



LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES  
AND OPPORTUNITIES:

An Asian American  
and Pacific Islander  
Woman's Lens



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

This study was undertaken by the Asian Pacific American Women's Leadership Institute (APAWLI) to (a) identify the leadership skills, perceptions and insights of Asian American and Pacific Islander women; and (b) understand their participation and impact in higher education, government, and private and non-profit sectors.

The study also provides a benchmark from which to develop recommendations – including organizational and individual strategies – to increase the representation of Asian American and Pacific Islander women in leadership roles.

## SUMMARY FINDING

Asian American and Pacific Islander (AA/PI) women define leadership in some of the same ways as non-AA/PI women. In addition, though, AA/PI women identify self-awareness, vision, empathy, communications skills, spiritual foundation, acceptance of risk and hands-on engagement as important leadership dimensions. Further, notable differences exist between Asian American women who live on the continental United States and Pacific Islander women in Hawai'i.

- This study documents the remarkable absence of Asian American and Pacific Islander women in leadership positions in the corporate, non-profit, government and educational sectors.

- The absence of Asian American and Pacific Islander women in leadership roles suggests two very different but inter-connected impacts: first, women are not realizing their full potential; and second, the sectors examined are missing the opportunity to benefit from diverse perspectives and skills of a talented leadership pool.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

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### *Asian American and Pacific*

*Islander women are consistently*

*underrepresented in top positions in every major sector examined.*

- Within the corporate sector, Asian American and Pacific Islander women hold fewer than 1/2 of one percent of the positions on corporate foundation boards and in corporate officer ranks. Asian American and Pacific Islander women are the least represented group at the top corporate levels – far less than white women and other women of color.

- Within the government sector, there is one Asian American woman in Congress and one Asian American federal judge (both from Hawai'i); and as of 2001, one Asian American woman Cabinet member. At state and local levels, there are very few AA/PI women who hold elected office, and they are underrepresented at the highest levels of government service.

- Within the non-profit sector, Asian American and Pacific Islander women hold fewer than 1/2 of one percent of the positions on private foundations boards. AA/PI women are underrepresented in executive positions of non-profit organizations, except those serving ethnic communities.

- Within the education sector, Asian American and Pacific Islander women hold less than 1 percent of the leadership positions at colleges and universities, and face the largest gender gap of any racial or ethnic group. At the K-12 level, AA/PI women rarely become principals.

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Asian American and Pacific Islander women may lead in ways that are different from the current American cultural norm. As a result of differences in leadership styles, the value of their leadership contributions is often unrecognized.

- Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders – like their mainstream counterparts – do not subscribe to an authoritarian model of leadership. Instead they said effective leaders have self-awareness, vision, communication skills, empathy, a spiritual foundation, hands-on engagement and acceptance of risk.
- Asian American and Pacific Islander women spoke of additional leadership styles mentioned by only a few comparison group participants from the mainland, or continent – the principled leader for whom values and principles are at least equally important

to process and goals; the relationship builder who brings people together and helps build relationships; the person who “steps up to the plate” because she sees a gap that needs to be filled; and the quiet leader who convenes people and gets things done but who stays in the background.

- Asian American and Pacific Islander women also spoke of their commitment to an inclusive, collaborative, consensus-building leadership style rooted in principles, relationships and an ethic of service.
- Asian American or Pacific Islander women leaders who don’t seek recognition are perceived as less effective than the assertive, risk-taking leader archetype of the current culture.
- Non-AA/PI leaders attribute humility, nurturing, sensitivity, and listening ability to Asian American and Pacific Islander women, but they generally do not value these characteristics as highly as other attributes that they associate with leadership.
- Native Hawaiian women reported some cultural differences between them and Asian Americans, such as coming from a tradition that has a historical and cultural foundation that includes strong women leaders, and being more expressive with their emotions.

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*Race and gender based stereotypes and bias pose challenges to Asian American and Pacific Islander women attaining leadership positions.*

- Study participants repeatedly cited numerous assumptions that are routinely made in the workplace about Asian American and Pacific Islander

women and their presumed lack of leadership qualities. Stereotypes that pose challenges include the perpetual foreigner, being shy and submissive, the geisha girl and the dragon lady.

- A significant majority of Asian American and Pacific Islander women working in the continental U.S. believe that their ethnicity is a major challenge to advancement. Survey participants from Hawai’i, though, identified gender as more of a challenge. Many participants also identified the dominant black/white paradigm of race relations in American culture as a hindrance to their acceptance as leaders.
- Immigrant status is also identified as a potential discrimination factor: Asian American women who are immigrants (approximately 60 percent of all Asian Americans) are less likely to be in management jobs than those born in the U.S.
- Mainland Asian Americans viewed culturally-based traditions and expectations, as well as family responsibilities, as additional challenges to leadership development. Women from Hawai’i did not view cultural values as a hindrance.

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*Asian American and Pacific*

*Islander women use different values to process the dynamic between power and leadership.*

- Some Asian American and Pacific Islander women are reluctant to claim leadership positions, saying they were just in the right place at the right time.
- Beliefs and self-perceptions held by Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders can lead to ambivalence about wielding power – which is defined

here as the ability to influence behavior; to change the course of events and to overcome resistance – or to reluctance to adapt traits and behaviors that conflict with their own sense of identity.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Experienced Asian American and Pacific Islander women can turn challenges into opportunities, by viewing challenges as invitations to make change. These women have discovered important strategies to advance ethical, caring and compassionate leadership, and they have shared some of these approaches in this study. Some strategies are aimed at organizations, some at women as individuals.

- **Do the research.** Acknowledge areas of ignorance, whether of the Asian American and Pacific Islander population that is served by the organization or of the Asian American and Pacific Islander women within the organization, including their career histories and perceptions of opportunity for advancement. Identify key resources that will help answer key questions and provide important contacts in the community. Develop relationships with the community, paying particular attention to under-represented segments of the Asian American and Pacific Islander community to ensure that opportunities are shared.

- **“Know thyself.”** Asian American and Pacific Islander women can objectively assess the “cultural gap” between themselves and the organizations in which they seek to operate. In the course of learning about themselves, they can also identify and implement strategies that will close that gap while allowing them to maintain their own

cultural integrity. This may mean sharpening communication skills, especially in such areas as asking for – and giving – feedback, selling ideas and keeping others aware of accomplishments. The women can better position themselves so that whenever possible they can work in their areas of talent. They may want to set up their own “advisory board” or personal “board of directors,” comprised of people from diverse levels, functions and backgrounds in areas that are important to them.

- **Change the environment.** Advance inclusiveness and create an environment where Asian American and Pacific Islander women’s cultural differences – including their commitment to an inclusive, collaborative, consensus-building leadership style – are perceived as a “value-added” resource, rather than a hindrance, to organizations. Through training and other experiences, provide employers and co-workers with cultural savvy – that is, knowledge and understanding and exposure – so that they can better understand and utilize leadership styles that the women can bring to organizations. This requires identifying, understanding, and then going beyond, existing leadership paths and strategies. Creating innovative ways to bring in and support new these faces, voices and experiences in leadership ranks means operating from the perspective of Asian American and Pacific Islander women.

- **Recognize accomplishments.** Celebrate accomplishments, and thereby help end invisibility. Those women already in leadership positions can communicate success stories and provide recognition especially of the “undervalued” styles of the “principled

leader,” the “relationship builder,” the person who “steps up to the plate,” the “quiet leader.” While Asian American and Pacific Islander women themselves generally may not “value” recognition, it is a valuable tool through which to provide opportunities for others.

- **Mentor and be mentored.** Create many pipelines. Each sector – non-profit, profit, government and education – has a particular culture that Asian American and Pacific Islander women must navigate and help transform. Given the low numbers in leadership positions in every sector, collaboration is the key. Those Asian American and Pacific Islander women already in those positions can also mentor others to ensure that there is a steady source of women identified to lead and prepared to lead.

- **Use this study as a benchmark.** This study represents the first national survey ever conducted on leadership and Asian American and Pacific Islander women. While it provides a snapshot of what exists, there is still so much more to learn. This study by APAWLI is but a springboard for much-needed future research and debate on how to advance Asian American and Pacific Islander women’s leadership.

- **Be courageous.** To bring about change and to integrate its lessons requires courage on the part of organizations and individual Asian American and Pacific Islander women. For organizations, it may mean setting goals and tracking results; holding managers and supervisors accountable for results; putting resources into leadership training; or looking more globally at how Asian American and Pacific Islander women’s leadership qualities can help this country thrive in the 21st

century. For the women, it may mean challenging stereotypes and biased behavior whether directed at them or others; taking risks; going after higher visibility assignments; becoming more adaptable in different environments.

Most challenges to leadership – whether organizational or individual – are about vision, capacity to move others to believe in that vision, and compassion for those who fear taking action. These are the very qualities that Asian American and Pacific Islander women have identified as their leadership strengths.

So, what happens next? Individual Asian American and Pacific Islander women have certain options; organizations have others. For those responsible for shaping events that will affect Asian American and Pacific Islander women and girls, the opportunities for action are many. The Asian Pacific American Women’s Leadership Institute commits to do the following:

1. Continue to offer its premier Leadership Fellowship Program.
2. Explore producing a new program for emerging women leaders.
3. Provide information to anyone interested in knowing more about Asian American and Pacific Islander women and leadership.
4. Hold regional workshops that will reach more Asian American and Pacific Islander women who want to explore the meaning of leadership and how it applies to their lives.
5. Create clarity and consistency around the values of ethical, caring and compassionate leadership, building upon the experiences, knowledge, skills and wisdom of the community of Asian American and Pacific Islander women.

