

Handbook of ASIAN AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGY

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INTERPERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS AMONG ASIAN AMERICANS: ISSUES OF LEADERSHIP, CAREER ADVANCEMENT, AND SOCIAL COMPETENCE

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ANNA SONG

As more Asian Americans become upwardly mobile in terms of jobs and careers, and as they expand on their social options in terms of interracial marriage and other social relationships, they have become increasingly concerned about efficacy in interpersonal situations (Guimares, 1980; Sue, 1977). Bakan (1966) has noted that life experiences, especially with respect to social relations, can be characterized in terms of agency or communion. Agency "manifests itself in self-protection, self-assertion, and self-expansion; communion manifests itself in the sense of being at one with other organisms. . . . Agency manifests itself in the urge to master; communion in noncontractual cooperation" (pp. 14-15). This distinction can be helpful in examining issues about interpersonal or social effectiveness. On the one hand, to be interpersonally effective, people often have to assert

themselves and exert influence on others' behaviors, attitudes, or both. On the other hand, social effectiveness can involve developing and maintaining meaningful and high-quality social bonds and attachments. Thus, interpersonal effectiveness refers to the person's capacity to initiate, maintain, and enhance social relationships (communion) as well as the ability to influence others (agency). Although Asian Americans come from cultures that reputedly emphasize communion in terms of collectivism and sense of belongingness (Triandis, Bontempo, & Villareal, 1988), social connectiveness and harmonious interdependence (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), and maintaining face or social integrity among others (Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999), Asian Americans often experience difficulties and challenges in agency, at least within the context of American society.

DIFFICULTIES IN CAREER ADVANCEMENT AND IN ATTAINING LEADERSHIP/MANAGERIAL POSITIONS

Over the years, a consistent pattern has been documented with respect to Asian Americans in the workplace: Despite their high levels of education and technical training (relative to other ethnic groups and, at times, Whites), Asian Americans are not represented in high-level administrative or managerial positions in proportion to their numbers in a particular workforce. Referred to as the "glass ceiling" effect, this pattern of underrepresentation in esteemed positions, management, and administration has been found in professions and organizations in both the private and public sectors. In 1980, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights reported on a number of analyses and studies that addressed Asian American career advancement. Using data from the U.S. Department of Labor, Cabezas (1980, cited in Bass, 1990) found that Asian Americans were seriously underrepresented as top administrators and decision makers. Even when Asian Americans were well represented in professional corporate jobs, few were promoted to top executive positions compared to White Americans (Minami, 1980).

This trend has continued into the 1990s and through the turn of the century. For example, a study of high-level executives in Fortune 500 companies found that 0.3% of these corporate officers were Asian American (Korn/Ferry International, 1990, Table 61, p. 23). The representation of Asian Americans in executive corporate positions was one-tenth of what would be expected given their population, since Asians constituted 2.9% of the general population in the 1990 Census. A study of engineers showed that Asian American engineers had job qualifications (i.e., educational level, years of experience, field of engineering) similar to those of their White American counterparts but were less likely to be in management or to be promoted to management positions (Tang, 1991). A study of the aerospace industry by the U.S. General Accounting Office (U.S. GAO) found that Asian Americans had a higher percentage of aerospace professionals than either African Americans or Hispanics. However, both of these ethnic

minority groups had a higher percentage of managers than aerospace professionals (U.S. GAO, 1989). The findings suggest that Asian Americans may experience difficulties in advancing from professional to managerial positions in this industry, although it is also possible that nonprofessional African American and Hispanic workers were taking low-level managerial positions. Similar patterns of underrepresentation in managerial and administrative positions have been found in the legal profession (Jensen, 1990; Glater, 2001) and in the television media (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1992).

With respect to the public sector, one study examined the city of San Francisco's civil service (Der & Lye, 1989). The investigators found that the ratio of administrators to professionals was lower for Asian Americans than for any other ethnic minority group, whereas Whites had the highest ratio. Not surprisingly, Asian Americans were underrepresented among local political leaders. In 1989, 35% of San Francisco's general population was Asian American, but only 1 member of the 11 elected to the city council was Asian American (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1992).

Contrary to what many believe, this pattern of underrepresentation in leadership, managerial, and administrative positions does not appear to be a phenomenon solely associated with the problems concomitant with being an immigrant—learning a new lifestyle, communicating in English, and accessing useful social networks. In the study of engineers, the pattern of underrepresentation in managerial positions was found for both immigrants and U.S.-born Asians (Tang, 1991). A study of only U.S.-born Asian American men in various occupations revealed that Asian American men were 7% to 11% less likely to be in managerial occupations, even after accounting for ethnic variations in factors such as education level, English ability, work experience, region, marital status, disability, and type of industry. Thus, there appears to be compelling and convergent evidence that for many Asian Americans, both immigrants and U.S.-born individuals are experiencing significant career advancement difficulties in many professions and in work organizations within both the private and public sector.

It also appears that Asian Americans themselves perceive racial, ethnic, and/or cultural issues as major factors that contribute to their difficulties in career advancement. One study surveyed Asian Americans working in computer industries in Santa Clara County (Asian Americans for Community Involvement, 1993). Half of those sampled believed that their promotion to managerial positions was limited by their ethnicity or race, and 17% thought perceptions of their interactional styles adversely affected their career advancement. Cabezas, Tam, Lowe, Wong, and Turner (1989) surveyed over 300 Asian American professionals and managers in the San Francisco Bay Area and found that a majority of the Japanese Americans and a large majority (over 67%) of the Chinese and Filipino Americans considered racism a major factor limiting their career advancement. In New York, the majority of Asian American attorneys maintained that minority lawyers have fewer opportunities for promotion or choice cases and are less likely to attain partnership (New York Judicial Commission on Minorities, 1991).

