



CULTIVATING INTERCULTURAL LEADERS

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With the aim of informing future efforts to cultivate intercultural leaders, this article explores factors contributing to twelve native-born Koreans' rises to prominent positions of intercultural leadership. Research participants were purposefully selected from three different leadership levels: three cross-cultural community leaders, three cross-cultural national leaders, and six international leaders. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews, emailed open-ended questions, and the review of archival materials. Data analysis identified six key factors divided into two broad categories: external influences and internal dispositions. External influences consisted of family heritage, pivotal encounters, and academic achievement/schooling. Internal dispositions consisted of individual attitudes, acquired skills, and personality traits. The article concludes with recommendations for parents and educators cultivating intercultural leaders in the next generation.

Where do leaders come from? Are they born? Are they fashioned? Do ordinary people rise to leadership when galvanized by dramatic events? Scholars have long debated this matter without coming to a definitive conclusion. What is clear, however, is that organizations and societies need competent leaders at all levels and in all environments. Nowhere is this statement truer than in intercultural contexts.

Introduction to the Study

In recent decades, Korea and Koreans have burst upon the global scene in business, sports, entertainment, and religious endeavors. This increased global involvement demands competent intercultural leaders. Yet Korea's production of intercultural leaders appears incommensurate with its apparent industry and potential. We believe Korea's monolingual, mono-cultural society demands an intentional effort to cultivate intercultural leaders among members of the younger generation in order to sustain and fuel global development.

To better understand how native-born Koreans become competent intercultural leaders, we explored the lives of twelve prominent native-born Koreans who have overcome experiential, cultural, and linguistic barriers to achieve prominence as leaders in intercultural contexts. Through an analysis of their varied lives we sought to discover the common denominators of their success.

While the research method employed does not allow the study's findings to be generalized to a larger group of leaders, those interested in developing leaders in non-Korean contexts might deem them transferable to their cultural environments. Further, the study grants new insights into cultivating leaders for a global society.

The central question guiding this study was, "What key factors contributed to native-born Koreans' (NBKs) rise to prominence as intercultural leaders?" The study did not deal with a vast host of leadership theories or domains. Hence, it did not discuss participants' leadership style, leadership effectiveness, or their perception of their leadership achievements. Nor did it consider participants' ethical practices unless they impinged directly on the study's purpose. Rather, this inquiry was limited to an examination of the key factors contributing to the rise of NBKs to intercultural leadership prominence.

Given the local, national, and international renown of the research participants, complete confidentiality with regard to their identity was impossible. The participants understood this limitation and indicated their willingness to take part in the study by signing letters of informed consent.

Research Methods and Procedures

The study utilized a grounded theory approach to data collection and analysis and employed validation strategies common to a number of qualitative research approaches, including triangulation, member checks, and peer review. Data collection was preceded by the purposeful selection of twelve research participants. We engaged in data analysis and validation throughout the data collection process.

Study participants were selected according to the principle of stratified purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2006). Participants, while not necessarily the world's most prominent Korean leaders, all met the chief selection criterion in that they exercised leadership in cross-cultural, multicultural, or global contexts. Further, they were intentionally selected from three different leadership levels—civic, national, and international—in hopes that the diversity would help identify important common traits (Creswell).

The civic leaders consisted of the mayor of Irvine, CA, and city council members in Irvine and Cerritos, CA. The national leaders consisted of a U.S. congressman, an advisor to former President George W. Bush, and an executive director of the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies in the UK. The six international leaders consisted of two global presidents of church movements, two leaders of Christian missions, the general secretary of the United Nations, and the first vice-president of the World Trade Center.

Data collection began with studying the books and documents related to the twelve participants, followed by in-depth, individual interviews with six participants. The interviews were informal, free flowing, and guided by open-ended questions. Additional data were collected from three more research participants via email. Biographies and other archival documents supplemented these data, particularly for the three final participants not available for interview or email correspondence. Data were analyzed during the collection process using grounded theory

methods and procedures (cf. Charmaz, 2006). We initially coded all data sources to discover potentially important themes. Through a process of constant comparison of various sources and emerging themes, the coding process became increasingly focused until several factors emerged as central to understanding the study's central phenomenon.

Research Findings

Data analysis resulted in 24 important themes, from which emerged six key factors contributing to the study participants' rises to prominence as intercultural leaders. The six key factors fell into two broad categories: external influences and internal dispositions. External influences consisted of family heritage, pivotal encounters, and academic achievement. Internal dispositions consisted of individual attitudes, acquired skills, and personality traits (see Figure 1).