For information or to obtain a copy of the full 250-page research report, contact APAWLI at [info@apawli.org](mailto:info@apawli.org).

## ABOUT APAWLI

The Asian Pacific American Women’s Leadership Institute (APAWLI) is a national, nonprofit organization dedicated to the enhancement and enrichment of leadership skills for Asian American and Pacific Islander (AA/PI) women through education, networking and mentoring.

## VISION

Ethical, caring and compassionate Asian American and Pacific Islander women at leadership tables.

## MISSION

Address the challenges facing U.S. and to nurture trusteeship within our communities by expanding leadership capacity, fostering awareness of Asian American and Pacific Islander issues, creating a supportive network of AA/PI women and strengthening community.

Some believe leaders are born and not made. APAWLI believes that under the right circumstances, each of us has the innate power and ability to lead. Furthermore, APAWLI recognizes that even born leaders benefit from leadership training. APAWLI approaches leadership with a three-step process that includes self-knowledge, self-improvement and recognizing one’s passion. These steps culminate with creating and seizing opportunities to take action. Leadership requires, vision, courage, will and desire to make a difference.

APAWLI programs are designed to help women answer two questions “Who am I” and “So What” – because we believe that success in leadership is assured for those who discover their gifts and talents and apply them to their passion.

APAWLI believes that effective and ethical leaders continually move beyond established paradigms to create new and better visions and connections – both personally and professionally. We help build a solid base for ethical leadership – the first step is by understanding our inner self and gaining knowledge of one’s own identity, culture and history.

## PRESENT APAWLI PROGRAMS

Fellowship Program  
Intensive Leadership  
Training Workshops  
Bi-Annual Summits  
Research

AN ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER WOMAN'S LENS

**Asian American and Pacific Islander women experience significant challenges to attaining leadership positions in all major sectors of the economy due to racial and gender stereotypes, bias, and cultural differences.**

AN ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER WOMAN'S LENS

**As Secretary of Labor for President George W. Bush, Elaine Chao, in 2001, became the first Asian American or Pacific Islander woman to serve in the President's Cabinet. Before that, no Asian American or Pacific Islander woman had even served in a senior White House staff position.**



# HIGHLIGHTS OF THE STUDY

## I. INTRODUCTION

This multi-phase study was undertaken by the Asian Pacific American Women's Leadership Institute (APAWLI) to (a) identify the leadership skills, perceptions and insights of Asian American and Pacific Islander women; and (b) understand their experiences in higher education, government, and private and non-profit sectors.

The study also provides a benchmark from which to develop recommendations – including organizational and individual strategies – to increase the representation of Asian American and Pacific Islander women in leadership roles.

### SUMMARY FINDING:

Asian American and Pacific Islander women experience significant challenges to attaining leadership positions in all major sectors of the economy due to racial and gender stereotypes, bias, and cultural differences.

- This study offers extensive documentation of the absence of Asian American and Pacific Islander women in leadership positions throughout society.

Implicit in this summary finding is a double social impact: 1) Asian American and Pacific Islander women are not realizing their full potential as contributors and leaders in their chosen professions; 2) the nation's corpora-

tions, government at all levels, educational institutions, and non-profit organizations are being denied the opportunity to benefit from the diverse perspectives and skills of a talented group of individuals.

APAWLI is the only national, non-profit organization dedicated to leadership development and fellowship for Asian Pacific American women. Since APAWLI was founded in 1993, the Institute has successfully drawn women of vision, passion, and exceptional commitment to the values of ethical, caring and compassionate leadership. Fifty-seven women have participated in the three-week Leadership Institute, and 800 women have participated in its other intensive programs and summits.

## II. APAWLI RESEARCH GOALS AND METHODOLOGY

- To collect and analyze existing and original data about Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders;
- To examine how Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders perceive themselves;
- To assess how they are perceived by other leaders;
- To review some critical issues facing Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders; and
- To recommend measures to advance caring and ethical leadership by Asian American and Pacific Islander women.

## METHODOLOGY

Sources for this study consisted of three major components:

(1) **Focus Groups and Interviews.** Researchers conducted 12 focus groups with 83 Asian American and Pacific Islander women, in six cities (Chicago, Honolulu, Houston, Los Angeles, Philadelphia and Washington, DC). They also completed in-depth interviews of 67 Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders. See Section XII, Tables 1 through 5 for a more detailed profile of participants.

The study also contains information from interviews of 35 “comparison group” members. This group, which provided a range of perspectives held by the general community about Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders, included white, African American and Latino men and women, and also Asian American and Pacific Islander men. See Section XII, Table 6 for a more detailed profile of the comparison group.

(2) **Questionnaire.** Two-thirds of 267 respondents to the questionnaire were from California and Hawai‘i, where 75 percent of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders live.

All participants in the focus groups, interviews and questionnaires were identified by the Institute, researchers and other community leaders. While they do not comprise a representative sample of the whole diversity of the communities, they provide a great deal information about the qualities, characteristics, and beliefs of Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders.

(3) **Literature Review.** Researchers surveyed current sources of information on Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders found in scholarly journals, books and in dissertations; and also in popular magazines, newspapers and the Internet. The review was current as of September 2000, except in updating some political data, which were based on the November 2000 election.

This summary highlights the significant findings and recommendations of the study. To obtain a copy of the complete 250-page report, contact APAWLI at (303) 399-8899 or visit the Institute’s website at [www.apawli.org](http://www.apawli.org).

Also, this report contains many quotes and anecdotes made by respondents. Some refer to stereotypes of Asian American and Pacific Islander peoples. These are used here to illustrate commonly held stereotypes. Neither APAWLI nor the researchers supports the use of such stereotypes.

## III. CURRENT STATUS OF ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER WOMEN LEADERS

### A. FEW ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER WOMEN HAVE ATTAINED VISIBLE ROLES OF LEADERSHIP IN THE LARGER SOCIETY.

- Asian American and Pacific Islander women’s leaders are significantly and consistently underrepresented in the four major employment sectors – corporate,

government, non-profit and education.

- Asian American women who are immigrants (approximately 60 percent of all Asian Americans) are even less likely to be in management jobs than U.S.-born Asian American women.

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are significantly and  
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### B. CORPORATE SECTOR LEADERSHIP

- Asian American and Pacific Islander women corporate managers are underrepresented in the highest-paying fields: durable manufacturing, non-durable manufacturing, and communications and utilities.
- Foreign-born Asian American and Pacific Islander women are less likely to reach upper levels of management than U.S.-born women. Asian American and Pacific Islander women who are recent immigrants have only half the chance as white women to be in

*RESEARCHERS’ NOTE: The term “Hawai‘i participants” refers to any respondents who live in the state of Hawai‘i, regardless of their ethnicity. This should not be confused with Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders; they will be specifically referred to as such where indicated in the report findings. In addition, “mainland” and “continental” U.S. are used interchangeably.*

management jobs, but U.S.- born and more established Asian American and Pacific Islander women have the same odds as white women in attaining management positions.

- Dissatisfaction with corporate job experiences may lead Asian American and Pacific Islander women to start their own businesses. They were second only to African American women in reporting race discrimination in their former positions, and they were the most likely to have been passed over for a promotion and least likely to have a mentor in establishing their business.

- When they become entrepreneurs, Asian American women have less access to credit than other women. According to the National Foundation for Women Business Owners, only 45 percent of Asian American women business owners have bank credit, compared to 60 percent of white women and 50 percent of Hispanic women.

- Although Asian American and Pacific Islander women make up 2 percent of the total population, their representation is less than 0.5 percent on corporate boards corporate officer ranks. Their representation is far less than that of white women and other women of color. Only 18 Asian American and Pacific Islander women (0.2 percent of the total) sit on the boards of Fortune 1000 companies, and only 21 Asian American and Pacific Islander women (0.3 percent of the total) are officers of large corporations.

- According to one study, nearly half of the Asian American women in corporate management believed their advancement opportunities had not changed in the prior five years. Asian American women corporate managers

were less satisfied with their jobs, pay, and advancement opportunities than other women of color.

- According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Asian American and Pacific Islander women in private industry are five times more likely to be “professionals” than “officials and managers.” For white women the disparity was double.

#### C. GOVERNMENT SECTOR LEADERSHIP

- There is currently only one Asian American or Pacific Islander woman member of Congress: Patsy T. Mink (D-Hawai'i).

- As Secretary of Labor for President George W. Bush, Elaine Chao, in 2001, became the first Asian American or Pacific Islander woman to serve in the President's Cabinet. Before that, no Asian American or Pacific Islander woman had even served in a senior White House staff position (Assistant to the President and above).

- One Asian American or Pacific Islander woman currently serves as a judge of a court authorized by the U.S. Constitution: Susan Oki Mollway of the U.S. District Court for the District of Hawai'i.

- In 1998, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (both men and women) held 1.8 percent of all Senior Executive Service positions, which include the highest managerial, supervisory, and policy positions in the executive branch of the federal government.

