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# Same, but Different: Understanding Asians' Attitudes Toward Affirmative Action

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Organizations often use affirmative action plans to increase demographic diversity, but, the success of these plans depends on employee attitudes. Attitudes toward affirmative action differ among racial groups, with Blacks having more favorable attitudes than Hispanics, Asians, and Whites (e.g., Bell, Harrison, & McLaughlin, 1997). To correct a paucity of literature that includes a large Asian American sample, Asian participants from various ethnicities, such as Indian, Filipino, and Vietnamese, ( $N = 181$ ) completed several online questionnaires at surveymonkey.com about affirmative action attitudes (Attitude Towards Affirmative Action Scale), collectivism/individualism (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998), and ethnic identity (Multigroup Measure of Ethnic Identity, MEIM). There were positive relationships between the horizontal dimension of the collectivism/individualism construct, collectivism, ethnic identity, and attitudes toward affirmative action. Implications and suggestions for future research are discussed.

Organizations often face the task of implementing and managing demographic diversity to maintain a competitive edge (Chen, Hickman, Garcia, 2000; Cox & Blake, 1991). One strategy for promoting diversity in the workplace is by providing equal employment opportunities (EEO) as defined by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and associated legislation. These laws prohibit discrimination in employment decisions, such as hiring, training, and promotion, based on race, sex, religion, national origin, color, disability, or age. As such, individuals are considered based on their job-related qualifications, such as employment experience or job performance. To expand upon the Civil Rights Act, President Lyndon Johnson

passed Executive Order 11246 in 1965 to “be applied proactively in the absence of (or in advance of) specific documented discrimination ... to ensure fairness within their organizations” (Crosby, 1994, p. 16). Executive Order 11246, section 202, specifically states that “[t]he contractor will take *affirmative action* [emphasis added] to ensure that applicants are employed, and that employees are treated during employment, without regard to their race, color, religion, sex or national origin” (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission [EEOC], 1997). The purposes for taking affirmative action are to remedy past discrimination against members of protected classes and to ensure an even playing field for employment opportunities.

Affirmative action has been interpreted many ways, which has led to controversy and misconceptions about what it means to take affirmative action.

There is a misconception, based on the "Model Minority Myth," that Asians do not need affirmative action (Bell, Harrison & McLaughlin, 1997; Cheng & Thatchenkery, 1997) despite being one of the racial groups that could potentially benefit from it. One of the primary goals of this study is to delineate a more accurate picture of Asians' attitudes toward affirmative action.

### **The Model Minority Myth**

According to the 2000 U.S. census, Asians, or Asians combined with one or more races (e.g., bi-racial or mixed races or multi-ethnic), comprise five percent of the United States population and had the highest growth rate, percentage-wise, of any racial group (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). As the Asian American and Asian immigrant population continues to grow, it is more likely that they will enter the workforce in larger numbers. However, the stereotype of Asians as the "model minority" appears in the workplace, as well as academia. The Model Minority Myth perpetuates the misconception that Asians are more educated than other minority groups, such as Blacks and Hispanics, and, therefore, do not need, nor will they benefit from, an affirmative action plan (AAP) (Bell, Harrison, & McLaughlin, 1997; Cheng & Thatchenkery, 1997; Wong, Lai, Nagasawa, & Lin, 1998).

The myth is based on the perception that all Asians succeed in school and work, have strong work ethics, and cause little trouble, which makes them a model for other minorities to follow (Cheng & Thatchenkery, 1997; Wong, et al., 1998). It also implies that Asians have higher levels of educational attainment than other minority groups, and therefore, have higher incomes and more opportunities for career mobility (Wong et al.). When Asians are referred to as the model minority, it is due to notions of

previous and current successful Asian Americans, such as Chinese or Japanese, but it does not take into account Southeast Asians and Pacific Islanders who do not fare as well as other Asians in terms of education and employment (Wong et al.). Southeast Asians are more likely to have lower-level jobs with lower wages than other ethnic Asian groups, such as Japanese or Indians. Furthermore, Asians are underrepresented in higher-level management positions in organizations in the United States, and they do experience employment discrimination (Bell, Harrison, & McLaughlin, 1997).

Based on a report of top 50 companies for minorities to work at, Chen, Hickman, and Garcia (2000) indicated that 22% of ethnic minorities held managerial positions, however, they did not differentiate the executive level from lower level jobs due to the nature of the survey instrument (EEO-1) the EEOC utilizes in classifying job categories. As a result, the relative status of Asians in the organizational hierarchy may be overstated. It is possible that the Model Minority Myth hinders, rather than helps Asians. If the popular perception exists that Asians do not benefit from or need affirmative action (Bell, Harrison, & McLaughlin, 1997; Cheng & Thatchenkery, 1997; Wong, Lai, Nagasawa, & Lin, 1998), do Asians agree as well? Can we homogenize the race and assume that all Asian ethnicities have similar attitudes and perceptions?

### **Affirmative Action**

One explanation for the controversy over affirmative action is that there is a lack of understanding of what affirmative action is (Crosby, 1994; Crosby & Cordova, 1996). Affirmative action means being proactive in analyzing the organization to identify areas of inequality in employment practices and develop a plan to address any identified problems. EEO is more passive in that an organization can state that they are an equal opportunity employer without necessarily analyzing their policies or

procedures to ascertain whether discrimination exists (Crosby & Cordova). Confusion over affirmative action also stems from the inconsistencies in affirmative action plans (AAP) because AAPs are not universal (Crosby & Cordova). The federal government mandates that organizations with federal contracts or organizations found guilty of discrimination develop an AAP, although organizations can also voluntarily implement AAPs. Organizations that voluntarily implement a plan interpret what affirmative action means and implement plans based on these interpretations.

