

solid foundation for the university's longer-term foothold.

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“Intercultural Bridge”: Internationalized Extracurricular Activities with Students

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Ukraine actively forces higher education internationalization as an entire component of its integration in the international education and research space. Higher education internationalization is proclaimed both at the national and institutional levels. The intentions towards internationalization are motivated by various factors, including the need to expand access to sources of advanced knowledge, new opportunities for partnership building and developing intercultural communication skills, as well as strengthening civil society, and training people to be ready to work in a globalized world. However, in most Ukrainian higher education institutions (HEIs), internationalization is seen within a narrow spectrum: academic mobility, signing international agreements, inviting foreign guest lectures and attracting international students. Mobility is still seen by Ukrainian students as a means to go abroad and stay there for employment. Most students do not value the possibility of an international educational experience and intercultural integration. They do not see how to use such an experience for a future career

in their native country. These more sophisticated aims for internationalization require the development of intercultural competence.

Intercultural Competence

There is no single definition of or research approach to intercultural competence. Mays, de Leon Siantz & Viehweg (2002) state that intercultural competence depends on the particular needs and characteristics of the cultural group, the community, the organization, as well as the political, economic, and social circumstances of the interactions in a community or state.

Preparation of students for intercultural dialogue is connected with adaptation to new challenges, such as: an *international environment* (e.g., implementation of international projects, the need to communicate with foreign partners), participating in an *intercultural community* (e.g., migrants, foreign students), and experiencing *diversification of cultural baggage* (the diversity of cultures with different systems of values often linked to the issue of so-

cial adaptation, which may lead to the conflicts or changes in identity).

Intercultural Competences: “American Dream” for Ukraine

Despite many efforts, higher education internationalization in Ukraine faces different challenges. This process is still rather more fragmented than systemic and does not correlate with institutions' missions, traditions or current contexts (Sikorskaya, 2017). Furthermore, Ukrainian national standards of higher education do not address intercultural competence for future specialists. There is a lack of designed methods for development or assessment of intercultural competence. Much about achieving “an intercultural competence” remains in question.

In contrast, most universities in the U.S. have identified intercultural competence as an important learning outcome, and the ability to effectively interact in an international environment is included in national policy priorities in the U.S. (APLU, 2004). The American approach, in terms of intercultural competence development as a country with a high level of higher education internationalization, is therefore a valuable model for Ukraine.

The top 25 U.S. universities, according to the Times Higher Education World Reputation Rankings 2018, were investigated within this study, because analysis of scientific research on student engagement in extracurricular activities shows that the top-ranking HEIs pay significant attention to engaging students in extracurricular activities (Koivula, 1999). In addition to study abroad and international exchange programs, extra-curricular opportunities for intercultural competence development exist on many U.S. HEI campuses. The research of Cheng & Zhao (2006) proves that student involvement in various extra-curricular activities has the potential to contribute to their multicultural competence.

The majority of Ukrainian students are still excluded from mobility opportunities (Sikorskaya, 2017). Given the Ukrainian challenge of limited international perspectives, it is important to foster actions that promote intercultural competences

through interaction in an intercultural environment. The American practice of multiculturalism, as a separate focus for extracurricular activities with students is therefore a model that might help fill the gap of Ukrainian students' lack of international experience.

“Intercultural Bridge” Due to the Competence Building

Higher education internationalization in Ukraine is aimed at strengthening the influence of universities in the country and abroad through the development of strategic partnerships (education), the mobilization of national intellectual resources (government), the development of graduates' competence in accordance with the challenges of society (community) and the requirements of employers (business) (Verbytska, 2018).

Focus on intercultural competence development in universities is considered essential in order to provide changes to the educational process (Gegersen-Hermans, 2014). This is an important shift in focus in order to harmoniously integrate extracurricular activities into the learning environment of Ukrainian HEIs, where they are often viewed as leisure activities. Educational approaches in Ukraine should be reconsidered, keeping in mind student-centered development. *Active participation and active learning* by which students are expected to ask questions are among the principles of higher education in the U.S. This is in contrast to Ukrainian culture, which is more teacher-centered in the approach to learning. In the U.S., students are contributors to extracurricular activities. On the other hand, students are the “users” of the activities organized by the teachers in Ukrainian educational tradition. Thus, an important change for the Ukrainian higher education model is also the implementation of a variety of non-formal learning methods.