- Asian American and Pacific Islander women are underrepresented at the three highest General Schedule levels – a system of classifying federal white-

collar employees – constituting 1.1 percent of the total number of employees at those levels.

- While 14 of the 18 women in Hawai'i's current state legislature are of Asian American and Pacific Islander descent, on the mainland, only four Asian American women serve in state legislatures – two each in California and Washington. Asian American and Pacific Islander women in state and local government also tend to be appointed rather than elected officials.

- Despite these statistics, only 47 percent of the Asian American and Pacific Islander women federal employees surveyed in 1993 agreed with a statement that they face extra obstacles because they are both minority and female. This suggests that they could be either unaware of the bias or in denial that it exists.

#### D. NONPROFIT SECTOR LEADERSHIP

- Asian American and Pacific Islander women make up less than 0.5 percent of private foundation board members, according to a survey of 644 private foundations.

- While only 16 percent of the executives of nonprofit organizations are women, and data disaggregated by race/ethnicity are not available, the number of Asian American and Pacific Islander women nonprofit executives is likely to be much lower, taking into consideration their smaller percentage in the population.

- Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders of nonprofits serving their ethnic communities are more readily identifiable than those in

mainstream institutions. More research is needed to confirm the extent of the underrepresentation because so little is known about the numbers of Asian American and Pacific Islander women working in these areas, their positions of seniority, and their pace of advancement.

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In higher education, Asian American and Pacific Islander women faculty face the largest gender gap of any racial or ethnic group. [They also] face both an ethnicity gap and a gender gap in obtaining tenure.

#### E. EDUCATION SECTOR LEADERSHIP

- Asian American and Pacific Islander women hold only 0.8 percent of positions of leadership positions at colleges and universities and appear to face a glass ceiling.
- In higher education, Asian American and Pacific Islander women faculty face the largest gender gap of any racial or ethnic group. In 1993 they comprised only one-third of all Asian American and Pacific Islander faculty while men represented two-thirds. Moreover, they were concentrated at the junior ranks, holding only 11.2 percent of all Asian American and Pacific Islander full professorships.

- Asian American and Pacific Islander women faculty face both an ethnicity gap and a gender gap in obtaining tenure. In 1993 they were tenured at a rate of 52 percent, the lowest tenure rate of all racial and ethnic groups.

- There were only two Asian American and Pacific Islander women presidents of colleges and universities in 1996.

- Asian American and Pacific Islander women rarely become principals of K-12 schools. According to a 1993-94 study, the most recent data available, they represented just 0.78 percent of all principals.

## IV.

### APAWLI FINDINGS ON THE LEADERSHIP PATHS AND SELF-PERCEPTIONS OF ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER WOMEN

Family, school, and early intercultural interactions with the majority population were formative for many Asian American and Pacific Islander women in their paths to leadership.

#### A. EARLY FAMILY INFLUENCES WERE IMPORTANT FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

- **Parental emphasis on educational achievement.** According to many mainland participants in focus groups and individual interviews, their parents' emphasis on educational achievement was a major influence in their formative years.

- **Struggles of immigrant parents.** The struggle of immigrant parents made a significant impression on about half of the U.S.-born continental participants. A Japanese American union officer who grew up in a multi-generational home told of the conflicting views held by her grandmother and her own parents. Her grandmother impressed upon her the notion that a woman's role was to be a good wife and bear sons, while her parents told her that she could be anything she wanted to be.

- **Parents' work ethic.** Another participant attributed her work ethic to her parents, who taught her "to appreciate what you have and work hard for what you want."

- **Community service and addressing injustice.** Most of the focus-group and interview participants felt that the idea of community service and commitment to addressing inequities or injustice had been ingrained in them by their parents, teachers, or other role models. One elected official said, "activist blood is part of my DNA structure," because her father was a minister and her mother worked with disabled children. These women saw their achievements as important beyond their individual gains. They felt they were "making their parents proud," that their success was "good for the Asian Pacific American community," and that they served as "role models for other women." A Pacific Island community leader talked about the "privileges" she has – education and the ability to navigate in the Western world – and the responsibility she feels to open doors for others.

- **Parental activism.** A nonprofit leader in Washington, D.C. learned about activism from her father, who

Most of the focus-group and interview participants felt that the idea of community service and commitment to addressing inequities or injustice had been ingrained in them by their parents, teachers, or other role models. One elected official said, “activist blood is part of my DNA structure,” because her father was a minister and her mother worked with disabled children.

was passionate about human rights in Korea. “He went to demonstrations and I thought that was what every Korean family did. It wasn’t until I went to college that I found out, no, that is not what every Korean does. But I really learned to respect my father for being out in front and pushing against the popular or mainstream Korean community because he was ostracized a lot and . . . he fought back. I think that really prepared me for taking some leadership roles in college.”

● **Mothers’ influence.** A few Hawai’i participants specifically mentioned their mothers’ strong influence in their early development. One high-ranking government leader told of her mother’s decision to leave her abusive husband in Japan and immigrate to Hawai’i with her two young children. That decision, along with other sacrifices her mother made to raise her children alone, encouraged her daughter to take risks in her own life. In speaking of her gratitude toward her mother, she said, “[W]hen you look at her, she just looks like a regular, normal person. But I start talking about her and all she had to do to bring U.S. here . . . I put it in context. Nothing I can do equals what she did. She’s been a profound influence on me.”

● **Rebellion against parents.** Interestingly, several continental participants related incidents when they rebelled against their parents as important junctures in becoming a leader. Many of them said that they acted contrary to their parents’ wishes at some time during their youth or young adulthood by (1) moving away from their home towns for college; (2) pursuing higher

education after high school; (3) choosing a different major in college; (4) getting involved politically; (5) taking leadership roles in extracurricular activities; (6) applying for scholarships in order to attend a better school; (7) not working in their parents’ business; (8) not getting married; (9) marrying a non-Asian; or (10) not having children.

B. SCHOOL EXPERIENCES WERE ALSO IMPORTANT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER WOMEN AS LEADERS.

The Asian American and Pacific Islander women in the study, in addition to their formative experiences, shared how they made their ways to roles of leadership and prominence in their respective fields. As one comparison group participant stated, “becoming a leader is a lifelong process.” Some exhibited leadership potential early, while others became leaders later in life out of a sense of necessity. A few were reluctant leaders who were thrust into leadership roles by others.

● **School leadership positions.** A number of focus group and interview participants held leadership roles in school, which correlates with the experience of comparison group participants. Most of the Hawai’i participants, and about half of the continental participants, had held leadership positions either in student government or organizations. Even there, though, some ambivalence about leadership were already emerging, as reflected by statements of a high-

ranking Hawai’i public official who began her leadership work in school. She said that from a young age she viewed herself as a competent and reliable person rather than as a leader. Women, she believed, are more likely to view themselves that way “because it’s rather egotistical to say you’re a leader.”

● **Nurturing schools.** The Native Hawaiian participants who had attended Kamehameha Schools – whose mission is to educate Native Hawaiian children – found school to be a nurturing environment, a place where, as one participant said, she was instilled with the belief that she could do anything she wanted to do.

● **Being different.** A few mainland participants, however, recounted painful stories of being picked on in school because they were different or did not speak English well. The reasons for the discrimination most often were: (1) looking and acting different from other students and (2) difficulty with the English language (for immigrants). A Korean American woman said that she had been called “chink” in school. A Filipina American attorney who was born in Chicago reported that “other kids teased me, calling me flat-nosed. I spent the first day under a desk, crying,” but the children ended up being her friends. This may not be surprising given that most mainland participants grew up in predominantly white neighborhoods, while Hawai’i participants lived in a more multiethnic, multicultural environment.

C. THE MAJORITY OF ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER WOMEN LEADERS HAD MENTORS, NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES AND VISIBLE ASSIGNMENTS.

**Mentors**

- About 71.2 percent of questionnaire respondents reported having been mentored, with Hawai'i participants more likely to have had mentors than their continental counterparts.
- Many of the women had been mentored in more than one arena in their lives.
- Among these women, 88 percent had been mentored in their place of employment, 48 percent in education, 38 percent through volunteer work, 37 percent through their families, 26 percent in a religious or spiritual setting, and 11 percent in other areas.

Most mentors mentioned by the mainland women who participated in focus groups or interviews were white men and women rather than people of color. An Asian American or Pacific Islander protégé who has a mentor with the same ethnic background, however, may benefit greatly. A senior Asian American faculty member in a study on barriers faced by Asian American academics in becoming college administrators said that most of her mentors have been Asian American women because she shares the most in common with them. (Numerous personal accounts are provided in the full report.)

A Native Hawaiian woman from Southern California observed that Hawaiian and Pacific Island leaders

tend to mentor those of the same sex as themselves. She also felt that Samoans were tied to their chiefs and their churches, where the true leaders of their community may be found.

**Support and Networking**

- Eighty-eight percent of the questionnaire respondents agreed greatly or somewhat with the statement, "I have experienced a lot of support to reach my current position."
- Approximately 80 percent of respondents agreed that they had a great number of networking opportunities in their professions.
- About 75.6 percent of the respondents wished for more networking opportunities.