### **Affirmative Action Plans (AAPs)**

The Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) is part of the Department of Labor's Employment Standards Administration, which monitors and enforces federal contractors' compliance with laws and regulations, such as AAPs. The OFCCP defines an AAP as a "management tool designed to ensure equal employment opportunity. A central premise underlying affirmative action is that, absent discrimination, over time a contractor's workforce, generally, will reflect the gender, racial and ethnic profile of the labor pools from which the contractor recruits and selects" (EEOC, 2000). That is, an organization's employment policies and practices should ensure an equal opportunity for all applicants and employees that result in a balance between its internal workforce and the external relevant labor pool. Accordingly, an AAP must contain "quantitative analyses on the organization, job groups, placement of incumbents in job groups, availability of qualified applicants, comparing incumbent to availability, and placement goals" (EEOC). Unfortunately, placement goals have frequently been interpreted as quotas. However, the OFCCP intended that placement goals be used as a means of measuring the organizations' "good faith efforts" toward achieving equal employment opportunities; "quotas are expressly forbidden" (EEOC). In addition, these placement goals are intended as guidelines and should not

be construed as requiring employers to hire unqualified or less qualified individuals from particular protected groups. The government will not punish an employer if they demonstrate a good faith effort to ensure equal opportunity. The only exception to this is court-mandated targets for organizations that have intentionally discriminated against protected groups. Action-oriented programs, such as recruitment and training, are proactive approaches that target underrepresented groups. Matching the internal workforce with the qualified external workforce through action-oriented procedures has been considered the traditional definition of AAPs. However, many people perceive affirmative action as unjustified preferential treatment and quotas (Crosby & Cordova, 1996).

#### *Design of Affirmative Action Plans (AAPs)*

Although it is uncertain how many organizations utilize preferential treatment or quotas in their AAPs (Crosby & Cordova, 1996), preferential treatment and quotas have become synonymous with affirmative action. Quotas are forbidden under Title VII Sec 703(j), which specifically states that "nothing contained in this title shall be interpreted to require any employer, employment agency, labor organization, or joint labor-management committee ... to grant preferential treatment to any individual or to any group because of the race, color, religion, sex, or national origin of such individual or group..." (EEOC, 1997).

Studies have operationalized AAPs in various ways to evaluate participants' attitudes toward affirmative action. For example, Kravitz and Klineberg (2000) evaluated Blacks, Hispanics (American-born and immigrants), and Whites' attitudes toward versions of an AAP. One version was a "typical" AAP as perceived by participants (i.e., they perceived a typical AAP as requiring hiring of unqualified candidates), and a tiebreak version in which a Black and White candidate were equally qualified, but the Black candidate was chosen because Blacks were underrepresented in the organization. The data showed that Whites were less opposed to the

tiebreak plan than to the typical plan because Whites viewed the typical AAP as giving minorities and women unfair advantages. However, Blacks generally supported both AAP versions, but were more likely to support the typical AAP than the tiebreak AAP. Members of all three racial groups generally opposed a typical AAP due to their beliefs that it provided an unfair advantage to women and minorities through preferential treatment. While Whites opposed the typical plan more than Blacks and Hispanics, their attitudes toward the tiebreak plan was not significantly different from Hispanics. Kravitz and Klineberg (2000) also indicated that designing an AAP that does not violate justice perceptions can garner support for AAPs from Blacks, Hispanics, and Whites.

Kravitz and Klineberg (2000) demonstrated that the design of an AAP can affect attitudes toward affirmative action. Although an AAP is intended to be beneficial, it can offend non-beneficiaries as well as beneficiaries, which may create negative attitudes toward affirmative action (Leck, Saunders, & Charbonneau, 1996). As long as AAPs are designed not to violate justice perceptions and these intentions are communicated, individuals will most likely support an organization's AAP.

### *Affirmative Action Attitudes*

Understanding employees' attitudes about affirmative action can be beneficial to employers because of the positive and negative effects it has on behaviors. For instance, employees' positive perceptions of an organization supporting diversity increases their positive affirmative action attitudes (Leck, Saunders, & Charbonneau, 1996), which may increase their commitment to stay with the organization. On the other hand, negative attitudes toward affirmative action may deter potential employees, even if they are the intended beneficiaries (Slaughter, Sinar, & Bachiochi, 2002). Research indicates that members of different racial groups often have different attitudes concerning AAPs. Blacks typically have more favorable attitudes towards AAPs than

other racial groups, followed by Asians, Hispanics, and Whites (Bell, Harrison, & McLaughlin, 1997; Kravitz & Platania, 1993; Parker, Baltes, & Christiansen, 1997).

### *Sex Differences in Affirmative Action Attitudes*

Not only are there differences among races in their attitudes toward affirmative action, there are also differences between sexes. In several studies, results indicated that women favor AAPs over men (Bell, Harrison, & McLaughlin, 1997; Heilman, Block, & Stathatos, 1997; Kravitz & Platania, 1993; Parker, Baltes, & Christiansen, 1997). Because women are often underrepresented in high-level positions in organizations, they tend to benefit from affirmative action, thus, have more positive attitudes toward affirmative action than men. However, women who are identified as an AAP beneficiary are stigmatized as incompetent (Heilman et al., 1997). AAPs that convey utilization of preferential treatment or quotas inadvertently cause others to stigmatize beneficiaries (e.g., women, ethnic minorities, and disabled individuals) as incompetent because they must have been hired or received a promotion based on group membership instead of qualifications (Heilman et al., 1997).

Although some studies have not found a sex effect on affirmative action attitudes (Kravitz & Klineberg, 2000), most studies have found such an effect (e.g., Bell, Harrison, & McLaughlin, 1997; Kravitz & Platania, 1993). Consistent with previous research, it is hypothesized that there will be sex differences in affirmative action attitudes between Asian women and men.

