Asian International Students' non-seeking behavior and institutional shortcomings regarding

Mental Health Counseling

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Abstract

Since U.S. institutions of higher education welcome and actively recruit international students, the number of Asian international students on U. S. college campuses has increased and will continue to increase. Asian international students experience unique stressors which are more complicated and difficult compared to stressors of their American peers. However, U.S. institutions do not pay attention to Asian International students' needs for psychological health counseling. Even though there is a need for mental health counseling to help these populations to adjust to U.S. campus culture, they tend to underutilize formal mental health counseling from universities because of their cognitive and cultural resistance, language barriers, as well as institutional ignorance and neglect in addressing their unique needs. Instead of blaming Asian international students for non-seeking behavior in mental health counseling, it is time for institutions to take ownership for actively promoting psychological health counseling services and creating a hiring policy on multiculturally and linguistically competent student affairs professionals including counselors in order to lessen AISs' stress and enhance their success.

Keywords: Asian international students, mental health counseling, non-seeking behavior, hiring policy, higher education, student affairs, stressors

Asian International Students' Non-seeking Behavior and Institutional Shortcomings regarding

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The number of international students on U. S. college campuses has increased and will continue to increase since U.S. institutions of higher education welcome and actively recruit international students (Lee, Koeske, & Sales, 2004; Tung, 2011). According to the Institute of International Education (2010), during the 2009-2010 school year, about 691,000 international students registered in numerous colleges and universities in the U.S., demonstrating a 3% surge over the previous year. Approximately 60% of all international students come from Asian countries, the majority of whom are from China, South Korea, and India (Institute of International Education, 2010; Tung, 2011). Because international students pay a premium price for tuition, institutions of higher education would like to increase recruiting from these populations in an effort to address shortfalls in their budgets (Vickers & Bekhradnia, 2007).

As I learned from College Student Retention Theory class discussion, adapting to U.S. college culture is stressful, even for domestic students (Hyun, Quinn, Madon, & Lustig, 2007; Mori, 2000). Furthermore, research reveals that international students experience more complications and difficulties at the university than their American peers (Hyun et al., 2007; Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002). Many studies show that those students with the lowest levels of acculturation suffer the greatest levels of stress while in college and the most psychological distress (Constantine, Okazaki, & Utsey, 2004; Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002; Kearney, Draper, & Baron, 2005; Swagler & Ellis, 2003; Wilton & Constantine, 2003).

As an Asian International student (AIS), I have experienced many of the same stressful situations described in the research due to English language barriers, academic struggles, cultural adaptation, problematic perfectionism, lack of social supports, homesickness, and discrimination (Chavajay & Skowronek, 2008; Constantine et al., 2004; Lee et al., 2004; Nilsson, Butler,

Shouse, & Joshi, 2008; Park-Saltzman, Wada, & Mogami, 2012; Wei et al., 2007). My experience echoes what researchers have found. AISs count on their peer networks or academic advisors instead of mental counselors for supporting their unique individual needs (Kim, 2006; Toyokawa, & Toyokawa, 2002). Relatedly, AISs tend to underutilize formal mental health counseling from universities (Yoon & Jepsen, 2008; Zhang & Dixon, 2003) because of their cognitive and cultural resistance, language barriers (Tung, 2011), as well as institutional ignorance and neglect in addressing their unique needs: lack of awareness about the accessibility of services (Hyun et al., 2007), and lack of quality and effectiveness of counselors (Abe, Talbot, & Geelhoed, 1998). Scholars tend to blame AISs for not seeking mental health counseling; however, researchers have not examined institutional responsibilities. In this paper, I will describe the unique stressors that AISs often encounter in post-secondary education in the U.S., the reasons that they do not seek mental health counseling, and the need for institutional responsibility, given the unique stressors that this population faces, so that AISs can benefit from psychological counseling.

I will consider both four-year undergraduate and graduate AISs because of the limited research that has been conducted on AISs' mental health counseling. Additionally, international students at undergraduate and graduate levels may share some common stressors (Yang, 2010). For the purpose of this paper, I use the term Asians as "A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia and the Indian Subcontinent. This includes people from China, Japan, Korea, the Philippine Islands, India and Vietnam (Common Data Set 2011-2012, p. 26). Furthermore, for the purposes of institutions, international students are defined as in general university admissions as, "A person who is not a citizen, national, or permanent resident of the United States and who is in this country on a visa or temporary basis and does not have the right to remain indefinitely" (Brown, 2005).

