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

A graduate project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Counseling, College Counseling and Student Services

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May 2015
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# Table of Contents

Signature Page ........................................ ii
Abstract ................................................... iv

Inclusion of Sociocultural Components in Psychological Services to Promote Psychological Help-Seeking Among Mexican American College Students ........................................ 1
Acculturation, Cultural Values, and Gender ........................................... 2
Cultural Orientation, Cultural Fit, and Class Standing Affect on Help-Seeking Attitudes ........................................... 5
Perceived Social Support Affects on Help-Seeking ........................................... 8

Theoretical Analysis ........................................ 11

Limitations in Acculturation, Cultural Values, and Gender ........................................... 14
Limitations in Cultural Orientation, Cultural Fit, and Class Standing Affect on Help-Seeking Attitudes ........................................... 15
Limitations on Perceived Social Support Affects on Help-Seeking ........................................... 16

References ................................................ 17
Abstract

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The purpose of the Core 2 major artifact is to demonstrate my proficiency and understanding of the selected 2014 CACREP standards. Through comprehensive literature reviews, theoretical analysis, and suggested implications for counseling and student affairs professionals, this major artifact demonstrates my foundational knowledge of diverse college student populations and trending issues.

The Core 2 Major Artifact examines literature on the inclusion of sociocultural components and their affect on the psychological help seeking among Mexican American College students. To examine psychological help seeking this paper observed several components including acculturation, cultural values, and gender. Findings of these three components observed by Ramos-Sanchez and Atkinson’s (2009) found that, as Mexican Americans stray away from Mexican society in future generations, their feelings toward help
seeking become less favorable. Cultural orientation, cultural fit, and class standing were also observed and found that cultural orientation variables were not predictive of help-seeking attitudes, while culture absolutely impacts the help-seeking process. Lastly perceived social support was observed to understand the psychological help seeking finding that, lower social support from family is an indicator for higher help-seeking behavior, and the opposite for the higher social support for Mexican American college students.
Inclusion of Sociocultural Components in Psychological Services to Promote Psychological Help-Seeking Among Mexican American College Students

Many studies have been conducted on distinct aspects of ethnic identity development, generational differences among ethnic groups, self-hatred among denigrated ethnic groups, and ethnic identity development in minority adolescents or adults. However, scarce research exists examining the sociocultural development of Mexican American college students’ ethnic identity and psychological help-seeking behavior. These sociocultural components include, but are not limited to, acculturation, cultural values, gender, cultural orientation, cultural fit, and class standing.

Perceived social support has been shown to have a significant role in whether Mexican American college students seek psychological services. Specifically, Ramos-Sanchez and Atkinson (2006) suggest that loyalty to conventional Mexican culture and cultural principles may essentially support help-seeking. Additionally, Gloria, Castellanos, Segura-Herrera, and Mayorga (2010) found that culture does in fact impact the help-seeking process. Furthermore, cultural congruity in multiple studies has indicated a positive relationship, but still modestly predictive of help-seeking in a psychological context (Miville & Constantine, 2006).

In addition to these sociocultural components, Phinney’s (1990) theory of ethnic identity development may be used to more efficiently understand the multifaceted process of how Mexican Americans' self-identify with their own or other ethnic groups. This theory highlights multiple components that suggest that ethnic identity may be central to positive mental health, particularly for ethnically and racially diverse minorities. Therefore, it is suggested that through incorporating sociocultural components into psychological services, psychological help-seeking attitudes among Mexican American college students can be increased.
Acculturation, Cultural Values, and Gender

Ramos-Sanchez and Atkinson (2009) conducted a study examining the interactions between Mexican American college students and various factors that may have a perverse affect on the use of mental health services on college campuses. These include acculturation, cultural values, gender, and help seeking intentions. The purpose of Ramos-Sanchez and Atkinson’s (2009) study was to examine Mexican American college students’ underuse of counseling services.

