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Attributes of Asian American senior leaders who have retained their cultural identity and been successful in American corporations

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ATTRIBUTES OF ASIAN AMERICAN SENIOR LEADERS WHO HAVE

RETAINED THEIR CULTURAL IDENTITY AND BEEN

SUCCESSFUL IN AMERICAN CORPORATIONS

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

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in

Organization Development

_____

by

Maria Odiamar Racho

August 2012

This research project, completed by

MARIA ODIAMAR RACHO

under the guidance of the Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to understand the stories of Asian American senior leaders of

Fortune 600 companies. The intent was to identify common attributes and experiences

that could be used to help emerging leaders along their journeys and American

corporations improve workplace environment and retention of top Asian American talent.

Thirty-two Asian American senior leaders of Fortune 600 companies participated in an

online questionnaire which included the Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation

(SL-ASIA) Scale. In addition, nine of those leaders were interviewed for stories and

insights on the quantitative data. The findings uncovered that these leaders found a way

to integrate their Asian and American identities, learned at an early age the Asian cultural

value of hard work, took on and sought out risks and challenges, had non-Asian mentors

and coaches in their careers who helped them acculturate into the American and/or

organization's culture, and were passionate about developing others.

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Introduction

I was an information technology (IT) manager at a Fortune 100 company just over a decade ago. Finding an Asian American leader to look up to was not easy, nor did I think I needed one. I had a number of informal mentors and coaches, all non-Asian and primarily peer-level or managers I was reporting to. One manager, a Caucasian woman, took a special interest in me and dedicated a lot of time and energy to develop and groom me to be a successful leader in our organization. She was extremely honest with me when it came to feedback; and as our relationship grew and I could see how much she cared for and believed in me, my trust in her grew.

"You've got to be more assertive," "Be more commanding with your voice," and "Take control of the situation" were common pieces of feedback I heard. While it seemed unnatural, I gave it a try and the more I raised my voice, pounded my fist on a table, or put someone "in his or her place," the more encouragement and positive feedback I got. My leadership career was also moving at a trajectory I had never experienced before.

That was until a couple of years down the road when a person on my team, who had been with me through this entire personal change, said, "You know what . . . it's like I don't even know who you are anymore." That stopped me dead in my tracks. I took this feedback to heart because I had always taken great pride in my relationship with my team. Then, when I took a step back to reflect on his comment, I realized that I, too, did not even recognize who I was anymore. Also, what seemed unnatural were these behaviors that were counter to the Asian American values I grew up with—including that harmony of the group was more important than the needs of an individual. I sensed that I needed to find some kind of middle ground but did not know how.

So I spoke with my manager about this revelation. I shared that while I had found that these new skill sets helped me be more effective . . . to a point, they weren't *entirely* me. She understood and was supportive. What she was offering me was coaching and advice that had helped her to be successful in her career. We agreed to experiment with helping me find my own leadership style. Unfortunately, within that same year, we went through organizational changes and we each moved to different parts of the organization. While we continued our mentoring relationship, it was different.

As I began to better understand myself and the way I wanted to lead, I felt like I did not fit into the leadership mold of our organization. The Center for Work-Life Policy published a study called *Asians in America: Unleashing the Potential of the "Model Minority"* (Hewlett & Rashid, 2011). Only 28% of their Asian American respondents answered favorably for "comfortable being themselves at work" versus all other ethnic groups (African American, Hispanic, Caucasian) answering between 40% and 42%. The study also showed that a large number of Asian Americans felt stalled in their careers— 63% of Asian men and 44% of Asian women, with a number of them planning to quit their jobs within a year—19% of Asian men and 14% of Asian women.

While I thought I fit the mold of what a leader was on paper, it did not seem to coincide with what was recognized as the norm among leaders in my part of the organization. After a couple more years, I was not only ready to step down from my leadership role, but I was also ready to leave the company.

The Work-Life Policy study found that 41% of Asian men and 31% of Asian women, the highest of all ethnic groups, reported that biases at work are severe enough to cause them to scale back in their careers. However, there are a small number of Asian Americans who have pushed on and have been successful, such as the 1.9% of the

Fortune 500 corporate officers who have made it to the top ranks (Hewlett & Rashid, 2011). To better understand what has made these leaders stand out, this thesis examines the stories of Asian American leaders who, as pioneers of their generation, have worked their way up to senior levels in top U.S. corporations.

Chapter 1

Background

People of Asian descent make up more than half the world's population and according to the 2010 Census, 4.8% (14.7 million) of the United States population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010a). According to the U.S. Office of Management and Budgets, "Asian" refers to a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent, including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam. The Asian population includes people who indicated their race(s) as "Asian" or reported entries such as "Asian Indian," "Chinese," "Filipino," "Korean," "Japanese," and "Vietnamese" or provided other detailed Asian responses.

The Asian population grew faster than any other race group in the United States between 2000 and 2010. The population who reported that they were Asian alone or in combination with another race increased 46% compared to the general U.S. population, which only grew by 9.7%. The U.S. Census projects a 161% increase to 9% of the total U.S. population in the next 50 years (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010a).

Purpose and Significance of Study

The purpose of this study is to provide emerging Asian American leaders with some guidance to more effectively navigate their paths to top executive positions in American corporations. These common themes and stories of success can also help American corporations better understand the untapped potential of this highly qualified talent to better create environments where diverse leadership styles are valued and leveraged and people feel free to bring their whole selves to work.

With the small number of leaders at a senior level and over 60% of Asian Americans being first-generation immigrants, knowledge transfer and awareness of what makes an Asian American leader successful is limited. "With many highly qualified Asians in America as the first in their families to enter the corporate world, navigating this new terrain can feel both complicated and daunting" (Hewlett & Rashid, 2011, p. 9). As one focus group participant in the Center for Work-Life Policy study called *Asians in America* put it, regardless of specific heritage, "We all literally have to start from scratch" (Hewlett & Rashid, 2011, p. 9).

The goal of this study is to take lessons and commonalities from the stories of the participants to add to and help connect the existing body of knowledge about Asian American leaders so that Asian American communities and American organizations can learn from and collectively take action to effect positive change.

Methodology

The research approach was in two parts. First, an online 10-minute questionnaire and assessment was distributed to capture demographics of this population and their acculturation levels based on the Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation (SL-ASIA) Scale self-assessment (Suinn, Rickard-Figuerna, Lew, & Vigil, 1987). Then, a subset of the participants who opted into the second part of the study were invited to do a 45-minute face-to-face or telephone interview to share stories of their upbringing as well as their career journeys and influences as leaders.

Thesis Overview

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on the topics of Asian Americans, Asian cultural values, Asian Americans in the workforce, and leaders and executives in American

corporations. This body of knowledge will help provide context for the discussion of the findings.

Chapter 3 summarizes the research method and process that was used to capture both quantitative and qualitative data during this study.

In chapter 4, the findings of the research will be shared. This is followed by a discussion to synthesize and understand the data, potential topics for future research, and a final conclusion of the study in chapter 5.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

What contributes to the success of Asian American leaders in American corporations? The purpose of this study was to understand the stories of Asian American leaders who have successfully reached the rank of senior manager or above in Fortune 600 companies. The intent was to identify common attributes of these leaders that have contributed to their success and can be used to help emerging leaders along their own journeys as well as help American corporations better understand the experiences and challenges of Asian Americans to improve workplace environment and retention of this talent.

Relevance and Importance

While Asian Americans have high ambitions that begin in the schools and carry into the workplace, their ability to reach the highest levels of corporations has met many challenges. A group of researchers at the University of California, Riverside, published study findings indicating that Asian Americans are not viewed as ideal or charismatic leaders in the United States:

> Understanding the effects of race on leadership perceptions is important, in part, because the U.S. workforce is increasingly racially diverse, and organizations are realizing that the inclusion of racial minorities constitutes a competitive advantage in a global market. However, racial minorities are often perceived to be less suitable for management positions in the United States, as evidenced by a persistent glass ceiling for these groups, lower managerial promotion ratings, lower job suitability ratings, and individuals' attributions of success and failure. (Sy et al., 2010, p. 904)

With the growing diversity of tomorrow's workforce and the highly educated pool of talent within the Asian American population, it would benefit American corporations

to understand how to best develop, appreciate, and leverage the cultural values of this group, especially as leaders.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Studies included in this review looked at Asian integration into different country cultures, specifically other countries that have what Hofstede, a Dutch researcher, defined in his National Cultural Dimensions as highly individualistic cultures, similar to America (Hofstede, 2012). Studies that were excluded from this research were those too narrow in scope or with too small of a sample used.

Asian Americans

Recognizing the peaks and valleys of the Asian American experience means analyzing both the past and present. This is important because the history of Asian Americans has been one of dynamic change.

Asians Americans, like all Americans, have faced good times and bad times. However, there is a historic set of challenges that have faced Asian Americans—from being excluded from meaningful participation in American society, viewed as racially and culturally inferior during the 19th and first half of the 20th century, to becoming viewed as the "model minority" during the latter half of the 20th century.

The ups and downs of Asians in America were seen in the history of two of the earliest groups of immigrants from Asia and their descendants. The first was in 1882 when Chinese Americans were the first immigrant group to be excluded from entry into the United States, an exclusion which was lifted in 1943. Chinese Americans were treated better during World War II, when China and the United States were allies, but then they were again viewed as suspicious after 1949 when the emergence of what was called "Red China" increased anti-Chinese hostility (Kitano & Daniels, 2001). In June of 2012, a

resolution introduced by Judy Chu (CA-32), H.R. 683, was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives as an acknowledgement and regret of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.

Other examples include the restriction of Japanese Americans by the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907-1908; the ban on immigration in 1924; and forcible incarceration behind barbed wire during World War II (1942-1946), with redress granted in 1988, including a formal apology and a cash payment of $20,000 to each survivor of the wartime camps (Kitano & Daniels, 2001).

However, in the second half of the 20th century, the image of Asian immigrants had largely changed to the "model minority." The term *model minority* was coined in 1966 at the height of the Civil Rights movement. Arguably, the transition to seeing Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders as the "model minority" in 1966 worked not to celebrate Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, but to reinforce how other minority groups were still "the problem." As the December 1966 article in *U.S. News & World Report* put bluntly: "At a time when Americans are awash in worry over the plight of racial minorities, one such minority is winning wealth and respect by dint of its own hard work—not from a welfare check" (Quoted in CARE, 2008, p. 2).

The number of Asian Americans in the United States doubled between 1980 and 1990. This was primarily an outcome of the Immigration Act of 1965 and the U.S. military's involvement in Southeast Asia. As of 2010, there were nearly 17 million Asian Americans. This represented an increase of 46% since 2000, equaling 4.8% of the current U.S. population. The U.S. Census Bureau (2010a) has also identified a wide diversity within the Asian American population, with at least 24 different ethnic groups, including Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, and Vietnamese. Each subgroup has its own unique language, immigration history, traditions, and customs.

In the 2010 Census, the Asian subgroups with one million or more responses for the Asian-alone-or-in-any-combination population were Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, and Japanese. The Chinese-alone-or-in-any-combination were the largest Asian subgroup, with 4.0 million. There were 3.3 million people who reported Chinese alone with no additional Asian subgroup or race category.

An analysis of respondents who identified with only one Asian subgroup shows the Chinese population accounted for 23%, the Asian Indian population accounted for 19%, and the Filipino population accounted for 17% of all respondents who identified as Asian alone. Combined, these three groups accounted for 60% of the Asian-alone population. Vietnamese (11%), Korean (10%), Japanese (5%), other single Asian subgroups (13%), and two or more Asian subgroups (2%) accounted for smaller proportions of the Asian-alone population.

Asian Americans have struggled with the "perpetual foreigner" syndrome. A Stanford University study titled "Where Are You Really From?" examined Asian Americans and identity denial. The report cited a headline on MSNBC's website during the 1998 Winter Olympics that captured the phenomenon of identity denial. The site ran the headline "American beats out Kwan" to refer to the victory of Tara Lipinski over Michelle Kwan, an American figure skater born and raised in California (Sorensen, 1988). Not only did this happen to Kwan once in 1988 with MSNBC, but then again in 2002 by *The Seattle Times'* headline stating "American outshines Kwan, Slutskaya in skating surprise" (Fancher, 2002). Kwan was not characterized as a member of any particular out-group. She was not mistakenly labeled as a foreigner, nor was she ascribed any stereotypical trait. She was simply denied her American status, and for an American Olympic athlete, this would be a particularly painful rejection.

Based on the research, Asian Americans appeared to be much more likely to be mistaken for and mislabeled as being from another country or a non-native English speaker than European Americans. In fact, over 30% of Asian Americans reported that this was a common misperception, compared with 7% of European Americans. Repeated exclusion in this way can impact the day-to-day behavior of Asian Americans as they consider themselves part of a group where members constantly make them feel like they do not belong, especially when being American is central to one's identity (Cheryan & Monin, 2005).

Identity denial shows up through recurrent and seemingly innocent questions, such as being asked what language one speaks or where one is from, reminding threatened group members that they do not look like they fully belong in the group. Ironically, the people reminding Asian Americans of their outsider status through seemingly innocent questions are often well intentioned and are even trying to be culturally sensitive.

Given that identity denial is something to be avoided, how does one appropriately strike a balance between appreciating and learning about another person's heritage yet not deny that person his or her American identity? The current studies demonstrate that questions such as "Where are you really from?" and "Do you speak English?" are offensive to Asian Americans. In contrast, inquiries that are careful not to pit ethnic and national identities erroneously against each other (for example, "What is your cultural background?" or "What is your ethnic heritage?") may be more effective because they serve the same purpose yet do not exclude the individual from being considered American. When one is seen as American, talking about one's cultural heritage does not become an exercise in proving one's American identity.

Look around the United States, and it becomes clear that Americans cut across the color spectrum. Yet, when asked to picture an American, many people immediately conjure up the image of someone Caucasian. As a consequence, Asian Americans are seen as less American, leaving many of them feeling like "a visitor at best, an intruder at worst" (Wu, 2002, p. 80). Understanding and addressing this phenomenon and the reactions to it are important steps toward a fuller awareness of group processes and toward making the United States, for citizens of all origins, a more welcoming place that lets all be their whole selves and thrive in the multiplicity of their identities (Cheryan & Monin, 2005).

Approximately 60% of Asian Americans are foreign-born, the highest proportion of any racial group nationwide. In contrast, only 38% of Latinos, 8% of African Americans, and 4% of non-Hispanic Caucasians were born outside the United States. The percentage of Asian Americans nationwide born outside the United States decreased from 63% in 2000 to 60% in 2007-2009. Nearly one in three of the 9.2 million Asian American foreign-born individuals entered the United States between 2000 and 2009 (Asian Pacific American Legal Center, 2011).

Asian Cultural Values

The impact of culture is an important topic in management research. According to many scholars, most notably Hofstede, core values formed early in life are likely to remain pertinent throughout one's lifetime (Hofstede & Bond, 1988). This section examines Asian cultural values and how Asian Americans balance the intersection between Asian and American cultural values.

