

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

Demonstration of Meeting the 2014 Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and
Related Educational Programs Core and the Student Affairs/College Counseling Specialty
Standards via a Major Artifacts

A graduate project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Science in Counseling,
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Abstract

Demonstration of Meeting the 2014 Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs Core and the Student Affairs/College Counseling Specialty Standards via a Major Artifact

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Master of Science in Counseling, College Counseling and Student Services

The purpose of the following major artifact is to demonstrate my knowledge and competency of the selected 2014 CACREP standards. This major artifact includes a comprehensive literature review on research and current trends regarding a specific population, implications for student affairs professionals, and areas for future research. In addition, it provides strategies and interventions, and a theoretical approach for working with a specific student population.

The purpose of core 2 major artifact is to argue the need for counseling outreach programs for international students. Many international students come to the United States to have access to a better quality of higher education and more job opportunities. However, they often experience language difficulties, lack of social support, homesickness, and difficulties with cultural adjustment. Even though international students may encounter these challenges, many of them do not seek counseling services. Therefore, universities need to provide alternative strategies to assist international students to enhance their help-seeking behaviors and their adjustment at the university.

COUNSELING OUTREACH PROGRAMS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

There is increasing interest among international students to pursue higher education in the United States. Many international students decide to study outside of their country for two common reasons: (a) quality of education, and (b) employment opportunities (Gibson, 2005). The Institute of International Education (2014) indicated that there were 886,052 international students enrolled in public and private institutions of higher education in the United States in the 2013-2014 academic year. The top ten places of origin include China (31%), India (12%), South Korea (8%), Saudi Arabia (6%), Canada (3%), Taiwan (3%), Japan (2%), Vietnam (2%), Mexico (2%), and Brazil (2%) (Institute of International Education, 2014).

International students encounter multiple challenges. Although they might come to the U.S feeling excited and optimistic, they can easily become frustrated, confused, and stressed over this transition (Gómez, Urzúa, & Glass, 2014). The increasing number of international students in the U.S. creates the need for student affairs and college counseling professionals to understand how to work with this specific population. Counseling outreach programs for international students can enhance their adjustment experiences in college while promoting alternative strategies to increase their help seeking behaviors.

Adjusting to college is challenging for international students who have to leave their family, friends and home (Tung, 2011). Once they leave, they have to learn to adjust to the American cultural norms and social practices. In addition to cultural adaptation challenges, international students may experience lack of social supports, English

language difficulties, and homesickness (Tung, 2011). International students experience acculturative stress because they are not only adapting to a new culture, which is referred to as acculturation, but they are also experiencing additional challenges. Seeking help in a foreign country can cause fear, anxiety, or other uncomfortable feelings for international students who are experiencing acculturative stress (Tung, 2011). International students view informal help seeking as more acceptable than formal help seeking. Informal help seeking includes discussing challenges with friends, family members, roommates, and academic advisors. Formal help seeking includes accessing university counseling and seeking services from mental health professionals. International students are more likely to build social support with academic advisors and other international students (Tung, 2011). Many international students underutilize mental health services because of the cultural stigma associated with seeking mental health professionals, mental illness, and emotional expression. This tends to occur for students from countries where people rely on traditional approaches to health care (Tung, 2011).

Literature Review

Help Seeking-Behaviors

According to Lee, Ditchman, Fong, Piper, and Feigon (2014), Asian populations commonly under-utilize mental health services in the United States. Although counseling services at colleges and universities are often free and accessible to students, Asian international students do not access services as often as their White counterparts (Lee, et al., 2014). Some students may seek initial counseling services but decide to terminate counseling after an intake interview (Sue & Sue, 2008). The current study focuses on Korean international students since they were one of the largest groups of international

students in most colleges and universities in 2010 (Institute of International Education, 2014). Additionally, research shows that the prevalence of depression among Korean Americans is higher compared to other Asian groups and to the overall U.S population (Bernstein, Park, Shin, Cho, & Park, 2011). Research also shows that cultural values and stigma are some factors that affect help-seeking behaviors among Asian international students, and specifically Korean students (Lee et al., 2014). In many Asian cultures, seeking help outside of the family is viewed as embarrassing or shameful. Therefore, seeking counseling services is not acceptable in most Asian cultures.

The purpose of the Lee et al. (2014) study was to (a) analyze the effects of stigma and attitudes associated with seeking mental health services, and (b) implement a culturally sensitive model applying theory to describe help-seeking behaviors among Korean international students (Lee et al., 2014). The participants consisted of 177 Korean international students including 87 females and 90 males. Approximately 31% of the participants stated that they were aware of counseling services but only 2.3% indicated that they used counseling services (Lee et al., 2014).