DIFFICULTIES IN SOCIAL SKILLS AND IN BEHAVIORS RELATED TO AGENCY

A number of investigators have noted that Asian Americans tend to be quiet, verbally inhibited, nonassertive, and compliant. They also have a wide range of apparent social deficits and problems: Greater social anxiety and more apprehension over social encounters (Sue, Ino, & Sue, 1983), more social anxiety in situations requiring assertiveness (Zane, Sue, Hu, & Kwon, 1991), lack of adequate public speaking skills (Klopf & Cambra, 1979b), discomfort in situations demanding interpersonal fluency (Callao, 1973), lowered mental health, overconformity, feelings of inadequacy (Sue, Zane, & Sue, 1985), and a lower preference for Asian males as dating partners by Asian females (Weiss, 1970). Reviews of research on psychological distress also have found that Asian Americans experience higher levels of social anxiety and report more interpersonal difficulties. For example, Leong (1985) reviewed the career development research and concluded that Asian Americans

tended to differ from White Americans on three personality characteristics: social anxiety, locus of control, and tolerance of ambiguity. Abe and Zane (1990) specifically tested for ethnic differences on psychological distress while controlling for other possible ethnic differences in demographics (e.g., age, sex, socioeconomic status), response style (e.g., social desirability), and personality style (e.g., self-consciousness, extraversion, and other-directedness). The investigators still found more interpersonal or social, as well as intrapersonal (e.g., peculiar thoughts, depression), distress among foreign-born Asian Americans compared to White Americans, even after accounting for ethnic differences on the other psychological factors.

The Abe-Zane finding of ethnic differences on both social distress and depression raises the question of whether one distress pattern is more primary than the other. Other studies have indicated that Asian Americans also report more depression than Whites (Aldwin & Greenberger, 1987; Kinzie, Ryals, Cottingham, & McDermott, 1973; Kuo, 1984). Because social anxiety and depression are both negative affects, and they are often correlated or comorbid conditions, it is unclear if the distress differential among Asians and Whites primarily involves depression or social anxiety or both. Okazaki (1997) tested if the Asian-White difference was due more to social anxiety or depression variations. She found that Asian Americans reported more social anxiety and depression than Whites. However, once the association between these two types of distress was accounted for, ethnic differences were found for social anxiety but not for depression. Evidence also suggests that work-related adjustment is a major factor in the mental health of Asian Americans. For example, Hurh and Kim (1990) surveyed Korean male immigrants and found that job satisfaction was the major correlate of mental health adjustment.

In sum, issues about interpersonal effectiveness involving career advancement and social relations have become major concerns for Asian Americans. With respect to the former, compelling evidence exists that Asian Americans are not being hired and promoted at rates commensurate with their proportion in the workforce. As for the latter, numerous studies

have documented that Asian Americans have higher levels of social distress and interpersonal adjustment problems relative to other ethnic groups, especially Whites. Despite this evidence, considerable debate exists over why Asian Americans are experiencing difficulties and challenges in interpersonal effectiveness and agency.

There are at least three possible explanations for these problems in career advancement and interpersonal relations. First, as members of an ethnic minority group and of a predominantly immigrant group, such problems may occur for Asian Americans as a consequence of negative ethnic stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, marginalization, and tokenism. This explanatory framework, which we will refer to as the marginalization hypothesis, posits that problems of interpersonal effectiveness for Asian Americans primarily result from individual and institutional racism designed to preserve racial and cultural hegemony by keeping Asians on the social margins of society. Some have argued, though, that Asian Americans often lack certain social and interpersonal skills considered instrumental for leadership positions and for establishing and maintaining good social relations. The second factor, which we will refer to as the skills deficit hypothesis, may better explain these problems in interpersonal effectiveness. It should be noted that the first two factors may be related in that marginalization experiences may prevent Asian Americans from developing the requisite skills for interpersonal effectiveness.

Finally, a third explanation centers on how behavioral performances can be adversely affected. It is a well-known fact that one of the most effective ways of inhibiting a behavior is to have the person perform a behavior incompatible with the targeted behavior so that the performance of the former prevents the occurrence of the latter. For example, reasoning that relaxation responses were incompatible with anxiety reactions, Wolpe (1958) developed a therapy for phobic anxiety disorders, systematic desensitization, which applied the anxiety-inhibiting effects of deep muscle relaxation to allow clients to tolerate greater levels of anxiety-eliciting stimuli. In a similar fashion, for Asian American individuals, culturally reinforced and socialized behavioral tendencies may

be incompatible or inhibit the learning or use of certain skills and behaviors needed for greater interpersonal effectiveness in Western cultural contexts. If, in certain Asian cultures, a person is taught and socialized to be modest, self-effacing, respectful to authority figures, and mindful of preserving interpersonal harmony, these tendencies may inhibit or prevent the performance of the behaviors and skills considered essential for career advancement and effective social relations in Western societies and cultures. Essentially, this may be the behavioral outcome or end product of the effects of cultural conflicts in values and worldviews for bicultural individuals such as Asian Americans. This third factor, which we refer to as the incompatible behavior hypothesis, may also be a compelling explanation for the interpersonal issues concerning Asian Americans. In this chapter, we address the challenges and difficulties faced by Asian Americans in interpersonal issues of agency (leadership and career advancement) and critically review the research using the three hypotheses as possible explanatory frameworks for understanding the ethnocultural issues in this area of interpersonal effectiveness.

THE PARADOX OF ASIAN AMERICAN LEADERSHIP

The case of Asian Americans in leadership presents an interesting paradox. As a group, they are the most educated in the United States: According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2004), 50% of Asian adults have college degrees (national average, 27%), and 19% have advanced degrees (national average 9%). Adolescents score higher on standardized tests, such as the SATs, than other ethnic groups (College Board National Report, 2002). In addition, portrayals of Asians in mass media since the 60s have been of a group exhibiting strong family values, determination, industriousness, high socialization, and conciliatory behavior (Mok, 1998). By all accounts, it seems that Asian Americans are enormously successful in American society. Herein lies the paradox: Although the Asian American stereotype is that of a successful, industrious ethnic group, they are rarely seen in positions of leadership. Indeed, leadership

researchers, including Bass (1990), have argued that even though Asian Americans, as a group, possess the traits and management decision-making skills necessary for leadership positions, they are very much underrepresented in corporate management, as they represent 6% of all college graduates (National Center for Education, 2000) but only 0.3% of American corporate executives (Xin, 2004).

