). In 2020, North American statistics by CTA did not distinguish Tibetan populations by gender (Samten & Shargoe, 2020), but the underrepresentation of Tibetan women in leadership positions within Tibetan communities documented shows significantly low

numbers of women in presidential positions. Underrepresentation of Tibetan women leaders in Nordon's (2020) study is in line with what participants in this study have expressed.

In Moua & Riggs (2015), participants demonstrated that many of the experiences of Hmong American women leaders were similar to those of Tibetan American women leaders. The concept of women leading in public forums is relatively new to both communities. As a result, most leadership positions, especially those in high positions, are occupied by men. Women's lack of representation in leadership has profoundly impacted those who are currently in this position. As a woman leader, gender expectations and gaining a voice are more difficult to overcome when in the minority. According to one of the participants, the root of this issue may lie in Tibetan cultural gender expectations, the community's failure to challenge this imbalance, and a lack of expectation for women to lead. If the expectation to lead does not persist within the Tibetan cultural construct, it is obvious that there are few Tibetan American women leaders.

I examined the literature to identify key barriers to Tibetan women leaders, Asian American women leaders, Hmong American women leaders, and women in leadership including ageism, gender disparities, stereotyping, the model minority myth, the glass ceiling, and the bamboo ceiling (Nordon, 2020; Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017; Liang et al., 2018; Tweebeck & Lashley's, 2018; Li, 2014; Kawahara, 2007; Paik et al., 2018; Moua & Riggs, 2015). Although many of the barriers discussed in the literature are consistent with the current study, some of them do not align contextually with Tibetan women's experience of leadership. They emphasized their experiences as leaders in Tibetan communities, whereas previous studies explored leadership in the macro community in the US. Tibetan cultural gender expectations and

stereotypical views about Tibetan women are proving to be tremendous hindrances to those aspiring to the top.

In Nordon's (2020) research, she observed that Tibetan language fluency impacted her participants' perception of themselves as strong communicators. Expectations of having fluency in the Tibetan language as a leader were prominent in their experience in my research. These expectations are typically present within the Tibetan community towards all members, as language has implications for subjective views in one's Tibetaness. Language creating strong access to communities' trust was discussed. Though participants established roots of biculturalism as a Tibetan American and as a US citizen, lack of Tibetan language or formal Tibetan language skill, typically required as a leader, may have hindered their sense of qualification as a high-level leader within the Tibetan Community. This notion was significantly more prominent among the younger participants as they navigated between two dominant cultural identities -Tibetan and American.

Tibetan American women leaders are stereotyped on the basis of the traditional construct of gender expectations within the Tibetan culture as opposed to the macro community in this research. Although some characteristics of these stereotypes overlap, many appear to be quite different from the prominent experiences that Asian American women leaders shared. The fact that the participants spoke of leadership experiences within the Tibetan community does not make them immune to larger US social stereotypes regarding Asian American women.

Participants' experience indicates that additional cultural gender expectations oozed into their leadership position as described by Moua and Riggs (2015) and Paik et al. (2018) as "filial piety." Tibetan American women leaders identified that through family responsibilities and their

role as members of leadership in their communities, and by carrying stereotypical beliefs that Tibetan women are quiet, respectful, helpful, and hardworking. As a result, these transcend into their leadership role as required to be multifaceted and letting men lead, while they are tied to supporting roles and serving tea. When opportunities are not valued and presented equally, it hinders their self-identity as a leader. Similarly, in Nordon's (2020), stereotypes about Tibetan women not being seen as leaders may have played a major role in the underrepresentation of Tibetan women in high-level leadership roles in the diaspora.

Liang & Peter-Hawkins (2017) found women's roles in the quality of nurturing to be acceptable in the experiences of their participants. In contrast, when they rose to high positions of leadership, they were considered to be "stepping over" their gender roles. Although Tibetan American women leaders have been able to transcend traditional gender roles, the outcome seems to be a work in progress, as some struggle with being taken seriously, but others have access to a strong support system that helps them navigate the role of leadership. Participants in Tibetan community-based organizations consistently expressed frustration with how women are portrayed in their communities. While serving tea was described as a cultural expectation regarded with respect and contribution to why women do it, this indirectly creates a portrayal of women as a supporting role within the community. Although they are expected to serve tea, it is overshadowing their capacity to take on high-level leadership and significantly taking them away from making key decisions in the leadership arena.