In terms of mental counseling, the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (1997) describes three main functions of counseling services: preventive, developmental and remedial. Similarly, the Accreditation Standards for University and College Counseling Centers by the International Association of Counseling Services (Kiracofe, Donn, & Yamada, 1994) also suggest three similar roles for the counseling services:

> [1] Providing counseling/therapy to students experiencing personal adjustment and/or psychological problems that require professional attention;…[2] the preventive role of assisting students in identifying and learning skills which will assist them in effectively meeting their educational and life goals… [3] contributing to a campus environment that facilitates the healthy growth and development of students. (Kiracofe et al., 1994, p.38)

These main functions of mental health counseling help to lessen AISs' unique stressors which I will describe below.

Asian International Students' Unique Stressors

The literature illustrates that most international students encounter distinctive challenges and difficulties when they arrive in universities in the U.S. (Overzat, 2011; Hechanova-Alampay, Beehr, Christiansen, & Horn, 2002). Dao, Lee, and Chang (2007) posit that AISs encounter psychological distress at the same rate, or an even higher rate, than majority culture students. Prior to understanding the reasons for AISs' non-seeking behavior for psychological health counseling, it is important to be aware of the unique stressors that AISs encounter: culture shock, conflict of ideology, language barriers, academic concerns, sense of loss and isolation, ethnic discrimination, and legal status and financial difficulties (Dao et al., 2007; Mori, 2000) which would logically place them in a position to need mental health counseling and its benefits.

Culture Shock

Many scholars define the procedure of adjusting to, adapting to, and becoming immersed into the main social culture as *acculturation* (Chung, Kim, & Abreu, 2004; Spector, 2008). Associated with *acculturation*, AISs frequently encounter a variety of academic and cultural difficulties and challenges (Hechanova-Alampay, Beehr, Christiansen, & Van Horn, 2002; Mori, 2000; Olivas, 2006; Olivas & Li, 2006; Tung, 2011). For instance, academic challenges come from the differences between education systems in their home countries and the U.S.: oral participation, pop quizzes, and recognition on level of authority (Overzat, 2011, Mori, 2001). As a consequence, numerous AISs deal with common acculturative stresses in college settings (Poyrazli, Kavanaugh, Baker, & Al-Timimi, 2004; Tung, 2011), which is described as culture shock (Overzat, 2011; Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001).

Recent studies of culture shock offer four segments: *honeymoon, crisis, reorientation*, and *adaptation* (Pedersen, 1995; Ward et al., 2001). There is a cyclical nature and overlap to these stages. In the *honeymoon* stage, AISs have positive expectations and excitement for the new host culture. In the *crisis* stage that often follows, however, AISs may feel frustration and disappointment and exposure to new ways of living while new cultural norms pose challenges during new cross culture transition, creating culture shock and stress. After the *crisis* stage, AISs become reoriented to the host culture during the *reorientation* stage. They experience trial and error through transitioning to a new culture. In the *reorientation* phase, AISs develop the attitude and skills which are needed for effective problem solving in the new culture. In this stage, social support and counselors have a key role in assisting them to resolve challenges associated with cross-cultural transition. The last culture shock stage is *adaptation.* It includes four different styles (Arthur, 2004; Berry, 1997): *assimilation* (individuals do not want or hold their own culture and adapt to the new culture), *separation* (individuals maintain their own culture but do

not engage in the new culture), *marginalization* (individuals are unable to keep their own culture nor do they join the new culture), and *integration* (individuals maintain some degree of their own culture as well as actively engaging into the new culture). While AISs are coping with different stages of culture shock, they may manifest stress related symptoms (see Appendix A) which logically indicate a need for this population for psychological support.

Conflict of Ideology: Collectivism vs. Individualism

AISs face more acculturative stress than European international students due to a larger cultural gap between the Asian culture and American culture (Lee et al., 2004). Most AISs arrive from a society oriented to collectivism (Sadeghi, Fischer, & House, 2003) which emphasizes relation to the group submersion of personal goals for the good of the whole (Triandis, 2001), rather than individualism which entails autonomy, independence, and self-fulfillment (Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002). As a result, AISs' values conflict with individualism which is one of the core values present in educational institutions in the U. S. The battle between those values causes acculturative stress for AISs (Arthur, 2004). As Sadeghi et al. (2003) address, it is critical for student affairs professionals, including psychological health counselors who are fully accustomed to the U.S. value system not to force their individualism onto AISs.

