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INNOVATIONS IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

A Social Network Perspective on the Bamboo Ceiling: Ethnic Homophily Explains Why East Asians but Not South Asians Are Underrepresented in Leadership in Multiethnic Environments

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In the United States, Asians appear disproportionately underrepresented in leadership roles, a puzzling phenomenon known as the "Bamboo Ceiling" (Hyun, 2005; Lu et al., 2020). We advance a social network explanation for this phenomenon: ethnic homophily. We theorize that East Asians (e.g., ethnic Chinese)—but not South Asians (e.g., ethnic Indians)—are less likely than other ethnicities to emerge as leaders in multiethnic environments partly because East Asians socialize more with ethnic ingroup members (other East Asians). Analyzing a survey of 54,620 Juris Doctor (JD) students from 124 U.S. law schools, Study 1 revealed that East Asians had the highest ethnic homophily of all ethnicities. Studies 2 and 3 examined friendship networks and leadership emergence in 11 class sections of new Master of Business Administration (MBA) students in a U.S. business school, and found that East Asians were the least likely to be nominated and elected as leaders. Social network analysis revealed that, compared to South Asians, Latinos, and Whites, East Asians exhibited higher ethnic homophily, which mediated their lower leadership emergence. These effects occurred for both East Asian internationals and East Asian Americans, and were robust after accounting for variables such as assertiveness (parallel mediator), network centrality, English proficiency, demographics, and personality. By integrating social network analysis into psychology, we identify ethnic homophily as one reason why the Bamboo Ceiling exists for East Asians but not South Asians. Moreover, by uncovering the negative link between ethnic homophily and leadership emergence, our research suggests that bonding with people from different ethnic backgrounds can facilitate individuals' leadership emergence in multiethnic environments.

Keywords: culture, Bamboo Ceiling, leadership, social network, homophily

Well-educated and prosperous, Asians are called the "model minority" in the United States. On average, Asians have the highest educational attainment (Hsin & Xie, 2014; Lee & Zhou, 2015; Ryan & Bauman, 2016), lowest unemployment rate (United States Department of Labor, 2019), and highest median income of all ethnic groups (Sakamoto et al., 2009; U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). However, Asians appear disproportionately underrepresented in leadership roles in the United States (Chin, 2020; Gee & Peck, 2018; Sy et al., 2017). This puzzling phenomenon has been termed the "Bamboo Ceiling" (Hyun, 2005; Lu et al., 2020), in reference to the fact that bamboo plays "an important economic and cultural role across Asia, with the world's largest bamboo areas in South Asia and East Asia" (Lu et al., 2020, p. 4590).

To better understand this Bamboo Ceiling phenomenon, we move beyond existing research to offer a social network explanation: ethnic homophily (McPherson et al., 2001). We propose that East Asians (EAs; e.g., ethnic Chinese, Japanese)—but not South Asians (SAs; e.g., ethnic Indians, Pakistanis)—are less likely than other ethnicities to emerge as leaders in multiethnic environments partly because EAs socialize more with ethnic ingroup members (i.e., other EAs).[1] Our proposition is supported by a survey study of

[1] Because other Asian subgroups, including Southeast Asians (e.g., ethnic Indonesians, Singaporeans, Vietnamese) and Central Asians (e.g., ethnic Kazakhs, Uzbeks), have much smaller populations in the United States, our studies did not have sufficient samples to analyze these groups.

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54,620 Juris Doctor (JD) students from 124 U.S. law schools and two social network studies of Master of Business Administration (MBA) students in a U.S. business school.

The theory section is structured as follows. First, we review the existing literature on the Bamboo Ceiling phenomenon. Next, we review the concept of ethnic homophily and theorize why it may hinder individuals' leadership emergence in multiethnic environments. Finally, we offer a cultural psychological perspective on why ethnic EAs tend to be high on ethnic homophily and thus less likely to emerge as leaders in multiethnic environments.

The Bamboo Ceiling

In the United States, Asians appear disproportionately underrepresented in leadership roles across different industries (Gee & Peck, 2018; Hyun, 2005; Lu et al., 2020; Thatchenkery & Sugiyama, 2011). On Wall Street, although Asians are well represented at the employee level, they are underrepresented at the executive level. For example, according to a 2017 report, whereas 20.6% of employees at JPMorgan Chase were Asian, only about 6.8% of its executives were Asian (Bloomberg, 2017). Similarly, in U.S. law firms, only 3% of partners were Asian despite 11% of associates being Asian (Chung et al., 2017). Even in the technology industry, where 30% of the workforce is Asian, less than 15% of senior leaders are Asian (Gee & Peck, 2018; The Economist, 2015).

In light of these striking descriptive statistics, researchers have begun to examine the scope and mechanisms of this Bamboo Ceiling phenomenon (Lu et al., 2020; Sy et al., 2010; Yu, 2020). In terms of *scope*, most organizational and government statistics lump all Asian subgroups together despite their cultural differences. Recently, Lu et al. (2020) observed that in contrast to the paucity of EA CEOs in the United States, plenty of SA CEOs have led well-known companies such as Citigroup, Google, MasterCard, Microsoft, and PepsiCo. Across nine studies using mixed methods, these researchers consistently found that ethnic EAs—but not ethnic SAs—are underrepresented in leadership roles.

In terms of *mechanisms* behind the Bamboo Ceiling phenomenon, Lu et al. (2020) tested three potential mechanisms—motivation, prejudice, and assertiveness—while controlling for a broad set of personality and demographic variables (e.g., birth country, English proficiency, education, socioeconomic status [SES]). Analyses found that EAs were as motivated as SAs and Whites to become leaders, and EAs actually faced *less* prejudice than SAs. However, EAs were lower than SAs and Whites in assertiveness, which partly mediated EAs' disadvantage in leadership emergence (Lu et al., 2020). The assertiveness mechanism is consistent with leadership categorization theory (Lord & Maher, 1991; Shondrick et al., 2010), which posits that individuals are less likely to emerge as leaders if their characteristics are incongruent with the leader prototype in a given culture. EAs' low assertiveness is incongruent with the American leadership prototype, as actively asserting oneself signals confidence and conviction in mainstream American culture (Lu et al., 2020).

Besides assertiveness, the stereotypes of EAs as competent but cold and foreign may also contribute to the Bamboo Ceiling (Berdahl & Min, 2012; Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Lin et al., 2005; Zou & Cheryan, 2017). Such stereotypes can result in others' envy and hostility, impeding EAs' leadership emergence (Johnson & Sy, 2016). In addition, the underrepresentation of EA leaders can self-perpetuate: Because there are numerically few EA leaders in the United States, EAs are typically not associated with the image of "leader" (Rosette et al., 2008; Sy et al., 2010). As a result, EAs are less likely to be selected as leaders, which in turn reinforces their "non-leader" image; this can produce a vicious cycle that exacerbates the underrepresentation of EA leaders.

While the above perspectives have provided insights into the Bamboo Ceiling, our understanding of this phenomenon is far from complete. In particular, while these perspectives have examined characteristics (e.g., assertiveness) and stereotypes of Asian individuals, they have not yet accounted for *social relational dynamics*—even though leadership emergence is inherently a social and relational process (Balkundi & Kilduff, 2005; Carter et al., 2015). To fill this knowledge gap, we break new ground by advancing a social network explanation for the Bamboo Ceiling phenomenon: ethnic homophily.

Ethnic Homophily

Homophily—the sociological principle that "birds of a feather flock together"—has been studied across a wide range of settings, attributes, and relationships (Fernandez et al., 2000; Gibbons & Olk, 2003; Ibarra, 1992, 1993; Lawrence & Shah, 2020; McPherson et al., 2001; Melamed et al., 2020; Mollica et al., 2003; Reagans, 2005). More specifically, *ethnic* homophily is defined as the preference for interacting with individuals of the same ethnicity (Leszczensky & Pink, 2019; Smith et al., 2016). In their influential review, McPherson et al. (2001) noted that ethnic homophily tends to be more salient than other types of homophily (e.g., age homophily, gender homophily) in social environments.

Past research suggests that ethnic homophily is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, same-ethnicity relationships can provide social support for ethnic minorities (Friedman et al., 1998; James, 2000), because sharing the same ethnic background "increases ease of communication, improves predictability of behavior, and fosters relationships of trust and reciprocity" (Ibarra, 1993, p. 61). For example, Friedman et al. (1998) found that Black network groups had a positive effect on Black managers' career optimism. Moreover, ethnic homophily can accelerate the diffusion of ideas and practices among ethnic ingroups because of higher trust and ease of communication (Rogers, 2003). On the other hand, ethnic homophily also has downsides. First, it restrains ethnic minorities' access to diverse information and resources outside their ethnic networks (Ertug et al., 2018; Mollica et al., 2003; Xie & Gough, 2011). Second, ethnic homophily can result in the marginalization of ethnic minorities in a social environment (Mehra et al., 1998), which exacerbates ethnic inequality (Lynam & Cowley, 2007). Third, ethnic homophily precludes the potential benefits of interethnic friendships, such as increased creativity (Lu et al., 2017; Maddux et al., 2021), reduced prejudice (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), and enhanced well-being (Mendoza-Denton & Page-Gould, 2008).

Despite these findings, little research has examined the effect of ethnic homophily on *leadership emergence* in multiethnic environments. This is a notable knowledge gap because societies and organizations are increasingly multiethnic (Pew Research Center, 2018); it is thus important to understand how individuals can emerge as leaders in multiethnic environments. To fill this knowledge gap, we next theorize why ethnic homophily can hinder individuals' leadership emergence in multiethnic environments.

Ethnic Homophily Hinders Leadership Emergence in Multiethnic Environments

Leadership emergence is inherently a social and relational process (Judge et al., 2002). People are more likely to perceive and select a person as their leader if they believe that the person has suitable characteristics (Edwards, 2008) and can represent their values and interests (Platow & Van Knippenberg, 2001; Reicher et al., 2018). Drawing on two theoretical perspectives that highlight such relational processes, we propose that ethnic homophily can hinder individuals' leadership emergence in multiethnic environments.

First, the person–environment fit perspective (Edwards, 2008; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Lu et al., in press) suggests that individuals are more likely to emerge as leaders when there is a fit between personal characteristics and environmental characteristics. A multiethnic environment calls for leaders who can bond with members of different ethnic groups. Compared to ethnically homophilous leaders, ethnically heterophilous leaders are a better fit for multiethnic environments because they can serve as brokers that bridge different ethnic groups. For example, in a multiethnic MBA class, if a person only socializes with ethnic ingroup classmates, it signals low openness to ethnic diversity and a lack of interest in interacting with ethnic outgroup members (Lisak & Erez, 2015). Conversely, if a person socializes with classmates of different ethnicities, it signals his/her potential as an inclusive leader who can bring together people from diverse ethnic backgrounds. This is a reason why political candidates strive to connect with different ethnic groups in their campaigns. As a revealing example, multiple candidates in the 2020 U.S. presidential debates deliberately spoke in Spanish to connect with Latino voters (TIME, 2019). Similarly, many non-Chinese political candidates in San Francisco adopted Chinese names to appeal to the large Chinese population there (Green, 2016).

