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An Investigation Of School Counselor Understanding And Response To Help Seeking Among Second Generation Asian American Students In The Us Public School System

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**AN INVESTIGATION OF SCHOOL COUNSELOR UNDERSTANDING AND
RESPONSE TO HELP SEEKING AMONG SECOND GENERATION ASIAN
AMERICAN STUDENTS IN THE US PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM**

A Dissertation

Presented to

Charles McAdams, EdD, Co-Chair

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The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Sharon Y. Chung

August 2016

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Approved August 2016 by

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my life-long supporters and greatest fans: my mom and dad. Thank you for giving up everything for John and me. Mom, you worked tirelessly to ensure we had a great life. Dad, getting your Ph.D. was always your dream but you couldn't do it because you had to provide for us. Thank you both for all your sacrifices so that I could get this far. I will always try my best to live a life worthy of your sacrifices.

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ABSTRACT

Asian Americans are a rapidly growing population in the US and have high levels of psychological distress. However, Asian Americans tend not to ask for help from mental health professionals in regards to social/emotional issues, including school counselors. Asian American students are typical in terms of their presence within the US mainstream public school system, yet they are atypical in experiencing a variety of stressors and issues such as academic pressures, language and communication difficulties with parents/guardians, acculturative stress, and many more (Chang & Smith, 2015; Mouw & Xie, 1999; Berry, 2005). Despite mental health needs and the growing relevance of this population, research on the Asian American population is limited (Cho & Haslam, 2010). Thus, the purpose of this research study was to gain an understanding of participants' experiences with Asian American students through the lens of the help-seeking model (Cauce et al., 2002). Two high schools and one middle school in a suburban area within the Southeast region of the US were purposefully selected for this study, and from these schools, eight high school counselors and two middle school counselors were interviewed. Participants were specifically asked about interactions, observations, and accommodations pertaining to the help-seeking needs of Asian American students. Data was collected through semi-structured individual interviews,

which were then transcribed and analyzed for themes and conclusions. Four main themes (acculturative stress, school based expectations, lack of mental health counseling, and counselor involvement) with 10 subthemes were extrapolated from the data and confirmed the current literature on the help-seeking needs and processes of Asian American students. The study brought new insights to this topic and provided implications for future practice and research.

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An Investigation of School Counselor Understanding and Response to Help Seeking
Among Second Generation Asian American Students in the US Public School System

*** CHAPTER ONE ***

An Overview of the Research Study

Introduction

Asian Americans are the fastest growing ethnic minority groups within the US, increasing by 43% from 10.2 million to 14.7 million from 2000 to 2010, comprising 4.8% of the total US population. Another 0.9% of individuals in the US reported identifying as Asian in combination with one or more other races (US Census Bureau, 2012). This increase in population growth is consistent from the past 20 years, as Asian Americans comprised more than 10.2 million individuals in the US in 2000, representing a 46% increase from 1990 to 2000 (US Census Bureau, 2002). By 2050, Asians are expected to comprise 8% of the total US population (Passel, 2011). In addition to current Asian Americans living in the US, international Asian students are rapidly traveling to the US to receive better education and will continue to do so in the upcoming years (Cho & Haslam, 2010). The history of Asian people as Americans is complex, encompassing Asian culture brought through various waves of significant events such as immigration, war-related trauma, past and continued discrimination, and acculturative stress (Wong & Fujii, 2004; Chang & Smith, 2015). Given the rapid growth of this population, mental health practitioners should be aware of best practices when working with them.

Asian values such as saving face, withholding emotions, and interpersonal harmony may contribute to the difficulty of recognizing mental health issues within this population (Iwamasa & Hilliard, 1999). Through the years, Asian American families learned to keep issues within the family and therefore tended to be the most underrepresented population within both inpatient and outpatient settings (Snowden &

Cheung, 1990). However, Asian Americans have high rates of psychological distress as compared to other ethnicity groups due to various stressors such as acculturative stress, academic pressures, and counseling stigma within the Asian culture (Berry, 2005; Chang & Smith, 2015; Kim & Omizo, 2003). Thus, Asian American students have a high need for mental health counseling but do not ask for help from professional psychological services (Atkinson & Gim, 1989). For the aforementioned reasons, school counselors must be informed about this population.

Statement of the Problem

Asian American students are typical in terms of their presence within the US mainstream public school system, yet they are atypical in their experiences of balancing both Asian and American expectations on a daily basis. As such, Asian American students experience a variety of stressors and issues such as academic pressures, language and communication difficulties with parents/guardians, acculturative stress, and many more (Chang & Smith, 2015; Mouw & Xie, 1999; Berry, 2005). Although Asian American students work to balance both cultures and make the most of their experiences, these challenges may result in high levels of psychological stresses such as depression, anxiety, and suicide (American Psychological Association, 2012). Ethnic minority groups such as Asian Americans are also more likely than non-ethnic minority groups to keep suicidal ideation private on intake questionnaires and clinical interviews (Chu, Hsieh, & Tokars, 2011). Further, Asian American students are being overlooked by mental health professionals such as school counselors because of their high achievement, low disciplinary issues, and underutilization of mental health services in general. School counselors' lack of multicultural training may also be a contributing factor to why school

counselors may not notice issues within this population (McCarron & Inkelas, 2006; Kim & Omizo, 2003; Sue & Zane, 2009).

Current approaches to understanding the aforementioned issues are scarce, as the Asian American population is not widely researched. Some theoretical models by which counselors can understand how to work with the Asian American population are acculturation theory, the cultural determinants of help-seeking theoretical model, and multicultural education. Acculturation theory is defined as a population adapting to a dominant culture that is different from their own (Berry, 2005). This process of adapting to another's culture, language, behaviors, norms, beliefs, etc. is very difficult and can take years, generations, or even centuries (Berry, 2005). Both first and second generation Asian American people experience acculturation by working to balance Asian and American culture. The theory of acculturation provides a deep understanding of the process by which immigrant populations adapt to the host culture. However, in regards to working with members of this population, acculturation theory only provides an overview of understanding Asian Americans' approaches to seeking mental health services. For example, acculturation theory says that Asian American people may have a difficult time transitioning out of the cultural stigma of counseling. Acculturation theory has not produced research in understanding the actual outcomes of how this stigma impacts Asian Americans' mental health and service utilization.

The cultural determinants of help-seeking (CDHS) model provides a lens of making meaning through people's cultures; certain experiences are emphasized or ignored depending on what the culture says is significant (Arnault, 2009). This lens provides a culturally sensitive perspective on interpreting situations; however, some

situations related to mental health may go unnoticed because of how the culture interprets an issue. While the model is helpful in understanding the significance of experiences based on different cultures, it does not allow for researchers to examine how these experiences positively or negatively impact populations of that culture. For example, in Asian culture, physical symptoms are treated quickly, but issues without physical symptoms are oftentimes ignored. The CDHS model would explain this phenomenon as a result of Asian values: physical symptoms warrant care and attention, but suicidal ideation and other mental health issues bring shame onto the family. The model, however, would not describe the repercussions of the different amount of care placed onto each situation.

Lastly, school counselors are expected to be multiculturally competent when working with a variety of clients (Dodson, 2013). Yet, CACREP (2009) only requires one multicultural counseling course for school counselors. This single course is expected to train school counselors on difficult concepts such as being self-aware of biases, understanding acculturative experiences of diverse clients, and more (CACREP, 2009, Section 2). Furthermore, the multicultural course offers an overview of how to work with all diverse populations (e.g., diverse by race, sexual orientation, SES, etc.) and is unable to provide thorough resources and skills of working with any one specific group of future diverse clients. While some training is more beneficial than none, school counselors are lacking in a deeper understanding of working with diverse populations due to lack of training in graduate programs.

The Current Study

In the current study, a new approach to knowing and meeting Asian American students' needs in the US public school system was considered through the lens of *help-seeking behavior*. Research centered on help-seeking behavior historically assumed that mental health service utilization was the outcome of help-seeking behavior among individuals (Cauce et al., 2002). However, recent research has shifted focus to the process of help-seeking rather than the rates of mental health service utilization. For the current study, the definition of help-seeking was defined by Srebnik, Cauce, and Baydar (1996) as “seeking assistance from mental health services, other formal services, or informal support sources for the purpose of resolving emotional or behavioral problems” (p. 210). The help-seeking model utilized for this study was comprised of three identifiable stages through the help-seeking process: (a) problem recognition, (b) the decision to seek help, and (c) the selection of a help provider. All three stages do not necessarily occur in a linear fashion, but rather undergo an interrelationship among the stages of this process (Cauce et al., 2002). The current study sought to better understand the perceptions of school counselors' experiences with Asian American students through the lens of this model.

Purpose of the Study

Tadlock-Marlo, Zyronski, Asner-Self, and Sheng (2013) assert that school counselors' multicultural competence is not a comprehensively studied field. The quantity of research on immigrant adolescents from East Asian countries is also very limited, and Asian Americans are underrepresented in the literature as compared to other ethnic minorities such as African American and Latin American populations (Cho & Haslam, 2010; Huynh & Fuligni, 2010). The research that currently exists rests on weak

evidence-based practices, and the diversity within Asian cultures has also been underrepresented (Cho & Haslam, 2010). The combination of the lack of research on this population and the questionable multicultural competence and practice of school counselors warrants further investigation in this area. Thus, the purpose of this qualitative research study was to add to the current knowledge based on school counselors working with Asian American student populations in US K-12 public school settings. The study sought to provide a more thorough understanding of school counselors' efforts and outcomes in their work, specifically in regards to Asian American students' progress (or lack thereof) through the help-seeking process.

Research Questions

The following research questions were designed to develop a better understanding of school counselors' experiences and efforts of working with the Asian American student population:

1. How do school counselors working in US K-12 public schools recognize Asian American students' utilization of each of the three steps (problem recognition, decision to seek help, service selection) within the help-seeking model?
2. How do school counselors working in US K-12 public schools accommodate to the unique help seeking needs of Asian American students when providing mental health or other school-related services?

Definition of Terms

Asian American: Person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent, including, for example, Cambodia,

China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam (US Census Bureau, 2010).

First generation Asian American: Foreign-born individuals of Asian descent (Kiang, Perreira, & Fuligni, 2011)

Second generation Asian American: US-born individuals of Asian descent (Kiang, Perreira, & Fuligni, 2011)

Implications of the Study

School counselors have multiple roles on a daily basis and are expected to perform duties that may not have originally been part of their job description (Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). As a result, school counselors commonly experience burnout and stress, which not only impacts them but also the students with whom they work. Thus, school counselors are likely to have difficulty in meeting the needs of each student in their caseload and paying particular attention to specific demographic groups. Without specific knowledge or plans to work with a population, school counselors can easily overlook the needs of struggling students such who do not ask for help, such as Asian American students. Therefore, the data and conclusions drawn from this study may spearhead specific curricula, programs, or interventions for working with Asian American students that school counselors can utilize amidst other important tasks. This study can also provide future research implications about school counselors working with Asian American students. By developing a better understanding of school counselors' conceptualization of this population's needs as well as specific efforts that are being implemented (or not) to work with this population, further proposals and suggestions for future research, cultural considerations, and practical implications for working with Asian

American students can be created for the benefit of the Asian American student population.

Assets and Limitations

The most immediate contribution of this study is the addition of rich data to the sparse literature on school counselors working with Asian American students. Ongoing research in this field will steadily develop practical interventions for school counselors to effectively work with Asian American students and increase mental health awareness and utilization among this population. The sample size of ten school counselors allowed for a comprehensive description of experiences of school counselors as working mental health professionals, thus making the implications of the study generalizable to other school counselors working in similar settings. However, the limitation of this sample size was that the findings may not be as generalizable to school settings of different grade levels, demographics, environments, funding, and other factors not represented through the sample. Other limitations of the study involved biases impacting data, both from the researcher as well as participants in regards to the researcher's and participants' backgrounds and values, as well as subjective interpretation from the researcher when analyzing the data.

The preceding chapter has provided a brief overview of the entire study. Chapter 2 will provide an in-depth, critical analysis of the current literature on the issues of Asian American students, current approaches to understanding the problem, gaps in the current approaches, and a new approach in understanding the problem.

*** CHAPTER TWO ***

A Select Review of the Literature

Asian American Students and Mental Health

Adolescents undergo developmental stresses including exploring ethnic identity (Pahl & Way, 2006). Immigrant-origin adolescents such as Asian American adolescents experience additional stressors related to discrimination and language and cultural challenges (American Psychological Association, 2012). Ruzek, Nguyen, and Herzog (2011) discovered that Asian American students who exhibited more behaviors related to Asian culture than European culture were more likely to report anxiety symptoms. Lastly, a study by Kim, Chen, and Spencer (2012) found that Asian Americans were significantly more likely to experience issues related to mood, anxiety, or substance abuse and dependence when experiencing discrimination for being Asian American. These findings indicate a need for mental health professionals to be aware of and reach out to the psychological needs and issues of this population. Because school counselors may be the only mental health professionals to have regular interaction with Asian American students, this responsibility falls heavily onto them.

A study by Brener, Hassan, and Barrios (1999) was the first of its kind in that it used a nationally representative sample of college students to assess the prevalence of suicidal ideation. This study had 4,609 participants answer a 96-item questionnaire about suicidal ideation, including questions such as, “During the past 12 months, did you ever seriously consider attempting suicide?” (p. 1005). Participants were recruited by mailing the questionnaire to undergraduate 2- and 4-year public and private college and universities. The response yield was 60% with 4,609 total responses. Of the 4,609

responses, 229 were identified as graduate students and thus were not included in the final analyses. The questionnaire used was the National College Health Risk Behavior Survey (NCHRBS) and was co-developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and representatives from universities. The data was analyzed by the Software for Statistical Analysis of Correlated Data (SUDAAN) and the results were as follows. Most students ranged in age from 18 to 24, and 56% of students were female. Racial demographics were as follows: 73% were White, 10% were Black, 7% were Hispanic, and 10% were of other racial/ethnic backgrounds. About 10% had some form of serious suicidal ideation in the 12 months before taking the survey, 7% of students had a plan for suicide, and 2% attempted suicide at least once. Results showed that students who self-identified as Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian, Alaskan Native, or of other racial/ethnic backgrounds had a higher rate of considering suicide than White students by about 5% (Brener, Hassan, & Barrios, 1999).

The results of this study were corroborated by other studies, making the findings of this study more reliable (Bonner & Rich, 1987; Wellman & Wellman, 1988). Schweitzer, Klayich, and McLean (1995) also found that Asian students reported higher rates of suicidal ideation than White students, which supports the data found in the study by Brener, Hassan, and Barrios (1999). A limitation of the study by Brener, Hassan, and Barrios includes the potential for biased recall, where students who were currently depressed at the time of taking the survey may have remembered an untrue suicidal ideation. Also, this study did not focus on gaining a more well-distributed representation of races; thus it provided minimal information on the difference of suicidal ideation behaviors between Asian Americans and non-Asian Americans. Nevertheless, the study

found that about 10% of college students had thoughts of suicidal ideation and suggested that colleges and universities be vigilant about students' mental health issues.

Lack of Parental Support

Research suggests that the lack of parental support due to separation in Asian American families is a contributing factor to mental health issues of Asian American youth. Studies indicate that immigrant adolescents' perception of parents' support are associated with mental health well-being and outcomes (Cho & Haslam, 2010). In Cho and Haslam's (2010) study, parental support was discovered to be vitally significant to well-being among adolescents acculturating to the US. The researchers measured 227 adolescents attending schools in New York and Seoul, and the sample included subgroups from four populations: Korean students living with both parents in the US (Korean Immigrant), Korean students living alone or with one parent in the US (Korean International), Korean students living in Korea (Korean Indigenous), and non-Korean-American students living in the US (American Indigenous). After participants completed a questionnaire measuring different items such as suicidal ideation, acculturative stress, acculturation, social support, and depressive symptoms, the researchers found that the Korean International group reported more stress associated with acculturation than the Korean Immigrant group.

The researchers discussed the possibility that this finding was related to the presence or absence of both parents. Indeed, living with both parents was associated with lower levels of psychological distress and suicidal ideation, so much so that the Korean International group reported twice the level of suicidal ideation as the Korean Immigrant group (Cho & Haslam, 2010). The researchers noted that these circumstances were not

rare for families in Asian countries such as Korea. Children are sent to the US alone, with one parent, or with another guardian on temporary visas in order to improve educational circumstances (Cho & Haslam, 2010). The stress of adjusting to new environments without live-in parental support may place Asian American students at a higher risk of interpersonal and psychological problems (Berry & Kim, 1988; Padilla, Cervantes, Maldonado, & Garcia, 1988). Another noted finding was that longer durations of residence within the US were associated with greater distress, suggesting that distress did not necessarily decrease with acclimation to new environments. In conclusion, this study suggested that the first ideal condition to facilitating adjustment in Asian American students was having both parents live with the students. However, even if this first condition is met, other issues exist. The limitations of this study included the fact that members of the Korean Immigrant group and members of the Korean International group may have had psychological difference before the study occurred, presenting the possibility that the results of the study had nothing to do with their acclimation status. This study also stopped analyses at suicidal ideation and did not continue to suicidal behavior, and thus could not predict if members of the Korean International group would act on their suicidal ideation.

Asian American students living with both parents also have challenges of uninvolved parents due to working circumstances. Li, Li, and Niu (2016) conducted a qualitative study that explored 14 female Chinese American mental health professionals' perspectives on cultural stressors of Chinese immigrant students. The researchers utilized individual interviews and qualitative analyses to discover: (a) what Chinese American mental health professionals perceive as stressors for Chinese immigrant school-age

children; (b) what Chinese American mental health professionals perceive as stressors for Chinese immigrant school-age children that are culturally specific; and (c) what interventions Chinese American mental health professionals deem appropriate when working with this population. After participants completed two questionnaires, two bilingual-Chinese individuals conducted semi-structured interviews in the preferred language and location of the participants.

Researchers then coded the transcribed data using Nastasi and Borja's (2015) coding procedure and narrowed down the themes to 12 general themes and six culturally specific themes. One of the themes that emerged was a "lack of parental involvement in school activities and lost voices/opportunities" (p. 68). The researchers found that many Chinese parents were not involved in organizations such as the PTO (Parent Teacher Organization) and, thus, lost opportunities to share opinions about the well-being of their children. Chinese parents also tended not to involve their children in extracurricular activities, potentially due to lack of time (Li, Li, & Niu, 2016). The researchers highlighted some of the consequences in regards to the lack of parental involvement. These consequences included students' needs not being addressed due to parents being unable to advocate for them at school and Chinese students' potential feelings of failure and low self-esteem when losing opportunities to be involved in extracurricular activities and developing friendships through these activities. This result, among others, supported previous literature that Chinese students encountered stressors in daily life due to culturally-related factors. The study emphasized significant stressors encountered by Chinese American students and the implications of these stressors for all parties involved. Parents were encouraged to reduce stressors at home by being more intentional about

gaining bilingual and bicultural competence, and schools were encouraged to reduce stressors on students at school by increasing cultural awareness and increasing multicultural training for their staff.

This study validated much of the current literature on stressors pertaining to students of Asian descent; however, the study only focused on a specific ethnicity and did not represent all Asian ethnicities. Also, the researchers acknowledged that the participants were of Chinese descent, and their responses may have been influenced by personal experiences as well as professional experiences, meaning that responses could have been influenced by their own backgrounds in addition to professional roles as school counselors (Li, Li, & Niu, 2016). Nonetheless, this study highlighted that the lack of parental support is a stressor for Asian American students, even if students live with both parents in the US.

Differences Between First and Second Generation Asian Americans

Family cohesion is highly valued in Asian culture but is difficult to maintain with members of different generations (Leong, Leach, Yeh, & Chou, 2007). First and second generation Asian Americans experience the US differently, as language and communication barriers may prevent parental support from being effective to children and adolescents of immigrant families. Other issues within Asian American family systems include closed communication patterns (regardless of language barriers), rigid hierarchical relationships, and limited quality time between parents and children (Lee, Choe, Kim, & Ngo, 2000). These issues suggest that even if both parents are physically available in the home, Asian American family values may inhibit deep relationships between parents and children. Further, first and second generation Asian Americans are

likely to be separated by an “acculturation gap,” where the discrepancy in the rate of acculturation between first and second generation Asian Americans causes conflicts and miscommunication (Lee et al., 2000). Some of these major disparities will be explored in further detail.

