

Exploring Leadership Development Among Female Asian International Counseling Students: A Qualitative Study

Jason Li¹

Wichita State University

Mahsa Maghsoudi

Wichita State University

Philip Mullins

Wichita State University

Xinyue Lei

Texas Tech University

Given the paucity of studies concerning the leadership development of female Asian international students attending CACREP-accredited counselor education programs, the authors conducted a qualitative study with the aim of exploring the leadership development experiences of these students. In-depth interviews were conducted with 10 students who were asked to share their experiences in leadership development through semi-structured interviews at two universities. A total of three domains and five core ideas emerged from the data. Domains included perception of professional leadership, internal and external factors, and advice to counselor education programs. Implications were discussed for both counselor educators and practicing counselors.

Keywords: consensual qualitative research, female Asian international students, leadership development

¹ Correspondence may be sent to: Jason Li, Department of Intervention Services & Leadership in Education, 184 Fairmount St. Box 142. Wichita KS 67260-0042 (e-mail: Jason.li@wichita.edu)

Leadership development is a complex and multi-faceted concept nestled deeply within nearly every layer of a given profession. In counseling, leadership development is integrated into training programs, supervision, practice, and other influential facets of the field with professionals from all levels having the capacity for leadership (Sweeney, 2012). To better understand leadership development within counseling, it is important to define leadership through a counseling lens and understand how leaders develop within a cultural context.

Leadership Development

According to Murphy and Johnson (2011), leadership development occurs throughout the life span, starting from the earliest developmental stage (e.g., genetics, parenting style) to the mature stage (e.g., leadership efficacy). During this process, an individual's leadership development closely correlates to their leadership efficacy and confidence in their ability to lead (Boyatzis, 2008; Murphy & Johnson, 2011). Further, Clark (2012) indicated that leadership development is a part of one's self-concept and self-efficacy. The individual's leadership self-efficacy increases through leadership-related experiences, and that sense of efficacy results in a conscious attempt to be more involved in leadership activities (Hannah et al., 2008). On the contrary, low self-efficacy in leadership development decreases one's willingness to develop leadership skills (Boyatzis, 2008).

Several noteworthy studies have indicated that a positive relationship between leaders and followers plays a vital role in contributing to an individual's leadership development (Jordan, 2009; Komives et al., 2005; Northouse, 2016). Gibson et al. (2018) suggested that receiving support through professional guidance is crucial in establishing a

leadership identity, while Bornstein (1989) pointed out that an interaction with influential people in critical moment of an individual's life influences their perspective of leadership development. A review of the literature demonstrated that leadership development is attributed to factors such as authority figures, peers, and fellow leaders (Yeager & Callahan, 2016), leadership values (McKibben et al., 2017), personal qualities (Clark, 2012; McKibben et al., 2017), leadership skills (Gibson et al., 2018; Gibson, 2016), and motivation (Gibson et al., 2018).

Working to crystalize a definition of leadership, Ardichvili and Manderscheid (2008) discussed *leadership development* as a process that is oriented at the organizational level with the aim of growing leadership potential to meet the goals of an organization. They differentiated this from *leader development*, which is similar but instead focused on expanding an individual's leadership capacity. Although researchers have specifically examined leadership development and its related factors in counseling literature, the findings were limited (Black & Magnuson, 2005; Gibson et al., 2018; Meany-Walen et al., 2013). Sweeney (2012) defined leadership through a relational lens at both the organizational and individual levels, emphasizing actions that contribute to the "capacity to serve others competently, ethically, and justly as helping professionals" (p. 5).

Professional counseling organizations (e.g., American Counseling Association [ACA], the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP], Chi Sigma Iota [CSI]) are committed to leadership development (Meany-Walen et al., 2013). Counselor preparation programs provide available resources and encourage students to develop their leadership abilities. Many programs include

leadership development opportunities such as presenting at and attending counseling conferences and hosting CSI Chapters.

Counselor preparation programs train counselors to serve others competently, ethically, and justly, producing leaders within the field; however, it is important to note that training specifically targeted at leadership development tends to be focused on doctoral studies rather than master's programs. In fact, all CACREP-accredited doctoral programs must meet standards for training that are specific to leadership and advocacy whereas master's standards do not directly address leadership or leadership development across specialties (CACREP, 2024).