The paradoxical lack of Asian American leaders becomes more comprehensible when the role of culture is considered. Most theoretical models are based on Western conceptions of leadership and therefore are more likely to incorporate traits and behaviors that are socially valued in European American societies. Many of these traits may not be valued by Asian cultures, and in some cases, may conflict with Asian values. Subsequently, these potential conflicts may obstruct Asian Americans' ability to be recognized as leaders, and perform in leadership roles. Moreover, these incongruities may also increase negative stereotyping against Asians, which, in turn, increases the likelihood of discrimination.

The following sections explore different explanations for the glass ceiling that Asians can't seem to penetrate. First, general theories on leadership and empirical studies that isolate traits and behaviors conducive to advancement in organizations are described. Second, the possibility that prejudice, discrimination, and racism form a plausible basis for the lack of Asian leaders and managers is considered. Third, relevant research is reviewed to determine if skill deficits in interpersonal qualities can account for these challenges in interpersonal effectiveness among Asian Americans. Lastly, the discussion turns to how several cultural factors may be incompatible with Western conceptions of leadership. In this regard, several hypotheses are presented on how culture-specific factors, such as face-saving orientation and dialectical thinking, might occlude organizational advancement.

WHAT IS A LEADER?

Even though there are several theories of leadership development, several common threads

regarding the nature of leadership unite most perspectives. Most apparent is the influence of economist-sociologist Max Weber's (1918) description of charismatic leadership: "Devotion to the charisma of the prophet . . . means that the leader is personally recognized as the innerly 'called' leader of men. Men do not obey him by virtue of tradition or statute, but because they believe in him" (p. 17). Furthermore, Weber expanded his conception of charismatic leadership as a relationship where one person (leader) influences another or others (followers). Charismatic leaders emerge when there is a crisis or special problem. During this time of need, leaders are the individuals who provide clear solutions to problems and effectively relay these ideas to followers.

Current leadership researchers have expounded on Weber's theory of charismatic leadership to apply it to modern-day, leader-follower environments. Bass's (1990, 1997) theory of transformational leadership is one of the most widely cited frameworks for charismatic leadership in organizational systems. According to Bass, two leadership styles emerge in hierarchical organizations: transactional and transformational. Transactional leadership is based on reward contingencies, and acts are rewarded on fixed, one-to-one schedules. Transformational leadership is based on persuading and motivating individuals to change their personal goals and accept collective goals. "People jockey for positions in a transactional group, whereas they share common goals in a transformational group. Rules and regulations dominate the transactional organization; adaptability is a characteristic of the transformational organization" (p.131). Although transactional leadership is common within hierarchical organizations, transformational leadership is the ideal form of leadership and can turn an ordinary leader into an icon.

Several empirical works have elucidated the nature of transformational leadership. Conger and Kanungo (1994) define leadership as a transformation of followers from one position to an improved position. A leader accomplishes this by clearly articulating a clear vision, showing sensitivity to others' needs, and demonstrating creativity and vision. Riggio (1986) and Groves (2005) argue that charismatic leaders'

influence over followers lies in their social and emotional skills. Social control, as conceptualized by Riggio (1986) is a social self-presentation skill that involves self-monitoring and social adaptability. People who have high social control adjust their behavior to fit varying social settings and situations. Grace, tactfulness, confidence, and acting abilities are all within a charismatic leader's repertoire of traits. In addition, validation studies conducted by Riggio (1986) have demonstrated convergent validity: Self-control is positively correlated with extraversion and negatively correlated with other-directedness, two dimensions that should contrast with one another.

Effective leaders also seem to be skilled in emotional expressivity, which is the ability to communicate emotional states using nonverbal gestures and expressions. According to several investigators, charismatic delivery style is characterized by appropriate eye contact, animated facial expressions, body gestures, and posture. Using these skills, leaders establish connections with followers and communicate their plans and influence. This argument has been supported by other empirical studies demonstrating the importance of body posture and gestures, speaking rate, smiles, eye contact, facial expressions, verbal tone, and touch to charismatic leadership (Gardner & Avolio, 1998; Riggio, 1992). These aspects of nonverbal communication are so important that without them, visionary speeches are rated uncharismatic and with them, nonvisionary speeches charismatic (Holladay & Coombs, 1994).

To summarize the empirical findings discussed in this section, charismatic leadership is characterized by extraversion, high social control, high emotional expressivity, and the ability to create group cohesion. Returning to our original line of inquiry, if we know what it takes to be a leader, why are there so few Asian American leaders? And why do Asian Americans seem to experience relatively more problems in advancing their careers than Whites do? As indicated earlier, several hypotheses may explain this differential pattern in interpersonal effectiveness. First, it is possible that Asians Americans face social marginalization through direct and indirect discrimination, thereby preventing mobility to upper-level management occupations. Second, contrary to Bass's (1990) assertion, Asians

may lack the general traits and skills necessary for leadership or consideration for leadership positions. To be more specific, although Asians are highly educated and motivated as a group, they may not have the "soft skills" necessary to be noticed and promoted to upper management levels. Lastly, Asians may have certain culturally socialized characteristics, attitudes, or values that conflict with or are incompatible with routes to leadership positions. Particularly pertinent would be characteristics or orientations such as face-saving concerns (Liem, 1997; Lutwak, Razzino, & Ferrari, 1998; Zane, Sue, Hu, & Kwon, 1991) that would conflict with essential leadership characteristics such as assertiveness and charisma. In the following discussion, all three hypotheses are examined as separate explanations for Asian American underrepresentation in leadership roles and problems in career advancement. It is highly likely that the three hypotheses are not mutually exclusive, so the interdependence among these processes is also considered.