*H1: Asian women will have more favorable attitudes toward affirmative action than will Asian men.*

### **Homogenization of the Asian Race**

The limitation to Parker, Baltes, & Christiansen's (1997) study on racial attitudes toward affirmative action and organizational justice perceptions is that the Asian sample size

was smaller relative to the other racial groups (Whites and Blacks) in the study, which limits the ability to detect differences among the races. Small sample sizes reduce the test's power to detect relationship differences in a population (Maxwell & Delaney, 2000). If there were more Asian participants, the results in attitudes might have been different. In addition, there was no classification of Asian ethnic groups. There could have been a dominant Asian ethnic group in the study that skewed the data toward more favorable attitudes than were reported by other Asian ethnic groups. The Asian race is comprised of different countries with different cultures, such as China, Japan, Indonesia, and India. Although there may be similarities among the cultures, it does not necessarily mean that all those categorized as Asians will have the same attitudes. This could be analogous to Europeans; European culture is quite different from Asian culture, but at a micro-level, differences exist among European countries in their attitudes and cultures. Similarly, cultural differences exist in Asian cultures at a micro-level.

According to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), individuals have a tendency to group themselves and others into social categories based on group membership (e.g., race, religion, etc.), which leads to stereotypes of in-group and out-group members. This may cause members of other racial groups to cluster all Asians into one category on the basis of certain physical features. Homogenizing the race in this way leads to the presumption that all Asians share the same attitudes or values and fails to take into account differences that exist due to cultural nuances (Kim, Yang, Atkinson, Wolfe, & Hong, 2001). To identify whether there were cultural differences among four Asian ethnic groups (Chinese, Korean, Filipino, and Japanese) on adherence to six cultural value dimensions, Kim et al. (2001) administered an Asian Values Scale (AVS). The six dimensions measured were collectivism, conformity to norms, emotional self-control, family recognition through achievement, humility, and filial piety (i.e., respecting the wisdom of elders and caring

for elder parents at home instead of placing them into a nursing home).

According to Kim et al.'s (2001) results, Asian ethnicities generally share the same values, although the results indicated that the four groups differed in how much they adhered to the six value dimensions. The most notable findings were that Filipino Americans had lower levels of adherence to five of the six values, than Chinese, Korean, and Japanese Americans. Humility was the only value that there were no significant differences among Filipino Americans and the other three groups. These differences in Filipino value adherence were explained by the Western influence of Spain and Catholicism on Filipino culture (Kim et al.). Also, although Japanese Americans are more likely to have more generations in the United States and have assimilated than the other three groups, they had higher levels of adherence to the six values than Filipino, Chinese, and Korean Americans. For instance, Japanese Americans had higher levels of adherence to conformity and family recognition through achievement than Chinese Americans. Although attitudes were not measured, the study acknowledges that differences do exist among Asian ethnic groups in terms of values. Values are the basis of attitudes (Rokeach, 1971), therefore, it is proposed there will be differences in Asians' attitudes.

*H2: There will be differences in attitudes toward affirmative action among Asian ethnic groups.*

## **Collectivism and Individualism**

As there may be differences among Asian ethnic groups in value adherence, there may also be differences within Asian ethnic groups in terms of individualism and collectivism that could affect their affirmative action attitudes. Collectivism "pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive ingroups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in

exchange for unquestioning loyalty” (Hofstede, 1997, p. 51). Individualism is less concerned with the group, but instead, individuals are concerned with themselves. Collectivism and individualism are two distinct constructs because of their emphasis on different attributes. Collectivism emphasizes “interdependence, family, integrity, and sociability” (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998, p. 119), a more communal-orientation, whereas individualism emphasizes “self-reliance, competition, emotional distance from in-groups, and hedonism” (p. 119). That is, collectivist cultures prioritize the group’s interest over their own self-interest to maintain harmony, whereas individualistic cultures are more concerned with self-preservation.

Triandis and Gelfand (1998) proposed that collectivism and individualism vary along horizontal and vertical dimensions, and based on four studies, they confirmed that these two dimensions have good construct and divergent validity when evaluated against other popular measures of collectivism and individualism. The horizontal dimension pertains to perceived equality, whereas the vertical dimension focuses on attitudes toward hierarchies in society (Triandis & Gelfand). The vertical dimension may be comparable to Hofstede’s (1997) concept of power distance, which is the recognition and acceptance of the distribution of power among the powerful and powerless in societal structures, such as family and government. Cultures high in power distance accept the disparity between the powerful and powerless because it is part of their culture, whereas cultures in low power distance have more cooperation in groups. Thus, individuals in the vertical dimension accept the group’s status relative to those in power, regardless of whether or not they are in a favorable position.

These two dimensions combine with individualism and collectivism to produce four different patterns that may explain why two individuals in an individualistic or collectivistic culture vary from one another (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). The four patterns are horizontal individualism (HI), vertical individualism (VI);

horizontal collectivism (HC), and vertical collectivism (VC). HI pertains to self-reliant individuals who want to differentiate themselves from others, but are not concerned with status or power. On the other hand, VI individuals compete with others to achieve power and high status. Although power distances exist in VI, the hierarchy is perceived to be permeable. The United States is characterized by this pattern. In the HC pattern, individuals view themselves as part of an in-group and emphasize interdependence and equality. In the last pattern, VC, individuals accept the power disparity between themselves and those in power. Individuals may be powerless to influence authority, but they are still willing to sacrifice everything for their group and will compete with others to maintain the group’s honor.

Collectivistic individuals may see affirmative action as a benefit to their group, therefore, they are more likely to support AAPs (Bell et al., 1997). Based on the four distinct patterns Triandis and Gelfand (1998) have delineated, it is hypothesized that individuals with a HI or HC orientation, as well as a HC or VC orientation, will have more positive attitudes toward affirmative action than those with an individualistic and vertical orientation.