**High-Visibility Assignments and Leadership Training**

- Most respondents (81.6 percent) reported working on high-profile or high-visibility assignments that had helped them advance in their professions.
- Most Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders have gone through some type of leadership training, including at work, in an educational environment, through volunteer work, through APAWLI, or in religious or spiritual settings. They listed the following elements of leadership training as most helpful (in descending order): skills acquisition, self-empowerment, networking and peer support.

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While the high percentage of Asian American and Pacific Islander women who have mentors, networking opportunities, visible assignments, and leadership training is an encouraging fact, it also reflects a discouraging counterpoint: Even with these advantages, Asian American and Pacific Islander women still experience many challenges to attaining leadership positions.

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D. STUDY PARTICIPANTS PERCEIVED THEMSELVES, AND ARE PERCEIVED BY OTHERS, AS LEADERS

- About 96 percent of the questionnaire respondents agreed with the statement, “I would call myself a leader.” A slight majority of respondents (50.9 percent) agreed greatly with the statement, while 44.6 percent agreed somewhat.
- Only 4 percent of respondents would not call themselves leaders.
- Many Asian American and Pacific Islander women attributed their success to being at the right place at the right time.
- Some said that they became leaders because other people or circumstances “forced” them.
- About 80.6 percent of questionnaire respondents stated that they had received recognition of their leadership within their professions.
- About 79.4 percent reported receiving recognition of their leadership within their communities.

Surprisingly, more respondents did not strongly identify themselves as leaders, given their high-level positions and their reputations in the community. Continental participants were more likely than those from Hawai‘i to call themselves leaders.

V. APAWLI FINDINGS ON THE LEADERSHIP STYLES OF ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER WOMEN

The study examined values held by Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders and by comparison group participants about certain leadership qualities and found differences that help explain why the unique qualities of Asian American and Pacific Islander women are often overlooked or unappreciated.

A. ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER WOMEN SHARE SIMILAR KEY LEADERSHIP STYLE CHARACTERISTICS WITH OTHER LEADERS.

- Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders, like their comparison group counterparts, do not subscribe to an authoritarian model of leadership.
- Likewise, the two groups agree that effective leaders have self-awareness, vision, communication skills, empathy, a spiritual foundation, a “hands-on” style, a willingness to take risks, and good listening skills.
- Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders also spoke of their commitment to an inclusive, collaborative, consensus-building leadership style rooted in principles, relationships and an ethic of service. This more closely resembled responses of comparison group members from Hawai‘i than from the continent.

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Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders also spoke of their commitment to an inclusive, collaborative, consensus-building leadership style rooted in principles, relationships and an ethic of service.

- Almost all of the participants described leadership in terms of bringing people together, building a consensus, and then organizing resources to reach a goal.
  - Many saw having a larger vision, the ability to communicate this vision, and inspiring others as part of this leadership model. Like the comparison group participant who endorsed the servant leadership model, a Japanese American woman legislator affirmed her commitment to this model, saying that power comes from the grassroots up.
- B. ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER WOMEN LEADERS HAVE SOME LEADERSHIP STYLE CHARACTERISTICS THAT ARE CULTURALLY UNIQUE

Many Asian American and Pacific Islander women participants spoke of other effective leadership styles that very few continental comparison group



participants mentioned: (1) The principled leader, (2) the relationship builder, (3) the person who “steps up to the plate” when there is a need, and (4) the quiet leader.

- **The principled leader.** Several Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders thought that values and principles were equally, if not more, important than the process and goals for leaders. A Hawaiian nonprofit executive spoke of having core principles that are strong and that cannot be compromised. Along with that strength, she believed, one also had to have tenacity and resiliency. A CEO of a large corporation said, “A manager does things right. A leader does the right thing.” She pointed to Corazon Aquino as an example of a person who was not a good executive but was a good leader. A national nonprofit executive said that for the last 20 years she has practiced principled management by acting according to the practices and standards she has applied to others. While some women spoke of leadership qualities in terms of the courage or strength to stand on principles, Congresswoman Patsy Mink did not view her role in speaking out against the Vietnam War as leadership, but as a moral responsibility and duty. “Duty can’t be shirked. . . . You have to decide where you stand and have the courage of your convictions to say it, even though you’re all alone.”

- **The relationship builder.** Many Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders believed that a leader can be someone who brings people together and helps build relationships rather than someone who necessarily takes

charge. A union leader said, of the ability to create relationship: “This is something women in general are skillful at and that they feel is important. I think that creating relationships is a fundamental ability for a leader. Men generally do not seem to see relationship-building as a key element of working with others.” Many other participants emphasized relationship-building in professional circles.

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Many Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders believed that a leader can be someone who brings people together and helps build relationships rather than someone who necessarily takes charge. A union leader said of the ability to create relationships: “This is something women in general are skillful at and that they feel is important. I think that creating relationships is a fundamental ability for a leader.”

- **The person who “steps up to the plate” when there is a need.** Because of the great needs they saw in their communities, Asian American and Pacific Islander women often felt compelled to step up as leaders. An ethnic studies professor rose to the leadership challenge while she was in college by starting the first course in Asian American Studies at her college. She and her classmates taught themselves using curricula from other schools. Two professors in higher education said that they never set out to become leaders; they just saw a “wasteland” and they rose to the occasion. They did not have a sense that there were pioneers; they just did what had to be done. A Native Hawaiian woman in Southern California explained that when asked how she became the chair of a civic organization, she replies, “Everyone else took a step back.” In contrast, the comparison group participants mentioned such needs less frequently and generally took more self-directed paths to leadership. None of the mainland comparison group participants thought of themselves as a “accidental” leaders, whereas several Asian American and Pacific Islander women qualified their perception of themselves as leaders by saying that they merely did what had to be done.

- **The quiet leader.** Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders, along with the Hawai’i comparison group, also recognized a quiet leadership style in which a person convenes people and gets things done but stays in the background. Continental comparison group participants rarely mentioned this leadership style.

C. PARTICIPANTS DESCRIBED DIFFERENCES IN THE LEADERSHIP STYLES BETWEEN PACIFIC ISLANDER AND ASIAN AMERICAN WOMEN.

- **A history of Hawaiian women leaders.** Many participants thought that within the Hawaiian community, there is a great respect for women. A Hawaiian educator pointed to some of the strong women in Hawai'i's history – Ka'ahumanu, Pauahi, and Lili'uokalani – and noted that it is historically and culturally consistent for Hawaiian women leaders to be outspoken and strong. An Asian American legislator commented that since traditionally in Hawaiian culture the woman is the core and strength, perhaps the Hawaiian woman faces less of a barrier in emerging as a natural leader within that cultural base. A young Asian American woman remarked that "Hawaiian women come out on top when it comes to presence. When a Hawaiian woman comes into a room, people notice."

- **Possibly less reserved.** Several Hawaiian women felt that they were more expressive with their emotions than their Asian counterparts. Several participants thought that Asian American women leaders were more reserved than Pacific Islander women leaders and seemed more comfortable in one-on-one situations and small groups, but some believed that this more reserved style was difficult to translate to larger audiences.

- **More consensus building.** One participant who had spent years in Southeast Asia and had worked with many Pacific Islanders said she thought that there were culturally-based differences between those groups,

noting, for example, that "Indonesian and Pacific Island cultures do a lot of consensus building." Another participant thought that Asian American women were more competitive, although not necessarily in an overt way. A Samoan leader of a community service organization emphasized the respect that Samoans have for their elders, and their value for a leadership style focused on family, sharing, and communality rather than individualism.

A woman from Seattle who had interacted with many Pacific Islander women leaders noted that it was not unusual for women to be chiefs in some Pacific Island cultures, so the Asian tradition of male dominance did not necessarily apply to them. At the same time, though, she also remarked that Pacific Islander women leaders faced a "triple whammy": being female, Pacific Islander, and marginalized within the Asian Pacific American community. She felt that as a result, they had a hard time getting their issues included in the Asian Pacific American agenda.

## VI. APAWLI FINDINGS ABOUT SOCIETAL CHALLENGES FACING ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER WOMEN LEADERS

Societal challenges preventing more Asian American and Pacific Islander women from attaining leadership positions include (a) racial stereotyping, (b) gender-based bias, (c) ethnicity-based bias, (d) cultural values, (e) emphasis of the black/white paradigm of race relations, (f) immigrant status, and (g) lack of recognition and valuing of culturally- and gender-driven leadership style characteristics.

A. NEGATIVE STEREOTYPES POSE ORGANIZATIONAL CHALLENGES FOR ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER WOMEN LEADERS.

Both Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders and the comparison group participants recognized that several stereotypes exist that have a negative impact on leadership prospects and advancement.

- **Perpetual foreigner.** The "perpetual foreigner" stereotype makes Asian American and Pacific Islander women appear less "American" and more "alien." Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders whose families may have lived in the United States for generations are still subject to the sentiments that they are recent immigrants, competitive foreigners, or loyal to foreign interests. Even U.S. Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta, who was born in the U.S., has been told, "You speak English so well." (Mineta, then-U.S. Commerce Secretary, 1999). Though intended as a compliment, the statement reflects an assumption that a person who looks Asian must be a recent immigrant. Another example is the 1998 headline from MSNBC's website that briefly declared "American beats Kwan" when reporting that U.S. figure skater Tara Lipinski had won the gold medal, and that teammate Michelle Kwan had won the silver medal during the Winter Olympics in Nagano, Japan. The headline implied that Kwan was not an American.

