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Abstract

The present study examined cultural factors underlying help-seeking attitudes of Asian American college students ($N = 106$). Specifically, we explored internalized model minority myth as a predictor of help-seeking attitudes and tested an intrapersonal-interpersonal framework of Asian values as a mechanism by which the two are related. Results indicated that internalized model minority myth significantly predicted unfavorable help-seeking attitudes, and emotional self-control mediated this relationship. Interpersonal values and humility were nonsignificant mediators, contrary to our hypotheses. The findings suggest that the investigation of internalized model minority myth in help-seeking research is a worthwhile endeavor, and they also highlight emotional self-control as an important explanatory variable in help-seeking attitudes of Asian American college students.

Keywords: Help-seeking attitudes, model minority myth, Asian values

Internalized Model Minority Myth, Asian Values, and Help-Seeking Attitudes among

Asian American Students

Some troubling trends exist in the literature on Asian American college students' mental

health service use and help-seeking attitudes. Researchers have shown that Asian American

university students underutilize psychological services (Kearney, Draper, & Barón, 2005;

Masuda et al., 2009). In addition, unfavorable help-seeking *attitudes* may be more pronounced in

Asian American students (Atkinson, Ponterotto, & Sanchez, 1984; Masuda et al., 2009).

Therefore, the investigation of help-seeking attitudes appears to be a promising endeavor in the

larger effort to reduce the gap in mental health service utilization. Indeed, several studies have

contributed to a better understanding of Asian American students' help-seeking attitudes (e.g., B.

S. K. Kim & Omizo, 2003; P. Y. Kim & Park, 2009; Liao, Rounds, & Klein, 2005). Our study

adds to this literature by examining a mechanism related to Asian American help-seeking

attitudes. Specifically, this study investigates (a) the predictive role of a relatively unexplored

construct, internalized model minority myth; and (b) the explanatory role of Asian values,

utilizing the intrapersonal-interpersonal framework to organize the Asian values.

Internalized Model Minority Myth as a Predictor of Help-Seeking Attitudes

The model minority myth is the idea that Asian Americans are often perceived as an

exemplary racial group in the United States, mainly due to their educational and financial

success (Fong, 2008). Yoo, Burrola, and Steger (2010) posit that this "success" is often attributed

to (a) a lack of barriers (e.g., racism) that might prevent Asian Americans' upward mobility (i.e.,

unrestricted mobility), and (b) Asian Americans' exceptional work ethic and inner drive (i.e.,

achievement orientation). Another key aspect of the model minority myth is the assumption that

Asian Americans have experienced more success compared to other racial minority groups in the

United States (Yoo et al., 2010). Based on these components, *internalized model minority myth* is the belief in the comparative success of Asian Americans and attributing it to hard work and lack of obstacles for moving up socially (Yoo et al., 2010). In the present study, we focus specifically on the achievement orientation dimension of the internalized model minority myth. [1]

The model minority stereotype is considered a myth because it oversimplifies the economic and educational realities of Asian Americans (for more details, see Fong, 2008; Yoo et al., 2010). As a result, scholars have argued that the model minority myth can have detrimental consequences for Asian Americans (Fong, 2008; Yoo et al., 2010). In particular, there is some limited evidence for negative psychological outcomes. In a study examining Asian American students' feelings toward the model minority myth, the majority (51.7%) reported negative feelings (Oyserman & Sakamoto, 1997). Similarly, a stronger endorsement of positive Asian stereotypes was associated with an increase in distress among Asian American students (Gupta et al., 2011). These studies suggest that the relation between psychological outcomes and internalized model minority myth is an area worthy of research, but the current literature on this topic is relatively sparse (Yoo et al., 2010). The present study addresses this gap, by investigating internalized model minority myth and its relation to Asian American college students' help-seeking attitudes.

Scholars have argued that the pressure of the model minority stereotype can interfere with seeking help for emotional problems (Das, Kemp, & Sharon, 1997), perhaps because Asian Americans are motivated to bury the issues that contradict the stereotype (Lee, Wong, &

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[1] Yoo and colleagues (2010) provide evidence for the validity of two dimensions of internalized model minority myth (i.e., success due to achievement orientation vs. success due to unrestricted mobility). Although both are important dimensions to consider, we use the achievement orientation dimension based on the evidence indicating that positive stereotypes of Asian Americans (which seems more conceptually proximal to achievement orientation than unrestricted mobility) are associated with unfavorable help-seeking attitudes (Gupta, Szymanski, & Leong, 2011).

Alvarez, 2007). However, little empirical literature exists on the relation between internalized model minority myth and help-seeking attitudes. A study found that the endorsement of positive Asian stereotypes by Asian American students was related to less favorable help-seeking attitudes (Gupta et al., 2011). However, it remains unclear whether internalized model minority myth, which not only includes the endorsement of positive stereotypes associated with success (i.e., hard-working and extra-motivated) but also the belief that Asian Americans experience more success compared to other racial minority groups (Yoo et al., 2010), predicts help-seeking attitudes. Given this need, we examine the relation between internalized model minority myth and help-seeking attitudes of Asian American college students. Specifically, we hypothesized an inverse relation between internalized model minority myth and help-seeking attitudes (Hypothesis A).

The question then surfaces: how or why are these two factors related? To answer this question, we examine Asian values as mediators. Below, we first provide a rationale for our framework used to organize Asian values. Next, we summarize the evidence for examining Asian values as mediators.

