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Demystifying the "Model Minority" Encounter: Concerns and Challenges in School Counseling With Asian Americans

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Abstract

Asian American students' counseling concerns and resulting challenges for school counselors were surveyed nationwide via (a) e-mail with 158 members of the American School Counselor Association [ASCA] and (b) regular mail with 296 counselors in school districts having high concentrations of Asian Americans. Counselors ranked concerns by frequency: (1) *expectations and pressures*, (2) *language and cultural barriers*, (3) *counseling barriers*, and (4) *logistical needs*. The school-district counselors identified all four concerns as challenges; the ASCA members only identified (1) and (3). *Expectations and pressures* was uniformly the foremost student concern and counselor challenge for both groups. On average, all counselors felt *somewhat* challenged by these issues—reflecting an intermediate level of confidence in counseling Asian Americans. Surprisingly, among the ASCA members, more background (multicultural counseling workshops or practical experience with Asian Americans) correlated with *higher* levels of perceived challenge. Among the school-district counselors, statistical relationships were found between students' logistical needs and school location; as well as between the counselors' perceived challenge level and (a) field-experience training, (b) ethnicity, and (c) school location.

Demystifying the "Model Minority" Encounter: Concerns and Challenges in School Counseling with Asian Americans

The Asian American population grew more than four times faster than the total U.S. population from 2000–2010; although not the largest ethnic minority, the group is the fastest growing single race (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). They averaged the highest percentage of individuals with a bachelor's/higher degree and the highest average household incomes among U.S. ethnic groups (Ramakrishnan & Ahmad, 2014). Nicholas Kristof (2015) in *The New York Times* named the phenomenon "The Asian Advantage." Due to their educational and economic attainments, the group has been stereotyped as a "model minority" whose members cannot possibly be troubled or need assistance.

However, the model-minority image often increases other groups' anti-Asian discrimination and racism because it arouses envy and fear (Hartlep, 2013), thus adding mental health distress for many of Asian descent (McAuliffe & Associates, 2013). At the 2016 Academy Awards (Oscars) ceremony, African-American host Chris Rock criticized the exclusively White racial makeup of the nominees, yet at the same time introduced racist jokes: One made fun of children of Asian descent while labeling them as "the most dedicated, accurate, and hardworking accountants for the Academy." This model-minority stereotypical joke, among others, does harm to the 60% of the global audience that are Asians (Barnes, & Associates, 2016; Feinberg, 2016; Garcia, 2016). The stereotyped image further partitions Asian Americans from other groups for many public services (Ishimatsu, 2013; Ng, Lee, & Pak, 2007). In postsecondary settings, Asian American

students have reported less educational benefit, support, and satisfaction than White students (Ng et al., 2007). Comparing 936 Asian Americans and 865 Latinos/Latinas in PreK–12 settings, Guo, Kataoka, Bear, and Lau (2014) found that positive school performance may create barriers for high-achieving Asian Americans to access mental health services. The study further showed that Latinos/Latinas "were 63.1 times more likely than Asian Americans to be referred for the service" (Guo et al., 2014, p. 33). Based on the striking disparity and other research, Guo et al. (2014) concluded school personnel may have particular difficulties to identify Asian American students' needs. Scholars have also attributed the underservice to the inadequate or incompetent services of helping professionals (Zhou, Siu, & Xin, 2009). Among various school personnel, school counselors—the most accessible, trained, helping professionals in youngsters' daily learning environment—are often the prime personnel responsible for answering their counseling needs (Shen, 2002).

In fact, the American School Counselor Association [ASCA] (2012), requires counselors to competently serve students with diverse features. In protesting Chris Rock's Asian jokes at the Oscars, *Star Trek*'s George Takei said, "Diversity means inclusion of a pluralism." In other words, we must move past White-and-Black or White-and-Hispanic complicity. Research shows that Asian Americans, including youth, continually underuse mental health and counseling services (Anyon, Ong, & Whitaker, 2014; Singh, 2009). On one hand, one may wonder if school counselors have really given Asian American children deserved attention. On the other hand, before demanding more from counselors, it is only fair to examine empirically whether these stereotyped "model" children do have counseling needs. If so, what are the needs, and among them, which have challenged the counselors? If not, the counselors may not deserve the blame for the underservice. Scientific research is necessary to identify (a) the needs of youth in the fast-growing Asian American population and (b) the challenges posed for school counselors. Hence, this study examines the reports of counselors who had actual experience with Asian American students.

Among the sparse empirical studies, Yeh's (2001) qualitative-based inquiry with New York-based school counselors revealed 10 types of presenting concerns in Asian American schoolchildren. The concerns, ranked by the percentage of counselors reporting each issue, include (a) academic pressure/expectations (91%), (b) family concerns (51%), (c) social concerns (42%), (d) cultural customs/barriers (40%), (e) mental health (23%), (f) language or communication problems (18%), (g) school logistical issues (18%), (h) problems with isolation (12%), (i) a lack of knowledge about mental health services (6%), and (j) financial difficulty (5%). Challenges for counselors include (a) a lack of family involvement (39%), (b) student stigmatization of counseling (38%), (c) overcoming cultural barriers (35%), (d) students' lack of self-disclosure (33%), (e) overcoming language barriers (27%), and (f) students' lack of direct communication (11%). All other challenges were reported by few counselors (< 10%).