SOCIAL MARGINALIZATION: EFFECTS OF RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION

With regard to racism and discrimination, times have both dramatically changed and stayed the same. On the one hand, blatant discrimination, overt prejudice, and explicit racial hostility are no longer acceptable in American culture. Federal laws prohibiting discrimination based on race, including The Civil Rights Act of 1964 that established Equal Employment Opportunities and the Civil Rights Acts of 1991 that paved way for monetary damages in cases of employment discrimination, have served as deterrents to obvious prejudiced behaviors. A cursory inspection of Whites' attitudes toward minority groups, particularly toward Black Americans, suggests that "old fashioned" overt racism is gone (Kinder & Sanders, 1996; Schuman, Steeh, Bobo, & Krysan, 1997). On the other hand, experts have theorized that prejudice is not dead. Instead, its manifestation has changed. In this case, explicit prejudice has turned into *symbolic racism*, a cluster of beliefs and attitudes based on the denial that racism exists (Kinder & Sears, 1985; Sears & Kinder, 1985). The line of reasoning

behind symbolic racism is as follows: if one believes that racism has been eliminated in society, a minority individual's failure to succeed cannot be due to systemic obstacles, but instead is due to laziness and personality flaws. This kind of reasoning can lead to other attitudes, such as thinking that minorities' expectations are unrealistic and that social programs, such as affirmative action, provide more advantages to minorities than they deserve (Henry & Sears, 2002). Outcomes of such belief structures reflect subtle acts of discrimination, such as support for conservative candidates and opposition to race-related policies (Bobo, 1998; Sidanius, Devereux, & Pratto, 1992).

Although most of the studies on symbolic racism used White and Black American relations as its focus, symbolic racism may nevertheless affect Asian Americans. Just as overt racist behavior has transformed into covert racism toward Black Americans, racial discrimination has taken a subtle form toward Asian Americans as well. Researchers have documented increases in anti-Asian sentiment in the auto industry's "buy American" campaigns, which were directed specifically against Japanese car companies—despite the fact that foreign car companies are multinational conglomerates that employ American assembly workers (Omi, 1993). In addition, the Western half of the United States closed out the 21st century embroiled in controversial debates on English Only initiatives. Since the 1960s, Western states accommodated bilingual citizens by making information available in various languages, such as Spanish or Japanese. For example, as the governor of California, Ronald Reagan authorized bilingual education in 1967, allowing children to be taught in both English and their native language. The English Only movement sought to abolish government-supported bilingualism and make English the sole means of communication between governmental agencies and its citizens. Numerous groups, including the American Civil Liberties Union and cultural advocacy groups, opposed the movement, suggesting that the English Only movement was racism cloaked in progressivism (Johnson & Martinez, 2000).

In addition to symbolic racism, several stereotypes about Asian Americans may contribute to

discrimination. Asian Americans are frequently stereotyped as the model minority. This image is of educationally successful, achievement-oriented Asians who excel in mathematics and science (Kao, 2000). But other, negative stereotypes also accompany attitudes toward Asians. For example, Fujino (1993) found that Asian men are frequently described as less attractive, sexless, and lacking in social skills. White and Chan (1983) conducted one study in which Asian American men reported feeling less attractive than White Americans feel. In addition, Sue and Sue (1971) describe several incidents where Chinese American men develop "racial self hatred" and begin to despise their own racially related physical characteristics. In contrast to the sexless image of the Asian male discussed by Fujino (1993), White and Chan (1983), and Sue and Sue (1971), Shah (2003) argues that Asian women often must contend with a dualistic stereotype, both sides laden with sexuality. The "dragon lady" image is that of an Asian woman who wields sexual powers to diabolically manipulate and ruin White men. As Shah contends, this image appears in popular media in the form of sexually aggressive Asian women who scheme and connive against the protagonist. The other image is the "lotus blossom," a meek, submissive Asian woman who dutifully experiences great emotional suffering without any complaints.

Although these stereotypes do not seem overtly negative or detrimental, they do have the potential to have adverse consequences on Asian American performance in the workforce, as shown by Steele (1998) and his work on stereotype threat. According to Steele, success in any domain requires a psychological investment in that people normally incorporate achievements within a domain as a part of their self-identity. Many members of various ethnic groups have stereotypic expectations about success or failure based on ethnicity. A common expectation based on stereotypes would be that Asians will perform well on math tests and African Americans will not. For the African American student, the mere existence of this expectation leads to impediments in math performance. According to Steele, just being cognizant of one's ethnic affiliation is enough to prime these negative stereotypes. In turn, the

activation of a stereotype, or stereotype threat, will increase anxiety and fear, particularly because the individual fears he or she will prove the stereotype true. The result of such high anxiety is underperformance on the identified task.

For Asians, stereotype threat could possibly cause underperformance in leadership-related behaviors. It can be assumed that Asians in business organizations are invested in their performance and want to advance in their work environment. Indeed, empirical evidence supports the idea that Asian self-identity and esteem tend to be rooted in achievement and accomplishments (Oyserman & Sakamoto, 1997). Given this investment in work and performance, Steele's (1998) model of stereotype threat would predict that Asian ethnicity, even implicit attention to Asian identity, might be associated with negative character associations, such as submissiveness, social awkwardness, and unattractiveness. In this case, Asians would underperform on behaviors such as appearing assertive or social networking, thus making them seem less capable of leading their colleagues. It is possible that these achievements or performances may be influenced by identity and acculturation processes.