First Generation Asian Americans

In a study conducted by Iwasaki and Brown (2014), 22 Japanese and Japanese American women were interviewed about their life as related to culture, with questions such as “how fluent are you in speaking English/Japanese?” and questions related to reasons for immigrating to the US (p. 326). Participants had lived in the US for a prolonged period of time (16-42 years) and all had experienced marriage or cohabitation with a White male. The research team consisted of three doctoral students and the principal investigator. Interviews were about 60-90 minutes per person. Data analysis began with transcriptions and then coding, whereupon participants’ responses were categorized into three acculturation domains through Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, and Szapocznik’s (2010) multidimensional acculturation model: *values, practice, and identification*. Participants were also grouped into two categories based on acculturation status: *Issei* women were foreign-born Japanese American women and *Nisei/Sansei* women were US-born Japanese American women (three total domains). Iwasaki and Brown (2014) found that many *Issei* women self-identified as Japanese over American even though they had lived in the US for 16-42 years and were married to White Americans. A complete shift to American cultural orientation across the three domains was extremely rare. Within the three domains, *Issei* women were more likely to adapt to US *practices* rather than to *values* or *identification*. Lee et al. (2000) supported this

notion by reporting that some family members who fully immigrate to the US reject acculturation by sustaining their traditional lifestyles.

This study found substantial differences between first (foreign-born) and second (US-born) generation Japanese American women. Particularly in the domain of *identification*, *Issei* women identified as Japanese regardless of US citizenship. Some participants disclosed that although they had lived in the US for several years, they would not be changing citizenship to the US until their parents passed away (Iwasaki & Brown, 2014). On the contrary, the majority of the members of the *Nisei/Sansei* group identified as “American” as opposed to Japanese or Japanese American. One participant said, “I am more American because I was born and raised here, and so I don’t know as much about the Japanese culture as I should” (p. 328). This study showed that first and second generation Japanese women were prone to have different views on identity, practice, and values in regards to acculturating to the US. A limitation of the study lies in the fact that participants in the study were married or cohabitated with White American men, thus providing them with more exposure to US mainstream culture and potentially producing an inaccurate representation of first/second generation Japanese women who did not have similar experiences. Also, members of the *Nisei/Sansei* group were not distinguished, such that second and third generation participants were studied within the same category. Further investigation between these two subgroups may have shown generational differences between the two groups. However, this study was a starting point for further investigation into the acculturative process of varying Asian American generations.

Other research has demonstrated that first generation Asian Americans have language mastery issues. Mouw and Xie (1999) noticed that first generation Asian

American immigrants learned and retained English at a slower rate than their children, thus creating less and less motivation for them to practice. First generation Asian Americans were also less likely to acculturate to US mainstream culture when residing in concentrated areas of other Asian Americans. These areas contained groups centered on Asian culture through organizations such as churches, youth groups, businesses, and even instructional settings. Such culturally comfortable settings did not present first generation Asian Americans with the need to survive by learning English and allowed them to survive successfully with minimal English language skills (Mouw & Xie, 1999). Although temporarily comfortable, the lack of language mastery and overall acculturation would create long-term issues between first generation Asian Americans and their second generation Asian American children.

Research also showed that first generation Asian Americans encounter issues in the US when aligning more heavily with Asian culture than US culture (Sodowsky, Lai, & Plake, 1991). Low acculturation and English mastery has led to higher vulnerability in regards to prejudice and discrimination, as first generation Asian Americans are not always able to advocate for themselves in non-Asian social settings. First generation Asian Americans, particularly those exposed to discrimination, are more prone to depression (Jurcik, Ahmed, Yakabov, & Solopieieva-Jurcikova, 2013). The initial desire to immigrate for the sake of their future children's education translated primarily into the role of financially providing for their children. This translation implied that rather than being emotionally available and providing social support for the children, first generation parents were more likely to be invested in their children's academic success by providing the financial means to attend the best schools, hire extra help such as tutors, etc. Second

generation Asian American students, then, must navigate the intricacies of the US public school system on their own and may have to depend on other avenues for emotional support. With the language and acculturation gap, first generation Asian American parents may not be knowledgeable about how to successfully communicate with school personnel to collaborate for the good of the child.

Second Generation Asian Americans

First and second generation Asian Americans have many commonalities other than bloodline. However, second generation Asian Americans' experiences of maintaining cultural values consistent with their heritage culture can be argued as being more challenging than it was for their parents. Second generation Asian American children and adolescents likely live in environments that contain remembrances of their heritage culture, such as food, heirlooms, artwork, clothing, and other tangible objects, as well as non-tangible items such as yearly traditions, different calendar celebrations, or religious practices (Portes & Rumbaut, 2008). Yet, they are immediately immersed in American culture from birth (or from a young age). Second generation Asian Americans are required to accommodate to both the heritage culture and the host culture through the level of acculturation expected by adults in the family (Castillo, Conoley, Brossart, & Quiros, 2007; Iwasaki & Brown, 2014). Some second generation Asian American children and adolescents may not always be able to relate to their peers, as each family's expectations of acculturation may be different (Castillo et al., 2007). For example, first generation Asian American parents may expect children to sustain all cultural beliefs and practices of the heritage culture, while others may expect their children to be as successful as possible in the host culture by becoming as "American" as possible.

Navigating the expectations of the culture at home as well as the culture at school can be challenging for second generation Asian American students.

The issue of language is not as concerning for second generation Asian Americans within the context of acculturating to the US, as most second generation Asian American children develop an affinity for English and prefer English to their native language (Mouw & Xie, 1999). However, this language gap creates potential issues within the home due to a discrepancy of language preferences between parents and children. The language gap is likely to cause an acculturation gap, where parents' slower acculturation rate causes familial conflict due to a higher chance for miscommunication. Acculturative family distancing can also occur, where parents and children disconnect due to differences not only in language but also in cultural perspectives (Ahn, Kim, & Park, 2009). The language barrier is a starting point for communication difficulties as children get older and the gap becomes larger, so much so that second generation Asian Americans report more problems within their family than first generation Asian Americans (Rosenthal, 1984). Without sufficient communication abilities, first generation parents are unable to help their children succeed in school, because they are not aware of their needs, deficiencies, and limitations. Furthermore, second generation Asian American students tend to be at a higher risk of mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation and behavior (American Psychological Association, 2012). The lack of much-needed support at home may be a contributing factor to these concerns.

Qin, Way, and Mukherjee (2008) conducted a study that explored 120 Chinese American adolescents' experiences in regards to family life and peer relationships. All

students were recruited from public schools and 88% of students immigrated to the US before 10 years of age. The sample consisted of 55% females and 45% males, and the average age of participants was 12 years of age. This longitudinal study used semi-structured and structured interviews, whereupon students were asked questions about family, peer relationships, and experiences from childhood. The researchers used open coding to determine themes and found that most students reported on challenges and negative experiences when discussing their relationship with parents (Qin, Way, & Mukherjee, 2008). Many students attributed their unhappiness with parental relationships to differences in generational and cultural expectations; students were frustrated with parents' traditional views as compared to their image of American parents. For example, students felt as though their Chinese parents were more rigid in demanding obedience, whereas American parents allowed their children to have autonomy in making decisions. Further, one student discussed the mismatch of parenting between Chinese and American cultures, describing that Chinese methods of discipline were hitting and forcing rather than teaching. Students also discussed the challenges of communicating with parents due to language barriers. Qin et al. (2008) found that students tended to lose their native language or never gain true fluency in their parents' language as they lived longer in the US. When students lost native language abilities, complicated vocabulary relating to emotions and deeper meanings were also lost, thus increasing the gap of intimate and effective communication between parents and children.

This study identified a myriad of difficulties for students who spent most of their life in the US while living with first generation Asian American parents. The researchers outlined students' experiences of balancing both cultures – the stereotypical American,

open relationship between parent and child versus the stereotypical Chinese, controlling relationship between authority and child. The results indicated that several factors led to an unhappiness of Chinese American students as related to issues with their parents around the following issues: generational differences, cultural differences, language barriers, parents' work schedule, academic pressures, etc. (Qin, Way, & Mukherjee, 2008). Although this study provided keen insight into the lives of Asian American adolescents, this study did not examine the challenges of first generation Asian American parents or investigate any positive experiences of the students due to the generational gaps between them and their parents. Further, this study was limited by the experiences of these particular participants who grew in the Northeast region of the US and did not explore experiences of students from other regions of the US. Therefore, continued research on Asian American students' experiences across all borders is necessary.

Acculturative Stress

Acculturative stress occurs when individuals of a different culture cannot conceptualize improving their experiences in the context of their new culture through adaptation (Berry, 2005). Second generation Asian American children and adolescents experience acculturative stress when not being able to sufficiently communicate with parents at home but also not fully relating to others at school. Asian American students may have to consistently decide whether to abide by the Asian traditional values of interdependence, collectivism, and family hierarchy (Chang, 1996) or facets of Western culture such as individualism, autonomy, and competition (Kim & Omizo, 2005). Depending on the context, Asian American children and adolescents need to make quick decisions on which part of their native culture is most appropriate to that context.

Possessing two cultures may lead to intense feelings of anxiety, guilt, or both (Zane, Sue, Hu, & Kwon, 1991). School-aged Asian American children and adolescents will likely have to deal with these feelings and adapt to both cultures on a daily basis.

Acculturative stress has been proposed to be a risk factor for severe mental health issues for Asian American youth (Berry & Kim, 1988; Hovey & King, 1997). Young children living with foreign-born parents oftentimes struggle with balancing both worlds – the world of their home life and the world where everything else takes place. Current research suggests that the risk for anxiety and depression could be increased in children of immigrants who are exposed to acculturation-related stressors in the US (Perreira & Ornelas, 2011). These increased risks could also lead to unsafe choices such as alcohol use, smoking, and early sexual activity as well as an increased risk of psychological issues such as depression (Perreira & Ornelas, 2011). In conjunction with other factors that inhibit Asian American students to seek out healthier alternatives, Asian American students may be more vulnerable to dangerous coping mechanisms in order to handle these stressors.

A study of Chinese immigrant families showed a higher likelihood of reporting depressive symptoms in adolescents whose acculturation levels were different from their mothers and fathers (Kim, Chen, Li, Huang, & Moon, 2009). Kim et al. (2009) utilized 388 father-adolescent pairs and 399 mother-adolescent pairs with at least one first generation (foreign-born) parent. Participants were recruited from Northern California through seven middle schools and were instructed to complete questionnaires asking about concepts such as acculturation, parenting, and adolescent depressive symptoms. The researchers found that in cases of high gaps in acculturation between parent and

child, adolescents had difficulty in managing psychological issues such as depression. Depressive symptoms in adolescents were found to be indirectly related to parent-child acculturation gaps through mismatched parenting practices. This mismatch suggested that adolescents perceived parenting practices utilized by first generation Asian parents as unsupportive and lacking in warmth. These issues impacted parent-child relationships, which is an important piece for adolescent development and success. On the contrary, adolescents living in families that showed high cohesion, parental closeness, and social support from the family had decreased depressive symptoms (Juang & Cookston, 2009). One major limitation of this study was that adolescents who reported negative perceptions of parenting may have had depressive symptoms beforehand and erroneously attributed parenting to these symptoms (Kim et al., 2009). Thus, future studies with more controlled processes on examining adolescents' depressive symptoms and parental styles would be warranted.

Cress and Ikeda (2003) described one of the leading causes of mental struggles among Asian American students as the pressure of adhering to traditional values that did not allow them to express social and psychological needs. Therefore, without a similar level of acculturation and an understanding between Asian American parents and children, Asian American students are less likely to seek mental health services due to the shame and humiliation associated with traditional Asian values (Kim & Omizo, 2005). In summary, current research indicates that the significance of the level of acculturation within the home is related to the mental health of Asian American students and suggests the need for further investigation into the acculturative stresses of second generation Asian American students.

Academic Pressures

Asian American students are immersed in a culture where achievement, excellence, and modesty are emphasized (Chang & Smith, 2015). Academic achievement is so highly regarded that failing to obtain excellent academic scores is interpreted as failing to achieve not only one's own destiny, but also the family's destiny (Lam, 2014). This value is so engrained in Asian culture that in a study by Kim (2015), students of Asian descent did not perceive parents' controlling style in regards to academic motivation as interfering with their own autonomy. Thus, it seems that some Asian American students may likely produce desirable results within academic settings but also may be more likely to acquire higher rates of social anxiety related to disappointing themselves or family members according to these high standards. High expectations are not only imposed on Asian American students from parents and families; Panelo (2010) discussed how Asian American students are labeled as "model minorities" among minority ethnic groups, thus being expected to academically outperform their peers. With expectations to excel at home and at school, the "model minority" label discourages Asian American students to: (a) perform poorly in academic settings and (b) seek support services at school if help is needed (Panelo, 2010). This overt label among other covert pressures may likely cause major psychological distress among Asian American students. Moreover, Buenavista, Jayakumar, and Misa-Escalante (2009) described the "model minority" status as a model minority myth, disagreeing with the notion that racial and ethnic communities can easily overcome challenges associated with being a minority. These researchers challenged the validity of the generalization of all Asian American students' experiences within the realm of education, asserting that such

generalization has a detrimental effect on underrepresented Asian American students such as Hmong, Cambodian, Laotian, and other Asian American ethnic minority groups. Furthermore, not all Asian American students represent academically achieving individuals in both grade level and higher education school settings.

Zusho, Pintrich, and Cortina (2005) studied 105 Asian American students and 98 Anglo American students from a large Midwestern University in efforts to examine motives, goals, and performances of the two groups in regards to academics. Students who identified as Asian reported that they lived in the US for more than 10 years or for their entire life; over 60% reported being a US citizen. The researchers administered a one-hour, 30-item mathematics achievement test that asked for general background information and then provided math problems that were similar to the SAT exam. Participants were then asked about their goals for this activity, as well as levels of anxiety, overall interest in this activity, and perceptions of success on the activity. After running descriptive analyses and zero-order correlations on the responses, Zusho et al. (2005) found that Asian American students reported higher levels of anxiety than their Anglo-American peers. Asian American students also reported higher levels of fear of failure but typically outscored the Anglo American students academically. These findings were consistent with previous research that Asian American students have high expectations in regards to academics. However, this research was limited due to its small sample size and its finding of no statistical significance between Asian American students and Anglo American students in regards to other measures in the study such as mastery goals, interest, or competence perceptions. This research also did not consider other factors such as parental or cultural roles in students' responses to this study. Lastly, this

study was specifically measuring student' academic perceptions in regards to mathematics; other subjects and topics may produce different results. Nevertheless, these findings support other research that Asian American students have higher anxiety in regards to academics and suggest that this may be so because Asian American students have high achievement goals for academics.

In addition to these pressures, Asian Americans come from homes where parental support is not abundant due to a lack of knowledge by the parents of the school system and environment (McCarron & Inkelas, 2006). Asian American parents are less likely to be aware of available financial resources, institutional terminology and language, academic support, and the resources within professional helpers such as advisors or mentors (McCarron & Inkelas, 2006). Although this data is reported from evidence from college-level contexts, similar experiences can be assumed for Asian American students within K-12 settings. For example, first generation Asian American parents may not be aware of the resources available through school counselors and thus, may not seek opportunities that may benefit their children. Also, Asian American students may not experience parental support in pursuing desired career paths, as they may be told which major, career path, or extracurricular activity to pursue (Okagaki & Frensch, 1998). Although Asian American parents may be well-intentioned when deciding their children's goals, these additional expectations can result in higher stress levels and psychological issues among students whose chosen path does not align whatsoever with their own desires and abilities (Cress & Ikeda, 2003). These expectations can begin at a young age and may carry on throughout the student's entire academic career.

Counseling Stigma

Expectedly, Asian American students have a variety of mental health issues including problems centered on academia, interpersonal, health/substance abuse, and family difficulties (Schoen, 2005). However, the need for counseling services does not match the rate of utilization among this population due to the stigma associated with receiving mental health services (Kim & Omizo, 2003). Studies show that less acculturated Asian Americans tend to have less favorable views on seeking mental health services than those who are more acculturated (Atkinson & Gim, 1989; Tata & Leong, 1994). Research on Asian Americans consistently show that Asian groups, including Asian American students, are likely to express depressive symptoms as somatic symptoms rather than mental health symptoms because somatic symptoms are more acceptable within Asian culture (Tsai & Pike, 2000). Therefore, Asian American children and adolescents may be more likely to report physical issues to parents and seek medical assistance rather than emotional assistance through mental health professionals. Further, this pattern of underutilizing mental health services has been a consistent trend for several years; Asian Americans who did seek mental health services had a significantly higher dropout rate than White clients (Sue, 1977). Also, for Asian American students who utilize non-medical helping professionals, services pertaining to academic or career paths would be sought out over mental health services (Kim & Omizo, 2003). This trend may be particularly relevant for school counselors.

Atkinson and Gim (1989) discussed possibilities for the conflict between Asian American values and the psychotherapy process. One of the main factors underlying counseling stigma within Asian American culture was the value of collectivism and within the family (Arnault, 2009). Research suggested that family members experiencing

mental illness brought shame onto the family because it signified a problem. For example, these families might be thought of as having imperfect relationships or lack of support for family members (Iwamasa & Hilliard, 1999). The emphasis on family within Asian culture is so prioritized that wellness is directly associated with harmony within familial relationships, engagement within mutually interdependent relationships within the family, and an understanding and respect for obligations to the family (Fetters, 1998). Traditional Asian values consider sharing personal issues outside the family shameful while valuing emotional self-control and the expectation to solve psychological issues alone (Sue, 1994; Kim et al., 2001). Therefore, individuals within the family may be required to ignore personal negative emotions or not express personal emotions so as not to disrupt the harmony of the group. Additionally, Asian American individuals are more likely to show physical symptoms than emotional distress, because physical symptoms are more acceptable (Kirmayer, 2001). Reiteratively, Asian American adolescents with high adherence to Asian values of family are less likely to receive mental health counseling services, even if they need them (Kim, Atkinson, & Yang, 1999). For the aforementioned reasons, school counselors may find Asian American children and adolescents to be particularly self-reliant and reserved when asked to discuss emotional or interpersonal issues.

Current Approaches for Understanding Student Help Seeking

The preceding section reviewed unique issues pertaining to Asian American students. The following section will discuss three approaches that have been identified to understand student help-seeking. They include: acculturation theory, cultural determinants of help-seeking, and multicultural education.

Acculturation Theory

Acculturation is described as the adaptation to the dominant culture while maintaining values, beliefs, and practices of the heritage culture (Berry, 2005).

Acculturation is a common phenomenon for immigrant populations as they learn how to successfully live in their new surroundings. This process can take years, generations, or even centuries as cultural groups engage in long-term changes in values, beliefs, and behaviors (Berry, 2005). Immigrants' experiences can depend on the extent to which they are immersed within the host culture; Berry (2005) describes four levels of acculturation: assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization. *Assimilation* refers to completely immersing oneself in the host culture while abandoning the heritage culture. *Integration* (most congruent with definition of acculturation) refers to adopting the host culture while maintaining facets of heritage culture. *Separation* refers to rejecting the host culture while maintaining the heritage culture. Lastly, *marginalization* refers to rejecting both cultures. Iwasaki and Brown (2014) describe three domains within each culture: identification, values, and practice. *Identification* refers to the individual's self-identified racial or ethnic group, traditions, and other aspects of a cultural group. *Values* are the individual's beliefs and perspectives, such as an affinity towards collectivism versus individualism. *Practice* refers to the tangible behaviors within a cultural group, such as food preferences and languages used. These three domains are present in both the host and heritage culture of immigrants.

LaFromboise, Coleman, and Gerton (1993) have asserted that a healthy balance between the two cultures provides the most ideal and positive life experience of immigrant populations. Curran (2003) found that Irish immigrants who integrated into a

new culture had superior health over those utilizing one of the other acculturation methods. Another study by Berry, Phinney, Sam, and Veder (2006) found evidence for better psychological and sociocultural adaptation among immigrants who identified as integrated over other forms of acculturation. Better psychological and sociological adaptation was associated with higher self-esteem and life satisfaction as well as good school adjustment and fewer behavioral problems. Although the challenges of acculturation are plentiful, those who experience acculturation find ways to succeed and achieve goals, oftentimes beyond their initial expectations (Berry, 2005). These findings strongly suggest that higher levels of acculturation are extremely essential in the mental, social, emotional, and physical health of immigrant populations. As such, school counselors are well advised to consider providing acculturation techniques and interventions in order to assist first and second Asian American students improve experiences in school settings, keeping in mind that acculturation is just one aspect of one's experiences and may merely be a contributing factor to mental health issues. Nonetheless, the research shows that higher rates of acculturation lead to improved quality of life in new environments.

Cultural Determinants of Help Seeking (CDHS) Theoretical Model

People experience and respond to wellness and distress in different ways, and understanding these experiences is a challenging endeavor (Arnault, 2009). The CDHS model was developed to create culturally relevant practice guidelines by examining the diverse literature on various bodies of research, including: philosophy, social psychology, and medical and psychological anthropology. When attempting to understand the various experiences of Asian American students, one can begin to make predictions of positive

and negative thoughts, behaviors, and emotions through the lens of a cultural model (Arnault, 2009). The cultural model says that individuals handle, give meaning to, and ignore certain aspects of experiences through the norms of their own culture. Through themes found within each culture, health care providers, including mental health professionals such as school counselors, can begin to develop strategies to address issues within specific cultural groups. This concept is supported by the theory of ethnobiology, which suggests that people of a culture interpret, conceptualize, and utilize their knowledge in the context of their environmental experience (Ellen, 2006).

