

# Social Engagement Forums to Strengthen Intercultural Ties: Piloting Community Outreach Workshops for Needs Assessment of Educational Support Services among Ethnic Minorities in Higashi-Hiroshima, Japan

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## I Research Background and Purpose

### 1. Adjustment Support for Culturally Diverse Ethnic Minorities in Japan

Migration is a significant life event that poses unique resettlement challenges for individuals and families who are driven to undergo it for economic or humanitarian reasons. Specifically, ethnic minorities are faced with issues such as changes in gender roles, intergenerational conflicts, family conflicts and the loss of communication, negotiation of identity and loyalty to culture of origin and new culture, loneliness and isolation (“Working with Immigrant Origin Clients,” APA, 2013), cultural and language brokering, and other gaps and conflicts in the acculturation process (Kia-Keating, Capous, Juang, & Bacio, 2016). Generally, these factors contribute to acculturative stress, an individual and family-related risk factor, which is defined as the “psychological strain resulting from stressors related to navigating a new environment including a lack of knowledge about how to access resources (i.e., school, healthcare), learning a new language, and reestablishing social networks, among others” (p. 52, Kia-Keating, Capous, Juang, & Bacio, 2016). Social support is noted as a source of strength for immigrant families that can serve as a protective factor from acculturative stress (Kia-Keating, Capous, Juang, & Bacio, 2016), and supplemental provisions of social support have been shown to foster sociocultural adjustment for expatriating individuals (Ali, Van der Zee, & Sanders, 2003). Cultural intelligence (CQ; Earley & Ang, 2003) has been attributed to some sources of cross-cultural adjustment for expatriates in Japan (Huff, Song, & Gresch, 2014). This project set out to pilot workshops for community outreach as these forms of support designed to provide formal contexts to identify stressors associated with acculturation, community integration, and opportunities for culturally diverse ethnic minorities to engage in local networking and problem-solving, to include the perspective and approach of CQ (data collection ongoing). The

workshops served as social engagement activities whose forum discussions were expected to reveal the nature of acculturation or adaptation stressors and the role or necessity of a stress management education program as a possible psychosocial care plan. Before a program can be designed toward selective prevention, a thorough understanding of local needs is necessary, as well as an established connection with community members with which to connect social support services (“Guidelines for Prevention in Psychology,” APA, 2014). Therefore, the chief purpose was to lay the groundwork for collaborations and create a vehicle for rapport between researchers at Hiroshima University and members of the local community of Higashi-Hiroshima.

## 2. Study Rationale, Project Plan, and Development of Workshop Designs

Project implementation was organized along five incremental steps toward the development of a community outreach program in keeping with principal recommendations for commissioning a public mental health program (Bisson et al., 2010) and related work on the public mental health intervention gap (Campion, 2018). As outlined, these steps broadly involve: (a) putting together a multidisciplinary planning group, (b) making a psychosocial care plan, (c), training and supervising specialists, (d) identifying correct social support sources, (e) setting up a one-stop shop, (f) identifying individuals in need, (g) promoting other evidence-based interventions, and (h) facilitating long-term coordinated planning and cooperation. A preliminary template of a psychosocial care plan was developed on Google Classroom for input by the grant project members based on manualized workshops in stress management for children and families (Tone, 2013) and a previous online stress management intervention program (Haramaki et al., 2021). These formats were compared with similar modules developed by researchers in United States (e.g., Crum, Salovey, & Achor, 2013; Nguyen-Feng, Greer, & Frazier, 2017), as well as researchers in Japan. Cultural dialogue activities were also assessed. The long-term goal was to integrate the findings toward the development of a website, practical workbook, and training materials that will be provided in future outreach workshops. The primary aim for the collaborative research project was to pilot workshop approaches and identify visible needs from community members.

The first stage of the project was to certify one individual (i.e., P.I.) in the use of CQ assessment tools and resources. This certification aimed to provide insight into which activities (e.g., cultural vignettes on parenting and educational practices) are most appropriate for the content of the pilot workshops and the potential use of the CQ instrument in a research design. The second stage involved interdisciplinary agreement on the structure of the workshop content and contact with community organizers for recruiting. Expertise was recruited and a planning group was formed consisting of educational specialists of sociology, psychology, instructional design, educational development, language acquisition, and Japanese language support as project members who met periodically to design the workshops. The third step surrounded the development of the interactive activities with the multidisciplinary and multicultural team for the two-session outreach program. This step reflected on the insights and assessment tools from certification training toward integrating it with other disciplinary training on living with difference and acculturation, language and cultural brokering, attachment changes, and coping with stress. The fourth stage was

implementation of the two 90-minute workshops with community members and immigrant family members. Discussions and preparations were made for providing the workshops interactively either in-person (e.g., via a community center) or via an online medium, such as Zoom. The fifth and final stage was evaluation of the workshops using a multilingually supported sheet. Additionally, A mixed-methods approach (i.e., triangulation) for qualitative and quantitative evaluation was chosen as the mode to preliminary analysis.

