

INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE STUDENTS'
PROBLEMS AND COPING STRATEGIES

By

NOMSA ELIZABETH MNCADI

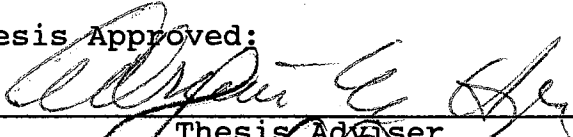
Bachelor of Arts
University of Zululand
South Africa
1982

Master of Science
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, Oklahoma
1987

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of the
Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
December, 1993

INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE STUDENTS'
PROBLEMS AND COPING STRATEGIES

Thesis Approved:




Thesis Adviser









Dean of the Graduate College

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my appreciation and gratitude to my major adviser Dr. Adrienne Hyle, for her guidance and understanding throughout this study. Appreciation is also extended to Dr. Thomas Karman, for his valuable suggestions. Many thanks also go to Dr. Steve Marks and Dr. Deke Johnson for serving on my graduate committee and their time in reading this manuscript.

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the College of Education and the Office of International Programs for offering me assistantships which made this dream a reality.

Special thanks is offered to all the respondents who so willingly and openly shared their experiences with me, without them this dissertation would not have been possible.

To my father, Genesius Mncadi, my brothers and sisters for their love and understanding, I extend my thanks.

This dissertation would not have been a reality had it not been for the love, support and constant encouragement from my husband, Samuel Geleta. Thank you Sam, for being there for the kids, and also for your suggestions and editing of this manuscript. To my daughters, Mandy and Lalissee, and my son Abdi, I ask for forgiveness for my lack of patience and time as a mother.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem	3
Theoretical Frame	4
Purpose of the study	6
Need and Significance for the Study	7
Summary	8
II. LITERATURE REVIEW	10
Problems Experienced by International Students	10
Academic and language	11
Socio-cultural and Personal	17
Summary	25
The Concept of Coping	25
Research on Coping	28
General Research on Coping	29
International students and coping	33
Summary	36
III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	38
Data Sources	38
Data Collection	43
Procedures	47
Data Analysis	50
Research Criteria	51
Credibility	52
Dependability	52
Transferability	53
Summary	53
IV. PRESENTATION OF DATA AND FINDINGS	55
Setting of the Study	55
Data Categorization and Findings	56
Information Gathering Processes	57
Socio-cultural Issues	61
Academic Concerns	67
Personal Concerns	73
Coping Strategies	76

Chapter	Page
V. DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS . .	88
Problems Experienced by International Graduate Students	88
Academic and Language	88
Socio-cultural	90
The Perceived Ability to Manage the Problem	95
Coping Strategies	95
Commentary	98
VI. SUMMARY OF THE STUDY AND RECOMMENDATIONS	101
Summary of the Study	101
Conclusions	109
Advice for Practice	110
Recommendations for Further Research	112
Concluding Thoughts	113
REFERENCES	115
APPENDIX A - DOCUMENT SUMMARY FORM	123
APPENDIX B - INTERVIEW PROTOCOL	124
APPENDIX C - LETTER TO RESPONDENTS	126
APPENDIX D - RESPONDENT CONSENT FORM	127
APPENDIX E - EXAMPLES OF UNITS	128
APPENDIX F - VITA	136

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The number of international students attending universities in the United States has increased steadily over the last decades. In 1971/72, 140,126 international students were studying in universities and colleges in the United States. In 1991/92, the number of international students was reported to be 419,585, an increase of almost 200% (Zikopoulos, 1992).

The United States is currently the leading host country to international students, yet less than 20% of these students come from countries where English is the primary language (Zikopoulos, 1992). The majority of international students enrolled in American colleges and universities come from countries with languages and cultures that are very different from those in the United States. These differences will no doubt affect the ease and quickness of their adjustment (Adelegan & Parks, 1985; Altbach, 1991).

Graduate students account for 44% of the total population of international students that come to study in the United State (Zikopoulos, 1990). In fact, 25% of all doctoral degrees awarded in 1989 were received by international students (The Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac, 1991). These high numbers can be attributed in

part to the difficulty many United States universities experience enrolling American students in some fields (Chandler, 1989), and also to the preference of many sponsoring agencies to fund graduate rather than undergraduate study. Another contributing factor is the lack of sophisticated research facilities in many developing countries (Baber, Altbach & Myers, 1984; Shana'a, 1979).

The high number of international graduate students has resulted in some fields of study being dominated by international student enrollments; for example, Baber & Morgan, (1988) reported that half of graduate enrollments in fields like engineering and computer science are made up of international students. In 1990 only 48% of doctoral degrees in Engineering were awarded to U.S. students while over 50% were received by students who were not U.S. nationals (The Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac, 1991). Roughly 3,000 accredited colleges and universities in the United States enroll international students, but the bulk of the international student population is concentrated in only 96 institutions of higher education. These institutions each enroll more than 1,000 international students on their campuses each year (Zikopoulos, 1990).

Research indicates that international students studying in the United States experience a variety of problems with which they must learn to cope (Akpan-Iquot, 1980; Amoh, 1985; Meloni, 1986; Pendersen, 1991). These problems, which take time and energy that could and should be directed

toward studies, occur in four major areas: Academic (lack of prerequisites, academic advising, difficulty understanding structure of the class; language (poor understanding of written and spoken language); socio-cultural (lack of social contact with nationals), and personal (health, cultural shock, homesickness and financial) (Clarke, 1976; Monshi-Tousi, 1980; Church, 1982; Miller & Harwell, 1983; Giammarella, 1986; Heikinheimo & Shute, 1986; Dodge, 1990).

Statement of the Problem

The ability to cope well is important to international students who have high educational stakes at risk if they fail to attain their goal of successfully completing their programs; most of them have pressure to succeed from sponsoring agencies, families, or even the communities from which they come. Given the high number of international graduate students in colleges and universities in the United States, the fact that most of these students come from countries with cultures and educational systems different from those of the United States, and the extensive body of research that reports the stressful nature of being an international student, the problem being examined in this study is how these people cope with their new world? The search for answers to the following questions is the focus of this study:

How do international graduate students define their

problems?

What strategies do they use to cope with their problems?

Overall, what do international graduate students do to succeed?

Theoretical Frame

Coping has been defined as an attempt to master or manage any stressful, threatening and frustrating situation, and to adapt to difficult conditions (Lazarus, Avrill & Opton, 1974; White, 1974; Weisman, 1984). The concept of coping involves casual and realistic forms of problem solving as well as the most highly motivated efforts to be relieved from real or perceived dangers. Lazarus, Avrill, and Opton (1974) maintain that when the stakes are perceived to be high, and the outcomes are difficult to handle effectively, frustration, stress and strong emotions typically follow, and there is a greater tendency to use ineffective, less adequate, and less realistic forms of coping.

According to Weisman (1984), coping well depends on having adequate resources that supply basic needs and permit personal development. He further contends that coping is a skill which can be learned, and having this skill may promote effective survival. Further, if a person is coping well, morale goes up; if s/he is not, morale goes down. He also found that people use different coping strategies;

those who cope well tend to use a wider range of strategies.

According to Lazarus et al. (1974), appraisal is the process by which an individual considers the potential outcome of a situation and selects the coping strategy. The individual sifts through and evaluates cues that the situation presents. Some appraisals are rejected and others accepted on the basis of the information available and the presence of psychological dispositions that influence how a person interacts with the environment. Coping strategies change in quality and intensity as a result of the new information being processed and of the outcome of the previous responses whose implications were appraised.

The model proposed by Lazarus and his associates (1974) for understanding the coping process involves a dynamic, cognitively mediated process in which coping behavior is based upon situational outcomes and self-appraisal in relation to an immediate threat, opportunity, or environment. This model seems most appropriate for understanding the coping processes used by international graduate students who experience high stress due to being away from family and friends, and the pressure to succeed. This model is based on the belief that aspects of appraisal must be identified and distinguished in order to understand coping. The appraisal processes are a function of the interrelation between the individual's personal disposition and belief system as well as the immediate situation.

This model proposes three aspects of appraisal. The

primary appraisal concerns a judgment of the possible threat of a situation's outcome. The second appraisal is an assessment by the individual of the range of the coping options through which the situation can be mastered. The third aspect of appraisal is reappraisal and refers to any change in the original perception based on changing or new external conditions (Lazarus et. al, 1974).

Looking at coping strategies used by international graduate students through this lens is most appropriate because it takes into account not only self-judgement but also an expectancy as to whether the immediate environment will be responsive to one's effort.

Purpose of the study

This study is designed to examine in depth the ways in which international graduate students deal with their problems. Specifically, this study:

1. Identifies the problems reported by international graduate students.
2. Examines the different strategies used to cope with these problems.
3. Examines how Lazarus, Avrill and Opton's (1974) coping strategies are reflected in coping efforts of graduate international students.
4. Generates advice for practice.