Debunking the Model Minority Myth

The model minority myth overlooks the suffering of many Asian Americans in various dimensions (Zhou et al., 2009). Nearly two million Asian Americans are living in poverty (Ishimatsu, 2013). From 2007–2011, the poverty growth rate was 37% for Asian Americans—well surpassing that of the nation as a whole (27%) (Ramakrishnan & Ahmad, 2014). Among the U.S.-citizen-adopted-immigrant orphans, 49% are of Asian descent (White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders [WHIAAPI], n.d.). About 24% of Asian American children are foreign-born, and 64% use non-English home languages (Aud, Fox,

& KewallRamani, 2010). Many Asians have limited English proficiency (Cook, Chung, & Tseng, 2011). In a high school in California, "the valedictorian was Asian, but [the] average GPA [of Asian students] was 1.8, and many were dropping out" (Zubrzycki, 2012, p. 10). The high school drop-out rate (35–40%) of Southeast Asian Americans is alarmingly high (WHIAAPI, n.d.). Asian American college freshmen have one of the two highest enrollment rates in remedial education courses (WHIAAPI, n.d.).

Lulled by the model minority glamour, the public may not know the group's struggle until the students desperately cry out for help (Wnet.org, 2009). In 2007, a South Korean immigrant massacred 32 people at Virginia Tech University and then committed suicide; the tragedy was the deadliest shooting rampage in the modern history of U.S. campuses (CNN library, 2016). Following the tragic incident, media cautioned about the critical value of counseling interventions for Asian Americans (Wnet.org, 2009).

Value-Related Acculturation Barriers

Relevant to training effective helping professionals, scholars have indicated that many traditional Asian values conflict with American mainstream values (Zhou et al., 2009). Counseling—a commonly accepted psychological intervention in contemporary U.S. society—may clash with Asian culturally rooted stigma and shame related to psychological problems (Shen, Ramirez, Kranz, Tao & Ji, in press; Yeh, 2001). In addition, compared with Caucasians, Asians de-emphasize direct verbal communication/expression about emotions and psychological issues (Shen, 2007; Yeh, 2001).

Family-related values may also create acculturation barriers. Filial piety requires younger generations' obligations to the elderly via deference, care, respect, and bringing honor to the family (Shen, in press a); this concept is less central in Western culture (Zhou et al., 2009). Asian American parents often have high expectations and even perfectionism about children's academic and career attainments, which are deemed to associate with family honor and valued as functional for upward mobility (Ng et al., 2007; Shen, in press b; Singh, 2009); Western parents typically do not emphasize this concept so much. These value-related conflicts contribute to acculturation, socialization, and cultural barriers which may confront the youth, thus leading to mental health difficulties (McAuliffe & Associates, 2013).

Multicultural Counseling Competence of Counselors

Among the rare empirical studies examining professionals' Asian American counseling competence, Shen and Lowinger's (2007) study with ASCA members across 50 states, found 203 counselors reporting a self-assured overall ability to serve the Asian American population. In contrast, Allison, Crawford, Echemendia, Robinson, and Knepp (1994) reported about two decades ago that only 16% of 292 counseling graduates surveyed felt well prepared to serve Asian Americans—the third worst percentage out of 13 cultural groups.

The difference between the aforementioned competence levels may relate to counselors' ethnicity, work location, and training. After examining 84 studies, Smith, Constantine, Dunn, Dinehart, and Montoya (2006) found that training modules strongly impact trainees' competence. Holcomb-McCoy, Harris, Hines, and Johnston (2008) reported higher self-perceived multicultural counseling competence and efficacy in non-Caucasian (vs. Caucasian) counselors. Shen (in press b) found that school counselors' comfort level or challenge level (i.e., degree of perceived difficulty) in counseling Asian Americans was significantly associated with counselors' training, ethnicity, and work location. Still, it is unclear how these factors may relate

to specific challenges (e.g., counseling barriers or logistical needs), instead of overall challenge for school counselors.

Further, there is a serious gap in empirical research into Asian American students' counseling concerns in PK-12 settings. A thorough literature search yielded only one publication—a 15-year-old, qualitative-based, local inquiry in New York—addressing the group's concerns and challenges in school counseling (Yeh, 2001). Quantitative studies are still needed, as is more current research reflecting changes that may have occurred since 2001. Most U.S. school counselors are Caucasians with little Asian American contact, thus likely yielding different sets of experience (Shen & Lowinger, 2007). For a more complete understanding, quantitative research separately targeting counselors who might have (a) little and (b) considerable Asian American practical experience is critical.

Research Questions of Current Study

Building upon Yeh's study (2001), the current study focuses primarily on outwardly manifested concerns and the challenges they pose to school counselors. Although Asian American youth may be troubled by deep-seated psychological problems (e.g., anti-Asian discrimination trauma), this study does not address them. Here the term *concern* refers collectively to both (a) concerns expressed by students *to* counselors and (b) counselors' concerns *about* students; *student-related concern*, *counseling concern*, and *concern* are used interchangeably below. Concerns and challenges were measured in two samples of school counselors with different degrees of Asian American contact. Specific research questions follow:

(1) What Asian American student-related concerns are encountered by school counselors?
(2) Which of these concerns pose challenges to the counselors?
(3) How often do the counselors encounter the student-related concerns?
(4) For each of the challenges identified, what is the challenge level for the counselors?
(5) How does the occurrence frequency of each student concern vary according to school location?
(6) How does the challenge level vary according to counselors' training (multicultural counseling course, field experience, workshop), self-perceived actual practical experience with the population, school location, and ethnicity?