Because of the significant variations on migration histories among Asian Americans, it is important to understand both acculturation and enculturation.

Acculturation is the extent to which these individuals have adopted the dominant cultural norms of the United States while maintaining the norms of their original culture. Enculturation was first defined and used by Herskovits (1948), who referred to the term as the process of socialization to maintenance of the norms of one's indigenous culture, including the salient values, ideas, and concepts. Recently, enculturation was defined as the process of retaining one's indigenous cultural values, behaviors, knowledge, and identity (Kim & Abreu, 2001; Kim, Atkinson, & Umemoto, 2001). Enculturation is particularly important with U.S.-born Asian Americans who may be socialized into their Asian heritage more fully later in life and hence engage in the process of enculturation at that time. Enculturation also places an equal level of focus on the process of socializing into and retaining one's Asian cultural norms in comparison to acculturation, the process of adapting to the norms of the U.S. culture (Kim, 2009).

A model to help understand the psychological processes and outcomes of acculturation and enculturation is the bilinear model of adaptation used by Berry and others. The authors theorized the following four acculturation "attitudes" based on combining either high or low levels of acculturation and enculturation: integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization. Integration is represented by individuals who become proficient in the culture of the dominant group while retaining proficiency in the heritage culture. People in this status are both strongly acculturated and highly enculturated (Berry, 1980; Segall, Dasen, Berry, & Poortinga, 1999).

Kim et al. (2001) noted that an important dimension of enculturation for Asian Americans is adherence to Asian cultural values. Cultural values refer to "universalistic statements about what we think are desirable or attractive" (Smith & Bond, 1994, p. 52).

Psychologists at the University of California, Santa Barbara, conducted a 1999 study that identified 14 Asian values. While differences were acknowledged among the extremely diverse Asian ethnic groups, they found that the traditional Asians tend to emphasize the following values:

- Collectivism
- Maintenance of interpersonal harmony
- Reciprocity
- Placing others' needs ahead of one's own
- Deference to authority figures
- Importance of family
- Avoidance of family shame
- Educational and occupational achievement
- Ability to resolve psychological problems
- Filial piety
- Conformity to family and social norms
- Self-effacement
- Self-control/restraint
- Respect for elders and ancestors (Hyun, 2005, p. 8)

This study also showed that these values did not differ significantly across generations since immigration. Still, there is a wide gap between Asian Americans' *behavioral acculturation*, such as with food, clothing, and language use, and *values acculturation* when transitioning to a new culture, which could be a reason why even more acculturated second- and third- generation Asian Americans feel burdened by the values of their parents and grandparents (Kim, Atkinson, & Yang, 1999; Hyun, 2005). The retention of Asian values has been observed in even fourth-generation Asian Americans (Min, 1995).

Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics (LEAP) conducts leadership training for companies as well as community organizations. LEAP developed a model comparing Asian American and mainstream American (Western) values (see Table 1).

Table 1

A Comparison of Asian American and Mainstream American Values

Mainstream (Western) Values	Asian American Values
Spontaneity/casualness: • Importance of social skills, informal relationships • Small talk • Acceptable to show full range of emotions • Flexibility	**Self-control/discipline:** • Speaking only when spoken to • Inner stamina/strength to tolerate crisis • Hiding emotions
Acceptability of questioning authority: • Anticipation of problem areas, opportunities; initiation of appropriate actions • No fear of challenging or opposing authority; ability to push the envelope with parents, professors, bosses, clients	**Obedience to authority:** • Respect for those who lead • Loyalty • Trustworthiness • Follow-through on assignments
Promotion of personal accomplishments: • Visibility (individual) is acceptable • Rewards individual for outstanding actions • Power perceived as individual power	**Humility:** • Low individual visibility • Power shared with others
Tough, individualistic, and authoritative leadership: • Individual leadership • Individual responsibility and ownership • Independence • Creativity and innovation	**Collective decision making:** • Proving the sources (accuracy and attention to detail) • Collective responsibility and ownership • Interdependence • Strong sense of teamwork

Note. Adapted from *Breaking the Bamboo Ceiling* (p. 24), by J. Hyun, 2005, New York, NY: Harper Collins. Copyright 2005 by Harper Collins Publishers. Adapted with permission.

Cultural values can affect the way that Asian Americans display leadership as well as how Asian Americans are perceived as leaders. Because culture is difficult to clearly measure, and because many cultural values are shared by diverse groups, it may be difficult for Asian Americans to decipher which of their values are "American" and

which are specific to their Asian background. Managing these bicultural and at times

conflicting values can be so stressful that some Asian Americans wind up rebelling

against or resenting one of their cultures (Hyun, 2005).

The work of Berry (1980) indicates that immigrants may experience significant

changes in their lives, at both the individual and group levels, as they adjust to a new

culture. Berry suggests that the notion of stress plays a prominent role in the acculturation

process as immigrants confront new cultural demands and attempt to cope with

significant life changes. He also suggests that stress experienced during the acculturation

process can impact psychological and sociocultural dimensions of adaptation.

While the following statement is not representative of all Asian families, it offers

a reference point for understanding the potential changes and challenges that some Asian

immigrant families may have to confront in their new lives in the United States. Dinh and

Nguyen (2006) stated that

> The traditional family in various Asian cultures is characterized by a strong
> patriarchal and patrilineal structure as well as a certain order in family life. For
> instance, gender, along with age and birth order, determines one's role and
> authority within the family. Therefore, grandparents, especially the grandfather,
> are revered, the husband has more power than his wife, sons have more privileges
> than daughters, and the eldest son is considered the most important child in the
> family. However, this structure may be challenged when the family migrates to
> another culture, especially one that is significantly different in language, values,
> beliefs, and traditions. (p. 409)

Concept of Self

It has been said that where a view of the self as independent is dominant in

American cultural contexts, a contrasting view of the self as interdependent is strongly

sanctioned in Asian culture (Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997).

Because of this, people with this independent view of the self often describe themselves

in terms of their unique internal attributes, such as their personal traits, preferences, or

attitudes. On the other hand, in Asian cultural contexts, people often hold a connected, more interdependent view of the self. In Asian cultures, the self is usually best understood by one's relationships with others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). People with this view of the self often describe themselves in terms of their social roles or group affiliations (Cousins, 1989; Imada, 2008; Rhee, Uleman, Lee, & Roman, 1995).

A significant cultural variable is how individuals relate to others. While others are looked at as a critical part of the social context for how the self is connected and assimilated for Asians, others also serve as important sources for Americans to be able to voice, get validation for, or assert the unique internal attributes of the self (Imada, 2008; Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

This poses a significant challenge for Asian Americans when performance management, recognition, and promotability in American corporations depend on a system where individual contribution and accomplishment is measured.

Asian Americans in the Workplace

Highly motivated and spurred by an intense cultural drive to achieve, Asian Americans represent a large portion of the student body of prestigious universities. Asian American students account for 18% of Harvard's student body, 24% of Stanford's, and 46% of UC Berkeley's. The trends are similar at professional levels—medical, law, and business schools. Asians comprise more than 20% of medical school and 7% of law school enrollment (Hewlett & Rashid, 2011).

Asian Americans carry this high ambition into getting entry-level jobs at reputable companies after graduating college. Nationally, Asian Americans are 4.5% of the total adult U.S. workforce. Forty-seven percent of the civilian-employed single-race

Asian Americans 16 and older are most likely to work in managerial and professional jobs, such as financial managers, engineers, teachers, and registered nurses.

It is projected that in 2050, Asian Americans will still have the highest labor force participation rate at 65%. However, relatively few Asian Americans make it into the highest ranks of the government or business. Only 146 out of 6,349 (2.3%) career members of senior executive-level leaders are Asian American, according to a congressional audit released in May 2007 (Diversity Best Practices, 2008).

The Work-Life Policy research uncovered a rich reserve of ambition and drive among Asian American professionals, with much stemming from the inspiration of an immigrant parent or a parent living back in the home country. Furthermore, many Asian individuals, similar to other immigrants, have had to start brand new in the United States, with limited advantages in terms of relationships or cultural capital. They then compensate with motivation and hard work. Asians push themselves based on an acute cultural emphasis—with deep roots in Asian's immigrant heritage based on hard work and achievement (Hewlett & Rashid, 2011).

The Work-Life Policy study showed that among survey respondents, 64% of Asian Americans aspire to a top professional job. Ambition is most prevalent among Asian-born women, 77% of whom aspire to a top job, with 86% of the Asian-born women coming from India and 76% of those women from China. Asian American men are also highly ambitious, with 66% of them aspiring to reach the top (Hewlett & Rashid, 2011).

As far as what factors Asian American respondents thought were most important in their work or career above all other ethnic groups, the highest two elements were compensation at 92% and a powerful position at 59%. Directly building on these

motivators, Asian respondents to the survey are equally likely as other ethnic groups to have directly asked a manager or supervisor for a pay raise or a promotion at work. Thirty-seven percent of Asians reported asking for a pay raise and 28% for a promotion, which is on par with other groups and contrary to perceptions that Asians are quiet and unassertive (Hewlett & Rashid, 2011).

However, when the aspirations of the Asian American professionals are compared to reality, a less glowing picture emerges, and despite their desire to reach the top of the corporate ladder, Asian Americans hit barriers that prevent them from doing so. Two-thirds of Asian American men who participated in the study felt stalled in their careers, compared with only half or less of other ethnic groups. The finding that Asian American men are highly ambitious, with 66% aspiring for top jobs, could also contribute to this statistic. As a result, Asian American men pose a significant flight risk, with 19% planning to quit their current jobs within the year. This is almost twice the rate for African American and Caucasian men. In addition, 41% of Asian American men reported that biases at work are severe enough to cause them to scale back or "brown out" (reduce their ambitions, work fewer hours, work less hard, or consider quitting). Thirty-one percent of Asian American women, the highest of any ethnic group, reported that problems of style and stereotype are severe enough to make them scale back (Hewlett & Rashid, 2011, p. 13).

Mentors and Sponsors

Mentors and sponsors are supports that Asian Americans can seek out to help with career growth and organizational fit. DiversityInc. defined mentoring as someone "talking with you," a relationship that is often mutually beneficial for the purpose of developing themselves or navigating their careers. Sponsoring is someone "talking about

you," usually someone within the organization at a more senior level or an individual

with strong influence assisting a protégé in gaining visibility for particular assignments,

promotions, and positions (DiversityInc. Best Practices, 2011).

According to the Work-Life Policy study, Asian Americans are the ethnic group

least likely to have a mentor, at 46% (Hewlett & Rashid, 2011). Hyun, author of

Breaking the Bamboo Ceiling, believes that Asian Americans do not seek out mentors

and sponsors soon enough in their careers.

> Multicultural professionals have to start working on getting a sponsor much
> earlier than those in the dominant culture. Asians need to establish credibility
> immediately after they start working because if they wait two to three years,
> people have already formed an opinion about them. (Quoted in Hewlett & Rashid,
> 2011, p. 15)

Many Asian American executives and professionals admit to focusing more on

results and less on relationships at work. It is only in hindsight that they understand the

importance of senior advocates. While Asian Americans came in fairly equal with other

ethnic groups with regard to having a sponsor, they tend not to have sponsors of their

own ethnicity, most likely since there are too few available. Only 17% of Asian

Americans have sponsors of their ethnicity, while 89% of European Americans do

(Hewlett & Rashid, 2011).

Influence of Family on Career

In the collectivist context, the accomplishments of the Asian American child

reflect more on the worth of the family than the individual, and parents take

responsibility for their children's actions (Kim & Hong, 2007). Also, because of conflicts

of culture and prejudice, the immigrant family takes on a new meaning in the United

States. It is a place of safety, solidarity, and closeness. Fearing for their children's future,

many Asian American parents stress professions, which they perceive to provide

occupational and financial security (Inman, Howard, Beaumont, & Walker, 2007). Researchers have suggested that children from Asian immigrant families are often encouraged to pursue occupations that best help them to survive in U.S. society and to avoid those occupations that bring them into direct contact with racial and cultural discrimination (Sue & Frank, 1973). Moreover, Leong (1991) suggested that compared to European American students, Asian American students tend to place a higher value on selecting college majors and occupations that provide prestige, income, and social status, which function as a strategy to attain upward mobility and survival. This survival strategy can motivate Asian Americans to give up their vocational interests and pursue majors and occupations that provide them security and opportunities, which in turn impacts their interest-choice congruence.

These strategies for upward career mobility and survival can be better understood when looking at the societal changes and their impact in the Asian American community. Sue and Okazaki (1990) summarized that in the 1940s, Asian Americans were discriminated against and refused union membership, which functioned as a block for Asian Americans' career paths. Also, in general, Asian immigrants at that time perceived career limitations and, therefore, avoided fields such as the social sciences and humanities, in which mastery of English and interpersonal skills specific to American society were needed. After World War II, technological advancements and an expanding economy demanded more educated professionals and white-collar employees. Fields in mathematics and sciences were more likely to emphasize technical competence, presenting opportunities for Asian Americans (Qin, 2010; Sue & Okazaki, 1990).

Impression Management

A 2004 study of Asian American managers sought to see if there is an impression gap between their perspectives, the perspectives of their subordinates, and the perspectives of their own managers with regard to their working relationships, examining the drop-off of perceived impact, visibility, and achievement when crossing over from individual contributors to leadership roles. Impression management was found to be related to performance ratings by supervisors, organizational citizenship behavior, supervisors' liking for subordinates, and the quality of supervisor-subordinate relationships (Xin, 2004).

Effective individuals take active roles in determining how others perceive them. Goffman (1959) described impression management as behaviors aimed at influencing perceptions of others concerning oneself. According to Leary and Kowalski (1984), impression management may be seen as two separate processes—impression motivation and impression construction. While it did not examine Asian Americans' impression motivation, the Work-Life Policy study did find that 64% of the Asian Americans who participated aspire to hold a top job, compared to 52% of European American participants (Hewlett & Rashid, 2011).

Taking a closer look at impression construction, Wayne and Ferris (1990) distinguished among three types of impression management in influencing supervisors: job-focused, self-focused, and supervisor-focused. Employees use job-focused impression management tactics to engage in behavior with the intention of creating a positive impression on the supervisor through the work tasks employees are doing. Self-focused tactics keep the supervisor informed of the employee's accomplishments. Supervisor-focused tactics include non-job-related behaviors by the employee to please

the supervisor, such as taking an interest in the supervisor's personal life and doing personal favors for the supervisor. Supervisor-focused tactics indicate a person's willingness to communicate and help beyond the work duties. Consequently, these tactics are likely to evoke in the supervisor positive images of and feelings for these employees.

In the findings of Xin's (2004) study, Asian Americans reported using different impression management tactics compared to European Americans. Although Asian American managers reported using job-focused tactics to a significantly larger degree than their European American counterparts, they reported using less self-disclosure and less self-focused and supervisor-focused impression management tactics compared to European American managers.