Toward a Framework of Asian American Help-Seeking

B. S. K. Kim, Li, and Ng (2005) identified five cultural values that are particularly salient in the Asian American population: emotional self-control, humility, collectivism, conformity to norms, and family recognition through achievement. Building upon this framework, the present study organizes Asian values as *intrapersonal* or *interpersonal*. We define intrapersonal values as those that primarily emphasize inner attributes or within-person processes, and interpersonal values as those that primarily focus on external attributes or others-oriented processes.

The support for the intrapersonal-interpersonal distinction is found in the literature on self-construals. An independent self-construal defines the self as a distinct entity from others; an interdependent self-construal defines the self in relation to important others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Based on this understanding, it is reasonable that the values would relate with one type of self-construal more strongly than the other, depending on their respective emphasis. Indeed, B. S. K. Kim et al. (2005) reported that emotional self-control and humility were significantly associated with independent but not interdependent self-construal. Likewise, collectivism and family recognition through achievement were associated with interdependent but not independent self-construal (conformity to norms was nonsignificantly correlated with interdependent self-construal in the expected direction, $r = .21$; its correlation with independent self-construal was small and in opposite direction, $r = -.05$; B. S. K. Kim et al., 2005). Based on this evidence, we organized emotional self-control and humility as intrapersonal; collectivism, conformity to norms, and family recognition through achievement as interpersonal.

The intrapersonal-interpersonal values framework is especially applicable in this study, given the varying perspectives on Asian American help-seeking. One perspective emphasizes internal attributes that hinder help-seeking, such as the etiological belief that a "weak mind" can cause mental illnesses (Mallinckrodt, Shigeoka, & Suzuki, 2005) or the view that mental illness can be overcome utilizing inner strength or willpower (Arkoff, Thaver, & Elkind, 1966; Sue, Wagner, Davis, Margullis, & Lew, 1976). Another perspective emphasizes the interpersonal aspect of help-seeking. Family (Lin & Lin, 1981; Root, 1985) and even the larger community (Yang, Phelan, & Link, 2008) may influence Asian American help-seeking. Consistent with this idea, P. Y. Kim and Park (2009) found that the opinion of salient others regarding help-seeking predicted Asian American college students' willingness to see a counselor.

We believe that the intrapersonal-interpersonal framework proposed in the present study advances the literature by addressing a limitation of an existing approach in examining Asian values and help-seeking attitudes. In particular, the literature has tended to rely on the enculturation-acculturation framework, which posits that both adherence to culture of origin and adaptation to host culture are essential in understanding psychological changes that occur as a result of cultural contact (Berry, 2003). An important element within the enculturation-acculturation framework is dimensionality – that is, the domain in which enculturation or acculturation occurs; a common dimensional distinction is the behaviors-values conceptualization (Miller, 2007). In terms of dimensionality, values may arguably be more critical in influencing help-seeking attitudes. For example, studies have found that values, not behaviors, were related to help-seeking attitudes among Asian American students (Miller, Yang, Hui, Choi, & Lim, 2011) and Asian international students (Yakunina & Weigold, 2011). Moreover, the investigation of enculturation and its link to help-seeking attitudes appears especially fruitful, as evidenced by the several studies on the relation (e.g., David, 2010; B. S. K. Kim, 2007; B. S. K. Kim & Omizo, 2003; P. Y. Kim & Park, 2009; Liao et al., 2005; Miller et al., 2011; Shea & Yeh, 2008). In sum, the literature suggests that value enculturation (i.e., Asian values) plays a critical role in Asian American help-seeking attitudes.

However, although there is ample evidence that Asian values predict help-seeking attitudes, it remains difficult to state which *specific* cultural value(s) are most influential. This is primarily because prior studies have tended to rely on a global assessment of Asian cultural values (e.g., B. S. K. Kim & Omizo, 2003; Liao et al., 2005; Shea & Yeh, 2008). In addition, although a few studies have reported the correlations between specific Asian values and help-seeking attitudes (David, 2010; B. S. K. Kim, 2007), the findings are inconsistent. Perhaps the

inconsistencies are partly attributable to the studies' use of the subscales from the Asian Value

Scale (AVS) to assess specific Asian values – subscales that have demonstrated low reliabilities

(B. S. K. Kim, Atkinson, & Yang, 1999). More recently, another instrument designed to address

the limitation of the AVS was developed (Asian American Value Scale-Multidimensional; B. S.

K. Kim et al., 2005), making it easier for researchers to reliably assess specific Asian values and

their relation to help-seeking attitudes. However, to the best of our knowledge, we are not aware

of studies that have examined *specific* Asian values as explanatory variables in help-seeking

attitudes. Therefore, the present study addresses this issue pertaining to the lack of specificity in

conceptualizing and assessing Asian values, by examining specific Asian values as mediators

and also organizing them using the intrapersonal-interpersonal framework.

So far, we have outlined the rationale behind the intrapersonal-interpersonal framework

and its usefulness for investigating Asian American help-seeking attitudes. We now turn to the

multiple mediation model tested in the present study (see Figure 1). The relation between model

minority myth and help-seeking attitudes (Path C) has already been discussed earlier in this

introduction. Below, we provide theoretical and empirical evidence for the mediation model by

first discussing the internalized model minority myth-Asian values relation (paths A1 and A2)

and then the cultural values-attitudes toward psychological help relation (paths B1 and B2), for

both intrapersonal and interpersonal values.