Methods

Participants

This research includes 454 school counselors who have worked with Asian Americans. The reports consist of (a) on-line responses of 158 ASCA practicing school-counselor members in Group 1 and (b) regular mailing responses of 296 counselors in school districts with a high density of Asian American students in Group 2. Table 1 details participants' demographics.

Instrumentation

A survey was developed by adapting existing multicultural counseling studies and assessments (Holcomb-McCoy et al., 2008; Yeh, 2001) and incorporating feedback from four professors in counselor education, multicultural counseling, and psychometric measurement.

Table 1
Demographics, Training, and Asian American Contact of School Counselors

Feature	Group-1 Counselor (N = 158)			Group-2 Counselor (N = 296)		
	M	*SD*	Range	*M*	*SD*	Range
Age	47.5	10.5	26–63	45.7	11.6	25–72
Year as school counselor	11.5	8.7	1–37	12.2	8.5	1–36
	n	%	Missing *n*	*n*	%	Missing *n*
Gender			0			3
Male	36	22.8		59	20.1	
Female	122	77.2		234	79.9	
Ethnicity			0			0
Caucasian	145	91.8		187	64.0	
Asian American	5	3.2		57	19.9	
Other	8	5.0		48	16.4	
School level			0			4
Elementary	48	30.4		139	47.6	
Middle	31	19.6		79	27.1	
High	56	35.4		57	19.5	
Multiple	23	14.5		17	5.8	
School location			0			0
Metropolitan/urban	36	22.8		146	50.7	
Suburban	79	50.0		125	43.4	
Rural	43	27.2		17	5.9	
Multicultural counseling course			2			13
With Asian American information	89	57.1		178	62.9	
No Asian American information	22	14.1		63	22.3	
No course taken	45	28.8		42	14.8	
Field Experience			0			10
With Asian American clients	83	53.2		156	54.5	
No Asian American clients	60	38.5		104	36.4	
No course taken	13	8.3		26	9.1	
Multicultural workshop			2			7
With Asian American information	93	59.6		177	61.2	
No Asian American information	10	6.4		42	14.5	
No workshop taken	53	34.0		70	24.2	
Asian American students in school[a]			0			67
< 5%	110	69.6		20	8.7	
5–20%	38	24.1		101	44.1	
> 20%	10	6.3		108	47.2	
Practical Asian American experience[b]			0			5
Little	64	40.5		34	11.7	
Some	71	44.9		117	40.2	
Considerable or Extensive	23	14.6		140	48.2	

Note: [a]Group 1*: M* = 6%, *SD* = 10.6%; Group 2*: M* = 26%, *SD* = 22.3%. [b]The counselor self-rated on a 5-point Likert Scale (1 = *None*, 2 = *Little*, 3 = *Some*, 4 = *Considerable*, 5 = *Extensive*); counselors rating on 1 were excluded.

Prior to the formal survey, a pilot test was conducted with 31 school counselors at a state conference and from a local area, its surrounding rural areas, and a metropolitan area. With limited participants, the pilot test was not statistically analyzed, yet it served as a critical resource for improving the questionnaire's clarity. In addition to demographic items (e.g., age, ethnicity),

the following two scales were purposefully developed.

***Scale for Asian American Counseling–Concern Frequency* (SAAC-CF).** This scale measures the situations/issues encountered by school counselors when counseling Asian American students on Likert scales (1 = *never*, 2 = *seldom*, 3 = *occasionally*, 4 = *frequently*, 5 = *always*). Factor analysis was processed based on the survey responses in Group 1 and Group 2, respectively, to increase distinctiveness among the scale's constructs. A principal components analysis with a Varimax procedure was applied. Based on loading coefficients (absolute value ≥ .4), cross-loading deletion, interpretability of factors, and percentages of variance explained (Gorsuch, 2015; Green & Salkind, 2014), the data in each study yielded four factors. They were labeled as (a) *expectations & pressures* (from students' family, self-aspiration, and social concern or social pressure), (b) *counseling barriers* (referring to students' stigmatization of counseling and lack of direct verbal communication), (c) *logistical needs* (referring to students' financial difficulties and understanding about school policy/procedure), and (d) *language & cultural barriers* (see Table 2). The factors explained 76.83% and 75.84% of the total variance in Group 1 and 2, respectively. Typically, each factor should have at least three items. However, with strong loading coefficients (.70–.89 in Group 1; .75–.84 in Group 2) and high percentages of total variance explained, the factors loaded with two items were deemed acceptable (Raubenheimer, 2004).

In line with these factors, the adopted items were grouped into four subscales with (a) 2, 2, 2, and 2 items in Group 1 and (b) 3, 2, 2, and 2 items in Group 2. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients yielded inter-subscale correlations of .27–.48 in Group 1 and .38–.56 in Group 2. Cronbach's alpha coefficients yielded internal consistency reliability of .79 for the total scale in either group. After factor analysis, reliability, and correlation were computed, the original 12 items were reduced to (a) eight in Group 1 and (b) nine in Group 2. Although the alpha coefficients of some subscales were not as high as desirable, this situation is not uncommon with many routinely used scales in social science research (Raubenheimer, 2004).