Need and Significance for the Study

Research reporting the problems experienced by international students is evidence that not all international students have positive experiences in their pursuit of higher education abroad. Many are isolated and feel stressed out from trying, successfully or unsuccessfully, to cope with their problems. They often return home with negative views. If international students are to be potential business and diplomatic allies after securing their diplomas, they must emerge from their educational experience with a positive attitude. An in-depth study that looks at the trials and tribulations of being an international graduate student can provide guidance in the development of programs that can make an international graduate student's sojourn a less stressful and a more enriching experience. The results of the study will serve as a reference point for advising and counseling international students.

Spaulding and Flack (1976), in their comprehensive review and evaluation of research on international students, examined 450 research materials. They concluded that there is a need for research on the coping behavior of students from different cultures. Klineberg and Hull (1979) also pointed to the need for systematic information on adaptation and coping of international students. This study will contribute to the few studies done on coping of international graduate students, and form a basis for

further research.

It is hoped that the results of this study will help students understand the processes they use in coping with their problems. This study will examine the coping process as described by Lazarus and his associate (1974) and its appropriateness in understanding coping efforts of international students.

Summary

This study aims at investigating the problems of international graduate problems as a basis for examining the ways in which they cope with these problems.

In Chapter I, a brief introduction, the statement of the problem, the theoretical frame providing a perspective from which to speculate about the process of coping, and the need and significance of the study were presented.

The remainder of this study is divided into five chapters. Chapter II provides a review of research relevant to international student problems in general, the concept of coping, research on coping and concludes with literature on coping of international students. Chapter III reports in detail the methods used to implement the study, including identification of the sample, and data collection and analysis.

In Chapter IV findings are presented in the form of direct quotations from respondents. The results are interpreted in Chapter V. Chapter VI provides a summary of

the study as well as recommendations for practice and further research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to present a review of literature. The chapter is divided into three parts: literature that focuses on problems experienced by international students, a detailed discussion of the concept of coping, and finally a review of the literature on coping.

Problems Experienced by International Students

The international exchange of students and scholars is not a new phenomena. As far back as 600 BC, students and scholars travelled to foreign lands in pursuit of higher knowledge. The University of Al-Azhar in Cairo, Egypt and the University of Taxila and Nalanda in India are examples of universities that engaged in international education in these early years (Dodge, 1961). Current research suggests that the major sojourners come from the Third World to pursue higher learning in developed countries (Zikoloupos, 1992).

✓ Studies examining international students all report the stressful nature of being an international student. Perhaps the most well-known study on international students was that conducted by Lysgaard (1955) in which he generated the

U-curve hypothesis, which states that at the beginning of the sojourn, adjustment is felt to be easy, followed by a period of depression when adjustment is felt to be stressful, and finally a period of better adjustment again. Subsequent studies either confirmed or questioned Lysgaard's U-curve hypothesis, but the significance of this study is that it pointed to the stressful nature of being an international student and all later research agrees (Collins, 1976; Ellis, 1978; Lam, 1979; Barber, Morgan & Torstrick, 1987) that international students do experience problems that are associated with being in a foreign country, and that these problems have not changed. These problems are in the areas of academics, language, socio-cultural and personal.

Academic and language

Research on academic and language problems of international students overlaps. Discussion of literature under this heading will be presented in two areas of concern: (1) written and (2) verbal communication skills, and culture conflict.

Written and verbal communication skills. Heikinheimo and Shute (1986) conducted a qualitative study to examine and clarify the adjustment process of foreign students. The first phase of this study consisted of unstructured, conversational interviews aimed at identifying the principal concerns of foreign students. Students were randomly

selected. The second phase consisted of structured questionnaires. Forty-six Asian and African students participated in the study. Questions asked included language ability and academic concerns.

Regarding language and academic problems, the results of the study indicated that Africans were more confident of their English skills than the Southeast Asian students because they had studied in English in their home countries. The major concern of Africans was being understood because of their accent. Asian students however, reported serious problems in understanding lectures, taking notes, answering questions, participating in class discussions, and preparing written and oral reports. This study further revealed that heavy academic pressure is generally experienced by international students who have to prove their intellectual ability to the host university and also have to maintain a passing grade, which is crucial in sustaining their scholarship. Even those who had self support were found to experience the same pressures. They were concerned about not performing well and disappointing their families, who had sacrificed for their education (Shana'a, 1979).

A study by White, Brown and Suddick (1983) also confirmed the fact that international students experience language problems. A survey of randomly selected international students, who had successfully completed at least two terms of coursework, resulted in the findings that international students were not performing at their optimum.

scholastic level because of the difficulty in English usage, test taking and study techniques. Also in agreement with this research were findings from studies done by Amoh (1985), and Addou and Hodinko (1989).

Barber, Morgan and Torstrick (1987) also confirmed the seriousness of English language inadequacy for international graduate students. The authors focused on identifying problems experienced by foreign graduate students in U.S. Engineering programs and solutions to them. The authors found that most engineering faculty and department administrators considered foreign graduate students to be assets rather than liabilities, because of the important contributions they make as teaching assistants. The results, however, revealed that the most frequently cited problems were language and communication. The authors argue that this difficulty affects the student's research and his/her effectiveness as a laboratory assistant, or teaching assistant, and hinders the successful completion of the dissertation or thesis.

Culture-conflict. Meleis (1982) described some major properties that characterize Arabs and dilemmas that face individuals from Arab countries when they come to study in the United States. Explaining the cultural differences that result in serious academic problems, Meleis (1982) identified the difference in the structure of the curriculum and the presence of optional electives as two characteristics of American education that negatively

influence students' performance. Students from the Arab countries are familiar with a structured educational system with no opportunity to make selection of electives, while American students are used to making decisions regarding their education. American students have learned to use the library extensively for research, to get information and to critically analyze the information. For Arab students and students from other countries (Shana'a, 1979; Story, 1982), the situation is quite different. They expect that someone more qualified should be responsible for making decisions relating to their education.

Shana'a (1979) stated that choice of academic majors, selecting electives and planning a comprehensive program leading to timely graduation, or even choosing a topic for a term paper, may pose a problem for those students who come from countries where students do not have such choices. Poor performance in laboratory classes may appear to be due to clumsiness, tardiness, and laziness but, Shana'a argues, it may be explained by the fact that in some cultures, manual labor such as in labs is regarded as degrading and also the fact that in most Third World countries, labs are ill equipped; consequently, most foreign students might not have had access to sophisticated equipment.

Story (1982) explained the cultural differences that affect the academic performance of international students. He stated that, to an American professor, international students may be perceived as immature or socially

incompetent when they exhibit such highly appropriate and correct (from their viewpoint) cultural behaviors as not expressing or defending their views in class. Shana'a (1979), explaining this lack of communication in class, contended that in some countries the teacher is an absolute authority who can not be challenged. This notion was captured very well by Heikinheimo and Shute (1986), who quoted a Southeast Asian student's response to the apparent passivity of Asian students in class.

Usually, I don't participate. It is cultural that I don't do it. I'm not used to it. Often Chinese students are active when the prof asks the class to list facts, but when there should be discussion and defending points, Canadians take over. We are not taught to be argumentative. We are taught to listen.
(p. 402)

Interesting findings were those of Fox (1991) regarding the difficulties experienced by international graduate students in analytical writing. The results were based on interviews with seven professors who work extensively with international students and on interviews and writing samples of 16 graduate students from Asia, Africa, and Latin America, as well as on the author's observations as a teacher and a researcher. This study aimed at finding out what happens to mid-career professionals, some of them published writers in their own countries, when they are required to modify their writing and thinking styles to

produce "analytical" papers in the Western context. The author identified several issues that affect the writing of these students. They included educational and societal influences, the students' previous education, the knowledge of American language and culture, the communicative style taught by their own societies, and their gender and status in their home countries. The author argued that all these issues may have been internalized thus making it difficult for students to change in order to meet the demands of the American university. He further stated that these students may need to change their writing and thinking strategies which may involve abandoning the ways their culture taught them to communicate. The result of the study suggested that these changes often cause resistance, either to writing itself, or to feedback from professors, or to the university's assumption of the superiority of the Western world view. This resistance may inhibit the willingness of the student to work over and over on a draft. As a result the ability to write analytically will not improve. The researcher concluded that while international students need more support, American professors also need to appreciate other styles of writing, thinking and communicating.

Addou and Hodinko (1989) also pointed out that other factors contributing to academic difficulties for international students resulted from choice of wrong academic field, and differences between the culture of the student and that of the host country.

Socio-cultural and Personal

International students who come to further their education in the United States come with beliefs and cultures that may be very different from those of the United States (Meleis, 1982; Zikopolous, 1992). One of the major goals of international education is to promote international and intercultural understanding which happens when there is an exchange of ideas through communication and interaction. Studies on international education, however, suggest that international students experience social isolation due to lack of contact with nationals and are often lonely (Sabie, 1975; Pruitt, 1978; Ng, 1981). Lack of social contact with nationals may be due to the lack of cultural cues necessary for communication such as eye contact, body space and body language. The research dealing with socio-cultural and personal issues will be discussed under three subheadings: Value differences, isolation or alienation and adaptation.