Intrapersonal Values as Mediators

  Internalized model minority myth → intrapersonal values. Although the empirical

evidence is limited thus far, there are conceptual reasons to believe that internalized model

minority myth is related to intrapersonal values (emotional self-control and humility). Scholars

have argued that the model minority myth can result in Asian Americans being viewed as self-

sufficient (Suzuki, 2002) and hesitant to "make waves" (Danico & Ng, 2004). Given these

stereotypes, the endorsement of the model minority myth may also lead to a greater endorsement

of Asian values that are consistent with the image of the quiet, unassuming, and hardworking

Asian American; arguably, the exercising of emotional restraint and demonstrating humility

despite success reflect values that are congruent with the model minority myth. Partially

consistent with this, Lee (1994), in an ethnography study of Asian American high school

students, found that the pressure of the model minority stereotype can manifest itself in

reluctance to disclose their struggles to others. Extending this finding, emotional self-control –

perhaps also a form of self-disclosure – may be frowned upon for those who endorse the model

minority myth. Consequently, we theorize that internalized model minority myth will be

positively associated with Asian values.

Intrapersonal values → help-seeking attitudes. Given that the ability to recognize and

express feelings is a core value in therapy (Bergin, 1991), the endorsement of emotional self-

control may lead one to view psychological services unfavorably. Likewise, because Western

psychotherapy often encourages a focus on the self (Leong & Lau, 2001), those endorsing

humility as a value may find it unsettling to engage in such self-explorations. Consistent with

these assertions, both humility and emotional self-control have been inversely correlated with

help-seeking attitudes of Asian Americans (David, 2010; B. S. K. Kim. 2007), such that a greater

endorsement of the intrapersonal values was correlated with less favorable attitudes toward

psychological help.

Interpersonal Values as Mediators

Internalized model minority myth → interpersonal values. Internalized model

minority myth has been directly associated with interpersonal cultural values of collectivism,

conformity to norms, and family recognition through achievement (Yoo et al., 2010). This suggests that a belief in the successful and hardworking Asian American may also strengthen being connected to others, conforming to societal expectations, and honoring the family through achievements. Based on this initial evidence, we predict that internalized model minority myth will be directly related to interpersonal Asian values.

Interpersonal values → help-seeking attitudes. The literature reveals two divergent perspectives on how interpersonal variables and help-seeking attitudes are related. On one hand, interpersonal values have been linked to unfavorable help-seeking attitudes, such that a greater endorsement of collectivism, conformity to norms, and family recognition through achievement are associated with more unfavorable help-seeking attitudes (David, 2010). Asian Americans who strongly endorse interpersonal values may find the idea of psychotherapy threatening because help-seeking has the potential to shame or disgrace the family (Root, 1985; Zane & Yeh, 2002).

On the other hand, being others-oriented may *facilitate* help-seeking among Asian Americans. Akutsu, Snowden, and Organista (1996) found that Asian Americans, compared to White Americans, were more likely to have been referred to a mainstream mental health program by family and friends. This suggests that close friends and family facilitate Asian Americans' mental health service use. Also, interdependent self-construal has been associated with more favorable help-seeking attitudes among Asian American (Shea & Yeh, 2008) and Taiwanese students (Yeh, 2002), suggesting that those who endorse interpersonal values may actually approve of seeing a mental health professional. Given the disagreement in the literature, we investigated the relation between interpersonal values and help-seeking attitudes in an exploratory manner that did not specify the direction of the relation.

In sum, the present study's first aim was to explore the relation between internalized model minority myth and help-seeking attitudes of Asian American students. Moreover, although evidence for the disparate relations specified in our multiple mediation model exist in the literature, no prior studies have tested the explanatory mechanism centered on intrapersonal and interpersonal values. Given this gap, our second aim was to examine the indirect effect of internalized model minority myth on help-seeking attitudes through intrapersonal and interpersonal values.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis A: Internalized model minority myth will predict unfavorable help-seeking attitudes.

Hypothesis B: Intrapersonal cultural values (humility and emotional self-control) will mediate the relation between internalized model minority myth and help-seeking attitudes. That is, more endorsement of internalized model minority myth will be related to more endorsement of intrapersonal values, which in turn will be related to more unfavorable help-seeking attitudes.

Hypothesis C: Interpersonal cultural values (collectivism, conformity to norms, and family recognition through achievement) will mediate the relation between internalized model minority myth and help-seeking attitudes. That is, more endorsement of internalized model minority myth will be related to more endorsement of interpersonal values, which in turn will be related to help-seeking attitudes.

Method

Participants

Characteristics. Participants were 106 self-identified Asian American undergraduates

(67.9% women) from a private four-year institution in the Northwest region of the U.S.

Participants self-identified as Korean (33%), Filipino (16%), Chinese (14.2%), Japanese

(12.3%), Vietnamese (4.7%), Taiwanese (2.8%), Indian (2.8%), and Cambodian (0.9%). Around

twelve percent (12.3%) of the participants self-identified as multiethnic ($n = 8$; combination of

two or more Asian ethnicities), biracial ($n = 3$; Asian/White combination), or both ($n = 2$;

combination of two or more Asian ethnicities with another race). One participant did not provide

ethnicity information. Most of the participants (76.4%) reported being born in the U.S. The

average length of residency in the U.S. was 18.60 years ($SD = 5.20$). Around twenty-three

percent (22.6%) were freshmen, 25.5% sophomores, 28.3% juniors, 19.8% seniors, and 3.8%

fifth-years. Around twenty-six percent (26.4%) reported prior use of counseling services.

Recruitment. Participant recruitment took place in two venues. First, members of our

research team visited an introductory psychology class to announce the study and obtain the

email addresses of interested students. Interested respondents received an email containing a link

the online survey that included the demographic questions and measures pertaining to this study.