In keeping with the CDHS model, physical sensations or emotions are interpreted as abnormal, disturbing, pathological, or as an illness through the standards of a specific culture before being defined as a “symptom” through which the process of seeking help may occur (Kirmayer, 2001). The significance of “symptoms” is largely dependent on what the culture deems as significant. Upon labeling symptoms as signs of distress, individuals within that culture can interpret symptoms as somatic (attribution of physical sources of wellness or distress), psychological (attribution of emotional sources), and/or environmental (attribution of social or physical environment sources). Depending on the particular interpretation of the issue at hand, individuals would pursue the appropriate course of action to alleviate the issue. For example, individuals from Western cultures may seek counseling services for depression, whereas individuals from Eastern cultures may try to treat depression with new activities or experiences.

A large component of the CDHS model is *reciprocity* within each culture. Reciprocity refers to the understanding between individuals within the same culture about giving and receiving various types of support (e.g. social, emotional, etc.) as well as

expectations of rules of who and when individuals will engage in these exchanges (Arnault, 2009). For example, collectivistic cultures may expect members to only exchange help within same-group members. Thus, once a problem is observed and labeled as a “real” issue through the lens of the culture, individuals must assess how the social network may accept the process of moving forward with seeking help. An individual with a mental health issue may have to consider how seeking help will be interpreted within the rules of the culture and, accordingly, what type of help he or she can request for what cost. For example, adolescents within Asian cultures would need to consider how speaking to a mental health professional may reduce the family’s social status within their enclosed community and/or how speaking to a mental health professional may violate a cultural rule of keeping negative matters within the home (Arnault, 2009). The significant aspect of social considerations within the CDHS model poses a difficulty for Asian American adolescents to seek help outside of individuals within their culture.

In summary, the CDHS model suggests that the process of interpreting situations always occurs through the lens of what that specific culture deems appropriate. If the culture interprets a physical or emotional symptom as significant, the process of resource exchange (seeking or giving help) must also be filtered through the lens of the culture (Arnault, 2009). The CDHS model recognizes that individuals with issues deemed problematic by the culture must follow the rules about the exchange of resources, meaning that they cannot always seek the kind of help they desire if the costs are too detrimental to other members within the cultural community. Thus, individuals with “symptoms” may continue to suffer because they choose not to or are not allowed to seek

help in the way they need or prefer. School counselors who understand minority populations through the CDHS model may be more sensitive to considering how students' culture would interpret what is occurring with the students. From there, school counselors can assess how to best help students through the lens of the students' culture rather than imposing Western or other values onto potential interventions. Although the CDHS model spearheads the research on cross-cultural health promotion, including mental health practices, more research needs to be done on improving the sensitivity of assessments and interventions. The improvement of these assessments can then increase the accuracy an understanding different cultures as well and also the effectiveness of interventions when working with diverse clients.

Multicultural Education within School Counselor Training

Dodson (2013) asserts that school counselors should possess overall abilities to provide multiculturally competent counseling due to the diversification within the United States. As such, Zalaquett, Foley, Tillotson, Dinsmore, and Hoff (2008) discuss five factors that led to the increased emphasis on multicultural competence in Counselor Education programs: diversity of future clients, historical shortcomings of multicultural focus within Counselor Education programs, requirement of multicultural initiatives from accrediting agencies such as CACREP, increased research in multicultural counseling, and American Counseling Association (ACA) and American School Counselor Association (ASCA) requirements for counselors to responsibly address the needs of all diverse and cultural students and other served populations. As a result of these and other reasons to initiate a higher focus of multicultural education in Counselor Education

programs, school counselors may be receiving more training in working with diverse populations through their graduate programs.

Dr. James Banks' (1993) Five Dimensions of Multiculturalism explains the framework of multicultural education. Banks (1993) described the five dimensions as content integration, knowledge construction, equity pedagogy, prejudice reduction, and empowering school culture and social structure. *Content integration* refers to learning about the culture, history, and patterns of specific cultural populations. *Knowledge construction* refers to a deepening of knowledge of the cultural assumptions, contexts, and perspectives of various cultural groups by helping students understand further than the factual information of those cultures. *Equity pedagogy* refers to instructional techniques of educators that meet the needs of diverse populations rather than utilizing a uniform method for all students. *Prejudice reduction* refers to the efforts of all teachers within the school working together to reduce discrimination within the classroom by being more sensitive to cultural needs and attitudes. Lastly, *empowering school culture and social structure* refers to the leaders and educators within the school fostering a multiculturally sensitive and equitable school climate (Tucker, 1998). These five dimensions lay the foundation for creating multicultural education programs within school settings; however, the factors may also have utility in counseling graduate programs in their efforts to foster multicultural competence within counselors.

Considering the five dimensions, graduate counseling programs accredited or working to be accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) are required to meet specific competencies under the general standard of "Social and Cultural Diversity" (CACREP, 2009). This overall

standard includes facets of multicultural education such as understanding the “...attitudes, beliefs, understandings, and acculturative experiences: of diverse clients, strategies for working with diverse populations, and developing self-awareness of counseling roles, biases, and intentional and unintentional oppression and discrimination” towards clients (CACREP, 2009, Section 2). CACREP (2009) standards are regarded highly for counselor education programs; CACREP’s influence on counselor education curricula is generally regarded as favorable, and the accreditation process has assured quality in counselor training for 30 years (Hensley, Smith, & Thompson, 2003; Lee, 2013). When applying or re-applying for CACREP accreditation, counseling graduate programs are required to provide ample and specific evidence of how competence related to multicultural counseling are met. Regardless of the varied interpretation and instruction of the standards, CACREP (2009) standards, including standards for multicultural competency, must be met in order receive accreditation. In Bernard’s (2006) review of 708 faculty and counseling staff position and advertisements, CACREP-accredited program graduates were more desirable for employment within counselor education programs, because they were assumed to provide the skills and abilities most needed for success in those programs. Despite the fact that Bernard’s (2006) review was specific to the training of counselor educators, rather than Master’s level graduates, it is reflective of the growing importance of CACREP accreditation and, thus, of promoting multicultural competency in all graduate counseling programs.

The Gaps in Understanding the Problem of Student Help Seeking

The preceding section reviewed three conceptual approaches to understanding the issues pertaining to Asian American students. The following section will discuss the shortcomings in these current approaches.

Asian American Students Overlooked

Although Asian American students possess many of the problematic issues discussed in the previous section, many of those issues are likely to be overlooked by helping professionals due to Asian American students' academic achievement and overall silence. A study by McCarron and Inkelas (2006) showed that students from Asian descent had the highest graduation rate compared to other underrepresented racial and ethnic groups. Lam (2014) reported a similar finding in that Asian American students typically comprise of 10 to 30% of the "best" colleges while consisting of less than 6% of the country's population. Panelo (2010) further supported the notion of Asian American students' success by indicating that Asian American students are perceived as the "model minority" among other ethnic minority populations. These findings, among others, provide reason to assume that Asian American students are excellent, overachieving individuals without unmanageable issues. As a result, professionals in outreach positions such as school counselors may not notice emotional and psychological distress in academically successful Asian American students without ample evidence. Preconceived notions of academic competency, along with the low likelihood of Asian American students asking for non-academic related help creates a perfect formula for Asian American students being overlooked by school counselors. As a result, Asian American students are likely to experience just that – substantial levels of psychological distress without school counselors ever being aware that these issues may be present.

Ethnicities Within the Asian Race

Over 20 ethnicities are represented within the umbrella term “Asian” (Schoen, 2005). Each ethnicity has a unique language, identity, culture and set of values, behaviors, and attitudes that must be considered when working with each population (Schoen, 2005). Further, diversity must be considered within each ethnicity, such as: generation, socioeconomic status, acculturation level, age, gender, religion, etc. All Asian American students cannot all be viewed or treated the same. For example, while Asian American adolescents tend to have lower rates of behaviors related to drugs and alcohol than other racial and ethnic groups, Pacific Islander adolescents have higher rates of substance abuse than other Asian adolescents (Perreira & Ornelas, 2011). Each ethnic group has unique challenges, perspectives, and approaches for dealing with psychological distress or mental health issues. When considering any type of services provided by school counselors, what might work for one group may not be appropriate for another (Panelo, 2010).

Inadequate Multicultural Competence (MCC) Among School Counselors

School counselors have a unique role to be advocates for multicultural students in schools. This role entails challenging tasks such as assessing the school environment for attitudes on minority students among students, parents, teachers, and administrators in order to potentially create multiculturally sensitive interventions to facilitate change (Tadlock-Marlo, Zyronski, Asner-Self, & Sheng, 2013; Sue et al., 1992). School counselors must also be able to effectively collaborate with stakeholders and effectively use community resources (ASCA, 2010; Holcomb-McCoy, 2001). Unfortunately, the notion of multicultural competence within school counselors is not a comprehensively

studied field; the few instruments that do measure multicultural competence (MCC) within counselors are typically developed for community mental health professionals (Tadlock-Marlo et al., 2013). Although similarities exist between the clinical work of community mental health professionals and school counselors, enough differences warrant a specific instrument that measures MCC within school counselors' role (Tadlock-Marlo et al., 2013).

Tadlock-Marlo et al. (2013) developed a self-report instrument through a mixed-method design that attempted to accurately measure school counselors' perceived MCCs. The instrument entitled *One School Many Differences* (OSMD) consists of 37 cultural questions that measured four factors as a means to conceptualize school counselor MCC through American School Counselor Association (ASCA) and Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD) standards. These factors included: (a) Assessment of School Environment, (b) Reflection of Personal Culture, (c) Interpersonal Relationships, and (d) Collaboration. Results from the norming sample (N=387) indicated that while school counselors self-reported as being multiculturally competent on all four domains, school counselors' perceptions of their competency in the given domains varied. Psychometric values suggested that school counselors felt more competent in interpersonal relationships and collaboration than in assessing the school environment and reflecting on personal culture (Tadlock-Marlo et al., 2013). Although competence in interpersonal relationships and collaboration are extremely significant in the role of a school counselor, the latter two domains of the aforementioned four may be more relevant to creating multiculturally sensitive school environments for minority students. This instrument development initiative was one of the first attempts at

measuring school counselors' MCC for the betterment of working with diverse populations within schools. Thus, although assessments of constructs related to multicultural competence within school counselors are not entirely absent, it seems that more research pertaining to school counselors' perceived self-efficacy and concrete action needs to occur in order to enhance their work with growing populations of minority students.

Inadequate School Counselor Preparation

A lack of empirical research on general Asian family processes and within Asian subgroups produces stereotypes, misperceptions, and prejudices (Choi, Kim, Kim, & Park, 2013). As a result, Asian American customs are not fully understood in a variety of areas. For example, Asian American parents could be perceived to be controlling, demanding, and emotionally insensitive, which could intimidate professionals such as school counselors to advocate for their students with their parents. Further, Sue and Zane (2009) noticed a significantly higher dropout rate in counseling among ethnic-minority groups than among White clients; nearly half of the ethnic-minority clients did not return for treatment after one session, compared to the 30% dropout rate of White clients. Although specific cultural implications need to be considered for the significantly higher underutilization of clinical services among ethnic minorities (heavily including Asian Americans), Sue and Zane presupposed that the American mental health system is particularly unsuitable for ethnic minorities. Some of these gaps include the lack of bilingual therapists, discrimination against ethnic minorities including Asian Americans via negative stereotypes, and the inability to provide culturally sensitive treatment (Sue & Zane, 2009). School counselors have different roles than clinical mental health

counselors; however, school counselors represent an important mental health professional role and may be heavily impacted by these gaps.

Aside from inadequacies within the mental health field in regards to working with ethnic minorities, school counselors may not feel prepared in working with this population without more training in specifically understanding Asian culture and expectations. Sue and Zane (2009) discuss this issue further with the assumption that most counselors are not familiar with cultural backgrounds of various ethnic minorities, including Asian Americans. Research shows that most training is centered on mainstream American values, and as a result, counselors deliver services that clients of ethnic minorities find strange and unhelpful. Thus, school counselor programs need to focus on providing a more comprehensive, experiential, and practical training initiative in multicultural counseling courses. A study by Holcomb-McCoy, Harris, Hines, and Johnston (2008) found that school counselors who self-reported to take more multicultural counseling courses reported higher on multicultural self-efficacy, particularly on multicultural knowledge. These findings suggest that school counselors who took the minimum requirement of one multicultural counseling course in graduate programs were not sufficiently trained to work with students of minority populations, including Asian American students. Further, although CACREP (2009) includes “Social and Cultural Diversity” standards for graduate counseling programs, the minimum amount of evidence required to meet these standards may not be sufficient for real-life counseling related to multicultural issues. Also, programs not accredited by CACREP are not accountable for implementing multicultural courses in counseling programs.

The same study by Holcomb-McCoy, Harris, Hines, and Johnston (2008) developed an instrument measuring multicultural self-efficacy of school counselors. The findings provided evidence that school counselors who identified as ethnic minorities reported higher levels of multicultural counseling self-efficacy than school counselors who identified as White American. The researchers reported that these results are consistent with past research on multicultural competence as related to counseling, in which other factors were considered such as life experience, higher caseload of minority students, and different multicultural training experiences in graduate programs. The findings from this study could have positive implications; school counselors who identify as ethnic minorities feel more comfortable working with multicultural issues and thus, are more likely to take more initiative when working with ethnic minority students on issues. Negative implications also exist, in that school counselors who identify as ethnic minorities are neglecting to continually improve their multicultural competency because of their self-perceived self-efficacy in this area. For either group of school counselors (those identifying as an ethnic minority or White American), more training, experience, and research are needed for improving all facets of multicultural competence (e.g. multicultural self-efficacy, multicultural initiatives, multicultural knowledge, etc.).

A New Approach to Investigating the Problem

The preceding section reviewed the deficiencies of understanding the problem of student help-seeking. The following section will discuss a new approach to investigating the problem.

Applying the Help-Seeking Framework

In 1996, Srebnik, Cauce, and Baydar discussed the importance of researching children's help-seeking activities as its own topic of concern rather than combining it with adult needs. Some of the underlying trends that supported this research interest were emerging fields of human developmental psychopathology and child and adolescent service programs such as child protective services and child welfare. Rather than focusing on the rate of mental health utilization of children, Srebnik, Cauce, and Baydar's research specifically focused on the help-seeking process of children. Because the term "service utilization" is nebulous in its definition, focusing on the process through which children with mental health needs seek help may be a more effective strategy for understanding mental health utilization (Srebnik, Cauce, & Baydar, 1996). Furthermore, this help-seeking framework is relevant for this research study, because research suggests that the highest rate of mental health service utilization of children is within the school setting (Koot & Verhulst, 1992). Barker and Adelman (1994) add that adolescents typically see school-based services most often for mental health issues. Thus, school counselors are likely the professional service providers most sought out by students and ought to have keen insight into the process of help-seeking needs and actions of Asian American students. For the purposes of this study, help-seeking will be defined as "seeking assistance from mental health services, other formal services, or informal support sources for the purpose of resolving emotional or behavioral problems" (Srebnik, Cauce, & Baydar, 1996, p. 210).

Pescosolido (1992) suggested that help-seeking behavior is dependent upon the social network in which the individual is immersed; the social environment determines the identification of the problem (about which the individual is seeking help) as well as

future actions to solve the problem. Pescosolido has also asserted that help-seeking is a process that involves a series of decisions rather than a single choice made by the struggling individual. This conclusion is particularly relevant to children, because children will rarely seek help on their own and/or go to a mental help service provider on their own. Rather, children will turn to their social network for assistance and use informal sources of support (Cheung, 1984). Nonetheless, understanding the process of helping seeking in minority adolescents may allow for research to begin with the identification of a problem (Cauce et al., 2002). Cauce et al. (2002) presented a sequential model outlining three identifiable stages along the help-seeking pathway: problem recognition, the decision to seek help, and the selection of a help provider. This model is illustrated in the Figure 1 below.

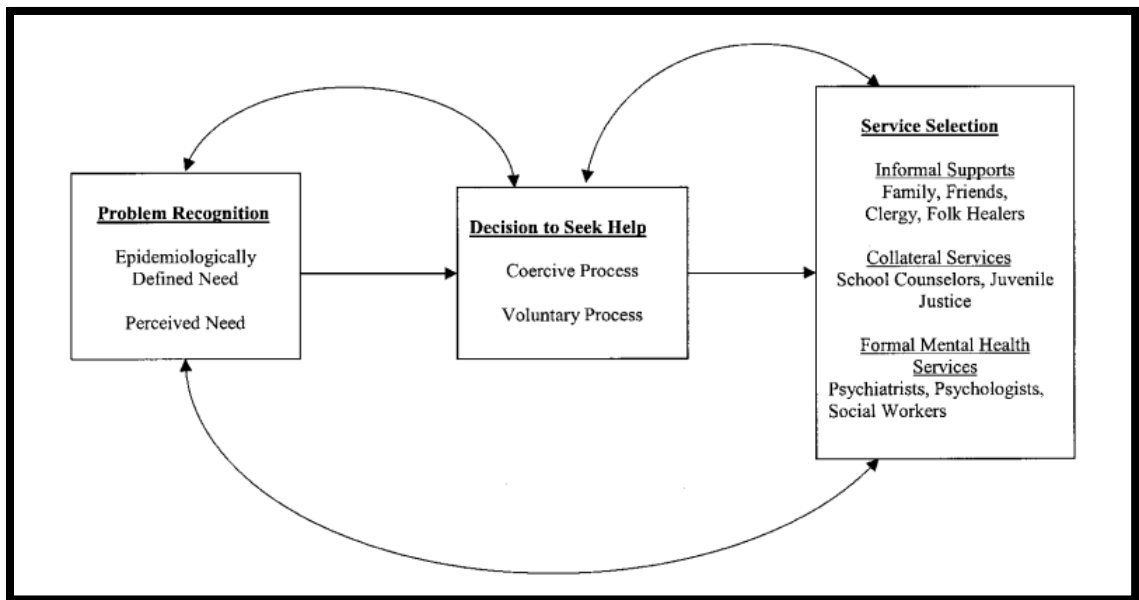


Figure 1. A model for mental health help-seeking

Cauce et al. (2002) described problem recognition as potentially occurring through an epidemiologically defined need or a subjective/perceived need. The first

method of recognizing problems can be difficult, particularly with children, because labeled symptoms may be incongruent with the way parents/guardians view their children's issues. This case may be particularly true for Asian American parents and families; symptoms such as sudden lack of motivation in school may be labeled as signs of depression by the school counselor, yet described as a disciplinary issue for Asian American parents. Sue (1994) supported this notion by asserting that ethnic and cultural groups differ on what is perceived to be a mental health problem through the lens of their culture. Thus, the epidemiological approach to problem recognition, although typically laid out very clearly in manuals such as the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), can be biased towards Western beliefs (Parron, 1997). The help-seeking model strives to take into consideration the cultural aspects of problem recognition and highly values the family or individual's perception of need. Therefore, one of its greatest conceptual strengths is its ability to allow the family/individual to determine whether a problem is defined as mental health related or not (Cauce et al., 2002). Cauce et al. recognize that standardized instruments give few opportunities for the consideration of culture and context in making a diagnosis, thus this model works to consider these important aspects when beginning with the reported "issue."

The second step in the help-seeking model is the decision to seek help by the child or adolescent after determining that an issue indeed exists. Cauce et al. (2002) label two conditions by which help-seeking is most likely to occur: (a) when a mental health problem is recognized as undesirable and (b) when the problem is not likely to be resolved on its own. Particularly for children and adolescents, developmental

considerations may inhibit parents to initiate mental health services for their child due to the expectation that the issues may disappear or reduce significantly over time (Holmbeck et al., 2000). Asian American families are particularly likely to have this mindset in conjunction with the belief that telling others about children's issues may not be the best course of action to preserve the family's reputation. Further, Boldero and Fallon (1995) contend that adolescents are less likely to discuss familial conflicts to outside family members than other types of interpersonal issues. This behavior is particularly applicable for conflicts around values that pertain to upholding family honor within the community; such values are highly regarded within the Asian American population. Understanding the reasons behind why children, adolescents, and their families may not decide to seek help even after a problem has been identified may be an important step for working with populations that are not drawn to receiving mental health services.