Second, the uncertainty reduction hypothesis posits that people have an epistemic need to reduce uncertainty (Hogg, 2000). If I am part of an ethnic outgroup (vs. ingroup) in the eyes of others, they may feel uncertain whether I share their values and interests. As a result, they may hesitate to trust me as a leader. However, if I am ethnically heterophilous and socialize with their ethnic ingroup member(s), then they may feel more certain that I share their values and interests, even though we are not direct friends. As a result, they are more likely to endorse me as a leader. Indeed, research shows that as an individual has more indirect contact with outgroup members via ingroup members, he/she is more likely to have future direct contact with outgroup members because of reduced intergroup anxiety (Wölfer et al., 2019). Relatedly, the principle of *transitivity* means that if an ethnic outgroup member is not yet my friend but is already friends with my ethnic ingroup member(s), I may presume that this person is likely to become my friend in the future (Flynn et al., 2010) and thus trust this person as a leader (Hogg, 2001). This view is echoed in Simmel's theory of triadic closure (Simmel, 1908) and Heider's balance theory (Heider, 1946).

In light of these theoretical perspectives, we hypothesize that more ethnically homophilous individuals are less likely to emerge as leaders in multiethnic environments. That is, we hypothesize that an individual's ethnic homophily negatively predicts his/her leadership emergence in multiethnic environments (Hypothesis 1).

Why Ethnic East Asians Are High on Ethnic Homophily

Having theoretically established the negative link between ethnic homophily and leadership emergence in multiethnic environments, we next theorize why ethnic EAs are high on ethnic homophily and thus less likely to emerge as leaders in multiethnic environments.

Although several studies have examined ethnic differences in friendship homophily (Ibarra, 1995; Mehra et al., 1998; Mollica et al., 2003; Quillian & Campbell, 2003; Zeng & Xie, 2008), due to limited sample sizes most of them only contrasted Whites versus non-Whites, let alone comparing *among* Asian subgroups. For example, Mollica et al. (2003) examined the friendship networks of three sections of first-year MBA students (about 20 participants in each section) and found that ethnic minorities exhibited higher homophily than Whites. However, because of their small sample of ethnic minority participants, the researchers could not compare ethnic homophily among the different ethnic minorities (Mollica et al., 2003). Similarly, Quillian and Campbell (2003) analyzed the U.S. National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health to examine ethnic differences in homophily, but this survey lumped all Asian subgroups together. This is a notable limitation because, as discussed below, EA cultures differ from other cultures (including SA cultures) in ways related to ethnic homophily.

We draw on cultural psychology research to hypothesize why EAs tend to be more ethnically homophilous than other ethnic groups. Specifically, we discuss cultural differences in (a) communication style, (b) ethnic heterogeneity, and (c) relational mobility. Because our social network studies only had sufficient sample sizes for EAs, SAs, Latinos, and Whites, our theorization focuses on cultural differences among these four groups.

Cultural Differences in Communication Style

A wealth of research suggests that EA cultures differ from mainstream American culture on many dimensions, including self-enhancement (Heine & Hamamura, 2007; Kitayama et al., 1997), construction of agency (Markus et al., 2006), emotions (Kitayama et al., 2006), and humor (Lu et al., 2019). Of particular relevance to leadership are cultural differences in communication style (Adair et al., 2016; Gudykunst et al., 1996). Whereas mainstream American culture encourages assertiveness and emotional expressivity, EA cultures emphasize humility and harmony (Lu et al., 2020; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Tsai et al., 2006). EA cultures are deeply influenced by Confucianism, whereas both SA cultures and Latino cultures have been influenced by Western colonization (Jeffrey, 2018; Tatum, 2013). EAs tend to communicate indirectly, implicitly, and nonassertively, whereas SAs tend to communicate directly, explicitly, and assertively (Lu et al., 2020; Nishimura et al., 2008; Sanchez-Burks et al., 2003). For example, Nishimura et al. (2008) found that Japanese tend to be quiet, use little body language, and think in silence, whereas Indians tend to be lively, use overt body language, and think aloud. Compared to EA cultures, Latino cultures emphasize "expressive displays of personal charm, graciousness, and hospitality" in interpersonal communication (Sanchez-Burks et al., 2000, p. 175). For example, Graham (1985) found that Brazilian negotiators said "no" more frequently and had fewer silent periods than Japanese negotiators.

Notably, Lu et al. (2020) found that *both* EA internationals and EA Americans were less assertive than their SA and White counterparts. This finding suggests that EAs' low assertiveness is not just an issue tied to English proficiency but rather has deep cultural roots: Although EA Americans are native English speakers, their family upbringings (e.g., dinner conversations with their EA parents) can still imprint the Confucian values of humility and harmony (Hofstede & Bond, 1988; Kitayama & Cohen, 2010; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Menon et al., 2010).

Due to such cultural differences in communication style, ethnic EAs may be less at ease than other ethnicities with the social scene in mainstream American culture, and thus socialize more within their cultural comfort zone (i.e., with other EAs).

Cultural Differences in Ethnic Heterogeneity

Second, EA cultures' low ethnic heterogeneity may also contribute to EAs' high ethnic homophily. Individuals from ethnically homogeneous cultures may have fewer scripts about interethnic interactions (Smith et al., 2020). Their cognitive networks may be less ethnically diverse, and as a result, they prefer socializing with ethnic ingroup members in social environments. Moreover, research shows that individuals from ethnically heterogeneous cultures mentally represent ethnic groups as more *similar* to each other, because these individuals are more likely to "realize latent and deep commonalities across groups" (Bai et al., 2020, p. 12747). By contrast, individuals from ethnically homogeneous cultures perceive ethnic groups as more *different* from each other (Bai et al., 2020). Such perceived differences can create psychological barriers for socializing with ethnic outgroup members (Turner & Cameron, 2016).

Unlike multiethnic cultures like the United States, EA cultures are largely monoethnic. According to Fearon's (2003) widely-used Ethnic Diversity Index (0 = least diverse, 1 = most diverse), the United States has a score of 0.491, whereas South Korea is 0.004, Japan is 0.012, and China is 0.154. Indeed, EA countries are ranked among the least ethnically diverse countries in the world (Fearon, 2003). Ethnic minorities comprise only about 1% of the population in both Japan and South Korea (*The World Factbook: Japan*, 2021; *The World Factbook: South Korea*, 2021). Similarly, as many as 91.6% of the Chinese population are Han Chinese (*The World Factbook: China*, 2021). In contrast to EA cultures, SA cultures are highly multiethnic (Ethnic Diversity Index: India = 0.811, Pakistan = 0.532, Sri Lanka = 0.428; Fearon, 2003). For example, India is home to numerous ethnic and religious groups, including Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Jews, Parsees, and Baha'is (Sen, 2005). As Frey and Roysircar (2006) summarized, "because diverse languages, religions, and cultural groups exist within most South Asian countries, South Asians have learned to accept the presence of cultural differences" (p. 218). Similarly, Roy (2018) noted that "[South Asians'] natural experience of managing diversity from their own very diverse ancestral country helps them to quickly adapt in different circumstances and ride on the ladder of success through wider acceptability from other communities" (p. 203). Like SA cultures, Latino cultures are highly multiethnic (Alesina et al., 2003). Latino cultures are characterized by a history of mestizaje—the ethnic and cultural mixing of Latin American indigenous peoples, Europeans, and Africans (Miller, 2009). For example, the Ethnic Diversity Index scores for Brazil and Mexico, the two most represented Latino cultures in our studies, are as high as 0.549 and 0.542, respectively (Fearon, 2003).

Due to EA cultures' ethnic homogeneity, EAs may be less accustomed to interacting with people from different ethnic backgrounds and thus socialize more with other EAs in multiethnic environments.

Cultural Differences in Relational Mobility

Third, EA cultures' low relational mobility may also contribute to EAs' high ethnic homophily. Relational mobility refers to "how much freedom and opportunity a society affords individuals to select and replace interpersonal relationships based on their personal preferences" (Yuki & Schug, 2020, p. 129). In cultures with high relational mobility, a person's relationships tend to be guided by personal choices and preferences rather than concern for the ethnic group to which one belongs (De et al., 2015; Yuki & Schug, 2012). Indeed, research suggests that ethnocentrism increases as mobility decreases, because ethnocentrism is adaptive in low mobility societies, which favor group-entitative behaviors (De et al., 2015). In a recent cross-cultural study, Thomson et al. (2018) found that relational mobility (range: −0.414 to 0.414) was high in the U.S. (0.182) and Latino cultures (e.g., Brazil = 0.203, Mexico = 0.359, Puerto Rico = 0.308, Venezuela = 0.226), but low in EA cultures (e.g., Hong Kong = −0.338, Japan = −0.414, Taiwan = −0.294).[2] Importantly, cultural differences in relational mobility can exist within the same country (Falk et al., 2009; Zhang & Li, 2014). For example, Falk et al. (2009) found that European Canadians reported higher relational mobility than not only the Japanese in Japan but also EA Canadians.

Whereas mainstream American culture encourages individuals to socialize with whoever they "click with," EAs may be more apt to befriend another EA just because that person is an ethnic ingroup member (Kim & Markus, 1999; Oishi et al., 2015). EAs who primarily socialize with ethnic outgroups are sometimes frowned upon by other EAs. For example, pejorative terms like "banana" and "Twinkie" (EA on the outside, White on the inside) are used to disparage EAs who primarily socialize with Whites (Trieu, 2019). Indeed, EA cultures' prioritization of ingroup relationships is sometimes accomplished at the expense of outgroup exclusion (Yum, 1988). In the United States, many EA entrepreneurs and professionals reside in ethnic enclaves in urban areas (Paik et al., 2017). In contrast to the many Chinatowns, Japantowns, and Koreatowns, the Indian population in the United States "by and large does not live isolated in 'Indiatowns'" (Oldenburg, 1988, p. 227).

In light of the aforementioned cultural differences in communication style, ethnic heterogeneity, and relational mobility, EAs may prefer to socialize with ethnic ingroup members in multiethnic environments. That is, we hypothesize that EAs tend to exhibit high ethnic homophily in multiethnic environments (Hypothesis 2).

Hypotheses and Overview of Studies

Taken together, if EAs are high on ethnic homophily (Hypothesis 2) and ethnic homophily negatively predicts leadership emergence in multiethnic environments (Hypothesis 1), then EAs may be less

[2] Thomson et al. (2018) did not present data on the relational mobility of SA cultures.

likely to emerge as leaders in multiethnic environments. In other words, we hypothesize that EAs are less likely to emerge as leaders in multiethnic environments (Hypothesis 3) partly because of their high ethnic homophily (Hypothesis 4).

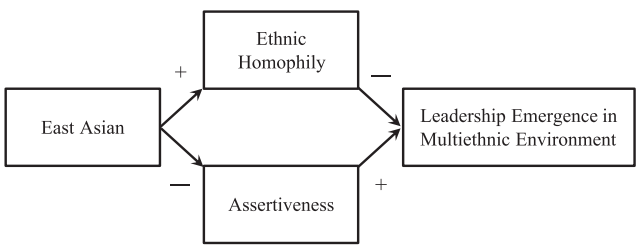
To test these hypotheses, we conducted three studies. In Study 1, we analyzed a large survey of 54,620 JD students from 124 U.S. law schools to test whether EAs had higher ethnic homophily than non-EAs (Hypothesis 2). Next, Studies 2 and 3 tested our entire theoretical perspective (Hypotheses 1–4) via social network analysis. Specifically, we examined friendship networks and leadership emergence in 11 class sections of new MBA students in a U.S. business school. Given the recent finding that assertiveness is an important mechanism for EAs' lower leadership emergence (Lu et al., 2020), both Studies 2 and 3 accounted for and tested assertiveness as a parallel mediator. That is, we tested whether ethnic homophily would explain EAs' low leadership emergence above and beyond assertiveness. Our conceptual model is displayed in Figure 1.

