

# THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING

## Departmental Research Seminar

### The Bamboo Ceiling in the Boardroom and the Classroom By

**Prof. Michael Morris**  
**Columbia University**



**Date : 9 Jun 2023 (FRI)**  
**Time : 2:30 – 4 pm**  
**Venue : M802 & online via Zoom**

#### Abstract

While Asians in the US excel in career and educational outcomes relative to most, the generalization of success misses some areas of lower attainment. The popular construct of a "Bamboo Ceiling" implies a problem for Asians broadly, but findings from recent research with Lu and Nisbett (Lu, Nisbett & Morris, 2020, 2022) reveal a stark difference between East Asians and South Asians. In leadership attainment, East Asians underperform (because of lower assertiveness) but South Asians do not. Profile experiments indicate whites feel less prejudice against East Asians but also less confident in them as leaders. In educational research on ethnic barriers East Asians have received limited attention, as they are commonly assumed to excel across all educational stages. Six large studies challenge this assumption by revealing that East Asians (but not South Asians) underperform in US law schools and business schools. This is not because East Asians are less academically motivated or less proficient in English but because their low verbal assertiveness is culturally incongruent with the communication style valued by these institutions. Online instruction (via Zoom) rather than an in-person classroom mitigated East Asians' underperformance in courses emphasizing assertiveness and class participation. Results suggest ways that managers and educators can create more inclusive workplaces and schools.

**Prof. Michael Morris** holds the Chavkin-Chang Professor of Leadership at Columbia Business School. He is also associated with the Psychology Department of Columbia University. He teaches MBA and executive-level classes on leadership, teamwork, communication, negotiation, and decision-making. He designed and runs Columbia's Leadership Lab, which translates emerging research insights into new forms of leadership training. He chairs the school's Organizational Culture Committee and serves on the university's Committee on Global Thought. Outside of academia, his consulting and training work brings him into contact with many private and public sector leaders from around the world.

In his research career, Prof. Morris has published over 200 articles in the leading psychology and management journals on topics such as individual decision-making, interpersonal influence, and social networks. His early research on culture and cognition played a key role in the blossoming of the field of cultural psychology. His scientific papers have received international awards from scholarly societies in the fields of social psychology, judgment and decision-making, psychology in the public interest, Asian psychology, management, human resources, marketing, and others. He is a founding editor of the journal *Management and Organization Review* and has served as an associate editor at *Psychological Review* and as special-issue editor at several other journals. He has served on National Academy of Science and National Science Foundation panels advising the Armed Services about managing cultural differences.

Prior to joining the Columbia in 2001, Prof. Morris was a tenured Professor at Stanford's Graduate School of Business and Psychology Department. He served as a visiting professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1995 and at the University of Hong Kong in 2000 and at Universitat Pompeu Fabra in 2008. He earned a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in 1993 and B.A from Brown in 1986.

**All interested are welcome.**



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