*H3a: Collectivism (HC and VC) will be more positively related to attitudes toward affirmative action than individualism (HI and VI).*

*H3b: The horizontal dimension (HI and HC) will be more positively related to attitudes toward affirmative action than the vertical dimension (VI and VC).*

## **Ethnic Identity**

American-born versus immigrant status could also be a factor in differences in Asian attitudes toward affirmative action. For example, American-born Hispanics were less favorable toward AAPs than Hispanic immigrants (Kravitz & Klineberg, 2000). Bell, Harrison, McLaughlin (1997) had similar findings in their study of

Asian immigrants and Asian Americans. They attributed the differences to Asian immigrants having heard positive descriptions of affirmative action and its benefits, but not having experienced it firsthand. Bell et al. also suggested that immigrants had less U.S. work experience than Asian-Americans, therefore, had not experienced discrimination. Because Asian immigrants and Asian Americans have different experiences in the workplace, their attitudes may differ from one another.

In general, assimilation is the process by which immigrants become incorporated into the mainstream society or culture, such as the American culture (Greenman & Xie, 2006). Based on assimilation theory, it is inferred that Asians who are natural-born U.S. citizens will have assimilated into mainstream "American" culture more so than Asian immigrants will have due to the length of time in the U.S. This would suggest that Asians who are natural-born American citizens will have weaker ethnic identities, a stronger identification with, and have attitudes more similar to Whites than Asian immigrants, and thus, they will be less likely to favor affirmative action.

However, equating length of time in the U.S. (natural-born versus immigrant) to assimilation may not be appropriate. As Kim et al. (2001) indicated, Japanese Americans have been in the U.S. longer, generation-wise, than the other three Asian groups, yet they had the highest levels of adherence on all six values. Japanese Americans were more likely to emphasize and maintain their cultural traditions, which is why they had higher levels of value adherence. Thus, the passing of generations may not be as strong a predictor as other factors, such as ethnic identity.

Phinney (1992) refers to ethnic identity as tying one's self-concept to membership in a particular group or groups. The three stages of ethnic identification are ethnic identity achievement, affirmation/belonging, and ethnic behaviors. Ethnic identity achievement is an individual's understanding of his or her ethnic identity and seeking out information about their ethnic background. Affirmation/belonging relates

to the acceptance of one's ethnicity, and ethnic behaviors are how involved one is with ethnic social groups and cultural practices. An individual who successfully achieves a strong sense of ethnic self has resolved ethnic identity issues, therefore, is more secure with him or herself.

Phinney (1992) evaluated the relationship between ethnic identity and self-esteem in high school and college students, and concluded that students, in both high school and college, who had stronger ethnic identities had higher levels of self-esteem than students who had weaker attachment to their ethnic identity. Individuals with stronger ethnic identities are secure with themselves and their ethnic group identification, and are proud of their ethnic group. This ethnic pride may cause those with stronger ethnic identities to have more positive attitudes toward affirmative action than individuals with weaker ethnic identities.

*H4: Ethnic identity will be positively related to attitudes toward affirmative action.*

In summary, the purpose of this study is to evaluate the relationships between Asian ethnic group membership, sex, levels of collectivism/individualism and the horizontal/vertical dimension of collectivism/individualism, and ethnic identity, and attitudes toward affirmative action (Figure 1).

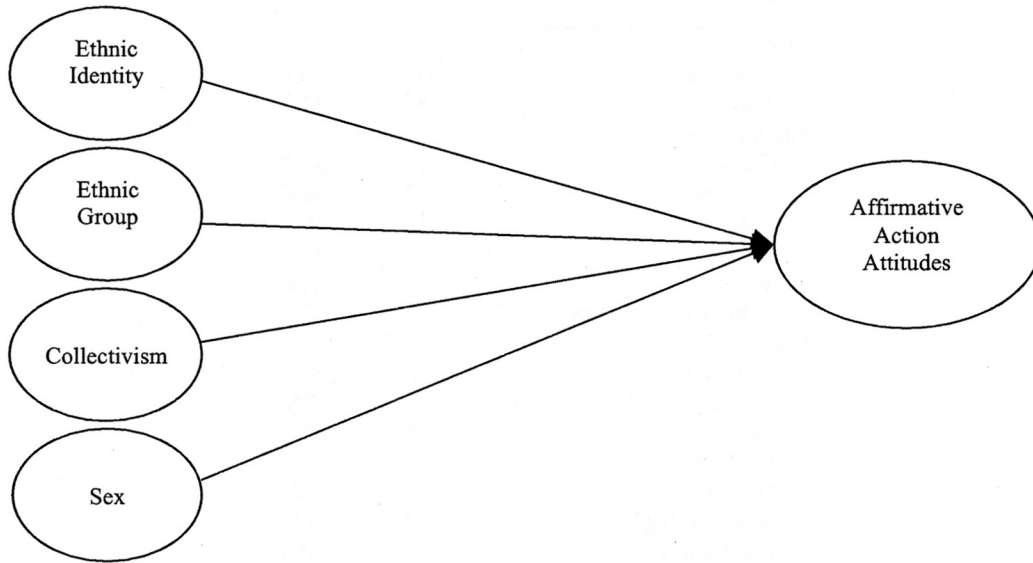
## Method

### *Participants*

Participants were 181 Asian professionals and students from around the world (e.g., Australia, England). Two hundred eighty-two participants accessed the website, 261 completed the first scale (affirmative action attitudes) for a response rate of 92.5%, and only 181 completed the entire questionnaire for a response rate of 64.1%. Demographic information is listed in Table 1. Only 21.5% were StudyResponse (SR) participants ( $N = 41$ ) and 78.5% were not SR participants ( $N = 150$ ).