The present research offers significant theoretical contributions and practical implications. First, we extend the burgeoning literature on the Bamboo Ceiling, a puzzling phenomenon that remains understudied. Our research contributes to this literature by providing insights into both the scope and mechanisms of the Bamboo Ceiling. In terms of *scope*, we demonstrate that ethnic EAs—but not ethnic SAs—are less likely than other ethnicities to emerge as leaders in multiethnic environments. This finding contributes to cultural psychology by highlighting the importance of understanding cultural differences *within* the Asian ethnic umbrella. In terms of *mechanisms*, whereas past research has focused on EAs' low assertiveness as a mechanism for their low leadership attainment (Lu et al., 2020), we identify ethnic homophily as a social network mechanism. Moreover, we shed light on an important question: How can individuals emerge as leaders in multiethnic environments? By uncovering the negative link between ethnic homophily and leadership emergence, our studies suggest that bonding with people from different ethnic backgrounds is conducive to leadership emergence in multiethnic environments.

Study 1

As an initial test of our theoretical perspective, Study 1 analyzed a large survey of JD students (N = 54,620) from 124 U.S. law schools. We tested whether EAs are higher on ethnic homophily than non-EAs (Hypothesis 2).

Figure 1
Conceptual Model



Note. Ethnic homophily = focal mediator; Assertiveness = parallel mediator.

Method

We obtained privileged data access to the Law School Survey of Student Engagement (LSSSE), one of the largest surveys for law school students. Each year, LSSSE collaborates with U.S. law schools to invite their students to participate in the survey. Participation is voluntary and anonymous. We analyzed 4 consecutive years of LSSSE data, which involved 124 U.S. law schools in total.

Sample

To ensure data quality, we applied two exclusion criteria, which excluded about 2% of participants before data analysis. First, we excluded students who self-reported being younger than 21 years old (0.2%), because they were likely to be unrepresentative of the JD student population or might have misreported age. Second, because JD programs in U.S. law schools typically last 3 years, we excluded students who self-reported being in their fourth year of JD (1.8%). All results were robust without excluding this 2% of participants.

These exclusion criteria yielded a data set of 54,620 JD students (56% female; M_{age} = 27.50, SD = 6.29). Thirty-nine percent of the students were in their first year of law school, 32% second year, and 29% third year. One methodological strength of the LSSSE is its distinction between EAs and SAs. Of these students, 1,514 were EA, 895 SA, 40,388 White, 5,331 Black, 5,277 Latino, 467 Middle Eastern/Arab, 244 Native American, and the rest belonged to other categories. Thanks to its large sample size, the study enabled us to compare the ethnic homophily of these seven ethnic groups in the United States.

Ethnic Homophily

The LSSSE survey measured ethnic *heterophily* with an item from the Interactional Diversity Scale (Hu & Kuh, 2003; Loes et al., 2012; Pascarella et al., 2012). Specifically, each participant was asked how often he/she had serious conversations with students of a different ethnicity than his/her own (1 = never, 2 = sometimes, 3 = often, 4 = very often). We reverse coded the measure, such that higher scores indicate higher ethnic homophily. While this measure of ethnic heterophily has face validity, it is a single-item measure, so we were cautious in interpreting results.

Control Variables

To account for academic aptitude, we controlled for each student's score on the Law School Admission Test (LSAT), which is a prerequisite for U.S. law schools (LSAT score range: 120–180). Based on law school records, LSSSE provided LSAT scores in the following ordinal scale: 1 = 120–145; 2 = 146–150; 3 = 151–155; 4 = 156–160; 5 = 161–165; 6 = 166–170; 7 = 171–180.

Second, we controlled for whether a student was international or American. Notably, 96% of the students were American, so English proficiency was unlikely to be a confounding variable for any observed differences in ethnic homophily. Indeed, all results were robust when we limited the analyses to Americans only.

Moreover, we controlled for student age, gender, and class year (first, second, or third year). Finally, we controlled for school-level characteristics: (a) whether a law school was public (N = 53) or private (N = 71) and (b) school enrollment size (small = fewer

Table 1
Study 1: Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlations

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. East Asian (vs. South Asian)	0.63	0.48	—							
2. Ethnic homophily	2.14	0.94	.28	—						
3. LSAT score (1 = 120–145, 7 = 171–180)	3.23	1.40	.16	.01	—					
4. Age	27.50	6.29	.12	−.01	−.12	—				
5. Gender (1 = male, 0 = female)	0.44	0.50	.06	.00	.10	.07	—			
6. International (1 = yes, 0 = no)	0.04	0.20	.29	.03	.00	.03	−.02	—		
7. First-year student (1 = yes, 0 = no)	0.39	0.49	−.02	−.01	.01	−.10	−.02	−.00	—	
8. School type (1 = public, 0 = private)	0.39	0.49	.06	.01	.23	−.03	.03	−.02	−.01	—
9. Small-sized school (1 = yes, 0 = no)	0.43	0.50	−.10	.05	−.13	.02	.03	−.05	.00	.08

Note. LSAT = Law School Admission Test.

than 500 students, medium = 500–900 students, large = more than 900 students).

Results

Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations are displayed in Table 1. Because students were nested within 124 U.S. law schools, we conducted multilevel analyses to account for within-school statistical dependence.

Consistent with Hypothesis 2, EAs were the most ethnically homophilous of the seven ethnicities. As detailed in Table 2 Model 1, EAs ($M = 2.36$) were significantly more homophilous than SAs ($M = 1.78$, $B = .57$, $SE = .04$, $p < .001$), Blacks ($M = 2.06$, $B = .28$, $SE = .03$, $p < .001$), Latinos ($M = 2.00$, $B = .33$, $SE = .03$, $p < .001$), Middle Easterners ($M = 1.78$, $B = .54$, $SE = .05$, $p < .001$), Native Americans ($M = 2.00$, $B = .42$, $SE = .07$, $p < .001$), and Whites ($M = 2.17$, $B = .24$, $SE = .03$, $p < .001$). All results were robust after we accounted for the control variables (all ps $< .001$; Table 2 Models 2 and 3).

Robustness Checks

Thanks to the large sample size, we repeated the analyses (with controls) on different subsets of the data: EAs had significantly higher ethnic homophily than non-EAs when we examined (a) only first-year students, only second-year students, or only third-year students; (b) only the 53 public schools or only the 71 private schools; (c) only the 48 small-sized schools, only the 54 medium-sized schools, or only the 22 large-sized schools (all ps $< .05$).

Table 2
Study 1: Multilevel Linear Regressions Predicting Ethnic Homophily

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
Variable	*B*	*SE*	*B*	*SE*	*B*	*SE*
East Asian (reference category)						
South Asian	−0.568***	(0.039)	−0.533***	(0.040)	−0.534***	(0.040)
Black	−0.280***	(0.028)	−0.242***	(0.031)	−0.242***	(0.031)
Latino	−0.329***	(0.028)	−0.289***	(0.030)	−0.289***	(0.030)
Middle Eastern	−0.543***	(0.049)	−0.491***	(0.051)	−0.491***	(0.051)
Native American	−0.419***	(0.066)	−0.394***	(0.072)	−0.394***	(0.072)
White	−0.241***	(0.025)	−0.182***	(0.027)	−0.182***	(0.027)
LSAT score (1 = 120–145, 7 = 171–180)			−0.017***	(0.004)	−0.017***	(0.004)
Age (years)			−0.001	(0.001)	−0.001	(0.001)
Gender (1 = male, 0 = female)			−0.005	(0.009)	−0.005	(0.009)
International (1 = yes, 0 = no)			0.130***	(0.025)	0.131***	(0.025)
Class year: First (reference category)						
Class year: Second			0.0003	(0.010)	0.0002	(0.010)
Class year: Third			0.039***	(0.011)	0.038***	(0.011)
School type: Public (vs. private)					0.033	(0.029)
Enrollment size: <500 students (reference category)						
Enrollment size: 500–900 students					−0.045*	(0.023)
Enrollment size: >900 students					−0.038	(0.034)
AIC	139,308		124,682		124,699	
BIC	139,388		124,813		124,856	
Log likelihood	−69,645		−62,326		−62,331	

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients are displayed, with standard errors in parentheses. LSAT = Law School Admission Test; AIC = Akaike information criterion; BIC = Bayesian information criterion.
† $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

These converging results highlight the robustness of EAs' high ethnic homophily.

Discussion

Analyzing a survey of 54,620 students from 124 U.S. law schools, Study 1 provided initial evidence for EAs' high ethnic homophily. The large sample size and the robustness checks underscored this finding's reliability.

Study 2

Study 2 extended Study 1 in three ways. First, whereas Study 1 analyzed a large-scale survey, Study 2 used social network analysis as a complementary methodology. Whereas Study 1 used a survey measure of ethnic homophily, Study 2 used a well-established social network measure of ethnic homophily (point correlation coefficient). Second, Study 2 tested the generalizability of our theoretical perspective by examining another context: MBA students in a U.S. business school. Third, whereas Study 1 provided evidence for EAs' high ethnic homophily (Hypothesis 2), Study 2 tested our whole theoretical perspective: EAs are less likely than other ethnicities to emerge as leaders in a multiethnic environment because of higher ethnic homophily (Hypotheses 1–4).

The research design of Study 2 had notable methodological strengths. First, MBA students were assigned to different class sections by school; that is, they did not self-select into their class sections based on certain criteria (e.g., career interests). Second, all class sections started without designated leaders, which precluded the possibility of reverse causality, where being a leader subsequently influences one's friendship ties. Third, because the students just entered the MBA program, most of them did not have preexisting friendship ties with classmates. This setting enabled us to examine the natural processes of friendship formation and leadership emergence in a new multiethnic environment (i.e., high ecological validity). Fourth, all students participated in all surveys as a part of required MBA assignments, which precluded potential self-selection bias in survey participation. Fifth, our focal variables were assessed with different data sources at different time points (see Table 3), which both mitigated common source bias and established temporal precedence. In particular, as detailed in the Method section below, we followed the literature (Mollica et al., 2003) and computed ethnic homophily based on *outward* friend nominations (i.e., an individual's nominations of others as friends), while we operationalized leadership attainment as the number of *inward* leader nominations (i.e., others' nominations of the individual as leader); this methodological approach mitigates common source bias. Sixth, we measured assertiveness with peer ratings instead of self-ratings, precluding the possibility that EAs might rate themselves lower on assertiveness due to modesty. Finally, to rule out alternative explanations, we considered a host of potential confounds, including network centrality, English proficiency, international/American status, SES, personality, and demographics.

Method

Study 2 was conducted at a top U.S. business school. Each year, the school has two entering cohorts: One cohort enters in August and graduates after four semesters, whereas the other cohort enters in January and graduates after three semesters. The two cohorts are similar, though the January-entry cohort is smaller and more international.

Sample

Participants ($N = 202$) were a complete January-entry cohort of full-time MBA students (35.6% female; M_{age} at matriculation = 28.20, $SD = 2.85$; 60.4% international). Upon entering the MBA program, the students were divided into three class sections. Each section had about 70 students ($M = 67.33$, $SD = .58$), who took all core courses together.

Based on self-reported ethnicities, 15% of the students were EA, 10% SA, 47% White, 15% Latino, 2% Black, 4% Middle Eastern/Arab, and 7% multiethnic/other. Our analyses focused on EAs, SAs, Latinos, and Whites, because sample sizes of the other ethnic categories were too small (e.g., some class sections had only one Black student, so ethnic homophily could not be calculated for Blacks).