Value differences. A report by Meleis (1982) in an article about social properties and dilemmas of Arab students in an American university provides an insight to value differences between international students and Americans. He contended that Arab students have a great need for affiliation emanating from their cultural upbringing. They grow up with the large network of the extended family. This social network is an integral part of their daily lives and is demonstrated in daily family

gatherings for consoling a sick person, to offering support or comfort, to sharing in another's happiness, or simply for the pleasure of company. Meleis (1982) argued that this social network serves as means of social contact, a reinforcement of norms and values, and above all, a network for support which is used in dealing with stressful situations. Americans deal with the stresses of life by a variety of internalized means such as problem solving, denial, suppression, or rationalization. Meleis (1982) further stated that Arabs take time to settle down on matters of business because they prefer first to learn about an associate personally before any matter of business can be discussed. Information regarding a business associate is acquired from questions, body movement, posture and eye contact. As a result, very little space separates the Arab and the prospective business partner as they discuss an issue, thus permitting close surveillance of body language and eye contact. The seriousness of a message is better communicated to an Arab student through body language and eye contact in addition to the written form. Written messages are not taken as seriously as verbal messages. Regarding time, the author explained that for Arab students, time has a meaning totally different than to an American student. For the Arab the business at hand is more important than the previously scheduled appointment.

Story (1982) confirmed the existence of cultural differences which could pose a serious problem for an

international student. His study gave an interesting insight to the conflicts between values inherent in theories of college student development in the United States and the values of the foreign student population. The author maintained that a major underlying assumption for Americans is that life is not in the hands of fate, but that individuals are responsible for improving themselves through hard work and sacrifice. People of other cultures, on the other hand, believe that human beings have no control over their destiny. Independence, competition, and aggressiveness are accepted ways of achieving success in the United States, while in other cultures cooperation is more valued.

Americans value openness and the ability to confront and to criticize, and reasoning, facts, and evidence are very important. In contrast to the American culture, such directness may be viewed as offensive and discouraged in other cultures. Story (1982) further argued that this value difference poses a great problem in cross-cultural interactions.

Dillard and Chisolm (1983) examined whether the culture differences of international students on university campuses in the United States affect the behavior of these students within and outside of the counseling relationship. The authors contended that, unlike American students who first experience college life, many foreign students encounter tremendous cultural shock caused by being on an American

campus. They experience differences in climate, food, social values and norms, modes of behavior, and verbal and nonverbal communication. This experience often results in a foreign student feeling that s/he is losing his/her cultural identity. The authors asserted that most of the international students that come to study in the United States are academically able. They have been successful in their home countries, but the stressful nature of being in a foreign country may negatively affect their academic achievement.

Isolation/alienation. The differences in cultural interactions create misunderstanding and inhibit social interaction between international students and Americans which at times results in social alienation (Dillard & Chisolm, 1983).

Owie (1982) conducted a study consisting of 53 randomly selected foreign students from two midwestern universities. The purpose of the study was to assess the level of social alienation among foreign students. The results of the study suggested that these students experienced high levels of social alienation. Owie argued that social alienation is positively correlated with powerlessness, meaningless and normlessness which are signs of depression. Alienation may seriously interfere with goal achievement by these students. He further stated that any effort to enhance the attainment of the students' goals by the university would promote a greater sense of belonging and decrease in social

alienation.

Social interaction between international students and host nationals has been reported to have a positive effect on the international student's well being (Surdam & Collins, 1984; Heikinheimo & Shute, 1986; El-Agha, 1991). Hull (1978), in his study of the coping behavior of foreign students, also confirmed this notion. The study revealed that those international students, who reported frequent positive cross-cultural contact with Americans through activities like discussions and outings were the ones most likely to report less loneliness and homesickness, and in general they had fewer negative reactions to experiences during their sojourn in the United States. Shandiz (1981) also found that the students from countries with cultures that are very different from that of the host country experience difficulties in adjustment.

Adaptation. Regarding adaptation problems, a study by Klineberg and Hull (1979) revealed that those international students who reported prior travel experience to other countries with stays of at least a month, and those that possessed language proficiency tended to be more adept at establishing positive contact. The study, however, indicated that when discrimination was perceived, these factors were of little use and adaptation became very difficult.

This finding is confirmed by a study of the adaptation of international students in the United States conducted by

Surdam and Collins (1984) investigating intercultural contact and adjustment on an individual level for international students. Surdam and Collins (1984) wanted to determine possible relationships between international students' adaptation and their family and personal backgrounds, presojourn knowledge about the United States, previous travel experience, participation in orientation programs, perceived English language adequacy, the use of campus services, interaction and intimacy with Americans, and the length of time spent in the United States. Results indicated that international students, who had been in the United States from two to four years scored lower on the adaptation variables than those who had recently arrived or those who had been present for more than four years, findings which seem to confirm the U-Curve hypothesis (Lysgaard, 1955).

Surdam and Collins (1984) further revealed that those international students who spent more of their leisure time with Americans were significantly better adapted than those who spent leisure time with fellow citizens, the same findings as were reported by Hull (1978). Also revealed by the study was that students who believed that their English was adequate on arrival were significantly better adapted than those who believed their English to be inadequate. Students from less developed countries were reported to have greater difficulties in adjustment than those from developed countries. Students who perceived that discrimination had

been a problem for them during the first three months of their stay were significantly less well adapted than those for whom discrimination had not been a problem, a finding which confirms that of Klineberg and Hull (1979).

Regarding pre-arrival arrangements, Sabie (1975), in his study of foreign students' coping with American culture, sampled international students, faculty members, and administrators from eight universities. His study revealed that most of the eight universities were not adequately prepared to accommodate international students. For instance, the institutions did not provide for pre-arrival arrangements, in most cases international houses were not available for the students, nor were orientation programs available for the students at all eight universities studied. A need was found for English courses for international students, special library orientation, and practical experience opportunities. The study further indicated that international students felt negatively about living arrangements, and also felt discriminated against because of their religion and nationality. Also international students felt that both academic and cultural environments required big adjustments.

Amoh (1985) investigated the problems which are frequently reported by international students. Regarding the social area, students perceived understanding slang words, difficulty making themselves understood, loneliness, and hostile responses from host students as problems. In

the personal area, students cited finances, difficulty adjusting to the U.S., housing, and time budgeting as serious problems.

Although all studies done on international students indicated that these students experienced problems resulting from being in a foreign country, it must be borne in mind that the severity of problems experienced differs from one international student to the other as revealed by the results from a survey conducted by Akpan-Iquot (1980) of randomly selected international students and administrators in Oklahoma. The results suggested that students from different world regions perceived different problems as being more serious than others. For example, students from India and Nigeria reported finances as the most serious problem while it was reported as no problem at all by the students from Saudi Arabia. English was ranked as the number one problem by students from China, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela and was reported as no problem by students from India and Nigeria. The students from Nigeria, however, ranked social-personal problems as the second most severe problem; this type of problem was ranked third by the Indian and Chinese students; while it was not perceived as a problem by Venezuelan students. Academic advising was reported as the second most severe problem by the Venezuelans and ranked as the fifth problem area among Nigerians, while Indians perceived academic advising as no problem at all. The results from a study by Roper (1989),

however, did not find any difference between males and females in the perception of problems experienced.

Summary

The literature has revealed, among other things, that foreign students do experience problems that result from being in a foreign country. Although the literature has widely reported that academic, English language proficiency, socio-cultural, and personal problems have given the international students the greatest concern, there is no consistency on the severity of these problems. This discrepancy seems to emanate from the fact that no two international students are alike.

The Concept of Coping

Dealing with problematic situations encountered in daily living is a challenging process. To be able to understand the struggles international students experience in dealing with their problems it is necessary to understand the concept of coping.

Definitions

Coping is "a constantly changing cognitive and behavioral effort(s) to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 141). Lazarus and Folkman (1991) further clarified the

concept of coping by stating that it is an intentional response to those demands of the environment which require effort to manage. This definition acknowledges that coping is a process but limits coping to demands that are perceived as taxing. The definition, however, excludes behaviors and thoughts that do not require effort. Using this view permits coping to include whatever maneuver an individual does or thinks about doing in order to alleviate taxing demands, regardless of its effectiveness. These maneuvers may involve minimizing, avoiding, tolerating and accepting the stressful conditions, as well as attempts to master the environment.

The constantly changing character of coping is a result of continuous appraisals and reappraisals an individual engages in as s/he tries to manage the environment. This effort involves constant reevaluation of what is happening, its significance, and what can be done Lazarus and Folkman (1984).

Lazarus and Folkman (1991) identified two forms of coping: emotion-focused, which involves behaviors that change the meaning of a situation without changing it objectively, and problem-focused, which refers to all actions directed at defining the problem. Problem-focused coping includes generating alternatives, choosing among them, and acting upon them.

These authors contended that the ways an individual copes depend on the resources that are available and the

constraints that hinder the use of these resources. The authors noted that these constraints include beliefs, health and energy, problem-solving skills, material resources, social support, and commitment, which has a motivational element that can be useful in sustaining coping.

They further stated that coping is influenced by constraints that inhibit the employment of resources. Personal constraints include internalized cultural values and beliefs that prohibit certain ways of behaving. Environmental constraints include demands that compete for the same resources that hinder coping efforts. Lazarus and Folkman (1991) further stated that high levels of threat can also prevent a person from using resources effectively.