In this study a total sample of 262 Mexican American community college students (80 men and 182 women) was used. These students were all pooled from three Central California educational institutions. Ages of the participants ranged from 16 to 60 years old ($M=27.00$). Notably, these students did not represent typical college students in the sense of working towards earning a degree, but rather older individuals from the community that wanted to learn English. Particularly, over 129 students were enrolled in English Second Language (ESL) courses, and 133 were enrolled in social science courses. Additionally, the majority of these students were first-generation college students, meaning they were the first in their families to attend college. Religious affiliation in Ramos-Sanchez and Atkinson’s (2009) study was also observed, indicating that 204 participants identified as Catholic, followed by 46 participants who identified as “other”, and 12 participants identified as Protestant. Income of Mexican American college students also was observed indicating 50 (19.1%) participants earning $0-$9999, 47 (17.9%) in the $20,000-$29,999 bracket, 39 (14.9%) of participants earning $30,000-$39,999, 22 (8.4%) in the $40,000-$49,999 bracket, and 19 (7.3%) in the $50,000 and over income bracket (Ramos-Sanchez & Atkinson, 2009).
Examining multiple components of help-seeking behavior, Ramos-Sanchez and Atkinson (2009) used a variety of instruments to measure acculturation, cultural values, gender, and help-seeking intentions. To examine acculturation, the Acculturation Rating Scale of Mexican Americans-II (ARSMA-II) was used. The ARSMA-II, “is a multidimensional, bilingual (English and Spanish) measure designed to assess varying levels of Mexican American acculturation” (Ramos-Sanchez & Atkinson, 2009, p. 64-65). This specific instrument consist of two sections (Mexican orientation and American orientation) and assess four axes of acculturation, which are integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization (Ramos-Sanchez & Atkinson, 2009). In addition to the ARSMA-II, to observe acculturation among Mexican Americans Ramos-Sanchez and Atkinson (2009) also utilized the Multiphasic Assessment of Cultural Constructs-Short Form (MACC-SF). This form is designed to observe and “assess five theoretical cultural constructs derived primarily from cultural values, beliefs, and ideas, and attitudes in the Mexican American culture “ (Ramos-Sanchez & Atkinson, 2009, p. 65). This instrument is constituted of five subscales characterizing the five constructs including familism, fatalism, folk illness, machismo, and personalismo. Additionally, the Religiosity Index was used to measure degree of religiosity to determine self-rated degree of religiosity, frequency of church attendance, perceived influence of religion on one’s life, frequency of prayer, and frequency of talks with priests, ministers, or other religious officials (Ramos-Sanchez & Atkinson, 2009). Ramos-Sanchez and Atkinson, (2009) additionally used the Attitudes Towards Seeking Professional Psychological Help-Short Form (ATSPPH-SF), which is a one-dimensional measure of attitudes towards seeking professional help. The variables observed in this instrument include, acknowledgment of necessity for psychological help, shame tolerance, relational openness, and confidence in mental health professionals (Ramos-Sanchez & Atkinson, 2009).
Results in Ramos-Sanchez and Atkinson’s (2009) study indicated that having strong American Orientation scores did not have any significant affect on help-seeking intentions. Therefore, this research suggests that dominant culture status does not have a positive affect towards help-seeking. Additionally, this finding in Ramos-Sanchez and Atkinson’s (2009) study indicates that other components may exist that inhibit openness to seeking psychological help. Interestingly, Mexican Orientation Scores indicated a connection to generation status. Specifically, Ramos-Sanchez and Atkinson’s (2009) found that as Mexican Americans move away from Mexican society in younger generations, their feelings toward help seeking become less favorable. Additionally, results of the study indicated that enculturated Mexican Americans show a more positive perception of mental health services. However, one noted limitation in Ramos-Sanchez and Atkinson’s (2009) study was that other variables not measured, such as Mexican Americans’ regard for educated professionals, may influence enculturated Mexican Americans to a greater inclination to use counseling services. In regards to gender, Ramos-Sanchez and Atkinson’s (2009) found that this variable contributed positive attitudes towards seeking psychological services. Specifically, Ramos-Sanchez and Atkinson’s (2009) found that women were more wiling than men to seek psychological services. Therefore, Ramos-Sanchez and Atkinson’s (2009) study indicated a deficit in outreach platforms that focus on enculturated Mexican Americans. Additionally, it is suggested by this research that efforts to inform enculturated Mexican American men in particular about counseling and encourage values that encourage help-seeking should be made.
Cultural Orientation, Cultural Fit, and Class Standing Affect on Help-Seeking Attitudes

Gloria, Castellanos, Segura-Herrera, and Mayorga (2010) examined the influence that cultural orientation and cultural fit have on help-seeking attitudes among Mexican and Anglo American undergraduate students. Specifically, they hypothesized that cultural orientation and cultural fit would predict attitudes towards counseling, particularly in Latina undergraduate students. Additionally, Gloria et al. (2010) hypothesized that difference in class standing (freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior status) would also be associated with Latina undergraduate perceptions. For the purpose of their research, cultural fit was defined as, “cultural congruity and perceptions of the university environment” (Gloria, Castellanos, Segura-Herrera, & Mayorga, 2010, p. 129). Additionally, Gloria et. al. (2010) defined cultural orientation as simply being either Mexican or Anglo.