Overall, Asian American managers are significantly less likely to use impression management tactics, such as supervisor-focused tactics, that are positively associated with higher quality supervisor-subordinate relationships, but they are significantly more likely to report using job-focused impression management tactics. Unfortunately, these job-focused impression management tactics, without the supervisor-focused tactics, can result in a poor-quality supervisor-subordinate relationship

However, Xin's (2004) study surfaced other questions. Data showed that it may not be entirely the overuse of ineffective impression management techniques, but also the supervisor's perception of the relationship. There was a significant gap with the Asian American managers viewing the supervisor-subordinate relationship more positively, while in the supervisors' perspective, there was no association between the reported use of impression management tactics and the quality of the supervisor-subordinate relationship. In comparison, the ratings and view of the European American managers'

ratings were highly and significantly correlated with their supervisors' views of the supervisor-subordinate relationship (Xin, 2004).

The findings call for a deeper examination of how Asian cultural values show up in the workplace, especially since scholars such as Hofstede believe that core values formed early in life are likely to remain pertinent throughout one's lifetime (Hofstede & Bond, 1988). A deeper look at how Asian cultural values intersect with a corporate work environment seems warranted.

In his teachings, Confucius said, "A young man should serve his parents at home and be respectful to elders outside his home" (University of Idaho, 2000, para 1:6). Confucius taught that society is, by nature, based on unequal relationships. The *wu lun*, or five basic relationships, put people at appropriate levels: ruler/subject, father/son, older brother/younger brother, husband/wife, and older friend/younger friend. In each case, the lesser member of the dyad owes the other total loyalty, obedience, and respect. To step out of line is to go against this deeply ingrained set of appropriate societal roles (Xin, 2004). Asian children are sometimes taught to speak softly and not raise their voices, especially to those in authority. Respecting elders also affects body language, as it is customary in many Asian countries to cast one's eyes downward in deference; direct eye contact is not always favored. In the United States, however, lack of eye contact may connote dishonesty, shiftiness, or lack of assertiveness.

In many Asian countries, the children or grandchildren care for their parents and grandparents, and quite often, Asian Americans carry on that tradition. This unwavering devotion to elders and superiors can be transferred to the workplace with superiors (Hyun, 2005).

That mindset of constantly being "in service" ties to a second major Confucian teaching that the individual is considered as a member of a family rather than as an individual. This view helps explain the high regard for collectivism, which is the belief that the group, versus the individual, is the most important unit in Asian cultures. However, there is high power distance in Asian cultures, especially between supervisor and subordinates (Xin, 2004). This may explain why the Asian American managers in the study chose to use fewer supervisor-focused tactics, which would require them to initiate getting to know the supervisor beyond the work setting.

In most Asian countries, there is not any flexibility for finding one's voice or one's self and figuring out one's career path. The route is straight and narrow, beginning with college. It is necessary to know what one is going to be, and changing majors or switching careers is not easy (Hyun, 2005). That is different from in the United States where the individual is expected to be the driver of his or her career.

America was founded on the principle of freedom, including freedom of press, freedom of religion, and freedom from political persecution. The country has long operated on the basis of free-market economics. This encourages competition, individual gain, and entrepreneurship. It is the land of opportunity, regardless of one's parents' social status. Moreover, education is considered important but not always necessary to succeed in corporate America.

In *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently— and Why*, which presents an interesting perspective on how Asians and Westerners think differently, Nisbitt (2004) described the absence of argumentation and discourse in Asia that seems to be second nature to Westerners: "North Americans begin to express opinions and justify them as early as the show-and-tell session of nursery school. In

contrast, there is not much argumentation or trafficking in opinions in Asian life" (p. 73). The Asian culture lives closer to the adage, "The loudest duck gets shot." Americans tend to live the adage, "The squeaky wheel gets the oil." In the corporate world, this translates into interpersonal abilities that aid career advancement (Hyun, 2005). This was seen for self-focused tactics in the earlier mentioned impression management study.

The virtues of hard work and conscientiousness are other Confucian beliefs widely held in Asia. One's task in life is to acquire education, work hard, spend money carefully and wisely, and be patient. These teachings of Confucius could explain the job-focused impression management tactics discussed earlier that Asian Americans preferred. As seen in the study, these Asian core cultural values affect the way Asian American managers manage people and how they manage impressions (Xin, 2004).

Asian American Leadership

Asian Americans are relatively well represented in the federal workforce, comprising 6% (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2008). The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission formed the Asian American and Pacific Islander Work Group and compared Asian American representation at different levels (that is, entry-level, mid-level positions, and senior executive positions). The study concluded that Asian Americans lack sufficient representation in executive-level positions in comparison to their representation in entry- and mid-level positions in federal agencies. An example is that Asian Americans are 11% of the Food and Drug Administration's workforce, yet hold 14% of the technician positions and less than 1% of the senior executive positions (Bigelow, 2012).

In the corporate setting, Asian Americans are also well represented at lower and mid-level positions; however, they represent less than 2% of Fortune 500 chief executive officers (CEOs) and corporate officers.

Cultural values affect the way Asian Americans demonstrate leadership as well as how Asian Americans are viewed as leaders. Generally viewed effective leadership traits include assertiveness and decisiveness, and Asian Americans have been found to be less assertive in comparison to European Americans (Zane, Sue, Hu, & Kwon, 1991). Asian Americans' leadership style tends to be defined by collaboration and a nonhierarchical nature, which can be viewed as ineffective characteristics of leadership in Western society. In the United States, public speaking and self-confidence are also valued as positive characteristics of leadership (Astin, 1993). The Asian cultural value of humility conflicts with this individualistic orientation of bringing attention and recognition to oneself.

A 2011 University of California, Riverside, study led by Sy looked at perceptions of Asian American leaders and found that they are not seen as ideal leaders or charismatic. The researchers sampled three groups of individuals—131 business undergraduates (67% having reported work experience averaging three years of full-time experience) from a large business school on the West Coast, a group of 362 employees, and a group of 381 employees in the Los Angeles region—and asked them to evaluate an employee. In one experiment, the group of 131 undergraduates and 362 employees received identical information about the employee's expertise as an engineer or salesperson, but some were told the employee was Asian American and others that he was European American. In a similar experiment, the 381 employees assessed the employee's leadership attributes. Study participants perceived Asian American engineers

as more technically competent than European American engineers and Asian American salespersons as less capable than European American salespersons. Leadership perceptions were higher for European Americans than for Asian Americans regardless of occupation (Sy et al., 2010).

In a February 16, 2011, article in the *UC Riverside Today*, Sy stated that

> Across all three studies, our results indicate that when making between-race comparisons, Asian Americans are perceived as less ideal leaders than are European Americans. This suggests that Asian Americans may be disadvantaged relative to European Americans when organizational leaders make decisions about whom to promote to managerial positions. (Sy, 2011, para. 11)

The stereotype in the workforce is that Asian Americans are great workers, not great leaders. In the Western world, the ideal leadership prototype is charismatic, which is associated with extroverted Caucasians. Asians are perceived as competent, intelligent, and dedicated but lack the perception of charisma needed to be viewed as strong leaders.

Sy (2011) stated that in a past similar study, researchers found that Asian Americans are perceived to possess the necessary attributes for engineering occupations but lack the necessary attributes for the sales fields. Traits often associated with Asian Americans, such as social introversion, emotional withdrawal, verbal inhibition, passivity, a quiet demeanor, and a reserved manner, are not typically viewed as compatible with sales positions. The study found that even when Asian Americans were perceived to be more technically competent—such as Asian American engineers versus European American engineers—they still were perceived to be less ideal leaders than were European Americans. This suggests that organizations and leaders need to understand that there is a pervasive bias and a need to examine current practices (Sy et al., 2010).

"People are not even aware they have biases. It is subtle, pre-conscious behavior," Sy explained. "Management needs to understand this is happening and needs to look at leadership selection and development. The awareness is there for African Americans and for gender issues, but not for Asian Americans" (Sy, 2011, para. 16).

Sy said it also is important to determine whether Asian Americans have the same motivations as European Americans to aspire to leadership positions. For example, many Asians in the West have come to believe that Caucasians make better leaders. "They look at the leaders in their organizations. If there are no examples of leaders of your race or gender, you're less likely to believe you are leader-like and consequently you don't aspire to be a leader," he explained (Sy, 2011, para. 18).

At the same time, Asian Americans tend to believe that technical competence is the primary criterion for promotions, so they may focus their energy on improving their technical rather than their leadership skills, further perpetuating the cycle of bias. "Ultimately, promotions and leadership advancement of Asian Americans and other minorities occur in a competitive environment where they are compared with others, especially their Caucasian counterparts, who may be viewed as best fitting for a business leader," Sy wrote. "Consequently, the extent to which Asian Americans and other minorities are perceived as less ideal leaders in comparison with others has significant implications for leadership advancement" (2011, para. 20).

While this may be the current view of Asian Americans as leaders, there is an emergent focus on different leadership characteristics, ones that align closely with Asian cultural values of humility, collectivism, and shared leadership. As pointed out by *Invitation to Lead* author Tokunaga (2003), Collins' description of Level 5 leadership (see Figure 1) in *Good to Great* (2001a) is one example. Collins described these Level 5

leaders this way: "The most powerfully transformative executives possess a paradoxical mixture of personal humility and professional will. They are timid and ferocious. Shy and fearless. They are rare—and unstoppable" (Collins, 2001b, p. 67). There is a clear connection between these characteristics described by Collins and Asian cultural values.

While acknowledging that there are number of factors in addition to Level 5 leaders that take an organization from good to great, Level 5 leadership is a critical one.

In a *Harvard Business Review* article, Collins went on to say:

Good to great transformations don't happen without Level 5 leaders at the helm. They just don't. Our discovery of Level 5 leadership is counterintuitive. Indeed, it is countercultural. People generally assume that transforming companies from good to great requires larger-than-life leaders—big personalities like Iacocca, Dunlap, Welch and Gault—who make headlines and become celebrities. (2001b, p. 68)

THE LEVEL 5 HIERARCHY

The Level 5 leader sits on top of a hierarchy of capabilities and is, according to our research, a necessary requirement for transforming an organization from good to great. But what lies beneath? Four other layers, each one appropriate in its own right but none with the power of Level 5. Individuals do not need to proceed sequentially through each level of the hierarchy to reach the top, but to be a full-fledged Level 5 requires the capabilities of all the lower levels, plus the special characteristics of Level 5.

LEVEL 5 LEVEL 5 EXECUTIVE
Builds enduring greatness through a paradoxical combination of personal humility plus professional will.

LEVEL 4 EFFECTIVE LEADER
Catalyzes commitment to and vigorous pursuit of a clear and compelling vision; stimulates the group to high performance standards.

LEVEL 3 COMPETENT MANAGER
Organizes people and resources toward the effective and efficient pursuit of predetermined objectives.

LEVEL 2 CONTRIBUTING TEAM MEMBER
Contributes to the achievement of group objectives; works effectively with others in a group setting.

LEVEL 1 HIGHLY CAPABLE INDIVIDUAL
Makes productive contributions through talent, knowledge, skills, and good work habits.

Note. From *Good to Great* (p. 20), By J. Collins, 2001a, New York, NY: Harper Business. Reproduced with permission.

Figure 1

The Level 5 Hierarchy

Asian American Executives in Corporate America

Taking a closer look at Asian American executives in corporate America, while the U.S. population of Asian Americans is 4.8%, less than 2% reach the CEO or

corporate officer ranks of the Fortune 500. While there are few studies that have closely examined the 2% as a whole, some studies have looked at similar populations, such as executives of higher education or smaller segments of the corporate executive population such as the Asian American CEOs of the Fortune 500 or executive Asian American women.

One study explored the experiences of Asian American senior administrators in higher education. In this qualitative investigation, the authors conducted an in-depth exploration of the career trajectories of 10 Asian American senior administrators who had broken through the glass or "bamboo" ceiling (Hyun, 2005). Neilson and Suyemoto (2009) set out to answer the questions: "What are some of the individual characteristics that shape the success of these senior-level administrators? And how have the different cultural and linguistic backgrounds of these administrators facilitated or hindered their career development?" (p. 87).

Initial analysis resulted in the following characteristics: predetermination of career paths, salience of occupational career paths, professional opportunities outside the institutions, and the role of mentors. These results left Neilson and Suyemoto (2009) unsure if they had fully captured the essence of the participants' experiences and realities. They realized that the experiences of the Asian American participants were framed using the experiences of participants in past research and therefore were analyzed and understood through a white Eurocentric perspective. The researchers took a step back and examined their own positions and biases through reflexivity and reframed the analysis.

Neilson and Suyemoto (2009) switched from a wholly deductive to a more mixed inductive-deductive approach. First, they inductively generated themes from the individual interviews. Participants' stories clearly indicated the importance of Asian

cultural values in the trajectories of these administrators. Those cultural values and characteristics included working hard, working collaboratively, and taking particular kinds of risks—all characteristics associated with Asian cultures. Second, they reviewed literature related to Asian cultural values and, in doing so, deductively generated a new culturally specific framework.

In Neilson and Suyemoto's (2009) research, they grounded the new analytical framework in Japanese cultural values. Five particular values originated in the Meiji period (1868-1912) and influenced Japanese, Japanese American, and Japanese Hawaiian cultures: *on* (ascribed obligation), *giri* (contracted obligation), *ningo* (humane sensibility), *enryo* (modesty in the presence of one's superior), and *haji* (shame).

After revisiting the data with a Japanese cultural lens, new themes emerged which can be separated into three categories: hard work as moral obligation, collaboration as interconnection, and risk taking as sacrifice for the future (Neilson & Suyemoto, 2009). Neilson and Suyemoto's (2009) study describes these categories as follows:

1. Hard Work as Honor, Legacy, and Moral Obligation—Participants repeatedly referenced hard work to achieve excellence. Hard work was an internalized expectation rather than a professional orientation. Moreover, it was not simply for purposes of career advancement but as an obligation to honor the legacy of hard-working family members.

2. Collaboration as Interconnection in the Present—Participants expressed a sense of interconnectedness and internalization of the concept of *okage sama de*—that people are extensions of one another and everything is connected.

3. Risk Taking for the Sake of the Children—A third theme that emerged was risk taking at pivotal moments in order to shape the future. However, the

experiences shared by the administrators in that study exemplified risk taking

of a different nature. Motivations for risk taking among participants were

making a point, doing the "right thing," fulfilling a moral obligation, or

righting a past wrong. In this way, risk taking reflects an additional cultural

principle, *kodomo no tame ni*, which symbolizes working hard for future

generations.

Another study looked at Asian American female leaders and set out to examine

their paths to leadership from a feminist perspective. The themes that emerged from this

research were as follows:

- Knowing thyself and doing something you believe in
- Having a vision and inspiring others to work on that vision
- Utilizing a relational and collaborative leadership style
- Taking on challenges, struggles, and conflicts
- Displaying dominant culture efficacy and biculturalism
- Having support and encouragement
- Influence of family
- Spirituality (Kawahara, 2007, p. 24)

Executives and American Corporations

When Miller of the Harvard University Research Center in Entrepreneurial

History looked at the backgrounds of 190 men who were business leaders between 1901

and 1910, he found that 79% had fathers who were businessmen or professionals

(Zweigenhaft & Domhoff, 2011).