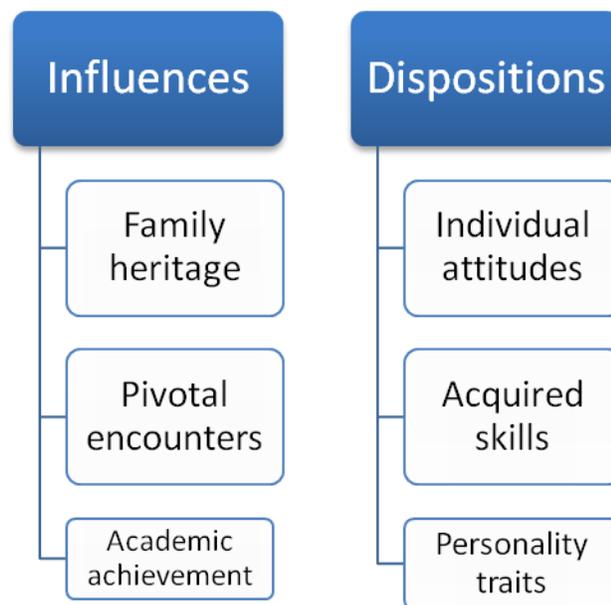


Figure 1. Key factors in understanding intercultural leaders' rise to prominence.

Not all factors emerged as equally important across the sample of research participants. Those present in the lives of eleven or twelve participants we labeled "decisive." Those present in the lives of nine or ten participants we labeled "important." Those present in the lives of six to eight participants we labeled "helpful." Four factors emerged as decisive: heritage, pivotal encounters, attitudes, and skills. Personality traits emerged as important and academic achievement as merely helpful. Table 1 illustrates the relative importance of the six key factors.

The six key factors were divided into two broader categories: external influences (i.e., external to the participants) and internal dispositions (i.e., characteristics possessed by the participants). These factors are further discussed in the following sections.

Table 1

The Relative Importance of the Six Key Factors

Decisive	Important	Helpful
Family heritage	Personality traits	Academic achievement
Pivotal encounters		
Attitudes		
Skills		

Category One: External Influences

While family heritage, pivotal encounters, and academic achievement all emerged as factors in participants' rise to prominence as intercultural leaders, only the first two emerged as decisive.

Family Heritage

With the exception of one participant, who declined to reveal his family background, family heritage deeply impacted all the intercultural leaders in this study. Two aspects of heritage emerged from the data: *values exemplified* and *values taught*.

Values exemplified. As the following biographical material and interview excerpts illustrate, participants' parents' or grandparents' good deeds and sacrificial spirits marked study participants profoundly.

Gimoon's father was a good and generous person. His father was considerate of others and enjoyed giving to others. Thus, when people came to his father to request help, his father never rejected them. When Gimoon was a high school student, his father took in a friend who had nowhere to go, letting him stay in his house and feeding him for a year.... His father also accepted a friend who was cast out by his family because he had Hansen's disease. For six months he served this friend with love, giving him meals and encouragement. (Shin, 2007, pp. 100-101, 154-155) [Our translation]

Yonggi's grandmother was a very warmhearted woman who liked to serve others. Many relatives and poor neighbors wanted to live together in his grandparents' house because they had no food to eat. His grandparents accommodated them. Therefore, 13 families lived in the house due to his grandparents' generosity. His grandparents helped them cultivate the rice field and farm. In addition, his grandparents fed wanderers and travelers and provided them with a place to sleep. Therefore all the village people praised his grandparents. (Han, 2008, p. 61) [Our translation]

My [Byungyoon] father gave a rice field to the village to expand the road. In addition, he helped poor elementary and middle school students. In my village, he provided food and clothes to the poor. My mother also shared her possessions with the poor, and was warm toward neighbors. She offered lodging to wanderers, gave food to the hungry, and helped many people in difficult positions. Specifically, she contributed a lot of money to the village community for the poor. (Interview transcript or email [our translation]).

Values taught. Informal instruction at home reinforced important family heritage values. This theme emerged from the data collected from all but one of the research participants.