Shih, Pittinsky, and Ambady (1999) presented evidence that negative stereotyping can impede performances among Asian Americans. They examined the influence of identity salience on one type of academic achievement, quantitative achievement. They reasoned that if a certain type of identity were implicitly activated, this identity would either facilitate or impede quantitative performance. Moreover, the specific effect of the activated identity on performance would depend on the stereotypes associated with that identity. In the case of Asian American women, the salience of ethnic identity would facilitate performance, due to the stereotype of Asian Americans as being adept in quantitative skills, whereas the salience of gender identity would impede performance based on the stereotype of women as being less quantitatively skilled than men. It was assumed that the identity effects were due to stereotypes related to one's particular identity. The investigators invoked or activated a particular identity by having Asian American women participants complete questionnaires that made one's female

gender or Asian ethnicity salient. As hypothesized, Asian females with activated gender identity performed worse than the controls, whereas Asian females with the activated ethnic identity performed better than the controls. These differences could not be attributed to differences in effort or ability. These findings strongly suggest that the negative social stereotypes of Asian Americans can serve as stereotype threats that can adversely affect performance in situations requiring them to exert leadership and management qualities. The findings also suggest that these stereotype effects have the most impact in work conditions that make the ethnic status or ethnic identity of an Asian American individual salient.

Lin, Kwan, Cheung, and Fiske (2005) have further examined how stereotypes might contribute to prejudice and discrimination. If Asians are perceived as highly competent yet socially awkward, it is possible that a corporate system can reward Asian Americans for work-related competence, but simultaneously exclude them from the important social networking necessary for upward mobility (Glick & Fiske, 2001; Jost, Burgess, & Mosso, 2001). More specifically, Lin et al. identified anti-Asian prejudice as envious discrimination most commonly used against out-groups categorized as competent but emotionally cold. Moreover, they theorized that discrimination against Asian Americans is a culmination of two basic attitudes: Asian Americans are competent and socially awkward or emotionally constrained. The researchers found that competence was related to out-group envy, but did not manifest itself as discrimination or rejection of Asian Americans. Instead, rejection of Asian Americans as members of an out-group may be due to the perception that Asians are *not sociable*.

If Asian Americans, as a group, tend to be socially marginalized, it would be expected that the individuals of that group who have characteristics and behavioral tendencies least like normative behaviors in White American culture would be the most affected. Leong (2001) used similar reasoning and tested the relationship between acculturation and career adjustment among Asian American workers in two studies. As predicted, he found that acculturation was negatively associated with job stress and strain,

whereas acculturation was positively associated with job satisfaction among Asian American workers. In other words, the least Westernized workers reported more occupational stress and less job satisfaction than their more Westernized counterparts. In the second study, he found compelling evidence for the effect of acculturation. The study examined the actual supervisor ratings of both Asian American and Hispanic workers. Leong found that acculturation was positively related to job evaluations in that the least-Westernized Asian and Hispanic workers tended to receive lower job performance ratings from their predominantly White supervisors (94%) than did the more Westernized minority workers. Consistent with the social marginalization hypothesis, Leong asserted that the lower-career adjustment and poorer job performance ratings of less-acculturated Asian workers could be attributed to in-group bias on the part of the predominantly White American management. However, as indicated later in this chapter, these acculturation effects also could be due to Asian Americans having certain cultural tendencies that were incompatible with the manifestation of Westernized leadership behaviors and skills.

The previous discussion of leadership skills and traits noted that leaders are individuals who identify conflict, effectively communicate a solution to others, and motivate others to work for the common good. Individuals who are able to accomplish these tasks also need to be extraverted in order to be noticed, socially malleable to adjust to volatile political climates, masters of nonverbal emotional cues, and Machiavellian enough to accomplish tasks for individual advancement. However, Asian Americans, like most other ethnic minority groups, are frequently associated with negative stereotypes. Particularly, Asians are often thought of as socially awkward, unattractive, submissive, docile, and emotionally constrained.

Given the negative attributes associated with Asian stereotypes, it becomes clearer why Asians are passed over for leadership positions. This line of research suggests that Asian Americans may not reach upper levels of management or other leadership positions because they may be perceived as unsocial and possibly are precluded from important network functions or overlooked as potential leaders. But these

findings also lead to another line of important questioning. What is fueling these negative attitudes and the perception that Asians lack leadership qualities? Do Asians really lack charismatic attributes or are there culturally related obstacles that impede expression of leadership traits?

SKILL DEFICITS IN INTERPERSONAL QUALITIES

A cursory investigation of the skills deficits hypothesis does garner some empirical support. There is gathering evidence that Asians tend to be emotionally constrained (Tsai et al. 2002), introverted, traditional, and compliant (McCrae, 2002), less assertive (Fukuyama & Greenfield, 1983; Johnson & Marsella, 1978), more accepting of hierarchies (Shon & Ja, 1982), and place group interests before self-interests (Allik & McCrae, 2004). Indeed, several investigators concluded that behavioral deficits may lead to other deficits in leadership-related skills such as public speaking abilities (Klopf & Cambra, 1979a) or interpersonal fluency (Callao, 1973). If Asians do lack these important leadership traits, then trait deficits could be blamed for the underrepresentation of Asians in leadership roles.

However, a number of studies indicate that Asian Americans may have the skills necessary to be interpersonally effective. For example, Sue, Ino, and Sue (1983) found that when Asian students were asked to role-play assertive responses, they were behaviorally as assertive as their Caucasian counterparts. Brief role-plays usually reflect the person's assertion capability and not the individual's actual tendency to respond assertively in the natural environment (Higgins, Frisch, & Smith, 1983; Linehan, Goldfried, & Goldfried, 1979). The conditions in the Sue et al. (1983) study would tend to be optimal for assessing skill ability for assertive behavior on the part of Asian Americans, but this capability may not correspond to actual tendencies outside the laboratory. In other words, although Asian Americans have the *capacity and requisite skills* to be assertive, they may not perform or behave assertively. The distinction between skill capacity and actual skill performance is a helpful one

to make because other research shows that Asian Americans may have the abilities to take on leadership positions and to manage other interpersonal situations, even if they are under-represented. Zane, Sue, Hu, and Kwon (1991) found that Asian Americans were as assertive as Whites with acquaintances (e.g., coworker, friend) and close relations (e.g., boyfriend/girlfriend, spouse, family member), and assertion differences occurred only when interacting with total strangers (e.g., salesperson, fellow customer). Similarly, Zea, Jarama, and Bianchi (1995) found no differences between Asian American, African American, Latino, and White college students on psychosocial competence or in adaptation to college demands. As these cases show, there is growing evidence against the deficit hypothesis since Asians may possess the requisite skills to behave as assertively as Whites. Instead, it may be that culture-related factors may prohibit the expression of these behaviors and traits.