In their study, Gloria et al. (2010) included a sample of 158 undergraduates (124 female, 32 male, and 2 unspecified). Of the 124 female students, 3 were removed due to not meeting the study criteria. Regarding class standing, 8.4% identified as freshman, 20.2% were sophomore, 34.5% were junior, and 37.0% identified as seniors, with 2% not indicating their class standing. Students ages ranged from 18-25 years old. Regarding their ethnicity, the sample indicated 76.6% of undergraduate students identifying as Mexican and 68.9% reported being the first U.S.-born member of their families. Additionally, Gloria et al. (2010) observed that educational goals varied among participants with 48.2% looking to pursue a doctoral degree and 27.2% looking to earn a master’s degree with interests including business administration, medicine, and law. Undergraduates in the study also discussed their previous counseling experiences, with 36.3% of students reporting having sought personal counseling and more than half of those students having found it helpful (Gloria, Castellanos, Segura-Herrera, & Mayorga, 2010, p. 130).
Gloria, Castellanos, Segura-Herrera, and Mayorga (2010) utilized various instruments to survey their participants. These included a demographic form and four different standardized and counterbalanced measures. The first standardized measure was the Cultural Congruity Scale (CCS). The CCS is a 13-item self-report measure to evaluate the cultural fit of individual and environmental values. One example item found in the CCS is “I feel that I have to change myself to fit in at school” (Gloria, Castellanos, Segura-Herrera, & Mayorga, 2010, p. 131). Participants using the CCS indicate their responses on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 4 indicating strongly agree to strongly disagree. Another measure used in the Gloria et al. (2010) study was the University Environment Scale (UES), a 14-item self-report measure to evaluate opinions of the university environment. Additionally, the ARSMA-II was used to evaluate individual attitudes, beliefs, and values of Mexican Americans. Items on this 30-item self-report measure included statements such as, “I enjoy listening to Spanish Language music” (Gloria, Castellanos, Segura-Herrera, & Mayorga, 2010, p. 131). Lastly, the Attitudes Towards Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale-Short Form (ATSPPHS-SF) was used. This 29-item measure examines attitudes of individuals seeking professional help for emotive and psychological distresses.

Results of the Gloria et al. (2010) study were consistent with previous studies that suggested cultural congruity and perceptions of university environment affect help-seeking behaviors. However, in relation to class standing, Gloria et al (2010) found that class standing was a predictor of perceptions of the university environment, which includes mental health services. Specifically, Gloria et al. (2010) found in their study that upper division Latino students were more likely to report negative perceptions of the university environment. This may be due to having spent more time at the university than lower-division undergraduate students and having developed successful strategies to negotiate their way through a campus. Interestingly,
Gloria et al. (2010) also found that Latina upper-division undergraduates reported being more Anglo-orientated than their lower-division counterparts. This finding suggests that acculturation may be a result of having to juggle two identities between home and school environments. Furthermore, while the study did not find cultural orientation variables to be predictive of help-seeking attitudes, culture does impact the help-seeking process.
Perceived Social Support Effects on Help-Seeking

Through multiple regression analyses, Miville and Constantine (2006) observed components including cultural congruence, perceived social support, and acculturation and outcomes on help-seeking behavior and attitudes among Mexican American College students. They first hypothesized that higher levels of acculturation and cultural congruity would be predictive of greater psychological help-seeking. Second, Miville and Constantine (2006) hypothesized that higher levels of enculturation would be predictive of lower psychological help-seeking behavior. Third, Miville and Constantine (2006) hypothesized that higher levels of perceived social support from family, friends, and a significant other would be a determinant of lower psychological help-seeking behavior among Mexican American college students.

Participants in the Miville and Constantine (2006) study included 162 Mexican American undergraduate students from a sizable, primarily White university located in the southwest region of the United States. In regards to gender, 103 (63.6%) of the participants were female and 59 (36.4%) were male. Ages of the participants ranged from 18-25 years old. Class standing was also reported, with 58 of the participants being freshman, 42 sophomores, 29 juniors, and 33 seniors. In identifying the demographics of their participants Miville and Constantine (2006), also utilized measures to assess the multidimensional variables of help-seeking behavior.

