



Noncognitive predictors of help-seeking among Southeast Asian men in community colleges

Soua Xiong & J. Luke Wood

To cite this article: Soua Xiong & J. Luke Wood (2016) Noncognitive predictors of help-seeking among Southeast Asian men in community colleges, Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 40:5, 452-455, DOI: [10.1080/10668926.2015.1080201](https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2015.1080201)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2015.1080201>



Published online: 23 Nov 2015.



[Submit your article to this journal](#)



Article views: 142



[View related articles](#)



[View Crossmark data](#)

Noncognitive predictors of help-seeking among Southeast Asian men in community colleges

Soua Xiong^a and J. Luke Wood^b

^aHigher Education and Student Affairs, San Diego State University, San Diego, California, USA; ^bCommunity College Leadership, San Diego State University, San Diego, California, USA

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to better understand factors that facilitate help-seeking among Southeast Asian men attending community colleges. Using data from the Community College Survey of Men (CCSM), the sample was delimited to men who identified as Southeast Asian ($n = 140$). Backwards multiple linear regression analysis was used to determine the effect of the control (background/defining) and predictor (noncognitive) variables on help-seeking. Degree utility, intrinsic interest, and self-efficacy were significant predictors of help-seeking. Given the importance of degree utility, intrinsic interest, and self-efficacy on help-seeking for Southeast Asian men, we conclude this study by offering recommendations for creating conditions that foster these factors.

In February of 2013, the Obama administration launched the My Brother's Keeper (MBK) Initiative. This initiative sought to bring national attention to the challenges and deleterious outcomes of boys and men of color in society. Predating this initiative were national efforts among scholars and practitioners in postsecondary education to enhance support structures for college men of color (The Seven Centers, 2014). While the vast majority of attention of MBK and these associated initiatives have been on Black and Latino men, outcomes for Southeast Asian men have also raised concerns. (Southeast Asian refers to students of Hmong, Cambodian, Laotian, and Vietnamese descent.) In fact, included in the MBK call to action was a focus on Southeast Asian men who, according to MBK, drop out of high school at rates as high as 50% (White House, 2014). Similarly, concerning outcomes are evident for Southeast Asian college students, with less than half of these students enrolling in, and earning a degree from, a community college (National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education, 2010). One critical challenge facing men of color, including Southeast Asian men, is a willingness to seek help (Harris & Wood, 2013). This circumstance is a result of socially constructed norms around masculine identity that serve to influence men's use of student services, engagement with faculty, and ultimately, their success in college (Wood, Harris, & White, 2015).

Given this, the purpose of this study was to better understand factors that facilitate help-seeking among Southeast Asian men. In particular, this research was concerned with the influence of noncognitive factors on this help-seeking. The extant literature on men of color in community colleges has documented the influence of psychosocial/noncognitive factors on help-seeking (Harris & Harper, 2008; Sáenz, Bukoski, Lu, & Rodriguez, 2013; Sáenz, Mayo, Miller, & Rodriguez, 2015). There are numerous types of noncognitive factors (e.g., self-esteem, motivation). According to Wood et al. (2015), those factors most often highlighted in research on college men of color, include self-efficacy (student's perceptions of confidence in their abilities to complete academic coursework), locus of control (student's perceptions of control

over academic outcomes), degree utility (students' perception of the usefulness of their college experiences), action control (student's attention and focus placed on academic matters), and intrinsic interest (students' authentic interest in academic learning). Their research indicates a linkage between these factors (e.g., self-efficacy, action) and help-seeking, particularly among Black and Latino men; however, the applicability of these relationships to the Southeast Asian male experiences remains unknown. Thus, this exploratory study extends prior research to address this gap in the literature. The next section describes the theoretical framework that guided this current study.

Theoretical framework

This study was guided by Harris and Wood's (2014) Socio-Ecological Outcomes (SEO) model, which accounts for factors that impact the experiences and outcomes of men of color in community colleges. While the SEO model suggests that prior to college, input variables such as background/defining factors (e.g., age, time status) and societal factors (e.g., stereotypes, economic conditions) influence the college experiences of men of color, the focus of the model is on factors that influence student success during college. The model highlights the interaction and influence of factors in the noncognitive (e.g., self-efficacy, intrinsic interest); academic (e.g., service use, faculty-student interaction); environmental (e.g., stressful life events, commitments); and campus ethos (e.g., sense of belong, validation) domains on success outcomes. The model proposes that student success outcomes (e.g., persistence, attainment, transfer) are influenced by the interactions between the campus ethos, noncognitive, and academic domains. More specifically, there is a bidirectional influence between noncognitive and academic factors, and campus ethos factors have a direct influence on factors from the noncognitive and academic domains. As such, the SEO model provides an appropriate lens to examine the effect of noncognitive factors on help-seeking while controlling for background/defining factors. Additionally, the SEO model provides an appropriate lens because the model guided the creation of the Community College Survey of Men (CCSM), the instrument which the data for this study was derived from.