- **Shy and submissive.** The "shy, submissive" stereotype jeopardizes Asian American and Pacific Islander women's leadership opportunities, because, as several participants pointed, an Asian American or Pacific Islander woman with a modest, quiet demeanor

Women in politics said that gender became more of a factor as they advanced to higher positions because there are expectations about how legislators should look and conduct themselves. . . In the educational sector, research shows that women continue to be valued less than men with respect to curriculum, classroom, research, and advancement opportunities.

might be seen as unable to speak up for herself, “difficult to read” – perhaps an echo of the “inscrutable” charge sometimes leveled at Asian Americans – or lacking in the ability to compete at higher management levels.

- **Geisha girl.** The “geisha girl” stereotype trivializes Asian American and Pacific Islander women. Although none of the comparison group participants mentioned the stereotype, the media portrayal of Asian American and Pacific Islander women as sexual objects affects how they are perceived in the larger society. Of course, sexual objectification in the workplace is a barrier that is not unique to Asian American and Pacific Islander women.

- **Dragon lady.** At the other end of the spectrum from the “shy geisha girl” stereotype is an image of Asian American and Pacific Islander women as fierce, vicious “dragon ladies.” This stereotype seems to have originated and been perpetuated in popular media. A 1924 film, *The Thief of Baghdad*, featured a Chinese American actress who “played a handmaid who employed treachery to help an evil Mongol prince attempt to win the hand of the Princess of Baghdad.” In the comic strip *Terry and the Pirates*, a “dragon lady” character was introduced in 1934. A more recent example of the stereotype is the role of Ling, a ruthless and seductive lawyer, in the television show *Ally McBeal*.

- **Pacific Islander stereotypes.** Two comparison group members talked about a stereotype specifically pertinent to Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders: warm, gentle, music-loving, “overly” generous people who thus are not appropriate for positions of

responsibility for handling money or other resources.

#### B. GENDER ALSO POSES CHALLENGES FOR ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER WOMEN LEADERS.

- About 63.3 percent of the questionnaire respondents agreed that gender had a negative impact on their leadership development.

- **Different expectations about men and women.** The differences between men and women in how they lead, the disproportionate burden of family responsibilities on women, the double standard in mainstream expectations of men and women, and the need to work harder than men were all factors mentioned by the participants. Women in politics said that gender became more of a factor as they advanced to higher positions because there are expectations about how legislators should look and conduct themselves. The same behavior is sometimes seen as “strong and tough” in a man but “bitchy” in a woman. In the educational sector, research shows that women continue to be valued less than men with respect to curriculum, classroom, research, and advancement opportunities.

- **Education pipeline.** A recent study explained that the educational pipeline for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders is constricted by gender. The study revealed the continuing influence of the view that women belong in the home and that too much education jeopardizes their marriage prospects; the expectation among immigrant families that girls will assume more household responsibilities than boys; gender stereotyping that leaves women less

prepared for college than men; and ongoing gender discrimination in institutions of higher education.

#### C. ASIAN AMERICAN WOMEN LEADERS, MORE THAN THEIR PACIFIC ISLANDER COUNTERPARTS, FELT ETHNICITY WAS A BARRIER TO LEADERSHIP.

- **Split on ethnicity as barrier.** Questionnaire respondents split on almost a 50-50 basis on the question of whether their ethnicity was a barrier to leadership. About 50.5 percent agreed that it was a barrier, while 48 percent disagreed.

- **Ethnicity not a barrier for Hawai'i participants.** Participants from Hawai'i generally did not see their ethnicity as a barrier to leadership. The 63.8 percent who stated that ethnicity was not a barrier attributed their belief to living in a multicultural environment where Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders form the majority of the population. Many women noted that Asian American and Pacific Islander men in Hawai'i had overcome barriers to leadership in earlier generations. One Asian American woman commented that the Hawaiian culture, which forms the basis for “local” culture, has made Hawai'i a more welcoming place for many different cultures and ethnicities.

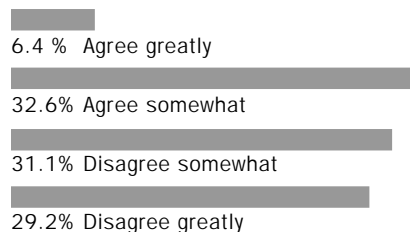
- **Ethnicity a barrier for continental participants.** Many continental participants, 59.4 percent, saw their ethnicity as a barrier to their ability to act as leaders. This was almost the reverse of the response of the participants from Hawai'i. Though the mainland interviewees often reported that their ethnicity had had a negative impact on their ability to act as leaders, many

women felt it was impossible to separate the impacts of gender and ethnicity. As one participant put it, an Asian American or Pacific Islander woman has two strikes against her, gender and not being white, and it is even more difficult for her if she has a family.

D. THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL VALUES ON ADVANCEMENT DREW MIXED, AND OFTEN CONTRADICTORY, RESPONSES.

- **Ambivalence about impact of cultural values.** A majority of questionnaire respondents (60.3 percent) disagreed with the statement that traditional cultural values hindered their leadership development. The statement elicited some ambivalence, though, with roughly one-third of respondents agreeing somewhat, another third greatly disagreeing about the impact of cultural values. Many respondents identified cultural-based stereotypes and expectations of their families that have challenged their development as leaders. Several mentioned that some of those same cultural values have made them more effective leaders.

**“Growing up with the traditional values of my culture has hindered my being a leader.”**



- **Hawai'i respondents.** A higher percentage of questionnaire respondents from Hawai'i (71.5 percent) disagreed with the statement that cultural values were a hindrance, with 46.2 percent disagreeing greatly. One Asian male comparison group member from Hawai'i said he believed that Hawaiian women have a power and depth of understanding of culture and values.

- **“Good girls and “good daughters.”** Many participants mentioned that they were expected to be “good girls” and “good daughters” by being obedient, setting aside their own desires and needs for the benefit of their family or to please their parents. At times, this has led to unfortunate choices in schools, careers and spouses or has resulted in lost opportunities.

- **Fighting stereotypes.** A few Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders mentioned that they had to fight the “quiet, obedient” stereotype that exists in Asian culture by being aggressive, loud and demanding, sometimes to the point of overcompensation. Although the “shy, submissive” image may be an unfair stereotype, many of the Asian American and Pacific Islanders admitted that there is some truth behind this stereotype. One legislator labeled it as the “Asian woman thing,” staying in the background, promoting others, and not taking credit.

- **Sacrifices.** Some mentioned the sacrifices they made to support their husbands or brothers at the expense of their own advancement.

- **Opposing values and rewards systems.** Others mentioned the difficulty of navigating between two cultures that at times have opposing values and reward systems. For example, an Asian

American male from the comparison group noted that while in America “the squeaky wheel gets the oil,” in Asian cultures, the “nail that sticks out gets pounded down.”

- **Unrealistic expectations.** Some noted that the larger Asian American and Pacific Islander community sometimes has unrealistic expectations of leaders and fails to provide a support network for them. Worse, the “crab pot mentality” pulls down an Asian American and Pacific Islander leader instead of pulling her up to the next level.

E. ISOLATION AND THE BLACK/WHITE EMPHASIS OF RACE RELATIONS HINDER ACCEPTANCE OF ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER WOMEN AS LEADERS.

- **Isolation.** Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders from the continent were more likely than Hawai'i participants to mention isolation and being caught in the black/white paradigm. Those who came from areas with relatively few people of color felt more isolated and sometimes encountered instances of subtle, or even blatant, discrimination. They were, however, more likely to be acculturated to mainstream American society, which may help them better navigate the corporate and organizational structure.

- **Being overlooked.** Other participants felt that their needs and issues were often overlooked because the emphasis on race relations in American is on blacks and whites. This has had a detrimental effect in many areas, including research, public policy, political empowerment, philanthropy, and media coverage. It has motivated some Asian American and Pacific

Islander women leaders to become advocates for the larger Asian American and Pacific Islander community. This advocacy, however, has its drawbacks. A few participants mentioned the burden of being the only one, or one of a few, in certain leadership circles. They felt stressed by having to represent women, minorities, and Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

Sometimes, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have been viewed as closer to whites in the black/white paradigm. A few participants who grew up in almost all-white neighborhoods noticed that they experienced much less discrimination than African Americans in the same neighborhood. In some instances, they believed that whites did not even view them as minorities.

F. IMMIGRANTS ARE EVEN LESS LIKELY TO BE IN MANAGEMENT OR LEADERSHIP POSITIONS.

**Immigrant status.** Asian American women who are immigrants (approximately 60 percent of all Asian Americans) are less likely to be in management or leadership jobs than those born in the U.S.

G. ASIAN AMERICAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER WOMEN HAVE SOME LEADERSHIP STYLES THAT ARE UNDERVALUED OR NOT RECOGNIZED.

- **Understated leadership style.** Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders who do not seek recognition are perceived as less effective than the assertive, risk-taking leader archetype of the current culture. The humility, sensitivity, nurturing ability and listening ability that some non-AA/PI participants attributed to Asian American and Pacific Islander women

were not valued as highly as other attributes that they associate with leadership. An Asian American or Pacific Islander woman who is skilled at building relationships and bringing people together to meet a need, yet who stays in the background without seeking recognition, may not be recognized as a leader. Those who have an understated leadership style may be erroneously perceived as lacking in self-confidence.