CULTURAL TENDENCIES INCOMPATIBLE WITH WESTERN-BASED SOCIAL COMPETENCE

In view of the research strongly suggesting that Asians actually may possess the necessary characteristics to be noticed and promoted, it is more likely that cultural factors can suppress or inhibit the expression of leadership traits and skills (Triandis & Suh, 2002; Zane, Sue, Hu, & Kwon, 1991). We outline several studies that provide evidence for ethnic differences in key leadership traits: Emotional expressivity, extraversion, and conflict negotiation. In addition, we provide several possible ways cultural variables might impact the expression of these traits in potential leadership situations.

Emotional Expressivity and Emotional Moderation/Constraint

Even though emotions are thought to be universal and biologically based (Ekman, 1999), several investigators have recently discovered ethnic differences in emotional experience. Specifically, Mesquita (2001) has demonstrated group differences in emotional appraisal,

recognition of emotional expressions (Matsumoto, 1993), and expression of self-conscious emotions (Tracy & Robins, 2004). One of the most enduring findings in the emotions-culture literature is that Asian cultures have different behavioral scripts for expressing emotions than American, or Western, culture. In particular, Asian emotional expression tends to center on balance, moderation, and self-constraint. Although inner states may differ, emphasis is placed on controlling behavior, rather than releasing it. Conversely, Western cultures more often value emotional expressivity and release, even if it means confrontation (Lutz, 1989).

According to Markus & Kitayama (1991), the difference in emotional expression lies in how a culture values groups. Asian cultures are described as collectivistic, meaning that individuals' orientation is toward the group, and so they adjust personal needs to fit members' considerations. In this case, the concern surrounding emotional expression is not whether the individual feels better or accomplishes some goal, but rather on how behaviors might affect the group or members within the group. Therefore, to reduce the risk of offending the group or throwing off its balance, members within the collective rein in emotional expressions. In stark contrast to the Asian model, Western culture is described as individualistic. The goal is not necessarily to fit in, but to stand out and be recognized for uniqueness. Therefore, the concern is not on impact on others, but on how expressions might differentiate the individual from the group. In a way, emotion-based behaviors are an assertion of the individual (Tsai et al., 2002).

Extraversion/Assertiveness and Face Concerns

As suggested by Markus and Kitayama (1991), assertion of individuality is a Western ideal and not necessarily accepted in Eastern cultures. This cultural difference speaks to possible cultural differences in personality, such as extraversion and assertiveness. The topic of personality differences across cultures seems to be a divisive issue in personality psychology. On one side, researchers argue that personality cannot be generalized across cultures. Instead, behavioral

patterns are context specific, as evidenced by low correlations on characteristics across situations (Mischel, 1969; Shweder, 1991). On the other side, McCrae et al. (2000) contend that the Five Factor personality traits—extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience—are universal and are traceable to biological temperament. These two lines have been merged to form a cross-cultural perspective of personality. Triandis and Suh (2002) explain that this perspective accepts the universality of personality traits but also argue that culture influences patterns of behavior.

McCrae, Costa, Del Pilar, Rolland, and Parker (1998) provide evidence for both universality and cultural differences. In their study, European American participants scored higher on extraversion and openness to new experience than Asians. Moreover, Americans were also characterized as antagonistic, individualistic, and more likely to reject social hierarchies. In contrast, Asians tended to be more introverted, traditional, and compliant. Asians also tended to put group-interest before self-interest demonstrating high collectivism. These findings have been corroborated by several other studies, including Okazaki, Liu, Longworth, and Min's (2002) study on social anxiety and Fukuyama and Greenfield's (1983) work on assertiveness. Both studies reported that Asians demonstrated more muted behaviors than their White counterparts.

Even though some researchers suggest that Asians lack the ability to be demonstrative or assertive, other findings, such as Sue et al.'s (1983) study, suggest Asians do possess the ability to act forcefully. Because role-play situations, like the ones used by Sue et al., are more likely to prompt assertiveness at levels not seen in naturalistic settings, Zane et al. (1991) tested whether nonassertiveness transcended situational contexts. Specifically, since Asians demonstrate the ability to act assertively, they tested whether situational variables, such as self-efficacy or outcome expectancies, could influence assertion. Across 9 situations, Zane and colleagues found that self-efficacy and expectancies were strong predictors of assertion. In particular, Asians were less likely to be assertive in situations involving interactions with strangers or unknown persons, especially if they felt less efficacious. Moreover, the

investigators argue that the results dispute previous notions of Asian's abilities to act assertively. Specifically, although Asians may feel more anxious and guilty when asserting themselves, they will act forcefully—but mostly with intimates or acquaintances. This suggests that it is not the case that Asians lack the capacity for assertion, but they may avoid asserting themselves if they feel that they have little control over the situation.

In the context of leadership, Zane et al.'s (1991) findings are particularly useful in understanding why Asians are frequently overlooked as leaders. As Bass (1990) and others have theorized, a large component of leadership is the ability to distinguish oneself from the masses. Also, leaders are the individuals who convince others to follow their plans or, at a basic level, impose their will on others. It is possible, as in the previous discussion on discrimination demonstrates, Asians may not feel efficacious in the work environment. More specifically, the workplace is frequently comprised of strangers or nonintimates. Also, as Steele's (1998) work showed, stereotypes increased anxiety related to outcome expectancies. All of these factors may work to prevent Asians from asserting themselves, which then makes them unlikely candidates for leadership positions.

