Helping Li Mei Blossom: A Career Development Case Study, Speaker Notes

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SLIDE 2: BRIEF OVERVIEW OF LI MEI'S CASE

Li Mei is a 19-year-old Taiwanese-American sophomore at Chapman University who has been experiencing persistent insomnia accompanied by headaches and general fatigue. Medical evaluations at the university health clinic found no physical cause, and she has been referred to counseling. Li Mei has communicated this causes her distress and discomfort given her strained relationship with parents who she feels she cannot disappoint. Li Mei comes from an accomplished family where her siblings have experienced extensive academic and extracurricular success. This contributes to Li Mei's feelings of inadequacy and invisibility. There are significant cultural and familial expectations placed on all siblings impacting both educational and self-worth. Li Mei was successful in high school, yet she struggles to understand and identify her own aspirations which exacerbates her emotional state. Li Mei's personal narrative reflects intersectional pressures faced by many Asian American women when negotiating their identities and careers within Asian patriarchal family systems (Kallivayalil, 2007; Murdock, 2017). Intersectional, culturally humble, feminist counseling support aims to affirm and empower Li Mei's self-efficacy and autonomy (Murdock, 2017).

SLIDE 3: CURRENT CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Li Mei's experiences at her private high school in New York supported her early development in several foundational areas: teamwork, leadership, effective communication, relationship building, and motivation and drive. These core strengths Li Mei presents through her lived experience are overshadowed by her siblings' successes and familial expectations (Kim & Choi, 2019). Despite being admitted to Chapman University, an excellent school, Li Mei centers on the fact that it was only after being waitlisted. This factor has further contributed to Li Mei's feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt and low self-worth. Presently, Li Mei lacks a declared major which she finds discouraging and contributes to her feelings of inadequacy. Li Mei's lack of clarity regarding her career goals and her disappointment regarding her entrance to the university may contribute to low career decision self-efficacy (Kim & Choi, 2019). Clarity is critical for students beginning to navigate their future. Reintroducing curiosity toward career exploration, supporting Li Mei in identifying and defining her personal values and beliefs, and breaking through the internalized stigma

and reluctance toward counseling will be primary focuses in counseling (Kim & Choi, 2019).

SLIDE 4: REASONS FOR SEEKING CAREER COUNSELING

Li Mei seeks counseling for a variety of interrelated reasons previously mentioned. These physiological symptoms have not been explainable through medical testing and this has compounded her feelings of inadequacy and disappointment she is already experiencing due to familial expectations and accomplishments of her siblings. This familial pressure, along with her uncertainty about her career direction and identity, has led to significantly low motivation and academic discouragement. Externally, Li Mei carries the weight of her family expectations and comparisons to her siblings. This weight perpetuates Li Mei's internal disappointment. As Kallivayalil (2007) points out in Feminist Therapy: Its Use and Implications for South Asian Immigrant Survivors of Domestic Violence, these factors reflect the complexities of navigating cultural and familial pressures. The stigma Li Mei has towards mental health also exacerbates her distress; addressing this stigma with Li Mei is crucial and should be done through normalizing therapy and addressing cultural misconceptions (Kallivayalil, 2007). Filial piety, collectivism, and individualism are additional internal and external constructs impacting Li Mei's ability to navigate her hardships.

SLIDE 5: UNIQUE PROBLEMS/SITUATIONS IMPACTING COUNSELING

The issues Li Mei describes are multifaceted and compounded by various intersecting systems of oppression ranging from sociocultural pressures commonly faced by Asian American women in academia, cultural stigma, and familial expectations (Kallivayalil, 2007; Kim & Choi, 2019). Li Mei's persistent somatic symptoms reflect deeper anxiety and depressive distress; Kim and Choi (2019) note that such distress is often somatized within her cultural framework. Evidence-based interventions such as trauma-informed CBT, mindfulness, identifying personal goals through empowerment, and strength-based approaches will work to honor and address her symptoms holistically (Murdock, 2017). To counter the adverse impacts of familial comparisons, inadequacy and invisibility, further strength-based interventions, self-advocacy, and psychoeducational groups with other Asian students can foster self-acceptance and resilience (Kallivayalil, 2007). Fostering a culturally humble and responsive environment, grounded in feminist intersectional theory will support Li Mei in challenging mental health stigma and familial burdens, encouraging her to increase help-seeking behaviors, reinforcing the idea that she is not alone (Kim & Choi, 2019; Murdock, 2017). Career development support through systemic advocacy and

collaboration with campus networks and clubs will collectively empower Li Mei as she begins to affirm her agency, promoting an equitable pathway toward wellbeing and success (Savickas, 2015).