My [Sukhee] parents taught me to keep my promises to others. They always taught me the importance of gaining peoples' trust. Thus, I always have made efforts to keep promises, even though it cost me personally. This resulted in people seeing me as a consistent man. This is my big fortune. One of the reasons that I got this position was that everybody acknowledged my consistent character. (Interview transcript or email [our translation])

Yonggi's grandmother told him when he was a child that men should put others first, because if a man lived just for himself, both he and others would perish at the same time (Han, 2008, p. 62) [Our translation]. Gimoon's mother always instructed him: "Because a person will get exactly what he deserves, if you harm others, bad things will happen to you afterwards" (Shin, 2007, p. 29). "Be benevolent to others. You should live in a kindly manner without quarreling with others" (Shin, 2007, p. 155) [Our translation].

The principle to emerge here is that the soil for cultivating a successful intercultural leader is a healthy family. Parents and grandparents who pass on heritage values position their offspring to succeed as leaders.

Pivotal Encounters

A pivotal encounter is here defined as meeting someone who profoundly changes one's life. Pivotal encounters strongly affected all participants but had various outcomes. Participants were motivated to study hard, challenged to become leaders, given opportunities for advanced or overseas study, provided models of accomplishment, and stimulated to develop self-confidence. Pivotal encounters played a vital role in all participants' rise to prominence as intercultural leaders. For example, when asked about the factors contributing to his becoming a prominent leader, one participant responded,

I cannot answer with just one. In my case, three major factors contributed to my rise to leadership prominence: First is self-confidence, second is *the fortunate pivotal encounter*, and third my always doing my best. Specifically, I had a lot of fortunate encounters, which led me to success. Thus, I cannot say, 'I rose to prominent leadership due to just my ability.' On the other hand, I can say, 'through many others' help, I rose to this leadership position.' (Interview transcript or email [our translation])

Pivotal encounters in participants' lives provided motivation, role models, help, and guidance.

Motivation. Pivotal encounters motivated most research participants to dream and achieve. When Gi-moon Ban, UN General Secretary, heard Foreign Minister Byun speak during his elementary school years, he was inspired to be a great man for his mother country. An encounter with American President John F. Kennedy in 1962 solidified his dream of becoming a diplomat. When Billy Kim met the evangelist Billy Graham as a high school student, he was motivated to become a great evangelist like Billy Graham. When Won-suk Ma met his high school principal, who graduated from Princeton University, he was motivated to study abroad in order to grow in stature. One of our participants said,

In my life's journey, I have been fortunate to have pivotal encounters that influenced my life's direction. For a long time I did not know why I was blessed with these pivotal encounters. However, I have now realized that God's unseen hand was working in my life. (Interview transcript or email [our translation])

Role models. For Gi-moon Ban, Foreign Minister Byun was not only an inspiration but also a model of what it meant to be a successful diplomat (Shin, 2007). In a similar manner, Won-suk Ma's high school principal proved an excellent role model for him. Likewise, after his pivotal encounter with Billy Graham, Jang Kwan (Billy) Kim emulated him to the point of adopting the great evangelist's first name.

Help and guidance. For some participants, pivotal encounters offered a chance to receive financial aid. For others, they helped them learn English or gave them direction in life. For example, Billy Kim's pivotal encounter with an American soldier serving in Korea changed Billy's life completely:

When Billy was in the military corps in the Kyungsan Korea, he met a master sergeant Powers who would take him to America. One day, when Billy was playing the harmonica, Powers came to him and asked him, "Do you want to go the US?" To Billy, at that time, going to the splendid US that Billy saw in the "Sears Roebuck" catalog was a dream.... The pastor Billy Kim says it is very curious that Karl Powers who was not a Christian had chosen the School of Bob Jones and that he himself, who had never gone to the Church, had entered the Christian School, and that the Bob Jones School that had required students with good grades and Christian faith had accepted Billy Kim himself to the School without any requirement. (Lee, 2006, pp. 35, 53)

Shin (2007), Gi-moon Ban's biographer, explained how one pivotal encounter in the diplomat's life led to another.

If Gi-moon Ban, who studied in a rural school, had not met the passionate English teacher, if he had not visited the USA, and if he had not met the American President John F. Kennedy, his dream would not have been realized. Fortunately, Gimoon Ban had pivotal encounters with people who guided, developed, and challenged him. (pp. 83-84) [Our translation]

Academic Achievement (Schooling)

Academic achievement did not emerge as a decisive or even an important factor in participants' rise to intercultural leadership prominence. Many Koreans might consider this finding counterintuitive because they equate success in life with success in school. Nevertheless, academic success did emerge as *helpful*. In looking at the impact of academic success, we explored three aspects of schooling: 1) excelling in primary and secondary school, 2) succeeding at college, and 3) earning an advanced degree.