Another barrier that contextually does not align with the Tibetan American women leader's experience is the Glass Ceiling Metaphor. However, this seems to be related to the lack of visibility of Tibetan American women in high-level leadership. Though women are involved

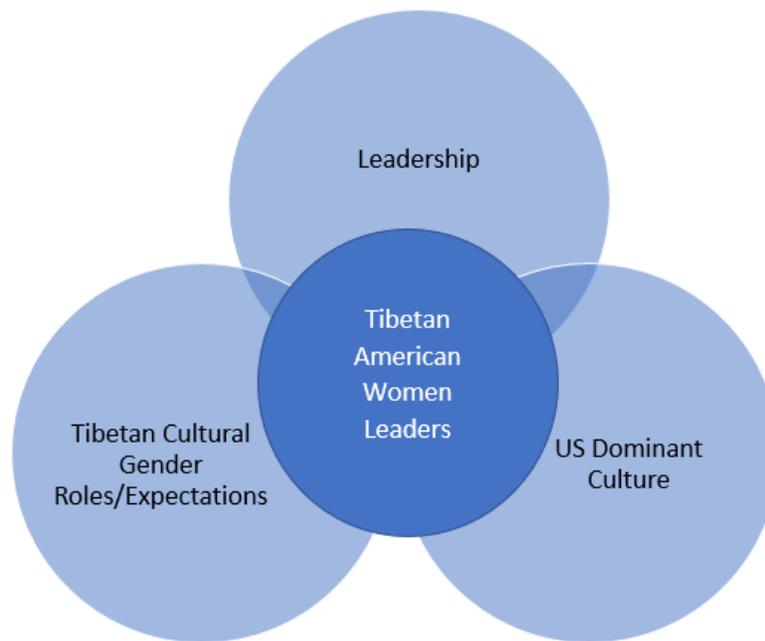
with the community board and serve within these leadership roles, their gender seems to have created an invisible layer of barrier in reaching a high-level position in leadership.

Factors in leadership

According to this research, Tibetan American women leaders are adaptive, resilient, and usually lead with a passion for serving others in their community. Across all leadership roles, community service was described as their key drive and purpose. Many of the women in this study did not identify themselves as leaders outside of the Tibetan community. Their young age may play a role in this as well as not holding a position of leadership in their profession. Among the six participants, five were in their mid-twenties or early 30s. These results demonstrate how different social constructs are involved in their lives and how this impacts their overall identity as Tibetan American women leaders.

According to them, their experience of leadership as Tibetan American women was one of the significant factors contributing to how they defined their experience. At the same time, the findings suggest the influence of Tibetan American identity on their values. Accordingly, biculturalism can be viewed as the process of negotiating or belonging to two cultural groups. (Kawahara, 2007; LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Nguyen & Rule, 2020). These boundaries became apparent in their values when leading within multiple socially constructed institutes. Within the Tibetan community, qualities of outspokenness were at odds with traditional gender expectations or stereotypes, while they are encouraged within the larger society. The younger leaders have a difficult time balancing these conflicting values as they move between different social constructions. Figure 1 illustrates this visually.

Figure 1: Diagram of Multiple Social Construct



Some of Moua and Riggs' (2015) participants reported feeling discouraged by their traditional parents and being reoriented to other priorities as a result. For the Tibetan American women leaders, the support of their families was critical to where they are today. Though many of the women in this study had access to mentorship through their schools or workplaces, they reported a lack of Tibetan women leaders as role models and mentors within the Tibetan diaspora. In the course of their experience, they have demonstrated self-reliance. They had to be the first of many; though the journey was lonely, they felt connected with other Tibetan women leaders who were undertaking similar journeys alone.