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## II Methods and Project Development

### 1. Planning Group Insights and Workshop Adjustments

The collaborative grant related to cultural diversity and ethnic minority psychology began in earnest at the first meeting with project members convening on August 16, 2021. The interdisciplinary make-up of the team added new domains of prior work in the area, such as the doctoral work of former Hiroshima University student Shinya Tanibuchi in Kure City, Hiroshima Prefecture, Japan (i.e., the “*Shiranda*” after school support initiative for culturally and linguistically diverse children; Tanibuchi, Takata, & Kodama, 2014). It also resulted in new sources of literature review and shared knowledge about background reports on global education monitoring and efforts to translate the promotion of interculturalism in Japan (H.K.), such as *An Introduction to the Intercultural City for Local Governments in Japan* by Yamawaki and Ueno (2021). This key document served to help the team structure the scope of the pilot project as focusing on fulfilling two of the three principles of interculturalism, “equality” in terms of ensuring that the interests of residents are included in discussions of resources and encouraging meaningful “interactions” to create conditions for everyday encounters across cultural differences, with the opportunity to engage in community problem-solving. For the third principle of “diversity”, we opted to connect potentially interested parties to the program of events and work of the Research Center for Diversity and Inclusion at Hiroshima University via our website-in-progress as a one-stop shop.

**Social support sources.** This meeting resulted in numerous sources of social support that were identified for the local context of Higashi-Hiroshima, Japan. These included local community services for Japanese language support (e.g., “U-18” at Sunsquare Resident Center), and helpful websites (e.g., “GetHiroshima”) for early cross-cultural adjustment information to present to potential workshop attendees. Group-based discussions and experience-based learning activities were suggested to engage with participants, facilitate communication between them, and support tacit learning. Due to the familiarizing effects of intercultural workshops as a forum to discuss culture (e.g., the World Café), it was suggested that we focus on leveraging meaningful interactions as suggested in documentation by the Intercultural Cities Programme (Yamawaki & Ueno, 2021). Pre- and post-workshop self-rating evaluation sheets were discussed to assess the workshop experience (e.g., changes in cultural or intercultural awareness). The P.I. of the research grant was then set to become trained and certified in CQ assessment to guide or lead the multidisciplinary team in workshop activities for current and future projects.

## 2 . Training, Certification and Steps to Implementation

Following the inaugural meeting, training and supervision of one specialist (R.S.K.) was coordinated virtually by the Cultural Intelligence Center (Grand Rapids, MI, U.S.A.) two-day workshop series with e-learning, who received Level 1 CQ certification to serve as a facilitator of cultural intelligence assessment tools and resources. As planned, funds from the grant project were allocated for this certification and ordering of assessments as an institute. To coordinate the timeline, links, and content of the two proposed workshops, Google Classroom was used among project members as a workspace organizational tool for drafts of the flow of interactive activities.

After the credentialing of the project member as certified on September 8, 2021, further project development meetings by the core team of members specified the role of the pilot outreach workshops with known needs and preferences of the local community. Early in these talks, it became clear that the formal, manualized approaches to stress management, such as those developed by Tone (2013) would be difficult to implement without clear assessments of needs by diverse members of the local community. Therefore, we opted for more flexible workshop formats to pilot for community outreach. Following up on the document by Yamawaki and Ueno (2021) that was published in coordination with the Council of Europe, the intercultural city models of Hamamatsu and Kobe were investigated for social support vehicles and outreach strategies. Among these, a multilingual program with a practical workbook known as the “Multicultural Education Facilitator Program” developed by Jon Dujmovich and Lissa Kikuyama, presented by the Hamamatsu Foundation for International Communication and Exchange (HICE), was discovered.