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Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders who do not seek recognition are perceived as less effective than the assertive, risk-taking leader archetype of the dominant culture. The humility, sensitivity, nurturing ability and listening ability that some non-AA/PI participants attributed to Asian American and Pacific Islander women were not valued as highly as other attributes that they associate with leadership.

- **Not “change agents.”** Generally Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders do not see themselves as “change agents.” In contrast, several comparison group participants highlighted the role of a leader as a “change agent,” that is, someone who can help transform the workplace environment. This was rarely mentioned by the Asian American and Pacific Islander women participants. Perhaps, given the near invisibility of Asian American and Pacific Islander women at the most important leadership circles and their consequent lack of power, it is not surprising that they do not perceive themselves as instruments for change within their organizations. It is significant that the only Asian American and Pacific Island woman who spoke of her ability to turn around poorly performing organizations was the CEO of a corporation.

## VII.

### APAWLI FINDINGS ABOUT INDIVIDUAL CHALLENGES FACING ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER WOMEN LEADERS

Individual challenges preventing more Asian American and Pacific Islander women from attaining leadership positions include (a) reluctance to claim leadership positions, and (b) ambivalence about wielding power.

A. MANY ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER WOMEN ARE RELUCTANT TO CLAIM LEADERSHIP POSITIONS.

- **Right place at the right time.** Many Asian American and Pacific Islander women interviewed, especially pioneers, attributed their success to being at the

right place at the right time. A few mentioned that they were not purposely seeking to be a leader but that circumstances or other people forced them to become a leader to meet a need or correct an injustice. A Hawai'i participant who had attained national recognition said it felt "odd" to be seen in the role of a leader by other Asian Americans because she had not had to fight the same discrimination battles as those on the U.S. continent. Several women, including a Chinese American lawyer and a Native Hawaiian government leader, told of their sense of surprise or "shock" when they discovered that others viewed them as leaders. A pioneer in the political arena said that adversity drove her to excel, but half of her success was due to good luck and timing.

- **Humility.** In contrast, few comparison group participants mentioned luck or timing as a significant factor in their leadership development. Many seemed to attribute their success to their own leadership qualities. The reluctance of Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders to take credit for their leadership may be a sign of humility or an acknowledgement that luck and timing must play an important role if they are to overcome the barriers they face to advance in their careers.

#### B. THE BELIEFS AND SELF-PERCEPTIONS OF ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER WOMEN LEADERS CAN LEAD TO AMBIVALENCE ABOUT WIELDING POWER.

Power may be defined as "the potential ability to influence behavior, to change the course of events, to overcome resistance, and to get people to do things that they would not otherwise do."

- **Contradicting core values.** Given the beliefs and self-perceptions of the women leaders in this study, their discomfort with wielding power is not surprising because the definition appears to contradict their core values. Asian American and Pacific Islander women in leadership positions seem conscious of the potential conflict and yet persevere. A senior executive at a gas company noted that Asian American and Pacific Islander women must be alert to the "trappings (privileges) of power"; otherwise they might be perceived as weak. A high-ranking political appointee warned that Asian American and Pacific Islander women who do not take stock of their power and feel comfortable wielding it to achieve their goals are not only missing an important tool but may be challenged more often by others because they are perceived as naïve and ineffective leaders. She also encouraged women to use their power to "push the envelope" because they can take more risks than more junior women or minorities. She also suggested that if there is a power vacuum, Asian American and Pacific Islander women should seize the opportunity and assume power.

- **Missed opportunities.** A few women mentioned that, in retrospect, sometime in their careers, they missed out on opportunities to exercise power and influence. One high-ranking political appointee realized in retrospect that she could have been appointed to a much higher position earlier in the administration if she had been more assertive about what she wanted.

In contrast, many of the comparison group participants who addressed this issue seemed more comfortable

seeking and utilizing power to achieve their goals. Most qualified their answers by saying that power itself is not an end but a means to achieve their objectives and should be used wisely and fairly.

## VIII. STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETAL CHALLENGES TO ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

This study found that Asian American and Pacific Islander women enjoy some advantages, including having the highest median income and the highest educational attainment among women. As discussed above, however, those achievements are eclipsed by the near invisibility of Asian American and Pacific Islander women at the upper levels of the four sectors examined by this study and by the challenges they face in advancing to greater leadership roles. Both the Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders and the comparison group participants shared valuable strategies to overcome these individual and societal challenges. There are also some broader social trends that may affect the future development of Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders.

### A. INDIVIDUAL STRATEGIES

1. **Adapt personal traits to the environment.** In general, Asian American and Pacific Islander women perceived themselves, and are perceived by others, as self-motivated, methodical, hard working, reliable, and driven to excellence. This study does not suggest

that Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders must change their core values and personalities or abandon important cultural influences. Many participants mentioned, however, that they had had to adapt in order to advance to leadership circles. For example, many Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders expressed their reluctance to speak up at meetings unless they have something “important” to say, to promote themselves openly, make demands on their superiors, claim credit for their hard work, or confront conflict directly. Yet, a Chinese professor said that in order to be a leader in the academic field, you must speak up. She noted that “in meetings, even if [they] have nothing to say, mainstream people say something. It’s like station identification.” Another academic said, “I had to make myself talk when I realized that I knew so much more than everyone else in the room.”

Comparison group participants tended to believe that many of the challenges facing Asian American and Pacific Islander women are societal and may be remedied over time. At the same time, though, they also focused on internal challenges including the need for Asian American and Pacific Islander women to be more assertive, visible, and engaged inside and outside of their work environment. Perhaps this suggestion reflects the actual experiences of the comparison group participants with Asian American and Pacific Islander women, but it also emphasizes that comparison group participants value assertiveness more than Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders do.

**2. Take risks and visible assignments.** Asian American and Pacific Islander women can benefit from taking more risks and being more alert to opportunities for visible or special assignments that can raise their profile within their organization. Several corporate executives noted that being selected by their superiors for a visible or challenging assignment was an important stepping stone to their advancement. A Japanese American elected official described taking risks as the single most important factor in her leadership advancement.

**3. Challenge stereotypes.** A computer programmer, born in China and raised in Taiwan, said that part of her job was to edit paperwork by engineers who were predominantly American-born, white males. On her evaluation, her supervisor noted that she needed to improve her English and grammar. She challenged that assessment by showing him the paperwork done by the American-born engineers and the final product that she had corrected. He then crossed out his misplaced criticism. She said that people just look at her face and name and automatically think that she cannot speak English well and list that down as a limitation because they have not been able to find anything else wrong with her performance.

**4. Improve communication skills.** Good communication skills, including the ability to be a good listener, was mentioned by almost all of the Asian American and Pacific Islander women and comparison group participants as important characteristics of a leader. In describing the traits of Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders, though, only a few comparison group participants described the women as good communicators. Asian American

and Pacific Islander women also recognize this as a challenge for themselves. A recent study confirmed this with its finding that Asian American women, more than the other women of color corporate managers, cited communication style as a challenge to career advancement.

To be more effective leaders, some participants suggested learning to speak the “male language” at work and making adjustments to their management style. They were quick to emphasize that this did not mean compromising their values but instead meant adapting themselves to their audience so that they could be heard.

**5. Recognize Strengths and Weaknesses.** Several comparison group participants and Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders suggested that leaders should assess their strengths and weaknesses, seek help to work through their weaknesses, not just be “worker bees,” and be proactive about asking for help or support from others.

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A common theme emphasized by the participants was the need for Asian American and Pacific Islander women to invest in themselves by participating in leadership development, networking, and mentoring.



**6. Invest in Leadership Training, Networking and Mentoring.** A common theme emphasized by the participants was the need for Asian American and Pacific Islander women to invest in themselves by participating in leadership development, networking, and mentoring. In addition, Asian American and Pacific Islander women focused on strategies that went beyond personal development and advancement, including gaining visibility for the Asian American and Pacific Islander community as a whole, building coalitions, and documenting the stories of community pioneers.

As previously noted, most of the participants had undergone some type of leadership training. Many were now mentoring or advising younger women. A pioneer in the political arena said that her greatest accomplishment is mentoring over 100 people in her political career – a new generation of Asian American and Pacific Islander leaders. The high percentage of participants who had been mentored reflects their understanding that career advancement depends not only on their development of leadership skills but also on sponsors who vocally support and promote them.

## B. ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIES

As previously discussed above, the management style of some Asian American and Pacific Islander women centers on cooperative approaches to problem-solving and is better suited to the team-oriented leadership model of the 21st century. Nevertheless, the pace of change in corporate boardrooms, legislative assemblies, academic enclaves, and foundation circles is gradual. Discrepancies between the leadership qualities deemed valuable by

the comparison group participants and those of the Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders confirm this. As some of the participants mentioned, change is slow because the establishment does not give up power easily, women and people of color are the “new kids on the block,” and their numbers are small. The “old boys network” is alive and well, and the “girls network” is still in its youth.