***Scale for Asian American Counseling–Challenge Level* (SAAC-CL)**. This scale measures the level of challenge associated with each situation/issue as encountered by school counselors on Likert scales (1 = *none*, 2 = *little*, 3 = *somewhat*, 4 = *considerable*, 5 = *substantial*). The original 12 situations included in the SAAC-CF were identically listed under the SAAC-CL, but the SAAC-CL allowed participants to identify the degree to which they felt challenged in each designated issue. For this scale, a similar analysis procedure was applied. Factor analysis generated only two factors labeled expectations & pressures and counseling barriers in Group 1, whereas four factors labeled *expectations & pressures*, *counseling barriers*, *logistical needs*, and *language & cultural barriers* were generated in Group 2. These factors accounted for 76.07% and 77.34% of the total variance in Group 1 and 2, respectively. With strong loading coefficients (.87–.89 in Group 1; .71–.83 in Group 2) and high percentages of total variance explained, the factors loaded with two items were deemed acceptable (Raubenheimer, 2004).

Table 2

Items, Loading Coefficients, Factors, Percentages of Variance Accounted, and Alpha Coefficients of the SAAC-CF

Item	ASCA Counselor – Group 1 (*N* = 158)				School-District Counselor – Group 2 (*N* = 296)			
	Loading Coefficient of Factor				Loading Coefficient of Factor			
	Expectations & Pressures	Counseling Barriers	Logistical Needs	Language & Cultural Barriers	Expectations & Pressures	Counseling Barriers	Logistical Needs	Language & Cultural Barriers
1. Students' family expectations/pressures	**.83**	.28	.19	.03	**.83**	.16	.15	.25
2. Students' perfectionism	**.85**	.12	.01	.24	**.82**	.24	.04	.12
3. Students' social concerns/pressures	--	--	--	--	**.78**	.12	.31	.15
4. Students' lack of direct verbal communication	.32	**.70**	.23	.25	.22	**.84**	.13	.19
5. Students' stigmatization of counseling	.15	**.89**	-.02	.14	.21	**.75**	.21	.30
6. Students' financial difficulties	.18	-.06	**.78**	.25	.08	.11	**.81**	.27
7. Students' understanding about school policy/procedure	.01	.20	**.83**	.10	.27	.19	**.80**	-.02
8. Cultural barriers	--	--	--	--	.23	.30	.01	**.78**
9. Language barriers	.02	.33	.28	**.75**	.17	.17	.25	**.78**
10. Dealing with students' parent/family	.26	.09	.14	**.84**	--	--	--	--
Percentage of variance explained	18.58	19.20	18.65	18.58	24.69	17.14	17.13	16.88
Coefficient alpha	.73	.69	.58	.67	.83	.72	.64	.66

Note. SAAC = *Scale for Asian American Counseling Challenges*; CF = *Concern Frequency*.
Bolded number = loading coefficient adopted.
-- = Item not adopted.

The adopted items were grouped into equivalent (a) two subscales with 3 and 2 items in Group 1 and (b) four subscales with 3, 2, 2, and 3 items in Group 2. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients yielded inter-subscale correlations of .40s for Group 1 and .45 to .61 for Group 2. For the total Challenge Level scale, Cronbach's alpha coefficients yielded reliability of .79 for Group 1 and .90 for Group 2. After factor analysis, reliability, and correlation were computed, the original 12 items were reduced to (a) five in Group 1 and (b) 10 in Group 2.

Procedure

This research applied a quantitative descriptive survey research design with two groups of school counselors. ASCA school counselor members with e-mail addresses across 50 states plus the District of Columbia (DC), and school counselors in major school districts with the highest Asian American populations across 47 states plus DC served as population frames. While not all U.S. school counselors belonged to ASCA, with more active professional involvement, the members typically were more efficiently and economically accessible via e-mail. For the counselors in major school districts, regular hard-copy mailing provided better access to the lead counselor in any given school. A systematic sampling stratified by state and school level was applied. Results were generated from an initial mailing with two follow-ups.

For Group 1, a total of 1,833 ASCA school-counselor members were invited to be surveyed on-line. Excluding undeliverable e-mails and invalid responses (i.e., counselors with no practical Asian American experience), the valid responses yielded a 13% return rate. In addition to Group 1, which generated 40% of counselors who self-perceived with very little Asian American counseling experience and only 6% of Asian American students on campus, Group 2 targeted counselors in major school districts with a high percentage of Asian Americans based on the database of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The school districts with the highest percentages of Asian American students in each state were targeted. In this regular mailing survey, the number of schools was roughly proportionate to the Asian American population, given that this ethnicity is more concentrated in metropolitan areas and primarily in ten states (Ishimatsu, 2003; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Three states were excluded: Montana and Nevada had scarce Asian Americans; Tennessee, also with fairly small Asian population, had no report available in the database by the completion of sampling. A total of 1,000 schools were selected and their lead counselors were invited to participate. Although the targeted participants were anonymous, the regular hard-mailed survey instructed recipients not to participate a second time if they had already completed an e-mail survey. The valid surveys yielded a 31% return rate.

Results

Descriptive statistics, a series of repeated-measures analyses of variance (ANOVA), and a series of one-way multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) were applied (Green & Salkind, 2014). The accuracy of data entry, missing data, normality, and equal variance or covariance assumptions were screened in advance. The repeated-measures ANOVA examined the differences (within each participant) in ratings across (a) the student-related concerns and (b) the challenges experienced by counselors. MANOVAs examined the differences among the concerns based on school location. The occurrence frequency of concerns was treated as the dependent variable; for the independent variable—school location, there were specific conditions (i.e., metropolitan/urban, suburban, rural). MANOVAs also examined the differences among the challenges based on counselors' training, self-perceived experience, school location, and ethnicity. The challenge level was treated as the dependent variable. For each of the independent

variables (e.g., ethnicity), see Table 1 for specific conditions (e.g., Caucasian, Asian American, other). Holm's sequential Bonferroni procedures were used to control Type I error accordingly. Group 1 and Group 2 were analyzed respectively.