Tibetan American women leaders can be seen constructing new social constructs and identities. Their identities are shaped by their experiences of leadership, American culture, and Tibetan cultural gender roles and expectations. Further exploration of this topic becomes more necessary as more Tibetan American women leaders emerge. Collectively, this construction has

not yet been fully developed, but the experiences and leadership of the participants in this study are contributing to its creation.

Limitations

In this research, the primary limiting factor is the lack of literature, peer-reviewed articles that specifically address Tibetan American women leaders. The study relied on very little literature that was available on Tibetan women's leadership.

Still, Asian American women in the leadership literature review provided helpful insights when comparing their experiences. Essentially, Nordon's (2020) study provided the foundation for this study which focused on other aspects of Tibetan American women leaders' experiences and allowed this research to build on it.

The study primarily focused on Tibetan American women leaders during recruitment was heavily concentrated on qualifications on held leadership positions. When we have already learned the lack of Tibetan women in leadership, this became very difficult during recruitment. In spite of being able to recruit the necessary number of participants, this study reinforces the very need for more literature on Tibetan American women leaders.

In this study, the leadership experiences discussed were mostly based on the experiences of young participants. Having a diverse range of ages of participants might potentially lead to different outcomes. The study was limited in that it was unable to examine this dynamic across different age groups.

Recommendation

Based on the insights participants shared, the following recommendations are made. The first recommendation is for the future studies of Tibetan leaders either in the US or a diaspora community. The second one targets the Tibetan diaspora community, which includes Tibetan

communities in the US, India, and Nepal. Lastly, there is one for Tibetan community-led organizations in the US.

For future studies:

1. The scope of the study should be widened to include Tibetan American leaders and their experiences as part of creating a fair assessment of how leadership is perceived within culturally constructed identities. By examining the type of environment, social structure, resources, and opportunities available within Tibetan communities, whether in the United States or in the Tibetan Diaspora, a greater understanding can be achieved. This could serve as a supporting or comparative paper that reviews all types and levels of leadership within the Tibetan community.
2. It is notable that only two women mentioned leadership, in the sense of being responsible for childrearing, while the other four women did not. In the women's leadership studies, this created its own barriers whereafter giving birth, women felt bound to these universal expectations of providing care for children, and many women regarded themselves as less flexible and less capable of climbing the organizational ladder. Do the childcare responsibilities of Tibetan women leaders contribute to their underrepresentation in high-level positions? The issue of Tibetan women being underrepresented in high-level leadership positions has long been acknowledged, but the existing articles and conversations have never specified where the issue originated, other than how Tibetan women fail to take high-level leadership roles. This does not identify or remedy the socially constructed barriers within Tibetan culture or culturally structured gender expectations.

Tibetan Diaspora Community:

1. The underrepresentation of Tibetan women in high-ranking leadership positions has been noted repeatedly in both the literature and in participant experiences. Tibetan American women leaders faced significant barriers due to social constructionism in Tibetan cultural characteristics and gender expectations. In spite of this, many of the women in the study described mentoring as having a positive impact on their leadership development. The diaspora community may have an opportunity to examine and consider how these qualities can be implemented within these established organizations. Unless the expectation of leadership remains consistent within the Tibetan cultural construct for all members of the community, it is likely that there will remain a lack of equity at all levels of leadership.

Community-led organizations in the US:

1. A number of younger women who took part in the study described their contribution as challenging and undermined. Community service-based leadership that continues to emphasize the ideal qualities of Tibetan women, and the Tibetan language as a primary form of acceptance, neglects the rich diversity within the Tibetan American community, and the lack of inclusivity could result in the lack of engagement of community members. The women of this study have made a strong impression on this study by expressing their dedication to leadership as a form of community service. Youth are considered to be the future of any community. Can the community do more to engage youth leaders and develop future leaders that are confident? One participant recommended some diaspora organizations that already implement youth-led leadership initiatives. Providing them with a platform and support to lead, creating a sense of ownership, respect, and appreciation for their contributions, and implementing these changes within the community, can help to cultivate inclusivity.