Language barriers

In addition to culture shock and dealing with ideological conflict, language barriers are another major root of anxiety for AISs (Wan, 2001). Difficulties in communication during daily routines cause stress (Wan, 2001). Little research exists that examines the connection between language barriers and general self-confidence in adjusting to the U.S. as an international student. However, some scholars indicate there may be a link between them (Dao et al., 2007; Overzat, 2011). Confidence in English proficiency may have a positive relationship to AISs' ability to cope with challenges in academic and social circumstances, which results in less anxiety (Kim,

2006). To illustrate, Dao et al. (2007) found that Taiwanese international students face greater jeopardy for depression than their American counterparts because they see their English fluency at a lower level. Moreover, Yan and Berliner's (2009) interview transcripts show Chinese International students' language deficiency and frustration negatively affects communication with their advisors. One student commented:

> I felt very stressed talking to my advisor. On one hand, due to limited command of English, I had no idea what topics are appropriate to talk about, how to make some jokes or show a sense of humor like American students do, or how to talk informally yet appropriately; on the other hand, I have difficulty understanding my advisor's jokes or off-topic conversations. I was worried about that my slow responses might make him think that I lacked talent. However, the more I wanted to speak fluently and act smartly, the more awkward and nervous I looked as I talked to him. As a result of over-stress, I could not even speak English the way I normally could (Yan & Berliner, 2009, p. 8).

As the previous example of coping with language barriers illustrates, it is a main source of anxiety for AISs and it causes stress (Perkins, 1977; Tidwell & Hanassab, 2007; Wan, 2001). Language barrier stressors themselves could explain why AISs often need counseling. Educators in higher education should be aware of fear and anxiety from the individuals' lack of confidence in English even though they appear to be holding firm in English communication skills. Overzat (2011) mentions an aspect of this problem which I too have experienced, AISs are not continuously aware that they are communicating well, they could experience distress that their communication in English might not come across efficiently. Language barriers for AISs are largely related with lower academic performance as well which further increases stress levels (Overzat, 2011).

Academic Concerns

AISs also face difficulties dealing with an unfamiliar educational system, frustration from perfectionism, a sense of loss and isolation, ethnic discrimination, and legal status issues as well as financial difficulties.

Different educational system. Even though educators in Asian countries have started to emphasize creativity and participation, those methods are not highly practiced in Asian educational systems. However, they are a critical component of the classroom experiences in North America (Overzat, 2011). AISs tend to struggle in the U.S. classroom in higher education (DiAngelo, 2006), due to unfamiliarity with the educational system which requires actively contributing in informal conversation, taking quizzes, and typing innovative essays (Mori, 2000). Since AISs are accustomed to a more structured classroom environment than is present in the U.S., they often experience lack of success in the less-structured U.S. classroom. Academic difficulties and frustration lead to a risk of depression and lower self-esteem (Overzat, 2011).

Academic performance associated with perfectionism. In addition to adjusting to a new higher education system in the U.S., academic performance along with perfectionism is also a major stressor for AISs (Cheng, 2001). Perfectionism is also derived by the culture of collectivism in which students' success reflects positively on parents. It is common that these populations land on campuses with considerable pressure to excel, as a result of extremely high expectations for success (Misra, Crist, & Burant, 2003). For instance, as an AIS, I try my best to earn the best grades from my school to meet my parents' expectations. When my parents are happy with my intellectual growth with great grades, I am satisfied and proud of myself. However, sometimes, satisfying my parents is difficult and stressful. Nilsson et al. (2008) posit that the combination of acculturation and perfectionism drastically escalates AISs' stress levels.

Other researchers argue that extreme perfectionism is largely related to increasing psychological concerns, such as anxiety, hopelessness and depression (Castro & Rice, 2003; Chang, 1998; Klibert, Langhinrichsen-Rohling, & Saito, 2005) and result in lower academic performance (Cheng, 2001). Frost et al. (2001) suggest several sub-components affecting perfectionism: parental expectations and parental criticism (students' awareness of parental anticipations and assessment of parental criticism when failure happens), doubts about performance (worries of not finishing tasks satisfactorily), personal desire for higher standards and status, and obsessing over mistakes (individual works hard to avoid failure instead of the need to achieve). As Chang (1998) states, AISs experience higher distress from parental expectations and anxiety over faults than American students.