Newcomer, the chair of the economics department at Vassar, studied the highest

ranking businessmen of 1900, 1925, and 1950. She also found that more than 70% were

the sons of businessmen or professionals (Newcomer, 1955). In his study of the top

executives of 1950, Mills also found that about 70% were the sons of businessmen or

professionals (Mills, 1956). This pattern has persisted. Writing in the late 1990s, Temin,

an economist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, found that the business elite

had remained remarkably stable in terms of class background (Temin, 1996, 1997). As

Mills put it: "To be compatible with the top men is to act like them, to look like them, to

think like them: to be of and for them" (1956, p. 141). This pattern shows limited

opportunity for leaders outside those circles reaching the top ranks of American

corporations.

Looking even more broadly, in a report comparing the CEOs of the Financial

Times and London Stock Exchange (FTSE) 100 and Fortune 100, key differences were

found. Fortune 100 CEOs are less likely than FTSE 100 CEOs to be of a foreign

nationality, are older, are more likely to have been promoted internally rather than

externally recruited, have largely gained their experience in the United States, and are

more highly educated. Only 10% of United States CEOs have foreign nationality,

compared to 32% of the United Kingdom CEOs. Internal promotions were higher, at 86%

with Fortune 100 versus 66% with FTSE 100 companies. United States CEOs also had

less international experience with only 33%, while a significantly larger number of

United Kingdom CEOs had international experience, coming in at 67%. Another

significant difference is that the emerging trend of super CEOs (age 45 or below) has

doubled in numbers over the last decade in the United Kingdom from six to now 12. In

the United States, only two Fortune 100 CEOs are in that age range. There is also a rise in

elite education, with both Fortune 100 and FTSE 100 CEOs holding advanced degrees

more than in the past, with 59% of United States CEOs and 45% of United Kingdom

CEOs having a master's degree or higher. One thing that was common between the

Fortune 100 and FTSE 100 was the lack of women CEOs, with the United States having

two and the United Kingdom having three (Marx, 2007). The report stated,

In the U.S., these "global" leaders are harder to find. One could argue that the U.S. has sufficient home grown talent to fill its top company positions—that it doesn't need to look elsewhere. We would question this assumption. If the U.S. market is not sufficiently open to global talent, top leaders will migrate to countries where they see different nationalities succeeding at the top of companies. This has the potential to be highly damaging for the U.S. and could see it facing long-term economic disadvantages, similar to the current gravitation of financial services from New York to London. (Marx, 2007, p. 3)

In Heenan's book *Flight Capital: The Alarming Exodus of America's Best and Brightest,* he said,

The next global war will be fought over human capital. This comprehensive study of the reverse brain drain challenges the time-honored belief that the United States is the unchallenged repository of human capital. It is a fallacy that dies hard. But everything changed on 9/11. What had been a trickle of brainpower became a steady flow. Left unchecked, the outflow poses a serious threat to America's security and scientific and economic preeminence. (2005, p. 1)

Based on Heenan's research, until recently this reverse brain drain (reverse, since the flow of knowledge in the past came into the United States from other countries) had gone largely unnoticed. However, the mounting loss of exceptional minds can no longer be dismissed. U.S. brainpower, once thought to be untouchable, is very much up for grabs (Heenan, 2005). "Worldwide, ominous, and growing" is how Yale historian Kennedy, author of *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers* (1989), described the prevailing headwind. There is also a particular threat of top talent returning back to birth countries because of growing opportunities there and because of limited opportunities for career growth in American corporations.

This change does not necessarily represent the decline of the United States as much as the revival of the rest of the world. "For the first time in American history," said Henry Kissinger, "we can neither dominate the world nor escape it" (Heenan, 2005, p. 248).

In relation to Asian Americans, the inexorable rise of India and China is forcing the largest companies to rethink the role of their Asian operations and transform their Asian outposts into strategic parts of their corporate decision making. For example, in 2006 IBM moved its chief procurement officer and operations from its New York headquarters to Shenzhen, China. That same year, Cisco relocated its chief globalization officer and a portion of the corporate staff from San Jose, California, to a new dual corporate headquarters in Bangalore, India. These shifts should create opportunities for global companies to attract and retain the very best Asians and Asian American executives who aspire to high corporate roles. It also means that Asian executives in Asia will interact with U.S. corporate organizations as they deal with global strategy, and they will run into the same cultural obstacles that their counterparts already see in the United States (Gee & Hom, 2010).

Conclusion

Based on current U.S. Census findings, a significant shift is occurring in U.S. demographics, which is affecting the workforce in corporations across the nation. However, minimal research has been conducted to understand the needs and opportunities to fully utilize the potential of the growing Asian American population, specifically with developing Asian American leaders in organizations. This study examines attributes that have enabled Asian American leaders to reach top-level positions in American corporations.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology and Procedures

This chapter describes the methodology used for this research project. It begins with the restatement of the research purpose and is followed by a description of the study method used. The chapter describes the study design, the sample, data collection, protection of human subjects, instrumentation, and an overview of the data analysis procedures.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this study was to identify attributes of Asian American leaders who have been able to retain their cultural identity while successfully furthering their careers in corporate America. While research has been conducted on the lack of Asian American leaders in the c-suite, or the top-level (c-level) positions in organizations such as chief executive officer or chief operating officer, little research has been done to identify the common attributes of Asian American leaders who have been successful, especially while being able to embrace their Asian culture.

Research Design

This study consists of a two-part design, using an online survey and one-on-one interviews. In this study, data was gathered using one distinct participant sample. Instruments used in each part contain questions resulting in quantitative and qualitative data.

Research Sample

The Asian American community is comprised of several subgroups, segmented by the different Asian countries of origin. However, over the past several years, those groups have begun working together, primarily to have a stronger collective voice as

Pan-Asians or Asian Americans. There are a number of organizations, both community- and professional-based, that Asian American leaders are involved in and that the researcher had been participating in. While the majority are Chicago-based, a few have a national presence as well. The organizations the researcher has worked with and reached out to in order to find potential participants for this study are as follow:

- Chicago Asian Affinity Group Leaders (AAGL)

- Asian American Institute (AAI)

- National Association of Asian American Professionals—National and Local Chapters (NAAAP)

- Organization of Chinese Americans—National and Chicago Chapter (OCA)

- National Association of Asian MBAs (NAAMBA)

- Leadership Education of Asian Professionals (LEAP)

- Ascend (Pan-Asian Leadership)

In addition to these direct connections, other close ties within the Asian communities also helped provide contacts. People within these networks connected the researcher to other Asian American leaders.

Another approach taken to reach potential participants was through various diversity and inclusion networks through work and professional social media forums. This expanded the reach to diversity and inclusion practitioners throughout the nation.

Success is defined in this study by the position the leader holds and the standing of the organization he or she is a part of. The sample population selected for the research consisted of Asian American leaders currently or previously in middle- to top-level positions at Fortune 600 companies. They had to be in a senior manager position or higher while at the Fortune 600 company. An online survey was open to all participants

meeting the defined criteria; and participants were chosen for face-to-face or telephone interviews based on availability and accessibility, with the intent of having as much of a mix of Asian ethnicities, gender, level, and generational differences as possible. The majority of the population was from the Midwest with the others coming from other parts of the United States.

Data Collection

Data was collected using a 10-minute online questionnaire and assessment along with a 45-minute face-to-face or telephone interview with a subset of the participants.

Part 1. Survey packets were e-mailed to all Asian American leaders who met the criteria ($n = 50$). Each packet included the following items: an introductory cover letter (Appendix A) explaining the purpose of the project and a consent form requesting participation in the study (Appendix B). Upon receipt of the signed consent form, a link to the online survey was provided to them along with a unique identification code. The online questionnaire which includes the Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identification Acculturation (SL-ASIA) Scale (Appendix C) was accessed through the provided Qualtrics survey tool. The Asian American leaders were asked to complete the survey within 10 days of receipt.

A modified version of the invitation letter was developed during the data collection period to increase participation rate. An abbreviated letter explaining the research, clearly identifying the criteria required for the research, and providing a link to another version of the online questionnaire was sent out and posted on Asian American social media forums. The letter was written in a way that individuals could pass it on to others in their networks who met the criteria without having to go back and forth with the researcher. (This is also shown in Appendix A.)

So that the participants' rights could be clearly protected and consent received before moving on with the online questionnaire, the questionnaire was modified. It included the consent form and two additional questions validating the requirements that the participant was a senior manager or above of a Fortune 600 company (currently or previously). The individual's position and the name of the company were also requested.

Each questionnaire was coded for the purpose of a potential follow-up reminder to increase the response rate. Later respondents were anonymous other than any information they provided regarding position, company, and the opt-in information for the one-on-one interviews. A list containing Asian American leader names and corresponding questionnaire codes for the group who responded to the original questionnaire was maintained by the researcher. The list was kept in a secure location, and no one other than the researcher and an assistant statistician had access.

Part 2. Forty-five-minute face-to-face or telephone interviews were chosen for Part 2 of this study. The interviews were held with a subset of the Asian American leaders who filled out the online questionnaire. The intent of the one-on-one interviews was to allow leaders to share their stories and personal reflections of experiences and factors that had contributed to their professional success.

The invitation to participate in the interviews was included in the initial introductory letter and consent form. That invitation and e-mail explained the purpose of the project and requested participation for the interviews as an optional second part. Those who opted in to the interview provided their names and contact information in the online questionnaire. After arranging the meeting times, a reminder e-mail was sent to all participants one week prior to the interviews. Some original respondents did not

participate in the interviews, so additional participants were selected until the desired minimum participation was achieved.

The in-person interviews took take place in a quiet location with comfortable seating, in a location convenient for the participant. The interviews took approximately 45 minutes. Participants were asked to review the consent form (Appendix B) indicating the purpose of the study and to give permission to record their responses and use them in a research study. The questions were also provided to the participants beforehand to increase their comfort level and allow them to prepare their thoughts for the discussion. Adequate time was included for any questions. Consent for participation was obtained through the signed form or the checked box on the online questionnaire and by the voluntary decision of the participant to remain present for the interview. Background information was collected by means of the online demographic questionnaire that is included with the SL-ASIA Scale and requires approximately 10 minutes to complete. The researcher was positioned in a way that facilitates verbal and non-verbal communication. A digital pen recorder was used for both written notes and an audio capture of the conversation. The interview was started with the written list of questions, and potential prompts were available on the interview protocol guide (Appendix D) using a semi-structured format. No personal views were shared by the researcher during the interview.

Protection of Human Subjects

Institutional approval to conduct the proposed research study was obtained through Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board on November 22, 2011. As such, measures were taken to protect the human subjects. In addition, the researcher

completed the Human Participants Protection Education for Research Teams course

sponsored by the National Institute of Health on October 25, 2010.

Instrumentation

The online survey questionnaire included 16 items used to obtain demographic

data regarding gender; age; country of birth; primary ethnic heritage; educational

background; current or previous position with Fortune 600 company; company name; and

parent information regarding education level, country of birth, profession, and

involvement in community. The SL-ASIA Scale (Appendix C) comprised the remaining

26 questions focused on individual experiences and perceptions related to acculturation,

such as historical background, as well as more recent behaviors related to cultural

identity. The format consisted of only multiple-choice questions.

In 1987, Suinn, Rickard-Figueroa, Lew, and Vigil designed the SL-ASIA Scale

for assessing acculturation of Asians modeled after a successful scale for Hispanics, the

Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans (ARSMA). Initial reliability and

validity data were reported for two samples of Asian undergraduates totaling 82 (mean

age 19 years) from two states in the United States.

The SL-ASIA Scale was validated by expert review and pilot study to obtain

feedback and revision suggestions in 1992. However, recently, Suinn added six additional

questions to measure values, behavioral competencies, and a self-identity score, which

have not been validated. The entire 26-question scale was used as part of this research.

A follow-up report by Suinn, Ahuna, and Khoo in 1992 discussed the reliability

and validity data on an extensive study of the SL-ASIA Scale involving a sample of 324

Asian American university students. Concurrent validity results show that the SL-ASIA

scores were significantly correlated with demographic information hypothesized to

reflect levels of Asian American identity. For example, high SL-ASIA scores were associated with having attended school in the United States over an extended period of time, during which time the student's Asian identity would have been reduced. Factorial validity was determined by comparing factors obtained for the SL-ASIA with factors reported for a similar scale measuring acculturation of Hispanics, the ARSMA. Of the four interpretable factors reported for the ARSMA, three were identified for the SL-ASIA.

Then, in 1995, Suinn, Khoo, and Ahuna published "The Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale: Cross-Cultural Information." They used the SL-ASIA to conduct a cross-cultural examination of Asian acculturation. Two hundred eighty-four Asian American university students in the United States and 118 Singapore Asian individuals in Singapore completed the SL-ASIA and a demographic questionnaire. Chronbach's alpha for the SL-ASIA was .79, reflecting reasonably stable data. Factor analysis identified five factors underlying acculturation scores: reading/writing/cultural preferences, ethnic interaction, generational identity, affinity for ethnic identity and pride, and food preferences. A one-way analysis of variance showed that Singapore Asians achieved a score indicative of Asian identity, whereas Asian Americans obtained a mean score indicative of higher Western acculturation.

The qualitative interview protocol was developed by this researcher to assess demographic data, Asian culture awareness, and experiences regarding Asian American leadership roles. The literature review, expert review, and pilot testing were used to establish the content validity and reliability of both the online SL-ASIA questionnaire and the face-to-face or telephone interview guide. Qualitative data was gathered to capture the stories and insights of the participants and to provide context for the

quantitative findings. The questions were centered around three main categories, the participant's work, Asian American culture, and leadership. The questions were developed to build off the SL-ASIA, especially the influence of their parents and engagement in traditional Asian practices. In addition, questions regarding their work and leadership influences were included to better understand their individual leadership journeys, choice points that led them to where they were, and influential figures and experiences that supported their career trajectory along the way.

The qualitative interview protocol (Appendix D) included 15 interview questions and prompts. The qualitative interview protocol was developed by this researcher and included opening comments and introductory or warm-up questions related to characteristics of successful leaders. The next series of open-ended questions dealt with work history, Asian culture and upbringing, perceptions and values that influenced decisions to pursue leadership roles, barriers that had been overcome, as well as current involvement in professional networks.

An introductory cover letter consent form was e-mailed to 50 Asian American leaders in Fortune 600 companies. Once consent forms were received, unique codes and links to the survey were sent out to the participants. The target number of people to participate in the online survey was 30, with 9 being selected to participate in a face-to-face or telephone interview. They were asked to complete the survey within 10 days after receipt of their unique code and link. In the online survey was a question asking them if they would like to participate in the follow-up face-to-face or telephone interviews.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data obtained from the interviews. Measures of central tendencies, frequency distributions, and percentages were calculated as appropriate.