Therefore, the concept of an “*Intercultural Bridge*” is proposed for Ukrainian HEIs. An “Intercultural Bridge” functions as a space for interdisciplinary extracurricular activities focused on intercultural communication and competence-development. These extracurricular events focus on

developing key intercultural soft skills such as cultural awareness, empathy, tolerance to diversity, the ability to dialogue with representatives of different cultures and nationalities, the ability to interact in the global environment, as well as intercultural production and consumption.

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Mainland Chinese International Students' Perceptions on Seeking Mental Health Counseling Support on U.S. Higher Education Campuses, a Research Plan

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International students leave their home countries to pursue an educational degree and fulfill their dreams in a different country. Often, they face adaptive challenges, including anxiety related to the unknown environment and uncertainties in the college or university setting, academic pressures, financial concerns and the feeling of isolation (Prieto-Welch, 2016). While discussions on supporting students' mental health are increasing on U.S. campuses, international students often are not a part of the conversation. Among all international students, Chinese international students from mainland China are the group of students identified as facing the biggest challenges, such as academic, social and cultural stress and distress when adapting to the American

environment, compared to other ethnic groups (Yan & Berliner, 2013).

When international students adapt to the American educational system and social environment, they face various challenges, including difficulty with English communication, developing friendships, a lack of knowledge of American culture, and changes in food, finances, housing, and social support (Galloway et al, 2015). International students encounter cultural adjustments and their acculturation process may lead to stress and vulnerability. According to Yan and Berliner's (2013) study, cultural distance is a leading factor for cultural stress of students from non-European educational systems, who

perceive their academic experience as highly stressful. Furthermore, the existing cultural context at American universities often generates stress, depression, frustration, anxiety, and fear in international students, which produces overwhelming feelings of loss of social support.

These adjustment challenges and stress factors include anxiety of uncertainties in the college or university setting, academic pressures, financial concerns, and feelings of isolation (Prieto-Welch, 2016). However, research indicates that the rate of Chinese international students' utilization of counseling services on campuses is lower than their domestic peers. Yoon and Jepsen (2008) found in their survey that Asian international students, mostly mainland Chinese international students, in comparison with their domestic peers, have less exposure to counseling, less self-perceived needs for counseling, and greater shame with seeking mental health help. The loss of social support also causes personal, academic and social problems (Yoon & Jepsen, 2008). They usually turn to other social networks for help that may not be available in the United States, such as parents and friends back in China. In addition, there may be stigma and shame around seeking mental health in these students', their families' and communities' perceptions. Low English proficiency may be another barrier to prevent them from seeking treatment since it is hard to explain their nuanced emotions even in their native language. These concerns highlight the need to learn more about the barriers that may be preventing Chinese international students from accessing mental health services. In this contribution, I present my intended doctoral study, which will focus on the challenges mainland Chinese international students face that can impact their mental health negatively, obstacles that prevent them from seeking mental health treatment, and practical initiatives that can be implemented on U.S. campuses.

Theoretical Framework

This study will use Berry's Stress-Coping Framework as the theoretical framework. The framework mainly intends to identify the factors that prevent

people from smoothly adapting to a new environment (Berry, 1997). It regards "the cross-cultural experience as a major life event that is characterized by stress; demands cognitive appraisal of the situation; and results in effective, behavioral and cognitive coping responses" (Yan & Berliner, 2013, p. 66). Stress and coping strategies, rather than emphasizing culture shock, highlight intercultural connections, and thus, changes are influenced by characteristics of the individual and the society (Berry, 1997). The concept of acculturation refers to the cultural changes resulting from group encounters, while the concept of psychological acculturation and adaption refer to the psychological changes and eventual outcomes that occur because of individuals experiencing acculturation. On the group level, students from different countries are usually affected and change significantly because of the conflict between two different cultures (Berry, 1997). These challenges come from economic changes, social changes, cultural shifts, language barriers, and value systems. Consequently these changes affect these individuals' stress and adaption strategies. On the individual level, gender, age, length of stay, personality, and education have an impact on the stress-coping process (Yan & Berliner, 2013).

Research Questions

The study will attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. What are mainland Chinese international students' perceptions of American higher education institutions' mental health support services?
2. What are the barriers that prevent them from seeking mental health treatments?
3. How can U.S. higher education institutions minimize the barriers for international students in seeking mental health treatments?

Methodology

To obtain mainland Chinese international students' perceptions and experiences on mental health counseling, qualitative research methods will be employed for collecting and analyzing data, including