Leader Nominations (Outcome)

After an intensive 1-week MBA orientation, all students completed a confidential survey as part of a required core class. Each student was asked to nominate one to five classmates whom he/she

Table 3
Study 2: Research Design

Variable	Measurement	Source	When
Ethnicity	Self-reported	Required core-class survey	1 week after MBA started
Ethnic homophily	Computed based on outward nominations	Required core-class survey	1 week after MBA started
Assertiveness	Other-rated	Required peer evaluation	5 weeks after MBA started
Leader nominations	Other-nominated	Required core-class survey	1 week after MBA started
Eigenvector centrality	Computed	Required core-class survey	1 week after MBA started
Big Five personality	Self-rated	Required self-evaluation	2 weeks after MBA started
Age, gender, international/American status, socioeconomic status, marital status, child status	Self-reported	Required core-class survey	1 week after MBA started
Whether MBA was sponsored	School recorded	Career Management Center	Pre-MBA
Post-MBA employment country	School recorded	Career Management Center	4 months after graduation

Note. MBA = Master of Business Administration.

viewed as leaders in his/her class section (of about 70 students). By the time of the survey, the students were already well acquainted with classmates in their section. To facilitate leader nominations, we displayed the class section roster alphabetically along with each student's profile photo. We tallied the number of times a student was nominated as a leader.

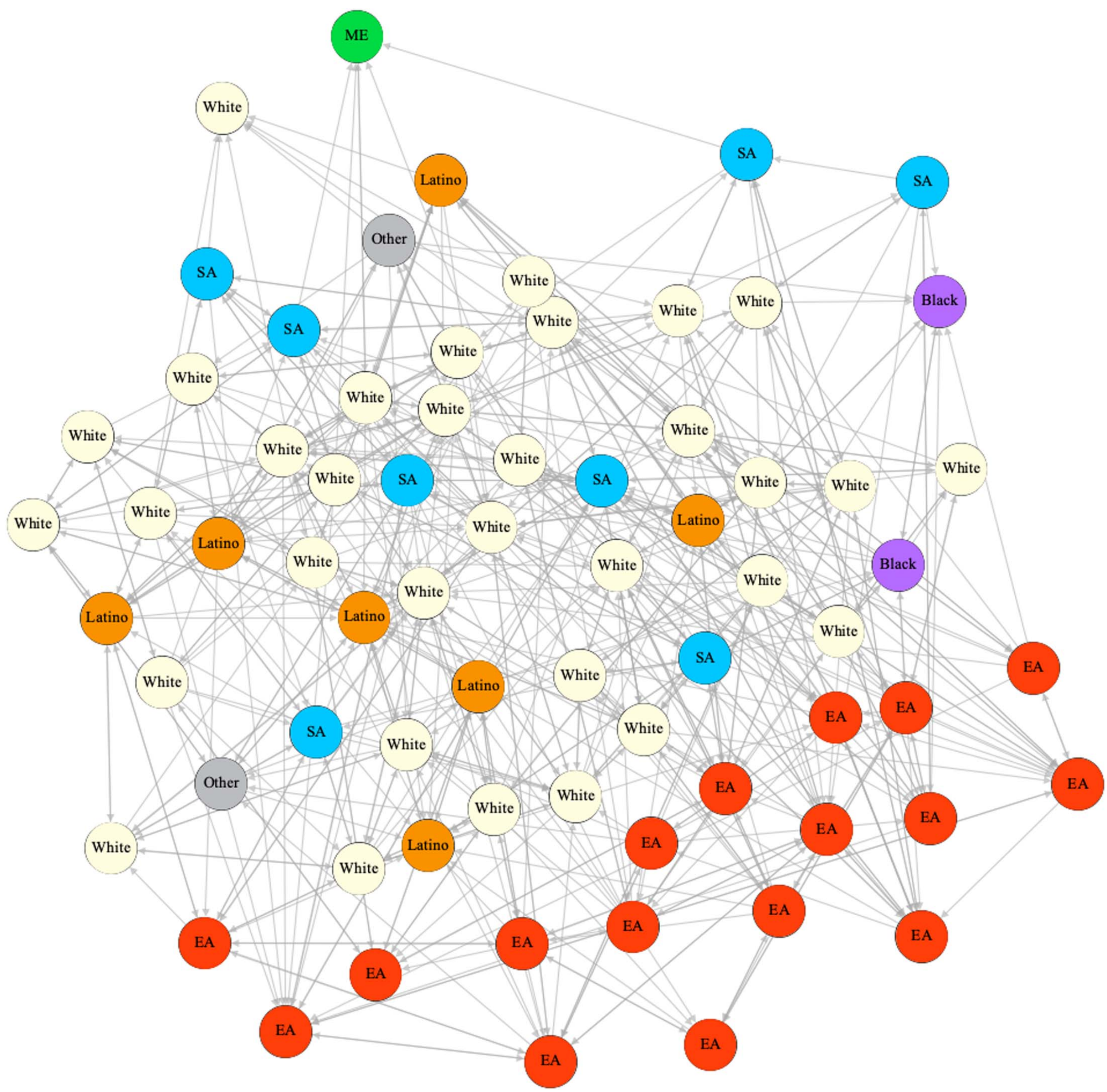
Friendship Network

Each student also responded to the following question: "Please indicate 1 to 10 individuals in your class section that you would say you are friends with at this time. List your closest friend first, followed by your next closest friend, etc. It is OK to list fewer than 10 people." Students selected their friends from 10 identical drop-down rosters (i.e., Choice #1, Choice #2, ... Choice #10). These questions enabled us to construct the entire friendship network of each class section. Figure 2 visualizes the friendship network of one class section.

Ethnic Homophily (Focal Mediator)

Following past studies (Ibarra, 1992; Mehra et al., 1998; Mollica et al., 2003), we calculated each person's ethnic homophily based on which classmates the person nominated as his/her friends

Figure 2
The Friendship Network of an MBA Class Section



Note. "EA" = East Asian; "SA" = South Asian; "ME" = Middle Easterner; MBA = Master of Business Administration. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

(i.e., outward friend nominations). The *point correlation coefficient* (Ibarra, 1992; Krackhardt, 1990; Lawrence & Shah, 2020; Mehra et al., 1998; Mollica et al., 2003), also known as the phi coefficient (Gaol et al., 2019), is a well-established measure of homophily:

$$\frac{ad - bc}{\sqrt{(a + c)(b + d)(a + b)(c + d)}},$$

where a is the number of same-ethnicity friends the person nominated, b is the number of cross-ethnicity friends the person nominated, c is the number of same-ethnicity friends the person could have nominated but did not, and d is the number of cross-ethnicity friends the person could have nominated but did not (Mollica et al., 2003, p. 128). Homophily scores range from −1 to +1, with positive values indicating homophily, negative values indicating heterophily, and zero indicating perfect neutrality (Lawrence & Shah, 2020).

Importantly, this formula "indicates the proportion of homophily that is beyond what would be expected if individuals were randomly paired in a given setting" (Mollica et al., 2003, p. 128). In other words, the formula accounts for the *availability* of ethnic ingroup and outgroup peers in a given class section. This is important because Whites were the majority, so there were naturally more Whites available to become friends with.

Assertiveness (Parallel Mediator)

About 5 weeks after the MBA program started, each student was rated anonymously by at least four classmates as part of a required peer evaluation. To measure assertiveness, we used the 3-item scale from Wallen et al. (2017): "X speaks up and shares his/her views when it is appropriate"; "X is willing to engage in constructive interpersonal confrontations"; "X is able to stand his/her ground in a heated conflict" (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*; α = .84). We computed each student's assertiveness by averaging across his/her classmates' ratings.

Control Variables

We collected a broad set of control variables to rule out alternative explanations.

Network Centrality. One alternative explanation is that EAs' low leadership emergence is actually driven by their low network centrality rather than by their high ethnic homophily. Indeed, prior research has found that individuals with higher centrality in a network are more likely to attain leadership (Neubert & Taggar, 2004). Whereas ethnic homophily captures an individual's preference for socializing with individuals of *the same ethnicity*, centrality captures an individual's *general* popularity (regardless of ethnicity). To rule out general popularity as an alternative explanation, we computed *eigenvector centrality*, which captures the extent to which an individual has many friends who themselves have many friends (Bonacich, 2007).

Eigenvector centrality scores range from 0 to 1, with higher scores indicating higher centrality. To compute eigenvector centrality for each student, we used function "eigen_centrality" in R package *igraph*. For each person, we computed three versions of eigenvector centrality based on (a) inward friend nominations, (b) outward friend nominations, and (c) reciprocal friend nominations, respectively. Following past studies on eigenvector centrality (Ballinger et al., 2016; Webster et al., 2016), we present analyses based on *inward* friend nominations; results were robust when we used *outward* or *reciprocal* friend nominations instead.

Number of Friend Nominations. We controlled for the *number* of friends one nominated because it could be a confounding variable associated with ethnicity or ethnic homophily (Gibbons & Olk, 2003). For example, individuals who selected fewer friends might be more ethnically homophilous. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) found no significant ethnic difference in the mean number of friend nominations ($F = .76$, $p = .52$).

English Proficiency. We controlled for English proficiency to rule out the possibility that EAs' high ethnic homophily and low leadership emergence are driven by low English proficiency. We procured scores of the Verbal section of the required MBA admission exams: the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) and the Graduate Record Examinations (GRE).[3] About 90% of students took the GMAT and about 10% took the GRE. To standardize across the two exams in different years, we followed the official GMAT and GRE websites to convert all scores to percentiles.

Post-MBA Employment Country. It is possible that EAs were more inclined to work outside the United States (e.g., in EA countries) after completing their MBA and thus more motivated to develop friendships with other EAs (rather than ethnic outgroup classmates). To rule out this possibility, we procured post-MBA employment information from the business school's Career Management Center. Following the guidelines of the MBA Career Services & Employer Alliance (www.mbacsea.org), the business school records the first post-MBA employment of each student 4 months after graduation. Analyses found that EAs and non-EAs did not differ significantly in their likelihood to work in the United States after earning their MBA ($\chi^2 = .09$, $p = .76$); this result suggests that post-MBA employment country was unlikely a confounding variable.

MBA Sponsorship. It is possible that EAs were more likely to be sponsored by organizations for their MBA degree and thus less motivated to network with ethnic outgroup classmates. To rule out this possibility, we procured MBA sponsorship data from the Career Management Center. EAs and non-EAs did not differ significantly in MBA sponsorship ($\chi^2 = .38$, $p = .54$), suggesting that it was unlikely a confounding variable.

Marital Status and Child Status. It is possible that EAs were more likely to have spouses or children and thus spend less time socializing with ethnic outgroup classmates. Of the 202 students, 6.4% had children. About 25.2% were married, 23.3% were in committed relationships, and 51.5% were single. EAs and non-EAs did not differ significantly in child status ($\chi^2 = .01$, $p = .93$) or marital status ($\chi^2 = .25$, $p = .62$), suggesting that they were unlikely confounding variables.

Socioeconomic Status. We controlled for SES because it could be a confounding variable associated with ethnicity, ethnic homophily, or leadership emergence (Lu et al., 2020). At the end of the social network survey, we measured SES with the widely used "ladder question" (Adler et al., 2000), which featured a drawing of a 10-rung ladder representing all of the people in the United States and

[3] Research found that for non-native English speakers who took both GRE Verbal and Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), the two scores were highly correlated at $r = .82$ (Pesta et al., 2019).

asked students to place themselves on the ladder in terms of SES (1 = lowest, 10 = highest).

Personality. We controlled for the Big Five personality traits (openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and emotional stability) because they could be confounding variables associated with ethnicity, ethnic homophily, or leadership emergence (Bendersky & Shah, 2013; Feiler & Kleinbaum, 2015; Judge et al., 2002). To assess the Big Five, we adopted the widely used Ten-Item Personality Inventory (Gosling et al., 2003; Lu, Liu, Liao, & Wang, 2020), which the students completed as part of a required self-evaluation (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*) 2 weeks after the MBA program started.[4]

Other Demographics. Finally, we controlled for age, gender, and whether a student was international.