The program and workbook *Everyone is Multicultural* (2010) by HICE, available in Japanese, English, and Portuguese (<http://www.hi-hice.jp>), offered detailed instructions about designing workshops to promote intercultural awareness with activities designed by a person with a multicultural background living in Japan. This format was adopted by the team as the first workshop in our community outreach series, and a Brazilian-Japanese researcher and assistant professor at Hiroshima University (S.N.A.) was approached about possibly holding an event as a multicultural facilitator. She agreed to collaborate and present in the role, and the principal investigator (R.S.K) met with her via e-mail and Zoom to plan the workshop. Upon inspection of the *Everyone is Multicultural* materials, the two discussed a program design around “Activity 4 – What is Your Burning Issue? Questionnaire” with special emphasis on the question, “If you could say anything you wanted, what would you like to say to young people today? What advice would you like to give them?” The multicultural facilitator decided on the topic of civic engagement and decided to create an event on experiences volunteering for communities in need. This became the Multicultural Facilitator Event (MFE) workshop.

**Content adjustments.** In a meeting after October 15, 2021, the role of coping skills training was further debated among project members and found best included as a brief session relaxation training module (approximately 10-15 minutes) in a second workshop, whose focus would instead be on identifying visible needs and engaging in group-based problem-solving. A workshop based on the “World Café process” (Brown & Isaacs, 2005; Shimizu, Mori, & Tada, 2019) was proposed as the main jigsaw-based group interaction activity with the coping skills section as a

supplementary activity. This proposal was adopted, and a rehearsal of the World Café Event (WCE) workshop was scheduled as an activity for the course, *Multiculturalism in Education*, with support by project members (B.R.W. & T.D.K.). With the workshops decided, a website entitled “Interculturalism in Action” was drafted for promotion and recruitment for the two events, as depicted in Figure 1 below: (<https://sites.google.com/view/interculturalism-in-action/home>). The next section reports on observations of the implementation of the two MFE and WCE workshops as pilot vehicles of community outreach.



Figure 1. Homepage entitled “Interculturalism in Action” designed on Google Sites as a one-stop shop for registering for workshop events, coordinating information sources as social support, displaying needs discussed, and facilitating long-term coordinated planning and cooperation.

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### III Results of Workshop Implementations

#### 1. Multicultural Facilitator Event (MFE) Workshop

Table 1. Workshop design and key activities.

Multicultural Facilitator Event Workshop (1)	
<i>Workshop Name</i>	“How Do You Engage with Your Community? Insights from Brazil, Japan, and Beyond”
<i>Location</i>	Seminar Room for Inclusive and Intercultural Education
<i>Reference Materials</i>	<i>Everyone is Multicultural (2010)</i> , Chapter 1 (p. 29)
<i>Instructional Format</i>	Face-to-Face (On-site)
<i>Recruitment</i>	Google Site Homepage, Google Forms sent via Momiji 7 registered, 6 attendees
<i>Key Activities</i>	Reflective discussion activity with the following prompts: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Have you ever been a volunteer?</li> <li>2. Have you heard of volunteering opportunities in Japan?</li> <li>3. What benefits have you gained as a volunteer now or in the past?</li> </ol>

**Summary.** The MFE was held as an event by the Institute for the Promotion of Interculturalism in Education, Hiroshima University, as depicted above (Table 1). While 7 individuals registered, a modest total of 6 individuals were in attendance. However, we presume this lower attendance was due to the ongoing countermeasures to prevent the spread of SARS-CoV-2 and its variants, as well as promotional issues due to the choice of venue, which was

a newly constructed room to which students may not have been familiar. Despite this, the event was successfully implemented as a workshop to enhance cultural knowledge in keeping with university policies and local countermeasures. The content was informative in terms of its contextualizing background for the country in focus, Brazil, referring to influential works in the humanities such as *Seeing Like a State* by James C. Scott and *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Paulo Freire, as well as working papers in the social sciences by Kabeer and Santos (2017) and reports of teacher training successes by the World Bank's Cear  Program.

Deep knowledge was provided by the emic perspective of the multicultural facilitator, who detailed the varieties and work of civil society organizations (e.g., orphanage work, medical care volunteering, biodiversity and conservation efforts), as well as culturally rich descriptions of significant events (e.g., McHappy Day). For the reflective discussion activity, evaluation was made by observer summaries of group discussion topics. These included: an appreciation for the rich diversity of community organizations and volunteering types, connections to debates on teacher training and education and their relationship to socioeconomic conditions in Brazil, and differences in community service commitment expectations (e.g., voluntary vs. duty-bound) in Japan. Overall, the MFE workshop was found to be flexible, but that the format might be more suitable for students to obtain cultural knowledge rather than to engage in community problem-solving.