It is also possible that other culturally sanctioned tendencies can inhibit efforts to be assertive and to control others. Specifically, the tendency to self-efface and be modest may compete with and suppress assertiveness. Akimoto and Sanbonmatsu (1999) examined very acculturated Asian Americans (third- and later-generation Japanese Americans) to see if they still self-effaced more than White American college students. All participants took a set of cognitive problem solving tasks (e.g., anagrams, cryptograms, perceptual reasoning problems) that were presented as new psychological measures of future job success. Regardless of their actual performance, all participants were told that they scored in the 89th percentile relative to college students from their region, and this feedback was found to be credible. Asian and White American participants then were randomly assigned to either a private or public condition in which they completed a questionnaire rating their performance on that creativity task. The

investigators hypothesized that if Japanese Americans were simply more self-critical than White Americans, they would rate themselves as lower in performance in both the public and private conditions. However, if Japanese Americans were more self-effacing, they would only rate themselves lower in the public condition. Support for ethnic differences in self-effacing tendencies was found as Japanese Americans rated themselves similar in performance to Whites in the private condition but lower in performance when asked to do so publicly. A follow-up study determined that self-effacing behaviors actually affected evaluations of competence. White American judges who had not participated in the previous study rated the audiotaped responses of the Japanese and White participants self-evaluating their performances from the first study. The judges rated the Japanese Americans (who had been shown to be more self-effacing as a group in the first study) as less competent, having performed less well, less likely to be hired, and less likeable than the White American participants. These findings suggest that the culturally based tendency to self-efface and be modest may mitigate the tendency to be assertive among Asian Americans. What is especially important to note is that the tendency among Asian Americans to self-efface about one's achievements and performance may be interpreted as signs of lower competence, poorer performance, less suitability for a job, and less likability in work situations. In this case, this cultural tendency may directly affect job evaluations of Asian Americans.

Conflict Negotiation and Loss of Face

In addition to Asians not displaying traits commonly associated with Western ideals of leadership, another reason that Asians are not perceived as leaders may be the strategies they use in dealing with conflicts. As several theorists have argued, the process of conflict resolution is dualistic. On the one hand, an individual can dangle threats of imposing costs in order to coerce other parties. As Schelling (1960) points out, coercion may be useful in accomplishing shortsighted goals, but it also poses high risks in the long term. It is possible that coercion will produce resentment, which will produce

retaliation or noncooperation in the future. Also, coercion commonly induces shame and loss of face on the part of the losing party. On the other hand, an individual can use bargaining techniques to show cooperative solutions that allow opposing parties to maintain their sense of respect. Tanter (1999) describes this type of conciliatory bargaining as appeasement, a tactic that requires negotiators to demonstrate a willingness to give up possible benefits and trust that their appeasement will not be taken advantage of in the future.

According to Western models of leadership, coercion is perceived as an indication of resolve, assertiveness, and strength. People who are willing to coerce are perceived as competent leaders, because they are willing to make their opposition lose face in order to fulfill their individual goals (Tanter, 1999). As Triandis and Suh (2002) argue, coercive tactics are not characteristic of Eastern styles of communication. Indeed, since Eastern cultures are collectivistic and emphasize respect, negotiators often engage in communication strategies that allow opposing parties to save face, but at the cost of clarity and the possible sacrifice of their own goals.

The difference in conflict negotiation tactics can be better understood when we consider how Western and Eastern cultures differ in self-identity reference points and the concept of face. Westerners frequently use the individual as an identity reference point. For example, according to Ting-Toomey (2004), Americans associated respect, reputation, and credibility to the individual, most commonly to themselves. Respect, in this context, is related to the ego of the individual. In contrast, Asians tended to use group affiliation as the identity reference point. For members of Eastern cultures, respect and reputation was associated with family or social group, not necessarily with the individual.

The contrast between Western and Eastern concepts of face is particularly poignant when considering the act of face-giving. According to Ting-Toomey, when Asians engaged in negotiations, they frequently offered opposing parties an option to maintain their respect or dignity. In this regard, Asians saw face as a relational concept that included their opponent's respect, as well as their own. Alternatively, Americans

could not offer a definition for "face giving." In her sample, American students were not able to discuss the terms of giving face to opponents in negotiations. During the conflict-resolution process, maintaining self-pride and esteem seemed to be the goal for American students. In this regard, American students focused on win-lose strategies that allowed them to maintain their own esteem, but at the cost of their opponent's respect. For Asian students, loss of face was less attached to the self, instead it was attached to family, groups, or a company. Instead of engaging in win-lose strategies, Asian students focused on win-win strategies and preferred tactics that allowed their opponents to maintain their respect and esteem.

Face-giving strategies frequently employed by Asians may be problematic in the context of Western leadership. Consider the fact that these models of leadership hold that individuals rise from conflict by emphasizing their individuality and demonstrating to peers that they hold the solution to the problem. To promote their solutions or plans, individuals usually compete against others who offer solutions and engage in win-lose tactics. The individual who gains the most respect, even if it is at the cost of the opponent losing respect, becomes the leader. This strategy may be incompatible with Asian styles of negotiation. Instead of engaging in tactics that will bring attention to their individuality, Asians may seek alternatives that are acceptable to all parties and allow people to save face. If they are working in a Western context, Asians using win-win strategies will not be able to garner the attention needed to stand out. In addition, since the Western perception of winning is that the opponent loses, the tactics employed by Asians may yield ambiguous results. In other words, even when Asians succeed in conflict negotiations, because there are no clear losers, Asians may not be seen as winners.