Prior research examining leadership has shown the vital role of leadership values, qualities, and practices in training leaders within counselor education (Gibson et al., 2018; Meany-Walen et al., 2013; McKibben et al., 2017). In addition, early leadership experiences provide a foundation for leadership identity development among counseling leaders (Gibson et al., 2018; DeDiego et al., 2022). DeDiego et al. (2020) suggested that targeted experiences and programs specifically focused on leadership development – as long as they are well-organized, carefully designed, and culturally responsive – may help to cultivate leaders with qualities that align with the mission and standards of the field.

Female Leadership Development in a Culturally Diverse Context

Despite the growing body of research on counselor leadership, the attention paid to this concept as it relates to female Asian international students has remained relatively scarce. Research exploring how females develop and mature into professional leaders over time has also been highlighted as an important but under-researched topic (Black & Magnuson, 2005; Gibson et al., 2018). Black and Magnuson (2005) found that the

attributes and behaviors of female leaders in the counseling profession were developed and demonstrated through an interaction of the personal, interpersonal, and professional domains of their lives. Female leaders of color encountered more prejudicial treatment and barriers to leadership than their White counterparts (Black & Magnuson, 2005). Thus, given the importance of women leadership development, researchers must critically examine how women of color develop their leadership in counselor preparation programs.

A small body of literature and research also exists examining cultural aspects of leadership development specific to Asian and Asian American women (Kawahara, 2007, Kawahara et al., 2013; Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997). A number of studies have identified a set of social and cultural barriers to leadership development of Asian women (Chin, 2020; Loo & Ho, 2006). These barriers include stigma and stereotypes around race (Asher, 2010), institutional discrimination (Loo & Ho, 2006), low socioeconomic status (Hune, 2020a), language barriers (Li et al., 2016; Liang & Peter-Hawkins, 2017), and heavy home-work responsibilities (Hune, 2020b). These barriers may be a result of the challenges that Asian and Asian American women face as part of navigating biculturalism.

In the current study, *biculturalism* refers to the presence of Asian and American cultures in the United States. As compared to their non-international counterparts, biculturalism is one of the unique leadership-related challenges that international students may experience in increased quantities (Kawahara, 2007). Kawahara (2007) stated that biculturalism plays a vital role in understanding leadership development of women and minorities. For instance, Asian and Asian American women may feel they must adapt

themselves into both their own family culture (e.g., Asian cultures) and the dominant American culture (Chin, 2020; Li et al., 2018). To navigate these two cultures, female Asian and Asian American leaders need bicultural efficacy (Kawahara, 2007; Kawahara et al., 2013).

In the current study, *bicultural efficacy* refers to the ability to develop and maintain interpersonal relationships within two cultures without losing one's cultural identity (Kawahara, 2007; LaFromboise et al., 1993). For instance, a successful female Asian or Asian American leader can demonstrate their leadership competences in the dominant American culture while maintaining their own cultural identity.

The Current Study

Most of the previous studies concerning leadership in counseling literature seem to have been limited by a lack of diverse sample sizes and thorough analysis of cultural factors influencing leadership development. To address this gap in current literature, the authors sought to explore the experiences of leadership development from a sample of female Asian international students in CACREP-accredited programs. Specifically, the authors aimed to address the following research questions:

- What perceptions do female Asian international students have about leadership development?
- What do experiences influence leadership development of female Asian international students?
- How do counselor education programs improve leadership development training among female Asian international students?

Method

Given the exploratory nature of the investigation, the authors used consensual qualitative research (CQR; Hill, 2012) for the current study. Hill (2012) stated that CQR is “ideal for studying in depth the inner experiences, attitudes, and beliefs of individuals because it allows researchers to gain a rich, detailed understanding” (p.15). In particular, CQR highlights the systematic methodology of developing domains and core ideas, and the cross-analysis across cases to ensure the accuracy and consistency of data. Using themes identified in the research, we examined in-depth experiences of counseling graduate students regarding leadership development.

Participants

Participants in the current study included ten self-identified female Asian students who were attending CACREP-accredited counselor education programs across two different institutions. All ten participants identified themselves as international students with F-1 Student Visa and indicated that they resided in the southcentral United States. The average age of participants was 28 years old (range from 24 to 34) at the time of the interview. Regarding educational level, eight participants had undergraduate degrees and were pursuing a master’s degree, while two held master’s degrees and were pursuing their doctorate. In terms of country of origin, four participants reported being from Malaysia, three reported that their family originated in Vietnam, one was born in Nepal, and two were from China. All names and identifiable information have been changed and/or omitted during the transcription process.

