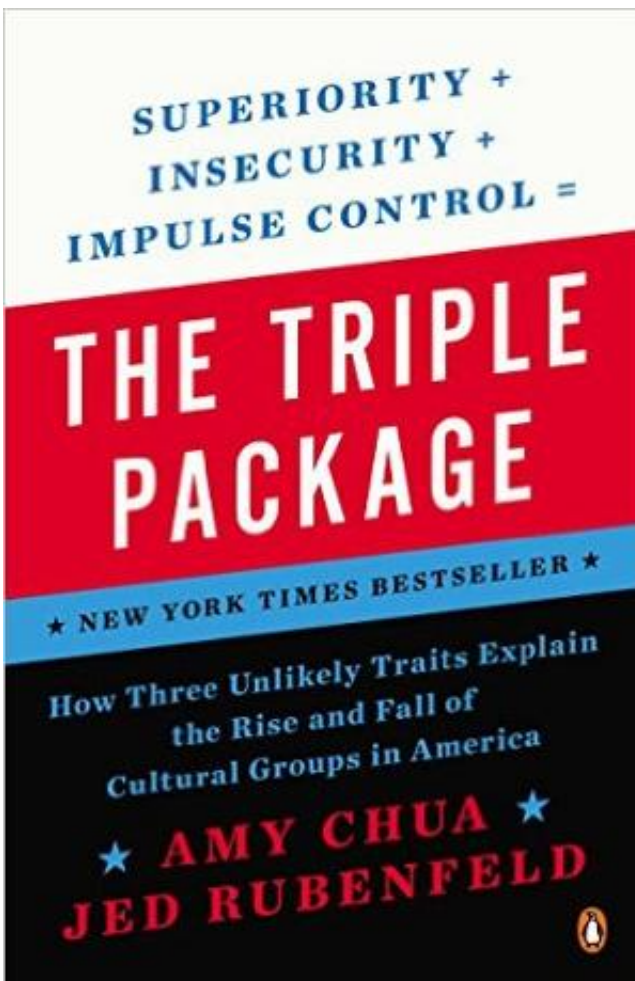


Researchers reject 'triple package' of traits that predict success

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In their controversial 2014 book, "The Triple Package: How Three

Unlikely Traits Explain the Rise and Fall of Cultural Groups in America," legal scholars Amy Chua and her husband, Jed Rubenfeld, attempted to explain why some groups "do strikingly better than others in terms of wealth, position and other conventional measures of success."

Using primarily anecdotal evidence, the authors (both professors at Yale Law School), theorized that people deemed to be extraordinarily successful shared three dominant cultural traits: a superiority complex, personal insecurity and impulse control. Further, they asserted that highly successful people belonged to one of eight groups: Cubans, East Asians, Indians, Jews, Lebanese, Mormons, Nigerians and Persians.

The theory received widespread attention, in part because Chua had touched off an intense debate earlier with her bestseller, "Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother."

But a new study by two Union College psychology professors finds there is little evidence to support the idea of the so-called triple package.

Instead, Joshua Hart and Christopher Chabris counter that intelligence, conscientiousness and economic advantage are the most likely elements of success, regardless of ethnicity.

The researchers conducted two separate online surveys of nearly 1,300 adults. Participants were asked a series of questions designed to measure their impulsiveness, ethnocentrism and personal insecurity. They also completed a test of their cognitive abilities. Finally, participants provided their income, occupation, education and other awards and achievements.

After analyzing the data in a number of ways, Hart and Chabris concluded that Chua and Rubenfeld's theory of a triple package failed scientific scrutiny, according to the study published in the journal

Personality and Individual Differences.

"We tried hard to find evidence for something resembling the triple package theory, and it just wasn't supported by the data," said Hart, the lead author of the study. "Instead, we found evidence for the benefits of a different sort of triple package: People who were more successful tended to be more intelligent, harder working and luckier (they had more educated parents)."

The researchers also found that the most interesting and counterintuitive part of the triple package theory—that "personal insecurity" would create success among people who also have a sense of group superiority and impulse control—was directly contradicted by the study.

"We found that emotional stability, not insecurity, was associated with more success," Hart said.

The study mirrors previous research showing that cognitive ability, conscientiousness and [socioeconomic status](#) give people advantages on the path to success.

"It is appealing to think that a simple set of success-engendering traits can be inculcated in anyone and that parents need only to create a belief that their family comes from a special stock and to be strict with their children to endow them with grit and a sense that their efforts are never quite good enough," the researchers write.

"Perhaps there is a formula of learnable personality traits that increases individuals' chances of succeeding in Western culture above and beyond what is contributed by native ability and the advantages of socioeconomic status. If so, the formula remains undiscovered—and we have found no evidence that the one proposed by Chua and Rubenfeld is it."

To learn more about the study, [click here](#).

Provided by Union College

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