Effective problem solving results from the individual's ability to identify effective ways of coping. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) noted that for effective coping to occur, there must be congruency among values, goals, commitments, beliefs, and preferred style of coping.

Coping Strategies

Researchers on coping have identified coping strategies individuals use to be relieved from stressful situations. For instance, Weisman (1984) identified 15 coping strategies, which include seeking information and getting guidance, sharing concern and finding consolation, laughing it off or changing of emotional tone, forgetting it happened, denial, distraction, confronting the issue,

redefining, resigning and making the best of what can not be changed, reviewing alternatives and examining consequences, getting away from it all, conforming, and venting it out. Stone and Neale (1984) categorized coping strategies in the following manner:

Diverted attention - take attention away from the problem by keeping busy,

Re-thought situation - minimize the problem,

Direct action - do something to solve the problem or think about solutions,

Expressed emotions - vent emotion to reduce tension, anxiety, or frustration,

Acceptance - accept that the problem has occurred but nothing can be done about it,

Emotional support - seek emotional support, relax, and do something for the purpose of relaxing, and

Spiritual comfort - seek spiritual support and comfort.

Both Weisman's (1984) and Stone and Neale's (1984) categories and strategies can be grouped into Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) emotion-focused and problem-focused forms of coping.

Research on Coping

This section on research relating to coping will be divided into two subheadings: general research on coping and international students and coping.

General Research on Coping

Studies on coping have emphasized the importance of certain elements in managing stressful situations among these are self-concept and values or beliefs.

Self-concept. The relationship between self-concept and the choice of coping behaviors was studied by Fleishman (1984). He found that self-denial is related to the utilization of coping behavior which treats the symptoms of stress instead of acting directly on the situation that is causing the stress. Further, he reported that people with high self-esteem are more likely to employ coping behaviors that directly act on the situation or problem causing the stress than people who have low self-esteem.

Interesting findings on coping and problem solving were those of Heppner, Reeder and Larson (1983) who revealed that individuals who perceive themselves as effective problem-solvers were characterized as having better self-concept and more consistency in their self-perceptions and being less critical of themselves than self-perceived ineffective problem solvers. Further, effective problem solvers evidenced lower frequencies of dysfunctional thoughts, fewer irrational beliefs, and coping styles that were less blameful than did ineffective problem solvers.

The study by Larson, Piersel, Imao, and Allen (1990) on significant predictors of problem solving confirmed the results of Heppner et al. (1983), in which self-appraised

effective problem solvers, in comparison to their less effective counterparts, expressed more problem-focused statements and less avoidance or wishful thinking. The results imply that problem-solving appraisal incorporates positive, action-oriented coping strategies but does not necessarily incorporate negative coping strategies. These results may mean that perceived effectiveness as a problem solver may have more to do with perceiving problems in a positive, action-oriented way than with perceiving them in a negative, self-critical way.

Nezu (1985) in his study examined differences between self-perceived effective and ineffective problem solvers using variables typically associated with psychological dysfunction and emotional distress. The results of the study indicated that self-appraised effective problem solvers reported less depression, less anxiety, a more internal control orientation, less frequent problems, and less distress associated with these problems. His findings suggested that self-appraised problem solving effectiveness is strongly associated with lower levels of emotional distress. The positive, action-oriented social view reflects an individual's interaction with the environment (Watson, 1988). A positive view appears to relate to overall patterns of social interaction, frequency of contact with others, activity, and a positive-oriented approach to self and others (Clark & Watson, 1988). Nezu (1985) argued that the ability to successfully solve life's problems gives

an individual a greater sense of control of his/her environment, and, as a result, s/he experiences less anxiety.

Meanaghan (1983) addressed the relationship between personal resources and coping. He found that good health, higher education, autonomy, and intellectual flexibility predict success in coping. Individuals who have these personal resources are more likely to employ coping behaviors that result in the successful reduction of stress. For example, regarding health, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) stated that depressed individuals tend to use an avoidance mode of coping which is not effective in reducing the stress or the depression.

The relationship between locus of control and the use of social support as a coping behavior was studied by Lefcourt, Martin, and Saleh (1980). The results of their study indicated that individuals with external loci of control were more likely to seek social support than those with internal loci of control. This strategy of coping was reported to be less successful in reducing stress for individuals with external loci of control. Although individuals with internal loci of control are less likely to seek social support, when they did, they were found to perceive their strategy of coping as more effective than that of externals. The authors argued that the autonomy associated with internal loci of control aids in the objective evaluation of information provided by the social

supporter. They further contended that the individuals with external loci of control tend to employ information without objective evaluation and then run a high risk of failure.

Value System. Sieffge-Krenke and Shulman (1990) focused on responses to everyday problems experienced by adolescents. She found that when adolescents deal with developmental tasks in fields such as peer group, school, or planning for the future, their behavior can be characterized by three main strategies or modes of coping. The first dimension includes active undertakings such as information seeking and taking advice; the second emphasizes the appraisal of the situation and the search for a compromise; and the third, which may be considered dysfunctional, entails a fatalistic attitude leading to withdrawal. However, other studies have indicated that the repertoire of coping behaviors depends on the family and also the cultural background of the individual (McCubbin, Cauble, & Patterson, 1982; Seiffge-Krenke & Shulman, 1990).

Bronfenbrenner (1986) illustrated the close connection between family and cultural background in shaping one's coping behavior. He argued that cultural norms, laws, rules, and attitudes regulate the perception and interpretation of the situation with which one is faced and we can therefore assume that the degree of stress inherent in a situation will be perceived differently by various ethnic and social groups. Each society has its own norms and attitudes regarding modes of coping with internal and

external demands, which will affect subsequent normative patterns of behavior.

A study by Seiffge-Krenke and Shulman (1990) seems to emphasize this notion. They compared the coping styles of adolescents in two different cultures. The population consisted of 353 German and 187 Israeli adolescents, between the ages of 15 and 18. Coping styles were defined by a matrix of 20 coping strategies applied across eight different developmental areas. Both German and Israeli adolescents were found to employ functional forms of coping most frequently. The samples differed with respect to their relative emphasis of direct action and help-seeking behavior as compared to internal reflection of possible solutions. In neither culture was withdrawal used very often. Coping behavior among German adolescents was more influenced by situational demands, with pronounced approach-avoidance behavior. Their Israeli counterparts showed less variability in coping behavior across situations, laid greater stress on cognitive factors, and showed a striking decrease in overall coping behavior with increasing age.

International students and coping

Studies on how international students cope in the host culture are limited to coping with adjustment and heavily focus on personality, culture, and age.

Personality and culture. Lee (1984) looked at the personality structures of international students who use

social support. He found that the use of social support was significantly related to positive self-concept. A study by MacCalla (1979) affirms this notion but further maintains that the use of social support depends not only on personality but also on cultural background. Okoawo (1985) indicated that Nigerian students are more likely to use professional social support although they have little belief in its effectiveness, while Bourne (1975) found that most Chinese students resolve conflicts without seeking professional counseling. Boakari (1984) found that Taiwanese students seek social support from host nationals more often than Korean students.

Although international students often make less use of host national social support than of co-national social support, Brein and David (1976) and Schram and Lauver (1988) have concluded that host national social support is the single best predictor of successful adjustment.

Schwartz (1987) studied the relationship between culture and stress. She compared the perceptions of problems encountered in daily living, the coping behavior employed, and the effectiveness of the coping behavior used by Chinese international graduate students, Saudi Arabian international graduate students and American graduate students. The results of the study showed that individuals from different cultures are socialized to identify different types of events as stressful and to appraise these events differently; they also reported using different types of

coping strategies. For example, the Chinese most frequently identified academic events as stressful and were likely to employ coping behaviors that acted directly on themselves to meet the demands of the environment. The Saudis identified personal events as stressful most frequently and tended to deal with stressful events by treating the symptoms associated with the stress. Americans reported interpersonal events as stressful most frequently and tended to employ behavior that acted directly on the environment.

Age. A more recent study conducted by Roper (1989) revealed interesting findings regarding age. This study explored how a sample of Caribbean foreign students coped with the problems they encountered as a result of their sojourn. Foreign students in this study were asked to rate problems commonly experienced by international students. They were also asked to indicate how they dealt with problems they may, or may not, have identified as being stressful. The researcher had hypothesized that there would be a difference based on age and gender in the utilization of coping strategies; the results, however, did not confirm this hypothesis. The significant finding of Roper's (1989) study was that the graduate students used positive coping strategies to a lesser degree than did undergraduate students. The results confirm those of McCrae (1982) which indicated that older individuals coped the same way as the younger people.

Summary

Although definitions of coping slightly differ they all reflect the same connotation that coping is the ability to deal with a stressful situation. What constitutes positive coping and negative coping is still debated. Individuals go through a series of actions or thoughts before they decide on a coping mechanism. There seems to be attributes that affect coping. These include personality, belief system, commitment, and age.