Procedure

We obtained human participants research approval from the institutional review board at the two institutions where the study was conducted. Participants were recruited via emails sent through two local listservs and via recruitment flyers posted in multiple locations in both mid-western and southwestern research institutions. All individuals meeting the inclusion criteria were given the opportunity to meet individually with the principal investigator who explained research purpose, consent form, and answered questions. The recruitment criteria included: (a) 18 years of age or older, (b) female Asian international students holding a valid F1 visa, and (c) currently a graduate student in a CACREP-accredited program. After receiving signed informed consent forms, the authors scheduled either Zoom or online interviews using the semi-structured interview questions as a guide. Interview questions were developed based on the findings of existing quantitative and qualitative studies (Gibson et al., 2018; Meany-Walen et al., 2013; Murphy & Johnson, 2011) and focused on three research areas of interest: questions 1-4 asked about perspectives of professional leadership development (e.g., *what is your perception of professional leadership?*); questions 5-7 were related to context and cultural factors that are influential to leadership development (e.g., *what factors that attribute your leadership development in your culture?*); and question 8 was a feedback question regarding counselor education program (e.g., *what should your counselor education program do to help improve your leadership development?*). The interview protocol was consistent across interviews; but the length and depth of interviews varied depending on the participants. Most interviews took approximately 50 minutes.

Research Team

The research team consisted of three faculty members and one doctoral student. To ensure trustworthy results, all team members were trained in CQR procedures and discussed potential bias related to the research topic. The first author was the principal investigator and has clinical experience working with Asian international students as well as research experience in cross-cultural adaptation. He is a licensed professional counselor and has practiced clinically for several years. The second team member identifies as an Asian female counselor educator who served as an auditor. She has clinical experience working with Asian international students and her research focus is on marginalized and underrepresented populations. The third member is a Counselor Educator and Licensed Professional Counselor with clinical experience working with multiple populations. The fourth member is a doctoral student in a counselor education program. One of the researchers served as an auditor for this study, while others participated in developing interview questions as well as collecting and analyzing data.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed in accordance with CQR methodology (Hill, 2012). Data analysis included three steps: (1) develop domains, (2) form core ideas, and (3) conduct a cross-analysis to ensure the consistency of themes across participants. The research team independently viewed raw data and developed a list of domains and core ideas. Upon completion, researchers met to consensually create a finalized domain/core idea to ensure accuracy of each category. When discrepancies came up during the analysis, the team members consulted the raw data and reached consensus. Once the consensual abstracts were completed, the team conducted an analysis across interview areas to examine

thematic similarities and dissimilarities. Lastly, the auditor reviewed the cross-analysis and provided detailed feedback regarding data consistency and accuracy for the research team. As suggested by Hill (2012), this procedure of cross-checking and consensus-building process provided accuracy and trustworthiness of results for the current study. The frequency labels in the current study were shown as general (e.g., positive personality, educational influences, cultural unawareness of leadership), typical (e.g., teach leadership), and variant (e.g., leadership skills).

Trustworthiness

We used Creswell's (2014) methods to establish trustworthiness and reduce researcher biases. First, researchers discussed the biases associated with their personal backgrounds, demographic characteristics, and experiences on data analysis to mitigate its impact on meaning construction of participants' responses (Creswell, 2014). Second, in accordance with the recommendations from Hill (2012), the authors piloted the interview protocol with one person who met the participation criteria but was not participating in the formal study. The pilot interview allowed researchers to examine if the interview process and questions functioned properly and logically. Other steps undertaken to establish trustworthiness included: (a) participants were given opportunity to review their raw transcript and provide feedback on the accuracy of the transcribed interview, (b) representativeness of the findings were labeled as general, typical, or variant, and (c) one of research team members served as an auditor providing feedback on the coding and thematic development.

Table 1*List of Domains, Core Ideas, and Frequencies*

Domains	Core Ideas	Frequencies
Perception of professional leadership	Positive personality	General
	Leadership skills	Variant
Internal and external factors	Educational Influences	General
	Cultural unawareness of leadership	General
Advice to counselor education programs	Teach leadership	Typical

Results

As shown in Table 1, there are three thematic domains emerged from the participant transcripts: perception of professional leadership, internal and external factors, and advice to counselor education programs. As recommended by Hill (2012), data analysis within domains yielded five core ideas, which are discussed in the following paragraphs, including: positive personality, leadership skills, schools, cultural unawareness, and teaching leadership. Sample quotes are included to highlight these domains and core ideas. For this study, the frequency label *general* applied to categories occurring in all or all but one case, *typical* denoted that it occurs in between half and less than all cases, and *variant* represented in less than half cases.