Conclusion

My goal in conducting this research was to reveal how Tibetan American women leaders experience their held leadership positions within a range of organizations within the larger society. Participants emphasized their leadership experiences organically within the Tibetan community. Study findings suggest that Tibetan American women found inspiration in leadership through their community service, working towards a greater cause than their own interests. As women in this study took on leadership roles, they had to deal with Tibetan cultural gender expectations as well as stereotypical views. The women in this study discussed their frustration with playing the support role, and this has affected the lack of women in high-level leadership positions today. Throughout this study, it is evident that Tibetan American women leaders are shaped by socially constructed identities of leadership, American culture, as well as Tibetan cultural roles and expectations. Collectively, this construction has not yet been fully developed, but the experiences and leadership of the participants in this study are contributing to its development. It has been noted earlier that the subject of gender equity has been often denied in Tibetan communities. In this study, we understand why this conversation needs to take place with Tibetan communities in the US or the diaspora to create an equitable society.

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Appendix A: Email Communication with Tibetan American Organizations

Tashi Delek,

I am reaching out to your organization today and four other heavily populated Tibetan American Organizations in the US to request your permission and assistance to reach Tibetan community members in your respective state of (State name) for my study. This study is called Tibetan American women in leadership. The research is conducted by Tenzin Lhamo Banari, a master's student at St. Catherine University in St. Paul, MN.

I am requesting from your organization to email or post an announcement flyer to your community members through your email subscription or those who follow your social media page (example: Facebook, Instagram, etc.) if one currently exists. Those interested will complete the pre-survey link provided on the flyer and may be requested to participate in this small research project.

The purpose of this study is to understand how Tibetan American women experience and navigate their leadership positions. This study is critical because leadership positions are uniquely experienced based on Tibetan American women's cultural background. By focusing on Tibetan American women in how they experience and navigate leadership roles, this study hopes to shed light on their personal experiences. In addition to adding literature related to Tibetan Americans in academia and adding resources for our future young scholars.

With this information, if your organization is interested in assisting in my research, please contact me. I will follow up with a flyer that can be distributed via email or post on your social media platform. I very much look forward to connecting with you.

Best regards,
Tenzin L Banari
MAOL Candidate
Tlbanari818@stkate.edu

Appendix B: Distributed flyers for recruit potential participants

Tibetan American Women Leaders Survey

Who can survey: Tibetan American women between the ages 18-65 who reside in MN, NY, DC, MA, and CA.

Why: To understand how Tibetan American women leaders experience and navigate leadership positions.

Survey link will be open from:

June 2nd, 2021 - June 20th, 2021

Survey link: [Click here](#)

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/25DC6MW>

Contact Tenzin L Banari @ 763-777-2143
Email: flbanari818@stkate.edu

Appendix C: Pre-Survey Questionnaires

- 1) Where do you currently live?
 - a) CA
 - b) DC
 - c) MA
 - d) MN
 - e) NY
 - f) Other (Where) _____
- 2) Do you identify yourself as Tibetan American woman?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
 - c) Other (explain) _____
- 3) What is your age?
 - a) 18-24
 - b) 25-34
 - c) 35-44
 - d) 45-54
 - e) 55-64
 - f) 65-75
 - g) None of the above
- 4) Are you currently employed?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 If yes, what is your title? _____
- 5) Do you currently hold a leadership position?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
- 6) Do you identify yourself as a leader?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 7) If yes, can you select if it is through a position, self-identified leader, or both?
 - a) Position through employment
 - b) Self-identified leader
 - c) Both
- 8) Will you be interested in participating in a study related to Tibetan American women in leadership roles?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No

If yes, please provide your contact information here.

Phone #: _____

Email address: _____

Appendix D: Email Invitation to Potential Participants

Greetings,

You are invited to participate in my research study.

This study is called Tibetan American women in leadership. The research is conducted by Tenzin Lhamo Banari, a master's student at St. Catherine University in St. Paul, MN. The purpose of this study is to understand how Tibetan American women experience and navigate their leadership positions. This study is critical because leadership positions are uniquely experienced based on Tibetan American women's cultural background. By focusing on Tibetan American women in how they experience and navigate leadership roles, this study hopes to shed light on their personal experiences.