Methods

This study employed data from the CCSM, an institutional needs assessment tool used by community colleges to advance success outcomes for historically underserved and underrepresented men. The assessment has been administered to more than 11,000 men in 60 community colleges across eight states. For this study, the CCSM dataset was delimited to men who identified as Southeast Asian ($n = 140$). The outcome variable employed in this study was help-seeking. Help-seeking was a composite variable derived from students' responses to three questions regarding students' help-seeking behavior ($\alpha = .72$) (see Table 1). Two groupings of independent variables were examined in this study, which included background/defining (controls) and noncognitive (predictors) factors. Background/defining variables included students' high school and college Grade Point Averages; age, annual income; number of dependents; total credits earned; hours worked per week; hours spent studying; mother and father's highest level of education; time status (e.g., full-time, part-time); and hours spent commuting to campus. Noncognitive factors examined in this study included action control ($\alpha = .93$), degree utility ($\alpha = .88$), intrinsic interest ($\alpha = .92$), locus of control ($\alpha = .94$), and self-efficacy ($\alpha = .93$). These composite variables have illustrated strong psychometric properties in prior research (Wood & Harris, 2013). Missing values were imputed using the expectation-maximization procedure. Data were analyzed in two stages, using correlations to identify variables with an initial relationship with the outcome. Subsequently, backwards multiple regression was used to determine the effect of the control and predictor variables on help-seeking.

Table 1. Composites and items of all predictor and dependent variables.

Composite Variables	Individual Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Help-Seeking	I am comfortable asking for help when I need it. I know which campus services to go for help.	.72
Action Control	Asking my professors for help is not a threat to my manhood. I am completely focused on school. I work as hard as I can to earn good grades in all my classes. I put forth my best effort in school.	.93
Degree Utility	The time I spend in school will help me achieve my personal goals. Attending college will provide me with financial security. Attending college will increase my job opportunities. Attending college will create a better life for me and my family.	.88
Intrinsic Interest	I enjoy learning from my classes. What I learn in class is interesting. I want to learn as much as I can in school. I get totally absorbed in my coursework.	.92
Locus of Control	If I study hard enough, I'll get good grades. I have full control over my own academic success. I have the power to get good grades when I want to. My academic success is in my own hands.	.94
Self-Efficacy	I have the ability to excel in my coursework. I can understand difficult concepts. I can master the material in my courses. I am confident in my academic abilities.	.93

Results

Six of the 17 independent variables examined in this study correlated with help-seeking and were retained for backwards multiple linear regression analysis. The only significant control variable was father's education, which indicated that higher levels of education were associated with greater help-seeking ($r = .17, p = .049$). All noncognitive variables were moderately to strongly correlated with help-seeking. Students with higher levels of action control ($r = .64, p < .001$); degree utility ($r = .65, p < .001$); intrinsic interest ($r = .71, p < .001$); locus of control ($r = .64, p < .001$); and self-efficacy ($r = .68, p < .001$) were also more likely to seek out help. The initial model significantly predicted the outcome ($F = 29.69, p < .001$) and accounted for 55.3% of the variance in help-seeking ($R^2 = .57, \text{adj}R^2 = .55$). The final model converged on the fourth iteration ($F = 59.83, p < .001$) and accounted for 55.9% of the variance in help-seeking ($R^2 = .57, \text{adj}R^2 = .56$). Of the six variables retained from regression analysis, three were significant predictors of help-seeking. Degree utility ($B = .62, \beta = .21$); intrinsic interest ($B = 1.02, \beta = .33$); and self-efficacy ($B = .91, \beta = .30$) were found to be significant predictors of help-seeking. As such, higher levels of degree utility, intrinsic interest, and self-efficacy were predictive of help-seeking. Standardized betas indicated that intrinsic interest, closely followed by self-efficacy, had the strongest effect on the outcome.