Domain 1: Perception of Professional Leadership

The first domain, perception of professional leadership, encompassed a variety of the perceptions that participants have of themselves as female Asian international students belonging to a marginalized group. This domain includes two core ideas: positive personality and leadership skills.

Positive Personality

All participants shared their feelings and perceptions of a female leader and discussed several positive personalities the leader should have. One participant shared that “a professional leader should be an active listener, who can offer and accept constructive feedback that facilitates growth.” Another participant also stated,

A responsible leader is someone that inspires and encourages others, someone who can see the big picture, someone who understands that they cannot be an expert on everything, can identify talent and nurture them. I think being responsible, harmony, caring, and understanding are some of the most crucial factors to be a leader. We need to be responsible and professional as a leader but also not to forget that we are all humans, we make mistakes. Everything you do is connected to your karma.

Interestingly, most participants reported that their understanding of personality traits for female leaders come from their cultural heritages based on Buddhism, which is a religious philosophy existing in many Asian countries. An example would be Karma influencing the future of a female leader. One participant shared:

In my culture, leaders should have a Buddha’s heart in their positions to care about their people and have compassions. Unfortunately, I don’t see this in many female leaders around me when I was a child, or after I came here. It’s very sad. If leaders don’t do good things for their people, bad karma will follow them.

Leadership Skills

Leadership skills were also evident within the participants’ perception of professional leadership in the coding category. Many of the participants discussed the

importance of leadership skills for professional leadership. For an example, one participant (a master's student) explained,

I never heard about leadership techniques, nor learned from my courses. Not sure if leadership skills are required in the counseling field, maybe it's for site supervisors or professors. I will take a course for leadership skills if my program offers.

Another participant (a doctoral student) stated,

In my opinion, professional leadership skills means that nurturing of a skill to lead and manage a group of people with a well-trained expertise in a specific field of study. My site supervisor has leadership skills, but I don't have these skills. Am not sure where to learn.

One participant (another doctoral student) shared,

I don't see myself as a natural leader because I am a little an introvert type and socially awkward. But I found myself being placed in some leadership roles when I was in the schools. When asked your question, I think that I might have something, or skills that have led to those roles of leaders such as listening well, encouraging others. I don't know if I could call them communication skills. I think it was related to my temperament or something I am good at.

Domain 2: Internal and External Factors

In this domain, all participants discussed the internal and external factors that influenced professional leadership development from a perspective of a female Asian international student. Their personal experiences of leadership growth ranged from their home country to the United States. In this study, authors defined *external factors* as the

certain moments and choices participants have no control over, while *internal factor* refers to participants' reaction to the moments and choices. Two core ideas emerged in the interview: educational influences (external factor) and cultural unawareness (internal factor).

Educational Influences

The first core idea to emerge in the second domain was about educational influences. Most participants reported that their education played a vital role in influencing their perspective of leadership. In particular, participants reported that their teachers and classmates were powerful role models that influenced their basic values and attitudes. One participant shared, "One of my teachers had a big influence on me while I was growing up and learnings. She was a great leader and everyone in my class wanted to become her." Another participant stated that "school is definitely the major influence for my leadership development in a professional way. I would say especially my experiences in my current [counselor education] program helped a lot!"

Five of the participants agreed that their counseling programs provided opportunities to become a leader through experiences such as completing practicum/internship, holding part-time jobs, earning graduate assistantships, and attending conferences. One participant described the benefits of practicum:

Workplace and practicum site are the key influences for my leadership development. These experiences shaping me to be a great leader. I also have teachers or supervisors that will provide feedback that could facilitate growth in myself. Learning from them is a great opportunity to learn to be a leader.

Cultural Unawareness of Leadership

When asked about personal experiences of leadership, many participants shared that they were unaware of the concept of leadership when they were in their home country. They began learning about the term *leadership* and developing leadership competencies after they were enrolled in their counselor education program in the United States. One participant shared,

Coming from a country that's very collectivist, I thought very little about the leadership aspect and hardly ever thought that I will be a leader. I came to the United States in my junior year in high school. Before that I don't think I have learned much about professional leadership development. However, this lack of awareness on leadership development may also be due to the young age that I was at. I also think that if I'm not in this current [counselor education] program, I wouldn't develop much leadership skills.

Another participant expressed that cross-cultural experiences helped her to understand the importance of leadership by stating,

Not having any thoughts about leadership. It was until I had the chance of moving into my own apartment a few months before coming to the United States. This gave me the opportunity to be independent and led myself into a different lifestyle. In my opinion, this influenced my personal leadership development because if a person were to rely on someone else too much, they would not even have the motivation of influencing others.