The third step of the help-seeking model includes service selection, or the place at which the individual and/or the family decide to turn to upon identifying an issue and deciding to receive help (Cauce et al., 2002). This portion is particularly complex for youth, as youth may not be eligible to receive certain services either with or without parental consent. Due to the highly emphasized value of keeping conflicts within family systems, this step of the process may also result with adolescents finding support within the family network (Cauce & Srebnik, 1989). Lin et al. (1992) discuss that Asian American families utilize formal mental health treatment as a last resort after making every attempt to deal with issues within the family. However, adolescents spend a large portion of their days at school, making the school setting a seemingly logical place to

receive mental health services. Thus, this third step of the help-seeking process is particularly applicable for school counselors. Cauce et al. describe “gatekeeper” roles such as that of school counselors to be less threatening than formal mental health treatment to minority parents and, thus, they may be potential bridges for encouraging families to seek treatment for their child or adolescent. Another consideration for minority adolescents and families not seeking services is when a cultural difference exists between provider and client (Cauce et al., 2002). Therefore, school counselors who are highly trained in multicultural counseling may naturally be more approachable by Asian American families and adolescents and increase the rate of mental health service utilization within the school setting.

School counselors working with Asian American students through the help-seeking model may allow for a deeper consideration for cultural contexts and social environments of those students before discerning their need for mental health services. By approaching each step of the process within the context of culture, school counselors may be better able to assist students in labeling what is occurring with them; that is, whether their experiences are truly issues according to their cultures, if they would like to receive help with their struggles, and how and from whom they would like to receive help. Cauce et al. (2002) reiterate that this model is not necessarily linear or sequential; rather, individuals may “muddle” through each phase in order to make meaning of experiences and how they would like to handle them. School counselors’ roles may be to facilitate this “muddling” so that Asian American students can receive the help they need, for self-defined problems, in the way they need.

Chu, Hsieh, and Tokars (2011) utilized the Help-Seeking Framework developed by Cauce et al. (2002) when studying the help-seeking tendencies of Asian Americans and Latino Americans who reported a history of suicidal ideation or suicide attempts. Participants included 2,554 Latino individuals and 2,095 Asian American individuals, all of whom were 18 years of age and older. Participants responded to questions on the World Health Organization Composite International Diagnostic Interview and were placed into one of three groups depending on their level of suicidal ideation. Results showed that Asian Americans with suicide attempts were less likely to seek and perceive a need for help than Latinos by 25.4%, and 35.7% of Asian Americans with suicide attempts never sought help in their lifetime. Chu, Hsieh, and Tokars attributed this finding to a lower perceived need for help by Asian Americans, thus they have a lower rate of deciding to seek help and ultimately, not select services. Another possible conclusion from this study was that Asian Americans purposely did not receive the level of support they needed due to a lack of perceived need for help, even if their condition was as severe to lead them to suicidal ideation. Another explanation was that Asian Americans did not seek services or perceive a need for help because they managed their suicidal thoughts with techniques such as mindfulness. This study used Cauce et al.'s (2002) help-seeking pathway model to determine Asian American students' help-seeking behaviors in comparison to Latinos; however, it was limited by the fact that the data did not include Asian American students' help-seeking behaviors as related to other races and ethnicities. Also, this study discussed the nonlinearity of this model and how that may impact the data in determining help-seeking tendencies along the pathway.

Another study by Molock et al. (2007) used the help-seeking model to examine help-seeking behaviors in African American adolescents. This study was intended to gather research in designing suicide prevention programs for African American churches. The researchers utilized hypothetical suicide crises and focus groups to discover attitudes and beliefs about suicide within the African American community. There were 42 participants between the ages of 12 and 18 in the study, and all participants were churchgoers. Sixty-two percent of participants were female and 38% were male. All participants were screened for suicidal ideation before the study and all participants did not report current suicidal ideation. Five participants made a previous suicide attempt; no participants made a suicide attempt within the last year. A 21-item questionnaire was administered to participants to gather background information, such as: age, race, gender, and education.

After reading the preliminary vignette about a young man with high-risk behaviors, participants engaged in six different focus groups to discuss the vignette with four to ten other members and a Ph.D. level clinical psychologist or doctoral student. The focus groups were audio taped and transcribed, after which four raters coded the transcripts for themes. Nineteen themes emerged from the data, but themes focused on help-seeking were emphasized. The study showed that African American adolescents had difficulty recognizing that the individual in the vignette had a problem pertaining to suicide. The researchers guessed that participants had difficulty acknowledging the problem because of the stigma associated with suicide in the African American community (Molock et al., 2007). Participants were also unsure about asking for help for the individual in the hypothetical high-risk situation. Participants tended to minimize the

negative emotions experienced by the hypothetical young man and attributed the suicidal behavior to manipulation rather than genuine cries for help. Participants who did want to seek help in the hypothetical situation were ambivalent about asking peers or older adults such as parents, teacher, and clergy. The two main concerns when choosing someone to ask for help were non-judgment and confidentiality. This study elicited African American adolescents' attitudes towards help-seeking for individuals with suicidal ideation and discovered a struggle in recognizing the problem, deciding to seek help, and selecting who to ask for help. The study did not include information on community members, including parents, other family members, and church members. Another limitation of the study was that participants knew the premise of the study before volunteering; participants with a certain type of experience relating to suicidal behavior and ideation may have been involved in the study, thus providing a skewed perception of help-seeking during focus groups. Lastly, the first author had an affiliation with one of the churches at which two of the focus groups were conducted. This connection could have affected the participants' comfort level in the study, both positively and negatively.

A study by Bates (2010) examined adolescents' barriers to help-seeking as well as a more comprehensive view of adolescents' help-seeking experiences through adding parental participants. Bates utilized the help-seeking model for her study, which included the same multi-directional steps as the present study: problem recognition, decision to seek help, and selection of services (Cauce et al., 2002). This study included 193 adolescent participants and 110 parental participants, with 51 adolescent-parent dyads. Participants were mostly Caucasian and recruited from a rural portion of Nova Scotia, Canada. Data collection was completed over four months and included questionnaires to

gather demographical background information about participants. Participants were also asked to complete several questionnaires measuring a variety of life experiences, including: help-seeking behavior, adolescent stress, adolescent psychological distress, impact of adolescent problems, and barriers to seeking professional help.

After data collection and analysis, Bates (2010) found that while 56% of adolescents reported having a serious problem in the last three months, only 21% of adolescents reported that they needed professional help, and about 8% reported seeking professional help for the problem. This study confirmed previous research that adolescents are unlikely to recognize a need for help and even less likely to ask for help from mental health professionals. Some notable factors in this study were that females were more likely to have reported psychological distress and also recognize having problems than males. Also, those who had previously obtained professional help were more likely to perceive a need for help. One limitation of this study was that parent participants mostly consisted of mothers, as 96 out of 110 parent participants were mothers. Bates indicated that mothers and fathers may differ in help-seeking behavior, and that future research would benefit from a more equal participation rate of mothers and fathers. Another limitation of this study was that the sample was taken from a rural setting, where mental health resources may be lacking compared to urban populations. This limitation of resources could have impacted participants' perceptions to help-seeking, as they were not accustomed to an abundance of mental health resources in the community other than physicians and school counselors. This limitation is consistent with past research, as Lyneham and Rapee (2007) found a significantly higher use of

school counselors in rural settings rather than clinical counselors due to a difference in resources.

The preceding chapter provided a thorough analysis of current literature on issues within the Asian American community, as well as the current approaches to the problem, gaps in the current approaches, as well as a new framework for understanding the problem. The following chapter will discuss methodology of the present study.

***** CHAPTER THREE *****

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the justification for the chosen methodology, an in-depth examination of the actual study, a verification of credibility approaches through the role of the researcher, and a final conclusion including the assets and limitations of the study. The study examined the ways that current school counselors conceptualized the needs of Asian American students through a help-seeking framework and how they attempted to meet the needs of this population. As such, the study focused on the following research questions:

1. How do school counselors working in US K-12 public schools recognize Asian American students' utilization of each of the three steps (problem recognition, decision to seek help, service selection) within the help-seeking model?
2. How do school counselors working in US K-12 public schools accommodate to the unique help seeking needs of Asian American students when providing mental health or other school-related services?

Procedures

The following section will provide an overview of the procedure of the study. This section will include site, sample, and participant selection, data collection, and data analysis.

Site, Sample Selection, and Participants

Participants in this study were limited in number and chosen purposefully (Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) has argued:

“There are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry. Sample size depends on what you want to know; the purpose of the inquiry; what’s at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources.” (p. 244)

Sample size in the present study consisted of ten participants: eight high school counselors and two middle school counselors who worked in a suburban area with a significant demographic population of Asian American students. A sample of size of 10 was selected due to potential attrition of participants, yet, no participants dropped out of the study. Sufficient participation was also determined by the criteria of data redundancy and theoretical saturation whereby the researcher could discover no new themes emerging by adding additional participants to the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The sample size of 10 was appropriate for saturation. An additional school counselor intern provided supplemental information for specific cases, which enriched the information of her supervisor’s interview. All participants had two or more years of experience working as a school counselor in a public K-12 school setting. This particular sample of school counselors was chosen due to accessibility of interviewing school counselors while also meeting the criteria of having a significant Asian American student population. The requirement of having a minimum of two years of experience as a school counselor was chosen because two years of experience is what CACREP (2009) requires for school counselors to be supervisors for school counseling interns. It was assumed that a certain level of experience, decision-making, and interaction with Asian American students

would have occurred within this amount of time. Participants were all currently employed at the school where they were interviewed.

Participants were recruited by contacting the Directors of School Counseling at two out of four high schools within this school district. The two high schools were selected due to having a higher proportion of Asian American students than other schools in the district. The middle school in the study was selected because it was the feeder school of the two high schools. The elementary school that fed into the middle school was also involved in the study. Of this circuit, school counselors at the middle and high schools were participatory in the study and the elementary school counselor assisted with strengthening interview questions. The researcher contacted the School Board Office of this school district in order to gain formal Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for the study. The School Board Office granted approval for the study, after which the researcher asked school counselors for participation. All school counselors contacted were willing to participate, after which they were informed of the nature of the study as well as the time commitment, risks, and benefits (Appendix A). The researcher then scheduled individual, in-person interviews with each school counselor. The researcher interviewed a total of 10 school counselors (with one school counseling intern observing). Interviews were conducted for approximately 60 minutes each over the course of three weeks.

Data Collection

As noted above, data was collected through individual interviews of school counselors who had experiences of working with Asian American students. Individual interviews were face-to-face interactions made possible by the geographical accessibility

of the school counselors; as a result, the researcher and participants were able to have more authentic, relational experiences in the interviews. This experience allowed for reading facial expressions and nonverbal cues and for assessing the overall comfort level of interaction. Before interviews were conducted, all interview questions were revised and approved by a faculty committee. A secondary validity check was provided by a school counselor who worked at the aforementioned feeder elementary school for the middle and high schools. This school counselor was not a participant in the study, and her input was only applied to ensure that interview questions were appropriate, clear, and purposeful.

Individual interviews. Yin (2014) asserts that “one of the most important sources of case study evidence is the interview” (p.110). As previously mentioned, the researcher selected potential participants for this study by seeking out current school counselors with two or more years of experience as a school counselor who were working in a US public school with a significant Asian American student population. No additional participants were needed, as the researcher obtained data saturation. The researcher conducted all interviews in person, thus ensuring that there was no conflict of interest between her and the participant (e.g. a coincidental personal connection). Interviews were semi-structured and consisted of “friendly” and “nonthreatening” (Yin, 2014, p. 110) open-ended and close-ended questions to gain the information needed (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The goal of this format was that participants would be able to freely answer questions as they honestly desired while still being guided and focused in the interview through prepared interview questions. Throughout the interview process, basic interviewing skills were utilized with the participants in order to make participants

feel comfortable and validated. These skills included building rapport, using reflective listening, and being open-minded to what each participant reported about his or her experiences. Interview questions were developed with consideration of the literature review and were revised until the researcher and her committee felt that all questions were relevant and contributory to the overall research goal.

After scheduling and arriving at each interview, the researcher first introduced herself and thanked the school counselor for participating in the study. The researcher then provided the school counselor with the informed consent form, which included a section asking for permission to audio record the interview. After each participant agreed to participate and be audio recorded, the researcher obtained his or her signature and provided a description of how the interview would proceed. The researcher then provided the participant with the list of approved interview questions and disclosed that although some of the latter questions might seem repetitive (e.g., if the participant had happened to already answer the question while answering previous questions), he or she would be asked to answer again in order to maintain uniformity. After participants were given an opportunity to ask questions or withdraw from the study, the researcher began the semi-structured interview and asked each question verbatim with follow up clarification if the participant did not understand the question as it was written. After the participant answered questions, the researcher asked follow up questions if she was not satisfied with the response or felt a new spark of curiosity based on the previous answer. Throughout the interview, the researcher tried to be open-minded and create a conversational environment for interviewees (Yin, 2014). After Question #12, which assessed the participant's familiarity with the help-seeking framework applied in the

study, the researcher read a uniform passage that informed the participant about the model so that each individual would have a concise and unvarying basis by which he or she could answer the subsequent questions.

After each interview, the researcher thanked the participant again for his or her time and communicated that the researcher would keep the participant updated about the study's progress. At the conclusion of each interview, the researcher wrote down some quick reflections from the interview so that she could be aware of any biases and leading questions so as to improve the next interview. These reflections were reviewed at the termination of the coding process to support future research implications. The researcher then uploaded the recorded interviews onto a secure, online transcription service (<https://www.rev.com>) and ordered transcriptions for each interview. After receiving the transcripts, the researcher checked each one for accuracy by listening to the audio recordings and correcting discrepancies between the recordings and transcriptions.

Data Analysis

After all data was collected, transcribed, and checked for accuracy, the researcher used a qualitative analysis program, NVivo, to upload the data on a system accessible by the primary and the second coder (who was another doctoral candidate with a background in school counseling) and the dissertation committee. Qualitative data analysis software such as NVivo has improved through the years and assists with coding and categorizing large amounts of data (Yin, 2014). This program served as the primary server for holding the raw and interpreted data in a secure location. After rereading through all the data in its entirety at least three more times to gain a thorough understanding of the responses, the researcher looked within the data for any patterns or themes that seemed significant or

interesting (Yin, 2014). Next, the researcher sorted the interview questions according to the specific research questions they were intended to answer. The researcher then sorted each of the participant’s responses to its respective interview questions. Again, the research questions were as follows:

1. How do school counselors working in US K-12 public schools recognize Asian American students’ utilization of each of the three steps (problem recognition, decision to seek help, service selection) within the help-seeking model?
2. How do school counselors working in US K-12 public schools accommodate to the unique help seeking needs of Asian American students when providing mental health or other school-related services?

Table 1 displays how the interview questions were referenced to the research questions.

Table 1

Interview questions organized by research question

Background Information	Research Question #1	Research Question #2
1. Please begin by describing your current job responsibilities as a school counselor (e.g. level, demographics of school, current caseload, type of work, etc.).	5. In your experience, what are the trends of Asian American students at your school (e.g. needs, academic achievement, general behavior, disciplinary issues, etc.)?	7. To what degree do you feel informed and/or knowledgeable about the Asian American student population at your school (e.g. culture, experiences, background, values, stressors, etc.)?
2. Please discuss your previous work experience as a school counselor (e.g. level, years of experience, demographics of school, caseload, type of work, etc.).	6. How do you conceptualize the needs and/or challenges of Asian American students at your school?	13. What are the most helpful strategies you find working with population?
3. Please describe the Asian	8. Are you familiar with	14. In what ways would you need additional support from your school/administration to better notice and accommodate to the unique

<p>American student demographics of your school to the best of your knowledge.</p> <p>4. Please describe a general report of your interaction with Asian American students.</p>	<p>the help-seeking model or help-seeking behavior? If so, how would you describe the model and behavior?</p> <p>9. How do you conceptualize Asian American students' help-seeking behavior as related to the model (problem recognition, decision to seek help, service selection)?</p> <p>10. Based on what you know and observe, would you say you notice a discrepancy between AA students' needs and decision to seek help? If so, do you feel as though there could be action taken to mitigate this discrepancy?</p> <p>11. Please describe the relationship to which how AA students perceive their own problems and how you perceive their problems.</p> <p>12. Please describe your observations of any information regarding students seeking help as related to mental health and their service utilization</p>	<p>help-seeking needs of the Asian American students at your school?</p>
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Questions #1-#4 were designed to gather preliminary data from participants to provide context to their responses. After the responses were sorted by interview

question, the researcher assigned specific codes to significant phrases, ideas, and concepts that were repetitive within and between interviews, a process referred to as bracketing (Creswell, 2014). Once the initial coding process was completed, the researcher identified themes according to the most reoccurring codes. Themes were deemed to exist when multiple participants reported similar or same accounts of experiences when answering questions.

As noted previously, a second individual (another doctoral candidate who had experience in the coding process in qualitative studies) independently coded the data and identified themes in order to increase inter-coder reliability (Kohlbacher, 2006). The second coder was instructed to analyze the data using the same process as the researcher, first sorting interview questions according to research question, then organizing participants' responses by interview questions, and finally identifying emergent themes using the help-seeking framework as a guide. The help-seeking framework was used as a guide by emphasizing any quotes or information provided by participants that specifically related to any of the three steps within the help-seeking framework. After analyzing all the themes together, the researcher and the second coder met to discuss the most significant themes and then grouped them into four main themes with 10 subthemes.

Although themes were often worded differently, both coders found that the essence of many themes aligned heavily. After all data and codes were discovered and agreed upon, the researcher drew conclusions based upon the findings and checked the data with participants in the study by emailing the findings to each participant in order for them to verify or dispute any information the researcher concluded from the interviews. Participants were given one week to respond with any changes and informed that if the

researcher did not hear any response, she would assume that the data was interpreted correctly. The researcher made changes in the interpretation of data when participants responded with disagreements from the current analyses. This step was intentionally in place to ensure accuracy of the findings. After receiving silent or written approval from participants, the researcher included the results in the final report.

Researcher's Context

Creswell (2014) instructs qualitative researchers to include a portion about the particular research problem that explains how the researcher is connected to the study. I developed this topic as an Asian American student studying school counseling without my parents' understanding of my degree field. Through my initial review of the research, I discovered very little attention has been given to mental health research within the Asian American population. I found myself relating with much of what I read regarding Asian American students' experiences and perceptions. Some of these experiences included: feeling pressure to succeed academically, being in a rigid communication environment at home, and struggling with major language barriers between parents and children. Growing up, I never knew what a school counselor was until my high school counselor helped me rearrange my academic schedule and organize my college applications. I watched my younger brother struggle socially; yet, my parents did not know about the school counseling resources and, thus, did not reach out for help for his social growth. Rather, they obliged to the school's consequences and hoped that my brother's behavior would improve. As the older child, I was tasked with handling the navigation of school for my brother and me, including: signing permission forms for every event, figuring out which courses would be most appropriate for us, and handling

most social/emotional issues on my own. As first generation Asian Americans, my parents were not very knowledgeable about the intricacies of the public school system and were not made aware of all the resources available to them through the school counseling department. Although I did not have any significantly negative experiences in my K-12 public school experience, my hope for other Asian American families is that they are made aware of the resources they have from the expertise of school counselors. Asian American students may be struggling with a variety of issues, and school counselors may be entirely oblivious to these struggles. Beginning with the discovery of current school counselors' perceptions about this population, Asian American students may start to benefit from increased research and implications of best practices in working with this population. Because of my personal interest in this topic, I implemented structured strategies for checking biases and reflecting on how data collection and interpretation can be most accurately representative of the participants.

Credibility

Creswell (2014) stated that qualitative research is interpretative and immersive – the researcher is highly involved in the entire research process. This researcher was aware and highly reflective of assumptions, biases, and personal reactions throughout this study. To establish higher credibility, the researcher involved other professionals and colleagues in order to make sure that the information was as accurate and non-biased as possible. During the study, the researcher was cognizant of the sense of “self” by understanding how she particularly shaped and constructed evidence, interpretations, and analysis in the study (Yeh & Inman, 2007). The researcher recognized that she could not be separate from the study, and her own identity would impact the voice that was

represented in the study (Hoshmand, 2005). This awareness was not only important to consider for formulating final theories after data collection, but also throughout the research process such as recognizing power dynamics between the researcher and the participants (Polkinghorne, 2005). After employing self-reflection, tangible steps were taken to ensure credibility of data.