Second, participants were recruited through the Registrar's office. At the request of the first

author, the Registrar's office provided the research team with the emails of all enrolled Asian

American undergraduates. An email announcement containing the online survey link was

distributed to this email list.

One hundred and sixty respondents proceeded beyond the first steps of the study (i.e.,

registration and reading the online informed consent), which prompted the survey system to

create 160 cases. This number was reduced to 106 after the following deletions: (a) 34 cases with

one or more measures missing (e.g., respondents who started the survey but did not proceed

beyond the first few questions); (b) six cases that were missing more than 15% of items on any

given measure; (c) 13 respondents that failed to meet the study eligibility criteria; and (d) one

respondent that did not agree with the consent form. By participating in this study, participants

received research credit or were given a chance to win an Amazon.com gift card worth $25

(three drawings), $50 (two drawings), or $100 (one drawing).

Measures

      Demographics. Age, gender, ethnicity, school year, place of birth, length of U.S.

residence, and information regarding counseling experience were obtained.

      Help-seeking attitudes. Attitudes toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help-Short

Form (ATSPPH-SF; Fischer & Farina, 1995) was used to assess help-seeking attitudes. The

ATSPPH-SF is a 10-item measure on a 4-point Likert scale (0 = *disagree*, 3 = *agree*). A sample

item is: "If I believed I was having a mental breakdown, my first inclination would be to get

professional attention." Fischer and Farina (1995) reported adequate internal consistency for the

ATSPPH-SF, α = .84. The measure has been used with Asian American samples (P. Y. Kim &

Park, 2009; Miller et al., 2011). Internal consistency in the present study was good, α = .81. The

mean score was used for analysis; a higher score indicated more favorable help-seeking attitudes.

      Internalized model minority myth. The Internalization of Model Minority Myth-

Achievement Orientation subscale (MM-Achievement Orientation) from the Internalization of

the Model Minority Myth Measure (IM-4; Yoo et al., 2010) was used to assess the belief that

Asian Americans experience more success than other racial minority groups due to perseverance

and hard work. The MM-Achievement Orientation is a 10-item measure on a 7-point Likert scale

(1 = *strongly disagree,* 7 = *strongly agree*). A sample item is: "Asian Americans are more likely

to persist through tough situations." The measure instructs respondents to preface all survey

items with "In comparison to other racial minorities (e.g., African American, Hispanics, Native Americans)…" Yoo et al. (2010) reported good internal consistency for the MM-Achievement Orientation (alphas ranging from .91 to .92). Discriminant, convergent, and incremental validity information related to the IM-4 have been reported (Yoo et al., 2010). The internal consistency of the MM-Achievement Orientation in the present study was good, $\alpha = .91$. The mean score for the subscale was used for analysis; a higher score indicated more internalized model minority myth.

Asian values. The emotional self-control, humility, collectivism, conformity to norms, and family recognition through achievement subscales from the Asian American Value Scale-Multidimensional (AAVS-M; B. S. K. Kim et al., 2005) were used to assess Asian cultural values. The AAVS-M is a 42-item measure on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree,* 7 = *strongly agree*). Sample items include "One should not express strong emotions" (emotional self-control) and "Succeeding occupationally is an important way of making one's family proud" (family recognition through achievement; B. S. K. Kim et al., 2005). The developers of the AAVS-M reported good internal consistency for the subscales of the AAVS-M (emotional self-control [.80 to .89]; humility [.75 to .86]; collectivism [.80 to .86]; conformity to norms [.79 to .90]; family recognition through achievement [.90 to .95]) as well as evidence for concurrent and discriminant validity of the AAVS-M (B. S. K. Kim et al., 2005). The internal consistency of the subscales of the AAVS-M in the present study was also good, ranging from .75 to .92. The mean score was used for analysis; a higher score indicated a stronger endorsement of the particular Asian value.

<div align="center">

Results

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Preliminary Analyses

Table 1 displays the means, standard deviations, bivariate correlations, and Cronbach's alphas for the study variables. The study variables that significantly correlated with help-seeking attitudes were internalized model minority myth ($r = -.23$, $p = .019$) and emotional self-control ($r = -.31$, $p = .001$). Demographic variables that significantly correlated with help-seeking attitudes were school year ($r = .25$, $p = .009$) and prior counseling experience ($r = -.25$, $p = .011$; 1 = *yes*, 2 = *no*). Given the significant associations, these two demographic variables were entered as covariates in the main analyses.

Main Analyses

Hypothesis A: Internalized model minority myth → help-seeking attitudes. We conducted a hierarchical multiple regression analysis to predict help-seeking attitudes from internalized model minority myth (Table 2 displays the results). In step 1, the covariates (school year and prior counseling experience) were entered. Step 1 explained a significant proportion of the variance in help-seeking attitudes, $R^2 = .09$, $F (2, 103) = 5.24$, $p = .007$. School year ($B = .09$, $t = 1.91$, $p = .059$) and prior counseling experience ($B = -.23$, $t = -1.82$, $p = .072$) were statistically nonsignificant predictors. In step 2, internalized model minority myth was entered, in addition to the covariates. Step 2 explained a significant proportion of the variance in help-seeking attitudes, $R^2 = .13$, $F (3, 102) = 5.09$, $p = .003$. This R^2 value was a medium-sized effect based on Cohen's (1992) convention. Internalized model minority myth was a statistically significant predictor of help-seeking attitudes, $B = -.10$, $t = -2.11$, $p = .038$, supporting Hypothesis A. School year ($B = .08$, $t = 1.71$, $p = .091$) and prior counseling experience ($B = -.22$, $t = -1.80$, $p = .075$) remained statistically nonsignificant.