Domain 3: Advice to Counselor Education Programs

The last domain, advice to counselor education programs, includes one core idea: teaching leadership.

Teaching Leadership

When asked to share advice for counselor education programs about how to improve leadership development among female international students, participants typically disclosed that they would be interested in taking a leadership course focused specifically on developing their professional leadership skills. As one participant delineated, “On my counselor education program, I never took any specific courses on leadership development, and I was not required to. I think having the students take at least one course would give us more knowledge about leadership development.” Another participant felt that programs should teach leadership related techniques and stated,

Counselor education programs should improve my leadership development by means of teaching me how to coach others how to be their own leader and problem solve. The program should teach me a toolkit of techniques that I can then teach my clients when they have difficulties.

Discussion

This study was designed to gain a better understanding of the leadership development experiences of female Asian International students in CACREP-accredited counselor education programs in the United States. From the in-depth interviews with ten students, three domains emerged from the data: perception of professional leadership, internal and external factors, and advice to counselor education programs. Examining these domains revealed five core ideas within the domains: *positive personality*,

leadership skills, educational influences, cultural unawareness, and teaching leadership.

These core ideas provide insight into the experiences of female Asian international students as related to leadership development. They also align with some of the themes such as *Teaching Leadership* and *Graduate Program Experiences*, as identified by Meany-Walen et al. (2013).

Perception of Professional Leadership

The perception of professional leadership is one of the three overarching domains that emerged from our results. This domain relates to the perceptions that female Asian international students have of themselves and others in regard to professional leadership within their counselor education program. As such, this domain includes two core ideas: positive personality and leadership skills.

Of the ten participants, all noted that professional leadership is closely related to positive personality. This finding aligns with prior research in that participants reiterated the particular personality traits to leadership and reported that leader effectiveness is related to several positive traits such as openness and responsibility (Bass, 1990; Judge et al., 2002).

The second core idea identified by this study focused on leadership skills specific to our participant population. Eight participants discussed the importance of obtaining and cultivating leadership skills as being essential to leadership development. These participants reported that they currently lacked training focused specifically on leadership skill development within their program and would utilize opportunities, if made available. These findings align with prior research presented by Gibson et al. (2018) discussing the nature of leadership development within counseling programs. These

researchers presented parallels existing between leadership development and core counseling components of practice, training, and feedback. These components are inherent and vital aspects of counselor training programs.

Meany-Walen et al. (2013) explored leadership development within the counseling profession identifying leadership skills as a subtheme of the *graduate program experience* domain which is identified when participants discussed the development of their leadership skills or self-confidence. Similarly, participants in our study did not see themselves as leaders due to a lack of opportunities and leadership skill training; however, while exploring their level of confidence as a leader and status of leadership training opportunities, participants expressed a desire to gain leadership experience and develop leadership skills. For example, one participant noted: *I really want to learn how to develop my leadership skills here [United States]. There are too few female women leaders in my country [Malaysia].*

Internal and External Factors

The second domain is comprised of two core ideas: educational influences and cultural unawareness of leadership. This domain responded to our second research question that explored the internal and external factors influencing leadership development of female Asian international students. In this study, cultural unawareness of leadership is considered an internal factor, while educational influences are external factors.

It is well-researched that educational experiences impact leadership development through the provision of opportunities to practice and develop leadership skills. This also helps students develop positive relationships with mentors who encourage student

development as leaders while also modeling appropriate leadership (Bass & Bass, 2008; Ensher & Murphy, 2005; Murphy & Johnson, 2011). Meany-Walen et al. (2013) highlighted multiple aspects of the educational experience that are related to leadership development. Contributing factors to student leadership development within counselor education that they identified included opportunities for professional development and relationships with educational mentors (e.g., faculty). In addition, 67% of their participant responses suggested that students would benefit from their programs and faculty creating a culture of leadership in which leadership development is promoted and modeled. Congruent to these findings, participants in the current study reported educational figures as major influences in their development and models of leadership.

The second core area, *cultural unawareness of leadership*, can be conceptualized through the lens of Mohring (1989), who stated, “The unawareness of cultural unawareness, that is, individuals don’t know about culture and its implications, and they don’t know what they don’t know about them” (p. 6). The idea that individuals were unaware of their culture and its implications alongside the metacognitive process of not knowing what they did not know helped drive a working definition when applied to leadership. For the purpose of this study, *cultural unawareness of leadership* refers to an individual’s lack of knowledge of their own leadership capacity as it pertains to their culture and its implications.