I am reaching out to you because you have participated in the pre-survey for this research and identified yourself as a Tibetan American women leader between 18-80 years old interested in participating in this research. I greatly appreciate your interest, and your participation in this study will significantly impact adding literature related to Tibetan American women leaders in academia.

For this research, I would like to conduct a one-on-one virtual interview with my participants for 60-90 minutes over a 1-time session. A follow-up contacts through an email or a phone call might be necessary if clarification from the interview is needed during the data analysis process. All data and documents related to your interview will be coded in a pseudonym name to ensure security and anonymity, disconnecting any identity indicator linked to you. If any direct quotes from the interview become pertinent to this research, the researcher will seek for your permission. Any information you provide will be kept confidential, which means that you will not be identified or identifiable in any written reports or publications.

In my experience, studying Organizational leadership through the lens of many who do not share the same complex background as a Tibetan American, it has not been easy to relate to these established theories and leadership frameworks. Therefore, your participation is significant in paving ways for our young Tibetan American leaders who will have a language and reference in their journey from leaders who they can identify with.

With this information, if you are still interested in participating in my research, please contact me. I will follow up with consent and appointment date/time for the interview that is agreeable to both of our schedule. I very much look forward to connecting with you again.

Best regards,
Tenzin L Banari
MAOL Candidate
Tlbanari818@stkate.edu

Appendix E: Consent form Introduction Letter

06/01/2021

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your willingness to participate in my research study titled Tibetan American women leaders.

I am a graduate student at St. Catherine University under the supervision of Sharon Radd, a faculty member in the Department of Organizational Leadership. I am completing this study as a part of my program in Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership.

In order to make sure that this research is both ethical and credible, it is important that each participant be fully informed of the risks and benefits of the study, as well as of their rights as a participant. Please read the attached Informed Consent Form for this important information. A week before our interview appointment, you will receive an electronic consent form. I will review this information with you verbally at the beginning of our interview and ask you to sign it then. Following your confirmation on understanding of the consent and signature, I will request you to forward the completed form via an email.

If you have any questions about the form or the study, please do not hesitate to discuss them with me.

Thank you for your support of my study,

Tenzin Lhamo Banari
Tlbanari818@stkate.edu
763-777-2143

Appendix F: Informed Consent Form

ST CATHERINE UNIVERSITY

Informed Consent for a Research Study

Study Title: Tibetan American women in leadership

You are invited to participate in a research study. This study is called Tibetan American women in leadership. The study is being done by Tenzin Lhamo Banari, a Masters' student at St. Catherine University in St. Paul, MN. The faculty advisor for this study is Sharon Radd, Ph.D. Associate Professor at St. Catherine University. Below, you will find answers to the most commonly asked questions about participating in a research study. Please read this entire document and ask questions you have before you agree to be in the study.

Why are the researchers doing this study?

The purpose of this study is to understand how Tibetan American women experience and navigate their leadership positions. This study is important because Leadership roles are uniquely experienced based on Asian American women's cultural background. By focusing on Tibetan American women in how they experience and navigate leadership roles, those who self-identify as leaders will allow and shed light on their personal experiences. Approximately 4-10 people are expected to participate in this research.

Why have I been asked to be in this study?

You have been asked to participate in this study because you have identified yourself as a Tibetan American women leader between the age of 18-80.

If I decide to participate, what will I be asked to do?

If you meet the criteria and agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in a 60–90-minutes one-on-one virtual interview.

In total, this study will take approximately 60-90 minutes over 1 session.

What if I decide I don't want to be in this study?

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide you do not want to participate in this study, please feel free to say so, and do not sign this form. If you decide to participate in this study, but later change your mind and want to withdraw, simply notify me and you will be removed immediately. You may withdraw until August 1st, after which time withdrawal will no longer be possible. Your decision of whether or not to participate will have no negative or positive impact on your relationship with St. Catherine University, nor with any of the students or faculty involved in the research.

What are the risks (dangers or harms) to me if I am in this study?

