

## OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY AND SELECTED FINDINGS

Title of Dissertation: RACIAL, ETHNIC, AND GENDER DIFFERENCES AMONG ENTERING COLLEGE STUDENT ATTITUDES TOWARD LEADERSHIP, CULTURE, AND LEADER SELF-IDENTIFICATION: A FOCUS ON ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICANS

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While Asian Pacific Americans (APAs) represent one of the fastest growing populations in the United States, APAs continue to be misunderstood as the “model minority” and subsequently are underserved in higher education. Limited research on APA students has left a void in understanding how APAs may relate to current leadership and student development approaches, many of which are based in Western cultural paradigms.

### **Is there a difference between Asian/APA and Western leadership approaches?**

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<i>Asian Intergroup Strategies</i>	<i>Ideal Western Leadership Behaviors</i>
Conformity/Obedience	Manage/control/organize
Emotion withdrawal	Motivate/influence/persuade
Passive resistance	Strengthen/defend position
Role adherence/formality	Challenge the process/Pioneer
Shame/Guilt	Confront directly
Silence	Express verbally/Take action

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This study utilized *Leadership Categorization Theory* (Lord, Foti, & De Vader, 1984; Lord, Foti, & Phillips, 1982) and *Positionality Theory* (Alcoff, 1988) with an *Intersectional Analysis* (Crenshaw, 1991; Weber, 2001) to explain how leadership perceptions are related to social group positions. Items were created and clustered into three content areas: *leadership and the role of culture*; *leadership from a social justice and social change perspective*; and *self-identification with the leader role*.

Data were collected from representative samples of first-year undergraduates ( $N = 1964$ ) and APA undergraduates ( $N = 270$ ) before starting their first semester at the University of Maryland. Using the Universal-Diverse Orientation (UDO) scale (Fuentes, Miville, Mohr, Sedlacek, & Gretchen, 2000), results indicated that Asian Pacific Americans are both no different from other students of color and higher than White/Caucasian students in their diversity awareness. Among four Asian American ethnic groups in this study [Chinese/Taiwanese ( $n = 82$ ), Filipino ( $n = 21$ ), Indian ( $n = 71$ ), and Korean Americans ( $n = 61$ )], there are no differences on levels of diversity awareness; APA women ( $n = 133$ ) have higher diversity awareness than APA men ( $n = 128$ ). Controlling for these similarities and differences in diversity awareness, multivariate analyses of covariance determined significant differences by race, ethnicity, and gender. UDO correlated positively with most leadership perception variables (See addendum for UDO items).

Results showed that APAs are less likely than other races to think that individuals from their cultural background are excellent leaders and to categorize themselves with the leader label. APAs are no different from other races in believing that leaders should address social justice or social change issues, although APAs are least likely to believe that

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they individually can make a difference in the community. Asian Indian Americans are more likely than other APA ethnicities to believe in the importance of and self-appraisal in working for social change. No significant differences were found by APA ethnicity in terms of leader self-categorization, culture, or UDO scores. Also, APA women have more diversity awareness and are more likely than men to think that cross-cultural skills are required for effective leadership.

Findings suggest that APAs may have internalized “model minority” or “perfidious foreigner” images and thus, may feel culturally marginalized from leadership and the leader role. Even when controlling for racial and gender differences in diversity awareness, results from this study suggest that intersecting social group positions (e.g., race, ethnicity, and gender) are salient indicators of differing leadership perceptions.

Further, this study confirmed the notion that leadership is perceived as socially constructed, culturally based, and related to social change. Also, there is evidence of the mediating role of diversity awareness (i.e., UDO) in positionally based leadership perceptions, particularly with regard to leadership from a social justice and social change perspective.