Our findings support prior research suggesting that female Asian and Asian American students often face challenging barriers that influence their awareness and attitudes toward leadership (Kawahara, 2007; Loo & Ho, 2006). Our participants discussed a lack of knowledge of leadership coupled with few opportunities to develop

skills and depth of understanding as to what it would mean to be a leader. Although our study was not specifically focused on Chinese women, Chin (2020) discussed her experiences navigating different gendered expectations, one of which was concerning education. She described how women from her culture were “not expected to pursue a college degree in a privileged male dominant culture” (p. 185). It is important to note that Chin’s experiences described her educational journey into psychology in the 1970’s and may be different to those of her culture today. Despite potential generational cohort differences, she describes many bi-cultural barriers that have been identified by other researchers as influencing leadership development for Asian and Asian American women (Asher, 2010; Hune, 2020a, 2020b; Liang & Pete-Hawkins, 2017; Loo & Ho, 2006).

Our findings seem to align with current research by suggesting that cultural values and beliefs may have impacted our participants’ awareness of leadership; however, desire for opportunity and leadership development remained present. Interestingly, although participants described a lack of awareness and knowledge of leadership, they also described individuals they idolized as part of their educational experiences. This evidenced the presence of mentors or model leaders within their own culture; however, participants seemed to recognize these individuals as influential figures but did not refer to them as leaders or models of leadership.

Advice to Counselor Education Programs

Meany-Walen et al. (2013) identified a sub-domain of *Teach Leadership* within their study which they used to describe instances in which their participant responses discussed a desire for counselor education programs to include professional membership and leadership skill development as a standard component of the curriculum. Our study

resulted in the same sub-domain – although we refer to this as a “core area” – within the primary domain of *advice to counselor education programs*. Our findings in this core area matched the findings of Meany-Walen et al. (2013) in that participants expressed a desire for programs to offer experiences targeted at deepening their understanding of leadership, developing their skills as leaders, and helping them grow in their ability to facilitate leadership development for others. These opportunities, although not present in all programs, are predominantly offered in doctoral level programs (CACREP, 2016; Gibson et al., 2018). Our study reflected a need for opportunities and the cultivation of a culturally sensitive program climate conducive of master’s-level student development and practice of leadership skills. As our study was focused on a specific population of female Asian and Asian American participants, our findings evidenced the necessity of cultural sensitivity and considerations as programs aim to develop opportunities for students to grow as leaders.

Limitations

Although the authors have taken great care to conduct this study in a manner that is trustworthy, the current study had several limitations. First, one of members in our research team was a counseling student. The potential power differentials could influence the data analysis. Second, our results are not meant to be generalizable due to their qualitative nature. Moreover, research teams had difficulty conceptualizing data when some of interviews did not yield rich data. We suggested future interviews be conducted in the interviewee’s native language. Third, considering the voluntary nature of participation and relatively small sample ($N = 10$), participants may have had different experiences from those who did not participate, which could have biased results. Lastly,

the domains and core ideas that emerged from this study represent experiences specific to this group of participants. Our sample included students from four Asian countries (e.g., Malaysia, Vietnam, Nepal, China) and lacked diversity. The authors concluded that the best representation of data might occur if more Asian countries were included such as Japan, Korea, and India. As a result, the voluntary nature of this study may have resulted in what might be viewed as a selection bias (Bikos et al., 2009).

Implications

This study represents a step toward addressing the paucity of counseling literature on the experiences of leadership development from the perspective of female Asian international students. Considering the gender and ethnic identity represented in the current sample, it is important for counselor educators to understand the social and cultural context of these students when engaging in teaching, mentoring, and supervising activities. Through these activities, opportunities for students to develop their knowledge and leadership skills may arise. For example, international students may be in the process of developing a new perspective, understanding, and awareness of professional leadership development resulting from their acculturative experiences in a Western culture. Similar to the experiences of Chin (2020), these students may be facing conflicting cultural values of which they may not be entirely aware during this process.

As a result of our study, we offer the following suggestions to counselor preparation programs:

1. Aim to cultivate a culturally sensitive program climate conducive of both doctoral and master's-level student development and practice of leadership skills.

2. Work to create opportunities for master's-level students to gain depth of understanding and a strong foundation of leadership and leadership skills as they progress into the field or doctoral studies.
3. Be mindful that some female Asian international students may be in the process of adapting to Western culture and encourage students to discuss their experiences while maintaining an appropriate level of awareness of cultural differences and sensitivity.
4. Be aware of social and cultural difference between counselor educators and Asian international students in term of race, ethnicity, and culture (Arredondo et al., 1996).
5. Create a culture of leadership in counselor preparation programs by the combination of faculty modeling leadership skills, mentoring students, and practicing culturally responsive teaching (Meany-Walen et al., 2013).