There are no foreseeable risks to you if you participate in this study.

What are the benefits (good things) that may happen if I am in this study?

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research. However, this research will contribute to the Tibetan American literature.

Will I receive any compensation for participating in this study?

You will not be compensated for participating in this study.

What will you do with the information you get from me and how will you protect my privacy?

The information that you provide in this study will be audiotaped and transcribed. The recording on the audiotape and transcription documents will de-identify your identity and replaced with pseudonym, this will disconnect any indicator linked to you. The researcher will keep the research results in a password-protected and encrypted file and only the researcher and their advisor will have access to the records while they work on this project. Data collected will be designated in One Drive Cloud to ensure protection as a password and a username is required to access the folder, additional layer of protection is in place with secure email notification from the server each time the folder is accessed by the researcher and their advisor. The researcher will finish analyzing the data by December 2021 and will then destroy all original reports and identifying information that can be linked back to you within six months of the conclusion of the study but no later than December 2022.

Any information that you provide will be kept confidential, which means that you will not be identified or identifiable in the any written reports or publications. If it becomes useful to disclose any of your information, the researcher will seek your permission and tell you the persons or agencies to whom the information will be furnished, the nature of the information to be furnished, and the purpose of the disclosure; you will have the right to grant or deny permission for this to happen. If you do not grant permission, the information will remain confidential and will not be released.

Could my information be used for future research?

No, your data will not be used or distributed for future research even if de-identified without gaining further consent from you.

Are there possible changes to the study once it gets started?

If during the course of this research study the researcher team learns about new findings that might influence your willingness to continue participating in the study, they will inform you of these findings

How can I get more information?

If you have any questions, you can ask them before you sign this form. You can also feel free to contact me at (763) 777-2143. If you have any additional questions later and would like to talk to the faculty advisor, please contact Sharon Radd at siradd@stkate.edu. If you have other questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you may also contact Dr. John Schmitt, Chair of the St. Catherine University Institutional Review Board, at (651) 690-7739 or jsschmitt@stkate.edu.

You may keep a copy of this form for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I consent to participate in the study and agree to be audiotaped.

My signature indicates that I have read this information, my questions have been answered and I am at least 18 years of age.

Signature of Participant

Date

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Researcher

Date

Appendix G: Demographic Information

Please complete this short information about you before the interview and return with the **consent form**. Select an answer that best describe you at this moment.

1. What is your age?

2. What is your gender?
 - a. Female
 - b. Male
 - c. Other (please specify) _____
3. What is your marital status?
 - a. Single/ never married
 - b. Married/Domestic Partnership
 - c. Divorced
 - d. Widowed
 - e. Separated
 - f. Other (please specify) _____
4. Education Background
 - a. Less than high school
 - b. High school Diploma
 - c. Bachelors
 - d. Masters
 - e. Doctorate (PhD)
 - f. Others (please specify) _____
5. What is your generational status in the US?
 - a. 1st Generation (Foreign born)
 - b. 1.5 Generation (Foreign born, immigrated to US at early teen)
 - c. 2nd Generation (US born, foreign born parents)
 - d. 3rd Generation (US born, both parents US born)
 - e. Other (please specify) _____
6. If employed, what is your current position?

Your title: _____

Please provide a short description of what you do:

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Appendix H: Interview Questions:

- 1) How do you define leadership?
- 2) In what ways do you identify or consider yourself to be a leader?
- 3) As a Tibetan American woman leader, in what ways has your experience been unique and/or same based on your cultural background compared to other leaders in your field of work? How has your cultural identity impacted your leadership experience?
- 4) How has cultural gender expectation influenced your desire to be in a leadership role? Can you provide specific examples?
- 5) Who has influenced you to lead or do you have role models? If so, what qualities of leadership have inspired you?
- 6) How have you experienced access to mentorship? Do you feel you are getting the support you need in your experience? (Through family, work, community, etc.)
- 7) How has your generational status impacted your leadership experience?
- 8) Can you give an example of when you felt most effective or at your best as a leader?
- 9) Is there anything else about your experience that I haven't asked you today that would be useful to my study?