Sense of Loss and Social Isolation

While many researchers demonstrate that obtaining a social support system helps significantly to adapt to the host culture (Maundeni, 2001; Yeh & Inose, 2003), many AISs experience a number of cultural losses including their family and social support, sense of belonging, familiar foods and customs, as part of their culture (Johnson & Sandhu, 2007). Not only do AISs feel a sense of loss from their home country, but they also face social isolation on campuses in the U.S. For instance, many AISs report difficulties establishing and maintaining adequate social support, and it causes stress (Yan & Berliner, 2011). Although AISs might want to form relationships with Americans, language barriers might be a main obstacle to keeping up the networks (Johnson & Sandhu, 2007). Moreover, even after AISs make initial contacts, cultural differences between social relationships in North America and their home county cause problems and result in high potential for miscommunication, misinterpretation, and frustration in cross-cultural relationships (Mori, 2000). Because of the stress of losing social support from their

countries of origin and difficultly obtaining social support in the U.S. (Zhai, 2004), many AISs could benefit from mental health counseling even though they do not seek it.

Ethnic Discrimination

Another challenge for AISs, like other U.S. racial minorities, is racial discrimination (Constantine, Kindaichi, Okazaki, Gainor, & Baden, 2005; Rahman & Rollock, 2004). In a qualitative study by Swagler and Ellis (2003), Taiwanese international students reported their typical experiences of ethnic discrimination. One student mentioned:

> When I first came here, sometimes I feel that there is a racial discrimination. I was aware that I may be different skin color or maybe English is not my first language. Sometimes I feel that I let people intimidate me because I know that I'm not a native speaker and I look different.[…] When you don't really understand what clerks mean, especially when they talk very fast. I try to repeat their words. They just show some impatience and treat you like, you an idiot or what…. Then they just talk like that and I feel very bad about it, I will think I will never come here again. (Swagler & Ellis, 2003, p. 432, p. 431)

This student voice demonstrates the racism causes stress and emotional damage. Not only did this Taiwanese international student experience personal hostility, but Arthur (2004) and Harrell (2000) also state that institutional discrimination and racism are evident in the policies, practices, and curriculum. For example, policies affecting employment for international students may appear on the surface to create opportunities for them; however, the reality of hiring practice is exceptionally restricting and qualifications for employment typically favor students who have local work experience, which means international students face unequal terms in the hiring process (Arthur, 2004). Both individual and institutional discrimination can cause helplessness, lessened self-esteem, or depression (Alvarez, Sanematsu, Woo, Espinueva, & Kongthong, 2006;

Greene, Way, & Pahl, 2006; Lee, 2003, 2005; Liang, Alvarez, Juang, & Liang, 2007; Liang, Li, & Kim, 2004; Liang & Fassinger, 2008).

Many international students have not yet established psychological mechanisms for dealing with being a minority because they have always experienced being a member of a dominant group in their country of origin (Yang, Maddux, & Smaby, 2006). Moreover, since many AISs derive from homogenous societies, they have no chance to develop a discrete ethnic identity. On the other hand, AISs who develop a solid sense of ethnic identity may face a conflicting view of their identity from U.S. residents on campuses. AISs might assess themselves quite differently than the majority population who views AISs in a certain way. It is critical to be aware of these possible variances while counseling AISs who have their unique stories (Overzat, 2011).

Financial Difficulties

Financial burdens are another source of stress for AISs (Dao et al., 2007; Mori, 2000; Offstein, Larson, McNeill, & Mwale, 2004). Even though AISs have to pay out of state tuition (David & Humphrey, 2000) or tuition for international students which is usually much more than out of state tuition (Vickers & Bekhradnia, 2007), they are not eligible for financial aid (David & Humphrey, 2000). Additionally, AISs have legal constraints concerning work and school opportunities (Yang et al., 2006). I thought that it was impossible for AISs to have financial difficulties because they should have sufficient funds or sponsorship to receive a legal student visa through U.S. homeland security. However, research shows that this is not always the case because monetary exchange rates vary. For instance, the U. S. dollar increased 64% during Asia's economic crisis from 1996 to 1998 (David & Humphrey, 2000). It significantly affected AISs. Clearly, these students can be distressed because of financial difficulties (Dao et al., 2007; Mori, 2000; Offstein et al., 2004).