Future Research

This study provided an initial empirical exploration of leadership development among female Asian international students. Additional research is warranted to further understand the factors that impact leadership development of these students. While the domains and core ideas that emerged from the data illustrate the complexity of being aware of leadership development and becoming a leader for international Asian international students, there is a need for future researchers to explore the experiences of larger, more diverse samples to add to the breadth of knowledge surrounding cultural differences in leadership development within counselor education. In addition, future studies related to leadership development based on gender identity, religion, ethnic

identity, socioeconomic status, and cultural orientation of both counseling students and practitioners (i.e., professionals at agencies and private practice) may yield valuable insight.

Conclusions

While a large amount of research has focused on leadership development and a small portion has focused on leadership development within counselor education, little research has been conducted on leadership development of specific cultural groups. In addition, only a small amount of research has been conducted focusing on master's-level leadership development within counselor education. The findings of this study reinforce prior research related to leadership development within counselor education and present additional considerations related to female Asian international students. Although perception and awareness of leadership and leadership development may have been present, it was identified that these factors developed after students began their educational journey within their counselor education programs. Likewise, participants identified a desire for opportunities to further their understanding of leadership and develop their skills within their programs. While the current study is specific to female Asian international students, the evidence suggests that a culturally sensitive approach to leadership development is likely to benefit all counselor education programs and their students.

References

- Ardichvili, A., & Manderscheid, S. V. (2008). Emerging practices in leadership development: An introduction. *Advanced in Developing Human Resources, 10*(5), 619-631. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422308321718>
- Arredondo, P., Toporek, R., Brown, S. P., Jones, J., Locke, D. C., Sanchez, J., & Stadler, H. (1996). Operationalization of the multicultural counseling competencies. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 24*(1), 42-78. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-1912.1996.tb00288.x>
- Asher, N. (2010). How does the postcolonial, feminist academic lead? A perspective from the US South. *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 13*(1), 63-76. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603120903242915>
- Bass, B. M. (1990). *Bass and Stogdill's handbook of leadership: Theory, research, & managerial applications* (3rd ed.). Free Press.
- Bass, B. M., & Bass, R. (2008). *The Bass handbook of leadership: Theory, research, and managerial applications* (4th ed.). Free Press.
- Bikos, L. H., Kocheleva, J., King, D., Chang, G. C., McKenzie, A., Roenicke, C., Campbell, V., & Eckard, K. (2009). A consensual qualitative investigation into the repatriation experiences of young adult, missionary kids. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture, 12*(7), 735-754. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13674670903032637>
- Black, L. L., & Magnuson, S. (2005). Women of spirit: Leaders in the counseling profession. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 83*(3), 337- 342. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6678.2005.tb00352.x>

- Bornstein, M. H. (1989). Sensitive periods in development: Structural characteristics and causal interpretations. *Psychological Bulletin*, *105*(2), 179–197.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.105.2.179>
- Boyatzis, R. E. (2008). Leadership development from a complexity perspective. *Consulting Psychology Journal*, *60*(4), 298–313. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1065-9293.60.4.298>
- Chin, J. L. (2020). Successfully navigating career paths. *Women & Therapy*, *43*(1-2), 182-196. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02703149.2019.1684677>
- Clark, N. (2012). Evaluating leadership training and development: A levels-of-analysis perspective. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, *23*(4), 441-460.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/hrdq.21146>
- Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs. (2024). *2024 CACREP standards*. <https://www.cacrep.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/2024-Standards-Combined-Version-6.27.23.pdf>
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed). Sage.
- DeDiego, A. C., Chan, C. D., & Basma, D. (2022). Emerging leaders: Leadership development experiences of counselor education doctoral students. *Counselor Education & Supervision*, *61*(3), 262-275. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ceas.12241>
- Ensher, E., & Murphy, S. E. (2005). *Power mentoring: How successful mentors and protégés get the most out of their relationships*. Jossey Bass.