**1. Promote “Undervalued” Leadership Qualities.** Cracks in the glass ceiling may be slow in coming. Nevertheless, participants in the study identified some ways in which Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders can accelerate the pace of organizational transformation. One way is to talk about the impact of the undervalued leadership qualities on worker productivity and the organization’s welfare. For example, the women could recognize and reward the “invisible” work of building relationships, convening people, mediating conflicts, engaging in informal mentoring, boosting morale, building teamwork, and preventing crises. This work often goes on “behind-the-scenes” but is nevertheless important to the efficiency and efficacy of organizations. Leading by example, Asian American and Pacific Islander women may be able to convince their peers and superiors that these abilities are just as valuable as the highly visible forms of leadership.

**2. Learn to Navigate the Workplace.** Just as some women advised other women to speak the “male language,” some believed that learning to navigate the workplace culture is essential to moving up in the organization. This may involve recruiting mentors, developing

political antennae, and finding champions within the organization. A Japanese American elected official felt that Asian American and Pacific Islander women need to “understand the ground rules and play the game” as well as, or better than, everyone else does. Others emphasized the need to “redefine leadership” whenever possible and not just conform to the prevailing norm.

Several participants warned that excellent work alone would not take women to the highest levels of management. Some found it effective to (a) hitch their career to “rising stars” in the company; (b) learn to identify who has authority to make decisions that can affect their welfare; (c) be alert to the changing political landscape, especially with the increased number of mergers, downsizing, and dislocations in corporate America; and (d) emulate effective leaders within the organization

Some have argued that it is not just the glass ceiling that holds women back but the whole organizational structure. Gender bias may be embedded in work practices, cultural norms, and images that appear unbiased, such as the definitions of competence, commitment, and leadership. For example, the entrepreneurial culture of the information technology industry encourages informal meetings where managers provide input and protect their turf. These meetings often occur after working hours, which presents a problem for some women who have family responsibilities. In addition, the information technology industry is prone to a crisis atmosphere, so managers who are available at all times are rewarded. Again, this is a disadvantage for women, because they often carry a disproportionate burden of family responsibilities.

AN ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER WOMAN'S LENS

A Japanese American elected official felt that Asian American and Pacific Islander women need to “understand the ground rules and play the game” as well as, or better than, everyone else does. Others emphasized the need to “redefine leadership” whenever possible and not just conform to the prevailing norm.

Several women from the for-profit sector explained that in order to succeed in their organizations, they felt a need to manage others' perceptions of them. For example, one said she would never tell her colleagues that she was leaving the office to attend her child's soccer game; she would simply say that she had an appointment outside the office. By managing perceptions, women can protect their privacy as well as prevent their superiors from having an excuse to consider them less committed to work.

**3. Support Leadership Training, Networking and Mentoring.** Comparison group participants echoed much of what the women leaders themselves said about the importance of leadership training, networking and mentoring. Asian American and Pacific Islander women need to build a pipeline of leaders, start leadership development with young girls, and invest in themselves by getting leadership training. The comparison group participants also pointed to social changes as a way for Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders to gain more visible leadership roles. They believed that desirable changes will occur naturally over time as consensual leadership becomes the norm for top corporate managers and as the Asian American and Pacific Islander community matures socially and politically and the number of U.S.-born leaders in the community increases.

C. SOME SOCIAL TRENDS MAY AFFECT THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP.

- Asian American and Pacific Islander women's leadership qualities are well-suited to the evolving leadership trend toward a more inclusive, collaborative process.

- Globalization offers possibilities to provide leadership in linking the U.S. and the cultures of the Asia-Pacific region.

- When equal opportunity is also present, the advent of the new economy may offer opportunities for Asian American and Pacific Islanders women with high professional technical skills.

- Workforce diversity and diversity initiatives may aid Asian American and Pacific Islander women to increase their leadership role within organizations.

- Greater involvement in the political process will open up more leadership channels for Asian Americans and Pacific Islander women, particularly in terms of the electorate, number of elected officials, the potential to influence elections through bloc and swing votes, and for Native Hawaiians, the process of determining their form of sovereignty.

## IX. THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAMS IN THE ADVANCEMENT OF ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER WOMEN LEADERS

A. SUPPORT AND UTILIZE LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAMS.

Leadership training programs play a critical role not only in preparing women to be at leadership tables but also in educating the public about the diversity of the Asian American and Pacific Islander women population and the challenges that face them as they advance to more visible positions of leadership. Asian American and Pacific

Islander women leaders in this study found programs tailored to their experiences to be most effective.

B. DEVELOP MORE PEER-TO-PEER SHARING.

Some participants suggested the development of peer-to-peer sharing programs that can be geared to senior women from the same sectors or geographical region. An example of a successful program is the National Leadership Conference of Women Executives in State Government. Their leadership training program is done primarily through peer-to-peer sharing, with old hands sharing what they have learned with new arrivals. Through this organization, new arrivals had instant access to knowledge and resources that often took the old hands years to develop. The organization's mission was to have each woman learn "how to arrive, survive and thrive" in the top jobs. Members moved up the pipeline to run larger cabinet agencies and win statewide offices, including officials such as current New Jersey Governor Christine Todd Whitman and former Texas Governor Ann Richards. In only 10 years, the number of women holding top executive branch posts in state governments increased from 10 percent to over 20 percent after the 1992 general elections.

C. DEVELOP MORE MENTORING PROGRAMS.

As stated before, 71.2 percent of the questionnaire respondents had been mentored by someone. While Asian American and Pacific Islander women have benefited from mentoring, they have fewer role models and people to whom they can turn for advice as they advance.

Many participants urged Asian American and Pacific Island women to share their experiences with others and to mentor younger women coming up through the ranks. Factors to consider in designing the program include the small number of Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders at higher levels in all four sectors, the wide geographic distribution of Asian American and Pacific Islander women outside of California and Hawai'i, the disparities between the more established and more recent Asian ethnic groups, and the low numbers of Asian American and Pacific Islander women in general across different industry sectors.

One executive mentoring program for women in the computer science field identified certain elements for successful mentoring programs: (1) regular interactions between mentor and protégé; (2) mentor's commitment toward success; (3) mutual respect between mentor and protégé; (4) mentor's willingness to provide opportunities and visibility to the protégé if they worked in the same work group; (5) mentor's willingness to share his or her network of contacts and other resources if mentor and protégé did not work in the same line of business; (6) mentor's willingness to advocate for the protégé's interest with her superiors if they came from different work groups; and (7) mentor and protégé being associated in the minds of others so it was clear that the protégé had a "sponsor" within the company.

#### D. INCREASE VISIBILITY OF ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER WOMEN LEADERS.

Several participants spoke of the need for good public relations and media coverage, especially to ensure that Asian

American and Pacific Islander women's perspectives are included at all levels of discussion and decision-making. They recognized that Asian American and Pacific Islander communities in general, and Asian American and Pacific Islander women in particular, are "invisible" on a national level.

#### E. DEVELOP A PIPELINE.

Some participants suggested that leadership training outreach include more women at entry level or junior levels to help build a pipeline that can provide a continuous source of Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders. Others suggested the need for a clearinghouse for corporate board membership referrals, political appointments, foundation trustee recommendations, and judicial nominations to help elevate Asian American and Pacific Islander women to more visible positions of leadership.

#### F. DOCUMENT OUR HISTORY.

A CEO of a venture fund suggested documenting the experiences of pioneers and trailblazers and sharing it on a multigenerational basis. Similarly, a South Asian American woman advocated learning from the first- and second-generation women in the community.

## X. FURTHER STUDY NEEDED

Time and resource constraints limited collection of original data. Nevertheless, this study provides a springboard for future research and debate about ways to advance Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders. Future research-

ers could consider undertaking the following projects:

1. **Obtain Disaggregated Data on the Asian American and Pacific Islander Community and Women, Ethnic Groups, and Multiracial Persons Within the Community.** The study made apparent the dearth of data on the Asian American and Pacific Islander community as a whole, and on the women and the ethnic groups within the community. At times, the data lumped all minorities together; at other times, statistics were available only for African Americans and Hispanics. Even when data on the Asian American and Pacific Islander community were available, data on women were often not disaggregated from the whole. Further, the need for disaggregated data on multiracial persons is growing because that population group continues to grow.

2. **Study Marginalized Groups Within the Asian American and Pacific Islander Community.** Because of their longer histories in the U.S., Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans have been studied much more than other ethnic groups within the Asian American and Pacific Islander community. Research on other groups whose characteristics, experiences, and needs are not as well known is especially needed. Persons of Cambodian, Hmong, Laotian, and Vietnamese ancestry have been studied infrequently, if at all; and the need for data on Native Hawaiians is particularly acute in view of the current debate on sovereignty for their community.

3. **Conduct Longitudinal Studies of Asian American and Pacific Islander Women Leaders.** Most of the information presented in this report provides a mere snapshot of Asian American and Pacific

Islander women leaders. For greater insights into the particular factors that affect a woman's career advancement, it would be helpful to follow the progress of a group of Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders over a number of years.

4. **Build on This Report.** This report may serve as a benchmark for future research on some of the topics it covers. In particular, other researchers can build on these following areas: (a) study the sectors in more detail, particularly the nonprofit sector and K-12 education; (b) expand the study of Asian American and Pacific Islander women to other cities; (c) compare the results of this study to data on other women of color.

5. **Document the Experiences of Asian American and Pacific Islander Women Trailblazers and Pioneers.** Several participants recommended that future researchers interview the trailblazing women in our community, document their experiences, honor their contributions, and share their stories.