Student-related concerns and challenges for school counselors. For both Group 1 and 2, the counselors encountered all of the four types of concerns (see Frequency of Concern on Table 3). As for the challenges for counselors, only two types (i.e., expectations and pressures, counseling barriers) were generated in Group 1, but all four types were generated in Group 2 (see Level of Challenge on Table 3).

Table 3

Rank, Mean, Standard Deviation, and Percentage by the Subscales of SAAC-CF & SAAC-CL

Frequency of Concern					Concern/Challenge	Level of Challenge				
Rank[a]	*M*	*SD*	%[b]	%[c]		Rank[a]	*M*	*SD*	%[d]	%[e]
					Group-1 Counselor (*N* = 158)					
1	3.63	.68	74.0	20.9	Expectations & Pressures	1	3.13	.79	40.5	39.2
2	2.85	.67	14.5	57.0	Language & Cultural Barriers		--	--	--	--
3	2.69	.77	22.8	50.0	Counseling Barriers	2	2.69	.77	22.7	42.2
4	2.55	.78	14.6	50.0	Logistical Needs		--	--	--	--
					Group-2 Counselor (*N* = 296)					
1	3.58	.79	58.9	33.2	Expectations & Pressures	1	3.25	.92	39.8	37.4
2	3.19	.80	47.1	40.3	Language & Cultural Barriers	2	3.18	.88	37.6	37.0
3	3.02	.84	42.0	40.0	Counseling Barriers	3	2.97	.89	34.8	40.7
4	2.75	.89	27.4	40.7	Logistical Needs	4	2.53	.89	21.3	30.5

Note. SAAC = *Scale for Asian American Counseling*; CF = *Concern Frequency*; CL = *Challenge Level*. Sample size of each condition varies due to missing data. -- = The data did not generate any challenge.

[a]Based on the mean of each concern/issue.
[b]Counselors who rated *always* (5) or *frequently* (4) encountered the concern (on 5-point scales).
[c]Counselors who rated *occasionally* (3).
[d]Counselors who rated *substantially* (5) or *considerably* (4) challenged by the concern (on 5-point scales).
[e]Counselors who rated *somewhat* (3).

Frequency of student-related concerns. For Group 1, on average, counselors encountered expectations and pressures *frequently* (*M* = 3.63) and the other concerns *occasionally* (*M* = 2.55–2.85) (see Table 3). Repeated-measures ANOVA showed the frequencies were significantly different across all issues, except for the counseling barriers versus the language and cultural barriers (see Table 4). Together, the results of repeated-measures were somewhat parallel to the ranking in Table 3, showing the expectations and pressures as the most commonly encountered; the logistical needs the least. Overall, 74% of the counselors *always* or *frequently* encountered the issue of expectations and pressures (see Table 3).

For Group 2, on average, counselors encountered expectations and pressures *frequently* (*M* = 3.58) and the other concerns *occasionally* (*M* = 2.75–3.19) (see Table 3). Repeated-measures ANOVA showed the frequencies were significantly different across all issues (see Table 4). Together, the results confirmed the expectations and pressures as the most frequently encountered; the logistical needs the least. Overall, 59% of the counselors *always* or *frequently* encountered the issue of expectations and pressures, but 42–47% also *always* or *frequently* encountered the language and cultural barriers and the counseling barriers (see Table 3).

Table 4

The Concern *Frequency and the Challenge Level as Dependent Variables by Each Condition in ANOVA Repeated-Measures*

Group 1-Counselor (N = 158)																
Frequency of Concern									Level of Challenge							
Measure	*M*	*SD*	Multivariate Test		Pairwise Contrast				Measure	*M*	*SD*	Multivariate Test		Pairwise Contrast		
			$F(1, 153)$	η_p^2	*df*	*t*		η_p^2				$F(1, 153)$	η_p^2	*df*	*F*		η_p^2
			111.62[a]**	.68								79.92 [b]**	.34				
EP	3.63	.68			157	15.44**	EP > LC	.60	EP	3.32	.82			1, 153	79.92**	EP > CB	.34
LC	2.84	.79			157	15.02**	EP > CB	.59	CB	2.69	.77						
CB	2.74	.74			157	12.05**	EP > LN	.48									
LN	2.56	.78			157	-1.68	LC = CB										
					157	2.47*	LC > LN	.04									
					157	-4.34**	CB > LN	.11									

Group 2-Counselor (N = 296)																
Frequency of Concern									Level of Challenge							
Measure	*M*	*SD*	Multivariate Test		Pairwise Contrast				Measure	*M*	*SD*	Multivariate Test		Pairwise Contrast		
			$F(3, 292)$	η_p^2	*df*	*t*		η_p^2				$F(3, 270)$	η_p^2	*df*	*t*		η_p^2
			92.69[c]***	.49								79.58[d]***	.47				
EP	3.58	.79			294	11.92**	EP > LC	.32	EP	3.30	.90			286	1.48	EP = LC	
LC	3.19	.80			294	15.47**	EP > CB	.45	LC	3.22	.85			277	13.28**	EP > CB	.39
CB	3.02	.84			294	8.26**	EP > LN	.19	CB	2.98	.88			282	6.38**	EP > LN	.13
LN	2.75	.89			294	4.91**	LC > CB	.08	LN	2.55	.86			278	-12.56**	LC > CB	.36
					294	-3.66**	LC > LN	.04						274	-7.87**	LC > LN	.18
					294	-7.93**	CB > LN	.18						284	5.00**	CB > LN	.08