Results

Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations are displayed in Table 4. Because students were nested within class sections, we conducted multilevel regressions to account for within-section statistical dependence.

East Asians → Higher Ethnic Homophily (Focal Mediator)

Consistent with prior research (McPherson et al., 2001), mean ethnic homophily was positive for all the four ethnicities ($M = .12$). This result indicates that each ethnicity exhibited homophily to some extent.

As detailed in Table 5 Model 1, consistent with Hypothesis 2, EAs ($M = .24$) were more homophilous than SAs ($M = .11$, $B = .13$, $SE = .05$, $p = .006$), Latinos ($M = .15$, $B = .09$, $SE = .04$, $p = .030$), and Whites ($M = .07$, $B = .17$, $SE = .03$, $p < .001$). By contrast, SAs did not differ significantly from Latinos ($B = -.03$, $SE = .05$, $p = .48$) or Whites ($B = .04$, $SE = .04$, $p = .24$). These results were substantively similar after we accounted for the control variables in multilevel linear regressions (Table 5 Models 2–4). As explained in the Method section, the measure of ethnic homophily (point correlation coefficient) already accounted for the ethnic groups' differential sizes in a given class section.

East Asians → Lower Assertiveness (Parallel Mediator)

Consistent with prior research (Lu et al., 2020), EAs ($M = 5.18$) were significantly less assertive than SAs ($M = 5.62$, $B = -.44$, $SE = .15$, $p = .003$), Latinos ($M = 5.72$, $B = -.54$, $SE = .14$, $p < .001$), and Whites ($M = 5.77$, $B = -.59$, $SE = .11$, $p < .001$). By contrast, SAs did not differ significantly from Latinos ($B = -.10$, $SE = .12$, $p = .42$) or Whites ($B = -.15$, $SE = .13$, $p = .26$). These results were robust after we accounted for the control variables.

East Asians → Lower Leadership Emergence

For the outcome variable of leader nominations, we conducted multilevel Poisson regressions because leader nomination was a positively skewed, count variable that took only nonnegative integer values. Consistent with Hypothesis 3, EAs ($M = .39$) were significantly less likely to be nominated as leaders than SAs ($M = 2.81$, $B = -1.97$, $SE = .32$, $p < .001$), Latinos ($M = 3.30$, $B = -2.14$, $SE = .31$, $p < .001$), and Whites ($M = 4.46$, $B = -2.45$, $SE = .29$, $p < .001$). These results were robust after we accounted for the control variables.

Ethnic Homophily → Lower Leadership Emergence

Consistent with Hypothesis 1, ethnic homophily negatively predicted leader nominations in a multilevel Poisson regression (Table 6 Model 1: $B = -2.50$, $SE = .26$, $p < .001$). This effect was robust (Table 6 Model 2: $B = -2.32$, $SE = .27$, $p < .001$) after we controlled for assertiveness, while assertiveness positively predicted leader nominations (Table 6 Model 2: $B = .98$, $SE = .09$, $p < .001$). The effects of ethnic homophily and assertiveness were both robust after we further accounted for the control variables, including eigenvector centrality, English proficiency, demographics, and personality (Table 6 Models 3 and 4).

Mediation Analyses

Consistent with Hypothesis 4, ethnic homophily significantly mediated the effect of ethnicity (1 = EA, 0 = SA/Latino/White) on leader nominations, indirect effect = −.82, bias-corrected bootstrapped 95% CI [−1.05, −.47]. Consistent with prior research (Lu et al., 2020), assertiveness also significantly mediated the effect of ethnicity (1 = EA, 0 = SA/Latino/White) on leader nominations, indirect effect = −1.29, bias-corrected bootstrapped 95% CI [−2.59, −.86].

Next, we conducted simultaneous mediation analysis with ethnic homophily and assertiveness as parallel mediators (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Both ethnic homophily (indirect effect = −.80, bias-corrected bootstrapped 95% CI [−2.73, −.04]) and assertiveness (indirect effect = −1.24, bias-corrected bootstrapped 95% CI [−2.65, −.47]) were significant mediators. These results suggest that ethnic homophily explained EAs' lower leadership emergence above and beyond assertiveness (Figure 3).

Discussion

By conducting social network analysis on three complete class sections of new MBA students, Study 2 supported our theoretical perspective. First, while all four ethnicities exhibited ethnic

[4] One potential limitation is that the Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI) uses only two items to measure each of the Big Five personality traits. Unfortunately, we were unable to use a longer personality scale because of survey length limit. Nevertheless, the TIPI had satisfactory psychometric properties in both Studies 2 and 3. Consider the case of extraversion. First, its two items ("extraverted, enthusiastic"; "reserved, quiet") were highly correlated ($r = -.70$, $p < .001$). Second, extraversion was positively correlated with assertiveness and leadership emergence, which is consistent with the literature (Bendersky & Shah, 2013; Judge et al., 2002). Third, extraversion was positively correlated with openness to experience, but not significantly correlated with agreeableness, conscientiousness, or emotional stability; meanwhile, conscientiousness was positively and significantly correlated with agreeableness and emotional stability. These results are consistent with the well-established "Big Two" pattern in the personality literature, where agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability represent a higher-order factor "Alpha," and extraversion and openness represent a higher-order factor "Beta" (DeYoung, 2006; Digman, 1997; Wei et al., 2017).

Table 4

Study 2: Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlations

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
1. East Asian (vs. non-East Asian)	0.18	0.38	—																		
2. Leader nominations received	3.43	6.73	−.21**	—																	
3. Ethnic homophily	0.12	0.18	.32**	−.20**	—																
4. Assertiveness	5.63	0.58	−.37**	.23**	−.15*	—															
5. Eigenvector centrality	0.67	0.24	−.07	.08	.15	.06	—														
6. Age	28.20	2.85	.21**	.12	.17*	−.12	.02	—													
7. Gender (1 = male, 0 = female)	0.64	0.48	−.19*	.12	−.05	.23**	.09	.07	—												
8. International (1 = yes, 0 = no)	0.60	0.49	.17*	−.22**	.23**	−.07	−.01	−.02	−.05	—											
9. GMAT/GRE Verbal percentile	87.27	10.55	−.14	.10	−.03	.19**	.04	−.08	.26**	−.14*	—										
10. Socioeconomic status	8.11	1.34	−.17*	.05	.00	.20**	−.02	−.06	.13	−.01	.22**	—									
11. Number of friend nominations	8.00	2.60	−.03	.08	.14	.06	.92**	.07	.13	.03	.06	.00	—								
12. Married (1 = yes, 0 = no)	0.25	0.44	−.04	.12	.06	.00	−.03	.36**	.03	−.04	−.07	.06	−.03	—							
13. Has children (1 = yes, 0 = no)	0.06	0.25	−.01	.01	.09	.02	.10	.34**	−.02	.01	.02	−.01	.08	.40**	—						
14. MBA sponsored (1 = yes, 0 = no)	0.24	0.43	−.05	−.01	.07	.19**	−.06	−.10	.09	.30**	−.07	.05	−.05	−.09	−.01	—					
15. Post-MBA job in U.S. (1 = yes, 0 = no)	0.58	0.50	−.02	.10	−.17*	.08	.04	.11	.00	−.62**	.07	.00	.01	.07	.06	−.48**	—				
16. Openness to experience	5.29	1.07	−.12	.19**	−.21**	.15*	.13	−.05	−.05	−.06	−.04	−.11	.12	−.12	−.05	.04	.02	—			
17. Conscientiousness	5.43	1.26	−.03	.02	−.03	−.17*	−.03	−.15*	−.13	−.15*	−.07	.05	−.06	.12	−.09	−.10	.09	−.07	—		
18. Extraversion	4.62	1.62	−.16*	.40**	−.14	.36**	.19**	−.02	−.15*	.05	−.01	−.02	.16*	.03	.02	.21**	−.03	.30**	−.06	—	
19. Agreeableness	5.14	1.13	.03	−.09	−.04	−.16*	−.06	.04	−.13	−.08	.01	.00	−.03	−.07	−.05	−.11	.07	−.04	.20**	.01	—
20. Emotional stability	5.09	1.23	.05	.01	.06	.09	.07	−.02	.12	−.08	.02	−.02	.07	.15*	.05	−.05	.10	.09	.26**	.06	.13

Note. "non-East Asian" = South Asian, Latino, and White. GMAT = Graduate Management Admission Test; GRE = Graduate Record Examinations; MBA = Master of Business Administration.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 5
Study 2: Multilevel Linear Regressions Predicting Ethnic Homophily

Variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	B	*SE*	*B*	*SE*	*B*	*SE*	*B*	*SE*
East Asian (reference category)								
South Asian	−0.128**	(0.046)	−0.132**	(0.047)	−0.143**	(0.051)	−0.111*	(0.051)
Latino	−0.091*	(0.042)	−0.088*	(0.042)	−0.085†	(0.045)	−0.074†	(0.044)
White	−0.174***	(0.034)	−0.150***	(0.038)	−0.160***	(0.040)	−0.137***	(0.039)
Assertiveness			−0.012	(0.023)	−0.014	(0.025)	0.008	(0.026)
Age (years)			0.005	(0.004)	0.004	(0.005)	0.005	(0.005)
Gender (1 = male, 0 = female)			0.001	(0.027)	−0.007	(0.028)	−0.036	(0.029)
International (1 = yes, 0 = no)			0.054*	(0.026)	0.017	(0.034)	0.016	(0.034)
GMAT/GRE Verbal percentile			0.001	(0.001)	0.001	(0.001)	0.001	(0.001)
Socioeconomic status			0.009	(0.010)	0.008	(0.010)	0.001	(0.010)
Number of friend nominations			0.012*	(0.005)	0.013*	(0.005)	0.017**	(0.005)
Married (1 = yes, 0 = no)					0.015	(0.034)	−0.002	(0.034)
Has children (1 = yes, 0 = no)					0.006	(0.056)	0.005	(0.055)
MBA sponsored (1 = yes, 0 = no)					0.026	(0.036)	0.033	(0.035)
Post-MBA job in U.S. (1 = yes, 0 = no)					−0.027	(0.036)	−0.030	(0.035)
Openness to experience							−0.027*	(0.012)
Conscientiousness							0.002	(0.011)
Extraversion							−0.016†	(0.009)
Agreeableness							−0.017	(0.012)
Emotional stability							0.014	(0.011)
AIC	−121		−119		−102		−104	
BIC	−102		−78		−49		−36	
Log likelihood	66		73		68		74	

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients are displayed, with standard errors in parentheses. GMAT = Graduate Management Admission Test; GRE = Graduate Record Examinations; MBA = Master of Business Administration; AIC = Akaike information criterion; BIC = Bayesian information criterion.
† $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

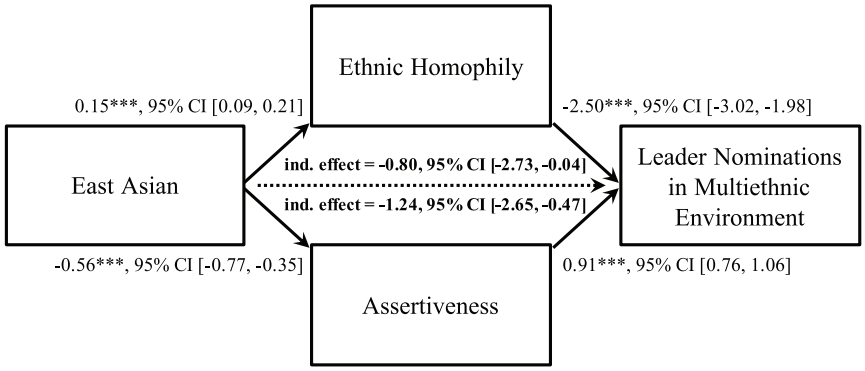
homophily, EAs were significantly more ethnically homophilous than SAs, Latinos, and Whites; this effect was robust to a host of control variables (e.g., network centrality, English proficiency, SES, personality). Second, consistent with recent research (Lu et al., 2020), EAs were significantly less assertive than SAs, Latinos, and Whites. Third, ethnic homophily partly explained why EAs (but not SAs) were less likely to be nominated as leaders—above and beyond the mechanism of assertiveness. Together, these