6. **Chronicle the Work of Asian American and Pacific Islander Women in Advancing Social Justice.** Along similar lines, future research can focus on stories of contemporary Asian American and Pacific Islander women leaders who are working to advance the cause of social justice and equality. Many other women whose stories have not been told have played critical roles in shaping the response of the Asian American and Pacific Islander community to watershed events and issues.

## XI. FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Experienced Asian American and Pacific Islander women can turn challenges into opportunities, by viewing challenges as invitations to make change. These women have discovered important strategies to advance ethical, caring and compassionate leadership, and they have shared some of these approaches in this study. Some strategies are aimed at organizations, some at women as individuals. The following are seven recommendations:

- **Do the research.** Acknowledge areas of ignorance, whether of the Asian American and Pacific Islander population that is served by the organization or of the Asian American and Pacific Islander women within the organization, including their career histories and perceptions of opportunity for advancement. Identify key resources that will help answer key questions and provide important contacts in the community, and develop relationships with the community, paying particular attention to under-represented segments of the Asian American and Pacific Islander community to ensure that opportunities are shared.

- **"Know thyself."** Asian American and Pacific Islander women can objectively assess the "cultural gap" between themselves and the organizations in which they seek to operate. In the course of learning about themselves, they can also identify and implement strategies that will close that gap while allowing them to maintain their own cultural integrity. This may mean sharpening communication skills,

especially in such areas as asking for – and giving – feedback, selling ideas and keeping others aware of accomplishments. The women can better position themselves so that whenever possible they can work in their areas of talent. They may want to set up their own "advisory board" or personal "board of directors," comprised of people from diverse levels, functions and backgrounds in areas that are important to them.

- **Change the environment.** Advance inclusiveness and create an environment where Asian American and Pacific Islander women's cultural differences – including their commitment to an inclusive, collaborative, consensus-building leadership style – are perceived as a "value-added" resource, rather than a hindrance, to organizations. Through training and other experiences, provide employers and co-workers with cultural savvy – that is, knowledge and understanding and exposure – so that they can better understand and utilize leadership styles that the women can bring to organizations. This requires identifying, understanding, and then going beyond, existing leadership paths and strategies. Creating innovative ways to bring in and support these new faces, voices and experiences in leadership ranks means operating from the perspective of Asian American and Pacific Islander women.

- **Recognize accomplishments.** Celebrate accomplishments, and thereby help end invisibility. Those women already in leadership positions can communicate success stories and provide recognition especially of the "undervalued" styles of the "principled leader," the "relationship builder," the person who "steps up to the plate," the

“quiet leader.” While Asian American and Pacific Islander women themselves generally may not “value” recognition, it is a valuable tool through which to provide opportunities for others.

- **Mentor and be mentored.** Create many pipelines. Each sector – non-profit, profit, government and education – has a particular culture that Asian American and Pacific Islander women must navigate and help transform. Given the low numbers in leadership positions in every sector, collaboration is the key. Those Asian American and Pacific Islander women already in those positions can also mentor others to ensure that there is a steady source of women identified to lead and prepared to lead.
- **Use this study as a benchmark.** This study represents the first national survey ever conducted on leadership and Asian American and Pacific Islander women. While it serves as a benchmark of what exists, there is still so much more to learn about how to advance Asian American and Pacific Islander women’s leadership.
- **Be courageous.** To bring about change and to integrate its lessons requires courage on the part of organizations and individual Asian American and Pacific Islander women. For organizations, it may mean setting goals and tracking results; holding managers and supervisors accountable for results; putting resources into leadership training; or looking more globally at how Asian American and Pacific Islander women’s leadership qualities can help this country thrive in the 21st century. For the women, it may mean challenging stereotypes and biased behavior, whether directed at them or

others; taking risks; going after higher visibility assignments; becoming more adaptable in different environments.

Most challenges to leadership – whether organizational or individual – are about vision, capacity to move others to believe in that vision, and compassion for those who fear taking action. These are the very qualities that Asian American and Pacific Islander women have identified as their leadership strengths.

So, what happens next? Individual Asian American and Pacific Islander women have certain options; organizations have others. For those responsible for shaping events that will affect Asian American and Pacific Islander women and girls, the opportunities for action are many. The Asian Pacific American Women’s Leadership Institute commits to do the following:

1. Continue to offer its premier, culturally-based Leadership Fellowship program.
2. Explore producing a new program for emerging women leaders.
3. Provide information to anyone interested in knowing more about Asian American and Pacific Islander women and leadership.
4. Hold regional workshops that will reach more Asian American and Pacific Islander women who want to explore the meaning of leadership and how it applies to their lives.
5. Create clarity and consistency around the values of ethical, caring and compassionate leadership, building upon the experiences, knowledge, skills and wisdom of the community of Asian American and Pacific Islander women.

## XII. PARTICIPANT PROFILE

The 267 questionnaire respondents and 150 focus group and interview participants had the following characteristics.

### 1. NUMBER OF FOCUS GROUP AND INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS BY LOCATION AND SECTOR

	For-Profit	Nonprofit	Government	Education	Total
Chicago, IL	0	10	0	3	13
Honolulu, HI	0	8	5	6	19
Houston, TX	10	0	0	0	10
Los Angeles, CA	8	0	0	8	16
Philadelphia, PA	6	0	0	0	6
Washington, D.C.	5	7	7	0	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>83</b>

### 2. FOCUS GROUP AND INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS BY ETHNICITY

Chinese	57	38.0%
Japanese	29	19.3%
Filipino	18	12.0%
Pacific Islander	17	11.3%
Korean	13	8.6%
Southeast Asians	10	6.7%
South Asians	7	4.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	

### 3. QUESTIONNAIRE PARTICIPANTS BY REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION

East	54	20.2%
Midwest	18	6.7%
South	14	5.2%
West	89	33.3%
Hawai'i and American Samoa	92	34.4%

### 4. QUESTIONNAIRE PARTICIPANTS BY ETHNICITY

Chinese	87	32.6%
Japanese	77	28.8%
Korean	24	9.0%
Hawaiian	23	8.6%
Filipino	20	7.5%
Multi-racial	15	5.6%
South Asians	9	3.4%
Vietnamese	4	1.5%
Thai, Burmese (Myanmar), Samoan, and Hmong		3.0%

### 5. QUESTIONNAIRE PARTICIPANTS BY EDUCATION LEVEL

99%	have had some college work, compared to the national average of 57 percent for all Asian American and Pacific Islander women.
63.3%	have completed a graduate degree (including post-baccalaureate professional degrees, master's degrees and degrees at the doctoral level).
1.5%	have completed some graduate work.
26.2%	completed college.
3.7%	have completed some college.
0.7%	stated that their highest level of education was high school.

### 6. COMPARISON GROUP PARTICIPANTS BY GENDER AND ETHNICITY

#### Age

The mean age of the 267 questionnaire respondents was 47.11 years.

The vast majority of them (86.9 percent) were between 30 and 59 years old.

Only 3.7 percent were 29 or younger, and 8.6 percent were 60 or older.

#### Birthplace

Of the questionnaire respondents, 68.9 percent were U.S.-born, compared to 40 percent of the general Asian American and Pacific Islander population.

31.1 percent are foreign-born.

This break down of birthplace correlated well with the viewpoints of some that U.S.-born Asian American and Pacific Islanders are more likely to succeed in the upper rungs of management.



Kaiser Permanente is committed to improving the health of our members as well as the communities we serve. For more than 50 years, Kaiser Permanente's social purpose has been the foundation of its community service programs. As a non-profit organization, we place great importance on community service and believe that strong, healthy communities benefit everyone.

We do this in many ways. Throughout the nation, Kaiser Permanente contributes to a wide range of community benefit. These efforts include providing health coverage to low income people who otherwise could not afford it; contributing to medical knowledge and improvement of clinical care nationally through our clinical and health services research projects; offering education and training programs for physicians, nurses and other health professionals; partnering with local governments to meet community needs and providing grants, equipment, expertise and volunteer hours to community organization. and, advancing medical knowledge through clinical and health services research.

On behalf of the diversity that is Kaiser Permanente with 8 million members, 90,000 employees and over 11,000 Permanente Physicians we applaud the efforts of the APAWLI, its staff, participants and leaders.





# Edison International is proud to support the Asian Pacific American Women's Leadership Institute

You have created unique opportunities for Asian American and Pacific Island women to share as sisters, strive as dreamers, and rise as leaders

Your commitment to developing leadership in our communities has paved the way for future generations of women leaders

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At State Farm, we recognize diversity among Asian American and Pacific Islander (AA/PI) communities. Leaders in these communities will help shape and change policies on important issues. We strive to build a partnership with AA/PI communities to support them in programs that will provide people with the knowledge and experiences they will need as leaders.

Our sponsorship for this research document will help to provide a forum for AA/PI women leaders to exchange critical dialogues about these issues affecting AA/PI women and leadership in the 21st century, to develop a blueprint for turning these strategic ideas into a high-impact action plan for the betterment of the AA/PI communities and to help to identify and cultivate AA/PI women’s true place and potential in creating a competitive yet civil society. We are proud to sponsor “Leadership Challenges and Opportunities: An Asian American and Pacific Islander Woman’s Lens.”



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