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## 2 . World Caf  Event (WCE) Workshop: Rehearsal and Implementation

Table 2. Workshop design and key activities.

	World Caf� Event Pilot Test Rehearsal (2.1)	World Caf� Event Community Implementation (2.2)
<i>Location</i>	Undergraduate Program Classroom	Phoenix International Center MIRAI CREA
<i>Instructional Format</i>	Face-to-Face	Hybrid (on-site simultaneously with Zoom)
<i>Participants</i>	29 participants (pre), 22 (post), 16 (follow-up)	20 registered, 15 attendees
<i>Activities</i>	Collaborative Dialogue (3 Rounds), Prompts: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What problems or troubles have you encountered adjusting to daily life in the Higashi-Hiroshima community?</li> <li>2. What problems or troubles were discussed? Any solutions?</li> <li>3. What did you learn from the discussions with other groups? Can you apply it to your original group issues?</li> </ol>	Zoom Username as "Signature" Adjective + First Name Icebreaker Collaborative Dialogue (2 Rounds), Prompts: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What problems or troubles have you experienced adjusting to the Higashi-Hiroshima community?</li> <li>2. What problems or troubles were discussed? Any solutions?</li> </ol> Shoulder Movement Relaxation Video (2 minutes) with English Dubbing



**Background.** Table 2 above depicts the flow of the WCE workshop implementations. The WCE pilot rehearsal (2.1) was conducted on November 17, 2021, and the WCE community event (2.2) was carried out on January 29, 2022. The manual, “A Quick Reference Guide for Hosting World Café” (World Café, 2015) was used to structure the norms, assumptions, and principles of the dialogue method.

**Procedure.** Participants were seated in groups of five in WCE 2.1. The entire rehearsal group underwent three rounds of conversational jigsaw to respond and interact to the question, “What problems or troubles have you experienced adjusting to daily life in the Higashi-Hiroshima community?” Google Slides was used as an electronic blackboard for students to list and make note of identified issues and proposed solutions in real-time. The third round was used to create the list of visible needs by participants for the groups. The same steps were used in WCE 2.2 with breakout rooms on Zoom, with the small adjustment of keeping an event organizer in each room to facilitate the activity and record responses as notes on the Google Slides.

**Study design.** To maximize the cost-benefit of the CQ assessment tools and administration, the CQ was used as a reference standard in a delayed post-test to a proxy instrument of communication change amenable to the activity. To evaluate the depth of interactional self-efficacy attributable to the educational design of the workshop, the Self-Efficacy in Intercultural Communication Scale-Short Form (SEIC-SF; Kabir & Sponseller, 2020), an eight-item instrument validated with Japanese participants and found to correlate with intercultural skills, was used in a pre-post study design, with the CQ 360 Pro Assessment Tool used as a follow-up for analysis of criterion-related validity. At the time of writing, our team is currently collecting the CQ as a pre-post measure to better understand patterns of the CQ factors in course evaluation as a comparison. Therefore, the current report includes only part of the qualitative results. However, reporting of detailed thematic content analysis and quantitative results is planned for a manuscript in preparation for submission to a related journal as outlined and planned in the grant proposal.

**Participants.** For WCE 2.1, undergraduate students ( $N = 29$ ; 28 freshmen, 1 senior; 13 integrated global studies majors, 12 education majors, 3 integrated arts and sciences majors, 1 letters major) responded to the SEIC-SF delivered on Microsoft Forms before class, underwent the World Café activity, and ( $n = 22$ ) responded to the same scale at post-test as well as four comment questions for qualitative and mixed-methods analysis (22 respondents). The same students were then asked to respond to a two-week follow-up using the CQ assessment tool and platform ( $n = 16$ ).

For WCE 2.2, recruiting was more successful than the MFE, which took place from January 13-27, 2022. This procedure took in student feedback to improve grouping strategies. Notably, our planning group was able to reach our goal of connecting with members of the university and local community in WCE 2.2. Twenty international community members (10 graduate students, 2 faculty members, 4 English instructors affiliated with the board of education, 1 international plaza resident, 3 unreported) registered for WCE 2.2. A total of 15 the registered participants were able to attend on-site or online. Only the qualitative comment portion was included in the bilingual Google Form (English and Japanese) for feedback and disseminated on the project webpage and through emails provided in the event registration and organization process (4 respondents).

### 3 . World Café Event (WCE) Workshop: Rehearsal and Implementation

Table 3. Summary of categorized lists of needs expressed by attendees in both implementations.