Table 6
Study 2: Multilevel Poisson Regressions Predicting Leader Nominations Received

Variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	B	*SE*	*B*	*SE*	*B*	*SE*	*B*	*SE*
Ethnic homophily	−2.499***	(0.264)	−2.318***	(0.275)	−2.206***	(0.279)	−0.807**	(0.291)
Assertiveness			0.984***	(0.088)	0.842***	(0.094)	0.406***	(0.100)
Eigenvector centrality					1.164***	(0.232)	−0.403†	(0.234)
Age (years)					0.104***	(0.013)	0.071***	(0.014)
Gender (1 = male, 0 = female)					0.381***	(0.113)	0.716***	(0.118)
International (1 = yes, 0 = no)					−0.601***	(0.088)	−0.852***	(0.093)
GMAT/GRE Verbal percentile					0.014**	(0.005)	0.008	(0.006)
Socioeconomic status					0.001	(0.038)	0.106*	(0.044)
Openness to experience							0.305***	(0.053)
Conscientiousness							0.197***	(0.042)
Extraversion							0.559***	(0.038)
Agreeableness							−0.156***	(0.047)
Emotional stability							0.045	(0.040)
AIC	1,583		1,446		1,265		916	
BIC	1,592		1,458		1,296		964	
Log likelihood	−788		−719		−622		−443	

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients are displayed, with standard errors in parentheses. GMAT = Graduate Management Admission Test; GRE = Graduate Record Examinations; AIC = Akaike information criterion; BIC = Bayesian information criterion.
† $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure 3
Study 2: Simultaneous Mediation Analysis for Leader Nominations



findings suggest that high ethnic homophily and low assertiveness both account for EAs' disadvantage in leadership emergence.

Study 3

Study 3 extended Study 2 in three ways. First, Study 3 examined a sample twice as large to ascertain the replicability of Study 2's findings. Second, whereas Study 2 measured leader *nominations*, Study 3 also measured whether a person was actually elected as a class-section leader. This is a consequential outcome because many MBAs list their leadership positions on résumés and LinkedIn profiles, as many employers favor students with such leadership experiences. Third, the leader election outcome was measured 1 year after we measured ethnic homophily; this time-lagged design established temporal precedence.

Method

Sample

Participants ($N = 560$) were a complete August-entry cohort of full-time MBA students of the same business school (40.0% female; M_{age} at matriculation = 27.97, $SD = 2.48$; 41.3% international). As in Study 2, the students were divided into class sections of about 70 students ($M = 70.00$, $SD = 1.60$) upon entering the MBA program. Whereas Study 2 involved three class sections, Study 3 involved eight class sections.

Based on self-reported ethnicities, 21% of the students were EA, 7% SA, 51% White, 9% Latino, 4% Black, 3% Middle Eastern/Arab, and 5% multiethnic/other. As in Study 2, our analyses focused on EAs, SAs, Latinos, and Whites, because sample sizes of the other ethnic categories were too small.

Leader Nominations

As in Study 2, after an intensive 1-week MBA orientation, all students completed a confidential survey as part of a required core class. Each student was asked to nominate one to five classmates whom he/she viewed as leaders. To facilitate leader nominations, we displayed the class section roster alphabetically along with each student's profile photo.

Leader Election (1 Year Later)

In addition to leader nominations, we also obtained data from the Office of Student Affairs on whether a student was elected as a class-section leader 1 year later (1 = yes, 0 = no). At the beginning of Year 2 of the MBA program, each class section held a competitive election for its leadership positions (e.g., class-section chair, social chair, academic chair, career chair). The MBA program values student governance, so these leaders are responsible for class-section activities. The elected leaders facilitate class-section unity, manage class-section funds ($4,000), act as liaisons to the administration and faculty, and serve as leaders during graduation events, in addition to handling other responsibilities. Because class-section leaders have a large impact on peers who vote for them, these elections carry high stakes.

Mediators and Control Variables

Ethnic homophily (focal mediator), assertiveness (parallel mediator), and control variables (eigenvector centrality, number of friend nominations, English proficiency, post-MBA employment country, MBA sponsorship, marital status, child status, SES, the Big Five personality traits, international/American status, age, gender) were measured in the same way as in Study 2. As detailed in Table 7, these variables were assessed with different data sources at different time points, which mitigated common source bias and established temporal precedence.

Results

Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations are displayed in Table 8. Because MBA students were nested within class sections, we conducted multilevel regressions to account for within-section statistical dependence.

East Asians → Higher Ethnic Homophily (Focal Mediator)

As detailed in Table 9 Model 1, consistent with Hypothesis 2 and Study 2, EAs ($M = .20$) were significantly more ethnically homophilous than SAs ($M = .12$, $B = .08$, $SE = .03$, $p = .005$), Latinos ($M = .14$, $B = .06$, $SE = .03$, $p = .018$), and Whites ($M = .06$,

Table 7
Study 3: Research Design

Variable	Measurement	Source	When
Ethnicity	Self-reported	Required core-class survey	1 week after MBA started
Ethnic homophily	Computed based on outward nominations	Required core-class survey	1 week after MBA started
Assertiveness	Other-rated	Required peer evaluation	5 weeks after MBA started
Leader nominations	Other-nominated	Required core-class survey	1 week after MBA started
Whether elected as leader	School recorded	Office of Student Affairs	1 year after MBA started
Eigenvector centrality	Computed	Required core-class survey	1 week after MBA started
Big Five personality	Self-rated	Required self-evaluation	2 weeks after MBA started
Age, gender, international/American status, socioeconomic status, marital status, child status	Self-reported	Required core-class survey	1 week after MBA started
Whether MBA was sponsored	School recorded	Career Management Center	Pre-MBA
Post-MBA employment country	School recorded	Career Management Center	4 months after graduation

Note. MBA = Master of Business Administration.

$B = .14$, $SE = .02$, $p < .001$). These results were robust after we accounted for the control variables in multilevel linear regressions (Table 9 Models 2–4).

East Asians → Lower Assertiveness (Parallel Mediator)

Consistent with Study 2, EAs ($M = 5.33$) were significantly less assertive than SAs ($M = 5.62$, $B = -.29$, $SE = .10$, $p = .003$), Latinos ($M = 5.79$, $B = -.45$, $SE = .09$, $p < .001$), and Whites ($M = 5.72$, $B = -.39$, $SE = .06$, $p < .001$). These results were robust after we accounted for the control variables.

East Asians → Lower Leadership Emergence

For the outcome variable of leader nominations, we conducted multilevel Poisson regressions because leader nomination was a positively skewed, count variable that took only nonnegative integer values. Consistent with Hypothesis 3 and Study 2, EAs ($M = .85$) were significantly less likely to be nominated as leaders than SAs ($M = 4.87$, $B = -1.74$, $SE = .12$, $p < .001$), Latinos ($M = 3.39$, $B = -1.39$, $SE = .13$, $p < .001$), and Whites ($M = 4.09$, $B = -1.60$, $SE = .10$, $p < .001$). These results were robust after we accounted for the control variables.

In further support of Hypothesis 3, EAs (8.5%) were less likely than SAs (25.6%; $\chi^2 = 7.65$, $p = .006$), Latinos (20.4%; $\chi^2 = 4.58$, $p = .032$), and Whites (16.7%; $\chi^2 = 4.52$, $p = .033$) to be elected as class-section leaders. These results were substantively similar in multilevel logistic regressions that accounted for the control variables.

Ethnic Homophily → Lower Leadership Emergence

Consistent with Hypothesis 1 and Study 2, ethnic homophily negatively predicted leader nominations in a multilevel Poisson regression (Table 10 Model 1: $B = -2.21$, $SE = .16$, $p < .001$). This effect was robust (Table 10 Model 2: $B = -2.15$, $SE = .17$, $p < .001$) after we controlled for assertiveness, while assertiveness positively predicted leader nominations (Table 10 Model 2: $B = 1.00$, $SE = .06$, $p < .001$). The effects of ethnic homophily and assertiveness were both robust after we further accounted for the control variables, including eigenvector centrality, English proficiency, demographics, and personality (Table 10 Models 3 and 4).

In further support of Hypothesis 1, ethnic homophily negatively predicted leader election in a multilevel logistic regression (Table 11 Model 1: $B = -2.77$, $SE = .83$, *Wald* $z = -3.34$, $p < .001$). This effect was robust (Table 11 Model 2: $B = -2.63$, $SE = .86$, *Wald* $z = -3.07$, $p = .002$) after we controlled for assertiveness, while assertiveness positively predicted leader election (Table 11 Model 2: $B = .71$, $SE = .26$, *Wald* $z = 2.70$, $p = .007$). The effects of ethnic homophily and assertiveness were robust after we further accounted for the control variables (Table 11 Models 3 and 4).

Mediation Analyses

Consistent with Hypothesis 4 and Study 2, ethnic homophily significantly mediated the effect of ethnicity (1 = EA, 0 = SA/Latino/White) on leader nominations, indirect effect = −.54, bias-corrected bootstrapped 95% CI [−.98, −.19]. Consistent with Study 2, assertiveness also significantly mediated the effect of ethnicity (1 = EA, 0 = SA/Latino/White) on leader nominations, indirect effect = −.77, bias-corrected bootstrapped 95% CI [−1.14, −.39].

Next, we conducted simultaneous mediation analysis with ethnic homophily and assertiveness as parallel mediators (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Consistent with Study 2, both ethnic homophily (indirect effect = −.54, bias-corrected bootstrapped 95% CI [−1.04, −.20]) and assertiveness (indirect effect = −.77, bias-corrected bootstrapped 95% CI [−1.29, −.43]) were significant mediators (Figure 4).

In further support of Hypothesis 4, ethnic homophily significantly mediated the effect of ethnicity (1 = EA, 0 = SA/Latino/White) on leader election, indirect effect = −.04, bias-corrected bootstrapped 95% CI [−.05, −.02]. Assertiveness also significantly mediated the effect of ethnicity (1 = EA, 0 = SA/Latino/White) on leader election, indirect effect = −.03, bias-corrected bootstrapped 95% CI [−.04, −.02].

Next, we conducted simultaneous mediation analysis with ethnic homophily and assertiveness as parallel mediators (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Both ethnic homophily (indirect effect = −.03, bias-corrected bootstrapped 95% CI [−.06, −.01]) and assertiveness (indirect effect = −.03, bias-corrected bootstrapped 95% CI [−.05, −.01]) were significant mediators (Figure 5).