SLIDE 6: CONTEXTUAL ISSUES: CULTURE & FAMILY

Li Mei has a number of internal and external challenges impacting her ability to focus on her academics, career development, and career goals. Before addressing these career-centric issues, Li Mei must first address her contextual issues pertaining to family and culture (Kallivayalil, 2007). Feminist theory offers a vital framework for supporting Li Mei's emotional growth and engagement. By centering empowerment, feminist therapy challenges internalized messages arising from the inherited feelings of inadequacy that arise from the patriarchal and familial expectations she places on herself, fostering Li Mei's ability to recognize her inherent strengths (Kallivayalil, 2007; Murdock, 2017). This approach validates her experiences and reframes her feelings of invisibility and discouragement as complex responses to intersecting systems of oppression, as opposed to personal failings (Kallivayalil, 2007; Murdock, 2017). Encouraging Li Mei to confidently articulate her lived experiences through a feminist lens, encourages her to cultivate her voice and agency which will increase her capacity to make autonomous and informed career choices (Murdock, 2017). Further critically examining the patriarchal and cultural dynamics connected to Li Mei will help her better identify and resist external pressures shaping her sense of self and professional aspirations (Kallivayalil, 2007). Feminist therapy affirms Li Mei's worth, supporting her holistic development as she pursues self-defined meaningful goals (Kallivayalil, 2007; Murdock, 2017).

SLIDE 7: INITIAL ASSESSMENT NEEDS

Multiple assessments for Li Mei will serve the purposes of working with her to collaboratively understand her lived experiences, career aspirations under the layers of self-doubt, and through systemic and sociocultural contexts. Those assessments are: The Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale (CDSES), the Curiosity and Exploration Inventory (CEI), the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM), the Career Construction Interview, and the Strong Interest Inventory (Kim & Choi, 2019; Savickas, 2015). CDSES and CEI serve to provide deeper insight into Li Mei's internal confidence structures when navigating career choices through systemic issues she experiences and her level of openness to self-discovery and new possibilities when deconstructing the patriarchal family structures and systems burdening her currently (Kim & Choi, 2019). It is essential to better understand how Li Mei's ethnic identity mediates her self-concept

and career-centric confidence, so by taking the MEIM, the counselor will be able to understand how her current ethnic identity mediates her self-concept and career-related confidence (Kim & Choi, 2019). Coupling these with the Strong Interest Inventory and Career Construction Interview will give Li Mei power to narrate her lived experiences and aspirations through engaging her authentic interests in potential careers, thereby challenging externally imposed definitions of success and worthiness, so she may foster identity coherence and agency (Savickas, 2015). Collectively, these assessments are not simply diagnostic tools but catalysts for change, empowerment, validation, and liberation, where Li Mei's wellbeing may finally be centered and honored.

SLIDE 8: CAREER THEORIES THROUGH A FEMINIST LENS

It is imperative that Li Mei, and other young women with similar experiences, are provided interventions that integrate theoretical frameworks so as to conceptualize Li Mei's specific counseling needs. Feminist therapy will center on naming and giving Li Mei the tools to identify patriarchal structures so she may disrupt sociocultural harms contributing to her distress. This validates the complexities of her experience within a broader context of power, oppression, and community support (Kallivayalil, 2007; Murdock, 2017). Utilizing SCCT provides additional insight that highlights the ways familial comparisons and internalized inadequacy diminish self-efficacy (Kim & Choi, 2019). Tailoring interventions that will bolster self-confidence and positive self-image are vital in supporting Li Mei to explore diversified career pathways (Kim & Choi, 2019). Incorporating Career Construction Theory emphasizes the pivotal role Li Mei's ethnic identity plays in her career development and empowers her to advocate for reflective activities that nurture her curiosity and improve her agency (Savickas, 2015). Integrating all three approaches supports Li Mei in crafting a vision for her future predicated on self-knowledge instead of conformity (Savickas, 2015). Recognizing that leaving out the feminist lens is potentially damaging and invalidating for Li Mei is crucial for fostering holistic support (Kallivayalil, 2007). It is vital the influence of patriarchy in career and family contexts is addressed, as it enables Li Mei to develop her truest self.

SLIDE 9: APPLICATION OF CAREER THEORY

The goals of counseling for Li Mei will be addressed through culturally responsive integrations of SCCT, CCT, and feminist counseling frameworks. Through facilitating reflective dialogues and the counselor giving her the tools to define her own narrative, Li Mei will be able to redefine success and facilitate her own autonomy and authentic

aspirations (Savickas, 2015). To support the development of nuanced self-concept, guided self-reflection activities and creative exploration will root her in her own values and ethnic identity, relieving her of burdens that were never hers to begin with (Kim & Choi, 2019; Savickas, 2015). Utilizing trauma-informed CBT strategies, Li Mei will recognize and challenge internalized beliefs about self-worth so she may cultivate affirming self-narratives (Kallivayalil, 2007). Providing Li Mei with a collaborative counseling relationship not only supports her internal strengths, it facilitates active, learned resistance to oppressive dynamics and promotes Li Mei's agency and capacity for self-determination within oppressive sociocultural systems (Kim & Choi, 2019; Savickas, 2015).