The online survey responses were also used to determine the participant's level of acculturation. Lower scores indicated low acculturation (or high Asian identity) and higher scores indicated high acculturation (or high Western identity). Mid-range scores showed high bicultural identity.

All responses were tallied for the demographic variables. In analyzing the qualitative data, the researcher looked at all the responses in an effort to find similarities, differences, and themes. Several consistent themes of success attributes were identified for Asian American leaders in American corporations contributing to data triangulation, content reliability, and validity. Content analysis of responses to open-ended questions was grounded in theory. Responses were categorized to generate common themes. Coding, data entry, and data analysis were completed by the researcher and confirmed by an independent auditor.

Summary

In conclusion, this chapter provided a summary of the research methodology and procedures used to identify attributes of Asian American leaders who have retained their cultural identity while successfully rising to high ranks of American corporations. The study design, sample, data collection, human rights, instrumentation, and data analysis were presented in this chapter. Chapter 4 will describe detailed study findings.

Chapter 4

Findings

This chapter reports the findings of the study. The demographics of respondents to both the online questionnaire and the interviews are first detailed. Then, themes are identified and discussed.

Demographics of Online Questionnaire Respondents

There were a total of 32 online questionnaire respondents. Six Asian American ethnic groups were represented in the research. This was an open call to any leaders fitting the criteria; there were leaders of Chinese, Indian, Japanese, Filipino, Korean, and Pakistani descent (see Table 2).

Table 2

Survey Respondents' Ethnicity

Primary Ethnic Heritage	Total
Chinese	14
Filipino	4
Indian	6
Japanese	4
Korean	3
Pakistani	1
Grand Total	32

The respondents were highly educated, with all holding a bachelor's degree and almost 60% holding a master's degree or higher (see Table 3).

Table 3

Survey Respondents' Educational Background

Educational Background	Count of Educational Background	Percentage of Educational Background
Bachelor's Degree	13	40.63%
Master's Degree or Higher	19	59.38%
Grand Total	32	100.00%

From a generational standpoint, all participants were either Baby Boomers (1943-1960) or Generation X (1961-1981) (see Table 4).

Table 4

Survey Participants' Birth Generation

Generation Year of Birth	Number	Percentage of Generation Year of Birth
Baby Boomer (1943-1960)	11	34.38%
Generation X (1961-1981)	21	65.63%
Grand Total	32	100.00%

Thirty-one of the 32 participants were first-or second-generation immigrants. Only one of the 32 who responded was third generation (see Table 5).

Table 5

Survey Respondents' Immigration Generation

Immigration Generation	Number	Percentage of Immigration Generation
1st Generation	18	56.25%
2nd Generation	13	40.63%
3rd Generation	1	3.13%
Grand Total	32	100.00%

As far as education of parents, 14 of the 32 respondents' fathers had a high school education or lower, and 24 of the 32 respondents' mothers had a high school education or lower (see Tables 6 and 7).

Table 6

Education of Survey Respondents' Fathers

Father: Educational Background	Count of Father: Educational Background	Percent of Father: Educational Background
High School or lower	14	43.75%
Bachelor's Degree	11	34.38%
Master's or higher	7	21.88%
Grand Total	32	100.00%

Table 7

Education of Survey Respondents' Mothers

Mother: Educational Background	Count of Mother: Educational Background	Percent of Mother: Educational Background
High School or Lower	24	75.00%
Bachelor's Degree	7	21.88%
Master's Degree	1	3.13%
Grand Total	32	100.00%

Demographics of Interview Respondents

Nine participants opted into the second part of the research by submitting their names and contact information in the Part 1 online questionnaire and assessment (see Table 8). Five of the nine leaders began their careers in technical fields, while the other four began in operations or service roles.

Similarities between the total 32 survey participants and the group of 9 interviewees that opted in were the mix of industries and levels. The interview participants also represented the majority of the ethnic groups that participated in the survey. However, the number of Chinese interviewees was exceptionally larger (6 of the 9) versus being only 38% of the total, or 12 of 32 survey participants. The interviewees

were also a fairly even amount of Baby Boomers and Generation X, which is comparable to the total survey respondents.

Compared to the total 32 survey participants, the group of 9 that opted in to the interviews had some differences. They were also more second-generation immigrants in the interviews (6 of the 9), where there were more first-generation Asian Americans in the total survey (19 of the 32).

Table 8

Interview Participants' Demographics

ID#	Position	Industry	Gender	Ethnicity	Immigration Generation	Generation
1	Vice President	Technology	Male	Chinese	2nd	Baby Boomer
2	Director	Retail	Female	Chinese	2nd	Baby Boomer
3	Senior Director	Financial	Male	Indian	1st	Generation X
4	Director	Technology/ Electronics	Male	Chinese	2nd	Baby Boomer
5	Vice President	Materials	Female	Japanese	2nd	Generation X
6	Assistant Vice President	Financial	Female	Filipino	1st	Generation X
7	Director	Technology	Male	Chinese	2nd	Baby Boomer
8	President	Technology	Female	Chinese	2nd	Baby Boomer
9	Senior Manager	Utilities/Energy	Female	Chinese	1st	Generation X

Themes

The interviews were centered around a few primary topics: the work these leaders do today and their career journeys to get there, their Asian culture and triggers that heightened their awareness growing up, and finally their leadership journeys and influencers along the way. The following common themes were pulled from the interviews as factors that contributed to their success:

- Learned early to integrate their Asian and American cultures

- Live and believe in the strong Asian value of hard work

- Willing to take risks and stretch themselves

- Learned from non-Asian mentors and influences

- Passion for teaching and developing others

Learned early to integrate Asian and American cultures. Psychology research on social judgments finds that bicultural individuals can exhibit the response tendencies associated with each of their cultures and that these individuals automatically switch between the two response styles depending on situational cues, such as culturally associated languages or images (Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martinez, 2000). However, not all bicultural individuals respond the same way in situations related to culture. Some are able to adapt like chameleons and conform to the norms of the cued culture, while others, like contrarians, shift in the opposite direction. Benet-Martinez, Leu, Lee, and Morris (2002) linked the direction of response to biculturals' identity structures, specifically the extent to which they represent their two identities (for example, Asian and American) to be compatible as opposed to conflicting. Biculturals with integrated, compatible identities tend to respond assimilatively to cultural cues (for example, they make more individualistic judgments than otherwise when in situations

that prime American culture), whereas those with less integrated, conflicting identities respond contrastively (for example, they make more collectivistic judgments than otherwise when in situations that prime American culture).

In this current study, the majority of the participants learned to integrate their different cultures at an early age. Of the nine interviewees, six grew up in European American neighborhoods and one attended an English-speaking school as a child in his originating country. Six of the nine interviewees were also second-generation Americans. However, their enculturation, their retention of their indigenous or Asian culture, was still highly present in their stories and responses. Examples of traditions, food, and family stories passed on regarding their ancestry and history kept the participants connected to their Asian culture. However, for those who grew up with other Asian Americans, they found that their friends' households were a lot more traditional in language and practices.

"My parents were interesting. They were very conservative, but they weren't very traditional," said one interviewee. Four of the nine interviewees rebelled as children, refusing to go to their ethnic language school, but they respected and followed the traditions and practices of their parents and family at home. Some found community and places of worship as a way for them to get support and gain a deeper understanding of who they are.

These stories support the survey findings that, somehow, these leaders have found a balance of their Asian and American (Western) cultures. Their examples reflect this constant dance and tension between the two cultures, yet there was an openness that allowed them to have high acculturation while having high enculturation.

Figure 2 shows the survey participants' responses to questions 22 and 23 of the SL-ASIA, which related to values. When asked how much they believed in Asian values and then how much they believed in Western values, the majority of the respondents believed equally in both, showing a high bicultural-identification at 60%. This compared to 31% Asian-identified and 9% Western-identified.

Rate yourself in how much you believe in Asian Values (Q22) & American (Western) Values (Q23)

■ Count of Acculturation (22 & 23)2

59.38%

31.25%

9.38%

Asian-identified   Bicultural   Western-identified
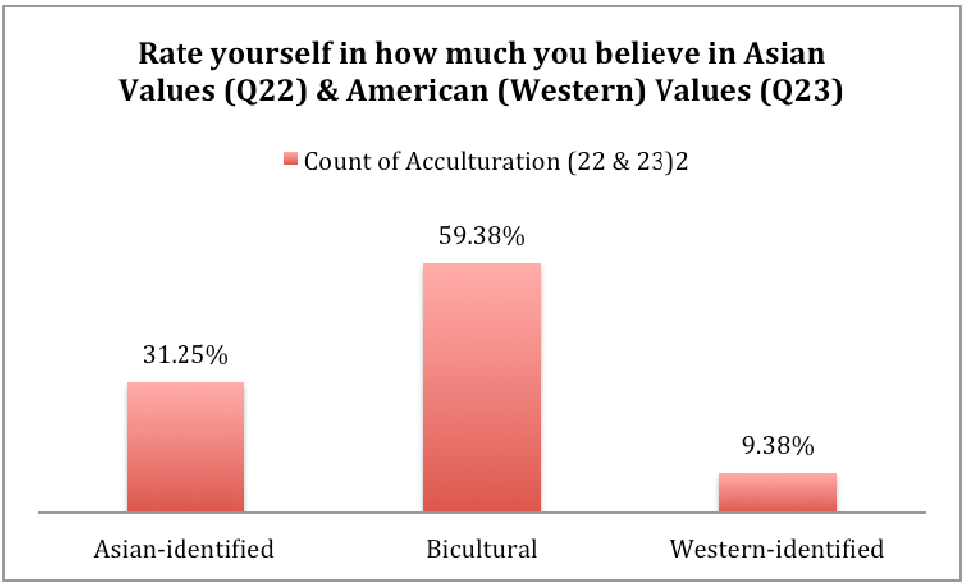
Figure 2

Survey Respondents' Belief in Asian and American (Western) Values

Figure 3 shows a similar response to how much the participants feel like they fit in Asian and then in Western cultures. Results showed that there was an even higher bicultural rating, 66%, when it came to fit, with Asian-identified responses coming in at 19% and Western-identified at 15%.
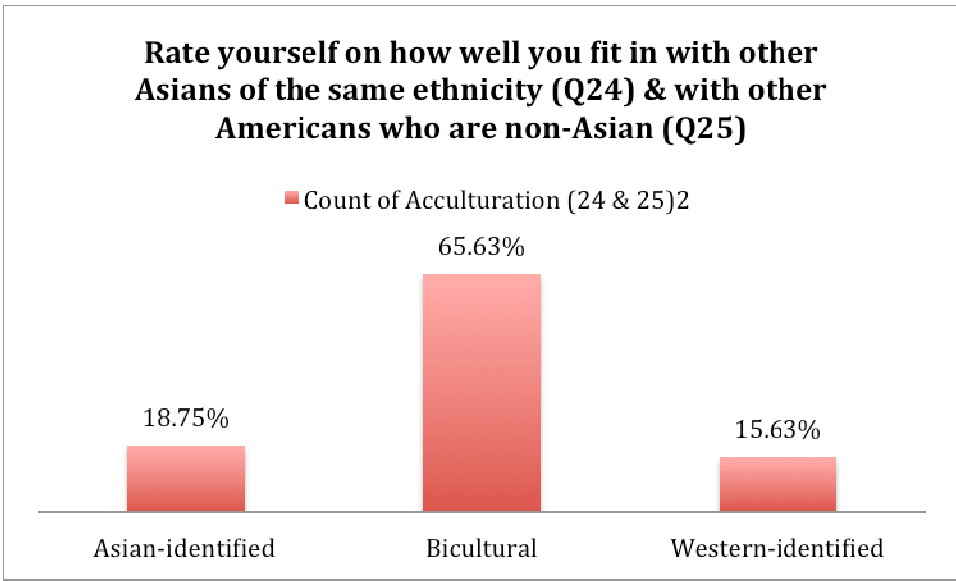
Figure 3

Survey Respondents' Sense of Fit with Asians and Non-Asians

When looking at the SL-ASIA scores from questions 1 to 21 that were primarily focused on behaviors and day-to-day activities, the scores were more evenly distributed; however, they were still more heavily weighted as bicultural (47%), while 19% of the responses showed up as more Asian-identified and 34% as more Western-identified (Figure 4).
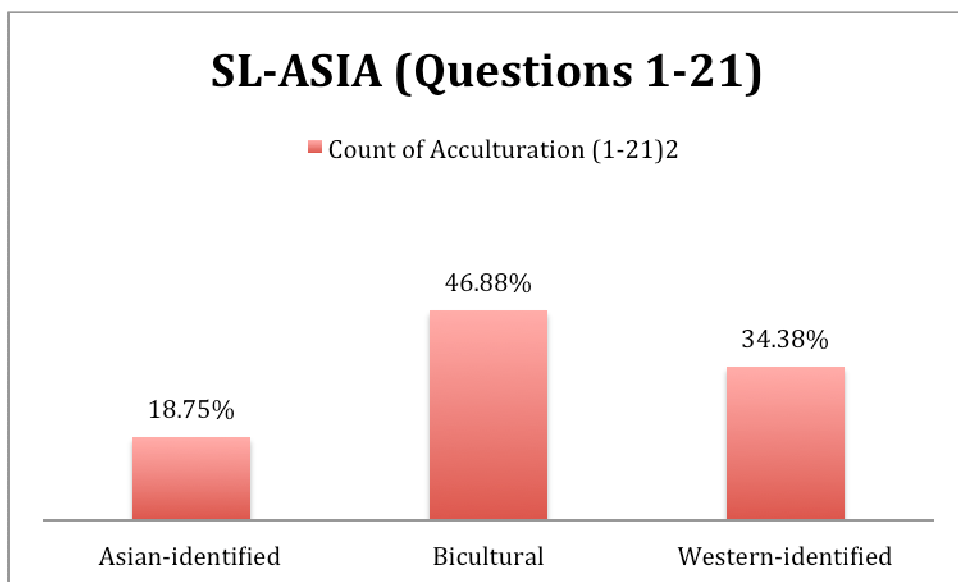
Figure 4

Survey Respondents' SL-ASIA Scale Scores

When asked directly to assess their acculturation, the respondents saw themselves as almost evenly split between the three identities. Bicultural-identified responses were at 41%, Asian-identified responses were 34%, and Western-identified responses were 25% (Figure 5).