Note. EP = expectations and pressures; LC = language and cultural barriers; CB = counseling barriers; LN = logistical needs.
[a]Wilks's Λ = .68.
[b]Wilks's Λ = .66.
[c]Wilks's Λ = .51.
[d]Wilks's Λ = .53.
*p < .05.
**p < .01.
***p < .001

Level of challenge for school counselors. For Group 1, on average, counselors feel *somewhat* challenged by expectations and pressures (M = 3.13) and counseling barriers (M = 2.69) (see Table 3). ANOVA repeated-measures showed the challenge levels of these issues were significantly different (see Table 4). These results confirmed the issue of expectations and pressures as the most challenging; counseling barriers the least. Overall, 40.5% of the counselors felt *substantially* or *considerably* challenged by the former issue (see Table 3).

For Group 2, on average, counselors feel *somewhat* challenged by (a) expectations and pressures (M = 3.25), (b) language and cultural barriers (M = 3.18), (c) counseling barriers (M = 2.97), and (d) logistical needs (M = 2.53) (see Table 3). Repeated-measures ANOVA showed the levels were significantly different across all challenges, except for the expectations and pressures versus the language and cultural barriers (see Table 4). The results showed both issues as the most challenging; logistical needs the least. Overall, 38–40% of the counselors felt *substantially* or *considerably* challenged by issues (a) and (b) (see Table 3).

Relevancy of school location to student-related concerns. For Group 1, MANOVA did not show significant difference among the four concerns encountered by the counselors pertaining to their school location. For Group 2, MANOVA and follow-up ANOVAs revealed that counselors in urban areas (M = 3.00, SD = .85) significantly confronted students' logistical needs more frequently than counselors in suburban areas (M = 2.44, SD = .84), Wilks's Λ = .89, $F(4, 265)$ = 8.64, p = .000, η_p^2 = .12; $F(1, 268)$ = 29.60, p = .000, η_p^2 = .10. The effect sizes (η_p^2 = .12 and .10) were medium to large, according to Cohen's (1977) criteria (i.e., .01 = small, .06 = medium, .14 = large).

Relevancy of counselors' training, practical experience, school location, and ethnicity associated with counselor challenges. MANOVAs and follow-up ANOVAs revealed several results. For Group 1, counselors who had workshops which provided information about Asian Americans felt significantly more challenged by counseling barriers with the students than counselors who had no multicultural workshop, Wilks's Λ = .93, multivariate F (2, 139) = 4.90, p = .009, η_p^2 = .07; $F(1, 140)$ = 9.40, p = .003, η_p^2 = .06. Counselors with considerable Asian American practical experience felt significantly more challenged by the issue of expectations and pressures than counselors with very little Asian American experience, Wilks's Λ = .92, multivariate $F(4, 300)$ = 3.37, p = .01, η_p^2 = .04; $F(2, 151)$ = 6.02, p = .003, η_p^2 = .07. The effect sizes (η_p^2 = .07, .06, .04, and .07) were between small and medium. There were no significant differences in the challenges based on counselors' work location, and training. Ethnicity was not tested due to the small number of non-Caucasian counselors.

For Group 2, counselors in urban areas felt significantly more challenged by students' logistical needs than counselors in suburban areas; Wilks's Λ = .94, $F(4, 247)$ = 4.24, p = .002, η_p^2 = .06, $F(1, 250)$ = 14.12, p = .000, η_p^2 = .05. Caucasian counselors felt significantly more challenged by expectations and pressures than Asian American counselors, Wilks's Λ = .86, $F(8, 528)$ = 5.17, p = .000, η_p^2 = .07; $F(2, 267)$ = 6.07, p = .003, η_p^2 = .04. Caucasian counselors felt significantly more challenged by students' language and cultural barriers than Asian American counselors, $F(2, 267)$ = 9.27, p = .000, η_p^2 = .07. When dealing with students' language and cultural barriers, counselors whose field experience included no Asian American clients felt significantly more challenged than counselors whose field experience did include the clients, Wilks's Λ = .93, $F(8, 514)$ = 2.84, p = .016, η_p^2 = .04; $F(2, 260)$ = 6.00, p = .003, η_p^2 = .04. The effect sizes (η_p^2 = .06, .05, .07, .04, .07, .04, and .04) were between small and medium. There

were no significant differences in the challenge level based on counselors' training.

Discussion

The results reveal Asian American students' counseling concerns and challenges for school counselors. Four issues were found as counseling concerns: (1) expectations and pressures, (2) language and cultural barriers, (3) counseling barriers, and (4) logistical needs, ranked from most to least frequently encountered. Among the counselors who *always* or *frequently* encountered a concern, the issue of expectations and pressures was reported by the highest percentage of counselors (59–74%). These issues all appeared as challenges for counselors in Group 2, but only issues (1) and (3) appeared in Group 1. On average, the counselors in both groups felt *somewhat* challenged by these issues. Among the counselors who felt *substantially* or *considerably* challenged, the issue of expectations and pressures was reported by the highest percentage of counselors (40–41%) in both groups. MANOVAs for Group 1 indicated positive associations between challenge level and counselors' (a) workshop training or (b) Asian American practical experience. Unlike Group 1, MANOVAs for Group 2, showed negative association (the expected result) between challenge level and counselors' field-experience training. Challenge level was also associated with their ethnicity and school location; school location was further related to the frequency of students' logistical needs.