Summary

It seems reasonable to conclude, based on the literature reviewed, that international students experience many problems that are aggravated by the stresses of being in a foreign country, and that these problems include homesickness, loneliness, discrimination, inadequate communication skills, difficulty adjusting to the American education system and lack of knowledge about student and faculty relationships. Although different approaches have been used to study coping, studies revealed that coping is dependent on several attributes including; personality, age, and culture. These attributes play a significant role in how the problem is perceived, and the choice of strategy employed to manage it. If the experience of stress is considered to be influenced by the process of appraisal, as maintained by Folkman and Lazarus (1985), then the severity of problems and the stress experienced differ from one

international student to another. Also, the coping strategy employed differs.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes in detail how the study was conducted. Information regarding data sources, data collection, data analysis, and research criteria is presented. The chapter concludes with a brief summary.

The method of collecting and analyzing data was qualitative. This method is best suited for studies that focus on insight, discovery and interpretation (Merriam, 1988). It is also appropriate for this study because of its flexibility to allow the researcher "to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondents, and to new ideas on the topic" (Merriam, 1988, p. 74). The methods used include talking to people, observing their activities, reading documents, and responding to their non-verbal cues (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Data Sources

People, settings, and documents served as sources of data for this study. The method of selecting the sample was criterion based. This method requires an establishment of standards essential for units to be included in the investigation before the researcher finds the sample that has the necessary properties (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984).

People

Primary respondents in this study were international graduate students who were perceived to be experiencing difficulties by their international student advisors and those who were perceived to be experiencing no problems by their international advisors. All respondents were international graduate students enrolled in an academic program or those who recently graduated from the university under study.

The selection of the sample was compatible with the conditions set by Lincoln and Guba (1985) which states that the researcher can eliminate from the study respondents who are unable to communicate clearly or who are unwilling to make a commitment of their time and energy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

A sample of 6 people was initially selected for this study to allow for an in-depth examination. "The crucial factor is not the number of respondents but rather the potential of each person to contribute to the development of insight and understanding of the phenomenon" (Merriam, 1988, p. 77). This method however, limits the generalizability of the study, but this study aims at an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon, not at what is generally true. It will be up to the reader to select those parts of the study that apply to his/her situation, enabling "reader generalizability" (Merriam, 1988).

As the study progressed more people were included. Two

respondents suggested one person each, who had indicated interest in participating in the study. Five international graduate students volunteered to be included in the study. The total number of people interviewed was 14; with four people from South American countries, three from the Arab world, five from African countries, and two from Asia. The break-down of respondents by major department is as follows: Four were from Animal Science, three from Agricultural Economics, two from Higher Education Administration, two from Agronomy, one from Forestry, one from Economics and one from Home Economics. Three of the participants were female and 11 were male. Seven respondents had prior travel experience; four were new to the university, and seven of the respondents had grade point averages of 3.7 and above.

The respondents in this study were the following:

Respondent 1. A single male student from South America in his mid-thirties, had prior travel experience, and had relatives in the United States. He was in his second semester in the College of Agriculture.

Respondent 2. A single female from South America in her mid-thirties, had prior travel experience and had attended an American university. She was in her third semester in the College of Agriculture.

Respondent 3. A married Middle Eastern male in his late forties, had a degree from an American university and travel experience in countries other than the United States. He was in the third year of study in the College of

Education.

Respondent 4. A married Middle Eastern female in her mid-forties, had just graduated from the College of Education. She had another degree from an American university.

Respondent 5. A single South American female in her early thirties. She had no prior travel experience. She was in her first semester in the College of Human Environmental Sciences.

Respondent 6. A single Asian male in his early thirties. He had no prior travel experience. He was in his last semester in the College of Agriculture.

Respondent 7. A married Asian male in his late thirties. His family was not with him. He had visited the United States before. He was in his second semester in the College of Agriculture.

Respondent 8. A married African male in his early thirties, his family was with him. He had no prior travel experience. This was his last year in the College of Agriculture.

Respondent 9. A single Middle Eastern male in his late twenties. He had no prior travel experience. This was his last semester in the College of Agriculture.

Respondent 10. A married African male in his early forties. He had prior travel experience and had a degree from an American university. This was his third year in the College of Agriculture.

Respondent 11. A married African male in his mid-twenties. He has prior travel experience. His family was not with him. This was his first semester in the College of Agriculture.

Respondent 12. A married African male, with family back in his home country. He was in his early thirties. He had no prior travel experience. This was his first semester in the College of Business.

Respondent 13. A single South American male in his mid-twenties. He had no prior travel experience. This was his second semester in the College of Agriculture.

Respondent 14. A single African male in his mid-twenties. He had no prior travel experience. This was his first semester in the College of Agriculture.

Settings

Orientation for international students is offered at the beginning of each semester in the university under study. The orientation is conducted to familiarize the international students with the new culture and campus in order to assist them in their adjustment process.

Orientation is a crucial element in helping students better deal with the problems they encounter at a later time. For this reason, observation and participation in the orientation by the researcher was necessary.

Documents

All the information the university sends to the

prospective international student was collected and read to see in what ways the information prepares the student for their sojourn. This information was prepared by the Graduate College. The orientation manual was also examined, since the orientation is offered to ease the adjustment to living in another culture.

Data Collection

Data collection was done through document analysis, observation, and semi-structured interviews. It consisted of detailed descriptions of situations, events, people, interactions, and observed behaviors (Merriam, 1988).

This study was a result of my own frustrations as an international graduate student. It has helped me understand how I deal with stressful situations. Also my personal interest in problems experienced by graduate international student results from my job as an advisor to international students. My position as an international, and advisor to these students made collection of data possible.

Document Analysis

All documents that were specifically prepared for international students by the university were reviewed. These documents included the Orientation Folder prepared by International Student Services office, Packet of information distributed by the Graduate College to prospective graduate international students and the orientation manual prepared

by the Office of International Programs for sponsored international student.

Orientation Folder. International students who are new to the campus attend a mandatory orientation at the beginning of the semester. The Office of International Student Services prepares materials and conducts the orientation program. For the purposes of this study, all materials distributed for the fall 1992 orientation were reviewed. The Folder included brochures and flyers about different offices and services available on campus. Among these were information regarding the renting an of apartment. This brochure had three important implications for cultural differences for international students. The first one was the importance of the written word, the second was the legality of the contract, and lastly the responsibility that goes with getting into contracts. Also enclosed in the folder was information regarding, buying of course materials, obtaining a driver's license, insurance, and a brochure on student services available to all students.

Graduate College Information Packet. The Graduate College mails this packet to all students who have indicated an interest in coming to the university. It has information relating to the location of the university, climate and advice on types of clothes appropriate for the weather.

Orientation Manual. The Orientation Manual was

prepared by the Office of International Programs specifically for sponsored students. It contains information regarding the services offered to sponsored students, the students' responsibilities regarding fulfilling the sponsoring agency's requirements, a brief discussion on the American culture and survival skills within the American society.

Information from documents was recorded on document summary forms (see Appendix A) as outlined by Miles and Huberman (1984). The data collected were used as background information in describing the setting of the study and as a basis for comparing what the university perceives as important information to help graduate international students adjust and how the graduate international students perceive the usefulness of the information.

Observations

At the beginning of each semester, the International Student Services office conducts a mandatory orientation program for all international students. I participated in the orientation program of fall 1992 with the primary purpose of observing what was said, how it was said, and the verbal and non-verbal reactions of the attendees. The orientation program of fall 1992 was conducted from August 17-21. It began with a welcome and introduction session at 8:30 a.m. Then followed sessions on academic success, immigration regulations, legal issues, adjusting to life in

the United States, and health insurance and services. These sessions were conducted by invited professionals on these areas. Each day of the orientation week there was a help center for those who needed assistance with shopping, housing, telephone services, and/or banking.

Interviews

The instrument for collecting data was the human instrument, which has been recommended for being responsive to the context (Merriam, 1988). Specifically, semi-structured interviews were the primary method of inquiry because "face to face contact, verbal behaviors gestures . . . and visual signs are vital routes to understanding" (Crowson, 1987, p. 35).

A list of questions was formulated to guide the research study (see Appendix B), although these questions were mere guidelines and not followed strictly when interviews were conducted. A full set of questions was not developed a priori, to allow for flexibility in the interview process. The questions helped in translating the research objectives into specific language. Questions also served as a way of motivating respondents to share their knowledge of the phenomenon under study. / They were conducted with the respondents for the purpose of finding out how they "make sense of their lives, what they experience, how they interpret these experiences, how they structure their social world" (Merriam, 1988, p. 28). /

Questions were formulated based on the purpose of the study. New questions were added to clarify or get additional information (Whitt, 1989).

Interviews were audio-taped. Tape recording ensured that everything that was said was preserved, it also made retrieval easy during analysis. Notes were made of those portions of the interview the respondents did not want to be tape-recorded. After each interview meeting, the data were retrieved and typed. Interview notes were immediately reviewed and expanded following each interview meeting.

Reviewing and expanding interview notes helped in developing additional questions and topics for the subsequent interviews and for use during data analysis. Questions 1 through 4 were formulated to get demographic information about the respondents and to put the respondents at ease. Questions 5 through 20 were developed from the purpose of the study and the theory base guiding the study to identify the problems experienced and examine the coping strategies employed by the respondents. Some of the questions emerged as the study progressed in order to clarify or obtain additional information. (Interview protocol is included in Appendix B.)