Figure 1: Proposed Hypotheses



Approximately 25% ( $N = 45$ ) were first-generation Asian Americans in the United States or Canada and approximately 27% ( $N = 49$ ) indicated that they were immigrants themselves. For 51.9% ( $N = 94$ ) of the participants, English is their first language, while 48.6% ( $N = 89$ ) learned their parents' native language first (e.g., Cantonese, Korean, or Vietnamese). The majority (37.6%) of the participants were Christian ( $N = 70$ ), while 27.4% were non-religious ( $N = 51$ ), 13.8% were Hindu ( $N = 26$ ), 9.7% were Buddhist ( $N = 18$ ), 6.5% were Muslim ( $N = 12$ ), and 4.8% listed Other ( $N = 9$ ).

Twenty-seven percent of the participants ( $N = 50$ ) were members of Asian-oriented organizations, such as Asian American Resource Workshop (AARW), Boston Asian Football League (BAFL), Malaysian Association of Georgia, Media Action Network for Asian Americans, or Young Generation Asian Association. Seventy-three percent ( $N = 135$ ) of the participants were not members of any Asian-oriented organization.

#### Procedure

Eight hundred thirty-three emails with the questionnaire link were sent to Asian alumni found in a university alumni online directory, and leaders, staff, and members of Asian-oriented organizations (professional and student) across the United States. One hundred twenty-two emails were undeliverable/returned. The questionnaire consisted of 78 scale items and 34 demographic items, and time to completion was expected to be approximately twenty minutes. Participants accessed the questionnaire via the internet from [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com) and could complete it at their leisure.

Examples of organizations participants were members of were the National Association for Asian American Professionals (NAAAP), Coalition of Asian Pacific Americans (CAPA), and several Asian lawyer associations. An additional 29 emails were sent to family and Asian friends. The email included a request to forward to family, friends, colleagues, and co-

Table 1: *Demographic and additional information*

	<i>N</i>	%
<b>Sex</b>		
Females	102	36.4
Males	87	31.1
<b>Ethnic group</b>		
Chinese	70	37.2
Filipino	12	6.4
Indian	36	19.1
Korean	11	6.9
Vietnamese	11	5.9
Other (Multi-ethnic/racial)	48	25.5
<b>Citizenship</b>		
United States	95	50.3
Canada	9	4.8
Other	85	45.0
<b>Education</b>		
High school	5	1.8
Some college	27	9.6
Bachelor's	84	30.0
Some graduate school	11	3.9
Master's	51	18.2
Ph.D.	4	1.4
Other	5	1.8
<b>Political affiliation</b>		
Democrat	64	35.2
Independent	28	15.4
Republican	17	9.3
Undecided	52	28.6
Other	14	7.7
<b>Employment status</b>		
Full-time	127	67.6
Part-time	21	11.2
Unemployed	18	9.6
Other (e.g., freelance)	12	6.4
Student	10	5.3
<b>Employer has AAP</b>		
Yes	41	22.4
No	51	27.9
Don't know/not certain	91	49.7

workers to recruit additional participants. This snowball technique (Babbie, 2000; Pittenger, 2003) is useful in generalizing the data to the Asian population because the email was not sent to one organization in one region, but was sent to various organizations and individuals across the United States and around the world. To obtain more responses, StudyResponse, a research

project that helps connect social researchers with its large, international participant pool, was utilized. They sent a recruitment letter to their database of 1,000 Asian participants around the world.

## Measures

All six measures described below used the same 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly agree; 7 = strongly disagree) and are included in Appendix A. Items were reverse coded (except for those labeled [R]) so that the larger the number, the stronger the agreement. Summing the items and calculating the mean derived the scores for the scales. Scales with one missing item were replaced by the mean of the scale responses. Scales with more than one missing item were deleted listwise in the analyses.

**Affirmative action.** A modified version of Kravitz and Platania's (1993) Attitude Toward Affirmative Action Scale was utilized. The original scale consisted of six items about whether or not the participant believed affirmative action is good and his or her willingness to work for an organization with an affirmative action plan. Previous research (Kravitz & Platania) has shown a Cronbach's alpha of .86 for the scale. Two filler items (Items 1 and 5) were omitted from the analyses. The reliability of the six-item scale in this study was .83 ( $N = 261$ ).

**Collectivism and Individualism.** A modified version of Triandis and Gelfand's (1998) collectivism-individualism horizontal-vertical

scale was used. The original scale had 27 items, but based on their factor analysis, only the first four items with the highest factor loadings in each pattern were used in this study, for a total of 16 items. Each pattern is distinct, therefore, each had their own reliabilities. Based on the original 27-item scale, the reliabilities were .81 (HI), .80 (HC), .73 (VC) and .82 (VI). Examples of questions are "Winning is everything" and "Families must stick together, no matter the sacrifices." The reliability coefficients were calculated for the four scales and yielded Cronbach's alphas of .66 (HI) ( $N = 189$ ), .67 (HC) ( $N = 188$ ), .74 (VC) ( $N = 188$ ), and .53 (VI) ( $N = 188$ ).

**Ethnic Identity.** A modified version of Phinney's (1992) Multigroup Measure of Ethnic Identity (MEIM) scale was used (Cronbach's alphas ranged from 0.81 to .90). Eleven of the original 14 items were retained for this study. An additional six items pertained to orientation with other ethnic groups, but were not included because they were not part of the Ethnic Identity Scale, and three items were inadvertently omitted in the study. The 11 items in this study resulted in a reliability of .92 ( $N = 189$ ).