The participants completed various inventories that included the Asian Value Scale, the Self-Stigma of Seeking Help Scale, the Inventory of Common Problems, the Attitude Toward Professional Psychological Help-Short Form Scale, the Social Scale for Receiving Psychological Help (SSRPH), and the Intentions to Seek Counseling Inventory. The Asian Values Scale (AVS) measured six factors including conformity to norms, recognition through achievement, emotional self-control, collectivism, humility, and filial piety (Lee et al., 2014). The self-stigma for seeking help scale (SSOSH) evaluated the self-stigma related to seeking mental health services. The Inventory of

Common Problems (ICP) analyzed types of problems and concerns that the participants presented. The questions focused on the areas of anxiety, academics, depression, physical health, and interpersonal relationships. The Attitude Toward Professional Psychological Help-Short Form Scale was used to measure tendency to seek or to resist professional assistance during a personal crisis or following extended psychological distress (Fischer & Turner, 1970). The Stigma Scale for Receiving Psychological Help (SSRPH) measured perceptions of stigma that are related to seeking psychological help. The Intentions to Seek Counseling Inventory (ISCI) measured willingness to seek mental health services (Lee et al., 2014). The findings of the study indicated that for the Inventory of Common Problems, all the six types of problems scored high, but depression and anxiety were the highest. The overall findings indicated that cultural values were positively correlated with public stigma and self- stigma related to help-seeking behaviors and negatively correlated with attitudes and intentions to seek counseling services. Based on these findings it can be seen that Asian cultural values may be associated with Asian international students underutilizing counseling services on college campuses.

Willingness to Seek Counseling

Li, Wong, and Toth (2013) described challenges that international students encounter that are categorized as academic, physical health, vocational, financial, personal, and social. The purpose of their study was to determine Asian international students' willingness to seek counseling (Li, Wong, & Toth, 2013). The question of interest was aimed at understanding why Asian international students were less likely to seek counseling services as well as predicting factors that impacted their willingness to seek counseling. Li et al., (2013) analyzed three possible factors based on previous

studies including (a) attitudes towards seeking counseling, (b) previous experience with counseling, and (c) academic challenges.

International students seem to have negative attitudes toward seeking counseling and a study suggested that Asian students prefer consulting their friends to solve their social and personal problems instead of seeking professional services (Chang, 2008). The negative attitudes they have towards counseling may be associated with cultural values. In some cultures, seeking counseling may be viewed as bringing shame to the family. Prior experiences with counseling also influence formal help-seeking behaviors. Chang's study indicated that Chinese college students' previous counseling experiences determined their willingness to seek professional (2008). Students with no previous counseling experience were less likely to seek help than students who had previous counseling experience, regardless of the types of problems they had. Therefore, lack of counseling experience may prevent students from seeking professional assistance and utilizing campus-based counseling services (Chang, 2008).

Li et al., (2013) used a mixed-methods design and participants consisted of 177 Asian international students. Of those who participated, 17.5% indicated that they had previously used counseling services. The study used a mixed-methods survey in which both quantitative and qualitative data was collected (Li et al., 2013). An open-ended question was used to collect qualitative data in the study, asking participants to explain what comes to their mind when they think about mental health counseling or counseling. Only 119 participants answered the question. Three inventories were used to collect quantitative data. The Attitudes Towards Seeking Professional Help Scale-short form measured participants' attitudes toward counseling or professional help. The Willingness

to Seek Counseling Scale was used to measure the level of willingness based on participants' academic related problems. The College Stress Inventory measured the stress levels of college students (Li et al., 2013).

The results from the quantitative data collected in the Li et al. study (2013) indicated that previous counseling experience, attitudes towards seeking counseling, and perceived academic stress were linked to participants' willingness to seek counseling. The results from the qualitative analysis indicated six common themes related to perceptions of mental health counseling: (a) counseling is for individuals with serious mental problems, (b) counseling is helpful (c) counseling is for individuals who need to solve their problems, (d) in counseling, individuals share personal information with a stranger (e) counseling is only needed when nobody else can help, and (f) a discrepancy between attitude and the need to seek counseling. Additionally, when describing counseling, participants included terms like help, solving problems, and advice seeking. While participants also indicated the belief that counseling was helpful and an outlet for some people, many participants expressed feeling uncomfortable sharing their personal information with someone they did not know (Li et al., 2013). The participants also perceived counseling as a last resort when individuals had already exhausted their other options and resources. Even though some participants had good attitudes about counseling and how beneficial it may be, they also indicated that they did not need to seek counseling services or were not willing to seek counseling.