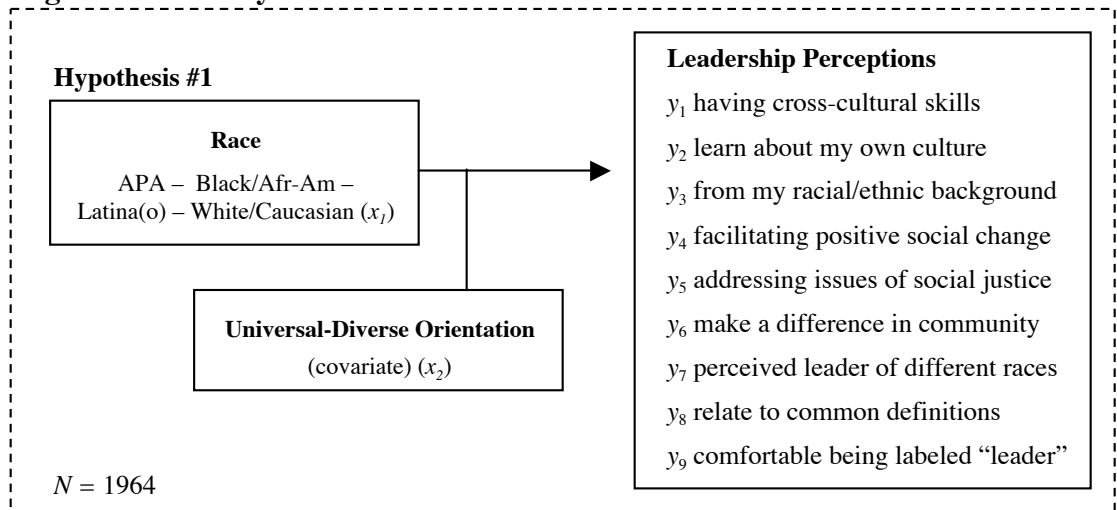
## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

#1: Do entering Asian Pacific American (APA) college students differ from other races in their perceptions of and self-identification with leadership in relation to their diversity awareness? (See Figure 1; see addendum for UDO items)

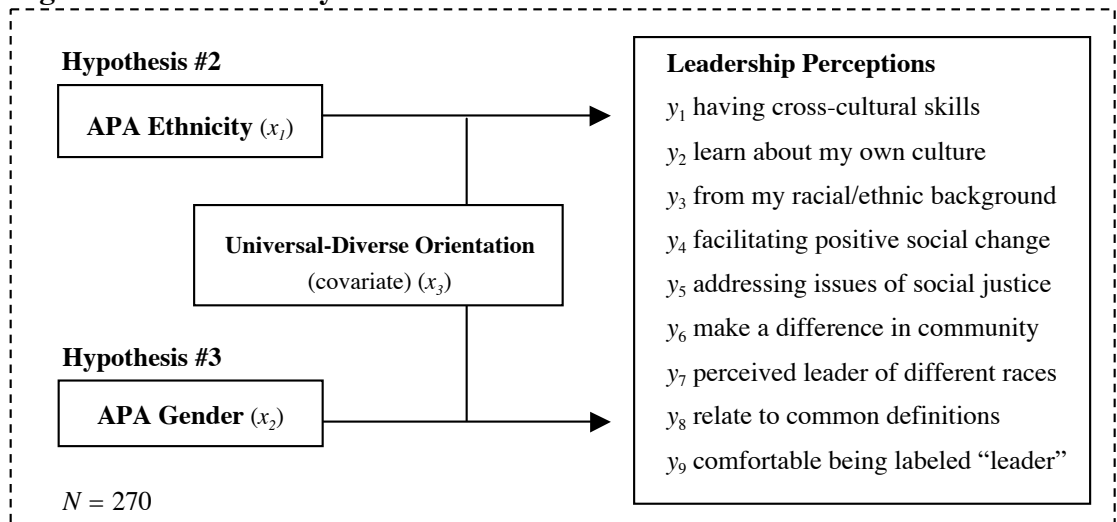
#2: Do these leadership perceptions of entering APA college students differ by ethnicity in relation to their diversity awareness? (See Figure 2; see addendum for UDO items)

#3: Do these leadership perceptions of entering APA college students differ by gender in relation to their diversity awareness? (See Figure 2; see addendum for UDO items)

**Figure 1: One-way MANCOVA – ALL STUDENTS**



**Figure 2: Two One-way MANCOVAs – ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICANS**



## SELECTED SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS

### Universal-Diverse Orientation (UDO)

- Asian Pacific Americans ( $n = 270$ ) were no different from either Black/African Americans ( $n = 193$ ) or Latina(o)/Hispanics ( $n = 92$ ).
- White/Caucasians ( $n = 1409$ ) had the lowest diversity awareness when compared with other races.
- There were no differences among APA ethnicities on orientation towards diversity; however, APA women ( $n = 133$ ) had higher diversity awareness than men ( $n = 128$ ).