Reasons for AISs' Non-Seeking Behavior

Due to all the stressors which AISs encounter (culture shock, conflict of ideology, language barriers, academic concerns, sense of loss and isolation, ethnic discrimination, and financial difficulties), it is logical that AISs could benefit from psychological counseling. However, much research has addressed the fact that AISs are underserved with regard to psychological counseling (Chang & Chang, 2004; Yakushko, Davidson, & Sanford-Martens, 2008) and are less likely to seek counseling than their U.S counterparts (Zhang & Dixon, 2003). Nevertheless, rarely has research discussed what institutions need to do as the responsible party, instead, much of the literature shifts responsibilities to AISs' cognitive and cultural stigmas as reasons for not utilizing mental health counseling (Zhang & Dixon, 2003). Before addressing how institutions can improve their services in mental health counseling such as proactively promoting services, possibly renaming said services, and reviewing hiring policy, I will review literature on cognitive and cultural aspects for AISs' non-seeking behavior (Vogel, Wade, & Ascheman, 2009; Yakunina & Weigold, 2011), followed by institutional approaches which need to address the lack of counseling information to AISs and the lack of culturally and linguistically competent counselors on U.S. campuses (Frey & Roysircar, 2006; Leong, Wagner and Tata, 1995).

Asian International Students Perspective

In reviewing literature, AISs are reluctant to seek mental health counseling. Researchers address cultural factors such as negative attitude and stigma and cognitive factors such as Asian values and loss of face.

Cognitive factors in non-seeking behavior. As Yakunina and Weigold (2011) indicate, little research has reviewed AISs' counseling-seeking intentions; however, some scholars indicate that AISs have low help-seeking intentions (Hyun et al., 2007; Zhang & Dixon, 2003).

Many researchers (Yakunina & Weigold, 2011; Zhang & Dixon, 2003) highlight that cognitive factors, such as counseling attitudes and stigma concerns, influence AISs' help-seeking behaviors. In addition, AISs have more negative attitudes toward counseling compared to their U.S. peers (Yoon & Jepsen, 2008), which translates into lower intentions for help-seeking and results in decreased use of mental counseling services (Yakunina & Weigold, 2011).

Negative attitudes toward seeking counseling: Self-concealment. In Asian cultures, self-concealment is more valued than in American culture (Liao, Rounds, & Klein, 2005), therefore, AISs might hesitate to discuss their problematic feelings with a stranger, including a counselor unless the counselor makes an effort to become friends with the AISs. Instead, as Liao et al. (2005), Zahi (2002), and Hyun et al. (2007) state, these populations feel more comfortable turning to their friends and family during challenging periods. Even though faith in friends and family is a healthy approach, professional counseling in college might be of greater assistance for higher levels of anxiety and stress (Overzat, 2011).

Stigmas. In addition to negative attitudes toward seeking mental counseling, AISs also hesitate to utilize mental health counseling because of stigmas (Shea & Yeh, 2008) associated with mental health issues. Vogel et al. (2009) refer to a *stigma* as the fear and distress of being destructively judged by surroundings due to seeking psychological counseling. As an AIS, I did not benefit from mental health counseling because the university did not inform me about the availability of counseling services. However, even if I had known about the existence of mental health counseling, I am not sure I would have utilized it because of the stigma and mistrust of the counselors. In fact, according to Yoon & Jepsen (2008), AISs hold a larger stigma than their U.S. peers and European international students towards mental health counseling, due to collectivism (Kim, 2007; Miville & Constantine, 2007). Not only cognitive aspects, but cultural variables influence AISs' behavior toward seeking mental health counseling.

Cultural factors in non-seeking behavior. Beyond cognitive variables, AISs are hesitant to seek mental health counseling because of cultural beliefs based in Asian values and losing face.

Asian values. Many scholars (Kim, 2007; Zhang & Dixon, 2003) state that the Western culture's basis for mental health counseling which highlights individualism, assertiveness, independence, and psychological expression, conflicts with Asian values. Most Asian cultures endorse collectivism, self-control of emotion, family appreciation, and social conformism (Kim, 2007; Kim, Li & Ng, 2005). These Asian beliefs are a significant predictor of AISs' intentions to seek counseling. Many researchers (Kim, 2007; Miville & Constantine, 2007) indicate that the different beliefs and values of AISs and counselors result in an AIS's identifying mental health counseling at the university as insensitive to home culture. As a result, impressions of culturally insensitive counselors lead to negative counseling attitudes which end up in lower help-seeking intentions of AISs (Kim, 2007; Miville & Constantine, 2007).