Excellence in primary and secondary school. Academic excellence at an early age emerged as a factor in only half of the twelve participants. These six took first place in their elementary school classes. However, a total of eight (including the six previously mentioned) were honor students in middle and high school. The remaining four participants were average students.

At the time when the research participants were in elementary school in Korea, no one attended pre-school. Hence, those with apparently higher "innate school intelligence" emerged quickly. Half of the prominent leaders manifested this school intelligence. Of the six participants that took first place in their classes in their early schooling, five continued their exceptional academic level in college. The remaining one struggled in the college environment and considered dropping out. In the end, however, he not only persevered but also earned a doctoral degree. One participant said,

When I [Jaegil] was a student in Elementary School, I had no time to study, because I had to work for my family instead of my father who was forced to work in the Japanese army as a laborer. However, even though I never could study at home, I always took first place. At that time, a high school education was very popular because the graduates could become teachers. Thus, only five percent of the students in the nation could enter the school. I graduated from the school and entered the College of Education in the Seoul National University. (Interview transcript or email [our translation])

A biographer wrote,

Whenever Yonggi Cho was tested as a little child, he took first place in the class and his presentation ability was outstanding. The teacher “Arai” used to praise him while patting him on the head: “You are truly an extraordinary boy. You will be a great man.” (Han, 2008, p. 100) [Our translation]

Success in college. In college, ten participants were ranked as honor students. Among the 12, seven participants graduated from prestigious universities. Ten of the 12 studied abroad in a day when it was yet difficult to do so. Their overseas educational experience appeared crucial to their achievement as intercultural leaders.

Advanced degrees. Ten participants held graduate degrees, eight at the doctoral level. For six of the eight doctoral degree holders, a doctorate was essential to the attainment of their leadership position. The two remaining doctorate holders earned their Ph.D. degrees in China. However, for both of these politicians, their doctorate appeared unrelated to their leadership attainment. The attainment of an advanced degree emerged as related to a particular field or role rather than as having independent or general value. For four participants, it had no relevance. However, advanced study emerged as noteworthy in the lives of the remaining eight.

Category Two: Internal Dispositions

The second category, called internal dispositions, consists of three key factors: personal attitudes, acquired skills, and personality traits. Participants’ dispositions emerged as five personal attitudes, six acquired skills, and five personality traits.

Personal Attitudes

Five characteristic attitudes emerged as decisive to NBKs’ rise to prominence as intercultural leaders: self-confidence, drive, passion, optimism, and constancy.

Self-confidence. Some participants gained self-confidence through parental encouragement; others through pivotal encounters; still others through getting outstanding grades in school. One got his self-confidence through a landslide victory in a political race. In all cases, participants were not born with self-confidence, but rather gained it through life experience.

One participant commented, “Self-confidence was implanted by my parents. My parents always believed in me. My father always used to say to me, ‘You can survive wherever you are.’ My father’s words helped me have self-confidence in any circumstance.”

Drive. All participants consistently tried to do their best in every area, such as study, prayer, work, and ministry. Even though all were gifted persons in specific areas, they never settled for “good enough” but put their utmost effort into all they did. For example, Gi-moon found Harvard’s Kennedy School a tough academic environment, even though his English was

excellent (Shin, 2007). One day, his wife called to Korea to ask her sister-in-law to stop her husband from studying too much:

Sister, I am worry that my husband would die from over studying. In a day, he just sleeps for two or three hours to study. Today, he even had a nosebleed. Please call my husband and tell him not to study too much. (...) He got all A+ in all his classes in the Kennedy School and received the award of the founder of the School in the commencement day. (Shin, 2007, p. 194)

Passion. All research participants emerged as having passion. Passion was perhaps the most common personal attitude among the participants. They were passionate in their work, ministry, and study. They would do or pay anything, go without food, sleep, or reward, to accomplish their mission. One participant's passion would not let him stop planting churches – he planted over 100 in various mission fields. One participant's passion led him to establish the biggest church in the world. Another participant's passion encouraged him to study English in the U.S. for a year so he could enter – and win – the National Speech Competition in High School in Korea. Still another participant's passion challenged him to overcome his disability and become a role model for other people with disabilities. One participant commented,

In my opinion, a leader's passion is the most important disposition among many important qualities. For me, even though I have many shortcomings, I could cover my deficiencies with my strong passion. If I had not had ardent passion, I would not be what I am. I believe that even if someone does not have enough talent, giftedness, or capability, if he or she has ardent passion to achieve his or her goal, he or she could overcome these shortcomings and be a leader. In history, almost all great men were passionate men, such as, Napoleon, Churchill, Lincoln, Roosevelt, Korean Admiral Soonshin Lee, and so on. I feel that passion is like a car's engine that pulls the car. Likewise, passion could be called a leader's leadership engine. (Interview transcript or email [our translation])