The first step was to put into action according to the guidelines provided by Yin (2014) in regards to executing interviews. Yin suggested that in order to receive a fresh commentary of each interviewee, further investigation needed to occur even if information seemed consistent among interviewees. Thus, all 10 interviews were completed regardless of consistent patterns in participants' reports. Creswell (2014) discussed the importance of being aware of personal biases by consistently being self-reflective and keeping a journal of how subsequent steps in the research process affects the researcher. Accordingly, the researcher used a journal after each interview to assess for leading questions and became more intentional about genuinely asking questions rather than searching for specific information. After data was collected, the researcher used inter-coder agreement so both parties agreed upon similar themes (Creswell, 2014). This technique was to ensure that themes discovered by the primary researcher were supported and confirmed by another credible individual, thereby ensuring the themes were accurate, substantial, and true. In order to increase qualitative validity, the researcher also used member checking, where she emailed the concluded data to participants and determined if the results aligned with participants' opinions (Creswell, 2014). Through this process, participants were an important part of data analysis and were able to contribute additional information that the researcher inadvertently missed or

misinterpreted. In order to monitor and minimize any biases influencing the findings of the study, the researcher took precautions such as documenting as much of the research process as possible.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations need to be addressed and acknowledged before, during, and after the research process (Berg, 2001). Acknowledging ethical issues in writing is not only beneficial to the study, but it is required for providing justifications for each step of the process (Creswell, 2014). Particularly in qualitative research, researchers must take steps to appropriately interpret participants' responses, as responses are more thorough than completing a numerical survey or instrument. Thus, the researcher worked to develop trust and rapport with participants to protect them from potential discomfort or risk during the study. This task was accomplished by consistently checking in with interviewees to see if any questions were making them uncomfortable. The researcher also informed participants at the outset of the study that they had the option to withdraw from the study at any time, and that they were not required to answer each question. Further, the researcher relied on attending skills within counseling to recognize verbal and/or nonverbal discomfort from the participants during their interviews or any other part of the research process. The researcher did not determine that she needed to take further action to ensure that participants felt comfortable with their involvement in the study. Ethical codes from professional organizations such as the American School Counselor Association were useful tools to refer to when considering how this research process could be most effectively conducted. The researcher complied with all reviews,

recommendations, and requirements of the institutional review board (IRB) of the College of William and Mary in conducting this research project.

Some practical measures that were taken to complete this study in an ethical manner included the researcher's aforementioned awareness of her own biases as related to this study and ensuring that she was continuously reflecting on questions and responses. This aspect was one of the most important ethical measures to put in place due to the subjective nature of this study as well as the researcher's personal background from which the study emerged. The researcher made certain to develop questions in a manner that ensured that participants did not feel pressured to answer in certain ways or feel as though they were being lead to a specific response by the manner in which the questions were phrased. The researcher was also aware that some participants could become vulnerable or sensitive to the nature of the questions, given that the topic indirectly addressed their professionalism; however, the researcher did not observe any vulnerability or sensitivity from participants and consistently checked in to make sure they were comfortable. Nonetheless, as noted previously, the researcher was sure to inform participants that all questions were optional and that they could withdraw or remain silent at any time. Moreover, the informed consent that was provided at the beginning of the study detailed all of the processes included in the study. By signing the informed consent, participants agreed to allow the researcher to include any information gathered in the final research study unless otherwise indicated, thereby ensuring as much protection of their confidentiality as possible.

Conclusion

Although many deficits in this field of knowledge exist, new research on this topic provides hope for Asian American students in US public K-12 schools. School counselors face many challenges such as large caseloads, insufficient resources and funding, and lack of support from administration and/or other school staff (Tatar, 2012). However, as leaders in the schools tasked with enhancing the learning process for all students as well as providing other direct and indirect student services, school counselors need to be resourceful and motivated to improve the mental and overall health of students, including Asian American students (ASCA, 2012). As such, this study was designed to add to the literature on how school counselors can notice and accommodate to the needs of Asian American students. The preceding chapter provided a thorough overview of the methodology of the study, including: procedure, researcher's context, credibility, and ethical considerations. The following chapter will examine the results of the study.

***** CHAPTER FOUR *****

Results

Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to gain an understanding of participants' experiences with Asian American students through the lens of the help-seeking model and add to the current literature on this topic. Two high schools and one middle school in a suburban area within the Southeast region of the US were purposefully selected for this study due to the convenience and accessibility of the schools as well as the significant population of Asian American students at each school as compared to surrounding areas. Eight high school counselors and two middle school counselors were interviewed because they all fulfilled the minimum requirements set by the researcher, and they were all willing to participate in the study. Data was collected through individual interviews, transcribed, and then analyzed for themes and conclusions for future implications. The following section will discuss the results of the study.

District

As noted above, participants from three schools, two high schools and one middle school, were the source of the information gathered in this study. These schools were located in a school district in a suburban region between two major cities in the Southeast portion of the US. Each high school had an enrollment of about 1000 students, and the middle school had an enrollment of about 750 students. Class sizes were about 24 students per class in the middle school and about 23 students per class in the high school. The graduation rate for the entire district for the Class of 2015 was 94.6% as compared to the 90.5% graduation rate in the state, and the average SAT score was 1563 in the district

as compared to 1533 in the state. The educational level of teachers was as follows: 42% of teachers held a bachelor's degree; 50% of teachers held a Master's degree; 7% of teachers held a Master's +30 Hours; and 1% of teachers held a Doctorate. There were about 78% non-minority teachers and 22% minority teachers represented in this district.

Descriptions of Participants

A brief profile of each participant is provided. A pseudonym is used to disguise true identities. Each profile will include job descriptions, number of students in each caseload, previous work experiences, number of years at the current job, and other responsibilities.

Ms. Milk

Ms. Milk is a female, White high school counselor. She is the Director of School Counseling at her school. Her job duties include developing school-wide programs and ensuring that goals are met in the department, the school, and the school system. Ms. Milk has a caseload of about 230 students. Ms. Milk's background experience is extensive, as she has been a school counselor for 27 years. During her Master's Degree program, Ms. Milk was the Assistant Director of Financial Aid, which she reports helped her in her career as a school counselor. Because of her financial aid experience, Ms. Milk is familiar with the financial aid system and can help families navigate the financial aid considerations when high school students are applying for college. She has been at the current high school for 13 years.

Mr. Bow

Mr. Bow is a male, White school counselor. He is the Director of School Counseling at his school. Mr. Bow carries a caseload of about 230 students. Before

being a school counselor at this school for 27 years, he taught for 10 years at a middle school. Mr. Bow reports that even while he was teaching, his ultimate goal was to become a counselor and he centered his career placements and experiences on becoming a school counselor. In addition to having the same duties as other counselors such as academic planning, social/emotional counseling, and college/career readiness, Mr. Bow has extra duties related to being the Director, such as managing logistical duties during summertime.

Ms. Edge

Ms. Edge is a female, White school counselor. Ms. Edge is currently the freshman counselor with a caseload of 311 students, and her duties include: registration, academic counseling, classroom guidance lessons, orientations, counseling groups, and communicating with parents. Before working as a high school counselor for the past two years, Ms. Edge was a middle school counselor for 13 years and an elementary school counselor for five years. Her elementary and middle school counselor duties included: classroom guidance lessons, meeting with parents about the social/emotional needs of students, groups, testing, workshops, parent universities, and running a summer camp for students transitioning between elementary and middle school.

Mr. Fish

Mr. Fish is a male, White school counselor. Mr. Fish has worked at this school for four years and has about 330 students in his caseload. Mr. Fish was a middle school counselor for two years before coming to the high school level, and he describes his current job responsibilities as helping 9th to 12th graders in his caseload successfully proceed from freshman year to senior year and graduation. Before entering the school

counseling field, Mr. Fish was a chaplain in the Navy for 23 years and enjoyed counseling and doing ministry in the Navy. Mr. Fish has seen a variety of issues with students, ranging from academic issues to family crises and suicidal ideation.

Ms. Jive

Ms. Jive is a female, White school counselor. Ms. Jive has a caseload of about 350 students on her caseload. Ms. Jive has been at this school for about nine years. Before being at this school for about 13 years, Ms. Jive was a counselor for two years in the Northeast region of the US. She describes these previous schools as having an extremely different demographic similar to her current school: extremely poor, rural, and working with a lot of sexual abuse cases. Her second placement was at a suburban school that was near a university campus and consisted of many enrichment programs for the students. Ms. Jive stated that she would have stayed at her second placement if not for moving South for personal reasons. Ms. Jive describes her job responsibilities as working with a wide variety of students: male, female, 9th to 12th grade, wealthy, difficult family backgrounds, students with abusive family members, etc.

Mr. Jorge

Mr. Jorge is an Asian American, male school counselor. Mr. Jorge has been a school counselor at this current school for almost 20 years. Mr. Jorge has about 325 to 360 students on his caseload. He describes his job responsibilities as academic counseling, academic scheduling, college information and college applications, among other duties. Mr. Jorge's previous work experience was as a tennis coach for nine years and working with the chronically mentally ill in a community living situation. His main

work in his previous job was helping clients to readjust to life by teaching basic living skills.

Ms. Cook. Ms. Cook is a White, female counseling intern at the high school. She primarily works with two of the school counselors and was with Mr. Jorge at the time of this interview. Ms. Cook is currently in her second year of her Master's program. Ms. Cook was not interviewed separately, as her qualifications did not meet the minimum requirements of two years of experience this study; however, she provided valuable insight throughout the interview with Mr. Jorge.

Ms. Kier

Ms. Kier is a female, White school counselor. Ms. Kier currently has about 275 students on her caseload. Ms. Kier describes her job responsibilities as including the following: individual counseling centered around social/emotional issues, logistical duties such as scheduling and course registration, career/college readiness counseling including tasks such as writing recommendation letters, and handling crises in the building. Before she assumed her role as a school counselor at this high school for about 15 years, Ms. Kier was a middle counselor for one year at a nearby district with a caseload of about 225 students for one year. Her job responsibilities at this school were similar to her current job responsibilities, but her middle school counseling career required her to do more group work than her current job.

Ms. Luck

Ms. Luck is a female, White school counselor. She has about 300 students on her caseload, and her job responsibilities include: meeting with all parents once a year, registration, Governor School (a prestigious high school program offered through the

district) applications, individual counseling, classroom guidance lessons, and personal counseling referrals. Ms. Luck has been at this school for 16 years and was previously a social services counselor for one year at a high school in a nearby military base. This previous high school had a much different demographic than Ms. Luck's current employment setting, consisting of about 95% Hispanic students with frequent gang activity.

Ms. Kilb

Ms. Kilb is a female, White middle school counselor. She works primarily with the 7th grade class, but she works with all three grade (grades 6-8) levels, particularly when the half time 6th grade counselor is not working. Her main caseload of students has 267 students, and when she adds on the 6th grade students as well, she has close to 400 students on her caseload. Ms. Kilb has worked at this school for four years, and this is her first job after graduating from her Master's program in School Counseling. Ms. Kilb mentioned that her job responsibilities included tasks such as academic planning, scheduling, social/emotional counseling, and parent communication.

Ms. Tag

Ms. Tag is a female, African American middle school counselor. She is the eighth grade counselor and the school counseling director, and her job responsibilities include registration, academic planning, individual counseling, student recognition, student programming, classroom guidance lessons, parent-teacher conferences, response to intervention meetings, and master scheduling. Ms. Tag also splits the 6th grade class when the half time 6th grade counselor is not present, increasing her current 310 student caseload to about 460 students on certain days. Before becoming a middle school

counselor at this school for two years, Ms. Tag was an elementary school counselor in a Northern state for five years, a middle school counselor in the same county as when she was an elementary school for one year, and an elementary school counselor in a nearby district of her current setting for six years. Her previous work experience gave her the background of working with a variety of populations, and she describes the school in which she did her first job as having a 75% ESL population and her second school as being a new magnet school for the arts, which attracted a diverse group of students from lower income families.

Themes

Themes were developed from the assessment of codes, which were created by looking for emerging patterns among interviews. Codes were assigned to interview data if their information was consistent with the literature and/or frequently mentioned among multiple people. As noted in Chapter 3, the researcher created codes using the qualitative software, NVivo, to highlight relevant quotes and passages and group them by theme. After creating several codes, the researcher looked for patterns through the lens of the help-seeking model to identify key themes that were relevant to the research questions (Yin, 2014). The researcher narrowed down the themes found in the interview data to four main themes with 10 subthemes. The themes include: acculturative stress, school based expectations, lack of mental health counseling, and counselor involvement. The subthemes include: language and belongingness (under acculturative stress); challenging course loads, parent expectations, Asian comparison, and lack of disciplinary issues (under school based expectations); changing responses to mental health (under lack of

mental health issues); and counselor knowledge, counselor flex, and school/administration (under counselor involvement).

Acculturative Stress

Acculturative stress is a theme that emerged through data analysis. To review, acculturative stress is a phenomenon experienced by individuals trying to conceptualize experiences in the context of their new environment (Berry, 2005). Asian American students, whether first or second generation, experience acculturative stress by balancing the cultures of home with the culture of school. These students need to constantly assess which cultural expectations are more appropriate for a particular setting: the Asian values of hierarchy, collectivism, and submission to authority (Chang, 1996) or the Western values of autonomy, individualism, and assertion (Kim & Omizo, 2005). Acculturative stress has implications that affect students' home life and school life, causing extra risks for mental health issues that they may not seek help for. Participants described observations of acculturative stress through the following subthemes: language barriers between students and parents and lack of belongingness in mainstream culture at the school.

Language. One of the subthemes associated with acculturative stress was the language barrier between parents and students, as well as the language barrier between parents and participants. Mouw & Xie (1999) discussed how one of the main barriers to full acculturation for first generation parents was lack of language mastery. One of the main implications was that although first generation Asian American individuals could survive in America without working to fully understand and speak the English language, the language gap between first and second generation family members could

have mental health repercussions for second generation Asian American students due to a lack of communication between students and parents. Oftentimes, second generation Asian American students prefer the English language over the Asian language spoken at home, creating a lack of communication between parents and students (Mouw & Xie, 1999). Several participants confirmed this pattern by making remarks relevant to language barriers in interviews. Mr. Bow discussed the gap in language preference, not because parents were not well educated, but due to the difference in background between first and second generation Asian American individuals. He said,

We have a lot of students whose parents do not speak English, whereas our Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, Chinese students have parents where English is not their first language. As for the kids, English is pretty much their first language.

Mr. Fish further explained this phenomenon by stating that one difference between his Asian American students and other students was that “[he] never [knew]” whether “[he was] going to be able to communicate [with parents] very clearly, because of the language.” Mr. Jorge also commented on his experiences working directly with students due to the lack of communication with parents due to language: “I have some students exactly like that--, that their parents don't speak much English. Most of my interaction is with the student. If I need to advise them on something, it's just dealing with them one on one.”

Ms. Kilb discussed how some parents did not speak enough English, and that she utilized interpretation services provided by the county. She also discussed the discrepancy between first and second generation students when she said, “The second

generation, they're pretty Americanized. The first generation, they usually have to have an interpreter with them to be able to talk with us." Ms. Kilb also went on to discuss the difficulties of the language barriers when explaining certain coursework. For example, she said,

That [talking with first generation parents] becomes the most difficult part because explaining to somebody about different math tracks and things like that is really hard, as is explaining why their child's not in algebra and what foundations of algebra is. It sounds about the same when all you're hearing is algebra.

Not only is there a difficulty in communication between parents and students in regards to the language barrier, but also between the counselor and the parent when working to decide what is best for students.

In regards to mental health, language barriers did not allow for students to communicate the extent of mental health issues with parents. Ms. Kier reported that students were expected to "keep plugging" when dealing with depression, anxiety, or other mental health issues. She said that school counselors continued to run into the language barrier when they "need[ed] their parents," simply needing "parents to recognize that this is more than they can juggle on their own and yet they have to be the ones to tell their parents." Ms. Kier attributed this difficulty of communication to parents' lack of English language mastery by saying: "A lot of times mom and dad are not at a point where they can [communicate]. I'm not saying they don't understand English but some of those concepts [mental health issues] are big concepts that they don't have the English word equivalent for." Thus, even if students wanted to have honest

conversations with parents, the language barriers created one less incentive to initiate those conversations for fear of being misunderstood.

Belongingness. Belongingness was an unexpected subtheme that emerged through data analysis. Multiple participants described the challenges faced by Asian American students in being accepted into the mainstream groups in schools due to factors such as: difference in goals and motivations, lack of family ties to the community, and a lack of help-seeking opportunities for various reasons. Mr. Bow attributed his worry for Asian American students being “especially susceptible” to “isolation” as not having “certain outlets that they just normally gravitate towards” and “doing thing[s] outside the school that take a lot of time.” He went on to discuss how even though the entire community was religious, Asian American students had their own religious community that separated them from other students.

One reason for a lack of belongingness described by Ms. Jive was parents not addressing social issues for students, which led to loneliness and depression. She recounted one experience with a student:

His mom did describe that he had issues with friends in the past, and that he had started to withdraw himself because he never really felt like he had friends. That issue was never addressed, and I guess he became more and more lonely and just accepted that life of loneliness, and high school became very overwhelming, but when we tried to intervene and give some ideas of how we can change that, he was already so far withdrawn and depressed and anxious that it was impossible to get him here on a daily basis.

This experience was not unique to this one particular student, as another pattern that emerged was that social/emotional issues were not taken as seriously as academic issues, leading to more difficulty in making friends and not having a sense of belonging in the schools.

Participants noticed that Asian American students tended to stick together throughout the school, particularly in social settings such as the lunchroom or hallways. Ms. Jive reported on her observations in the cafeteria when she said,

They [Asian American students] sit together. Not all, but a significant amount. They sit together. They connect with each other. Sometimes they speak in different languages, depending on what they're comfortable with and what they know. It's [their interactions] interesting to watch.

Ms. Milk also confirmed the same observation: "They [students] have a diverse group, but if you look at the lunch table, you see a lot of the Asian kids together." Because of the tendency to associate with others who are similar, Asian American students have a more difficult time belonging to larger social groups as a whole and continue in the pattern of being isolated from mainstream groups within schools and other social settings.

Participants were aware that Asian American students were involved in their own communities outside of school, particularly in churches. Ms. Luck talked about her perception of churches within the Asian community: "It's some of the other families that may not have as much support but the churches around here seem pretty important. I always say, "Let's look at the church, there's a lot that goes on at the church." The churches were described to be a place of community and resources, as Mr. Fish said, "I feel like I can drive down the road and see the Korean Presbyterian Church or the

Chinese Baptist Church and I know there's a community that's looking out for each other." He went on to discuss how churches were the source of support for Asian American students, as he had students talking about their involvement in church through "helping" others, "tutoring," or "helping teach English." Likewise, Mr. Bow said that "Asian American students are very active in their own churches." Thus, being heavily involved in their own community may be another contributing factor that inhibits them feeling as though they belong in the mainstream culture at school.

School Based Expectation

The topic of academic pressures was an extremely common theme that emerged from all 10 participants. This theme is consistent with the literature on academic expectations of students, as Asian culture emphasizes achievement, excellence, and continued education as being the marks of success (Sue & Okazaki, 2009). Asian American students were generally regarded, as Mr. Jorge said, "extremely, strong, academic students [who are] focused." Mr. Jorge also said that Asian American students were "committed" with a "[strong work ethic]." Ms. Jive corroborated this notion by stating that "[Asian American students] expect excellence so much to the point that we assume just because they're culturally one way that they're all brilliant." She also mentioned that "they all have a common understanding that academic excellence and focus and commitment and dedication are the most important and just to ignore the teenage world around them." Ms. Edge attributed this phenomenon to their culture by saying: "It's like a culture for them to be among the highest for academic rigor." Further, every participant noticed that Asian American students tended to have academics being

the driving force behind all other activities: sports, clubs, organizations, course selection, etc. Mr. Bow said,

The Asian American kids, they're involved in certain sports that they see are being compatible with their academic goals. Outside, you're going to see what I guess would be considered fairly typical things such as music studies. Different types of things that way, [extracurricular activities that are more related to] academic prep, it goes on. [Their selection of extracurricular activities] will be unique in that fashion.

Mr. Jorge also reported how some of his “main requests” from Asian American students were centered on advising them how to prepare for universities such as being “involved in leadership positions” or “maybe an extracurricular sport activity to bolster their resume.” Further, he said that “the main conversations that [he normally has] are centered around:

“...doing a lot of college planning even earlier, as early as like sophomore year. Talking about standardized testing, what's their next step and then how many AP courses they would they need to take to qualify for an upper tier school, like UVA or Duke University or MIT.”

Mr. Jorge also mentioned that students were concerned about “what [would] happen to their rank” if they were to “take fewer weighted courses.”

Challenging course loads. A common subtheme within academic pressures was Asian American students’ trend to create a more difficult course load for themselves starting at a young age, even if their school counselor did not recommend it. Most participants noticed a pattern of Asian American students inquiring, registering for,

and/or disregarding recommendations when it came to rigorous courses or prestigious programs such as Governor School, the International Baccalaureate program, or outside academic programs that were not age appropriate. Ms. Kilb, a middle school counselor, said:

Their [Asian American students] interests may lean a little bit more towards future classes, current academics, wanting to go into courses that they really shouldn't go into —that they're not prepared for. I have some students who really are pushing to go into high school level or advanced courses. Their academics are not showing that that's appropriate for them. Or I have, on the opposite end, those that want to take even higher level courses before they even take the ones that they've been taking, a lot of those [students].