Self-Enhancement and Self-Criticism

Underlying these tendencies to express oneself, assert oneself, and exert control over others is what is seen as the basic, general need for positive self-regard—essentially the motivation to "possess, enhance, and maintain positive self-views" (Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama,

1999). Psychological research indicates that this is a core, normative need in Western societies (Diener & Diener, 1996; Steele, 1988; Taylor & Brown, 1988; Tesser, 1988). Accordingly, it is not surprising that Western notions of leadership involve enhancing, promoting, and extending one's self interests over others. However, some cross-cultural research has called into question whether or not this motivation for positive self-regard is truly universal in nature. Research in Japan and other East Asian societies indicates that rather than positive self-regard, the basic underlying motivation is to be self-critical and to make continual efforts to improve oneself and to reduce one's shortcomings (e.g., DeVos, 1985; Kashiwagi, 1986). There is an emphasis on performing up to and meeting certain socially shared standards or role expectations. In this way, the self-critical orientation reinforces and affirms the sense of belongingness, inter-group harmony, and interdependent relations so valued in these collectivistic societies. Similar to how positive self-regard has been linked to mental health in Western cultures (e.g., Baumeister, 1993; Taylor & Brown, 1988), self-criticism has been linked to adaptive coping among Asian Americans (Chang, 1996).

This interesting cultural difference in basic motives and needs points to another reason why Asian Americans may not perform well or excel in Western leadership and management roles. The behaviors and skills required of leaders and managers are essentially self-enhancement strategies designed to increase or maintain positive self-regard. As a consequence, Asian Americans, who are more likely to be oriented to self-critical and self-improvement concerns, may not be as motivated to excel in these situations. Needless to say, this explanation remains speculative, as there has been no research to test this possibility.

CONCLUSION

There is compelling evidence that many Asian Americans are experiencing difficulties in interpersonal effectiveness, especially as these issues affect their career advancement and opportunities for attaining leadership positions. Moreover, Asian Americans themselves perceive problems

in career advancement and often believe they are less effective in influencing people and having an impact on others. Three hypotheses were considered as possible explanations for why many Asian Americans experience challenges in interpersonal effectiveness. There appears to be little evidence that these interpersonal difficulties result from deficits in the skills needed to be interpersonally effective. In fact, there is evidence to the contrary showing that Asian Americans have the capacity to be assertive and to influence others in work situations.

More evidence exists for the other two hypotheses, social marginalization, and culturally reinforced incompatible behaviors. First, it is highly likely that Asian Americans, like other ethnic minorities, are adversely affected by racist attitudes, beliefs, and practices that keep them on the social margins and prevent them from fully participating in managerial and leadership opportunities. Second, certain cultural tendencies on the part of Asian Americans, such as modesty, self-effacing behaviors, and face giving/saving, may be incompatible with and inhibit behaviors considered instrumental for effective leadership and management. There is even some evidence that certain tendencies such as self-effacing behavior may be interpreted in a way that results in negative job-related evaluations concerning competence, performance, likelihood of being hired, and likability. Moreover, the basic motivation that drives Western leadership behaviors, the need for positive self-regard, may not hold as much valence for Asian Americans, who tend to be grounded and socialized in cultures that emphasize a more self-critical orientation. Lastly, it is highly possible that social marginalization and cultural incompatibilities can interact and build on one another to create major interpersonal challenges for Asian Americans. Specifically, due to cultural incompatibilities, Asians may not manifest behaviors and performances associated with leaders and influential people, and these perceived deficits, in turn, reinforce the already negative social stereotypes of Asians. Moreover, negative stereotyping and other racist practices may differentially reinforce and strengthen those Asian cultural tendencies that are incompatible with, or inhibit behavior considered interpersonally effective in, Western cultural contexts.

One fact to keep in mind with respect to these issues of interpersonal effectiveness is the possibility that many Asian Americans are or can become bicultural in their adaptation. As bicultural individuals, they have opportunities to develop competencies and skills to function and perform well in two or more different cultures. However, this review suggests that at least in the area of interpersonal effectiveness in job and career situations, many Asian Americans continue to be challenged and, at times, frustrated in negotiating the American work culture. The normative tendency is for people to become bicultural (Hurv & Kim, 1984; Hurv & Kim, 1990). Then why do many bicultural Asian Americans continue to experience challenges in the workplace, even though they supposedly have access to behavioral competencies from both Asian and Western cultures?

A number of factors may be operating to limit bicultural individuals' access to the Western-based competencies that they may possess. First, even bicultural individuals are not immune to the effects of ethnic stereotyping and in-group bias, in that these effects are predicated on minority group membership. Moreover, group stereotyping and bias may differentially reinforce Asians to behave in an "Asian" or "non-Western" manner, since that is what is expected of them. Behaviors not consistent with these expectations are not reinforced or punished. Second, most performances related to leadership and management usually take place in a public context and involve complex behaviors that usually elicit high social anxiety. Under these conditions (i.e., presence of others, performance of complex behaviors, and high anxiety level), social facilitation effects are likely to occur (Zajonc, 1965). Social facilitation is a well-established psychological principle that may have universal applicability across cultures (Norenzayan & Heine, 2005). In social facilitation, the presence of others induces arousal (Martens, 1969). This heightened arousal facilitates the performance of the dominant response in one's behavioral repertoire and inhibits the non-dominant responses (Zajonc & Sales, 1966). Given that the large majority of Asian Americans are immigrants or are children of immigrant parents, it would be safe to assume that the behaviors learned and reinforced in East

Asian cultures would be the most well-learned behaviors, whereas the more recently learned behaviors tied to Western culture would be non-dominant. Consequently, in the context of career and work situations in American society, social facilitation may affect bicultural Asian individuals by enhancing their dominant East Asian tendencies over their subordinate Western-based competencies. This analysis raises a number of interesting hypotheses that remain to be tested in future research.

In their review of the research on biculturalism, LaFromboise, Coleman, and Gerton (1993) note that the alternation model of biculturalism seems to be the most adaptive. In alternation functioning, the individual knows and develops proficiency in both cultures without losing functional connections or identification with either culture. Alternation also involves the ability to alter one's behavior to fit a particular sociocultural context. Indeed, it seems that a major psychosocial challenge for bicultural individuals involves breaking out of the negative cycle of stereotyping/in-group bias and selectively alternating between Eastern and Western behavioral tendencies so that they can function more effectively in the workplace.

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