## Results

Table 2: *Correlations Between Variables*<sup>a</sup>

Variable	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1. Affirmative action attitudes	—						
2. Sex	.04	—					
3. Collectivism	.23**	-.03	—				
4. Individualism	.05	-.17*	.37**	—			
5. Horizontal dimension	.18*	-.03	.69**	.68**	—		
6. Vertical dimension	.11	-.17*	.72**	.73**	.45**	—	
7. Ethnic identity	.28**	-.05	.42**	.17*	.25**	.36**	—

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

<sup>a</sup>. Listwise ( $N=179$ )

The correlations of sex, distributive and procedural justice, ethnic groups, collectivism/individualism, and ethnic identity with affirmative action attitudes are listed in Table 2.

*Sex.* An independent *t*-test was conducted to identify differences in attitudes toward affirmative action between males ( $N = 81$ ) and females ( $N = 101$ ). Hypothesis 1 proposed that females would have more favorable affirmative action attitudes than males. However, the results were not significant,  $t(180) = -.47$ ,  $p = \text{n.s.}$ , thus, Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

*Ethnic groups.* Hypothesis 2 stated that there would be differences in affirmative action attitudes among Asian ethnicities. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the relationship between Asian ethnic groups (Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Korean, Vietnamese, and Other) and affirmative action attitudes. The results of the one-way ANOVA were not significant,  $F(5, 175) = .674$ ,  $p = \text{n.s.}$ , therefore, Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

*Collectivism and individualism.* Hypotheses 3a and 3b stated that collectivism and the horizontal dimension would be positively related with affirmative action attitudes. Correlation coefficients were computed among the collectivism, individualism, horizontal, vertical, and affirmative action attitude scales. The results of the analyses in Table 2 indicated that collectivism and the horizontal dimension were significantly correlated with affirmative action attitudes,  $r = .23$ ,  $p < .01$  and  $r = .18$ ,  $p < .05$ , respectively. Asians who were more collectivistic and high on the horizontal dimension had more favorable affirmative action attitudes than individuals who were more individualistic or high on the vertical dimension, thus supporting both Hypotheses 3a and 3b.

In addition, the correlations between collectivism and individualism, and the correlations between the horizontal and vertical dimensions were tested in an independent *t*-test of correlations. There was a significant difference between the individualism and collectivism correlations,  $t(178) = 2.134$ ,  $p < .05$ .

However, there were no significant differences between the correlations between the horizontal or vertical dimensions,  $t(178) = .978$ ,  $p = \text{n.s.}$  *Ethnic identity.* Hypothesis 4 stated that ethnic identity would be positively related to affirmative action attitudes. Correlation coefficients were computed between the ethnic identity and affirmative action attitude scales. The results indicated that ethnic identity is positively correlated with affirmative action attitudes,  $r = .28$ ,  $p < .01$ , thus supporting Hypothesis 4.

## Discussion

One purpose of this study was to delineate a more accurate picture of Asians' attitudes toward affirmative action by evaluating the relationships between sex, ethnicity, collectivism, and organizational justice perceptions with attitudes toward affirmative action. Five of the seven hypotheses were supported, which suggests that other factors, such as collectivism and ethnic identity, should be included in future studies with affirmative action attitudes.

Contrary to most studies finding sex differences in affirmative action attitudes, this study did not indicate significant differences between Asian men and women's affirmative action attitudes. Parker, Baltes, and Christiansen (1997) found differences between White men and White women, which is why it was hypothesized that there would be differences between Asian men and women. Also, because Asian women are considered minorities in two categories, sex and ethnicity, it was expected that they would have stronger positive attitudes toward affirmative action. The nonsignificant result may be due to Asians favoring affirmative action in general (e.g., Parker et al., 1997), thus, making it difficult to detect differences between Asian men and women.

The results for Hypothesis 2 suggest that there are not significant differences in affirmative action attitudes among the various Asian ethnic groups. Although this may suggest that Asian ethnic groups have similar affirmative

action attitudes, it may not be feasible for future studies to continue to categorize Asian ethnic groups into one category when evaluating their values or attitudes. Phinney (1996), for example, suggests that researchers should describe ethnic groups as thoroughly as possible so that they can ascertain if and why differences exist within a group or race.

The results for the collectivism and horizontal dimension supported the supposition that both would be positively related to affirmative action attitudes. Individuals who scored high on collectivism had positive attitudes toward affirmative action because they were concerned with the group's well-being, and affirmative action is perceived to help disadvantaged groups (i.e., ethnic minorities). Additionally, ethnic identity was positively related to affirmative action attitudes. Developing a strong ethnic identity involves achieving an ethnic identity, developing a sense of affirmation or belonging to the group, and participating in ethnic practices. Thus, participants who had a strong identification with their ethnic group had positive affirmative action attitudes because they felt that affirmative would be beneficial to their group.

Additional analyses included analyzing Asian participants' agreement on different aspects of AAPs that are real (e.g., training and recruiting) and normally illegal unless mandated by the courts (e.g., quotas and preferential treatment). Participants strongly agreed that AAPs should involve recruiting and training over quotas and preferential treatment. Also, participants strongly agreed that affirmative action is necessary and effective.

The relationship between affirmative action attitudes and employers with an AAP were also analyzed. Participants who work for employers with AAPs had more positive attitudes toward affirmative action than participants who did not work for employers with AAPs or participants who did not know whether their organization had an AAP. This would suggest that organizations that have AAPs could increase positive attitudes toward affirmative action. This is consistent with

previous studies that current and potential employees' perceptions of organizational support for affirmative action or diversity programs had a positive impact on their attitudes, assuming there were no justice violations (Parker et al., 1997; Richard & Kirby, 1999).

Another interesting result was that Asian participants who were members of Asian-oriented organizations outside of work (e.g., social, political, professional, or sport) had more positive attitudes toward affirmative action than participants who were not members. Additionally, members of Asian-oriented organizations had higher levels of ethnic identity; as previously mentioned, participants with higher levels of ethnic identity had more positive affirmative action attitudes.