Loss of face. Another predictor of low seeking behavior for mental health counseling of AISs is *loss of face.* According to Zane and Yeh (2002), loss of face is defined as losing individual social prestige and status as a consequence of breaking traditional cultural norms and standards. In most traditional Asian cultures, seeking or getting mental health counseling is often stigmatized and could involve loss of face. Even though not many existing researchers have studied loss of face distress among AISs**,** fears of loss of face might discourage counseling seeking behavior in this population (Gong, Gage, & Tacata, 2003; Zayco, 2009).

Some AISs abstain from seeking counseling due to many reasons, including language barriers, cognitive and cultural barriers as mentioned above. However, it is also critical to consider institutional perceptions. I found that there was much more research that blames AISs

for their underutilization of mental counseling services. It is essential that researchers examine institutional perspectives regarding AISs' hesitations to seek psychological counseling.

Institutional Approach

While there is an abundance of research on stressors of AISs and their shortcomings in not seeking counseling, relatively little research has examined institutional responsibility toward providing AISs with mental health counseling. In this section, I will address the lack of mental health counseling information for AISs, followed by the lack of culturally and linguistically qualified counselors for AISs.

Lack of mental health counseling information. Similar to other AISs, I have struggled with cultural adjustment and I am still dealing with racial discrimination on campus. However, I was never informed about mental health counseling services that I could possibly benefit from. Many researchers (Buggey, 2007; Hyun et al., 2007; Zhang & Dixon, 2003) have addressed the issue of unawareness among AISs' mental health counseling (see Appendix B) but attribute AISs' non-seeking behavior to cultural stigmas rather than institutional responsibility.

Lack of culturally and linguistically competent counselors. As many scholars propose, educators in higher education including mental counselors need to increase cultural competence (Fouad, 1991; Shihwe & Kim, 2010). Cultural competence contains a cognizance of students' cultural values and respect for cultural differences, knowledge of their cultures and country of origin, understanding of their verbal and nonverbal reactions as well as willingness to learn about their cultures (Fouad, 1991; Pedersen, 1991; Sue et al., 1982; Yan & Berliner, 2009).

Even though many higher education practitioners recognize multicultural competency as critical, almost all counselors utilize theories which are rooted in the values of American culture (Zhang & Dixon, 2003). Moreover, even though institutions realize that multiculturally competent counselors are needed (Gim et al., 1991; Shihwe & Kim, 2010), there is no data on

how many counselors are culturally and linguistically competent. Moreover, we are unaware of

any hiring policy that exists on selecting qualified culturally competent counselors and student

affairs practitioners. To illustrate, the counseling center at the University of Utah does not have

specific policies on hiring counselors who have international experiences or for working with

AISs. It is time to create a policy that entails multicultural and linguistical qualifications when

hiring mental health counselors.

Implications and Suggestions

Research on counseling for AISs is limited compared to general international students or

Asian Americans. Furthermore, while some research (Bradley, 2000; Hyun et al. 2007) focused

on international students' stress and mental health, little research examines the needs and

problems of AISs (Mori, 2000). Moreover, student affairs professionals should be aware of the

importance of subgroup variances among Asian populations such as Korean, Chinese, and many

other Asian subcategories (Lee et al., 2004). As I learned from the class discussion in

Intervention in Higher Education, it is critical to be aware of individual differences even if

students might come from the same country. Even though many limits exist on mental health

counseling for AISs as previously listed, it is valuable to address and give advice to AISs at an

institutional level. First, I suggest that AISs should be more open minded toward mental health

counseling and be ready for the difficulties that they might face. Second, I discuss the needs of

promoting mental health counseling, as well as the shortage of culturally and linguistically

competent counselors with special attention to applications with AISs, followed by suggestions

on what institutions should do to resolve the above situations.

For Asian International Students

According to Yan and Berliner (2009), AISs need to actively socialize and participate in

the host culture on campus and adopt an integration strategy as well as deliberately conduct a

cultural transformation. This will help AISs lessen their acculturative stress, and reduce their

cultural and academic adjustment period. Furthermore, AISs should be more open-minded to

seeking counseling and trusting counselors, and be ready to face difficulties when they come to

U.S. colleges and universities. It might be helpful for AISs to read about common stressors from

their institution's website that most AISs encounter before they come to North American

colleges so that they can predict what might happen in their new life in the U.S. college setting.