Test of a multiple mediation model. We used bootstrapping to test Hypotheses B and C (specific indirect effects of internalized model minority myth on help-seeking attitudes through

intrapersonal and interpersonal values, respectively, controlling for school year and prior counseling experience). Researchers have recommended bootstrapping for mediation analysis because it is more powerful than traditional approaches (Mallinckrodt, Abraham, Wei, & Russell, 2006; Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The SPSS macro (available for use on quantpsy.org) that is part of the Preacher and Hayes paper was used to compute the indirect effect estimates and associated confidence intervals based on 5,000 resamples. Table 3 displays the results of the bootstrapped mediation analyses. Figure 2 displays the normal theory test results. The variance explained by the multiple mediation model was statistically significant, $R^2 = .22$, $F(8, 97) = 3.51$, $p = .001$. This R^2 value was a medium-large effect based on Cohen's convention (1992).

Hypothesis B: Intrapersonal values as mediators. The specific indirect effect associated with emotional self-control was statistically significant, as the confidence interval for the indirect effect estimate did not contain a zero (bias-corrected CI of -.129 to -.009). The normal theory test results were consistent with the bootstrapped finding: Internalized model minority myth was significantly and directly related to emotional self-control ($B = .29$, $t = 3.32$, $p = .001$), which in turn was significantly and inversely related to help-seeking attitudes ($B = -.17$, $t = -3.01$, $p = .003$). Humility (bias-corrected CI of -.034 to .019) was a statistically nonsignificant mediator. Normal test theory results indicated that internalized model minority myth was significantly related to humility ($B = -.18$, $t = -2.12$, $p = .036$), but humility was a statistically nonsignificant predictor of help-seeking attitudes ($B = .02$, $t = 0.29$, $p = .773$). In sum, Hypothesis B was partially supported.

Hypothesis C: Interpersonal values as mediators. Contrary to our hypothesis, collectivism (bias corrected CI of -.007 to .056), conformity to norms (bias-corrected CI of -.031 to .022), and family recognition through achievement (bias corrected CI of -.043 to .089) were

statistically nonsignificant mediators, as the confidence intervals associated with the indirect

effects contained a zero. Normal test theory results indicated that internalized model minority

myth was related to family recognition through achievement ($B = .48$, $t = 5.57$, $p < .001$), but

family recognition through achievement was a statistically nonsignificant predictor of help-

seeking attitudes ($B = .05$, $t = 0.77$, $p = .441$). Normal test theory results also indicated that

internalized model minority myth was not related to collectivism ($B = .08$, $t = 1.00$, $p = .322$) or

conformity to norms ($B = .15$, $t = 1.82$, $p = .071$); collectivism ($B = .09$, $t = 1.29$, $p = .199$) and

conformity to norms ($B = -.002$, $t = -0.03$, $p = .976$) were unrelated to help-seeking attitudes.

Hypothesis C (interpersonal values as mediators) was not supported.

Discussion

The key findings of the present study were (a) a statistically significant relation between

internalized model minority myth and help-seeking attitudes, controlling for school year and

counseling experience; and (b) a statistically significant mediating role of emotional self-control,

above and beyond the effects of school year, counseling experience, and other Asian values.

These findings provide a more precise understanding of cultural factors influencing Asian

American students' help-seeking attitudes.

The inverse relation between internalized model minority myth and help-seeking attitudes

is consistent with the argument that the model minority stereotype acts as a barrier in Asian

American help-seeking (Inman & Yeh, 2007; Lee et al., 2007). Our finding is also consistent

with empirical evidence demonstrating the association between positive stereotypes and

unfavorable help-seeking attitudes among Asian American students (Gupta et al., 2011).

However, in contrast to the Gupta et al. (2011) study, and based on Yoo and colleagues' (2010)

definition, our application of internalized model minority myth was specific in the stereotypes

assessed (e.g., hardworking and determined) and asked participants to reflect on the stereotypes relative to other racial minority groups.

Our study also highlights emotional self-control as an important intrapersonal explanation of the relation between internalized model minority myth and help-seeking attitudes. This is partially consistent with studies showing that Asian values and help-seeking attitudes are inversely related (David, 2010; B. S. K. Kim & Omizo, 2003; Shea & Yeh, 2008). However, our study adds to the literature in two important ways. First, our assessment of *specific* Asian values provides a refined perspective on the role of Asian values on help-seeking attitudes. Relatedly, our finding suggests that intrapersonal values (specifically, emotional self-control) may be especially pertinent to consider in examining Asian American help-seeking attitudes. Second, we are not aware of other studies that examined the *indirect* effect associated with emotional self-control, rather than testing Asian values as a predictor. The identification of mediation provides further entry points through which interventions can be developed (see implications below).

To explain the indirect effect associated with emotional self-control, one approach is to first interpret the relation between internalized model minority myth and emotional self-control (Path A) and then the relation between emotional self-control and help-seeking attitudes (Path B), which combined equals the indirect effect (Path A x Path B). In other words, explaining these disparate relations can provide clues as to why the indirect effect exists.

First, we consider the relation between internalized model minority myth and help-seeking attitudes. One possibility is that a stronger belief in the model minority myth may motivate an individual to highly value emotional self-control as a way to maintain a positive self-image of what it means to be an Asian American in the United States. That is, the ideal Asian American may be perceived as someone who exercises restraint in expression of emotions and

does not stir up trouble – a stereotype that fits the model minority myth. This interpretation is broadly congruent with social identity theory, which posits that individuals are motivated to maintain a positive view of the in-group (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Alternatively, a strong endorsement of the model minority myth may also strengthen one's group identity, and one way to increase the Asian identity is to endorse salient Asian values, such as emotional self-control. This interpretation is consistent with the evidence that Asian values and ethnic identity are correlated (Iwamoto & Liu, 2010). However, our interpretation is a cautious one, as we did not assess for ethnic identity. In sum, we theorize that internalized model minority myth may serve as a trigger for strengthening cultural values (e.g., emotional self-control) because of a desire to preserve a positive self-image or to strengthen one's identity as an Asian American.