## Limitations

One major limitation is sample size. More participants could have increased the power of the test to detect for differences between ethnic groups. The two major ethnic groups, Chinese and Indian had 70 and 36 participants, respectively, whereas the other ethnic group categories had fewer than 12. Another limitation was the length of the components to an AAP; there were 24 questions split over three pages that seemed to deter participants from completing that section or subsequent sections of the questionnaire. Additionally, range restriction could have occurred as individuals who may have held unfavorable attitudes toward affirmative action may have decided not to take the survey. Some participants commented that the questions seemed similar to each other, that this portion of the questionnaire was too long, and there was not a completion bar. To address the completion bar comment, statements indicating how much they had completed were added to the questionnaire after the questionnaire went live.

Another limitation was common method variance. All the measures were self-reports using a 7-point Likert scale, so participants could

have responded with the same rating or used one pattern throughout the questionnaire.

### *Implications*

Despite these limitations, this study adds to the limited literature on race and ethnicity in organizational research. Research involving other races or ethnicities outside of Whites and Blacks is limited due to the difficulty in conducting racial and ethnic research as well as the difficulty of publishing in leading academic journals because it is not considered mainstream (Cox, 2004). This study adds to the extant literature on Asians and their attitudes toward affirmative action.

As the results indicated, participants with stronger ethnic identities had positive attitudes toward affirmative action, and individuals with stronger ethnic identities had higher self-esteem (Phinney, 1992). Also, stronger ethnic identification is related to reports of fewer depressive symptoms and it acts as a buffer to stress related to discrimination (Mossakowski, 2003). Organizations could incorporate activities or events for employees of all races to participate in to develop a stronger sense of their ethnicity or belonging to the department or organization. They could also pay for employee membership into organizations to help gain a better sense of their own ethnic identity. Not only would a strong ethnic identity increase an employee's self-esteem and reduce stress-related health problems, it can also increase manager-employee relations between racially diverse dyads (Chrobot-Mason, 2004). Majority (White) participants who indicated their ethnicity other than "White" (e.g., Irish American) had higher levels of ethnic identity than participants who identified themselves racially (White). White managers with a stronger sense of ethnic identity were more aware of racial issues, thus more likely to be sensitive and empathetic toward their ethnic minority subordinates, which led to more subordinate satisfaction with their White manager (Chrobot-Mason).

### **Future Research**

In previous studies with different racial groups, organizational justice perceptions affected attitudes toward affirmative action (Parker, Baltes, & Christiansen, 1997), but ethnic identity was not measured. If the MEIM scale were utilized, the results may have indicated that there could be differences between strong and weak ethnic identities instead of racial differences. Because this study was an all-Asian sample, future studies should incorporate other races using the MEIM scale to ascertain whether or not the scale is a good predictor of one's attitude toward affirmative action. It would help evaluate the affect of strong or weak ethnic identities on attitudes and whether ethnic identity should be measured instead of asking for one's race. Phinney (1996) has suggested that organizations should request ethnicity instead of race to better understand individual and group differences. As previously noted, the MEIM scale is applicable to the White/Caucasian race (Chrobot-Mason, 2004) and not just limited to ethnic minorities.

More importantly, the results indicate that Asian participants agree that affirmative action is necessary and effective, thus arguing against the Model Minority Myth which leads Whites in particular to assume that Asians do not support, need, or benefit from affirmative action. This suggests the importance of including Asians in future studies of attitudes toward affirmative action. In addition, to my knowledge, no field study has included items pertaining to whether or not participants' employers have an AAP and evaluated the relationship between having an AAP and affirmative action attitudes; future field studies should incorporate this item with all racial groups. In doing so, researchers can begin to ascertain what components these organizations use in their AAP that relate to positive employee attitudes toward affirmative action. Policy makers and other organizations can then integrate these components into their AAPs. More research is needed to determine what makes an effective and positive AAP.

## Conclusion

Contrary to popular belief based on the Model Minority Myth, the results of this study indicate that Asians do see value in affirmative action policies. This supports the contention that future affirmative action studies should include Asians in their participant pools and continue to evaluate the potential for culturally-based differences in attitudes toward affirmative action. While the results of the current study failed to identify significant attitudinal differences among Asian ethnic groups, they do suggest that *ethnic identification* is positively related to support for affirmative action. This points to the possibility that it is group identification, as suggested by social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), and not simply group membership, that influences attitudes toward affirmative action. Future research should consider whether this result is generalizable to other racial groups.

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## APPENDIX

### Appendix A. Measures Used

#### Attitude Towards Affirmative Action Scale (Kravitz & Platania, 1993).

Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly agree	Moderately agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree/disagree	Slightly disagree	Moderately disagree	Strongly disagree

1. I am familiar with affirmative action. [filler]
- \*2. Affirmative action is a good policy.
- \*3. I would ***not*** work for an organization with an affirmative action plan. [R]
- \*4. The goals of affirmative action are good for ethnic minorities.
5. I do not know what affirmative action is. [filler]
6. Affirmative action is ineffective. [R]
- \*7. Employees should be actively involved in attempts to improve the affirmative action conditions of their place of employment.
- \*8. I would be willing to work for an organization with an affirmative action plan.
9. Affirmative action is unnecessary. [R]
- \*10. All in all, I oppose affirmative action plans in industry for ethnic minorities. [R]

\* *Original items*

## Affirmative Action Plans Scale (Kravitz & Platania, 1993)

Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly agree	Moderately agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree/disagree	Slightly disagree	Moderately disagree	Strongly disagree

[1] 1. An affirmative action plan would require that the proportion of ethnic minorities hired be equal to the proportion of ethnic minority applicants who are qualified for the position.

[2] 8. An AAP would require that employment decisions be made **without regard** to the person's ethnic minority status.