For Institutions Including Counselors and Student Affairs Professionals

Depending on AISs' challenges and needs, counselors as well as student affairs

professionals providing mental health counseling services need to take a dynamic approach to

serving AISs (Arthur, 2004). Researchers indicate that universities can assist AISs with the

transition to a new system in the U.S. in a variety of ways, including using a primary interview to

delineate a student's viewpoint, conducting workshops or cultural classes for adjusting to

educational and cultural norms on campus (Lee et al., 2004; Nesdale & Todd, 2000; Yan &

Berliner, 2009), or creating a support group such as peer mentoring (Kim, 2006). In addition,

assisting AISs to improve their English proficiency is critical when it comes to attaining and

benefiting from counseling (Ng, 2006; Nilsson & Anderson, 2004; Wedding, McCartney, &

Currey, 2009). One way to help them to be more comfortable with their English proficiency is

for universities to possibly offer tuition-free noncredit English courses during their first year on

campus (Yan & Berliner, 2009). I will now provide some suggestions for institutions as solutions

to blaming AISs' for underutilization of services: not promoting and being proactive on mental

health counseling, and failing to hire culturally and linguistically competent counselors for AISs.

Proactive on promoting mental health counseling. Regardless of the speed of

acculturation of AISs, these populations could benefit from mental health counseling (Overzat,

2011). However, relatively limited research addresses the institutional responsibility for

assisting these populations. Researchers address the issue of deficiency of mental health

counseling (Hyun et al., 2007) for AISs but blame AISs for non-seeking behavior due to

cultural stigmas. As Hyun et al. (2007)'s study illustrates 61% of international graduate

students were aware of counseling services on campus. This percentage is considerably lower

than the 79% of domestic students. From this finding, I detect barriers present during the

transmission of information to international students. It is time for institutions to proactively

promote mental health counseling for this underserved population. In order to prevent a

student from developing problems, periodically checking on a student's wellbeing could be an

essential step (Lee et al. 2004; Wilson, 1996).

Many scholars (Yan & Berliner, 2009; Zhang & Dixon, 2003) suggest that institutions

should better publicize availability of counseling services to AIS by having counseling staff

present at new student orientation meetings. I also suggest that faculty members inform students

about mental health counseling services in the class at the beginning of the semester.

Respecting Asian values and renaming mental health counseling services. As

Yakunina and Weigold (2011) suggest, counseling professionals might need to adjust Western-

based therapy to fit the values of their AISs. For instance, professionals could demonstrate

respect for Asian values while counseling, thereby strengthening the beneficial relationship.

Freire (1970) from one of my Foundations in Higher Education class's reading posits that

> The point of view of libertarian education is for the people to come to feel like masters of
>
> their thinking by discussing the thinking and views of the world explicitly or implicitly
>
> manifest in their own suggestions and those of their comrades (Freire, 1970, p. 124).

As Freire (1970) states Asian International students have ability to think for themselves and

student affairs professionals including mental health counselors can assist these populations by

understanding AISs' cultural differences as well as mental health counselors' own biases. This

process would help to build beneficial and constructive relationships. As a result, AISs would be more likely to persist in counseling. Emphasizing students' confidentiality will help university staff promote counseling usage for AISs (Yakunina & Weigold, 2011). Furthermore, practitioners could frame counseling as a proactive way to promote academic and career success (Yakunina & Weigold, 2011) so that AISs lessen their stigma toward seeking mental health counseling. This framing could attract AISs' desire to honor their families by academic achievement through counseling assistance. Besides respecting Asian values while counseling, I suggest renaming mental health counselors differently for AISs, such as *advisor for well-being*. It might help AISs feel less stigmatized and lessen loss of face concerns on seeking and getting counseling. Institutions also need also to hire multiculturally and linguistically competent university staff and faculty and train them properly. This is a significant responsibility for institutions.

        The importance of multiculturally and linguistically competent counselors. In my Foundations in Higher Education class, I learned about social justice in higher education which entails non-oppression (Freire, 1970; North, 2008). I also learned about inclusiveness and welcoming students on campuses from Multiculturalism and Diversity in Higher Education (Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005; Smith, 2009). These two concepts of social justice and inclusiveness are strongly related to mental health counseling (Vera & Speight, 2003). "Multicultural counseling competence must be about social justice- providing equal access and opportunity, being inclusive, and removing individual and systemic barriers to fair mental health services" (Sue, 2001, p. 801). Many scholars suggest that student affairs practitioners including mental counselors need to increase cultural competence (Constantine et al., 2007; Gim et al., 1991; Yan & Berliner, 2009). For the best practice on campus, institutions need to hire and train multiculturally competent student affairs professionals (Yan & Berliner, 2009).