Next, we consider the role of emotional self-control in predicting help-seeking attitudes. It may be that when Asian Americans are socialized into traditional values such as emotional restraint, it eventually also influences the development of attitudes that contradict those values (such as attitudes related to expression of emotions in therapy setting), leading to an unfavorable set of attitudes toward help-seeking. This interpretation is especially promising when considering the distinction made between "core" (i.e., attributes that are central and stable) and "peripheral" (i.e., attributes that are less central and unstable) elements of culture (Rosenthal & Feldman, 1992). Based on this distinction, it makes sense that a core value that one is socialized into, such as emotional self-control, eventually will also influence the peripheral elements, such as help-seeking attitudes. Another possibility is that because a typical therapy in the Western context emphasizes emotional expression, emotional self-control as an intrapersonal cultural value is a more *proximal* variable to help-seeking attitudes. Thus, the significant relation of emotional self-

control with help-seeking attitudes may be attributable to its shared conceptual element with help-seeking.

We also briefly consider the statistically nonsignificant mediators in the present study. Perhaps these variables are more distal variables to help-seeking. Arguably, a value socialization process involving humility or interpersonal values may not necessarily diminish one's stance on psychotherapy because these values are not as incompatible with therapy (at least compared to emotional control). For instance, conformity may be a value that is not too inconsistent with seeking psychological help in times of distress, especially given the context in the United States. Relatedly, others-oriented values may not necessarily translate into negative attitudes toward help-seeking. This is consistent with prior studies reporting that interdependent self-construal was predictive of positive help-seeking attitudes among Taiwanese students (Yeh, 2002) and Asian American students (Shea & Yeh, 2008). But because we did not find significant positive relations between the interpersonal values and help-seeking attitudes (just statistically nonsignificant effects), we present this explanation with caution.

Implications for Research and Practice

Our findings have research implications. First, the findings speak to the importance of examining value enculturation (specifically, emotional self-control) as an explanatory variable in help-seeking attitudes of Asian Americans. Moreover, the intrapersonal-interpersonal framing of Asian values appears to be a promising direction. Researchers have called for more examinations of cultural variables in models of Asian American help-seeking attitudes (Ting & Hwang, 2009), and future studies should apply the intrapersonal-interpersonal approach and other meaningful ways of conceptualizing cultural variables in their investigations. Second, the findings highlight the potential of internalized model minority myth as a contributor to Asian American

psychological outcomes in general and help-seeking in particular. More research should be conducted on the model minority myth and its influence on Asian American help-seeking.

Our study also has practice implications. First, our findings suggest more avenues through which counselors can explore help-seeking attitudes in therapy with Asian Americans. Model minority myth can be challenged, for example, by asking questions such as "What evidence do you have that *all* Asian Americans are intelligent, compared to other racial minority groups?" Alternatively, a counselor may intervene at the *mediator* level (i.e., emotional self-control) by exploring beliefs related to emotional self-control (e.g., "What would happen if you did express your emotions?"). Second, clinicians and intervention researchers may find it helpful to keep in mind emotional self-control when developing new interventions for Asian American college students. Culturally-appropriate programs that do not emphasize emotion expression to the same degree as a "typical" program (or, one that places an emphasis on a healthy *restraining* of emotions) might be helpful in weakening the potential threat posed by psychotherapy. In other words, because the present findings indicate that emotional self-control is a central variable in the mechanism underlying help-seeking attitudes, a development of interventions that is sensitive to this value may be helpful in reducing stigma of mental health services.

Limitations and Future Directions

The present study has some limitations that point to future research. First, in testing mediators that were congruent with the intrapersonal-interpersonal values conceptualization, the present study did not include other possible mediators between internalized model minority myth and help-seeking attitudes. For example, perhaps internalized model minority myth creates cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) at the mere thought help-seeking (e.g., "I am a model minority, but I also need psychological help"), such that the person is motivated to engage in

dissonance reduction through the formation of negative help-seeking attitudes. We encourage researchers to build upon the mediation model identified in the present study by examining other explanatory mechanisms. Second, we did not control for psychological distress in examining help-seeking attitudes. Future studies should examine help-seeking attitudes controlling for mental health distress, such that the conclusions regarding the mechanism can be drawn above and beyond the influence of psychological distress. Third, the present study utilized a correlational design, and thus causal inferences cannot be drawn. Use of longitudinal or experimental designs will be helpful in making more definitive statements regarding sequential or causal processes in help-seeking attitudes. Fourth, our sample included more females than males. Future studies might deliberately recruit Asian American males only to examine the intersection of gender norms, Asian values, model minority myth, and help-seeking attitudes among Asian Americans. Alternatively, studies may also examine how gender influences the explanatory model identified in this study (i.e., moderated mediation or conditional indirect effects; Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007). Fifth, the current study utilized a college sample from the Northwest region, which calls into question the generalizability of the findings to Asian Americans not in college or college students not from the Northwest. Sixth, because the present study did not focus on a specific Asian group, the findings cannot definitively be applied to a particular group. Although Asian values (B. S. K. Kim et al., 2005) and internalized model minority myth (Yoo et al., 2010) are constructs that affect Asian Americans across ethnic groups, we also recognize that there are important within-group differences among Asian Americans and their mental health-related outcomes (Leong & Lau, 2001). Future studies should follow up on our findings with more specific Asian ethnic groups in the United States.