Ms. Tag, another middle school counselor, described the measures that she and her administration had to take in order to halt the registration process for a parent and student who wanted to take online courses at an Ivy League university to get ahead: “We had to put the brakes on it. It went all the way to the school board.” Mr. Jorge discussed the mentality of Asian American students when approaching course selection:

Sometimes their perception is, I'm a top student, I should be able to handle all these courses. But then the reality is that these courses have a lot of expectations and requirements. And there may not be enough hours of the day for all that to get done. So that's typical with a lot of students. A lot of students have some confidence, thinking that they can knock out four or five AP classes. The reality is there's not enough time in that schedule to meet those requirements and do other things.

Multiple other counselors mentioned that Asian American students wanted to take challenging courses. Ms. Edge described students wanting to take the “highest of the highest, the cream of the crop courses” because they were “very focused, very driven.” Mr. Fish also said that one of the trends he saw in Asian American students was, “how can I take the top academic courses I can possibly handle?” Other counselors, such as Ms. Kier, discussed how she needed to reassure one particular Asian American student that she did not need to enroll in seven AP courses:

I don't care how driven you are or how academically focused you are. Seven AP's – there are kids who can do it, but it's a very, very, very small population of kids, and not every one of my Asian American kids can do seven AP's at once.

Parent expectations. Parent expectation was another subtheme that emerged from data analysis. When asked about school counselor and parent interaction, many participants said that parents typically initiated a meeting when wanting to discuss the child’s academic life. Mr. Bow described parent trends as,

They [Asian American students’ parents] just have strong expectations that their child will have every possible option to be the strongest or highest ranking kid in the class. So what you deal with are things like ... I'll just give you a concrete example. [One parent said,] “My student is in eighth grade, coming to the ninth grade next year, what summer school class can they take that's AP and weighted?”

After providing this information at the interview, Mr. Bow said that the aforementioned question had already been asked “a couple of times this year” and that it was “typical.” Ms. Edge corroborated the notion that parents were heavily involved in students’

academic life by saying that “their parents drive the bus on [academics]” and that “the parents want them to take the cream of the crop of the accelerated courses.”

Further, Ms. Jive described the following scenario:

When the tutoring is not working and the after-school [program] is not working, we sit down, and we're saying, "Look, it's still a 72[% in the course]. This isn't working. Let's move over to regular calculus," [Students will say,] "Oh my gosh, that's devastating! I'm a junior in AP Calc!" [I will say,] "Yes! You're a junior in AP Calculus. It's okay to struggle in that class. You're 16 years old. It's okay." [They will say,] "No, it's not." In their opinion, it is not okay. [They think,] "It is not okay. I should be writing code by now." Truly, they expect that of themselves.

Although this interaction was between counselor and student, Ms. Jive went on to explain the source of this expectation: “Then you meet their parents and you understand. You understand that their expectations are that [their children excel].” Ms. Kilb discussed how her middle school was a heavily educated population and, thus, Asian American students were not unique in having high expectations from home. Regardless, she discussed how it was usually the parents’ initiation when it came to conversations about students’ academics, with potential parental language barriers being the only reason why students would initiate the conversation instead:

Their parents are usually the ones who start the conversation when it comes to their academics. If the student comes to me, it’s because their parent can’t speak English, so they’ve been told to come and speak to me. If the parents do speak English, then they are the ones who call me and talk about it.

Ms. Kier was also familiar with this phenomenon and joked about talking to parents in regards to the child's academics, "I almost have to reassure the parents more than the students."

Participants reported a lack of contact from parents unless the issue was regarding students' academics. Mr. Bow said, "The emphasis when parents come in is always academic. "How are his grades?" "I see his grade is doing this. What can we do about this particular class?" Ms. Milk also recounted situations where parents wanted to meet to discuss how students can take a maximum amount of AP and other advanced courses. Finally, Ms. Tag went as far as to say that she had never had any parent reach out to her to help their child with anything not academic related.

Asian comparison. Another subtheme that emerged under academic pressures was the expectations that came from within the Asian community by comparing students to one another or comparing students to parents. Ms. Luck discussed how high achieving parents and peers expected more from students because of Asian stereotypes:

They just have to do it [excel academically] in their community just because of the fact that "not all White kids are smart but they say all Asians are smart," If you're not good in math then come on. They know the drill. There are little quirks like that [in the Asian American community]. They're very attuned to what the expectations are in their community.

Several participants were aware of this expectation within the Asian community due to personal reports by students. Mr. Bow disclosed,

I think that's because some of the kids have told me that in the Asian American adult community, there's a great deal of talk and comparison about if your kid's

going to get into an Ivy League school, then they may need to be doing this [excelling academically, impressive extracurricular activities] earlier and stronger.

Similarly, Ms. Milk talked about how students tell her of mothers' conversations at church:

The kids always tell me that all of the mothers talk at church, and they're all talking about where their child is going to school, and this one's going to William and Mary or UVA because those are the prestigious state schools. I'm going to ODU and my mother is so embarrassed.

Aside from adults in the Asian community speaking to one another and comparing children, this type of comparison exists between siblings as reported by Mr. Jorge:

One Asian student whose background is Chinese that I met with early this year, her sister is at MIT. The bar is set extremely high in their household. She took on one more AP course than she could handle. We had to have this discussion earlier in the year and we actually moved her out of the AP chemistry course to a different course that she could handle along with all the other B classes. That's a typical interaction.

Further, participants reported that students compare themselves to peers. Ms. Milk told of a particular instance:

Some top kids are always comparing themselves to the top students in the class. I mean here they are [having] a 3.9 [GPA] average, she [the top student] probably has a 4.5 [GPA] and she has a [low] number ranking in the class. They know each other. They know where each other stand and are very in tune to that.

Students who were not maintaining the “Asian expectations” were said to be nearly ostracized within the community, whether by self or by others. Ms. Jive discussed one particular individual who was giving her best effort in school but not receiving glowing grades:

It's very difficult because she's not just up against the stigma of, "Ooh, you may not graduate," but [she is up against] this other whole layer of these cultural expectations. She has removed herself completely from the students who sit together at that table at lunch. We have students every year that struggle, but she's significant in the sense that she's an Asian American that struggles. For some reason, that magnifies her perception of her acceptance. She truly does not like herself.”

This phenomenon may not be intentionally in place to embarrass students who do not live up to expectations enforced by the Asian community, but nevertheless, the intense comparison within the Asian community is very prevalent and noticed by students, parents, and now school counselors.

High behavioral expectations. Another subtheme that provided evidence of high academic expectations within the Asian American community was an expectation of good behavior for Asian American students. All 10 participants reported that there were very little to no disciplinary issues with Asian American students at their school. Kim and Omizo (2003) describe deference to authority and humility as some of the most salient traditional Asian values. These cultural norms may be contributing factors to a lower rate of disciplinary issues within the schools within the Asian American population. Ms. Milk regarded the disciplinary issues as so low that she said it was

“probably almost 0%.” Other counselors described the rate of disciplinary issues as “never a disciplinary issue,” “normally no disciplinary issues,” and “minimal disciplinary issues” (Ms. Jive, Ms. Edge, & Ms. Kier). Mr. Bow elaborated,

I would guess that if you talk to our administrators, and if they ran any kind of a query on their [the Asian American students] discipline, the percentage of discipline that they receive is probably tiny proportionally compared to the rest of the population.

Ms. Jive described Asian American students as “some of the most respectful, polite, students that we have in the building, and truly, truly focused, so they’re never, never a discipline problem.” Further, Ms. Cook also described Asian American students as “more respectful of the teachers” and Mr. Jorge also said that “they’re more respectful to the teachers” as compared to students of other descent.

Regardless of the general accolade towards Asian American students’ behavior, participants reported that the themes for disciplinary issues that do emerge are generally related to academics. Ms. Kilb described incidents where Asian American students were “[doing] something against the rules that’s basically lying to try to keep them out of the trouble – mostly with academics.” Mr. Jorge also reported on previous experiences of Asian American students being reprimanded for disciplinary issues regarding academics:

Some Asian students may have been collaborating on a project, a PowerPoint project or technology project that they were not really supposed to collaborate on.

That’s the only disciplinary issue that I have gone through.

Lack of Mental Health Counseling

A prominent theme reported by participants was that Asian American students and their families had a lack of mental health counseling services. As established in Chapter 2, Asian American students utilize counseling services much less than what one may expect (Kim & Omizo, 2003). One of the main contributing factors to this low rate may be the stigma associated with counseling within Asian cultures (Arnault, 2009), which can lead to repercussions such as bringing shame to the family (Iwamasa & Hilliard, 1999). In alignment with the literature, participants discussed their experiences of recognizing the counseling stigma in Asian American culture. Ms. Jive clearly articulated this notion by saying,

Well, I think that it goes without saying that there is a stigma in the Asian American culture about mental health, and that statement is very alive and well. Often times, students who see themselves having difficulty, whether it be depression or anxiety or just lack of academic success, see not only themselves as a failure, but that they're representing their family. [They see it as] their family being a failure as a whole and so they're uncomfortable.

Multiple participants discussed how mental health issues are handled within the family rather than being brought to a professional clinician. Mr. Bow mentioned students whose parents did not direct the child to counseling services when needed, but rather reprimanded the child for discussing issues outside of the family in the first place. He recounted one particular individual:

I had a particular girl who's going through some pretty tough issues and called her mom in. She was glad that we called her in, but it ended up being a tremendous guilt trip on the girl. First reason, "Why did you go to them and not come to me

and tell me?" "Why couldn't you tell me this?" There was almost an anger there. "Why did you go outside of our family to tell them you were feeling this way. We can take care of this here."

Ms. Jive corroborated this phenomenon through another individual:

Well, the challenges are each other. You have your friend whose parents say, or even your friend who says, "No, you can't go see [Ms. Jive] about that [stressful issues]. Just stay [here], you're fine. Don't even worry about it [current issues]. Whatever." It's that pressure to say, "You're right. I'm not even going to talk to her [Ms. Jive] about it [stressful issues] because I'm fine." Or if one student says to another, "I really haven't been feeling that great lately. I don't know what's going on. I'm a little confused about it [stressful issues]. I'd love to just figure this [stressful issues] out," [And the friend says,] "Oh, yeah, well, talk to me or talk to your dad." It's all kept within. There's no willingness to talk to anyone outside of that [friends and family].

Further, participants reported observations that Asian American students utilized the least amount of mental health services compared to students of other descent. These reports were related to the help-seeking model, where participants discussed a nearly nonexistent pattern of students reaching out for mental health services. Ms. Edge reported the order of help-seeking services utilized by Asian American students: "family, friends, school counselor, and mental health service." It appeared that there was a large gap between asking friends and the school counselor for help. Ms. Edge discussed how the stress level would have to be so high that a friend or Ms. Edge herself would have to initiate contact for students to receive help. Mr. Jorge and Ms. Cook recounted of a

different junior class student who was dealing with depression for over ten years but did not want to discuss his feelings with the counselors. The student admitted to taking an online depression survey and scoring as “severe “but receiving the following response from his parents when he disclosed of his mental health condition: “Well, you’re a teenager, it’s a difficult time.” Mr. Jorge and Ms. Cook described the conversation as ending at that point with no further information from the student, as the student felt “uncomfortable” discussing his issues any further. Thus, even in seemingly extreme circumstances, Asian American students appeared to have a difficult time seeking help from counselors.

Ms. Jive described another factor reflective of this theme: a pattern of respectful disagreement from parents when mental health services were recommended by her and her colleagues. She described parents as “never rude” when she suggested one particular student to see an outside counselor, but the issue “never [got] addressed.” She discussed how she would attempt to offer to help the family find counselors with the same cultural background in order to provide a more comfortable experience, but she would receive responses that they would “work on it at home” and “revisit it.” Ms. Jive went on to admit that when she calls an Asian American parent in reference to mental health issues of a student, she knows that it’s “going to be tough” and wonders, “is anything really going to come of this?” Furthermore, Ms. Jive recounted a situation where parents requested an alternate school counselor because that counselor suggested that the student was depressed, and the parent did not think the student was depressed.

Counselors all reported that it was extremely rare for them to see Asian American students seeking a counselor outside of school counseling academic services. Ms. Kilb said:

That is a common thing that we see, that they really will avoid going to a counselor outside. The kids here feel comfortable coming to us. Sometimes they may not want us to call home and tell them [parents] that they met with us. If we say [to the students] “What if we were to refer you to an outside counselor?” they’re like, “No, my parents won’t take me.”

Although extreme cases such as suicidal ideation or self-harm warrant at least a single visit to an outside clinician, participants reported a lack of participation in mental health counseling for Asian American students, even in extreme circumstances. When asked about the students that get to the very extreme point where they need a lot of help and their parents are made aware, Ms. Kier responded, “I would say they mostly don’t seek help – or it has to be said again in three weeks, and I think eventually they get there, but there’s a lot of pushback.” Ms. Kier went on to acknowledge that although the pushback may be cultural rather than intentional, the unlikelihood of Asian American families seeking counseling remained. Ms. Milk said that “it has to be really bad” for Asian American families to utilize resources offered by school counselors. She said that even after students make suicidal remarks and are sent to a mental health professional for an intake, students will recant and say, “I’m fine, I don’t know why they sent me here” and “change the story.”

Changing responses to mental health. A subtheme under lack of mental health counseling was the observation of changing responses to mental health by participants.

Asian culture discourages seeking mental health services, resulting in a slow movement of asking for help within the Asian American student community (Kim & Omizo, 2003). However, Atkinson and Gim (1989) described a study where Asian Americans who were more acculturated in the US tended to accept ideas contrary to the Asian culture when related to mental health such as recognizing the need for psychological help, resisting the stigma associated with seeking help, and discussing personal issues with a professional mental health clinician. Participants in the current study also identified these tendencies at the present time. When asked about how one particular father responded to Mr. Jorge's suggestion of offering his son mental health services, Mr. Jorge said,

He seemed a little bit surprised, but he was accepting the information, and then he sent me a thank you email yesterday. Then asked me to send him that information via email again so that he can better understand what we had spoken about.

Mr. Jorge discussed how part of the school counseling protocol, after making referrals to outside clinicians, was to follow up a couple days later to inquire if the parent and student had made an appointment with the counselor. A particular father was receptive and seemed to be willing to make an initial appointment for his child, and this situation was not an isolated incident. Ms. Jive disclosed of "one of [her] favorite students" whose mother accepted his ADHD diagnosis and "embraced it to the point that [they] are looking at a 504 Plan for him." Ms. Jive praised the mother by saying,

I feel like she's broken barriers in the culture to really say, "It's okay. I'm disappointed that my son is having these issues, which is a very natural feeling, but let's help him." There are breakthroughs within these stigmas, but traditionally, we are still seeing people saying things like, "I don't want to talk

about my emotions. I don't want to talk about anything that's not related to my academic success.”

Ms. Jive acknowledged that it was “very rare” to witness this mother’s response, and that the response was one of the reasons why she “[loved] her so much.”

Further, Mr. Jorge commented on how his position as a school counselor and an outside party positively influenced the parents when he offered advice. When asked about student and parent receptiveness to his advice or counsel when it is not related to academics, he responded,

Usually they're receptive to it, especially the students, because the student may not listen to the parents and totally disregard what they say, like a typical teenager. Then if an outside person, outside of the family, like a counselor, conveys it to the student, they think about it more and they realize, "Yeah, I think that is the issue right there. If I do these things, then not only will it make things better at home, but I'll be able to function better in school."

He continued by saying that parents were “onboard, typically” when words were conveyed in simple terms for parents to understand.

Counselor Involvement

A prominent theme was counselor involvement, where participants discussed how their work with Asian American students were enhanced by building relationships with students and families and being sensitive to Asian American students’ culture.

Participants also discussed how school/administration involvement was crucial in working with Asian American students. This section will provide evidence of these claims.

Counselor knowledge. One subtheme of counselor involvement was counselor knowledge, where participants described how their understanding of Asian American students' backgrounds and experiences helped their work with students. Many participants felt confident in their understanding of Asian American culture, which seemingly helped them articulate observations of students going through the process of help-seeking. However, participants disclosed that they knew they were not finished learning about the culture just as with any other population. Mr. Jorge, an Asian American school counselor, acknowledged that his Asian heritage made him "feel like [he was] knowledgeable about how an Asian household operates and [has certain] expectations" and that he "[understood] that pressure...to perform well enough to get into a good university." However, he did not fully attribute his understanding of this culture to his own Asian identity. He said,

Having been a counselor for many years, I think if you're in the counseling profession for that long, your comfort level is going to be fine with any student.

When I started, my comfort level was the same with Asian students or Caucasian students or African Americans.

Other participants described the same notion of learning more as they gained more experience. Ms. Kilb put it simply: "the more I work here, the more I learn." Ms. Kier shared that she "[felt] relatively well informed" and that although "[she didn't] think [she knew] everything by any stretch of the imagination," she continued to learn about this culture from "kids who [were] very willing to share their cultures." Similarly to other participants, Ms. Kier admitted that "[she] always [thought] there's something else [she] could learn."

Ms. Milk stated that she thought she understood “what’s going on at home” because she has “been doing this for so long” and “dealt with many Asian students.” This comfort level was not only prevalent through experience working in schools with significant Asian American populations. Mr. Fish discussed how his experience in the Navy made him feel “very comfortable” with Asian American students, because he spent time in Asian countries during his time with the Navy. He mentioned that “one of [his] very simple observations of life is that people are really the same in a sense everywhere you go across the country.” Although “there needs to be cultural information about every group, and that would be very helpful,” Mr. Fish talked about how the “information [came] informally by what [he] gleaned off [his] relationships with [the students].” Many counselors discussed how they did not necessarily see the students as “Asian” when working with them, but rather saw students as individuals with Asian descent who needed the same type of rapport and individual attention as any other students. However, as counselors gained more experience and exposure to Asian American students, they noticed and learned of the cultural nuances of their backgrounds and took those factors into consideration when working with them. Thus, a balance of respecting students’ individualities while understanding their context and background was achieved.

Counselor flex. With an understanding of the general trends of Asian American students, participants described many instances where they accommodated to the help-seeking needs of Asian American students. One major subtheme that emerged was counselor flex, where participants emphasized the importance of building rapport with students as soon as possible in order to better understand them and accommodate to their needs. To start, Mr. Bow articulated the importance of reputation:

If you build a relationship with kids and they know your reputation, even if they haven't utilized school counseling services themselves, they know from their friends or from other people that you're trustworthy and that this space is an open space for them, and it's a safe space. Then they're going to seek it out. They're going to take a chance. If you don't have that kind of relationship with kids, they're not going to take a chance, period.

Mr. Fish agreed with this perspective and discussed how barriers will always exist, but he tried his best to create a comfortable environment for the students:

I think a lot of it has to do with relationship that you build up with them. If we have more time to build a relationship, they feel comfortable coming in. It's not just because I'm an adult, because for me, [the hesitation to talk to me] might be a White male thing, it could be [that I am] older. There might be some barrier that they have that keeps them from coming in to see me. It could be my gender, you know? There's always some barrier for somebody that keeps them from walking in through the door.

By building this safe environment for students, Mr. Bow reported how students came into his office to “vent” and “get things off their chest,” particularly about issues that they “don't feel like they can say to other adults.” He described his office as a “safe haven” for students. Similarly, Ms. Edge discussed the specific technique of distributing information cards at the beginning of the school year in order to “build trust” from the beginning, so that when she makes “contact with the parents and there's a concern or something that's sensitive, [she's] already established the relationship and the connection with the parents.”

In addition to building relationships with students, participants reported how when working with Asian American students in particular, respecting boundaries and meeting them where they were is vital to the counseling process. Mr. Bow reinforced this theme by saying that for Asian American students, academic planning was mainly what they wanted to discuss; thus, he made time for those conversations because it was “very, very important” to them. He emphasized that “making time” to discuss what may seem trivial, such as the “difference between having six AP classes and seven AP classes” was essential to the relationship-building process. Additionally, Ms. Jive talked about how students needed to be reminded that her and her colleagues “[understood] that the students were human beings and that they have emotions and feelings, and [the counselors] support them.” She went on to say that her goal was to “make sure that the Asian American population [knew] that [the school counselors] were there for them and that it’s okay... not to feel successful all the time” and that “[the school counselor] will never judge them.” Ms. Jive described her supervision to school counseling interns. She gave a sample lecture of what she would tell her counselors-in-training when working with an Asian American student. The following excerpt is an example of what she would tell her counseling intern:

You need to keep an open mind, because when that student [an Asian American student] walks in the door, you [the counselor-in-training] have no idea what their [the Asian American student] perceptions are. My student [a current Asian American student that Ms. Jive is working with] that is barely graduating, that is doing her best to graduate, if it was your [the counselor-in-training] first day talking with that student and you would say, "Wow, you're [the Asian American

student] not in AP classes," you just devastated that child who would love to be in those AP classes but can't.