Procedures

A letter (refer to Appendix C) was sent to all prospective respondents at the beginning of May, 1992. This time was chosen because it would give respondents enough

time think about committing themselves to the study during the summer vacation when they were not as hard pressed with class work. The letter introduced the researcher and the topic of the study. The letter informed the prospective respondents of the method of inquiry and also stated that a telephone call would follow soon. Enclosed with the letter was a consent form (see Appendix D) which clarified how the research would be carried out and set down the terms under which the research would be conducted. The consent form addressed the issue of confidentiality and the fact that participation in the study was voluntary, participants could withdraw from the study at any time.

The first phone calls to prospective respondents were made five days after the letter was mailed. Five out of six people initially contacted agreed to be included in the study but wanted to schedule the interviews a week later, after they had finished writing their examinations. One person wanted to be interviewed as soon as possible even though he was writing his examinations that same day. I convinced him to schedule the interview after the examinations were completed because I thought that the anxiety of having to take the exams would affect the interview process.

The first interview was scheduled immediately after finals week. The interview was conducted at the respondent's apartment. His friend became interested in the study and requested to be included as well. The next

interview meeting was with a respondent who wished to be interviewed together with his wife, who had just graduated from a doctoral program. She was included because her experiences and how she had coped with her problems were still very vivid in her mind.

After the first four people were interviewed, it became evident that respondents preferred to have a set of questions written down so that they could read them just before they were interviewed; as a result, a formal set of questions was formulated (see Appendix B), most of them taken from Hull (1978), and revised to fit the objectives of the study. The questions were not necessarily asked in the same order nor was the same wording used to elicit information from respondents.

Interview time ranged from 1 hour 45 minutes to 2 hours per respondent. Audio tape was the main instrument for gathering data. None of the respondents minded talking in front of a tape recorder. Two respondents requested to have the recorder turned off at times because they felt that, some particular information would affect them in some way.

Two people had personally talked to the researcher and showed interest in being included in the study. These people were not in the initial list. All people called agreed to participate in the study. The meeting place was determined by the respondent. Four respondents preferred to be interviewed in the researcher's office and 10 respondents were interviewed in their apartments or dormitories.

Data Analysis

An inductive method was used to analyze data in this study. The inductive method requires units to be formed which subsequently serve as a basis for defining categories and developing themes. Units came from interview transcripts, observation notes, or documents. A unit can either be a phrase, a sentence, or a paragraph (Merriam, 1988). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), a unit must have two qualities: (1) it should reveal information relevant to the study, and (2) it is the smallest piece of information which can be understood in the absence of any additional information.

Unitization

Units in this study included sentences, phrases, or paragraphs that have thematic value. For the purposes of this study, a unit was a single statement, a sentence, or a phrase which gave an insight to the definition of problems experienced, perception of the resources available in solving the problems, and the coping strategies employed.

Units were identified and each unit was cut from the interview transcript and taped to a 5" x 8" index card to make sorting easy. For purposes of retrieval, each index card was coded according to the respondent's code letter. Appendix E provides a sample of units found.

Categorization

Categories of this study were formed by sorting the units according to whether they had the same meaning or idea. All units that projected the same idea were put together; if the next unit did not belong, a new category was formed. The list of categories which resulted is included in Appendix F.

Themes

Through constant comparison, categories were integrated and sorted according to whether they exhibited the same theme. Categories were then grouped according to thematic value, making inductive analysis (moving from specific to general) of data possible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Research Criteria

Merriam (1988) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) address the issue of trustworthiness of a qualitative study. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) trustworthiness answers the question: "how can an inquirer persuade his or her audience that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of?" (p. 290). The criteria for trustworthiness include credibility, dependability and transferability.

Credibility

It refers to the fact that the study is believable, the respondents have been accurately portrayed. Qualitative research is based on the assumption that reality is holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing. The researcher is, therefore, obligated to present an accurate picture of how the respondents view themselves and their experiences (Merriam, 1988).

Three strategies suggested by Merriam (1988) for establishing credibility were used in this study.

1. Member checks. Data and interpretations were taken back to the respondent and they were asked if the results accurately portrayed their opinions.

2. Gathering data to "the point of redundancy" (Whitt, 1989, p. 50). Interviews were conducted until no further new information was available from the respondents.

3. Peer examination. A knowledgeable peer who has an interest in the study, was identified and requested to serve as a debriefer. Debriefings were held twice during the course of data collection. New ideas emerged and different techniques of asking questions were discussed. This procedure checked the researcher's bias and the effect it may have had on the results of the study (Whitt, 1989).

Dependability

This refers to consistency of the reporting over time. In this study, dependability was achieved through the use of

an "audit trail." A detailed description of how data was collected and how categories were formed is provided to help the researcher who wishes to replicate the study (Merriam, 1988). Also the audit trail is developed by keeping available raw data: Interview tapes, notes, documents, and any other materials used while conducting the study.

Transferability

This means that the study may be useful in another context. According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), it is the researcher's responsibility to provide "the data base that makes transferability judgements possible on the part of the appliers" (p. 316). In this study, judgement was made possible by providing a rich, thick description, to make available to anyone interested in transferability information adequate for judgement (Merriam, 1988).

Summary

The source of data for this study included people, settings and documents. Key respondents were identified before the study began, others emerged as the study progressed. Semi-structured audio-taped interviews were utilized to collect data. Data was immediately retrieved from the audio-tape and transcribed. The inductive method was used to analyze data, which required moving from the specific (units) to the general (categories and then themes). Information was recycled among respondents to

establish the emerging themes.

Information gathered through interviews is presented in the form of direct quotes from respondents. The respondent's construction is reported as themes. This report is presented in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF DATA AND FINDINGS

This chapter begins with a brief description of the setting of the study. The data and findings of the study are then described and discussed.

Findings are reported according to themes that emerged during data analysis. Excerpts from respondents' statements are used to illustrate the findings. Respondents are portrayed as a group by means of general geographic area of origin or college of study. Although this approach obscures some interesting and useful information about individuals, it is necessary in order to protect the specific identities of the respondents.

Setting of the Study

This study was conducted in one of the 96 universities in the nation that enroll 1000 and above international students a year. Among 20 universities and colleges enrolling international students in the state, the university under study has the highest enrollment of international students (Zikopoulos, 1992). This mid-western university's involvement in international education dates four decades back.

There are two major offices that deal with students of

international origin: the Office of International programs and International Student Services. Both of these offices employ professionals whose responsibility is to assist students in their cultural adjustment and advise them on immigration as well as on personal matters.

Implicit in the mission statements of these two offices is the belief that international involvement by the university through programs and the presence of students from other countries will contribute to international understanding and assist with cultural exchange and enrichment of the university and the community at large. It is hoped that this cultural understanding will contribute to world peace.

Data Categorization and Findings

To meet the objectives of this study, interview questions were formulated to elicit responses regarding problems perceived as causing difficulty for international graduate students, how much control they perceive themselves to have over the situation, what strategies they employed to relieve the stressful situation, whether the coping strategies used were perceived to be effective, and what the outcome might be if the problems were not solved. Grouping of the data obtained from interviews revealed 15 categories which reflected five broad themes: (1) information gathering processes, (2) socio-cultural issues, (3) academic concerns, (4) personal problems, and (5) coping strategies.

Data are presented as themes, including examples of statements of respondents to illustrate the findings. Real names of respondents were not used to protect the confidentiality of the participants. Results are summarized at the conclusion of each theme.

Information Gathering Processes

The theme of information gathering processes includes three categories of data: (a) expectations of the United States, (b) formal orientation, and (c) informal orientation.

Expectations of the United States

According to the respondents, the first impression of the United States was influenced by the image they got from the media. A female from South America commented, "I expected a big place like we usually see in movies." A male from Africa had this to say: "At home people think so highly of America, they think everything is in abundance. I realized that what I expected was not true when I saw the homelessness in New York."

The actual encounter with Americans and their culture either confirms or disproves the media expectations of respondents. According to an Asian respondent, "Americans are projected as lazy and fun loving but on actually interacting with them I have discovered that they are hardworking and serious." A South American respondent

reiterated this view.

Before I came here I had my stereotypes about Americans, that they are dirty, lazy, and that they exploit people. I have since discovered that there are good as well as bad Americans and also that although America is a big country, not every American is rich.

Formal Orientation

Formal orientation refers to any systematic effort intended to introduce international students to the social, cultural and educational aspects of America (e.g., organized orientation programs prior to departure or upon arrival to a United States campus).

Respondents had different views about participation in orientation programs and their usefulness in coping with problems. Some sat through the orientation program without paying much attention to it. This is reflected in the comments of a South American student who noted that although he attended the orientation program he does not remember what was said. Also family concerns at this initial stage of the student's life away from home occupy the student's mind as portrayed in the comments of an African male: "I did not pay any attention to what was said, I was too preoccupied with thoughts about my wife" [they got married the same day he left for the United States]. For a female respondent orientation did not give enough information or

skills to deal with isolation, discrimination and tips to survive in an American graduate school.

According to some respondents the orientation program was very interesting and informative. A Human Environmental Sciences female student noted: "I enjoyed participating in the orientation program because I got an opportunity to meet people like me, who were new to the this university."