The present study provided evidence suggesting that internalized model minority myth is related to help-seeking attitudes, in part, *through* emotional self-control. The identification of this mechanism is helpful for researchers and clinicians who are interested in the mental health of Asian American college students. We are optimistic that our findings will contribute to the larger body of literature that examines culture-specific correlates of help-seeking attitudes among Asian Americans, and that this body of research, in turn, will help reduce the disparity in mental health service utilization.

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Table 1

Bivariate Correlations, Means, Standard Deviations, and Cronbach's Alphas for the Study Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Year in school	—								
2. Prior counseling experience [a]	-.34***	—							
3. Internalized model minority myth	-.12	.06	—						
4. Emotional self-control	-.03	.06	.31**	—					
5. Humility	.02	.04	-.21 *	.05	—				
6. Collectivism	-.17	.12	.12	.27**	.28**	—			
7. Conformity to norms	.09	.15	.17	.44***	-.18	.24*	—		
8. Family recognition through achievement	-.04	.10	.48***	.37***	-.12	.37***	.43***	—	
9. Help-seeking attitudes	.25**	-.25*	-.23*	-.31**	.07	.02	-.11	-.08	—
M	2.57	NA	4.63	3.60	4.36	4.49	3.69	4.45	1.58
SD	1.16	NA	1.11	1.04	.99	.89	.92	1.11	.55
Alpha	NA	NA	.91	.83	.78	.78	.75	.92	.81

Note. [a] Response options for this variable ("Have you ever had psychological counseling before?") were 1 = *yes*, 2 = *no*.
*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

Table 2

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Predicting Help-Seeking Attitudes from Internalized Model Minority Myth

| Predictor	*B*	β	*t*	R^2
Step 1				.09**
Year in school	.09	.19	1.91	
Prior counseling experience	-.23	-.18	-1.82	
Step 2				.13**
Year in school	.08	.17	1.71	
Prior counseling experience	-.22	-.18	-1.80	
Internalized model minority myth	-.10	-.20	-2.11*	

*p < .05; ** p < .01.

Table 3

Indirect Effects of Internalized Model Minority Myth on Help-Seeking Attitudes through Asian Values (N=106)

Mediator	Bootstrap Estimate	SE	Bias Corrected 95% CI lower	Bias Corrected 95% CI upper
Emotional self-control	**-.052**	**.030**	**-.129**	**-.009**
Humility	-.002	.013	-.034	.019
Collectivism	.011	.016	-.007	.056
Conformity to norms	-.001	.013	-.031	.022
Family recognition through achievement	.020	.033	-.043	.089

Note: Based on 5,000 bootstrap samples. Significant indirect effects are in bold.