[3] 19. The only organizations that are legally required to have AAPs are those with large government contracts and those with histories of discrimination against ethnic minorities.

[4] 2. An AAP would involve hiring goals designed to result in a distribution of ethnic minorities within the organization that matches the distribution of people in the community.

[5] 9. An AAP would require that a person's ethnic minority status **not** be considered in making employment decisions **unless** the person is qualified.

[6] 20. All organizations are legally required to have AAP for ethnic minorities.

[7] 3. An AAP would require businesses to hire and promote a certain number of ethnic minorities.

[8] 25. **[Filler] "AAP" stands for Affirmative Action Plan.**

[9] 10. An AAP would require that when an ethnic minority and a non-ethnic minority have equal qualifications the employment decision will favor the ethnic minority.

[10] 21. An AAP would involve the elimination of all barriers within the organization that limit ethnic minority applicants and employees.

[11] 17. An AAP would require the organization to do its best to get qualified ethnic minorities to apply for positions.

[12] 4. An AAP would require that the proportion of ethnic minorities hired be equal to the proportion of ethnic minorities in the community who are qualified for the position.

[13] 11. An AAP would require that employment decisions favor ethnic minorities over non-ethnic minorities who are more qualified.

[14] 22. An AAP would involve providing the federal government with information about the number of ethnic minority employees in different positions in the company.

[15] 5. An AAP would involve quotas for ethnic minorities.

[16] 12. An AAP would require that when an ethnic minority and a non-ethnic minority have equal qualifications, and both are fully qualified, the employment decision will favor the ethnic minority.

[17] 15. An AAP would involve setting up training plans designed to teach ethnic minorities the skills needed to obtain employment within the organization.

[18] 23. An AAP would require the organization to hire unqualified ethnic minorities.

[19] 6. An AAP would require that the proportion of ethnic minorities hired be equal to the proportion of ethnic minorities in the community.

[20] **[FILLER] 26. I am taking an online questionnaire.**

[21] 13. An AAP would involve preferential treatment of ethnic minorities.

[22] 7. An AAP would require that the proportion of ethnic minorities hired be equal to the proportion of ethnic minority applicants.

[23] 14. An AAP would require that a person's ethnic minority status be included as one of the factors considered in making employment decisions.

[24] 16. An AAP would involve providing ethnic minority employees with additional training to help them succeed within the organization.

[25] 18. An AAP would involve extra efforts to make sure potential ethnic minority applicants know about positions. This could involve such things as recruiting at schools with many ethnic minority students, advertising in ethnic minority newspapers, and the like.

[26] 24. An AAP would be designed to compensate for the organization's previous discrimination against ethnic minorities.

## Distributive Justice and Procedural Justice Scales

### Distributive Justice- Price & Mueller Distributive Justice Index (Kim et al., 1996; Price & Mueller, 1986)

*“Fairness in the following questions refers to the relationship of an individual’s inputs to the organization and his/her perceptions of the appropriateness of the rewards (money, recognition, etc.) received at work.”*

Please indicate how much you agree/disagree with the following statements.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly agree	Moderately agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree/disagree	Slightly disagree	Moderately disagree	Strongly disagree

1. I am rewarded fairly for the amount of effort I put in.
2. I am rewarded unfairly considering the responsibilities I have. [R]
3. I am fairly rewarded in view of my experience.
4. I am rewarded fairly when the amount of my education and training is taken into account.

### Procedural Justice (McFarlin & Sweeney, 1992)

Please indicate how much you agree/disagree with the following statements.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly agree	Moderately agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree/disagree	Slightly disagree	Moderately disagree	Strongly disagree

1. The procedures used to determine promotions in my organization are fair.
2. The procedures used to evaluate employee performance in my organization are fair.
3. The procedures used to determine salary increases in my organization are fair.
4. The procedures used to communicate performance feedback to employees in my organization are unfair. [R]

## Individualism-Collectivism Scale (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998)

Please indicate how much you agree/disagree with the following statements.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly agree	Moderately agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree/disagree	Slightly disagree	Moderately disagree	Strongly disagree

### Horizontal Individualism (HI)

1. I'd rather depend on myself than others.
5. I rely on myself most of the time; I rarely rely on others.
9. I often do "my own thing".
13. My personal identity independent of others is very important to me.

### Horizontal Collectivism (HC)

3. If a coworker gets a prize I would feel proud.
7. The well-being of my coworkers is important to me.
11. To me pleasure is spending time with others.
15. I feel good when I cooperate with others.

### Vertical Individualism (VI)

2. It is important that I do my job better than others.
6. Winning is everything.
10. Competition is the law of nature.
14. When another person does better than I do, I get tense and aroused.

### Vertical Collectivism (VC)

4. Parents and children must stay together as much as possible.
8. It is my duty to take care of my family even when I have to sacrifice what I want.
12. Family members should stick together no matter what sacrifices are required.
16. It is important to me that I respect the decisions made by my groups.

## Ethnic Identity Scale (Modified) (Phinney, 1992)

Please indicate how much you agree/disagree with the following statements.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly agree	Moderately agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree/disagree	Slightly disagree	Moderately disagree	Strongly disagree

1. I have spent time trying to learn more about my ethnic history, traditions, and cultures.
2. I am active in ethnic organizations and/or social groups.
3. I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means to me.
4. I am happy with my ethnic background.
5. I have a strong sense of belonging to my ethnic community.
6. I understand what my ethnic background means to me in terms of how I relate to my ethnic group and other ethnic groups.
7. To learn more about my ethnic background I have often talked to other people about my ethnic culture and history.
8. I have a lot of pride in people with my ethnic background and their accomplishments.
9. I participate in ethnic cultural practices such as special food, music, or customs.
10. I feel a strong attachment towards my ethnic community.
11. I feel good about my cultural and ethnic background.