Table 8

Study 3: Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlations

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
1. East Asian (vs. non-East Asian)	0.24	0.43	—																			
2. Leader nominations received	3.65	7.90	−.19**	—																		
3. Elected as leader (1 = yes, 0 = no)	0.16	0.36	−.11*	.29**	—																	
4. Ethnic homophily	0.10	0.17	.32**	−.15**	−.15**	—																
5. Assertiveness	5.63	0.56	−.30**	.21**	.16**	−.13**	—															
6. Eigenvector centrality	0.65	0.25	−.04	.12**	.12**	−.05	.05	—														
7. Age	27.97	2.48	.14**	.05	.00	.11*	−.05	−.03	—													
8. Gender (1 = male, 0 = female)	0.60	0.49	−.10*	.02	−.01	.04	.05	.13**	.17**	—												
9. International (1 = yes, 0 = no)	0.41	0.49	.29**	−.15**	−.07	.22**	−.12**	−.05	.12**	.05	—											
10. GMAT/GRE Verbal percentile	90.56	8.80	−.18**	−.02	.01	−.14**	.04	.01	−.16**	.05	−.22**	—										
11. Socioeconomic status	8.23	1.40	−.18**	−.08	.00	−.03	.08	.00	−.14**	.12**	−.13**	.17**	—									
12. Number of friend nominations	8.17	2.64	.03	.11**	.13**	−.02	.02	.89**	.00	.14**	.01	.02	.01	—								
13. Married (1 = yes, 0 = no)	0.21	0.41	.08	.06	.04	.06	.02	.01	.31**	.11*	.13**	−.13**	−.03	.03	—							
14. Has children (1 = yes, 0 = no)	0.04	0.19	.08	.05	.02	−.01	.06	−.01	.27**	.08	.07	−.01	−.13**	−.01	.35**	—						
15. MBA sponsored (1 = yes, 0 = no)	0.07	0.25	−.03	.03	.08	−.09	.03	.01	−.05	.09*	.16**	−.03	−.06	.00	.02	.06	—					
16. Post-MBA job in U.S. (1 = yes, 0 = no)	0.80	0.40	−.26**	.07	−.01	−.11*	.10*	.04	−.10*	−.05	−.52**	.14**	.04	−.03	−.02	−.08	−.24**	—				
17. Openness to experience	5.21	1.12	−.13**	.09*	.02	−.13**	.05	−.02	.05	−.07	.07	−.08	.04	−.02	−.06	−.04	−.01	.02	—			
18. Conscientiousness	5.65	1.08	−.10*	.01	.00	−.02	−.05	−.04	−.01	−.14**	.01	−.05	−.09*	−.06	−.06	−.03	−.03	.11**	.08	—		
19. Extraversion	4.64	1.59	−.17**	.31**	.18**	−.09	.26**	.23**	−.01	−.04	−.01	−.08	.02	.20**	.03	−.04	.00	.09*	.27**	.02	—	
20. Agreeableness	5.03	1.16	.06	.08	.05	−.10*	−.22**	−.12**	−.05	−.24**	−.07	−.07	−.04	−.10*	.01	−.03	−.04	.06	.14**	.12**	.06	—
21. Emotional stability	5.03	1.28	−.03	.02	.04	−.02	.03	.05	.04	.20**	.01	−.07	.03	.05	.09*	.03	.08	.09*	.12**	.13**	.02	.13**

Note. "non-East Asian" = South Asian, Latino, and White. GMAT = Graduate Management Admission Test; GRE = Graduate Record Examinations; MBA = Master of Business Administration.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 9
Study 3: Multilevel Linear Regressions Predicting Ethnic Homophily

Variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	B	*SE*	*B*	*SE*	*B*	*SE*	*B*	*SE*
East Asian (reference category)								
South Asian	−0.084**	(0.030)	−0.068*	(0.030)	−0.076*	(0.030)	−0.061*	(0.030)
Latino	−0.065*	(0.027)	−0.070*	(0.028)	−0.073*	(0.029)	−0.073*	(0.029)
White	−0.145***	(0.018)	−0.125***	(0.020)	−0.127***	(0.020)	−0.125***	(0.021)
Assertiveness			−0.013	(0.014)	−0.012	(0.014)	−0.019	(0.014)
Age (years)			0.003	(0.003)	0.002	(0.004)	0.003	(0.004)
Gender (1 = male, 0 = female)			0.022	(0.016)	0.026†	(0.016)	0.014	(0.017)
International (1 = yes, 0 = no)			0.023	(0.017)	0.032	(0.019)	0.032	(0.019)
GMAT/GRE Verbal percentile			−0.002†	(0.001)	−0.002†	(0.001)	−0.002*	(0.001)
Socioeconomic status			0.007	(0.006)	0.006	(0.006)	0.008	(0.006)
Number of friend nominations			−0.002	(0.003)	−0.002	(0.003)	−0.002	(0.003)
Married (1 = yes, 0 = no)					0.009	(0.020)	0.009	(0.020)
Has children (1 = yes, 0 = no)					−0.031	(0.045)	−0.038	(0.044)
MBA sponsored (1 = yes, 0 = no)					−0.058†	(0.031)	−0.054†	(0.030)
Post-MBA job in U.S. (1 = yes, 0 = no)					0.016	(0.022)	0.019	(0.022)
Openness to experience							−0.016*	(0.007)
Conscientiousness							0.003	(0.007)
Extraversion							0.001	(0.005)
Agreeableness							−0.017*	(0.007)
Emotional stability							−0.001	(0.006)
AIC	−385		−373		−368		−371	
BIC	−359		−319		−297		−279	
Log likelihood	198		200		201		207	

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients are displayed, with standard errors in parentheses. GMAT = Graduate Management Admission Test; GRE = Graduate Record Examinations; MBA = Master of Business Administration; AIC = Akaike information criterion; BIC = Bayesian information criterion.
† $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Discussion

Supporting our theoretical perspective, Study 3 replicated and extended Study 2's findings by examining another eight class sections of MBA students. EAs were less likely than SAs, Latinos, and Whites to be (a) nominated as leaders and (b) elected as leaders. EAs' high ethnic homophily partly explained EAs' low leadership emergence—above and beyond the mechanism of assertiveness.

Table 10
Study 3: Multilevel Poisson Regressions Predicting Leader Nominations Received

Variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	B	*SE*	*B*	*SE*	*B*	*SE*	*B*	*SE*
Ethnic homophily	−2.210***	(0.164)	−2.147***	(0.172)	−2.031***	(0.181)	−1.749***	(0.185)
Assertiveness			0.998***	(0.057)	1.059***	(0.061)	0.884***	(0.063)
Eigenvector centrality					0.935***	(0.135)	0.309*	(0.135)
Age (years)					0.077***	(0.011)	0.064***	(0.012)
Gender (1 = male, 0 = female)					−0.234***	(0.055)	−0.028	(0.060)
International (1 = yes, 0 = no)					−0.438***	(0.059)	−0.425***	(0.061)
GMAT/GRE Verbal percentile					−0.001	(0.004)	0.006	(0.004)
Socioeconomic status					−0.080***	(0.019)	−0.065**	(0.021)
Openness to experience							0.013	(0.026)
Conscientiousness							0.138***	(0.027)
Extraversion							0.464***	(0.022)
Agreeableness							0.179***	(0.025)
Emotional stability							−0.011	(0.022)
AIC	4,859		4,472		4,059		3,375	
BIC	4,872		4,489		4,101		3,438	
Log likelihood	−2,427		−2,232		−2020		−1,673	

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients are displayed, with standard errors in parentheses. GMAT = Graduate Management Admission Test; GRE = Graduate Record Examinations; AIC = Akaike information criterion; BIC = Bayesian information criterion.
† $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 11
Study 3: Multilevel Logistic Regressions Predicting Whether a Student Was Elected as a Class-Section Leader

Variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	B	*SE*	*B*	*SE*	*B*	*SE*	*B*	*SE*
Ethnic homophily	−2.769***	(0.830)	−2.627**	(0.856)	−2.549**	(0.881)	−2.432**	(0.906)
Assertiveness			0.707**	(0.262)	0.683*	(0.270)	0.624*	(0.292)
Eigenvector centrality					1.366*	(0.625)	1.142†	(0.639)
Age (years)					0.095†	(0.058)	0.106†	(0.061)
Gender (1 = male, 0 = female)					−0.291	(0.275)	−0.243	(0.299)
International (1 = yes, 0 = no)					−0.040	(0.282)	−0.022	(0.289)
GMAT/GRE Verbal percentile					0.022	(0.020)	0.027	(0.020)
Socioeconomic status					0.032	(0.100)	0.024	(0.107)
Openness to experience							−0.104	(0.129)
Conscientiousness							−0.058	(0.128)
Extraversion							0.251**	(0.097)
Agreeableness							0.178	(0.125)
Emotional stability							0.115	(0.110)
AIC	421		413		411		409	
BIC	433		430		453		472	
Log likelihood	−207		−203		−196		−190	

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients are displayed, with standard errors in parentheses. GMAT = Graduate Management Admission Test; GRE = Graduate Record Examinations; AIC = Akaike information criterion; BIC = Bayesian information criterion.
† $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Further Evidence for the Ethnic Homophily Perspective on the Bamboo Ceiling

The Hypothesized Effects Exist for Both Internationals and Americans

We conducted further analyses to examine whether the hypothesized effects existed for both (a) international students and (b) American students. To maximize statistical power, we combined samples from Studies 2 and 3.

Internationals

In support of Hypothesis 2, EA internationals were significantly higher on ethnic homophily than SA, Latino, and White internationals (without controls: $B = .15$, $SE = .02$, $p < .001$; with controls: $B = .13$, $SE = .02$, $p < .001$). In support of Hypothesis 3, EA internationals were significantly less likely to be nominated as leaders than non-EA internationals (without controls: $B = -1.73$, $SE = .14$, $p < .001$; with controls: $B = -1.36$, $SE = .15$, $p < .001$). In support of Hypothesis 4, ethnic homophily significantly mediated the effect of ethnicity (1 = EA international, 0 = SA/Latino/White international) on leader nominations, indirect effect = −.62, bias-corrected bootstrapped 95% CI [−1.26, −.18].

Americans

In support of Hypothesis 2, EA Americans were significantly higher on ethnic homophily than SA, Latino, and White Americans (without controls: $B = .06$, $SE = .02$, $p = .013$; with controls: $B = .05$, $SE = .02$, $p = .041$). In support of Hypothesis 3, EA Americans were significantly less likely to be nominated as leaders than non-EA Americans (without controls: $B = -1.37$, $SE = .14$, $p < .001$; with controls: $B = -.71$, $SE = .15$, $p < .001$). In support of Hypothesis 4, ethnic homophily significantly mediated the effect of ethnicity (1 = EA American, 0 = SA/Latino/White American)

Figure 4
Study 3: Simultaneous Mediation Analysis for Leader Nominations

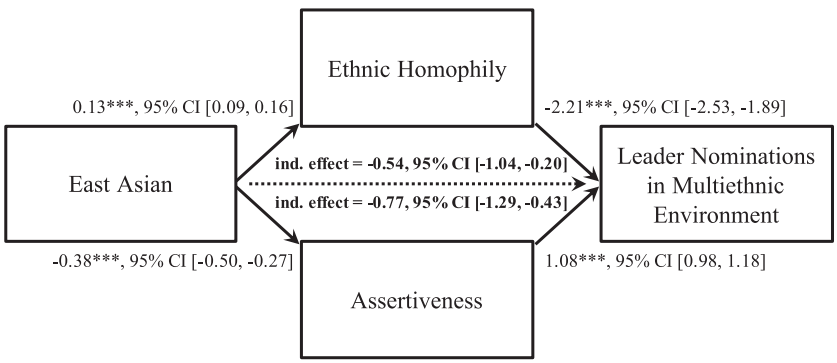
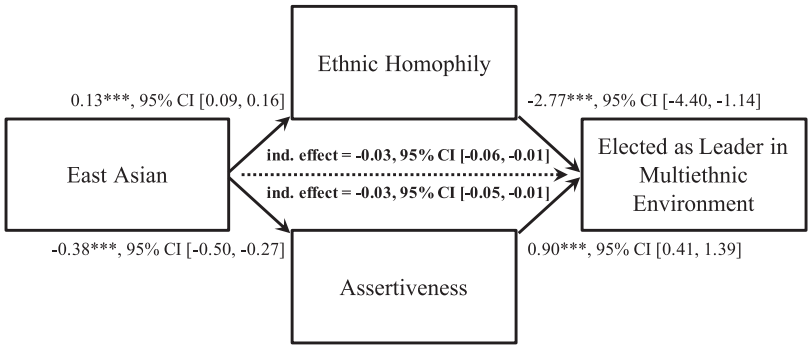


Figure 5
Study 3: Simultaneous Mediation Analysis for Leader Election



on leader nominations, indirect effect = −.25, bias-corrected bootstrapped 95% CI [−.77, −.03].