One measure used in Miville and Constantine's (2006) study was the Stephenson Multigroup Acculturation Scale (SMAS). Specifically, this 32-item, 4-point Likert-type instrument assesses attitudinal and behavioral characteristics of enculturation and acculturation that can be functional across diverse cultural groups (Miville & Constantine, 2006). In addition, the SMAS measurement utilizes two subscales including both dominant society identification (15 items) and ethnic society identification (17 items). Scores for dominant society identification
were used as the index for acculturation, while scores for ethnic society identification were used a measure of enculturation for each participant's cultural group. The study also used the CCS, similar to the Gloria et al. (2010) study, to observe cultural orientation and cultural fit’s effects on help-seeking attitudes among Mexican and Anglo American undergraduate students. Additionally, this study used the ATSSPH-S instrument used in the Gloria et al. (2010) study to measure attitudes of individuals seeking professional relief for emotive and psychological distress. Lastly, Miville and Constantine’s (2006) study assessed help-seeking behavior by including an additional item on the demographic data sheet that was distributed to each participant. This item asked whether participants had sought professional mental health services in the past year to address any mental health concerns. Each of these 5 instruments yielded specific results to assess social support and its relationship to help-seeking behavior.

Results from Miville and Constantine’s (2006) study indicated that multiple sociocultural variables are important to consider when observing attitudes and behaviors associated with help-seeking in a mental health context, particularly among Mexican American college students. Interestingly, unlike the Ramos-Sanchez and Atkinson (2009) and Gloria et al. (2006) studies, Miville and Constantine (2006) found that acculturation into dominant U.S society was relatively and clearly predictive of help-seeking behaviors. In addition, Miville and Constantine’s (2006) study suggests that acculturation into Anglo American culture appears to be related to positive help-seeking attitudes and behaviors in Mexican American college students. However, consistent with existing research, Miville and Constantine’s (2006) study found that enculturation for Mexican American college students does not play a role in help-seeking behaviors. Additionally, cultural congruity indicated a positive relationship, but was still only modestly predictive of help-seeking in a psychological context (Miville & Constantine, 2006).
In regards to social support, Miville and Constantine’s (2006) study indicated that this variable was a strong predictor of both attitudes and behaviors for psychological help-seeking among Mexican American college students. Consistent with their hypothesis, Miville and Constantine’s (2006) study found that lower social support from family is an indicator for higher help-seeking behavior, and the opposite for the higher social support for Mexican American college students. Additionally, findings in Miville and Constantine’s (2006) study suggested that Mexican Americans may be more likely to be in need of mental health services due to being alienated or isolated socially. Finally, findings in Miville and Constantine’s (2006) study suggested that behaviors in the context of help-seeking may also be determined by levels of psychological discomfort or distress.
Theoretical Analysis

In discussing cultural congruity and cultural orientation, cultural fit, and help-seeking attitudes among Mexican American college students, one relevant model is the ethnic identity development theory developed by Phinney (1990). Phinney (1990) explains ethnic identity development by asserting that as an individual becomes older, they are more likely to have developed their ethnic identity. As discussed, existing research suggests that ethnic identity may be central to positive mental health, particularly for ethnically and racially diverse minorities. Therefore, Phinney's (1990) research suggests inaccurate ethnic self-identification is connected to poor psychological well-being. Phinney (1990) highlights in his research how little attention has been paid to minority groups in the area of ethnic identity development. Therefore, she highlights that when dominant groups perceive qualities of ethnic groups negatively, then these ethnic groups will be faced with negative self-perception and self-esteem (Phinney, 1990). This research suggests that the extent to which one identifies with a negatively perceived ethnic group may determine levels of poor self-concept (Phinney, 1990).

It is important to highlight the differences between ethnic identity and acculturation to further understand ethnic identity development among Mexican Americans. Specifically, these differences are best understood by observing Mexican Americans' ethnicity and ethnic self-identification, sense of belonging, and ethnic involvement.

Defining the term self-identification is significant particularly to understanding the starting point of ethnic identity. Self-identification is defined by Phinney (1990) as, “the ethnic label that one uses for oneself” (p. 503). While it may be assumed that self-identifying with an ethnic label is simple, the opposite is true according to this research. Specifically, self-identification with a specific ethnic label may be difficult, especially when an individual's
parental background differs from the individual's self-concept (Phinney, 1990). Therefore, the developmental processes leading up to self-identifying as Mexican American may be more complex than referencing parental backgrounds. Research has shown that as Mexican Americans become more acculturated to the dominant groups, and lose their ethnic identities, they are less inclined to develop positive help-seeking behavior.