Optimism. The data showed that an optimistic or positive attitude was a decisive factor in participants' rise to leadership prominence. When asked how he dealt with almost insurmountable difficulties in his life journey, one participant answered,

First of all, I never thought of those difficulties as bad things. I thought of those problems as chances for me to take off. I always have thought there is no such thing as a question that cannot be answered. Sometimes, some difficulties are not solved, but I never despaired because of that. I waited for it to be solved or turned around in a new way. However, I have never given up. I believe that if I believe that I can solve it, there is an answer, but if I do not believe that I can do it, there is no answer. Thus, for a leader, the positive belief that any problems can be solved is so important. In my opinion, positive thinking brings positive attitude or positive attitude brings positive thinking. There is a deep correlation between them. (Interview transcript or email [our translation])

Another participant said,

I believe that in the world, the person who has the biggest shortcoming is not the person who has weak points but the person who has negative thoughts and a negative attitude. Even though one has a severe problem, if he sees it through a positive perspective, to him or her, it could even be a blessing. (Interview transcript or email [our translation])

Constancy. Among 12 participants only one person answered, "I am a normal person in consistency because I sometimes cannot work consistently." The remaining 11 reported being exceptionally consistent. One participant said,

Consistency is my distinctive characteristic. The most important reason I got this leadership role is my distinctive *consistent* attitude. I never would change in the middle. I never break my promise even if I have to suffer a large loss. Since 1983, the year that I arrived in the US, I have attended church. After becoming Mayor, many people recommended I move to another mega church for political gains. I never changed church and will not change. When I ran as a candidate for City Council and Mayor, many people recommended that I use an American name. However, I never changed because I believed that consistency is important in interpersonal relationships and for winning public trust. (Interview transcript or email [our translation])

One participant's wife reported,

My husband's distinctive characteristic is that he is a *consistent* person. He cannot make a decision easily. He needs enough time to make a decision. However, if he decides his plan or goal, he never changes it halfway. When I saw the situation objectively, in my thinking his plan or goal should be changed. However, he never wavered. Finally, his goal was achieved. Because of his distinctive *consistent* character, he has achieved many things in difficult circumstances. (Interview transcript or email [our translation])

Acquired Skills

Five acquired skills emerged as closely related to the participants' leadership attainment: creativity, communication ability, English proficiency, cultural competence, and interpersonal competence (or social intelligence).

Creativity. The twelve participants were variously gifted, but all were creative. For example, one participant testified,

I think I was able to take a prominent intercultural leadership position because I had worked to accomplish my goals with creative thinking. In my personal opinion, the person who wants to be a prominent leader should be able to think creatively or strategically. Without creative thinking power, one cannot lead followers. Leaders should have advanced creative thinking skills that are greater than the skills of their followers. The radical difference between leaders and normal people is in their creativity. (Interview transcript or email [our translation])

Banden Hubell, the chief director of the Roosevelt Foundation, introduced one participant by saying,

Dr. Kang has worked with us from the day of the establishment of the Roosevelt International Disabled Award. His original and creative leadership is very exceptional. He is a visionary person who inspires frustrated people to hope and who challenges those who work hard to work even harder for their future. As we know, Dr. Kang is a blind man who has no sight. However, he is an outstanding leader who presents the vision and direction that show the future, the world, and life to the people. (Kang, 2006, p. 127) [Our translation]

Communication ability. All twelve participants possessed the ability to converse effectively with others. For example, the wife of one participant said,

My husband believes he received an outstanding talent in talking to others. Even though I thought that no matter how he tried, he couldn't solve the problem through conversation with the person concerned, he always did it through conversation. I cannot remember how many times he solved difficult problems just through conversation. (Interview

transcript or email [our translation])

English proficiency. All study participants took advantage of opportunities to become proficient English speakers at different times—five in junior and senior high school, three in university, and four in graduate school. All but one participant affirmed that the ability to communicate in English was essential to being an intercultural leader in today’s global society. Two participants considered English proficiency the most important skill for an intercultural leader. One stated,

In my opinion, to be a prominent intercultural or global leader, English is an essential factor and the most basic requirement. Although a person can have excellent talents, ability, and strength in every area, if the person cannot speak English, then how can the person express his opinion to another country’s people and persuade them to follow his opinion? (Interview transcript or email [our translation])