She continued, "we just have to be mindful as counselors and educate ourselves about the differences that exist. Differences are always changing, but it's just really important."

Participants admitted that they worked hard not to stereotype Asian American students as all being alike, but rather worked with each one as an individual while considering their culture and potential external pressures. Ms. Jive reported that she wanted to make connections with students and understand their family dynamic so that she could "best support them as a counselor" by "[understanding] what their lives are like and what their dynamic is, and then [she could] help address the things that are in front of [her], whatever that is." Rather than relying solely on the literature and/or other external sources when learning about other cultures, participants mainly discussed how letting students self-report about their lives helped them provide a more positive experience during counseling sessions. In some cases, respecting boundaries and "just [letting] them talk and when they really need" may be the most appropriate (Ms. Milk).

School/administration. Participants discussed a subtheme of how their schools/administrations could better support them in noticing and accommodating to the help-seeking needs of Asian American students. Participants reported a variety of suggestions: Mr. Bow admitted,

It'd be nice to see that minority population represented in your ranks in the building, among teachers, any counseling staff, wherever. I just think that's important. If you have a couple of adults on staff who are excellent role models and who are there for kids, I think that's huge.

He went on to mention that his school had recently hired a teacher of Asian descent, and that he had already seen a drastic impact she made on the Asian American students. This teacher also had her doctorate, which Mr. Bow suspected was an additional positive impression on the students. Other teachers discussed the role of teachers as important as well – Mr. Fish described teachers as “the frontline in the trenches staff members” because teachers “see the students a hundred times more than [school counselors] see them.” He said that he “would love to hear from teachers” because they see the students “every day” or “every other day,” thus likely having more information on how to help these students.

Ms. Jive offered an alternate viewpoint; she mentioned that it might be “really difficult for teachers to identify an Asian American student that might be dealing with mental health issues,” because “it's much less visible, and it's much less apparent because they aren't the kids that are falling asleep in class, that have that withdrawn face, or that you've heard are drinking and smoking on the weekends.” Thus, Ms. Jive articulated that the school could assist in this field by advocating for the “acceptance of help, period.” Ms. Jive was alluding to a need for a school-wide culture of asking for help, where students would not need to feel ashamed of asking for help because asking for help was so embedded in the culture of the school.

Mr. Jorge recognized that the school administration was “usually bogged down with disciplinary issues” and “attendance issues,” which would make it difficult for them to notice the needs of “one of [their] highest functioning populations.” Thus, providing more support (e.g. administrative) so that counselors can have more opportunities to accommodate to the needs of students may be the current status on this situation.

Summary

The preceding chapter provided the results of the study and described the themes and subthemes that emerged from data analysis. The themes included: acculturative stress, school based expectations, lack of mental health counseling, and counselor involvement. The subthemes included: language and belongingness (under acculturative stress), challenging course loads, parent expectations, Asian comparison, and lack of disciplinary issues (under school based expectations), changing responses to mental health (under lack of mental health counseling), and counselor knowledge, counselor flex, and school/administration (under counselor involvement). Chapter 5 will discuss the limitations and implications for future practice and research from the study.

*** CHAPTER FIVE ***

Discussion, Limitations, and Implications for Future Practice and Research

Summary of the Study

Although Asian American individuals are a significant and growing portion of the US population, research on this population's mental health states is limited (Sue, Cheng, Saad, & Chu, 2012). As a group, Asian American students experience unique stressors that put them at a higher risk for suicidal ideation and mental health issues (Chang & Smith, 2015; Mouw & Xie, 1999). Further, due to factors such as the cultural stigma of counseling and the traditional value of family honor, Asian Americans are more likely than non-ethnic minority groups to keep their suicidal ideation private on intake questionnaires and clinical interviews (Kim & Omizo, 2003; Boldero & Fallon, 1995; Chu, Hsieh, & Tokars, 2011). Because Asian American students do not seek the help they need while also performing at some of the highest academic levels, mental health professionals such as school counselors need to be informed of how to utilize best practices when working with this population (McCarron & Inkelas, 2006).

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of school counselors' experiences with Asian American students through the lens of the help-seeking model in order to add to the current understanding of this topic. The help-seeking framework is a flowing model developed by Cauce et al. (2002) that demonstrates three identifiable stages along the help-seeking pathway: problem recognition, the decision to seek help, and the selection of a help provider. In an attempt to gather more data on school counselors' perceptions of Asian American students' help-seeking patterns and behavior, the research questions were outlined as:

1. How do school counselors working in US K-12 public schools recognize Asian American students' utilization of each of the three steps (problem recognition, decision to seek help, service selection) within the help-seeking model?
2. How do school counselors working in US K-12 public schools accommodate to the unique help seeking needs of Asian American students when providing mental health or other school-related services?

A case study method was utilized and 10 full time school counselors from a suburban county in the Southeast region of the US were individually interviewed. Eight school counselors worked at a high school and two school counselors worked at a middle school. In accordance with CACREP standards (2009) for being a supervisor, all school counselors had at least two years of experience working as a school counselor.

Interviews were semi-structured, and the researcher administered all interviews. After each interview was conducted, the researcher implemented credibility techniques such as journaling and checking personal biases in order to maintain as much objectivity as possible. Then, the researcher uploaded all recordings to a confidential, transcription service website for online transcription. The researcher checked all transcriptions for accuracy and changed the names for increased confidentiality before uploading all transcriptions to NVivo in order to begin the coding process. To increase inter-rater reliability, the researcher also sent all transcriptions to a secondary coder who independently coded the data and identified key themes. The researcher checked the themes against her own for consistency and grouped them together by relevance and prevalence. After organizing all themes into main groups, the researcher ended up with four main themes and 10 subthemes. Each theme will be discussed below.

Discussion of the Results

This section will provide a discussion of the results, organized by research question. Four themes emerged in the study and three addressed the first research question and one addressed the second research question. The themes were: acculturative stress, academic stress, lack of mental health counseling, and counselor involvement. Research question #1 will be answered by the first three themes and research question #2 will be answered with the last theme.

Research Question #1

The following research question will be answered by three themes that emerged from the study: acculturative stress, academic pressures, and lack of mental health counseling. As noted above, the first research question sought to understand how school counselors working in US K-12 public schools recognize Asian American students' utilization of each of the three steps (problem recognition, decision to seek help, service selection) within the help-seeking model

Acculturative stress. Participants alluded to various forms of acculturative stress within Asian American students. To review, Berry (2005) defined acculturation as the process of adaptation that occurs when individuals make contact between two or more cultures. Acculturative stress appeared to contribute to many problems that students encountered but did not acknowledge as problems or seek help on. The notion of acculturative stress, whether it regarded language gaps between parents and students or the required independence of students at a young age due to parents' work schedules, was not mentioned lightly in participants' reports. Rather, participants repeatedly mentioned that Asian American students had stress pertaining to balancing both mainstream culture

and home culture. These stresses mostly stemmed from implications brought on by language and cultural barriers.

Although participants did not frame their reports as “acculturative stress,” many of their accounts alluded to observations of student issues within this realm. One of the main stressors was the language barrier between parents and students, where participants said that students oftentimes had to navigate their own path because of parents’ English language deficiencies. The stress related to language was predictable, as it was consistent within previous literature: Mouw and Xie (1999) discuss how second generation children have an affinity to English while first generation parents maintain their native language. Participants discussed how students were oftentimes translators for parents and/or translators were utilized if students did not speak the parents’ native language. The implication for this parent English language deficiency is that Asian American students are at a disadvantage in basic communication both at home and at school.

Parents who are not comfortable with speaking English are not able to advocate for their child as well as a native English speaking parent could; thus, Asian American students miss out on opportunities to receive help in areas they need. This means that even if parents were aware of resources such as a school counselor, first generation Asian American parents are less likely to be aware of their child’s need for these resources because the child could not communicate their needs to parents. When students are not comfortable with the primary language spoken at home, they are less likely to express deeper issues to parents. Previous literature corroborates this issue, as Leong, Leach, Yeh, and Chou (2007) describe the difficulty of maintaining family cohesion due to communication errors between first and second generation Asian Americans. Research

such as the study by Iwasaki and Brown (2014) also show evidence that first generation Asian American parents are less likely to adapt to English as a proficient language, thus inhibiting their relationship with a second generation Asian American child. This lack of communication pathway increases a barrier for students to communicate needs to parents, let alone parents being able to be aware of or advocate to school counselors on behalf of their child.

Another implication for language barriers between Asian American parents and children is the blockage of cultural nuances that are often necessary for understanding between individuals, especially when individuals of different generations align with different cultures (Vu & Rook, 2013). Thus, Asian American students do not simply endure stress when struggling to communicate with parents, they also experience stress related to adapting to one culture at home and another at school. Language barriers are not only problematic for understanding content topics between parents and students; they also contribute to differences and potential conflicts between parents and students based on the beliefs, values, and idiosyncrasies of differing cultures. Despite the unique significance of these stressors for Asian American students, the participants observed that Asian American students tended not to ask for help from parents or other resources.

Because second generation Asian American students are balancing both cultures at all times (Berry, 2005), they find it harder to fit into the general crowd at school. Multiple participants discussed their observations of Asian American students being more susceptible to isolation among the mainstream culture due to significant cultural differences between home and school. As a result, participants reported that Asian American students tended to stick together in religious and other activities outside of

school. They also reported that Asian American students tended to be immersed in multiple activities relating to academic and vocational success such as tutoring, standardized testing preparation courses, volunteering at church, etc. As such, Asian American students appeared to have limited time in socially interacting with others and making friends in their school and the outside community. Also, parents of Asian American students are also involved in their own communities, taking away opportunities for Asian American students to attend their own social gatherings because they are obligated to spend time with their parents' communities. Participants observed that this lack of belongingness in mainstream culture also make it challenging for Asian American students to seek help; because students were heavily influenced by Asian American stereotypes towards asking for help, their mentality was more similar to their parents rather than their non-Asian American peers at school.

Acculturative stress is consistent with the literature, wherein Lui (2015) described the many stressors of dual-culture individuals living in the US. Berry (2005) discussed acculturation occurring at the group level, in which entire cultural practices and social structures are adapted to the new environment, as well as the individual level, where personal behavior changes according to new social norms. Berry (2005) mentioned that acculturation could take long periods of time, ranging from years to generations. Participants observed this phenomenon taking place within Asian American students and corroborated the stress associated with making adaptations to the host culture from the previous culture. Changes associated with acculturation included changing patterns in daily life such as new food and dress, while other stressors were more difficult to change such as learning new languages and embracing new values (Berry, 2005). Participants'

observations and previous literature on unique stressors for Asian American students were consistent.

Participants' reports of Asian American students' acculturative stress, in conjunction with the previous literature on this phenomenon, provide evidence to the difficult experiences of Asian American students as related to balancing both Asian and US cultures. These experiences cannot be eliminated as second generation Asian American students are continuing to increase in number. However, school counselors can be aware of these students' unique stressors and work to ensure that they are provided supplemental support systems. Due to the highly achieving, academic nature of Asian American students, school counselors are prone to be unaware of Asian American students' struggles. With an increased knowledge of the aforementioned issues, school counselors can be more intentional about checking in with students and providing opportunities for students to navigate through the help-seeking process.

Academic pressures. Another major factor that led to participants' recognition of Asian American students' utilization of the help-seeking model was academics. Previous literature stated that one of the main facets of Asian culture is the expectation that students will academically excel (Sue & Okazaki, 2009). All participants alluded to some notion that Asian American students were motivated and academically charged individuals. Most participants described Asian American students as driven, motivated, and high performing students. Participants discussed how Asian American students and parents were indeed motivated by academic success and typically sought school counseling services in regards to coursework selection or seeking opportunities for advancement. One participant discussed how both parents and students met with her to

push for more difficult classes, even against her advisement. These reports are consistent with the literature, as Chang and Smith (2015) describe Asian culture as one where achievement, excellence, and modesty are emphasized. Other participants also reported that students tended to take on a heavier course load than recommended, such as taking seven AP courses or registering for advanced courses in between middle and high school. This trend is not unique to the Asian American students in the studied district, as Sue and Okazaki (2009) say that Asian culture and beliefs are likely the cause for academic achievement.

All participants reported that the help-seeking model was most often completed when the issue was centered on academics. Asian American students were likely to recognize a problem, decide to seek help, and seek professional (academic) services when academic life was at stake. However, Asian American students and parents tended to have an idea of how to solve academic issues before consulting with school counselors, and participants were only approached to bring solutions to fruition. In keeping with professionalism and previous counseling training, participants did not express frustration to parents and students when they were so resistant to the advice of the counselors. Still, no participant disclosed that they did not want parents and students to come to them with these issues – participants were always willing to help parents and students, despite resistance to advice. This attitude of participants is keeping in with the cultural determinants of help seeking model discussed in Chapter 2, where participants realize and recognize that different values are important to individuals of different cultures, and they work to respect those values (Arnault, 2009).

Lack of mental health counseling. A common theme in previous literature was that Asian American students have the most need for mental health services, yet the lowest rate of utilization of services (Kim & Omizo, 2003, Atkinson, & Gim, 1989; Chang & Smith, 2015). All ten participants in the study observed this pattern. Most participants reported that Asian American students came to seek help in regards to academics, such as changing schedules or requesting challenging courses. Social/emotional issues were also oftentimes related to academics, such as not getting along with a teacher and asking for advice on how to improve the relationship. Participants noticed a pattern in deciding not to seek help when the issues was not related to academics, as they discussed the extreme circumstances that needed to occur for students and parents to receive an intake. They also reported that the initial intake was oftentimes not pursued further in subsequent counseling sessions. This trend was consistent with previous literature, where Kim et al. (2015)'s study showed that clients of Asian descent terminated treatment after one session at a significantly higher rate than White clients.

This result was also significant, because clients of Asian descent reported higher severity levels of psychological distress at the initial intake as compared to others. Multiple participants mentioned severe struggles experienced by students in their schools and discussed parents' response to these issues - parents did not acknowledge these challenges or offer professional services for students to process their challenges in a healthy manner. Participants also reported how parents oftentimes resorted back to responses such as "we'll handle it at home" or "we'll take care of this," insinuating that they had no interest in pursuing further action outside of the family. These comments

suggested that social/emotional issues were dealt with according what was accepted in Asian culture, which is that, as established in Chapter 2, discussing social/emotional issues with non-family members brings shame onto the family (Iwamasa & Hilliard, 1999). Participants mentioned that parents would compare students' struggles with their own and attributed mental health issues to age, character, or students' lack of effort.

Furthermore, participants mentioned that some students did not desire for participants to reach out to parents as they predicted a negative outcome, and others were even somewhat frightened of "getting in trouble" if parents knew that students had discussed issues to someone outside of the family. These responses suggested that students did not seek help outside of the home and were forced by culture to maintain emotions within themselves and within the family. These accounts are consistent with the literature in Chapter 2, where Sue (1994) discussed how Asian family values expected individuals to deal with emotional issues through self-control rather than sharing personal issues outside of the family. Although challenging, participants developed an understanding of how to navigate mental health issues with this particular group of students and knew how to respect boundaries while still advocating for them.

Research question #1 discussed how school counselors recognize Asian American students' utilization of the help-seeking model. This study discovered that school counselors recognize that Asian American students typically do not navigate throughout the help-seeking process in regards to mental health issues. Although Asian American students have unique stressors such as acculturative stress and academic pressures, students will be less likely to seek help than their non-Asian American peers. Participants recounted that the help-seeking framework was most highly utilized in

regards to academics, which is an important Asian value. Participants' recognition of these trends consistent with the literature, as Chapter 2 discusses how Asian American individuals experience acculturative stress, academic pressures, and lack of mental health counseling due to counseling stigma (Cho & Haslam, 2010; Kim & Omizo, 2003; Chang & Smith, 2015).

Research Question #2

The following research question will be answered by one theme that emerged from the study: counselor involvement. To review, the second research question sought to better understand how school counselors working in US K-12 public schools accommodate to the unique help seeking needs of Asian American students when providing mental health or other school-related services.

Counselor involvement. Participants spent a significant time discussing their comfort levels of working with Asian American students. Although only one participant was of the same racial background as the studied demographic, all participants reported a high comfort level of working with this population. Participants' attitudes are not surprising, as literature in Chapter 2 describes school counselors to have a wealth of skills due to the multiple-role nature of the job (Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). Previous literature also discussed how school counselors are expected to be well-versed in the knowledge, abilities, skills, and attitudes to implement a program that aligns with the ASCA National Model; as well as the foundations, management, delivery, and accountability of all things associated with both direct and indirect implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program (ASCA, 2012). These skills include working with students of

differing backgrounds than school counselors, and all participants discussed strategies for how they made an effort to understand and be sensitive to the studied population.

Participants said that they felt comfortable working with Asian American students due to a variety of reasons: years of experience, not seeing students by race/background, having a positive relationship with students, and a combination of all. One school counselor was of Asian descent, and he understood students' contexts on a personal level; other counselors also had personal ties to the Asian community through family members and living abroad in Asian countries through previous work experiences. Nevertheless, participants discussed how they learned the cultural nuances of Asian American students' backgrounds and thus were able to be mindful of their needs and challenges. This technique is consistent with the model described in Chapter 2, where Arnault (2009) speaks about how thoughts, values, and behaviors are deemed significant through the lens of culture. For example, participants disclosed how they understood that academic success was highly emphasized in Asian culture; thus, when working with Asian American students, participants inadvertently utilized the CDHS model to understand what was important to these particular students through the lens of their culture.

Further, in regards to help-seeking and mental health services, participants' understanding of students on a deeper level allowed them to accommodate to students' help-seeking needs because they were familiar with the trends of their culture (e.g. parent responses to mental health service, counseling stigma, etc.). Rather than being frustrated or discouraged by these trends, participants were able to respect students' wishes and be strategic in building relationships by spending the most individual time talking about

topics that they knew were important to these particular students' culture, such as academics, college readiness, and future careers. Rather than imposing their own standard of what was "most appropriate" for these students, participants utilized multicultural competency by being sensitive to values in Asian culture. These skills are not obtained by coincidence, as asserted by Dodson (2013) in Chapter 2 regarding the importance of multicultural counseling for school counselors.

Counselors mentioned a few suggestions for the school and/or administration to assist in aiding this population. Because Asian American students typically ranked higher than other students in academics, the school/administration tended not to realize that Asian American students also had needs. This notion is consistent in the previous literature, as a study by Shen and Lowinger (2007) showed that school counselors had limited and minimal interaction with Asian American students. One can deduct that this finding was a result of school counselors' higher attention to students with lower academic grades. Regardless of current minimal interaction, participants remarked that they could help students more successfully with a few improvements in the structure of the system. Two of these improvements are teachers being in more consistent communication with counselors and administration alleviating some of the counselors' logistical tasks. Participants reported that teachers spend significantly more time with students than do counselors, thus, they are more aware of students' behaviors and emotional states. A consistent collaboration between teachers and school counselors would be beneficial in noticing student issues. Also, participants reported a dislike for the overwhelming amount of logistical duties in their job and dreamed of a time where more personal interaction with students could be possible. Participants' logistical

complaints were not emphasized in Chapter 2 and would be an interesting addition to future research. These simple yet challenging modifications would allow counselors to flex even further when working with students, as both communication and time channels would significantly open up. As school counseling roles continue to be defined and develop into a more student-interaction based profession, these ideas could become a reality and tremendously benefit students of all backgrounds.

This section provided a summary of participant responses and comparisons of the findings to previous literature. Both research questions were answered with themes extrapolated from the data – the first research question was answered with the themes of acculturative stress, academic pressures, and lack of mental health counseling. The second research question was answered with the theme of counselor involvement. The following section will discuss implications for future research and future research as determined from this study.

Implications for Future Practice and Future Research

The preceding section acknowledged limitations and areas of improvement for this study. This section will provide implications for future practice and future research from the study.

For Future Practice

This research study was a case study in a suburban district and 10 school counselors were interviewed. Implications for future practice were drawn based on the information received by participants as well as what was already established in the literature.