Together, these results suggest that our theoretical perspective applies to *both* EA internationals and EA Americans: Both were more homophilous than their non-EA counterparts and thus less likely to emerge as leaders in multiethnic environments.

Notably, there was also a significant interaction between EA/non-EA and international/American status on ethnic homophily, such that EA internationals were especially homophilous (without controls: $B = .09$, $SE = .03$, $p = .004$; with controls: $B = .09$, $SE = .03$, $p = .009$). This result points to the acculturation of EA Americans but also indicates that acculturation may not be sufficiently strong. Although EA Americans are native English speakers raised in the United States, their cultural upbringings can still predispose them to high ethnic homophily and thus disadvantage them in leadership emergence.

Ethnic Homophily Negatively Predicts Leader Nominations for *Each* Ethnic Group

We also tested whether ethnic homophily negatively predicted leadership emergence for *each* of the four ethnicities. To maximize statistical power, we combined samples from Studies 2 and 3.

In further support of Hypothesis 1, ethnic homophily negatively predicted leader nominations for *each* of the four ethnicities (with controls): EAs ($B = -3.36$, $SE = .83$, $p < .001$), SAs ($B = -3.24$, $SE = .75$, $p < .001$), Latinos ($B = -5.10$, $SE = .66$, $p < .001$), and Whites ($B = -.57$, $SE = .21$, $p = .008$). That is, *among* EAs, the more ethnically heterophilous EAs were more likely to emerge as leaders. Even among Whites (ethnic majority), the more ethnically heterophilous Whites were more likely to emerge as leaders. Together, these results further demonstrate that, regardless of one's ethnicity, bonding with individuals from other ethnic backgrounds is conducive to leadership emergence in multiethnic environments.

General Discussion

The three studies supported our ethnic homophily perspective on the Bamboo Ceiling phenomenon. Analyzing a large survey of 54,620 JD students from 124 U.S. law schools, Study 1 found that EAs displayed higher ethnic homophily than all other ethnicities (SAs, Whites, Blacks, Latinos, Middle Easterners, and Native Americans). Using social network analysis, Studies 2 and 3 again found that, compared to SAs, Latinos, and Whites, EAs exhibited higher ethnic homophily, which mediated EAs' lower leadership emergence in a U.S. business school. Consistent with recent research (Lu et al., 2020), EAs were also lower on assertiveness, which independently mediated their low leadership emergence. Simultaneous mediation analyses found that high ethnic homophily and low assertiveness both accounted for EAs' disadvantage in leadership emergence. These findings were reliable (a) for both EA internationals and EA Americans, (b) across both survey and network measures of ethnic homophily, (c) whether we assessed leadership emergence with leader nominations or leader election, and (d) after we accounted for a host of control variables (e.g., network centrality, English proficiency, personality, demographics).

Theoretical Contributions

The present research offers three major theoretical contributions. First, we contribute to cultural psychology by advancing the nascent literature on the Bamboo Ceiling phenomenon. Whereas a wealth of research has examined the Glass Ceiling phenomenon for women (Morrison et al., 1987), limited research has examined the Bamboo Ceiling phenomenon. Our research extends this literature by providing insights into both the scope and mechanisms of the Bamboo Ceiling phenomenon. In terms of *scope*, we found that ethnic EAs—but not ethnic SAs—were less likely than other ethnicities to emerge as leaders in multiethnic environments. This finding suggests that the Bamboo Ceiling is not an issue for all Asians, but a cultural issue unique to EAs. By culturally distinguishing between EAs and SAs, the current research moves beyond the predominant West-vs-East paradigm (Gelfand & Denison, 2020; San Martin et al., 2018) and highlights the importance of examining differences *within* the Asian ethnic umbrella. Future research should theoretically and empirically distinguish among Asian subgroups where possible (e.g., when collecting demographic information and conducting analyses). In terms of *mechanisms*, we revealed a theoretically novel explanation for the Bamboo Ceiling phenomenon. Whereas past research has focused on EAs' low assertiveness as a mechanism for their disadvantage in leadership emergence (Lu et al., 2020), we uncovered ethnic homophily as another mechanism above and beyond assertiveness. That is, EAs are less likely to emerge as

leaders partly because their ethnic homophily is culturally incongruent with the ethnically heterophilous leader suited to multiethnic environments. Importantly, the Bamboo Ceiling occurred for *both* EA internationals and EA Americans: Both were more homophilous than their non-EA counterparts and thus less likely to emerge as leaders in multiethnic environments.

Second, we contribute to the leadership literature by advancing a social network perspective on leadership emergence in multiethnic environments. Whereas much research has examined how social network influences leadership *effectiveness*, less research has examined how social network influences leadership *emergence* (Lu, 2018), especially in multiethnic environments (see Carter et al., 2015, for a review). Our network studies consistently found a negative link between ethnic homophily and leadership emergence for *each* of the ethnicities—that is, not only for EAs, but also for SAs, Latinos, and Whites. Regardless of ethnicity, ethnically heterophilous individuals were more likely to emerge as leaders in multiethnic environments. These results suggest that bonding with people from different ethnic backgrounds is conducive to leadership emergence in multiethnic environments, which are increasingly common in the contemporary society.

Third, we contribute to the literature on ethnic homophily. Whereas past studies have mostly compared the ethnic homophily of Whites versus non-Whites (Mollica et al., 2003), we provided a more comprehensive and nuanced comparison among different ethnic groups. By contrasting the ethnic homophily of EAs and other ethnicities, we highlight the role of culture in shaping social network dynamics. Drawing on cultural differences in communication style, ethnic heterogeneity, and relational mobility, we theorized why EAs may be more ethnically homophilous than other ethnicities. We not only revealed cultural differences in ethnic homophily but also demonstrated how they translate into differences in leadership attainment—an important consequence. In doing so, we extend the literature on the double-edged nature of ethnic homophily: While same-ethnicity ties can provide social support (Ibarra, 1993; James, 2000), they can also impede individuals' leadership emergence in multiethnic environments. By examining the sociological construct of homophily, we respond to the call to integrate social network analysis into psychology (Burt et al., 2013; Kilduff & Lee, 2020; Kitayama, 2017; Oishi et al., 2009).

Practical Implications

The present research has actionable practical implications for society, organizations, and individuals in an increasingly multiethnic world. Society should be alert to EAs' underrepresentation in leadership roles—rather than assuming that Asians are the model minority "doing just fine" (Lu et al., 2020). To help EAs break through the Bamboo Ceiling, organizations could create opportunities for interethnic interactions, such as interethnic lunches or mentorships. Indeed, research suggests that social contact is a prerequisite for meaningful relationships (Festinger et al., 1950; Reagans, 2011). For EA individuals themselves, it is important to be cognizant that high ethnic homophily can contribute to their underrepresentation in leadership roles. EAs may benefit from a conscious effort to diversify their social networks (e.g., sports with individuals from other ethnic backgrounds).

More broadly, our research provides insights into an important question: How can individuals emerge as leaders in multiethnic environments? Consistent with the literature (McPherson et al., 2001), we found that all ethnicities exhibited ethnic homophily to some extent. To emerge as leaders in multiethnic environments, individuals need to step out of their cultural comfort zone and bond with others from different ethnic backgrounds.

Limitations and Future Directions

The current research has several limitations which provide opportunities for future research. First, although Study 3 leveraged a time-lagged design to examine the effect of ethnic homophily on objective leadership emergence 1 year later, strict causal inference could not be established. Future research could examine whether experimental interventions that help EAs develop friendships with ethnic outgroups can increase their leadership emergence (Gino et al., 2020). For example, acculturation research suggests that individuals who integrate the host culture into their ethnic identity tend to exhibit lower ethnic homophily in friendship networks (Mok et al., 2007; Repke & Benet-Martínez, 2017).

Second, although our law school study surveyed a large sample of JD students and our MBA studies enabled us to examine the natural processes of friendship formation and leadership emergence in a new multiethnic environment (i.e., high ecological validity), future research should ascertain the generalizability of our findings in other settings. For example, researchers could examine whether EA employees are higher on ethnic homophily than non-EA employees, and are thus less likely to emerge as leaders in the workplace.

Third, while our theory section discussed cultural differences in (a) communication style, (b) ethnic heterogeneity, and (c) relational mobility as potential explanations for EAs' high ethnic homophily, our studies did not test these explanations. Additionally, while EAs may prefer to socialize with other EAs, non-EAs' biases can also contribute to EAs' ethnic homophily (Lin et al., 2005; Mehra et al., 1998).[5] Future research is needed to pinpoint what mediates the link between our predictor (EA vs. non-EA) and mediator (ethnic homophily). Similarly, future research is needed to pinpoint what mediates the negative link between our mediator (ethnic homophily) and outcome (leadership emergence).

Fourth, it is noteworthy that our study contexts are multiethnic environments, where socializing with people from different ethnic backgrounds is conducive to leadership emergence. We speculate that ethnic homophily is less likely to impede leadership emergence in mostly monoethnic environments, as monoethnic environments do not require a leader to bond with ethnic outgroups. For example, in monoethnic cultures like Japan, it is essential for a Japanese individual to bond with other Japanese in order to attain leadership.

[5] Notably, Lu et al. (2020) tested prejudice as a potential mechanism for EAs' underrepresentation in leadership. They operationalized prejudice as "affective social distance, or antipathy toward close interactions with members of a group" (p. 4597). The researchers measured prejudice with items such as "How comfortable would you be if a [Chinese/Japanese/Korean/Bangladeshi/Indian/Pakistani] American dated your sibling/shared an office cubicle with you/became your next-door neighbor . . . ?" (1 = *very uncomfortable*, 6 = *very comfortable*). Lu et al. (2020) consistently found that EAs faced *less* prejudice than SAs on average, "possibly because of SAs' darker skin tone and physical resemblance to certain Middle Easterners. For instance, SAs experienced considerable ethnic hostility in the aftermath of 9/11" (p. 4591). If EAs similarly faced *less* prejudice than SAs in our studies, then anti-EA prejudice would be unlikely to be the main driver of EAs' high ethnic homophily.

Finally, it is noteworthy that the multiethnic contexts in our studies are nonpolitical. While ethnic homophily may negatively predict individuals' leadership emergence in non-political contexts, ethnic homophily may produce cohesiveness that enables bloc voting for ethnic minority candidates in political contexts (Wolfinger, 1965).

Conclusion

The present research advanced a social network explanation for the Bamboo Ceiling phenomenon: ethnic homophily. We analyzed a large-scale survey of JD students from 124 U.S. law schools and conducted social network analysis on 11 complete class sections of new MBA students in a U.S. business school. Our studies revealed that ethnic East Asians—but not ethnic South Asians—were less likely than other ethnicities to emerge as leaders, partly because EAs socialize more with ethnic ingroup members (i.e., other EAs). The Bamboo Ceiling phenomenon arises partly from the cultural mismatch between EAs' high ethnic homophily and the ethnic heterophily needed for leadership emergence in multiethnic environments.

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