Figure 1. Indirect effects of internalized model minority myth on help-seeking attitudes through intrapersonal and interpersonal cultural values.
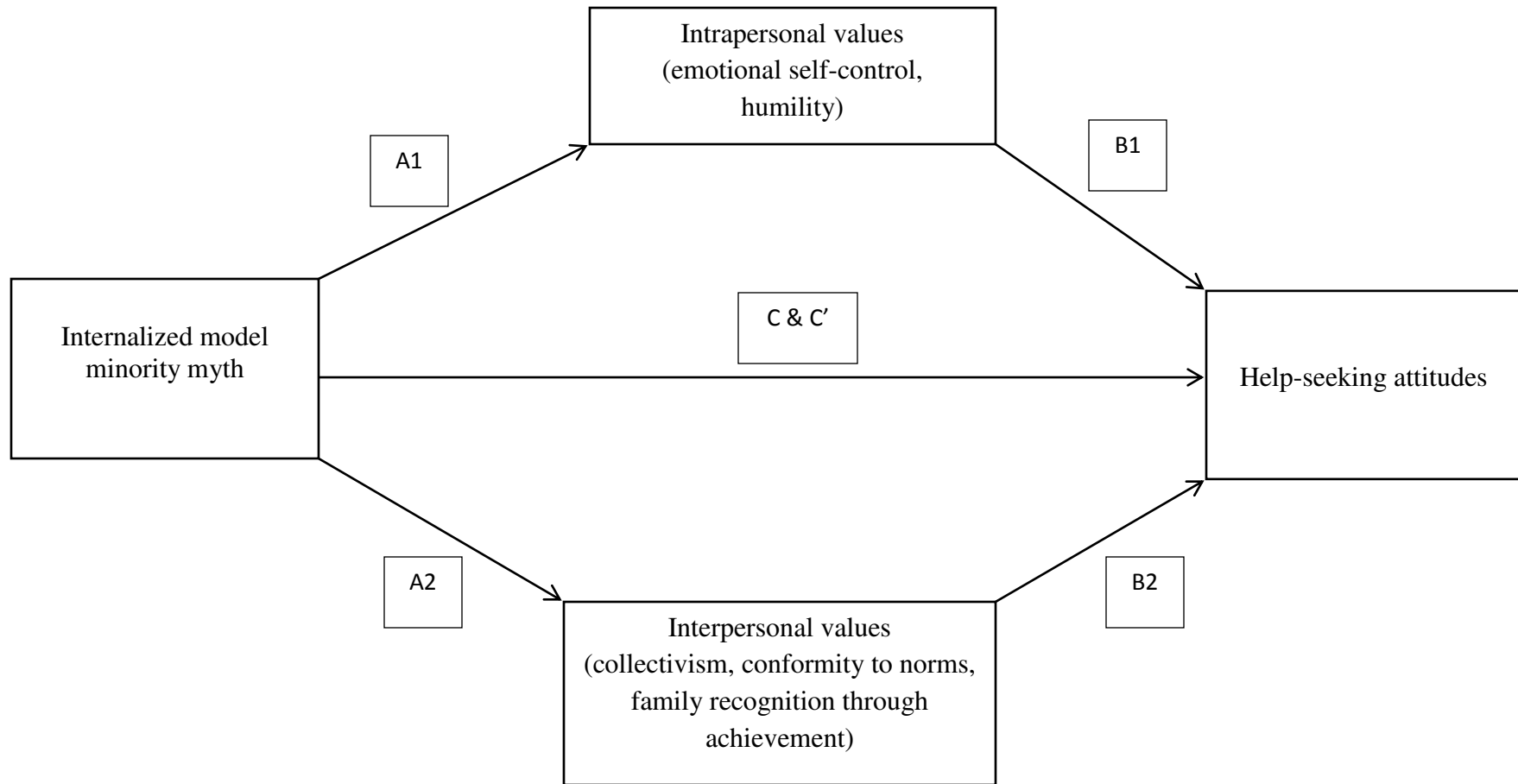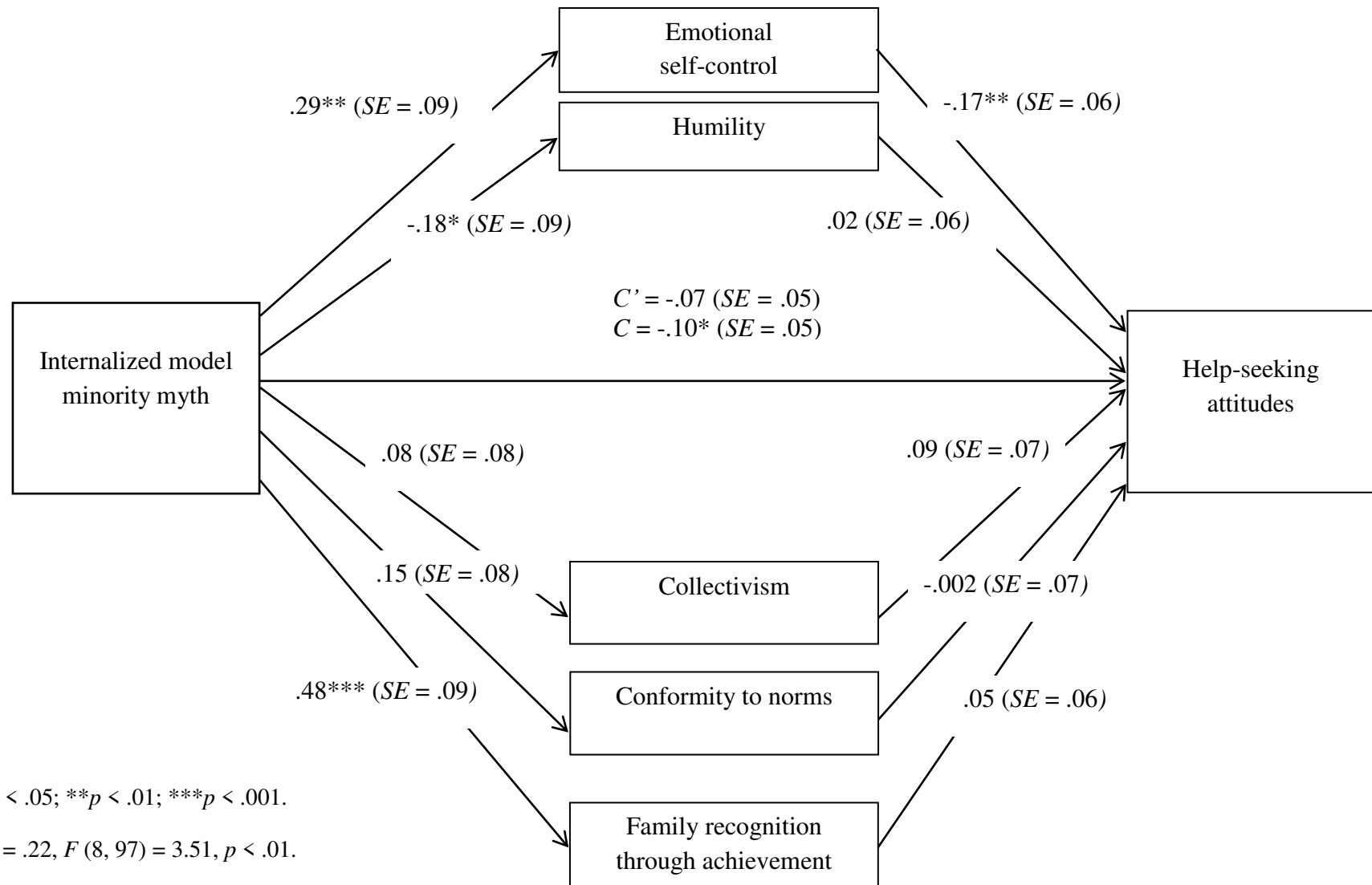
Figure 2. Unstandardized regression coefficients from the multiple mediation model testing the effect of internalized model minority myth on help-seeking attitudes through Asian cultural values. *C* = total effect of internalized model minority myth on help-seeking attitudes; *C'* = direct effect of internalized model minority myth on help-seeking attitudes.