Language. Participants in this district reported on the lack of first generation parents' language skills, which is consistent with the literature on language issues between first and second generation Asian American individuals (Mouw & Xie, 1989). In order to alleviate the language discrepancy, participants repeatedly asserted the issue of language resources between various groups: student/parent, parent/school counselor, and student/school counselor. These language resources included an informal translation between participant and student or student and parent as well as formal support resources from the district: resources on language assistance such as translator programs or programs specifically designed for non-English speaking students. However, not all participants mentioned these programs and, thus, were uninformed about language-related resources. One implication from this finding is that districts need to be intentional about informing school counselors of language-based resources within the district from the beginning of employment. Districts must include a mandatory training and/or seminar on all of the language-related resources that are accessible to school counselors. If none exist, it would behoove districts to implement a translation or interpretation program for school counselors (and other faculty and staff) to utilize when working with non- or limited-English speaking individuals. As funding is often an issue, districts could partner with community resources to provide resources for non- or limited-English speaking individuals. This addition would allow school counselors to communicate more effectively with parents, so that school counselors and partners could form partnerships for the sake of non- or limited-English speaking students and parents. With an increase in non-English speaking populations in the US public school system, this investment is warranted and would be immensely utilized.

Another potential implication for the issue of language barriers would be for Counselor Educators. Counselor educators could integrate a course or unit on common secondary languages in school counseling programs. CACREP (2016) highlights seven requirements under “social and cultural diversity” for institutions to be multiculturally competent. These standards can integrate an immersive approach for counselors-in-training, such that counselors-in-training can experience and learn the language of other cultures to use in future practices. Topics for these units would include common, basic phrases or words for major languages, particularly in regards to common topics in the school counseling office. For example, school counselors could be informed about the equivalent of common words and phrases such as “transcript,” “algebra,” or “counselor” in other languages so that students and parents of limited-English speaking backgrounds could have a frame of reference for what the communication was about. School counselors would be empowered to take ownership of working with students with limited English proficiency, and these simple language skills would strengthen relationships with limited-English speaking students and/or parents. Learning multiple languages in their entirety would not be realistic; however, knowing basic phrases that are relevant and commonly used in school counselors’ practices would assist in filling in the gaps of conversations when discussing difficult concepts. Rather than depending on the resources of the district of future employment, all school counselors who graduated from programs that included a language piece would be proficient in having basic non-English conversations. Solving the language barrier issue at the training level would be highly advantageous for school counselors when working with diverse groups, including Asian American students.

School/family collaboration. Many participants alluded to some form of interaction with parents of Asian American students, whether positive or negative. Thus, school counselors inevitably interact with parents of students and need to be competent in forming school-family partnerships. Particularly for students of a cultural group that highly emphasizes family cohesion, school counselors' intentionality in reaching out to parents would be appreciated and beneficial. However, school counselors need to purposefully include students' families in discussions centered on the student. Williams, Sanchez, and Hunnel (2011) emphasize the value of parental involvement in education by discussing the positive association between parental involvement and academic outcomes (e.g. higher grades, fewer retentions, lower drop out rates, etc.). This technique of involving parents/other family members may be unattractive for school counselors who know that a language or cultural barrier exists – however, school counselors need to be even more intentional about reaching out to families who are naturally less comfortable with school personnel. School counselors should also be aware of culture and expectations in Asian American families for maximally positive experiences. Through created opportunities for discussion, school counselors can build relationships with families in the case that students do need to receive non-academic, mental health services. Knowing that Asian American parents are generally less open to receiving mental health services for their child, school counselors need to work to build relationships. By consistently including families when severe issues are not present, school counselors would build credibility with parents and create an ideal situation for parents to be more receptive to suggestions made by school counselors.

Working with families may be an intimidating concept for school counselors, particularly new school counselors. Thus, Counselor Educators are tasked once again with adequately preparing school counselors to work with families during graduate school. Counselor educators need to provide school counselors-in-training with opportunities and requirements for working with parents. CACREP's (2009) requirement for Practicum and Internship direct counseling hours include interactions with parents or students. A beneficial alternative would be splitting the direct hours into required interaction with students and interaction with parents so that school counselors are comfortable with working with parents at employment.

School-wide programs. Another emerged implication from this study is that school counselors need a system of inquiring about students' mental health on a regular basis, particularly with Asian American students. The data from this study showed that Asian American students were not likely to navigate through the help-seeking process, especially for issues related to mental health. School counselors are also overworked and required to check in with students who are academically struggling and receiving grades of D's and F's. Thus, a realistic alternative is implementing school-wide programs where students are required to engage in a positively influential program. These programs would provide opportunities for students to express concern and have an opportunity to disclose non-academic related issues. Examples include: mentoring programs, where students are required to spend an allotted amount of time with an assigned older mentor from the school; leadership programs, where students are required to partake in a leadership position with meetings that discuss social-emotional topics; or a social-emotional discovery course, where students are required to reflect on non-academic

related issues through writing or other creative class activities. Rather than tasking school counselors to check in individually with each student, a school-wide approach would be more effective in building a culture that encourages open discussion about feelings. School-wide programs can be more effective than fragmented approaches when programs are thoughtfully considered and executed (Greenberg et al., 2003). These school-wide programs would allow school counselors to check in with students who are not academically struggling, but who are struggling with social/emotional issues.

Many participants mentioned that Asian American students are not likely to be brought into the school counseling department, because they are performing excellently in course work. However, some of these students could be hiding mental health issues that should not be ignored and would only be discovered if prompted by someone else. By allowing more opportunities for students to disclose issues, school counselors would be more aware of how they can help facilitate students through the help-seeking process. Another option for a school-wide program is working with community resources – school counselors could form partnerships with mental health professionals who could arrive at the school on a regular basis. As previous research shows, mental health resources are much less likely to be sought out by Asian American students on their own volition; however, the presence of mental health professionals in the building could urge Asian American students to share about a difficulty that they would never have shared otherwise.

Relationships. One of the most prominent themes from this study was the positive impact that school counselors had with Asian American students due to established relationships. Participants reported on tremendous successes in building

relationships when working to understand Asian American students' culture, boundaries, and context. This success was applicable to parents as well – school counselors generally had a positive experience when speaking with parents in a calm, simple, and respectful manner, even if parents did not always agree with school counselors' recommendations. School counselors should continue to rely on basic counseling skills and their helping intentions in order to foster relationships between students and families. As the school counseling field becomes more well-known and sought out by more aspiring school counselors, current and future school counselors must work to maintain and build a positive reputation for the field of school counseling. As a result, students, parents, faculty, staff, and administration would increase in desire to utilize school counseling services. Building a positive reputation for the field of school counseling is particularly important for students of color and families of color, as they are less comfortable with working with strangers due to cultural and language barriers. Thus, the school counseling field as a whole needs to work to build in character so that as generations ensue, more people will be inclined to willingly work with school counselors. School counselors can continue to invest in students on an individual basis and continue to change lives one at a time. With simple steps such as respecting a student and his or her family and building a meaningful relationship, school counselors can encourage Asian American students to break from harmful traditions such as not seeking help. This encouragement would stem from the school counselor's character and not simply their words.

For Future Research

Research on the Asian American population is limited (Cho & Haslam, 2010). Thus, continued research on this population in both quantitative and qualitative methods could add a comprehensive addition to the literature in regards to the Asian American population. Personal experiences and in-depth interviews are necessary and valuable to continued research in this area. However, generalizable data that gathers more information from a larger sample is also imperative so that trends, issues, and best practices can be applied for Asian American populations across all demographics and contexts. One method of generalizing this information could be transforming this study into a phenomenology where school counselors could be asked similar questions but represent diverse districts from across the nation. A combination of quantitative and qualitative studies on issues and challenges within this growing population would provide more opportunities for mental health professionals to have more awareness, training, and best practice methods with Asian American clients.

Further, there is even less research on school counselors working with Asian American students in US public schools. This research study added to the literature on this topic and opened new avenues of study within this realm. However, this research did not focus on other significant and interesting information provided by the participants that was not prevalent enough to be a theme or that strayed too far off from the research questions. Researchers could further investigate topics such as challenges of LGBTQ Asian American students, the impact of employing same-ethnicity role models (e.g. teachers, administrative positions) and other leadership positions on Asian American students, the implications associated with solely language barriers, and the longitudinal effects of Asian American students not seeking help. Future research on the implications

of Asian American school counselors working with Asian American students could also be useful in discerning the differences between help-seeking when suggested by an Asian counselor versus a non-Asian counselor. Each of these independent studies would add a significant addition to the literature in noticing the trends of the Asian American population, thus providing implications on how to best reach out. Also, with more research, school counselors and other mental health professionals would be better trained on working with not only Asian ethnic groups, but other people of color who struggle with similar issues.

Help-seeking framework. This study was conducted through the lens of the help-seeking framework described by Cauce et al. (2002). Participants were specifically asked questions in regards to their work with Asian American students' mental health issues and their observations regarding Asian American students' help-seeking behavior. The help-seeking framework was a multidirectional process involving the following three phases: problem recognition, decision to seek help, and service selection. Some participants reported that Asian American students were not likely to engage in the first phase, problem recognition, as they tended not to acknowledge social/emotional issues as legitimate problems. Other participants reported that for students who did recognize having a mental health issue, they were reluctant to decide to ask for help from a professional such as a school counselor and were more likely to disclose issues to friends. Asian American students were said to be the least frequent visitor in the school counseling office when pertaining to mental health issues, and nearly absent when asking for help to an outside mental health professional. However, Asian American students were most likely to utilize all three steps of the help-seeking process in regards to

academics. This framework provided a clear perspective on how rarely Asian American students acknowledge mental health issues and utilize school counseling services to the full capacity. All findings are consistent with the literature, and the help-seeking framework helped to conceptualize Asian American students' attitudes and behaviors towards seeking mental health services. However, an in-depth study of each step in the help-seeking framework is warranted. With a quantitative analysis of each step of the help-seeking framework, researchers would have a better gauge on how Asian American students perceive problems as well as what kind of issues are dictated as problems. This study determined Asian American students' processes throughout the help-seeking framework based on tangible interactions between school counselors and students, such as students' visits and/or school counselors' knowledge of verbalized issues. Exploring the students' self-reports on each step would lead to a deeper understanding of how to best reach out to students within each step.

Limitations

The researcher acknowledges that this study had limitations and areas of improvement. This section will discuss those limitations and areas of improvement.

From the Researcher

Some limitations of this study were directly related to the researcher. This section will specifically highlight the limitations that were a result of the researcher's proficiency and biases as related to this study.

Proficiency. The first limitation in this study was the researcher's novice status in conducting case study qualitative research. Yin (2014) discusses how case study research is difficult due to the continuous mediation between the theoretical issues being

studied and the data being collected. He addresses the unique complexities of a case study on all aspects of the researcher: intellect, ego, and emotions. Due to the unpredictable nature in case study research, Yin says that “only an alert researcher” will be able to make use of opportunities rather than being stuck by them (p. 72). The researcher worked to be alert and grow through the process of case study qualitative research. The researcher’s previous experience with completing a qualitative study was being involved in a phenomenological study with two of her peers. With the guidance of her committee, the researcher worked to follow the guidelines of a qualitative study and learned as much as she could from the literature on executing a study. Predictably, however, the researcher was on a learning curve from researching the literature to writing implications about the data. The researcher has continued to grow through this experience.

Biases. Another limitation related to the researcher was the bias that she brought to the study by being Asian American and being a current school counselor. Thus, the researcher was familiar with much of the information related to Asian American culture and expectations, and she was also somewhat familiar with the job descriptions of school counselors. The researcher worked to ensure that interview questions were not leading or biased in any way; however, Creswell (2014) discusses that qualitative researchers are immensely involved in the research process and would pose issues if they do not keep biases in check. The researcher was also aware that she could not hide her Asian descent from the counselors, and this factor may have influenced some of the participants’ answers as they knew they were speaking directly to an Asian American individual about Asian American students. To prevent discomfort or awkwardness in interviews due to

the fact that she was Asian, the researcher sporadically shared some of her previous experiences as related to their comments throughout the interview to demonstrate her comfort level with discussing Asian heritage. Also, the researcher tried her best to build rapport with each of the counselors and create a safe environment through humor and lighthearted conversation before the interview so that they knew she was not bringing any judgment into the interview and truly valued a report of their experiences. In retrospect, fully addressing that she was Asian and checking with each counselor if her Asian heritage impacted their answers or comfort level would have been an appropriate step in this process.

Limited Data Collection

Yin (2014) states that case studies have been successfully executed by using one source of data as the only basis. However, this method is not recommended, as multiple sources of data increase the quality of the case study. Creswell (2014) agrees with this recommendation and says that qualitative researchers typically gather as many sources of data as possible, such as: individual interviews, observations, artifacts, documents, photos, videos, etc. Due to the confidential nature of this topic, as well as the difficulty of obtaining permission to involve minors in the data collection process, the researcher was not able to acquire valuable data outside of individual adult interviews. These data sources would have mainly included counseling session observations with Asian American students, participants' notes and documentation on Asian American student meetings, and any copies of written correspondence between the counselor and Asian American parents. Through such data sources, the researcher would have had a more rich understanding of interactions between participants and the Asian American population,

both towards the students as well as the students responses back to the counselor.

Individual interviews provided a wealth of information in regards to the self-perception of participants' work with the Asian American population; however, seeing the skills in action could have provided a more comprehensive understanding of participants' work with the students. Further, pairing the actual experience of participants' work with Asian American students with self-reported ideas of their work would have provided evidence that they, in fact, acted as they perceived.

Another limitation in regards to data collection was that although the researcher was able to gather invaluable data from the individual interviews, she could have executed the interviews in a more professional and uniform manner. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the interviews were semi-structured and consisted of open and close-ended questions. Before each interview, participants were informed of the interview procedures and asked to consent to being audio recorded. Participants were also given the opportunity to withdraw at any time from the study. Each interview was about one hour long and resulted in an extensive amount of data, as conversations naturally unfolded after being prompted by interview questions. All interviewees were given the same interview questions; however some follow up questions were not consistent among all participants due to the unique nature of each individual interview. Although Yin (2014) discusses that interviewees do not stick to the predetermined line of questions, the researcher felt herself being casually drawn into the interviews as conversations unfolded. Thus, the researcher consistently had to check herself as not to lean towards a conversational approach in the middle of interviews rather than remaining semi-structured.

Further, participants were asked different follow up questions depending on how their initial responses guided the researcher's train of thought. Interview questions for this study were purposefully and thoughtfully crafted, then revised and approved by the committee. However, after this experience, the researcher realizes that interview questions could always be given more attention, as they are the driving force behind how the majority of the data was collected. Perhaps, an even more intentional refinement of interview questions before the first interview would have eliminated the need for such follow up questions in various interviews. Lastly, the researcher did not conduct a complete mock interview with the final interview questions before the study began. The researcher reviewed all interview questions with the elementary school counselor in the district in order to ensure that questions were meaningful, clear, and non-repetitive. Yet, a thorough mock interview was an extra task in itself and executing this step with another school counselor would have been helpful in preparing the researcher for future interviews.

Generalizability

As with any qualitative study, generalizability is a limitation that is difficult to avoid (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2014) discusses how qualitative generalization is intended for the context of a specific site. This research was a case study on a suburban school district in the Southeast part of the US and the results are not fully relevant to other districts throughout the nation. The demographic of this district is unique in that most students are Caucasian and the surrounding areas are extremely diverse in socioeconomic status. Other factors within this division such as school size, demographics of faculty and staff, demographics of the nearing community, the district's

access to resources or lack thereof, etc. could all exclude other school counselors from applying the implications from this study into their practice. This district was also chosen through purposive sampling.

What Was Not Said

Participant's interviews were consistent with the literature on all accounts. However, participants' responses were limited by interview questions, and thus participants did not have opportunities to expand on other aspects of interactions with Asian American students. For example, participants did not discuss positive aspects of second generation Asian American students' experiences as bicultural and bilingual individuals. In their review of immigrant families' experiences, Mouw and Xie (1989) offered a positive association between academic achievement and bilingualism. They discussed a cognitive perspective as well as a cultural perspective, indicating that bilingual individuals were able to utilize multiple parts of the brain by switching between languages and understanding parents' culture. Other studies have also showed that, when comparing bilingual and monolingual individuals from the same socioeconomic status backgrounds, bilingual individuals performed better on cognitive development measures such as flexibility of thought and spatial analysis (Peal & Lambert, 1962). Participants mentioned the academic success of Asian American students as well as communication issues between students and parents; yet, participants correlated academic achievement to academic expectations within Asian culture and not to bilingualism. Neither participants nor the researcher explored this possibility.

Conclusion

Asian American students are a significant part of the population, yet are overlooked in many ways by school personnel, including school counselors. This research study focused on a specific realm of the Asian American population by doing a case study of school counselors' interactions with students in a suburban area of the Southeast region in the US. Although this information is centralized to this district's demographics and populations, school counseling resources are not unique to this district. School counselors are at the front lines of noticing mental health issues within any population of students, as they typically interact with most students for some purpose throughout students' middle and/or high school career. School counselors have many roles within the school, but being the "gatekeeper" is one of the most important – Cauce et al. (2002) state that school counselors may be less threatening than formal mental health treatment to minority parents and, thus, have a higher success rate for encouraging families to seek treatment for students after noticing certain issues. A great responsibility comes with this opportunity.

This study showed that the movement in Asian American families towards seeking psychologically-related help is slow. However, participants in the study continued to reinforce the idea that they had great relationships with students and that parents were receptive to the idea of seeking help for students. Also, due to the academically-related nature of school counselors' job, parents tended to trust school counselors' words and good intentions. With continued research on developing ways to break down the stigma of counseling within the Asian American population, school counselors, in partnership with other mental health professionals, will be better able to instill courage in Asian American students to recognize issues and decide to seek help

outside of family and friends. Then, both trivial and significant social/emotional issues will be properly addressed and lead to an increased psychological health of all Asian American students.

Appendix A

Informed Consent

Informed Consent

You are invited to participate in an interview regarding working with Asian American students as a school counselor. You were selected as an interviewee because you meet the professional qualifications and necessary experience of working with students within the Asian American population. We ask that you read this form and if you consent, sign below.

Explanation of Procedures: You are being asked to participate in an interview with a doctoral student completing her dissertation titled, **An Investigation of School Counselor Understanding and Response to Help Seeking Among Second Generation Asian American Students in the US Public School System**. The goal of this qualitative study is to contribute a significant addition to the literature about school counselors working with Asian American students. The researcher will use a case study approach to better understand the perceptions and interventions of school counselors working with Asian American students in US 6-12 public school settings through individual interviews.

Confidentiality/Safety: Information gathered from the interview will be used in formulating the report that will be written in the final dissertation report; however, your name will not be used within the report and a pseudonym may be used during the interview process. All documents containing identifying information will be kept in a secure, password-protected Word document and authorized personnel will only be allowed to access the documents. All documents will be destroyed appropriately after the completion of the study. Identifying information will not be used in the interview transcriptions as well as within the final report.

Voluntary Participation: You are free to withdraw consent to participate at any time for any reason. You may direct any questions or comments to the primary researcher, Sharon Chung, or the Dissertation Co-Chair, Dr. Charles McAdams and/or Dr. Johnston Brendel. All contact information is listed below.

Sharon Kim: (847) 361-3896 || sykim@email.wm.edu
Charles McAdams: (757) 221-2338 || crmcad@wm.edu
Johnston Brendel: (757) 221-2328 || jmbren@wm.edu

I have read and understand the above, I voluntarily agree to participate in this interview, and I understand that I may keep a copy of this form.

- Yes, I agree to participate in this interview. My interview may be audio recorded.
- No, I decline to participate in this interview.

Name of Participant (printed): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B

Interview Questions

Final Interview Questions

1. Please begin by describing your current job responsibilities as a school counselor (e.g. level, demographics of school, current caseload, type of work, etc.).
2. Please discuss your previous work experience as a school counselor (e.g. level, years of experience, demographics of school, caseload, type of work, etc.).
3. Please describe the Asian American student demographics of your school to the best of your knowledge.
4. Please describe a general report of your interaction with Asian American students.
5. In your experience, what are the trends of Asian American students at your school (e.g. needs, academic achievement, general behavior, disciplinary issues, etc.)?
6. How do you conceptualize the needs and/or challenges of Asian American students at your school?
7. To what degree do you feel informed and/or knowledgeable about the Asian American student population at your school (e.g. culture, experiences, background, values, stressors, etc.)?
8. Are you familiar with the help-seeking model or help-seeking behavior? If so, how would you describe the model and behavior?
9. How do you conceptualize Asian American students' help-seeking behavior as related to the model (problem recognition, decision to seek help, service selection)?
10. Based on what you know and observe, would you say you notice a discrepancy between AA students' needs and decision to seek help? If so, do you feel as though there could be action taken to mitigate this discrepancy?
11. Please describe the relationship to which how AA students perceive their own problems and how you perceive their problems.
12. Please describe your observations of any information regarding students seeking help as related to mental health and their service utilization.
13. What are the most helpful strategies you find working with population?
14. In what ways would you need additional support from your school/administration to better notice and accommodate to the unique help-seeking needs of the Asian American students at your school?

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