Training multiculturally and linguistically competent counselors. For working with AIS effectively, student affairs professionals must have a clear understanding of their challenges and difficulties including developmental issues, psychological status, and the cultural circumstances (Hyun et al., 2007). For instance, counselors at the university need to understand the relationship between classroom teaching styles and self-image related with grades in AISs in order to precisely determine the origin of the difficulties and offer the most effective assistance (Overzat, 2011).

In addition, it is an institutional responsibility to have educators including student affairs professionals participate in agency trainings where they learn more about working with diverse groups of students including AISs. Student affairs practitioners including counselors could learn the following through training: becoming more sensitive to cultural differences related to comfort seeking counseling, maintaining awareness of the impact of doing therapy or counseling when English is not the first language, and recognizing the differences that may exist depending on what country the student is coming from.

Non-existence of hiring policy. There is no hiring policy currently on selecting qualified culturally competent counselors and student affairs professionals, specifically for AISs. To illustrate, the counseling center at the University of Utah does not have specific hiring policies on hiring counselors who have international experiences or competency for working with AISs. I recommend that not only should counselors with international experiences and competencies be viewed favorably during the hiring process, but also that it is time to examine policy needs on hiring procedure (Wei et al., 2008). I argue that it is time to create a hiring policy to properly serve AISs. Without a hiring policy for multiculturally and linguistically competent counselors, it is hard to serve AISs appropriately. Preference for multicultural sensitivity and recommendation of multicultural and linguistic competence is not enough.

Conclusion

The number of international students on U. S. college campuses has increased and will continue to increase since U.S. institutions of higher education welcome and actively recruit international students (Lee, Koeske, & Sales, 2004; Tung, 2011). Even though AISs face various difficulties when they are coping with different cultures in U.S. colleges (Constantine & Okazaki, 2004; Mori, 2000; Swagler & Ellis, 2003) such as but not limited to culture shock, language barriers, and different ideology, institutions do not pay adequate attention to AISs' needs for mental counseling. Instead, institutions often blame AISs for non-seeking behavior (Vogel et al., 2009) due to their cognitive and cultural stigma (Yakunina &Weigold, 2011; Zhang &Dixon, 2003), and the fact that they are underserved in mental health counseling (Chang & Chang, 2004;Yahushko et al., 2008). It is time for institutions to take ownership for actively promoting psychological health counseling services and creating a hiring policy on multiculturally and linguistically competent student affairs professionals including mental health counselors in order to lessen AISs' stress and enhance their success.

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Appendix A

Common Psychological and Physiological Symptoms of Culture Shock

Anger	Insecure
Anxiety	Insomnia
Cognitive impairment	Irritability
Confusion	Lack of energy
Curiosity Exhaustion	Loneliness
Defensiveness	Loss of appetite
Depression	Loss of control
Disorientation	Mood Swings
Excitement	Muscle tension
Exhaustion	Overeating
Fatigue	Resentment
Fear	Sadness
Gastrointestinal problems	Sense of loss
Headaches	Unfamiliar body pain
Homesickness	Vague bodily sensations
Inferiority	Withdrawal

(Arthur, 2004, p.28)

Appendix B

Percentage of Graduate Students with Knowledge about Available Mental Health Services and Sources of Information

Measure	International (%)	Domestic (%)
Knowledge of campus counseling services	61.0	78.6[*]
Source of information about campus counseling services[a]		
Web site	20.9	24.2[*]
Orientation	20.2	18.9
Flyer	21.1	18.9
Friend	12.3	14.8
University health center doctor/nurse	8.4	10.0
Other graduate students	5.1	10.0[*]
Graduate assistant	2.2	3.5
Roommate	1.5	1.5
Family	0.4	0.9
Faculty advisor	0.5	1.2[**]
Other	7.8	14.5[*]

[a]For students who reported that they were aware of campus counseling services.
[*]$p < .01$. [**]$p < .10$.

From "Storyboard for Ivan's morning routine," by T. Buggey, Summer 2007, *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, *9*(3), p.151.