Regardless of groups, the counselors reported encountering four major issues. The finding is somewhat parallel to that of Yeh (2001) who reported New York-based school counselors' experiences. *Overcoming counseling barriers* as a challenge for counselors in both groups also supports the finding of Yeh (2001) who highlighted students' lack of self-disclosure and direct communication. These phenomena may suggest the universality and the degree of each concern in these children, as well as the challenges for school counselors nationwide.

Table 3 shows the counselors in both groups overall felt *somewhat* challenged by the issues identified as challenges. This result echoes Shen and Lowinger's (2007) finding indicating that even though school counselors had little Asian contact, they perceived themselves to be *somewhat* competent—reflected by a medium stand on a 5-point Likert scale—in counseling Asian Americans. As reflected by the medium degree of overall challenges, this study appears to validate an intermediate degree of confidence in counseling Asian Americans.

In Group 1, the ASCA counselors who rated themselves with *considerable* Asian American practical experience, however, felt significantly more challenged when confronted by the issue of expectations and pressures, as opposed to counselors with *little* experience. Group 2 did not show this result. In addition, in Group 1, compared with counselors receiving no multicultural workshops, counselors receiving workshops with Asian American information felt significantly more challenged when confronted by the issue of counseling barriers. Further, the counselors only experienced two major challenges in Group 1 versus four in Group 2. Taken together, perhaps the exposure to Asian American culture, including gaining practical client contact and new knowledge/skills, had strong impacts on the ASCA counselors, who appeared to have much less Asian exposure than the school-district counselors. Instead of blithely relying on the stereotypical model minority image, ASCA counselors with relatively more Asian contact (compared to their ASCA peers) may have started to realize the real difficulties.

Unlike Group 1, counselors in Group 2 reported a negative association between challenge level and field-experience training. Counselors with Asian American clients in field experiences felt significantly less challenged by the issue of language and cultural barriers than those without Asian clients. The finding supports the results of (a) Shen (in press b) reporting school

counselors feeling more comfortable and less challenged than those without Asian clients and (b) Shen and Lowinger (2007) reporting school counselors feeling more competent than counselors without Asian clients. Yet, in addition to cultural barriers, 64% of Asian American children speak non-English home languages (Aud, Fox, & KewallRamani, 2010). Because language is a measure of acculturation, it is unsurprising that nearly 40% of counselors in Group 2 were seriously challenged by these children's language and cultural barriers. Promisingly, this study suggests that close supervision of entry-level counselors' practice with Asian Americans will provide fundamental support to handle future challenges.

Group 2 also shows that ethnicity is another valuable factor. Compared with Caucasian counselors, counselors of Asian descent felt significantly less challenged when encountered by expectations and pressures. This finding is parallel to the results of (a) Shen (in press b) reporting school counselors of Asian origins feeling significantly more comfortable and less challenged than those of Caucasian when working with Asian American students and (b) Holcomb-McCoy et al. (2008) reporting ethnic minority counselors rating themselves with a significantly higher multicultural counseling self-efficacy. Perhaps the familiarity with Asian schoolchildren facilitated the intervention of counselors of the same cultural origin.

Group 2 further shows that school location and logistical needs—although not ranked as high as other issues—merit attention. Compared with counselors in suburban areas, counselors in urban/metropolitan areas encountered students' logistical needs significantly more frequently and felt more challenged. The finding may reflect the needs of impoverished Asian American youth. According to the *2007–2009 American Community Survey*, although the average household incomes and number of adults with bachelor's/postgraduate degrees of Asian Americans are higher than that of the nation, the socioeconomic status (SES) of the Asian American population is bimodal among its subethnicities (Cook et al., 2011). Low SES Asian Americans are more excessively concentrated than any other ethnic poverty population in certain urban/metropolitan areas where the housing markets are the priciest in the nation (Ishimatsu, 2013). The parents with low income might focus most energy on meeting their family's basic needs before orienting the children to correctly follow school procedures.

Further, it is worth noting that expectations and pressures constantly topped all of the challenges for both groups of counselors. This finding is different from Yeh's study (2001), in which all other challenges were more salient. The discrepancy maybe due to changes since 2001 or the difference between Asian American children/parents in New York and nationwide. In the present research, *expectations and pressures* is also the only issue significantly associated with the conditions examined across both groups (i.e., counselors' practical Asian American experience in Group 1 and counselors' ethnicity in Group 2). In any case, expectations and pressures among Asian Americans are frequently discussed in the anecdotal literature (e.g., Ng et al., 2007; Singh, 2009). In this research, the issue not only refers to the expectations and pressures from the students' family and self-aspiration, but also deals with their social concerns or social pressures. In fact, high expectations—unrealistic at times—and the corresponding academic pressure imposed on schoolchildren is a common phenomenon and core issue resulting in education reform in certain Asian countries. In America, the issue could be further complicated by anti-Asian discrimination, racism, and model minority myths (see Ng et al., 2007). With this sociocultural context in mind, it is unsurprising that 40–41% of the counselors surveyed across both groups felt greatly challenged by this issue.