The other said,

In these global times, to have intercultural competences, the ability to speak English fluently is an essential factor. I know many Koreans who, despite having powerful spiritual ability and other outstanding talents, cannot exercise their leadership in the global or intercultural worldwide stage. I think that although Koreans have excellent talents in many areas, most of them cannot become influential global leaders because of the language barrier. Thus, a person who wants to work on the worldwide stage should overcome the language barrier. (Interview transcript or email [our translation])

Cultural competence. Cultural competence is the capability to interact effectively across cultures and with “people from different cultural backgrounds” (Thomas & Inkson, 2004, p. 62). Closely related is Earley and Ang’s (2003) definition of cultural intelligence: “a person’s capability to adapt effectively to new cultural contexts” (p. 59). They elaborated,

Cultural competence can be generally defined as the process by which individuals and systems respond effectively to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions, and other diversity factors in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, and communities and that protects and preserves the dignity of each. (p. 263)

The research showed all participants were culturally competent. For example, one participant observed,

To me, joining groups from different cultures is not awkward but very natural. I frequently participate in different national events because I am a politician and enjoy the different national cultures. Thus, people who belong to different cultures like me very much. I believe that being familiar with different cultures is essential to be a leader in an intercultural society. (Interview transcript or email [our translation])

Another said,

To becoming an intercultural leader as a Native Born Korean, I think it is essential to have cultural competence in multi-cultural settings through experiential understanding. To have cultural competence, NBKs should develop the capacity to work in a multi-cultural, multi-racial, and multi-linguistic background. (Interview transcript or email [our translation])

Interpersonal capacity. Ten of the twelve participants were excellent at relating well to others. However, the other two confessed they had to work hard at forming relationships, thus underscoring the importance of developing this skill. One of them admitted,

That was my weakness as a politician. Thus, I made firm efforts to change my unsociable

character. I think my attitude could be sociable but my unsociable character cannot be changed to a sociable character. However, I manage my relationships with others well through hard work because relationship is so important to politicians. (Interview transcript or email [our translation])

The other said,

I have no ability to have a good relationship with others because of my introverted nature. Even though I had tried to overcome my introvert character to extrovert in order to be a social person, I realized that it was not natural for me. Thus, I have made efforts to deal with people with authenticity and love. Although I have envied the persons who were sociable persons, I believe that I have merits that they do not have. (Interview transcript or email [our translation])

Personality Traits

Four personality traits emerged important (but not decisive) to participants' rise to prominence as intercultural leaders. Nearly all the participants were tolerant, resolute, empathetic, and persistent.

Tolerance. Nine of twelve participants were very tolerant, understanding, and charitable. The wife of one participant commented, "My husband has a mind so open that I cannot understand it. My husband tolerates and accepts someone whom I would never forgive and accept. I believe that the open mind is the gift of God." Another participant explained,

From childhood, I have been so open-minded as to accept men of all shades. When I was a student, I always got first place in the tests, and was the representative in the classes. However, I always befriended students who were ostracized by other students and who did not study well. I regarded myself as a person who has to accept all other people with magnanimity. Because of my capacious mind, I can associate with others naturally. From childhood, I dreamed of becoming Korea's President so that I could deliver the poor in the agricultural areas. I live with a sense of mission that I have to relieve the poor and the weak. Thus, I never wore a wristwatch and a tie for myself. Keeping in mind the problems of the nation, emigrants, laborers, and minorities, I have lived for the benefit of the weak rather than for my family, my economic wealth, and my individual ambitions. Today, I work for minorities' political rights and for the protection of their interests. (Interview transcript or email [our translation])

Persistence. Ten of the twelve participants had experienced various trials that would have crushed most people. However, they overcame these trials through patient persistence. For example, one participant said,

I have experienced many severe hardships in my life. If I could not endure trials, I think that today my leadership would not exist. I have seen many people fail because of their deficiency of persistence. (Interview transcript or email [our translation])

Nevertheless, one participant admitted, "My characteristic weak point is enduring to the end. For me enduring for such a long time in trials is so hard." However, this participant was elected once to city council, once as mayor, and three times to the House of Representatives.

Resoluteness. The data indicated that a resolute character in decision-making was important to prominent leadership. For example, the participant who described himself as not being persistent had strong decision-making abilities. Even so, not all participants found decision-making easy.