SLIDE 10: DEFINING LI MEI'S CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROCESS PT. 1

In following the steps in the career development process as defined by Brown and Lent (2021), we begin with self-assessment using the CDSES, CEI, and MEIM to critically analyze and identify how familial, cultural, individual, and patriarchal influences are shaping Li Mei's self-concept (Brown & Lent, 2021; Kim & Choi, 2019). The counseling relationship centers validation of Li Mei's intersecting identities to provide affirming context. Throughout the exploration phase, the counselor will empower Li Mei to consider diverse career paths through community-centered activities and informational interviews, actively resisting internalized scripts of inadequacy (Brown & Lent, 2021; Savickas, 2015). The decision-making phase involves collaborative dialogues using interest inventories and narrative approaches with the counselor facilitating a liberatory, egalitarian space, centering Li Mei's self-defined version of success (Brown & Lent, 2021; Kim & Choi, 2019; Savickas, 2015).

SLIDE 11: DEFINING LI MEI'S CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROCESS PT. 2

Continuing through the career development phases, Li Mei will develop a pragmatic, strengths-based action plan in co-creation with her counselor, centered on self-determined goals which incorporate skill-building, education, and strategies for managing and coping with familial pressures and burdens (Kallivayalil, 2007). The counseling relationship remains grounded in feminist principles of empowerment and self-efficacy by prioritizing healthy boundary-setting and support seeking (Kallivayalil, 2007). Implementation will encompass scaffolding support for Li Mei's academic and career pursuits where the counselor will actively advocate for her within institutional systems, connecting her to affirming resources and mentors (Kallivayalil, 2007; Savickas, 2015). Ongoing evaluation of Li Mei's plan will be integral to her continued adjustment and development (Brown & Lent, 2021; Savickas, 2015). Supporting Li Mei to

adapt her plan's strategies to the evolving needs of her identity and environment will ensure her progress is honored and agency amplified (Savickas, 2015). Collectively, the career development process will provide Li Mei with resilience amid the intersecting systems of oppression she faces (Kallivayalil, 2007; Savickas, 2015).

SLIDE 12: CAREER RESOURCES ADAPTED TO LI MEI

Resources for Li Mei include O*NET Online and My Next Move, the Asian American Feminist Collective, and local supports such as Chapman University's Career and Professional Development Office, campus organizations, and the Asian Pacific Student Association. These tools, resources, and organizations are beacons by which Li Mei may guide herself in identifying pathways congruent with her skills, interests, ethnic identity, and more. The local school-based organizations provide structured support through culturally affirming communities and peer support, ensuring Li Mei's internal and external work remains holistic, socially just, and culturally responsive to her intersecting identities.

SLIDE 13: ETHICAL & LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

As it pertains to ethical and legal considerations regarding Li Mei's care, it is vital counselors clearly explain informed consent and disclosure limits, capacity, and session structure, all while maintaining and emphasizing confidentiality, with the exception being in cases of harm or legal requirement (NCDA, n.d.). Ethical praxis demands the integration of Li Mei's cultural and intersecting identities, recognizing the layers of systemic oppression present in western-centric counseling, re-centering through culturally humble lenses (Mullan, 2023; NCDA, n.d.). As such it is imperative counselors engage in continual self-assessment regarding competencies, seeking consultation or referral when Li Mei's needs exceed their competence. In doing so, counselors are able to center Li Mei's agency, strengths, and narrative so as to prioritize her empowerment in overcoming structural inequalities and challenging institutional, discriminatory contexts (Mullan, 2023).

SLIDE 14: FINAL THOUGHTS FOR LI MEI

For Li Mei, effective career counseling demands rigorous adherence to ethical standards and a deeper commitment to integrating the client's cultural values, intersecting identities, and unspoken needs. Li Mei's counselor must prioritize her agency and autonomy, resisting deficit-based or assimilationist paradigms, and co-constructing pathways that center her aspirations and lived realities. Beyond individualized support, Li Mei will need ongoing support in implementing her action

plans in a manner that scaffolds it to position her for self-defined success. Empowering Li Mei with resources and tools to dismantle the various systemic barriers in her way through identity-affirming interventions, strategies, and relational modeling will redefine Li Mei's self-concept, establishing a stronger, self-defined Li Mei.

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