### Leadership and the role of culture

- Controlling for diversity awareness, APAs were no different than other students of color and more likely than White/Caucasians to believe that effective leadership requires having cross-cultural skills and learning about one's own culture.
- Controlling for diversity awareness, APAs are less likely than both Black/African Americans and White/Caucasians to identify members from their own racial/ethnic background as excellent leaders.
- Controlling for diversity awareness, APA women feel more strongly than men that cross-cultural skills are a prerequisite for effective leadership. On a different variable item, when not controlling for diversity awareness, APA women feel more strongly than men in the role of culture as important to being an effective leader; this suggests that diversity awareness may be a mediating factor along this perception.

### Leadership from a social change and social justice perspective

- Compared to other perceptions in this study, these variables were among the highest in agreement among all races, perhaps indicating that on the topic of leadership, first-year students are most interested in making a difference and viewing the purpose of leadership as related to community-based social change.
- Controlling for diversity awareness, APAs were no different than other groups on the role of social change and social justice; when not considering the diversity awareness covariate, APAs were no different from other people of color and were more likely than White/Caucasians to believe in the importance of social change in leadership, indicating the intervening nature of diversity awareness. On social justice, diversity awareness did not seem to be a significant mediating factor for APAs.

- On being able to make a difference in the community, APAs were marginally (not significant) less confident than Black/African Americans and White/Caucasians. When not controlling for diversity awareness, White/Caucasians were no different than APAs but both groups were less confident than Black/African Americans in making a difference, again indicating the significant intervening role of diversity awareness on this self-perception for APAs and White/Caucasians.
- In terms of ethnicity, Indian Americans were more likely than Korean Americans to believe that leadership should be about facilitating positive social change and addressing issues of social justice. Filipino Americans believe less strongly than both Chinese/Taiwanese and Indian Americans that they can make a difference in their community. When diversity awareness is not considered, there were no differences along ethnic groups on these perceptions.
- Compared to APA women, men more strongly feel that they can make a difference in their community, when controlling for diversity awareness. This finding was not significant ( $p = .06$ ).

### **Leader self-identification**

- In comparison to all other leadership perceptions, students in this study — across all races — were least likely to agree with being perceived the leader of a group among people of different races.
- When controlling for diversity awareness, APAs were least likely of all racial groups to self-identify with being the leader in racially diverse settings or unspecified group settings. Similarly, APAs ( $M = 2.68$ , adjusted for UDO) were least likely to relate to most common definitions of “leadership”; Latina(o)/Hispanics ( $M = 2.49$ , adjusted) were not significantly different from any other race on this variable, although the scores were generally closer to those of Black/African Americans ( $M = 2.49$ , adjusted) and White/Caucasians ( $M = 2.48$ , adjusted).
- Regarding leadership self-identification, there were no differences among APAs along ethnic and gender categories.

## ADDENDUM

### Universal-Diverse Orientation (UDO) Scale

Short Form of the Miville-Guzman Universality-Diversity Scale  
(Fuertes, Miville, Mohr, Sedlacek, & Gretchen, 2000)

Scale included in University New Student Census (University of Maryland, Fall 2003) —  
for more information on the UNSC, contact Dr William Sedlacek at: [wsed@umd.edu](mailto:wsed@umd.edu).

- I would like to join an organization that emphasizes getting to know people from different countries.
- I would like to go to dances that feature music from other countries.
- I often listen to music of other cultures.
- I am interested in learning about the many cultures that have existed in this world.
- I attend events where I might get to know people from different racial backgrounds.
- Persons with disabilities can teach me things I could not learn elsewhere.
- I can best understand someone after I get to know how he/she is both similar and different from me.
- Knowing how a person differs from me greatly enhances our friendship.
- In getting to know someone, I like knowing both how he/she differs from me and is similar to me.
- Knowing about the different experiences of other people helps me understand my own problems better.
- Getting to know someone of another race is generally an uncomfortable experience for me.
- I am only at ease with people of my race.
- It's really hard for me to feel close to a person from another race.
- It is very important that a friend agrees with me on most issues.
- I often feel irritated by persons of a different race.

Likert: Strongly Agree – Agree – Neutral – Disagree – Strongly Disagree

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