Limitations and Recommendations

The results must be viewed with caution due to research limitations; meanwhile, recommendations are suggested. First, the small number of items on the researcher-designed scales generated limited psychometric information and partial student concerns. Although not as discernible as the issues identified in this research, deeper brewing issues also trouble the group. These issues include racialization or racial identity formation, along with marginalization and racism in schools (Lee, 2005; Ng et al., 2007). These youngsters are still in the process of developing their cultural identity and *bicultural competence*, the ability to meet the demands of two cultures (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993). The dual processes of *enculturation* (learning how to live in the primary ethnic culture) and *acculturation* (socializing into a second culture) can be stressful (McAuliffe & Associates, 2013). Value clashes between the East and West may result in intergenerational conflicts and acculturation gaps causing youngsters' identity confusion (Chou & Leonard, 2006). As *Education Week* states: "[Asian American students'] needs are profoundly diverse" (Zubrzycki, 2012, p. 1). The invisibility of Asian American students and Asian American issues could be part of the larger structural issue associated with marginalization and racism in educational settings, professions, and system (Lee, 2005). This area warrants more scholarly attention. An expanded number of items examining various constructs synthesizing the issues explored in this study and suggested herein could enhance the psychometrics and advance the instruments' usefulness.

Second, most effect sizes were between small and medium, so one should be cautious in applying the findings to practice. Third, Asian American encompasses (a) heterogeneous subgroups speaking more than 100 languages and (b) multiple generations since immigration (Leong, Lee, & Chang, 2008; McAuliffe & Associates, 2013). Hence, the findings may not be generalizable across all Asian groups or individuals. Future research should focus on each subgroup or generation. Fourth, although typical for online surveys, the low response rate of Group 1 may limit generalizability. Future research should strive for a higher rate. Fifth, the counselors' practical Asian American experience was a subjective rating. Future research should include objective measures (e.g., case load, length of contact/exposure). Sixth, the findings are from counselors' subjective views. The barriers to meeting the students' needs should be further assessed with the students, parents, and teachers.

In light of the study results, several initiatives should be highlighted. First, to help the students negotiate among possible stressors, school counselors should explore and assess Asian Americans' parental involvement and expectations, self-aspirations of the students, and the emotional cost of excessive expectations and pressures. Areas to be addressed may include living up to parental expectations, internalized perfectionism and occupational aspirations, self-efficacy of cognition, and the toll on one's physical and emotional health, including suicidal ideation. Because perfectionism-driven stress and related mental health symptoms are also found in many gifted students (Cross & Cross, 2015), counselors may find coping strategies recommended for gifted students beneficial to Asian American students distressed by high expectations/pressures. One helpful strategy is to build Asian American students' positive social supports by involving them in helping peers and engaging in extracurricular activities (Cross & Cross, 2015). While helping these students develop healthy coping strategies and reasonable self-criticisms/ self-image, counselors should also help the parents, who might be these children's primary stressors, monitor when the level of expectations/pressures is too much.

For clients with language, direct-expression, culture, or counseling barriers, creative arts or play therapy could work more effectively than traditional talk therapy (Shen, 2007; Yeh, 2001).

Helping clients negotiate between the mainstream U.S. and traditional Asian values, counselors may want to integrate (a) a cognitive theoretic approach—easier to align with cognition-prioritized Eastern cultural norms (Shen, 2007)—and (b) a constructivist approach—granting clients flexibility to construct alternate views and personal meaning (Grier-Reed, Arcinue, & Chahia, 2012). To further address the language and cultural barriers, counselors should take the initiative in referral, consultation, and collaboration with community-based organizations that have language and cultural capacity (Ishimatsu, 2013). For students with logistical issues or stigmatization of counseling, counselors should provide effective parenting education and collaborate with social workers to familiarize the parents and children with logistics-related solutions, especially in urban schools, as well as with the Western-rooted counseling services.

Second, instead of passively waiting for students seeking help, counselors should proactively approach and advocate for Asian American students. As declared in the ASCA (2012) National Model—a comprehensive management model for school counselors—active collaboration with other school personnel to ecologically support the students is essential. Murata (2011) discussed pragmatic initiatives such as monitoring service allocation for Asian students on campus and providing Asian-specific information during inservice training for school personnel. Third, regarding counselor training, augmenting trainees' practical Asian American experience while under the supervision of university faculty is critical. Counseling programs should increase trainees' exposure to and practice with the group. The programs may provide internationally collaborative field experience and use movies in multicultural counseling training; for details, see Alexander, Kruczek, and Ponterotto (2005) and Shen (2015). Fourth, the mental health profession should promote the concept of *counseling without barriers* via recruiting multilingual trainees with Asian ethnicities. A stronger match with clients' backgrounds may enable counselors and the mental health profession to serve the group without obstacles—much more effectively than translators (Murata, 2011).

In sum, concurring with the goal of the WHIAAPI (n.d.) for generating more data on the communities of Asian Americans and advancing their life quality, this study empirically documents the student-related concerns and challenges experienced by school counselors working with Asian Americans at both elementary and secondary schools. Through the large scope insights of counselors who had actual experience with the group, this study not only demystifies the needs of the "model" youngsters, but reveals the barriers and recommends possible resources to meet the needs. Due to the fast growing rate of the population, school personnel will increasingly encounter Asian American pupils. Compared with other helping professionals, school counselors assume a greater responsibility to guide and counsel the group, thus preventing them from potential mental health difficulties on a daily basis. Effectively identifying the students' concerns and efficiently conquering the challenges is the duty of cutting-edge counselors. Undoubtedly, the advance of Asian American students' counseling needs awaits school counselors' more active service and researchers' continual exploration.

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