A similar study by Yakunina and Weigold (2011), showed that Asian international students are less willing to seek psychological services when they have negative attitudes towards counseling. Some of the factors that deter Asian international

students from seeking counseling include stigma concerns, which refer to the fear of criticism because of seeking counseling (Vogel, Wade, & Ascherman, 2009). Asian values may also be a factor in seeking counseling for Asian international students. Some Asian cultures place importance on collectivism and emotional self-control, while Western cultures emphasize emotional expression and individualism (Yakunina & Weigold, 2011). The findings from this study indicated that Asian values were associated with help-seeking behaviors. Students that held onto traditional values were less likely to have positive attitudes towards counseling, making them less likely to seek professional help.

Taken together, the results from these studies has indicated that while International students do have difficulties in their adjustment to college, they typically do not seek counseling as a result of negative attitudes, cultural values, and unwillingness to seek counseling. Therefore, a new counseling approach including alternative strategies to enhance Asian international students' help seeking behaviors and college adjustment should be determined.

A counseling outreach approach

Many students do not access counseling center services in colleges and universities (Boone & Eells, 2008). Therefore, professionals in counseling centers are faced with the challenge of understanding new ways to assist this student population. The counseling center at Cornell University developed two programs to address this challenge: *Let's Talk* and *Community Consultation and Intervention (CCI)* (Boone & Eells, 2008). The purpose of these programs was to support students that were experiencing stress by offering consultations outside of the counseling center for all students, but mainly to target those that do not seek counseling. *Let's Talk*, also provided

walk-in sessions with counselors in different locations around campus. *CCI* was staffed by two psychologists who worked with faculty and staff on ways to support students who are struggling with environmental and emotional challenges. The psychologists also provided them with resources and ways to advocate for students. These two programs were beneficial for students and provided a new approach in counseling students.

Boone, Edwards, Haltom, Hill, Liang, et al. (2011), described *Let's Talk* as a counseling center outreach program to assist students who are less likely to seek counseling, or don't know about services available to them. A lot of students do not seek counseling due to stigma, lack of awareness of services, and lack of culturally appropriate services (Eisenberg, Golberstein, & Gollust, 2007). Some suggestions have been made to provide counseling alternatives that address the needs, help-seeking styles and unique characteristics of specific populations (Boone et al., 2011). Counselors can adopt different types of nontraditional roles to advocate for students that do not seek counseling but need it. For instance, counselors can work outside their offices and are encouraged to engage in practices that are different from the typical traditional style of meeting with students in the counseling center. Some of these practices include conducting workshops or presentations, consultations, and other intervention strategies to target specific student populations (Boone et al., 2011).

Mier, Boone, and Shropshire (2008) stated that students may be more comfortable with a flexible and less informal type of counseling that still provides contact between the counselor and the student. The counseling does not necessarily need to be in a counseling office. It can be at the dorms or in the student union of the college campus. The role of the counselor would be focused on helping students with any stressors that may lead to

depression or academic or adjustment problems (Mier et al., 2008). While students would know that these individuals are counselors, they may be more likely to meet with them and talk without feeling that they are going through counseling because the setting is not as intimidating as being in a counseling center. After meeting with a counselor, some students may feel less reluctant to seek counseling. They may realize that talking to a counselor can be beneficial and that it is less frightening than they thought. Therefore, they might be more comfortable with setting up an appointment or visiting the counseling center. Other students, may still avoid counseling, but with this new approach, they still received help through a less formal type of counseling.

The counseling outreach program *Let's talk* was established due to the awareness of counselors and student affairs professionals that many students did not use the counseling center at Cornell University (Boone et al., 2011). Although they promoted their services to make the center more visible and user-friendly, access levels remained unchanged. Student affairs professionals working with students at Cornell University saw the emotional and academic challenges their students were experiencing. They would then refer students to counseling services, but students would not accept or take the opportunity to go to counseling. Many of them were international students. Therefore, a program had to be implemented to promote the counseling center services.