Respondents had some concerns about the amount of information that had to be assimilated in a short time by international students upon arrival to the United States. A male respondent from South America put it this way: "On arrival we are bombarded with a lot of information when we are too tired and anxious to pay attention to any trivial matter. Our major concern is accommodation and starting classes, not what would happen half-way through the year."

For those respondents who had attended orientation programs elsewhere or who had attended other American universities, orientation was perceived as a waste of time: "To me attending orientation here on campus was a waste of time since I had already attended two orientations conducted by my sponsoring agency" (African male, Economics) and "I have completed a degree in an American university. I think participating in an orientation was a waste of my time" (African male, Agriculture).

According to a South American female who chose not to attend the orientation because she graduated from a university within the same state, orientation is not the

problem, but "The problem is the department. How can you be happy if you can not talk in class because you are afraid of your accent? I know that there are professors who do not like internationals, who do not even want to give them information regarding their programs."

There were differing views about the usefulness of formal orientation. Some respondents viewed formal orientation as very useful and recommended participation by all new international students. However, they felt that not all aspects of adjustment were covered by the orientation. For example, one respondent felt that it did not prepare her to deal with difficulties she encountered in the department, such as isolation caused by cultural and language barriers, inadequate academic advisement, and racism. For some respondents it was viewed as a waste of time. It was implicit that too much information bombardment on the newly arrived students takes away from them full attention and participation in orientation programs.

Informal Orientation

The informal orientation process is a non-organized, perhaps not even intended, form of cultural learning. This includes information gathered from television, magazines and friends. Respondents tended to rely on this information gathering process more in making sense of American culture and campus life in an American university as reflected in a comment by an African male who stated: "When I first came

to the United States I was not shocked because I had seen all about it on television and movies." A female from South America noted the following: "I do not experience any discrimination because I was made aware of its existence. As a result, I keep to myself as much as possible."

Summary

The respondents' knowledge of the United States through formal and informal orientation processes confirmed and clarified formal expectations. The actual encounter with American culture and people caused a constant comparison between what the respondents already knew and what they encountered. Some expectations were met while others were not.

Socio-cultural Issues

The theme of socio-cultural issues encompasses the following categories: (a) culture shock, (b) interaction, and (c) discrimination.

Culture Shock

Culture shock refers to a normal process of adjustment to a new setting. It involves such symptoms as anxiety, helplessness, irritability and longing for a more predictable and familiar environment (Oberg, 1960). The category of culture shock also includes depression, food, physical ailments and lack of understanding cultural cues

necessary to function in a society.

According to respondents, culture shock was not a major problem although when asked about food, symptoms of culture shock emerged. According to an Asian male, he was starving although there was plenty of food. He sums it this way: "I have a problem adjusting to American food. I always tell my friends that even though there is plenty of food in the cafeteria, I am still starving."

Missing native food and dislike of American food was reported to result in stomach disorders by an African male. "I do not like American food and I do not even know how to cook for myself which disturbs my stomach. I constantly suffer from stomach aches which I think result from my cooking and of course American food."

When international students and Americans interact there are behaviors that are confusing because of different cultural backgrounds. These behaviors are interpreted, and judgements are made as to whether people are friendly or not. "I consider Americans as not sociable, one day they greet you with a big smile and the following day they ignore you like they never met you before" (Middle Eastern female).

Feeling of homesickness, not belonging and wishing to be with family and friends is experienced by the respondents. This is illustrated by a respondent from the Middle East who said: "At times I feel so lonely, I ask myself why should I go through this? I wish to take the next plane and go home. I do not belong here."

Interaction

The category of interaction refers to both social and academic/business contacts. To establish the pattern of interaction, respondents were asked about their roommates, friends, neighbors and participation in activities involving Americans.

Only one respondent reported to have social contact with Americans, his roommate was an American and he was dating an American. Almost all students interviewed reported to interact with fellow nationals or other internationals. They reported to interact with Americans for academic related purposes only. "We talk to each other [American students] about class work. Other than that, there is no relationship" (African male).

The feeling of belonging together and the support system provided by fellow nationals and other international students seem to draw these students together. "I like [interacting with] internationals because we relate to each other, we understand each other's problems. We feel like a minority here" (Middle Eastern female). "I prefer interacting with fellow nationals because I do not feel good if I do not speak my own language and exchange ideas about what is happening back home" (Asian male).

Cultural norms tended to be confusing to the foreign student and created social distance between American students and respondents. "I wish to get more acquainted with my classmates but Americans are always rushing. They

leave the class before I can talk to them" (female, South America). And "I expect the natives to reach out to me. I can not, as a foreigner go around introducing myself. They should take the initiative to welcome me to their country" (African male).

According to those respondents who come from countries whose religious and cultural background are very different from those of the United States, mixing with Americans would mean "going to their parties, dancing and be drunk" (Middle Eastern male).

Discrimination

Most respondents stated that they had not personally experienced discrimination, even those who had reported incidents that resembled acts of discrimination. There seemed to be a lack of understanding what discrimination is. "I do not think there is discrimination for us Asians. There may be discrimination against Blacks because we [Asians] do not compete for jobs in America" (Asian male). Also "Because I have never experienced discrimination, it would be difficult for me to know when it happens" (African male). It is of interest to note that the same African male respondent later on in the conversation made this comment:

When I first came to this university, I asked a professor to be my advisor. Although he is in my area of interest he did not want me as an advisee; he has since accepted me because I have proved that I am a

capable student (GPA 4.00). I feel I have to constantly prove myself.

Although respondents had not personally experienced discrimination, they reported to know of complaints from friends about discrimination. For instance, "They [friends] say that in some departments blacks are looked down upon and are not expected to succeed. They [professors] do not differentiate between the local blacks and foreign blacks."

Only two respondents interviewed reported experiencing discrimination because of their foreignness. One reported that "There are some professors who look at internationals as lazy or even stupid. This makes me have to work twice as hard to prove that I am neither lazy nor stupid" (Middle Eastern male). Assignment of office space was another indicator of discrimination. "In my department there is a lot of discrimination. For example, we foreign students are given offices in a building which does not even have windows, while American students have offices in the nice new building next to the professors" (South American female). These two respondents are in the same department, but an African male who is in the same department, felt differently.

I do not feel discriminated against. At times there are feelings that are not substantiated. Like most students in my department, I thought the fact that we [internationals] are in a different building is due to discrimination. I have since realized that most

American students are Teaching Assistants. I, therefore, think the professors are justified to keep them closer to them.

Summary

Respondents seemed to be unaware that they could be suffering from culture shock when they experienced minor ailments. Failure to clearly communicate the departmental requirements and university procedures resulted in misunderstanding and problems which could easily jeopardize the delicate advisor/advisee relationship. Cultural differences regarding what is considered educational experience also posed a problem (e.g., "I am a government official, I was sent here to study not manual labor").

Interaction with Americans is limited to academic purposes for most respondents. Barriers to effective and positive communication between members of different cultures resulted from a lack of understanding of latent and connotative meaning of verbal and non verbal cues. (e.g., "Americans greet you with a big smile one day and the following day they ignore you like they never met you before), the fear of compromising beliefs and life styles (e.g., "if I mix with them I will have to go to their parties and dance and be drunk"), and cultural expectations (e.g., "I expected Americans to reach out and welcome me not the other way round").

Interaction with fellow nationals or other

internationals serves a protective function, whereby psychological security, self-esteem, and a sense of belonging are provided (e.g., "we are like a minority, we understand each others problems"). Such enclaves also serve as reference groups with whom the new environment can be discussed, compared and interpreted, and information about current issues in the home country shared.

The majority of respondents had not personally experienced discrimination. Although they mentioned behaviors and acts that resembled discrimination, these were not perceived as acts of discrimination.

Academic Concerns

The theme of academic concerns includes four categories of data: (a) advising, (b) academic conflict, (c) language proficiency, and (d) expectation for academic achievement.

Advising

The academic advisor was seen as the key element in the successful accomplishment of the student's objectives.

According to an African male,

He [the advisor] is the single most important factor. If you come to him and find out that he is willing to listen to your problems and to help you solve them, you will be okay. I had conditional admission. My advisor was very concerned. He encouraged me to do my best.

That semester I took ten credit hours and made all A's.

He was happy about it. I have never lost that focus. An advisor was seen by many as a person to go to, for both academic and personal concerns.

Respondents had varied expectations of the role the advisor should play in facilitating their programs, which created problems. According to a South American female, her problems resulted because:

When I came here I was not advised well. I read the course catalog and enrolled for the courses that were relevant to my career (based on the course description). I did not know that the course number means something, for instance, the higher the number, the higher the level of the course. When I eventually found out that I did not have the necessary background for the course, it was too late for me to drop the course.

A South American male reported that his advisor did not check his academic background so that he could help him choose the right courses with the necessary preparation. The consequences were serious academic problems. He was forced to drop one course and completed the semester with only six hours. The responsibility of a graduate student to plan and make decisions about their programs is difficult according to a male from the Middle East, "My advisor let me to think by myself, do things on my own. He wants me to solve problems by myself. Although he supports me, I need

more guidance."

Academic Conflict

This category addresses issues of culture that affect normal educational interaction.