One of my characteristic features is that I waver in decision-making. When I make a decision, I have to think deeply and examine many possible situations. However, once I decide on a goal, I never change it. To me, I lack in decisiveness and resolve. However, I have never thought it has been my weak point. (Interview transcript or email [our translation])

Another participant admitted,

Whenever I have to make a serious decision, I cannot easily make it. I need much time to consider many situations. Specifically, when I make a decision, I always deeply consider the situations of many people related to my decision. These make me delay my decision-making. (Interview transcript or email [our translation])

Empathy. The research revealed that ten participants were particularly considerate of others. One participant, who admitted he was weak in thoughtfulness, said,

Perhaps I am aware of my weakness in thoughtfulness because my wife used to say to me, “You should consider others’ situation and feelings” more. It is a fact that I have not been a thoughtful husband to my wife. When I have to make a serious decision, I focus on it and consider the whole rather than individuals. (Interview transcript or email [our translation])

On the contrary, participants who reported being thoughtful said things like,

When I have to make a serious decision, I consider who would be hurt or not because of the decision. When I make a decision, it is most important for me to consider each member’s situation because I expect to heighten the dramatic effect through harmony of all the members. (Interview transcript or email [our translation])

One biographer wrote,

His grandmother used to teach her grandson: “Fundamentally, a man should think of others rather than himself.” ... He cannot pass by when he sees people in difficulty. Whenever a feature appeared on TV about people in difficulty, he used to soak a handkerchief with tears for the people. Then he would write down the contact information, which he later used to help them. His grandmother’s teaching, that man should serve others’ needs rather than himself, played an important part in *shaping the character* of the man. (Han, 2008, pp. 62-63) [Our translation]

Conclusion on Key Factors

While not all six factors contributing to the twelve participants’ rise to prominence as intercultural leaders were equally present, they emerged unambiguously as the most common to the greatest number of them. In particular, four factors surfaced as decisive: family heritage, pivotal encounters, certain attitudes, and several critical skills. In addition, certain personality traits emerged as important and academic achievement was found to be helpful. Given these findings, what, if anything, can a society, family, educational program, or individual do to cultivate successful intercultural leaders?

Cultivating Intercultural Leaders

While the origin of leaders is debated, the following discussion assumes leaders can be cultivated. Bennis and Nanus (1997) described the development of leadership theory:

Leadership skills were once thought a matter of birth. Leaders were born, not made,

summoned to their calling through some unfathomable process. This might be called the “Great Man” theory of leadership. When this view failed to explain leadership, it was replaced by the notion that great events made leaders of otherwise ordinary people. This “Big Bang” idea in which the situation and the followers combined to make a leader, like the “Great Man” theory, was another inadequate definition. Therefore, some looked at the leader and some looked at the situation. Now, in a stasis uninterrupted by either Great Men or Big Bangs, we have a new opportunity to appraise our leaders and ponder the essence of power. (pp. 5-6)

Some individuals may appear born to lead. Nevertheless, we side with those who affirm that even people with little or no apparent aptitude for leadership can be developed into leaders (Bennis, Spreitzer, & Cummings, 2001; Parks, 2005). Further, even individuals with proven leadership abilities are in need of development (Charan, Drotter, & Noel, 2001).

In this section, we discuss how parents and educators might cultivate intercultural leaders and suggest ways emerging leaders can prepare themselves to become intercultural leaders. These suggestions parallel the life experiences of our 12 study participants. While we directly address only the Korean context, readers will find a number of the principles discussed to be transferable to other ethnic contexts.

Parenting to Cultivate Intercultural Leaders

The socialization of children in the home emerged as critical to the cultivation of prospective leaders, far more significant than academic success. However, much in Korean society today militates against the inculcation of heritage values. The study participants grew up in a largely agrarian society in which family education was natural because families were large and several generations lived together. Communication between adults and children was frequent and often prolonged. However, in Korea today, both parents regularly work outside the home, meaning children are likely to spend more time with their computers than with their parents. A return to the old days is impossible. Therefore, we suggest the following strategies for contemporary families to promote intercultural leadership development: (a) instilling heritage values, (b) facilitating pivotal encounters, and (c) fostering good attitudes.

Parenting to instill heritage values. Traditionally, parental roles for children’s education were divided between fathers and mothers. Fathers were charged with children’s social education, such as personal relationships, social ethics and morals, social etiquette, and ways to succeed in society. Consequently, most fathers were strict, even severe toward their children. On the contrary, mothers were warm and kind to their children, taught children their role in the family, and contributed toward shaping good character.