The purpose of creating *Let's talk* was to increase the interactions between counselors and students through a new service called informal consultation. Traditional counseling differs from informal consultation in making it more acceptable for students. The concept of informal consultation came from observing that students would be open to attending outreach activities and starting personal and private conversations with

counselors afterwards instead of just going to counseling. Having that pre-counseling conversation was essential for students to have a second conversation with counselors and meet with them in the counseling center (Boone et al., 2011). Informal consultations also seemed to serve as a way to engage students without any paperwork, appointments, or disclosing students' names. It also assisted students who were feeling uncomfortable about walking into a counseling center. *Let's talk* served as more than just a drop-in service. There was no intake process; therefore, students had the freedom to talk about anything. Counselors focused on the present needs of the students, whether it was information about resources, dealing with any problems, or a need for someone to just listen (Boone et al., 2011). The meetings ranged from 10 minutes to an hour. Many of the meetings with students were not crisis situations but if they were, counselors had immediate access to phones and campus police (Boone et al., 2011). It is critical to have resources available in case a student is in crisis because some students may display depression symptoms or signs of overwhelming stress.

In regards to the use of program services, 296 people visited in 2009-2010 and there were a total of 454 visits. The majority of the visitors came once to talk with the counselors but the average number of visits per visitor was 1.5 (Boone et al., 2011). Forty-two percent of the visitors were referred to traditional counseling after speaking to a counselor. Even though the purpose is to assist students that do not typically seek counseling, having the informal consultations served as a bridge for students to go to counseling. Some students may still be resistant to seek counseling but at least they were able to benefit from seeing a counselor during the informal consultation. *Let's talk* served 91 white students, 17 black students, 16 Hispanic students, 44 Asian/ Pacific Islander

students, 2 American Indian or Alaska Native students, 10 multiracial or biracial students and 29 students that did not identify their ethnicity (Boone et al., 2011). They also served 72 international students from the 296 people. The data collected indicated that 57 % of students who used *Let's talk's* services were international students or students of color.

Many students did utilize the program, which makes it an effective intervention because of the diversity of students it served. The program was beneficial for students because they did not have to make any appointments to see a counselor and they were not required to do an intake or participate in a formal type of counseling (Boone et al., 2011). *Let's talk* served a high percentage of international students and students of color, which may suggest that it is serving the needs of underserved populations. Compared to counseling, the program offered flexibility of location and hours, catered to differing help-seeking styles, and may have reduced stigma or other impediments associated with traditional counseling (Boone et al., 2011). The program also addressed the needs of students who have different types of help-seeking behaviors. Additionally, the program was effective because students felt that the *Let's talk* was easier for them than going to counseling (Boone et al., 2011). Also, a high percentage of international students and students of color used this type of service. Seventeen colleges and universities were inspired by this program and decided to implement programs similar to *Let's talk*.

The program seems to be successful in serving different types of populations including international students. Implementing a program specifically for international students can help them reduce any negative attitudes and stigma towards seeking help. With a program similar to *Let's talk*, students might be willing to seek counseling. This is critical considering that many international students are facing difficulties with

adjustment in their first year of college and other challenges that differ from domestic students such as language difficulties, social support, and homesickness. International students might prefer a less informal type of counseling and designing a program similar to *Let's talk* might meet their needs. They might make the decision to seek traditional counseling but having a counseling outreach program may introduce international students to counseling and the benefits of it to help them in their first year of college. Counselors will also learn ways to work with different types of students and increase their competence in being multiculturally competent when it comes to counseling international students. Since international students tend to underutilize counseling centers at universities, a counselor outreach program may be a better approach for them.

Schlossberg's theory of Marginality and Mattering

Schlossberg's theory focused on the significant impact of involvement in learning as well as student satisfaction at institutions and making meaningful relationships at institutions. The involvement in programs and activities of the campus can influence student satisfaction of the college (Schlossberg, 1989). Schlossberg's theory consists of five constructs: (a) attention, (b) importance, (c) ego-extension, (d) dependence, and (e) appreciation (Schlossberg, 1989). *Attention* refers to feeling interested in another. *Importance* signifies the belief that someone cares about what an individual does or thinks. *Ego-extension* refers to the belief that others will be proud of an individual's accomplishments or disappointed by an individual's failures. *Dependence* is the belief that one is needed. Finally, *appreciation* is the belief that an individual's efforts are recognized. The concept of *marginalization* involves the perception that one does not

belong or fit in, is not significant to others, or is not needed by others (Schlossberg, 1989).