Discussion and implications

This study examined the effect of noncognitive factors on help-seeking for Southeast Asian men in community colleges. Correlation analysis identified six variables with strong association with the outcome variable which included father's highest level of education, action control, degree utility, intrinsic interest, locus of control, and self-efficacy. Regression analyses produced several viable models; however, the final iteration indicated that degree utility, intrinsic interest, and self-efficacy had the greatest effect on help-seeking. Collectively, findings from the correlation and regression analyses provided preliminary evidence that help-seeking is less of a function of students' backgrounds, characteristics, and environmental pressures and more of a function of their noncognitive

outcomes. Thus, this finding provides support for the SEO model highlighting the influence and interaction between campus ethos, noncognitive, and academic factors on student success outcomes (Harris & Wood, 2014). This finding is critical as the control variables employed in this study were factors that are largely outside institutions' control. Instead, extant research has demonstrated that noncognitive outcomes are greatly influenced by campus ethos factors that are within institutions' control (Harris & Wood, 2014; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Perrakis, 2008; Sutherland, 2011; Wood & Harris, 2013; Wood et al., 2015).

Given the importance of intrinsic interest, self-efficacy, and degree utility on help-seeking for Southeast Asian men attending community colleges, we conclude this study by offering recommendations informed by the SEO model to creating conditions that foster these factors. Conditions that would enhance critical help-seeking include validation (Rendón, 1994); messages of welcomeness to engage (Wood et al., 2015); and sense of belonging (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Perrakis, 2008; Sutherland, 2011). Therefore, community colleges should provide access to, and opportunities for, faculty and staff to validate Southeast Asian men, communicate that they want Southeast Asian men to engage with them, and help them feel supported and connected to the institution.

References

- Harris, F., III, & Harper, S. R. (2008). Masculinities go to community college: Understanding male identity socialization and gender role conflict. In J. Lester (Ed.), *Gendered perspectives on community colleges: New directions for community colleges*, 142 (pp. 25–35). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Harris, F., III, & Wood, J. L. (2013, April). Student success for men of color in community colleges: A review of published literature and research, 1998–2012. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 6(3), 174–185. doi:10.1037/a0034224
- Harris, F., III, & Wood, J. L. (2014). Applying college impact theory to community college students and professionals: The socio-ecological outcomes model. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Council for the Study of Community Colleges, Washington DC.
- Hurtado, S., & Carter, D. (1997). Effects of college transition and perceptions of the campus racial climate on latino college students' sense of belonging. *Sociology of Education*, 70, 324–345. doi:10.2307/2673270
- National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education (CARE). (2010). *Federal higher education policy priorities and the Asian American and Pacific Islander community*. New York, NY: Author.
- Perrakis, A. I. (2008). Factors promoting academic success among African American and white male community college students. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 2008, 15–23. doi:10.1002/(ISSN)1536-0733
- Rendón, L. I. (1994). Validating culturally diverse students: Toward a new model of learning and student development. *Innovative Higher Education*, 19(1), 33–51. doi:10.1007/BF01191156
- Sáenz, V. B., Bukoski, B. E., Lu, C., & Rodriguez, S. (2013). Latino males in Texas community colleges: A phenomenological study of masculinity constructs and their effect on college experiences. *Journal of African American Males in Education*, 4(2), 5–24.
- Sáenz, V. B., Mayo, J. R., Miller, R. A., & Rodriguez, S. L. (2015). (Re)defining masculinity through peer interactions: Latino men in Texas community colleges. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 52(2), 164–175. doi:10.1080/19496591.2015.1018269
- Sutherland, J. A. (2011). Building an academic nation through social networks: Black immigrant men in community colleges. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 35, 267–279. doi:10.1080/10668926.2011.528665
- The Seven Centers Report. (2014). *Advancing the success of boys and men of color: Recommendations for policy makers*. Contributions from the Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education, Minority Male Community College Collaborative, Morehouse Research Institute, Project MALES and the Texas Education Consortium for Male Students of Color, Todd Anthony Bell National Resource Center on the African American Male, Black Male Institute, Wisconsin's Equity and Inclusion Laboratory. San Diego, CA: Printing Office.
- White House. (2014). *My brother's keeper*. Retrieved from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/my-brothers-keeper>
- Wood, J. L., & Harris, F., III (2013). The community college survey of men: An initial validation of the instrument's non-cognitive outcomes construct. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 37, 333–338. doi:10.1080/10668926.2012.754733
- Wood, J. L., Harris, F., III, & White, K. (2015). *Teaching men of color in the community college: A guidebook*. San Diego, CA: Montezuma.