

Poster Presentation Proposal

Title: Application of Holland's Theory of Vocational Interests in East Asia

Abstract (100 words)

The purpose of this poster is to present a study on how to appropriately apply Holland's theory of vocational interests in East Asia considering the challenges in the cultural context. Literature review on Holland's theory of vocational interests across Cultures and unique aspects of East Asian culture will be presented. This poster will then discuss challenges for application of Holland's theory in East Asia and how these challenges could be addressed using modified Holland's theory in East Asia. Implications for practice and research related to culturally sensitive career counseling will be discussed.

Summary (up to 500 words)

Vocational interest inventories based on Holland's theory have been generally adopted and used in the context of career counseling and research across cultures (Gong, 2005; Harmon, Hansen, Borgen, & Hammer, 1994). However, researchers and counselors have noted that there are cultural differences between the U.S.—where this theory was originally developed—and other countries in the world, and such cultural differences were viewed as having a significant effect on career choice (Hesketh, & Rounds, 1995).

East Asia refers to a subregion of Asia that includes the countries of China, Hong Kong, Macau, Japan, North Korea, South Korea, Mongolia, and Taiwan. When it comes to cultural differences, many people generally group the East Asian countries into the same cultural group. This is because they have cultural similarities, and those similarities have been generally assumed to be relevant to all or most subgroups regardless of ethnic backgrounds (Kim, Bean, & Harper, 2004). Therefore, although intra-group variations in cultural constructs and values within East Asian cultures

exist, cultural similarities will be emphasized in this poster in order to provide a general understanding of East Asian cultures from a heuristic standpoint.

These unique cultural aspects in East Asia include collectivistic self-concept, hierarchical relations, and saving face. Since these aspects are different from U.S. culture, such cultural differences could provoke some challenges for application of Holland's theory in East Asia. For example, Holland's theory is based on the worldview that people should independently act when they make career decisions because Western European culture generally assumes that the individual is the most important social unit (Carter, 1991). However, East Asians' career decision-making and job satisfaction are related to a much more complex set of variables, including family or group demands and their approval of the career choice. This is because East Asians tend to consider their career decision as "business of group" rather than "personal business." In addition, individuals in East Asia may think that deciding career independently based on their own interests is unrealistic due to their family and social roles. Moreover, since East Asians tend to avoid potentially face-losing situations, they may want to have strong confidence in their ability to perform well in a career before they decide to take a certain career path. In this sense, the assumption of Holland's theory (i.e., a person's personality is the most important variable to consider for career choice) may not make sense in East Asia.

Despite these challenges, utilizing Holland's theory can provide a good opportunity to help clients in East Asia to maximize their satisfaction of career choice. In particular, since East Asians usually heavily rely on external variables such as familial and societal influences for their career choice, Holland's theory could help them to identify and have a better understanding of their own characteristics. With this understanding, clients in East Asia may be able to make a well-informed career decision. In this sense, recommendations about appropriate application of Holland's theory in East Asia considering the challenges in the cultural context will be presented.

References

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