There are many ways people think of themselves. Which ONE of the following most describes you? (Q26)

Figure 5

Survey Respondents' Self-Assessment of Acculturation

Strong Asian value of hard work. A common theme among the interviewees was the value of hard work and how they associated it with their Asian roots, with three of the nine leaders developing their strong work ethic at an early age, getting their first jobs at 13 and 14 years of age. Every interviewee was either first- or second-generation Asian American, so the immigrant experience was still fresh and firsthand for them— both watching and experiencing the struggles and sacrifices their parents made to give their families new opportunities and possibilities in America and experiencing firsthand having to start brand new, with little to no family support in this new land. All told stories of remarkable resilience and some drew inspiration from their immigrant stories. Whether that inspiration was rooted in appreciation for what they or their parents overcame or a desire to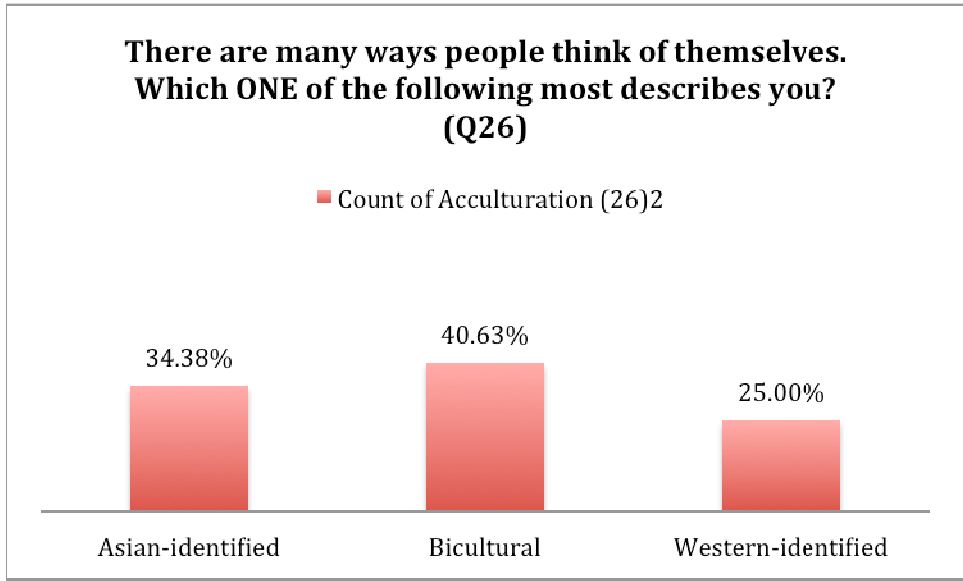 not suffer as they had growing up, they used it as fuel and the common outcome was a focus on hard work, a core Asian cultural value. One of the interviewees was born at the start of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Her grandfather was a CEO of a company in China. The government promised him that he would keep his position and personal assets, so he did not leave the country. However, everything was taken away and the grandfather had to work three-shift days in the fields. The family was poor, but the interviewee was the eldest of the grandchildren so was sponsored to come to the United States for better opportunities. The airfare was all this leader's family in China could afford. This leader arrived in the United States with no family and no money, starting from scratch and waiting tables in Chinese restaurants, sometimes working three jobs at a time to get by. The interviewee also managed to support herself through graduate school along the way. When things were tough, what this leader thought was, "If I feel it's not fair, I accepted the fact that it was my choice to come to this country. I wanted to make

changes and come here. And so I feel like I want . . . I need to work hard and to earn. I think that's been my mentality all the time."

Another leader's immigrant story captured the challenge of migrant families having to split up in order to reach for the American dream. He explained,

> My father came over in the 30s, and in those days you weren't allowed to bring your spouse along with you, so he left my mom back in China. He came over here basically as a laborer. Never got an education. Worked as a butcher. Even though he joined the union, he was never given the best job because there was a lot of discrimination in those days. So he did that. He worked in restaurants. He did all that and finally in the 1950s—I have three older sisters, so they left two of the sisters behind in Hong Kong because they were already older. They brought my youngest sister who's 18 years older than me, came over with my mom, and then I was born the next year.
>
> My parents were, like I said, they were laborers, so my dad always was on and off from work, always trying to put some food on the table, and my mom was the typical seamstress in Chinatown. You know, that's the only thing they can do so they worked in the sweatshops.

"My parents instilled in me the value of hard work" was a comment heard many times in the interviews, along with having this desire for perfection, not fearing difficult assignments, and putting in the hours and effort needed. There was an observation about differences in the next generation:

> My kids have picked up on the desire to work hard as well. However, I worked hard and I would be willing to work hard because I wanted to be better, whereas I noticed that my kids are more—a job is a means to an end, not the means itself.

As children of immigrants or immigrants themselves, many of these leaders grew up without economic privilege, and most described themselves as "growing up poor." This is contrary to an analysis of the Fortune 500 CEOs in the book, *The New CEOs*. One of the conclusions of the Latino and Asian American Fortune 500 CEOs was that at least half of them, both men and women, came from economic privilege, and especially those born outside the United States were from upper-middle or upper-class backgrounds

(Zweigenhaft & Domhoff, 2011). It should be noted that while a few Asian American leaders at the c-suite level were invited to this study, none participated.

Willing to take risks and stretch themselves. Another common theme across each of the interviews was the constant turns and changes in their careers and their ability to stretch themselves beyond their comfort zones. While there were points in their careers that they felt inhibited by being an introvert, not comfortable with speaking in front of others, making decisions, or being forced to go on their own to put themselves through college or support their families, they found ways to overcome and thrive.

Each of the leaders continuously looked for, and was open to, new challenging assignments, no matter how difficult or different the work was. They moved around to different roles and assignments, some as drastic as going from public relations to information technology or from being a systems engineer to working in human resources. They were willing to take on big responsibilities, assignments that "no one else wanted" or were known for being able to turn around failing business units or projects.

One of the leaders told himself and other Asian Americans he mentors, "Force yourself. You've got to think, you've got to listen, you've got to come up with something, but you need to break in there and say something. Don't ever leave a meeting without saying anything." He shared that he learned to turn it on and off but that to this day, he is still naturally an introvert.

A common thread in their stories was the ability to overcome fear. Their ability to not fear challenging, new, different assignments stemmed from their belief in themselves to take those challenges on. One of the leaders shared,

> I have a philosophy of "If not me, than who? Or, if not you, than who?" Like my son, I would always coach him and say somebody's gotta be number one, why shouldn't it be you? And, even though that may sound cliché, it's amazing how

many people don't think that way. They think there's always gonna be someone else to do that.

The majority of the women Asian American leaders interviewed discussed their having to balance work and family. One of them commented, "You can't fear taking a step sideways or back to change your career, to balance work and family, to follow your strengths and passions."

Learning from non-Asian mentors and influences. All of the leaders could remember a point in their careers or their lives when the actions or feedback of someone non-Asian opened their eyes and minds to new information about their surroundings and themselves. The impact of these individuals believing in them and supporting them opened them up to opportunities they had not thought of before. As mentioned earlier, all of these leaders began in technical, operations, or service roles. Most were so busy being the best in their technical fields that they were not thinking about other career paths, such as leadership. By colleagues, managers, and others playing an informal mentoring role, sharing that they thought these Asian Americans had leadership potential, it enabled them to open their careers up to greater possibilities.

One interviewee reflected back early in her career as an entry-level job applicant when one of the officers of the company asked her to join a meeting to get her point of view on a business issue they were having and again as an executive assistant, being offered a hand of support from a leader. "Those things made me question my belief about hierarchy."

Most of the leaders were approached directly by people they came to trust, raising their awareness of American culture or of the culture of the organization. One interviewee reflected on the best lesson he ever got and that he carried with him his entire life.

After about six months on the job, my mentors on my team literally took me into the conference room and said, "You've got to learn to speak up. We know you're smart, we know you know your stuff, and you never say anything. You're never going to make it in this company if you don't speak up."

He continued,

I mean I trust these guys. They were my heroes and from that point on, I told other people and coached and mentored them with the same feedback. I also share this with my child, that what you want to do in a meeting is listen but also to say something. You don't want to just repeat what someone else said, but what you have to say.

Another example from the interviewees was from one who came to the United States as an adult, as an experienced leader. As a senior leader of his organization, he had been doing well and was highly competent in his work. During an offsite meeting, he and his leadership team went out for dinner. He shared his story:

I don't drink. I don't eat meat. I don't socialize with topics I'm not interested in, and I've still not developed that well. Others were talking around me. I stood there with my arms crossed and left the event not feeling good. So much so that later that evening, I told a [European American] colleague, "I don't think I fit in this culture. I think I need to go back home. I just don't feel like I fit into these extracurricular activities and things." That colleague, who was sensitive to Asian culture because of ties he has with his family, was observing me; however, he didn't realize what was going on or what I was experiencing. We talked about it and returned to work. I didn't feel good, but we got back to work and things eventually got normal.

A week later, that colleague returned to talk with me. He took me into a conference room and said, "I want to give you some feedback. Do you remember what happened a week back?" I said, "Yeah. I felt bad. I didn't want to even come to these things anymore. I will pretend I'll have a conflict and I won't show up." He said, "That's exactly what I want to talk to you about . . . I know your culture. I appreciate your culture. I want to tell you something. You don't have to adapt all the time. Others around you also have to adapt to you." That was a fantastic statement he made to me and I told him, "Man, you just gave me a lot of confidence." We continued to talk about the experience of that night.

He told me, "Your food came first. You just looked at your food. You didn't even look at what others were talking about." I said, "I did not know how to engage in the conversation because I do not understand the conversation you guys were talking." He said, "Yeah. You could've talked. You travel a lot. You enjoy cricket. You could've talked about it. No one knows you. No one has ever gone outside the U.S. yet. You know so much. Why don't you start a conversation?" I said, "I couldn't find space. You guys were talking loudly, and I couldn't find space to insert myself." And he said, "Yeah. But you could have

said, 'Hey, I have something to talk to you about' to your neighbor and then the neighbor would get engaged and then the next person would get engaged. You should have done that." He then said, "I want you to know this because I think we were bad to you."

While the Asian American leader did not see the others as being bad, but that he just did not fit in, by the two of them having the courage to open up and have honest dialogue, they learned lessons that changed their lives and deepened their relationship.

Passion for teaching and developing others. Teaching and developing others are shared passions among these leaders. All of the leaders mentor others, mostly informally, and use those opportunities to share what others have shared with them. A number of them either aspire to teach or are currently teaching part time at universities or in other settings.

They love to teach in their role as a leader and to see people develop and grow. The teaching is not often directly connected to other Asian Americans but to more of a general audience.

Pieces of Advice

The interviewees were asked if there were any pieces of advice that had made a significant impact in their careers that they wanted to pass on to others. Their responses are summarized below, with additional comments included.

- Ask questions and dig deep within yourself and with others

  As Asians, we have to be able to learn to question our attitudes and even our values. What I find is that when you start to question your attitudes and even your values, you may determine that it's not the right thing for you. So then you make the appropriate changes. Then you actually set yourself on a course of improvement.

  Don't be afraid to ask for help. Ask why. Asking "why," I would say, is the biggest thing because every time you ask why, you actually create a new connection. Many times, people are not fully clear about what they are saying or asking for. When you ask why, it forms a new bond because now you find the answer together.

"Learn by asking questions. You can also teach by asking questions."

- Don't fear your strengths

"Don't be afraid to work hard and to be smarter than other people."

- Develop your communications skills

Develop your speaking, writing, and communication skills, because your ability to communicate clearly to people makes all the difference in the world.

- Be flexible, be humble

"You learn, sometimes even more so, from those experiences that don't go well. "

- Be true to yourself

There was a point in my career that I made the decision that I am not going to be defined by other people's perceptions of me and my job and my work. I've got to do that and if I'm going to do that, the best thing I can do is redefine success. I saw it as bringing others along with me, not that it was just about me.

No matter what others tell you, you ultimately have to make the decisions in your work, about your people . . . just do the right thing. I've gotten opportunities where I've been told, "I'm asking you to do the job because of who you are, not because of who they think you need to be."

"Learn how to step out of the box while still being your authentic self."

Chapter 5

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Common attributes among Asian American senior leaders were that they learned at an early age to integrate their Asian and American cultures, they live and believe in the Asian value of hard work, they are willing to take risks and stretch themselves, they have learned from non-Asian mentors and influences, and they have a passion for teaching and developing others.

This chapter identifies limitations of the study as well as possibilities for future research. It also includes a summary and conclusion of the findings. Recommendations from the researcher are provided for emerging and established Asian American leaders, organization development and learning practitioners, as well as for American corporations.

Limitations

A couple of limitations regarding the respondents were the number of participants and the diversity. While there were a handful of leaders who responded immediately and supportively to the invitations, for the most part it was a challenge to get the number of participants aimed for. Part of the earlier challenges were in the complexity and number of handoffs back and forth between the respondent and researcher; however, even after that was adjusted, participation was slow to trickle in. A consideration with the responsiveness is that the pool of qualified participants is limited. Again, there are only 1.9% of Asian American corporate officers in the Fortune 500 (Hewlett & Rashid, 2011). When the study was posted on professional social media platforms and with the researcher's professional networks, dozens of responses were received from colleagues throughout the nation expressing their surprise that after looking through their own

networks, they were not able to identify one person who qualified. However, there were also responses from individuals concerned that they were not "Asian enough" or who were too busy to participate. The latter reinforces the theme that surfaced from the interviews, as well as past studies, of how Asian Americans value and invest in hard work.

In addition to adjusting the response process, the criteria were expanded to meet the number of participants desired. The original criteria were current senior-level (senior manager and above) Asian American leaders of Fortune 500 companies. The revised criteria became current or past senior-level (senior manager and above) Asian American leaders of Fortune 600 companies.

As far as diversity, while c-suite leaders were invited, none participated. There was one former president of a Fortune 500 company that participated. However, all others were at the senior manager to senior vice president levels. This limits the perspective shared from the c-suite and president levels.

In addition, all but one participant was first- or second-generation American. The experiences of third-generation or later senior leaders are not captured in this study. These leaders would have differing experiences having grown up primarily in the American culture, possibly enculturing into their Asian culture at a later age or not at all. It would be interesting to see if there are commonalities with the level of bicultural identity in the later generations or if they identify more with Western culture.

Another diversity limitation is the number of ethnic groups that participated. Asian American leaders from only six Asian ethnic groups participated (Chinese, Asian Indian, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, and Pakistani). It would have been preferable to get a broader mix that represents a diagonal slice, or sampling, of that population.

Unfortunately, the researcher did not locate detailed information regarding the population of Asian American corporate officers, other than CEOs or board members. In the 2010 U.S. Census, the detailed Asian groups with one million or more responses for the Asian-alone-or-in-any-combination population were Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, and Japanese (U.S. Census Bureau, , 2010b). With Vietnamese Americans as the fourth largest Asian American population, it would have been ideal to have Vietnamese American leaders included in the study.

Recommendations for Future Study

One possibility for future study would be Asian American women in corporate leadership. Most of the Asian American women leaders (four of the five) in the study brought up challenges faced with balancing work and family. Family was defined broader than spouse and children; it extended to parents, grandparents, and extended family as well. There is value in another study examining and capturing the stories of those women who have been able to balance their personal drive to get to the top with the often-traditional expectations of the female role at home. A common theme among most of the Asian American women was taking steps back or sideways in their careers for family.