With the various challenges that international students experience, they may feel marginalized because their needs are not being met. Because international students may underutilize counseling services, a new approach to serve students that does not involve traditional counseling is needed. If universities provide alternative strategies for counseling, this may reduce or ease students' transition to college and therefore, it may increase their satisfaction at the university. By creating new support services for international students, universities are demonstrating their interest in increasing student satisfaction. International students need to feel welcome at their host universities. As college counseling and student affairs professionals, it is important to understand different strategies and interventions that will impact their help-seeking behaviors while understanding how to meet the needs of diverse students.

Interventions

Group Counseling

In addition to a counseling outreach program, group counseling may also be beneficial for international students with college adjustment challenges. Since many international students underutilize counseling centers, a group-oriented approach might be effective to address the needs of this population (Johnson & Sandhu, 2007). Some of the benefits of a group-oriented approach include reducing cultural isolation, increasing social support, and validating the challenges of international students (Dipeolu, Kang, and Cooper, 2007). These benefits help international students with their overall adjustment in college by using this specific counseling approach.

Yakunina, Weigold, and McCarthy (2011) suggested that before conducting a group for international students, professionals need to choose the type of group that they want to have. There are different types of groups such as (a) goal-oriented, (b) psychoeducational, (c) counseling, and (d) psychotherapeutic. Implementing a combination of a psychoeducational and counseling support group can be most beneficial for international students. Yakunina et al., (2011) also suggested that practitioners should consider the meeting locations for group counseling for international students. Practitioners can facilitate a group in settings that are not near a counseling center to be sensitive to international students' stigma concerns. An ideal place to conduct a group can be the international student office. It is a pre-established safe place where international students may feel comfortable, supported, and welcomed.

Intercultural contact

International students have additional challenges starting college because they are not familiar with the cultural environment and the language and education system are different (Campbell, 2012). However, having a source of social support can benefit international students during their adjustment to college. Campbell (2012) described a buddy project that was used to connect international students with domestic students. Various studies have indicated that peer support programs such as peer mentoring, buddy projects, and peer networks assist students in their adjustment to a new environment and increasing social integration to the campus (Campbell, 2012). The buddy project took place at a university in New Zealand in an intercultural communication course. The program paired 30 domestic students with 30 international students (Campbell, 2012). The international students who were part of the study were from China, the United States,

Papua New Guinea, Singapore, Vietnam, Japan, Germany, Malaysia, and India. Students were in contact for twelve weeks and had face-to-face meetings on and off campus.

The purpose of the program was to increase international students' social networks. The domestic students had to write about (a) what they learned about their buddy and their transition, (b) what they learned about their intercultural communication competence, and (c) whether concepts they learned in class helped them understand their buddies' transition and adjustment challenges (Campbell, 2012). The students' reports were used to analyze the outcomes of the project. The findings from these reports indicated that there were both positive outcomes and challenges. The positive outcomes were how domestic students gained an understanding of some of the challenges that international students encounter such as difficulty making friends and learning the language (Campbell, 2012). Some of the challenges of this project were that some students had not volunteered to be part of it and therefore some interactions with their buddies were forced and not genuine. Students felt like they would prefer that students choose to participate; however, they also felt that if students had the option, some would not volunteer and therefore, they would not benefit from intercultural communication (Campbell, 2012). Students also felt they were challenged because they had to get out of their comfort zone and communicate with someone from a different culture. Another challenge was finding time to meet with their buddies because both international students and host students were full-time students. Many of them also worked part-time which made it difficult to schedule times to meet face-to-face (Campbell, 2012).

Future Research

Much of the research focuses on Asian international students, which only provides adequate information but not enough to understand alternative approaches for all international students. It would be useful to have more research on different cultural groups other than Asian international students. Some of the research also stated that cultural values play an important role in help seeking behaviors, specifically for Asian international students. It would be important to analyze cultural factors in depth to help students become more comfortable with seeking professional help. For example, using testimonies from previous clients, particularly Asian international students and their families (Lee et al., 2014). These testimonies can help reduce the stigma correlated with accessing mental health counseling services.

International students can benefit from being part of a program where they are paired with their American peers to help them transition to the United States and decrease their acculturative stress (Tung, 2011). Through outreach and educational programs held in residence halls, international student offices, and student centers, as well as during new student orientation, awareness about counseling services will be more likely to reach international students (Nilsson, Butler, Shouse & Joshi, 2008). In order to serve international students, college counseling and mental health professionals need to find alternative methods to help students and meet their needs, whether it is implementing a counseling outreach program, a counseling support group, or a peer group for international students. These interventions will not only increase international students' help-seeking behaviors but will also address their adjustment difficulties in their first year of college.

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