Appendix I: A Brief Tibetan Immigration History

The complexity of Tibetan history can be found in many books and articles on its political history, Tibetan Buddhism, exile life, and many other aspects. According to McGranahan (2006), historically, the U.S. and Tibet's relations were first established in 1942; during World War II, President Franklin Roosevelt sought passage through Tibet to reach U.S. troops in China to transport supplies. The second recognized contact event took place in 1947 when Tibetan government trade delegations traveled to the U.S. to establish labor, economic, and political ties (Hess, 2009; McGranahan, 2006). In 1959, after the Chinese troops' violent invasion of Tibet, millions of Tibetans died from famine, or were killed for resisting the invasion or on their escape through the difficult trenches of the Himalayas to their neighboring countries (Gilbert-Chatalic, 2012).

Following 1947's first presence of Tibetans in the U.S. and as a result of 1959's invasion, the following exchange was recorded when the U.S. government attempted to explore labor options for Tibetans through the Alaska Yak project. The project intended to bring yaks from Tibet to Alaska, which was unsuccessful as it was concluded creating an unnecessary struggle to the existing resources. According to McGranahan (2006), between 1950-1959, before the direct invasion in 1959, the U.S. Government had reached out to Tibet's officials to aid the Tibetan movement, which resulted in agreeing to train Tibetan soldiers. Starting in 1958, the U.S. C.I.A. (Central Intelligence Agency) opened a secret training facility at Camp Hale near Leadville, Colorado, for the CIA-sponsored Tibetan guerrilla training. In a duration of six years, they had trained over several hundred Tibetan guerrillas (McGranahan, 2006; Hess 2009).

In Hess's (2009), *Immigrant Ambassadors*, she mentioned a few other significant events in Tibetan's immigration to the U.S. following these early events. In the 1960s, several prominent Tibetan Lamas immigrated to the U.S. for Buddhist teaching. In 1967, six Tibetans arrived in the U.S. to work at a logger company, which eventually grew to 30 individuals. When the logging company closed due to financial difficulties, those Tibetans settled here in Oregon and the Washington area. By the 1990s, 500 Tibetans had reestablished their home in the United States before the 1990 immigration act, Tibetan Provisions.

The 1990 Immigration Act, Tibetan Provisions

In 1989, Tibetan U.S. Resettlement Project (TUSR) was born out of a significant collaboration between Tibetan and American organizations, the U.S. resettlement agencies, and the Central Tibetan Administration in India (Hess, 2009). “Ed Bednar, a former New York City Director in Refugees Services, spearheaded the organizing of the TUSR.” (Hess, 2009, p 104). According to Hess (2009), Bednar became interested in Tibet’s issue after attending one of the Dalai Lama’s public talks in the late 70s. Before getting involved with the TUSR, he facilitated a religious tour and learned more about Tibetan Buddhism and its struggles in Tibet. Along with Bednar, T.C. Tethong, former Special Representative of the Dalai Lama, played a significant role in passing the TUSR bill through congress. (Hess, 2009). One of the biggest challenges faced during existing attempts to get Tibetans to the United States was their classification as refugees. However, because Tibetans in India and Nepal were classified as “stateless persons,” Bednar strategically came with the idea to propose immigration classification under non-refugee status, which would lift most of the financial responsibilities that came with its categorization.

Through the 1990 Immigration Act, Tibetan provisions, 1000 Tibetans living in Nepal and India became eligible to apply through a lottery style for the Immigration Diversity Visa (Hess, 2009; Houston & Wright, 2003). In the early 1990s, these 1000 immigrants arrived in the United States, and many resided with a host family before situating independently. Through the Family Reunification law, the number of Tibetans living in the US increased exponentially today. According to the *2020 Baseline Study of the Tibetan Diaspora Community Outside South Asia*, a report published by the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) stated 35 Tibetan Associations are registered with the Office of Tibet, Washington, DC in North America. An estimated 36,000 Tibetans residing in North America; this data includes Canada (Samten & Shargoe, 2020).