Cross-cultural Adaptation of Social Work Intervention:
A Case Study of "Let's be Friends" Project in China

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Outline

➤ **Research Question**

➤ **Practical Framework**

➤ **Experimental Evidence from China**

➤ **Discussion and Reflection**

Research Question:

What is "Cultural Adaption" in Social Work Practice?

□ Cultural adaptation of social work intervention:

  □ Core objective of social work practice: the use of evidence-based interventions (EBIs) for the purpose of making positive changes.

  □ The content of these interventions should be reassessed and altered to improve the relevance to the new context or different target population.

  □ Cultural adaptation become critically important for the design and implementation of social services or interventions(Schim & Doorenbos, 2010).

- Practically dilemmas of cultural adaption (Cardemil, 2010; Ferrer-Wreder et al., 2012):

  - No consensus on when cultural adaptation is needed.

  - Different standards on how to judge whether cultural adaptation has been achieved.

- Based on different practice models, cultural adaption practice varies：

  - Social work intervention develops a practical framework for cultural adaptation (Briar & Miller, 1971; Fraser & Galinsky, 2010).

☐ There are two practical logics of social work intervention：

☐ Creating a new intervention——culturally grounded interventions.

☐ Introducing an intervention that has proven effective in another cultural context——cultural adaption.

☐ Mission one: preserving core components.

☐ Mission two: making adaptations that ensure intervention effectiveness within the local context.

(Anderson et al., 2019; Castro, 2004;Resnicow, 1999)

□ Case: Making choices（MC） ➡ Let's be friends（LBF）

  □ During 2013 and 2019, LBF was first implemented in Tianjin city (pilot test), then extended and implemented in Xi'an city and Hebei Province by different teams.

  □ LBF, as the cultural adaptation of MC for children in China, has been proved effective from the matched clusters designs with random sampling.

□ Thinking: Why and how to adapt the existing interventions evaluated as effective in other cultures?

Practical Framework of cultural adaptation：
Deep Structure & Surface Structure

☐ A set of concepts derived from linguistics:

☐ Deep structure: the underlying logical relationships of the elements of a phrase or sentence.

☐ Surface structure: the structure of a well-formed phrase or sentence in a language, as opposed to its underlying logical form.

- Applying the set of concepts to cultural adaptation can be conceptualized as (Resnicow et al., 1999):

  - Deep structure

    - Cultural, social, historical, environmental and psychological factors that determine the effects and outcomes of intervention.

    - Program theory of intervention: explaining the causal relation between the intervention and its effect(Sundell et al, 2014).

  - Surface structure: adaptation to the specific culture for improving the acceptance of the intervention related information(Morton et al., 1997)

□ Foundation of cross-cultural interventions:

□ Congruent deep structure——the primary condition for the introduction of cross-cultural interventions.

□ Congruent surface structure :to make interventions more accessible to the target groups. The strategies to modify language, pictures, expressions, and other considerations should be adapted into four categories(Bernal, 2009)：

□ Peripheral strategy: the appearance of cultural appropriateness

□ Linguistic strategy: providing in the dominant or native language

□ Evidential strategy: presenting evidence

□ Constituent-involving strategy: Inclusion of local persons

Experimental Evidence from China

☐ The core perspective guiding the design of the MC program is SIP theory (social information processing theory) (Crick & Dodge, 1994)

  ☐ Correlational relations: Strengthening children's SIP skills can reduce aggressive behavior and promote social competence of children (Crick & Dodge, 1994, 1996; Dodge, 2006; Lemerise & Arsenio, 2000)

☐ Intervention effect of MC：

    ☐ It was developed and conducted through pilot test (Nash et al., 2003), manual revision, randomized controlled trials in the U.S.

    ☐ The findings are consistent in showing the intervention effect has maintained positive and stability to a great extent (Smokowski et al.,2004; Fraser et al.,2011; Terzian et al.,2015)

☐ MC is an evidence-based intervention in the U.S. context.

- The key issue of cultural adaption: deep structure is congruent.
  - The essential question of adapting MC in the Chinese context：
    - The effectiveness of MC in improving SIP skills had been conducted and tested among children from the U.S.
    - Does the SIP theory can also explain the causality of positive social behavior brought by the improvement of Chinese children's SIP skills?

  - If the deep structure is consistent, we can introduce and make adaptation to the surface structure according to China's cultural context.

- The key issue of cultural adaption: deep structure is congruent.

  - Systematic reviews show that the interventions used SIP as conceptual framework are effective in China.

  - The effectiveness of SIP has been confirmed while there are still differences relating to genders, ages, mental health, etc. (Choy, 2001; Fung, et al., 2013;李闻戈, 2004; 俞国良等, 2002; 王益文, 2001）

The premise of cultural adaption: congruent surface structure

Strategies	States	Content	Decisions → Interventions
Peripheral strategy	Translation	Colors, pictures, headlines etc.	Preserving core components：manual illustration, games Modification：manual headline, cover, game content（e.g., Bingo → Gobang）
Linguistic strategy	Translation	Chinese	Step one: English to Chinese Step two: Chinese to English（back translation） Step three: finalize the manuscript
Evidential strategy	Project designing	Database review	Introducing the project to stakeholders and explaining the effectiveness of SIP
Constituent-involving strategy	Before the intervention	Participants	Recruiting and training professionals or "natural helpers" locally: Intervention agents/trainers——social work students Paraprofessionals——teachers

- The effectiveness of LBF in China is consistent with it of MC in the U.S. （scales: MESSY & SLA）
  - 2013-2014, 5 happy camps, Hexi district in Tianjin city (91 team members, 123 children in controlled group）
  - 2016, two primary schools with migrant children inTianjin city (120 team members, 120 children in controlled group) ——"LBF" NKU team
  - 2018, children in a rural area, Xi'an (355 team members, 341 children in controlled group) ——"LBF" XJTU team
  - 2019, two groups from a primary school with left-behind children, Boye county in Hebei province——"LBF" NKU team
- LBF has been proved a relatively sustained effectiveness in the Chinese context.

Discussion and Reflection

☐ Questions that could not be explained by "deep structure & surface structure":

    ☐ Malfunction of Messy Scale

    ☐ Concerns from key stakeholders（schools and parents）

    ☐ Conflicts between theoretical requirements and practical needs

    ☐ Fidelity in the Chinese context

☐ Extend to multi-structured practice: "deep structure + surface structure + situational elements"

  ☐ Institutional fitting: understanding different levels of acceptance

  ☐ Environmental adaption: connecting of specific demands

  ☐ Relationship building: professional relationship of trust and agreements

  ☐ Subjective experience: dealing with individual needs

☐ Deep structure congruent——Surface structure congruent——Environmental structure adaptability

  ☐ Important: cultural competence of social workers

- Important: cultural competence of social workers

- Respond from Social work education

  - Theory

  - Practice

  - Internship

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Thank You！