One female interviewee described her experience and her ascent back to her senior leader position after taking steps back for her family. She discussed the deeply socialized perception growing up of the role of an Asian woman, of wanting to have a husband and believing in the family. However, as much as she tried to rely on her husband, he could not support the family and so they divorced and she needed to work and support her children. She worked hard, took her kids with her to Asia, to other states, wherever she could get work, and her career grew. However, there came a time when she

had to find balance. "I took a couple steps down," she said, choosing to take a less time-demanding position in a new company to have time for her young children.

> So I adjusted the way I'm talking and adjusted the way how I approach people and hide a lot of my credentials before. When I started to build good relationships and earned the trust from them, then later I see what I can offer and I gradually depend on the situation and I do it.

The complexity and social conditioning that Asian American women have to face and come to terms with, especially those who have reached higher levels of leadership, is an area of study worth looking into further.

Another possible body of work is examining the differences and similarities within the subgroups of the Asian American community: South Asian, Southeast Asian, East Asian, Pacific Islander. This would be helpful to better understand the more granular communities within the Asian American population and to understand each group's acculturation into American culture and enculturation of their own cultures.

For example, the Southeast Asian group is one that is often overlooked, especially when Asian Americans are looked at as a whole group. Vietnamese Americans are the fourth largest subgroup population, but their statistics differ significantly from that of the other subgroups. While Asian Americans, in general, have the highest education rate with 48.9% holding a bachelor's degree or higher, when looking at the Southeast Asian subgroup, the number drops significantly, even below the national average of 28.2%. Vietnamese Americans average at 25.5% holding a bachelor's degree or higher, while Cambodian Americans average at 16%, Hmong Americans at 14.8%, and Laotian Americans at 13.2%. Approximately half of this population is first generation and many of those first-generation immigrants are refugees (Southeast Asia Resource Action Center, 2011).

Another potential future area of study is how Asian Americans make it to the c-suite, examining how they are developed internally or if they have to move from company to company to get to the top. It would be interesting to see if there are best practices in developing Asian American leaders into the c-suite or as successors within major corporations.

Research on how Asian Americans are helping other Asian Americans develop and move up the corporate ladder would aid in understanding whether Asian Americans are helping or hindering the current situation. In a study of U.S.-based law firms by Bigelow (2012), Asian Americans represented nearly half of all minority associates, making them the most established minority group at the associate level. However, Asian Americans have the lowest conversion from associate to partner of any minority group. Results of the research were surprising. It was expected that European Americans would favor other European Americans but that Asian American partners also preferred European Americans was a surprise. This result seems counterintuitive given that one would expect that Asian American partners would relate to the struggle Asian American associates face and thus push for their promotion.

Early research on inter-group relations suggests that members of disadvantaged groups internalize biases held against them and then display an inferiority complex at the group level (Allport, 1954). More recently, researchers employing the system justification theory (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004) argued that because disadvantaged groups find it exceedingly challenging to contest or refute the integrity and authority of systems and organizations, they accept their inferiority as legitimate and are motivated to rationalize the status quo. In doing so, underprivileged groups reinforce negative stereotypes about members of their ingroup.

According to the study, using system justification theory, the Asian American partners rationalize the status quo and, in doing so, give preferential treatment to European Americans. This, combined with ingroup-favoring evaluations on the part of the European American partners, places Asian American associates in a substantially disadvantaged position as they apear to be discriminated against by both European American and Asian American partners (Bigelow, 2012).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study captured the stories of resilient, driven leaders, from their early years growing up to their adventurous career journeys, full of turns and twists, some self-initiated, some unexpected. While different in context, their stories surfaced common themes and attributes such as strong Asian values with regard to hard work; willingness to take risks; seeking and receiving mentoring and guidance from others, especially non-Asians; and having a passion for teaching and developing others. They were children of immigrants, if not first-generation immigrants themselves, and the mindset of hard work was instilled in them.

An important point that showed up with both the SL-ASIA as well as through the interviews was that these leaders had found a way to integrate and embrace the strengths of both their Asian and American cultures. This was key to their success. Many shared the impact on their lives and careers of someone acculturated in either the American or the corporation's culture reaching out to them to offer feedback and mentoring.

Past research on judgment has found that Asian Americans with high bicultural identity integration assimilate to norms of the cued culture (for example, they exhibit typically American judgments when in situations that cue American culture), whereas Asian Americans with low bicultural identity integration do the opposite, contrasting

against the cue (for example, they exhibit typically Asian judgments when in American situations). A 2010 study conducted by researchers from City University of Hong Kong, China, and Columbia University, New York, found similar results when looking at creative expression among Asian Americans (Mok & Morris, 2010). This may help explain how the Asian American leaders have been able to manage and balance their identities. Through high bicultural identity integration, they are able to call upon their American side to respond to situations in American settings, while also being able to call upon their Asian side when in Asian settings. By embracing both identities, rather than resisting one or the other, they are effectively able to navigate both worlds.

Emerging Asian American leaders can use the stories of these participants as a guide along their journeys and they can learn from these experiences, particularly by proactively asking for help early in their careers. Seeking out trusted colleagues or mentors to learn about the culture of the organization or to get feedback on how they are showing up can provide valuable pieces of input that can raise a young leader's awareness. One challenge with this is that in collectivist cultures, such as Asian culture, the emphasis is on the good of the whole and less on the individual. However, in American culture, it is expected of leaders to speak up for themselves and to ask for what they need. This awareness of the individual self and the ability to communicate needs are skills that will benefit Asian Americans and ones that they will need to grow and nurture. One way of doing so is through continuous development of the individual's self-awareness. As Asian Americans strengthen their self-awareness and are able to practice and get clear on their strengths and weaknesses and build their capabilities in asking for help, they can more effectively and confidently ask for support.

Tools such as the Johari Window can help individuals look inward to gain deeper understanding of who they are and how to continue to expand that awareness and sharing. Another way Asian Americans can deepen their understanding of themselves is to become aware of their strengths. Assessments such as the StrengthsFinder, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, or the INSIGHTS Inventory Tool or experiential workshops such as Gestalt can help surface characteristics and strengths that individuals have to begin the process of self-discovery. Asian Americans can also journal and reflect on the strengths of their Asian identity and then the strengths of their American identity. As a Filipino American, the researcher began to become truly aware and awake to her Filipino identity in her early 30s. However, it was not until she had traveled internationally to Lyon, France, at age 38 that she awoke to her American identity.

Asian American senior leaders, such as the ones who participated in this study, also have a key role in narrowing the gap at the top. Many of the leaders in the study made the comment that they were curious about whether their experiences and observations were "just them." While the context was different, there were many similarities that surfaced. One way to break through the "bamboo ceiling" is to acknowledge and open up the dialogue about the group-level differences and experiences. Asian Americans at the senior executive level are pioneers in their own right, and they could pave the way for future leaders by sharing their stories and experiences with the Asian American community as well as with American corporations. They could also take deliberate action to mentor young Asian Americans so that they do not have to "start from scratch" but can build on the shoulders of giants.

Five of the nine leaders interviewed had significant involvement in their company's Asian employee or business resource group. One had been a founder of the

group, another was an executive sponsor, and one of the vice presidents was the existing leader of the Asian American business resource group. These organizations offered opportunities to develop their leadership abilities in a safe environment, mentor and develop other Asian Americans, and help their organizations.

One example of the impact one interviewee and his employee resource group leadership team had was at an annual conference for their group that drew more than a thousand people. He said,

> And it was really incredible 'cause that is where we really woke up, so to speak. Where we identified issues that Asians seem to have. And as you know in the engineering and sciences, we know Asians have a tendency of gravitating towards because we have the least barriers to entry, so to speak, right?

He continued,

> And so, we were kind of leaders identifying the fact that Asians really do want to become managers or at least a lot of them do. They want to enjoy the fruits of their labor and this was, believe it or not, news to management. They always thought we were happy just doing our thing and being quiet and not, you know, rocking the boat. So the fact that we started rocking the boat was an eye opener.

"Throughout those years we got courses started, we created curricula for managers, you know, non-Asian managers to attend on how to manage Asians and on and on, so went to that whole process." When asked when this took place, he responded, "Through most of the 80s." This is the impact leaders can make on the next generations. Senior leaders can get involved in their company's Asian American employee resource groups. They can exercise a strength they already have and lead it or leverage their passion for teaching and mentor the existing leaders, who may have had minimal leadership experience prior to that role.

In the broader picture, in order for Asian Americans to achieve their highest aspirations, Asian Americans have to believe in their self-worth as individuals and as a collective whole. They have Asian roots and they are American, which gives them a

diverse range of strengths and perspectives that will add value to organizations and communities throughout the world. Together, they can also utilize their experiences and knowledge to invest in the next generation of leaders.

Recommendations for organization development or organization learning practitioners are to deepen their understanding of diversity and inclusion and look for ways to integrate that knowledge into their organization development practice. One way to do that is by understanding one's own cross-cultural competency. In Tapia's book, *The Inclusion Paradox; The Obama Era and the Transformation of Global Diversity* (2009), he referenced the Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, which is a framework developed by Bennett to explain the way in which people commonly develop cross-cultural, or intercultural, competence. The stronger the organization development practitioners' cross-cultural competency, the better they are able to help build that capability in the leaders and organizations they are working with. The strength of organizations comes from individual differences and how those differences are leveraged. Leaders can unleash that potential by allowing people to be different once they arrive in an organization (Young, 2007). A tool called the Intercultural Development Inventory, developed by Bennett and Hammer, is a way of measuring where individuals and groups are in their cultural competence as conceptualized by the Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (Tapia, 2009).

Another recommendation, specifically for organization development or organization learning practitioners working with Asian American leaders, would be to help build an executive network for these leaders. None of the leaders interviewed were members of an executive network. All were part of Asian networks or industry networks, but in their positions, they are often the ones providing mentoring and coaching for others

in these groups. Executive networks, especially for Asian Americans, can make a significant impact in breaking the cycle of these leaders starting from scratch. Each leader spoke of his or her passion for teaching and developing others; however, each also spoke about his or her instilled Asian value of hard work. What has resulted is often informal and ad hoc mentoring and coaching relationships. With regard to their own development, seven of the nine interviewees had only informal mentors. An Asian American executive network can provide a safe, supportive community for the leaders to focus on their own development and can be a place where their capabilities on how to effectively mentor and coach others are built.

A critical role in breaking the "bamboo ceiling" is in the hands of American corporations. Unless American corporations invest in understanding and developing this highly skilled and motivated pool of talent, they may lose out. With the Work-Life Study showing 63% of Asian American men and 44% of Asian American women feeling stalled in their jobs and 19% of Asian American men and 14% of Asian American women thinking about quitting their jobs in the next year, this population is a significant flight risk. While 41% of Asian American men and 31% of Asian American women have chosen to scale back or "brown out" with their career aspirations, that statistic may change as globalization increases. With Asians being 60% of the world's population, global and multinational companies outside of the United States will be vying for Asian Americans who are familiar with both Eastern and Western cultures.

Adachi, the managing director of Deloitte Consulting LLP's human capital practice, said,

> The Asian community is a very large economic force both inside and outside of the U.S. The more you understand what's going on globally, and the impact that China and India are having on the world, the more you will recognize the

importance of having Asians be part of your organization and leadership team. (Hewlett & Rashid, 2011, p. 7)

In a book called *Flight Capital: The Alarming Exodus of America's Best and Brightest*, author Heenan (2005) discussed the exodus of America's talented immigrants because of better opportunities in their birth countries or the slow pace of their advancement in corporate America. With only 3.5% of the world's population of Asians living in the United States, Asian Americans will be a scarce commodity in a global talent war (UNFPA—United Nations Population Fund, 2011).

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Appendix A: Cover Letter and Modified Cover Letter

Cover Letter Inviting Participation in the Study

Dear [Name of Asian American Leader],

In July 2009, there were an estimated 16 million U.S. residents of Asian descent. Asians represent the second fastest-growing minority group in the U.S. with a population expected to grow 213 percent over the next 50 years. Additional facts on Asian Americans are that:

- 50 percent hold bachelor's degrees (compared to 38 percent of the general population)
- 20 percent hold graduate or professional degrees (compared to 10 percent of the general population)
- 45 percent of the Asian population is employed in management, professional, and related occupations, compared to 34 percent of the total population

However, despite that rapid growth, high levels of education, and professional roles they occupy, according to a 2009 survey conducted by LEAP (Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics), only 1 percent of senior management and board members of Fortune 100 companies are Asian American.

Emerging Asian American leaders need role models and a clearer path to help them navigate their way up the corporate ladder. Corporations would also benefit from understanding the strengths Asian American leaders bring to the work environment and the choices they make in balancing both their Asian and American cultures.

As a student in Pepperdine University's Master of Science in Organization Development, I am seeking your participation in an important research project. The purpose of the study is an exploration of the personal and professional journeys of successful Asian American leaders as they have grown their careers in a corporate environment. This study attempts to answer the question: **What attributes contribute to the success of Asian American leaders, who have been able to maintain their cultural identity, in corporate America?** Knowledge gained from this study will be useful to help other up and coming leaders with an awareness of success factors that are common across the journeys of several Asian American senior leaders. It can also help organizations further understand ways to create a supportive and inclusive environment that may help expand their pipeline of strong Asian American talent.

Participation requires that you respond to a confidential questionnaire and the Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale (SL-ASIA) instrument. The questionnaire takes approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Any question may be left unanswered if you wish. Once that is completed, a subset of the participants that volunteer will be asked to participate in a telephone or face-to-face interview with me, not to exceed 45 minutes. Participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. You may also leave any question blank.

All responses will be kept confidential. Only aggregate data will be reported in the thesis or in any subsequent analysis beyond the thesis and possible future publication of the results. Questionnaire and interview data will be stored securely in the researcher's locked file cabinet or password protected computer file for five years, after which all of it will be destroyed.

If you would like to participate, kindly respond with permission in writing to:
Maria Odiamar Racho

Prior to conducting any research, this study will be reviewed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Pepperdine University and will meet all requirements regarding the university's procedures. If you have any questions regarding the study or questionnaire, please call Maria Odiamar Racho at XXX-XXX-XXXX, Professor Terri Egan at XXX-XXX-XXXX or the IRB Chairperson, Dr. Yuying Tsong, yuying.tsong@pepperdine.edu.

Thank you for your consideration. Upon completion of the research, an overview of the findings can be delivered to you and an abstract of the study results will be provided upon your request.

Appreciatively,

Maria Odiamar Racho
Candidate, Master of Science in Organization Development
Pepperdine University Graziadio School of Business and Management
24255 Pacific Coast Highway
Malibu, CA 90263

Modified Letter Seeking Participants

Dear [colleague],

Only 1.9 percent of Fortune 500 corporate officers are Asian American, so you can see that the population I am trying to reach is small in number. Also, based on a study by the Center of Work-Life Policy, 48 percent of Asian American men and women report that conformity to prevailing leadership models – having to act, look, and sound like the established leaders in the workplace – is a problem.

However, through action, this sparse, but influential group of Asian American leaders could provide insight and positively impact those statistics. One way is by giving 10 minutes of their time to this study. ***I'm asking your help to personally reach out to your networks over*** <u>***the next week***</u> ***and pass this opportunity on to people who meet the following criteria.*** For those who already have, THANK YOU so much for your help!