Visible Needs Discussed by Students	Visible Needs Discussed by Community Attendees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Halal food availability</li> <li>• Access (transportation, distance from stations)</li> <li>• Local drivers are inattentive</li> <li>• Cost (and taste) of water</li> <li>• Separating garbage issues (few chances to throw away cardboard)</li> <li>• Lack of part-time jobs (or low pay)</li> <li>• Too many part-time job responsibilities</li> <li>• Lack of entertainment variety/facilities</li> <li>• Desire for more opportunities to meet people</li> <li>• Desire for centralization of information (especially related to credentialing)</li> <li>• Insect noise</li> <li>• Temperature differences</li> <li>• Cultural differences</li> <li>• Experience with racism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Halal food availability</li> <li>• Access (distance, bus time interpretation, bikes/traffic rules)</li> <li>• Separating garbage issues</li> <li>• Work culture differences</li> <li>• Paperwork load and confusion over administrative documents</li> <li>• Desire for more interactive opportunities outside of local seasonal event</li> <li>• Difficulty networking outside of university</li> <li>• Lack of information from a cohesive body for connections among international students on campus</li> <li>• Communication issues as stressful/difficult</li> </ul>

The lists of visible needs (Table 3), solutions as shared discoveries and feedback (Table 4) suggested that an organized network and website to centralize information (e.g., with on-campus international student committee) and interaction opportunities to share local knowledge (e.g., halal grocers) are necessary. Notably, the attendees' solutions from group discussions generally covered adjustment stressors and the topic of public mental health. As observation notes from the implementations, two major social support solutions were the identification of a weekly student committee as a network of support and local tips about grocery shopping. These and other considerations are expected to help our team's institute serve as a mid-level entity to connect on-campus and off-campus activities between culturally diverse ethnic minorities, and to continue to build rapport with other groups whose projects align with cultural adjustment support services.

Table 4. Sample comments from WCE 2.2 post-workshop feedback forms.

Sample Comments (2.2) for Q1 New Discoveries	Sample Comments (2.2) for Q2 Website Development
<p>[Q1] "[I hadn't thought about the] Mental Health Support issue among international students. It is generally perceived to be a "taboo" discussion topic. I feel there is a need to address this issue to minimize the negative stigma around it."</p> <p>[Q1] "Shared feelings of difficulty making new friends and meeting people. We all expressed feeling that there are lots of people to meet, but not knowing where to look and how to find them."</p>	<p>[Q2] "Definitely, for the feeling of being heard and not alone more than anything else. When these things are a struggle it is easy to feel isolated, so I think it would be a huge help. I also think it would be an amazing resource to have a place to look for clubs and common interest groups in Higashihiroshima. Without Japanese it is very difficult to find clubs."</p>



## IV Conclusions and Future Directions

Higashi-Hiroshima City is an aspiring “multicultural city” with a promotion plan that proactively engages with its almost 8,000 international community members to create opportunities for exchange and support situational improvements. However, there are relatively few formal contexts to discuss community involvement and engage in local problem-solving. Here, we implemented two workshop designs toward these aims with forums that provide (1) cultural knowledge (MFE), and (2) a dialogue process to discuss localized educational support needs and suggestions for cross-cultural adjustment (WCE). Specifically, the WCE showed indicators of implementation fidelity and quality from participant feedback throughout the project development process (“I hadn’t considered the connection between the international sphere at HU and the wider public in Higashi-Hiroshima, and the need for more events to bring the two together”). The pilot test rehearsal of the WCE with 29 students in a class focused on multiculturalism especially suggested qualitative increases in cultural awareness about local adjustment issues (quantitative interactive competence gains in a pre-post study design are forthcoming). In the second implementation of the WCE, 15 individuals with diverse backgrounds and areas of residence throughout the community were able to participate optimistically in a hybrid workshop format (“The activity was marvelous and should happen more frequently”). It is noted that these pilot workshops were chiefly conducted in English, shifted from a focus on immigrant families to international community members more generally, and took on a website development strategy as our primary feedback tool rather than a written feedback form, but we aim to continue and adapt the WFE format to gain insights on needs in other major community languages as well. Participants themselves identified other potential future uses of the WCE workshop as containing, “[p]erhaps some time to discuss and brainstorm a way to kickstart something that would connect the international community here with the rest of Higashi-Hiroshima.” We hope that the initial project of social engagement activities reported, as well as our recent meetings to connect with local representatives, will allow our team to continue to grow the support network for ethnic minorities in Higashi-Hiroshima in ways attuned to their educational and adjustment needs.

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