Contemporary Korean society has changed in many ways, specifically in regard to parents’ roles and the family atmosphere—from multi-generation family to nuclear family; from parental leading roles to parental helping roles; from collective family atmosphere to individual family atmosphere; and from mom-centered family to working mom family. Today, it is difficult to define separate roles for moms and dads. Today’s young parents must be more flexible in nurturing their children and passing on heritage values to them.

Traditional Korean households were large and multigenerational, but contemporary Korean households have come to resemble the Western nuclear family. With both parents working and children occupied with burdensome schoolwork and interfacing with electronic media, parental influence has suffered greatly. However, it is often still possible to involve

grandparents in children's lives. Many Korean grandparents do not work outside the home and are available to share valuable experiences with their grandchildren. Parents would do well to integrate grandparents into their households. Rather than sending children to after-school academies to improve their test scores, parents could place them with grandparents capable of cultivating family heritage values.

Parenting to facilitate pivotal encounters. As discussed previously, pivotal encounters changed participants' lives dramatically. Whereas these encounters appeared to be largely serendipitous, some may be related to participants' character (i.e., attitudes and personality). For example, self-confidence, passion, optimism, and constancy attract the attention of well-placed individuals positioned to get involved at a critical juncture in a young person's life. Hence, ancestors sowing good seeds could bring descendants unexpected and fortuitous pivotal encounters that dramatically change their lives.

In addition, not all pivotal encounters are accidental. While the participants did not seek out their pivotal encounters, parents or grandparents of future intercultural leaders may be able to do so for their offspring by exposing them to inspirational role models and introducing them to models of achievement and potential mentors.

Parenting to foster good attitudes. Fostering good attitudes is closely related to family heritage, which is transmitted through *values exemplified* and *values taught* in the home context while children are growing up. Many contemporary Korean families sacrifice family time in the quest for financial security, believing they are thus securing a good future for their children. They discover too late that their efforts were counterproductive. We recommend parents plan ahead to set aside time for family interaction, such as eating and playing together and interactions surrounding important heritage values (e.g., family worship time).

Schooling to Cultivate Intercultural Leaders

Contrary to expectations, academic achievement or schooling emerged as the least important of the key factors in NBKs' rises to prominent intercultural leadership positions. Perhaps the relatively feeble connection between schooling and leadership success can be explained by the disparity between the abilities rewarded by schooling and those required of successful intercultural leaders. Of course, academic intelligence is not a handicap in leadership. However, contemporary Korean schooling focuses almost exclusively on cognitive objectives, thus rewarding abilities other than those most needed in leaders (e.g., recall of information as opposed to self-confidence, tolerance, and empathy). Of the three educational domains, affective and the psychomotor (i.e., skills) emerged as most significant in participants' rise to prominence as intercultural leaders. Without neglecting the cognitive, Korean schooling should place greater emphasis on character and skills to develop future intercultural leaders.

One skill in particular merits special mention: English proficiency, which is crucial for today's intercultural leader. Again, success in "school English" as an academic subject (cognitive task) is insufficient. English is first and foremost a communication skill whose mastery requires learners to step out of their mono-cultural, mono-linguistic context to interact with English speakers.

Positioning Oneself to Become an Intercultural Leader

Clearly, who you are matters more than what you know. Those aspiring to intercultural

leadership must first and foremost foster crucial internal dispositions—self-confidence, drive, passion, optimism, and constancy—followed by tolerance, resoluteness, empathy, and persistence. In addition, they should be intentional about developing skills in creativity, communication, English proficiency, cultural competence, and interpersonal capacity (i.e., social intelligence). Such skills, for the most part, require exiting the comfort zone of one’s monocultural, mono-linguistic context into order to encounter, understand, and befriend the “other.”

Regarding external influences on an aspiring leader’s life, some things obviously are outside a person’s control (e.g., parents and grandparents). However, one can still pursue relationships with “pivotal” people. In particular, aspiring leaders would do well to seek out mentors who can guide them in the next steps along the path toward competence and confidence.

Conclusion

Are leaders born, fashioned, or galvanized by dramatic events? In the case of the twelve native born Korean leaders in this study it was likely a combination of all three, but life experiences dominated their rise to prominence. In particular, two external influences outside the individuals’ control (family heritage and pivotal encounters) and two internal dispositions they could cultivate (attitudes and skills) emerged as nearly universal. Granted, the intercultural nature of their leadership required certain attitudes and skills that might be less important in a monocultural context. Nevertheless, their stories illustrate the possibility and importance of intentionally cultivating the values, attitudes, and skills required of intercultural leaders.

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