- Gibson, D. M. (2016). Growing leaders: The parallels of professional identity and leadership identity development in counselors. *Journal of Counselor Leadership and Advocacy*, 3(1), 31–40. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2326716x.2015.1114435>
- Gibson, D. M., Dollarhide, C. T., Moss, J. M., Aras, Y., & Mitchell, T. (2018). Examining leadership with American Counseling Association presidents: A grounded theory of leadership identity development. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 96(4), 361-371. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcad.12219>
- Hannah, S. T., Avolio, B. J., Luthans, F., & Harms, P. D. (2008). Leadership efficacy: Review and future directions. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 19(6), 669–692. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2008.09.007>
- Hill, C. E. (Ed.). (2012). *Consensual qualitative research: A practical resource for investigating social science phenomena*. American Psychological Association.
- Hune, S. (2020a). Introduction: Our histories. In S. Hune, & G. M. Nomura (Eds.), *Our voices, our histories* (pp. 8-16). New York University Press.
- Hune, S. (2020b). Prologue. Taking action: Asian American faculty against injustices in the academy. In K. L. C. Valverde, & W. M. Dariotis (Eds.), *Fight the tower: Asian American women scholars' resistance and renewal in the academy* (pp. 1-28). Rutgers University Press.
- Jordan, J. V. (2009). *Relational-cultural therapy*. American Psychological Association.
- Judge, T. A., Bono, J. E., Ilies, R., & Gerhardt, M. W. (2002). Personality and leadership: A qualitative and quantitative review. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87(4), 765–780. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.87.4.765>

- Kawahara, D. M. (2007). Making a Difference: Asian American women leaders. *Women & Therapy, 30*(3-4), 17-33. https://doi.org/10.1300/J015v30n03_03
- Kawahara, D. M., Pal, M. S., & Chin, J. L. (2013). The leadership experiences of Asian Americans. *Asian American Journal of Psychology, 4*(4), 240-248. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035196>
- Komives, S. R., Owen, J. E., Longerbeam, S. D., Mainella, F. C., & Osteen, L. (2005). Developing a leadership identity: A grounded theory. *Journal of College Student Development, 46*(6), 593–611. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2005.0061>
- LaFromboise, T., Coleman, H. L. K., & Gerton, J. (1993). Psychological impact of biculturalism: Evidence and theory. *Psychological Bulletin, 114*(3), 395-412. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.114.3.395>
- Loo, C. M., & Ho, H. Z. (2006). Asian American women in the academy: Overcoming stress and overturning denials in advancement. In G. Li, & G. H. Beckett (Eds.), *“Strangers” of the academy: Asian women scholars in higher education* (pp. 134-160). Stylus Publishing.
- Li, J., Marbley, A. F., Bradley, L. J., & Lan, W. (2016). Attitudes toward seeking professional counseling services among Chinese international students: Acculturation, ethnic identity, and English proficiency. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 44*(1), 65-76. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jmcd.12037>
- Li, J., Wang, Y., Liu, X., Xu, Y., & Cui, T. (2018). Academic adaptation among international students from East Asian countries: A consensual qualitative research. *Journal of International Students, 8*(1), 194–214. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v8i1.160>

- Liang, J., & Peters-Hawkins, A. L. (2017). "I am more than what I look alike": Asian American women in public school administration. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 53(1), 40-69. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X16652219>
- McKibben, W. B., Umstead, L. K., & Borders, L. D. (2017). Identifying dynamics of counseling leadership: A content analysis study. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 95(2), 192–202. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcad.12131>
- Meany-Walen, K. K., Carnes-Holt, K., Barrio Minton, C. A., Purswell, K., & Prochenko-Jain, Y., (2013). An exploration of counselors' professional leadership development. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 91(2), 206-215. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6676.2013.00087.x>
- Mohring, P. M. (1989). Cultural unawareness: A critical issue for education, training, and development. *Training and Development Research Center*. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED345977.pdf>
- Murphy, S. E., & Johnson, S. K. (2011). The benefits of a long-lens approach to leader development: Understanding the seeds of leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 22(3), 459–470. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2011.04.004>
- Northouse, P. G. (2016). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (7th ed.). Sage.
- Phinney, J. S., & Devich-Navarro, M. (1997). Variations in bicultural identification among African American and Mexican American adolescents. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 7(1), 3-32. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327795jra0701_2
- Sweeney, T. J. (2012). Leadership for the counseling profession. In C. Y. Chang, C. A. Barrio Minton, A. L. Dixon, J. E. Myeres, & T. J. Sweeney (Eds.) *Professional*

counseling excellence through leadership and advocacy (pp.3-20). Taylor & Francis.

Yeager, K. L., & Callahan, J. L. (2016). Learning to lead: Foundations of emerging leader identity development. *Advances in Developing Human Resources, 18*(3), 286–300. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422316645510>