Requirements:

[Asian American Leader (Senior Manager and above)

[Currently or previously employed with a Fortune 600 company (had to be a senior manager or above while at the F600)

If you meet these criteria, please answer the attached online questionnaire and assessment. It only takes 10 minutes. If you know someone who qualifies, PLEASE PASS THIS MESSAGE AND LINK ON to them and encourage them to fill it out. The survey is anonymous.

http://pepperdine.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_9HLKSZie8bugLOs

This research can help emerging Asian American leaders along their journeys as well as corporations with understanding how to develop and engage diverse talent.

If you have any questions, please let me know. Thank you in advance for your support and time.

Sincerely,

Maria

Maria Odiamar Racho
XXX-XXX-XXXX
moracho@pepperdine.edu
Candidate, Master of Science in Organization Development
Pepperdine University Graziadio School of Business and Management
24255 Pacific Coast Highway
Malibu, CA 90263

Appendix B: Consent Form

Pepperdine University/Graziadio School of Business and Management

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Investigator: Maria Odiamar Racho, contact number: XXX-XXX-XXXX
Faculty Advisor: Terri Egan, Ph.D.: XXX-XXX-XXXX

You are being asked to take part in a research study. To join the study is voluntary. You may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty. As a participant, you may also leave any question blank. Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in the research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form. You should ask the researcher Maria Odiamar Racho, any questions you have about this study at any time. Approximately 30 individuals will participate in this study, with at least 10 participating in the interviews.

Your active involvement will take approximately 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire and the Sun-Lew Asian Self Identity Acculturation instrument and if you wish to participate in the second portion of the study, no more than 45 minutes of your time to participate in the telephone or face-to-face interview.

The steps required by you to participate in this study are as follows:
1. Read and understand the cover letter to consent form.
2. Read, understand and sign the consent form.
3. Read and respond to the questionnaire and the Sun-Lew Asian Self Identity Acculturation instrument.
4. Indicate your desire to participate in the second portion of the study on the online survey. Maria will arrange a timeslot to participate in a telephone or face-to-face interview.
5. Participate in the interview.

All information collected will be kept confidential and stored in a locked, secured filing cabinet for five years. Only the researcher has access to this cabinet. Participants will not be identified in any report or publication about this study. Your participation is completely voluntary and appreciated. You may withdraw at any time without question or penalty.

You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, complaints, or concerns, you should contact the researcher, Maria at XXX-XXX-XXXX or her supervisor Terri Egan, Ph.D. at XXX-XXX-XXXX.

All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research

subject, or if you would like to obtain information or offer input, you may contact the Institutional Review Board at Pepperdine University at XXX-XXX-XXXX.

Title of Study: What attributes contribute to the success of Asian American leaders, who have been able to maintain their cultural identity, in corporate America?
Investigator: Maria Odiamar Racho

Participant's Agreement:
I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

Signature of Research Participant: Date:

Printed Name of Research Participant:

Printed Name of Investigator: Date:

Appendix C: Online Questionnaire and Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity

Acculturation Scale

Online Questionnaire:

Demographics:
Year born [Date field]
Country of birth [Single line – open text]
Primary ethnic heritage [Single line – open text]
Educational background [Multi-line – open text]
Current Position [Multiple choice – Senior Manager/Director, Vice President,
Senior/Executive Vice President, President, C-Suite, Other with option to enter text]

Understanding the Impact of parents:
Father:
Education level [Multiple choice – Some Elementary, Some High School, Some College,
Graduate Level and beyond]
Country of birth [Single line – open text]
Profession [Single line – open text]
Involvement in community [Multi-line – open text]

Mother:
Education level [Multiple choice – Some Elementary, Some High School, Some College,
Graduate Level and beyond]
Country of birth [Single line – open text]
Profession [Single line – open text]
Involvement in community [Multi-line – open text]

Interview Participation (at end of questionnaire):

Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up 45 minute face-to-face or telephone
interview? If yes, please indicate preferred contact information (assistant information,
telephone number, e-mail, etc.) to make arrangements.

Thank you for your time and for your participation in this very important research.

SL-ASIA: Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale

INSTRUCTIONS: The questions that follow are for the purpose of collecting information about your historical background as well as more recent behaviors, which may be related to your cultural identity. Choose the one answer which best describes you.

1. What language can you speak?
   1. Asian only (for example, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, etc.)
   2. Mostly Asian, some English
   3. Asian and English about equally well (bilingual)
   4. Mostly English, some Asian
   5. Only English
2. What language do you prefer?
   1. Asian only (for example, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, etc.)
   2. Mostly Asian, some English
   3. Asian and English about equally well (bilingual)
   4. Mostly English, some Asian
   5. Only English
3. How do you identify yourself?
   1. Oriental
   2. Asian
   3. Asian-American
   4. Chinese-American, Japanese-American, Korean-American, etc.
   5. American
4. Which identification does (did) your mother use?
   1. Oriental
   2. Asian
   3. Asian-American
   4. Chinese-American, Japanese-American, Korean-American, etc.
   5. American
5. Which identification does (did) your father use?
   1. Oriental
   2. Asian
   3. Asian-American
   4. Chinese-American, Japanese-American, Korean-American, etc.
   5. American
6. What was the ethnic origin of the friends and peers you had, as a child up to age 6?
   1. Almost exclusively Asians, Asian-Americans, Orientals
   2. Mostly Asians, Asian-Americans, Orientals
   3. About equally Asian groups and Anglo groups
   4. Mostly Anglos, Blacks, Hispanics, or other non-Asian ethnic groups
   5. Almost exclusively Anglos, Blacks, Hispanics, or other non-Asian ethnic groups

7. What was the ethnic origin of the friends and peers you had, as a child from 6 to 18?

    1. Almost exclusively Asians, Asian-Americans, Orientals

    2. Mostly Asians, Asian-Americans, Orientals

    3. About equally Asian groups and Anglo groups

    4. Mostly Anglos, Blacks, Hispanics, or other non-Asian ethnic groups

    5. Almost exclusively Anglos, Blacks, Hispanics, or other non-Asian ethnic groups

8. Whom do you now associate with in the community?

    1. Almost exclusively Asians, Asian-Americans, Orientals

    2. Mostly Asians, Asian-Americans, Orientals

    3. About equally Asian groups and Anglo groups

    4. Mostly Anglos, Blacks, Hispanics, or other non-Asian ethnic groups

    5. Almost exclusively Anglos, Blacks, Hispanics, or other non-Asian ethnic groups

9. If you could pick, whom would you prefer to associate with in the community?

    1. Almost exclusively Asians, Asian-Americans, Orientals

    2. Mostly Asians, Asian-Americans, Orientals

    3. About equally Asian groups and Anglo groups

    4. Mostly Anglos, Blacks, Hispanics, or other non-Asian ethnic groups

    5. Almost exclusively Anglos, Blacks, Hispanics, or other non-Asian ethnic groups

10. What is your music preference?

    1. Only Asian music (for example, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, etc.)

    2. Mostly Asian

    3. Equally Asian and English

    4. Mostly English

    5. English only

11. What is your movie preference?

    1. Asian-language movies only

    2. Asian-language movies mostly

    3. Equally Asian/English English-language movies

    4. Mostly English-language movies only

    5. English-language movies only

12. What generation are you? (circle the generation that best applies to you:)

    1 1st Generation = I was born in Asia or country other than U.S.

    2 2nd Generation = I was born in U.S., either parent was born in Asia or country other than U.S.

    3 3rd Generation = I was born in U.S., both parents were born in U.S., and all grandparents born in Asia or country other than U.S.

    4 4th Generation = I was born in U.S., both parents were born in U.S., and at least one grandparent born in Asia or country other than U.S. and one grandparent born in U.S.

    5 5th Generation = I was born in U.S., both parents were born in U.S., and all grandparents also born in U.S.

    6 Don't know what generation best fits since I lack some information.

13. Where were you raised?

    1. In Asia only

    2. Mostly in Asia, some in U.S.

    3. Equally in Asia and U.S.

    4. Mostly in U.S., some in Asia

    5. In U.S. only

14. What contact have you had with Asia?
   1. Raised one year or more in Asia
   2. Lived for less than one year in Asia
   3. Occasional visits to Asia
   4. Occasional communications (letters, phone calls, etc.) with people in Asia
   5. No exposure or communications with people in Asia
15. What is your food preference at home?
   1. Exclusively Asian food
   2. Mostly Asian food, some American
   3. About equally Asian and American
   4. Mostly American food
   5. Exclusively American food
16. What is your food preference in restaurants?
   1. Exclusively Asian food
   2. Mostly Asian food, some American
   3. About equally Asian and American
   4. Mostly American food
   5. Exclusively American food
17. Do you
   1. read only an Asian language
   2. read an Asian language better than English
   3. read both Asian and English equally well
   4. read English better than an Asian language
   5. read only English
18. Do you
   1. write only an Asian language
   2. write an Asian language better than English
   3. write both Asian and English equally well
   4. write English better than an Asian language
   5. write only English
19. If you consider yourself a member of the Asian group (Oriental, Asian, Asian-American,
Chinese-American, etc., whatever term you prefer), how much pride do you have in this group?
   1. Extremely proud
   2. Moderately proud
   3. Little pride
   4. No pride but do not feel negative toward group
   5. No pride but do feel negative toward group
20. How would you rate yourself?
   1. Very Asian
   2. Mostly Asian
   3. Bicultural
   4. Mostly Westernized
   5. Very Westernized

21. Do you participate in Asian occasions, holidays, traditions, etc.?
    1. Nearly all
    2. Most of them
    3. Some of them
    4. A few of them
    5. None at all
22. Rate yourself on how much you believe in Asian values (e.g., about marriage, families,
education, work):
    1 2 3 4 5
    (do not believe) (strongly believe in Asian values)
23. Rate your self on how much you believe in American (Western) values:
    1 2 3 4 5
    (do not believe) (strongly believe in American values)
24. Rate yourself on how well you fit when with other Asians of the same ethnicity:
    1 2 3 4 5
    (do not fit) (fit very well)
25. Rate yourself on how well you fit when with other Americans who are non-Asian (Westerners):
    1 2 3 4 5
    (do not fit) (fit very well)
26. There are many different ways in which people think of themselves. Which ONE of the following
most closely describes how you view yourself?
    1. I consider myself basically an Asian person (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, etc.). Even though I live and   work in America, I still view myself basically as an Asian person.
    2. I consider myself basically as an American. Even though I have an Asian background and characteristics,
     I still view myself basically as an American.
    3. I consider myself as an Asian-American, although deep down I always know I am an Asian.
    4. I consider myself as an Asian-American, although deep down, I view myself as an American first.
    5. I consider myself as an Asian-American. I have both Asian and American characteristics, and I view myself as a blend
     of both.

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SUINN-LEW ASIAN SELF-IDENTITY ACCULTURATION SCALE

(SL-ASIA)

This document provides formal permission to anyone wishing to use the SL-ASIA scale. The scale is duplicated in the last section . Also discussed are some practical research design suggestions as well as some theoretical issues. Finally some potential new items are described for those researchers who may wish to extend the scale. (The same information is duplicated in a more convenient format under separate links in the web site: http://www.awong.com/~randy/dad/index.html)

RESEARCH DESIGN:

Please note that if you feel your sample is one that requires reading a translated version, this could mean that your sample is very restricted to a first generation. If so, then by definition you would not have enough subjects who represent the various levels of acculturation (low to middle to high). If this is the case, then this restricted range will prevent you from testing any hypothesis regarding how "level of acculturation" or acculturation differences has effects.

Also note the usual principles regarding use of standardized tests: if you revise any part of the test - order of questions, wording of answers, etc. - then it may be questionable whether the test still is valid. Certainly, the question can be raised about whether the same norms can be used to interpret the results. If you choose to do such a revision, you should discuss the matter with a colleague who is a methodologist, or your advisor if you are a student.

 After some thoughts about acculturation and its measurement, I have added questions 22-26 to the original 21 item scale. These questions can serve to further classify your research participants in ways that use current theorizing that acculturation is not linear, unidimensional but multi-dimensional and orthogonal. These new items were developed based on writings of those who felt that a linear, unidimensional scale was insufficient. Hence, some added items have been written as a potential separate way of classifying the subjects...if the original scale did not turn out predictive. I have not obtained any validity/reliability info on these added items, but hope that users of the added items will share their results with me.

USING THE ORIGINAL 21 ITEMS:

  In scoring these 21 items, add up each answer for each question on the scale, then obtain a total value by summing across the answers for all 21 items. A final acculturation scores is calculated by then dividing the total value by 21; hence a score can range from 1.00 (low acculturation) to 5.00 (high acculturation). Because of the nature of the multiple choice content, it is possible to view low scores as reflective of high Asian identification, with high scores reflecting high Western identification. In other words, a low score reflects low acculturation, while a high score reflects high acculturation.

Appendix D: Qualitative Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Preparation:
- Research each candidate prior to interview
- Schedule meeting for 45 minutes in a location that will be quiet and private
- Prepare recording equipment

Introduction: My name is Maria Racho. I'm a graduate student at Pepperdine University completing my Master of Science in Organization Development. I'm conducting research on Asian American leaders in Fortune 500 companies, that have been able to maintain their Asian cultural identity and successfully grow their careers in corporate America. My hope is to gather themes and common attributes that will help emerging leaders on their own journeys and will help American companies gain better insights into the choices and balance Asian American leaders make to adapt while still bringing all of who they are to work.

The questionnaire and survey gathered some demographic data and walked you through a self assessment on your individual acculturation. That data, as well as this interview data will be kept completely confidential and only aggregate information will be used in the thesis findings and analysis.

This portion of the research will focus on your personal and professional journey, particularly choice points in your life that stand out and that you feel led you to where you are today in your career.

Interview Questions:

Your work -
- Describe the role you have today. What do you enjoy most about your work?
- Can you walk me through your career journey? What were major milestones that led you to where you are today?

Your Asian culture -
- Can you tell me about your childhood? What was it like growing up in [country]? How was your environment at home, at school, in your neighborhood?
- Were there triggers in your life that heightened your self-awareness of your Asian culture? If so, what were they?
- Growing up, were you aware of or did you participate in traditional Asian practices?
- What impact did your parents have on you and your connection to your Asian culture?
  - How was it similar or different than your friends' Asian parents? Non-Asian parents?
- Were you treated the same as other races in the work environment? If no, what was different? Did you make changes or adapt to those differences and if so, how?

Leadership –
- What were key choice points that helped shape who you are today as a leader?
- Did you have a mentor and/or a sponsor in your career? If so, how did that influence your career growth? Was your mentor Asian American? If no, what race was he/she?
- What impact did your parents have on your leadership development growing up?
  - How was it similar or different than your Asian friends' parents? Non-Asian friends' parents?
- What are experiences that helped shape your career?
  What are pieces of advice that influenced your career?