The sense of belonging pertaining to an individual’s ethnic group is defined by Phinney (1990) as, “the experience of exclusion, contrast, or separateness from other group members” (p. 504). Phinney (1990) explains that individuals may use an ethnic labels when asked, but may not feel a sense of connectedness or belonging to that particular group. Therefore, evaluation of an individual’s ethnic sense of belonging could allow for improved assessment of cultural congruity, cultural orientation, and cultural fit of Mexican Americans.

Ethnic Involvement as evidenced by social participation and cultural practices has also been observed in research by Phinney (1990) to explain ethnic identity development. These complex and sometimes problematic indicators include language, friendship, social organization membership, religious affiliations, cultural traditions, and political beliefs. Each of these variables can have significant effects on ethnic identity development. Therefore, these variables must each be individually measured to understand how Mexican American college students' ethnic identity development.

It is suggested through the acculturation framework that is important to observe an individual’s relationship to the dominant or majority group. Acculturation according to Phinney (1990) is defined as "changes in cultural attitudes, values, and behaviors that result from contact between two distinct cultures” (p. 501). If the concept of acculturation were applied to Mexican American identity development, these changes would mirror those of the dominant or host
society that the minority is part of. Ethnic identity in Phinney’s (1990) study is defined as, “an aspect of acculturation, in which the concern is with individuals and the focus is on how they relate to their own group as a subgroup of the larger society” (p. 501). In understanding these terms, Phinney (1990) outlines that the theme of culture between two groups and the effect on the mental health for individuals and their conflicts are all part of the process of ethnic identity development.

Phinney (1990) therefore suggests that the most needed area for ethnic identity research is on reliable and valid measures of ethnic identity. Therefore, in order to promote more positive help-seeking attitudes and behaviors in Mexican American college students, it is important to understand the general variables of ethnic identity as well as those that are specific to Mexican American culture. Phinney (1990) suggests that there are consequences of poor self-identity on psychological adjustment. Therefore, in promoting developing stronger measures and instruments to measure Mexican American identities, implications to positively promote help-seeking behaviors may be accomplished.
Limitations in Acculturation, Cultural Values, and Gender

Ramos-Sanchez and Atkinson (2009) suggest further studies reevaluating cultural values by using instruments with more advanced psychometric properties. In relation to their focus on Mexican American college students, Ramos-Sanchez and Atkinson (2009) also suggest that a more representative sample be used to more accurately observe help seeking among this group. Specifically, Ramos-Sanchez and Atkinson (2009) suggests that including a sample of Mexican American individuals not connected with academic institutions and seeing psychological services would increase generalizability of the results. Lastly, Ramos-Sanchez and Atkinson (2009) suggest that institutional barriers such as counselors who are not skilled in counseling ethnically and racially diverse students be examined.
Limitations in Cultural Orientation, Cultural Fit, and Class Standing Affect on Help-Seeking Attitudes

Several limitations were outlined in research conducted by Gloria, Castellanos, Segura-Herrera, and Mayorga (2010), particularly focusing on an unevenly distributed sample in the area of class standing. Gloria, Castellanos, Segura-Herrera, and Mayorga’s (2010) study also primarily used self-report data, which is subject to both conscious and unconscious biases such as social desirability, speculating about the study’s hypothesis, level of comfort with the content, and willingness to answer honestly. Additionally, participants from Gloria, Castellanos, Segura-Herrera, and Mayorga’s (2010) study were pooled from ethnicity-specific courses and clubs and organizations, which may indicate participant bias based on the responsibility to participate in the study. In addition the ARSMA-II instrument had limited measures in regards to the multidimensionality of value-drive cultural orientations. Therefore, further investigation and research is needed to contrast and compare the correlation between cultural values and help seeking attitudes.
Limitations on Perceived Social Support Affects on Help-Seeking

Like Gloria, Castellanos, Segura-Herrera, and Mayorga (2010), Miville and Constantine (2006) also found limitations related to the use of self-report measures. This study also used a sample of only Mexican American college students, who may function differently than a larger population not affiliated with a higher education institution. In addition, Miville and Constantine (2006) used an enculturation measure with low reliability that may have skewed results. Finally, the psychological functions of the sample used in the study were not assessed, but did find that sociocultural variables are an important predictor for psychological help seeking attitudes and behaviors.

Given these limitations, further limitations of Miville and Constantine’s (2006) research include the lack of community samples and referencing psychosocial development stages to help understand the external validity of the results. Moreover, it is suggested in this study to use a longitudinal design to highlight the direction of connections between the sociocultural variables and help seeking attitudes and behaviors. Lastly, Miville and Constantine (2006) add that a qualitative design might further support how and why sociocultural variables affect help seeking.
References