Challenging authority poses a problem for respondents. An Asian male reported of not wanting to argue with his advisor "even if I do not agree with him." A serious problem with the advisor is dealt with by "get[ting] along with him as much as I can [because] I can not change him, this will create worse problems" (Asian male).

Cultural philosophies dictate what is considered proper educational practices and what is not. Differences in these philosophies created misunderstanding as portrayed in the comments of an Asian student pursuing a degree in Agriculture: "I do not want to be bothered with work [manual work in the field]. You see, I am a government official, I am not a researcher. We are sent here to study not to work in the field."

There were also various issues related to cultural norms that emerged. For instance, an African male respondent mentioned that American professors specialize too much when students from the developing countries need a broad knowledge of the subject. Another African male respondent noted: "Here people are very individualistic, they do not study together. They are more competitive than cooperative. I find it difficult to study alone."

Language Proficiency

According to respondents, fluency in the English language is the key element in integrating to the host culture. This is reflected in an Asian male's response who stated: "When I want to say something it is interpreted wrongly because of my accent and inadequate English."

Participating in class discussions is inhibited. According to an African male English is the major problem. Answering and asking questions is intimidating because according to a South American female, "I am afraid to because of my accent and the fact that I cannot express myself well."

International students miss out in class discussions because, "At times I want to say something and I do not know how to say it" (African male). Preparing term papers, writing and defending the thesis is difficult for these students because "writing is my problem. I write and cannot just give it to my instructor. I give it to somebody else [for editing] before I give it to my instructor" (female, Middle East).

According to some respondents, Americans were perceived as not making enough effort to understand the foreign student's accent. For example,

I have a problem expressing myself to Americans. At times they do not understand me, but internationals listen very carefully and understand what I say (South American female).

For these respondents the problem was not their ability to

understand English but being understood by Americans, "I do not have a problem understanding American English, but Americans have a difficulty understanding me. I have noticed that they do not bother to understand an international person's accent" (male, Middle East).

A South American male had a solution to the problem of not being understood.

Initially, I thought people would have a problem understanding my accent. They [Americans] told me that they do not have any problem with my accent. I however, make an effort to speak clearly and speak slowly; as a result they understand me.

Academic achievement expectations

All interviewees perceived themselves as academically able students. Although some reported problems, they felt their problems did not result from low intelligence. Those who were on scholarships had been selected on the basis of their capability to master graduate work. An African male noted: "I do not think I am stupid, at least I have never been. I think I will perform okay but I am not sure of one course which I wrote when I was told my wife was admitted in the hospital."

Confidence in the respondents' capability came from the knowledge that they were selected to study abroad. "This semester I will have a 4.00 GPA. International students are mostly on scholarships; those few who get funded are

screened very well" (male, South America).

Those respondents, who had been at an American school for less than one semester, were more anxious about their academic performance, and their responses were more cautious as reflected in a comment from a South American female:

This is my first semester. It is very difficult; my course work is very, very hard. There is a lot of work to be done. When I had my first exams, I had a problem. I forgot everything, I was so nervous, but the second exam I improved.

Those who were on their second semester were more optimistic that they would perform better than they did in their first semester "my first semester was very hard but this semester it is much better" (male, Africa).

Summary

Because the primary goal of many foreign students is academic achievement, the advisor is seen as a key factor in the successful completion of the program. What ever s/he does, or does not, do is perceived as a predicting factor in accomplishing the educational goal. International students perceive the advisor as the decision maker regarding the student's program. This expectation creates problems in an American university where professors expect graduate students to take responsibility of their programs.

The cultural difference existing between many international students and Americans is viewed as a problem.

There is an apparent fear of challenging the authority of the advisor for many international graduate students.

Issues that could have been solved by talking to the advisor result in being serious problems. Americans are seen as individualistic and competitive rather than cooperative.

Respondents perceived themselves to be intelligent and capable of mastering graduate work, although problems in proficiently communicating and writing in English is regarded as a serious problem. Frustration for those students who perceive themselves as proficient in English results from not being understood by Americans due to their different accent, causing these students to resign themselves into passive participants in class discussions.

Personal Concerns

The theme of personal concerns addresses the categories of (a) time budgeting, (b) loneliness and homesickness, and (c) problems with sponsoring agency.

Time budgeting

Respondents reported allocating their time exclusively to academic related activities. The pressure of obtaining good grades and performing at the same level as American students makes it a necessity for these students to put as many hours toward their studies as possible. An African male stated, "I spend most of my time doing school related activities. If you do not, it is to your disadvantage." For international students, the demands are not only for

mastering the course work but to understand the cultural differences, deal with language deficiencies, and adjustment all non-traditional students experience when they come back to school after several years of working as reported by the an Asian male, "My time is exclusively school work. I would like to do some sport but I do not have time. I came back to school after seven years of work. It is really difficult for me to adjust."

Loneliness and Homesickness

According to the respondents, being away from loved ones and being unable to fulfill the responsibilities as a provider and head of the family, as most of these students are, created stress which triggered homesickness and loneliness. As noted by an African male respondent: "I feel homesick . . . because of my family. I have a wife and a six-month daughter." Also the inability to go home and take care of emergencies contributed to the feeling of homesickness as reported by an Asian male:

I feel homesick a lot. This is resulting from the fact that my father passed away while I was here. I did not go home to bury [him], because I could not afford the ticket. This disturbed me a lot from my studies.

Respondents also reported that they feel depressed and this causes a feeling of helplessness and frustration. "I have been here for three years now without visiting my family. My depression results from knowing that there is

nothing I can do to visit my family without financial resources" (African male, Agriculture).

Sponsoring Agencies

Compounding the problems of the graduate international students is the pressure to fulfill the requirements of the funding agencies. The regulations imposed on the students (e.g., having their families visit them while they are in the United States) is very restricting. According to an African male an opportunity to visit home at least once in his sojourn would save him a lot of stress. He constantly thinks about his wife and a six-month son.

The failure of the funding agencies to schedule the program in time causes confusion and adds the stress on the international student. This failure could slow down the adjustment and adaptation process when the student is in the United States as in the case of an African male who noted:

My problem resulted from poor scheduling from my sponsor. I had to postpone my wedding twice to fit in my departure. I eventually received a fax message informing me that I was leaving for the United States in a weeks time, three months earlier than was scheduled. I had to quickly prepare for my wedding. I got married the eve of my departure. This has affected me a lot, I can not focus on anything because my mind is at home.

Summary

The pressure of having to secure good grades to be able to maintain their scholarship and not to waste limited funds that their families sacrificed for their education, and the constant feeling that they should perform at the same level as American students compel these students to spend their time exclusively in studies.

Relocating and leaving behind families, friends and responsibilities is very stressful to international graduate students. Limited financial resources make it difficult for these student to go back to their home countries to take care of emergencies as they arise.

Coping Strategies

The reporting of data relating to the theme of coping strategies is based on Lazarus, Averill and Opton's (1974) theory of coping, which states that for a coping strategy to be selected an individual goes through an appraisal process whereby the potential outcome of a situation, and of the coping effort adopted by the person is evaluated. Four categories were identified under the theme of coping strategies: (a) appraisal processes, (b) emotion-focused coping (c) problem-focused coping, and (d) suggestions.

Appraisal Processes

Respondents were asked to identify problems that were perceived major and what they thought would be the outcome

if they were not solved. According to respondents, any problems that were perceived to affect successful completion of their academic program were identified as major problems. English language skills were reported to be a major problem because "I have to write papers, and ultimately my dissertation. If I do not have a good command of English, it would affect my success" (female, Middle East).

The respondents that are funded through scholarships all reported that the fear of losing their financial support and thus not finishing their programs is very threatening. Their comments are summed well by a South American female who noted: "Failing my courses would be a major problem to me. I consider that as a serious problem because my sponsors would take me back home. I do not want that to happen."

Respondents who perceived themselves as capable of solving problems and who perceived themselves as adapting easily felt less threatened. "I do not have any fears. I do not even think how I can be affected if my problems are not solved because I have always solved my problems" (male, South America).

Emotion-focused Coping

According to Folkman and Lazarus (1985), emotion-focused coping is any action taken to control the emotional response to the stressful situation, such as distraction and relaxation to divert attention from the stress symptom.

Emotion-focused coping was evident in the responses of some interviewees. A male respondent from the Middle East, when asked about how he deals with loneliness, noted:

Well I do not think about this thing, I try to forget about it maybe because of the religion, you are not supposed to feel lonely. I also tell myself, to get something I must pay a price, this is the price I have to pay. I have the Mosque where I can go and speak and laugh. I also call home . . . at times I spend more money in telephone bills than I spend on food.

The same respondent had this to say about how he deals with depression. "When I feel depressed, more especially when I get a failing grade I take sleeping pill and go to sleep until the following day. The following day I promise myself I will study harder."

An African male, responding to how he deals with depression, said,

When I think about my wife and children I feel very depressed, more especially because I had been telling them every time I talk to them that I will come back home soon to do my research. I was recently told by my sponsors I could not go home. This devastated me. How do I tell my kids I still have a year or more to finish . . . what I do is to work myself to exhaustion so that when I go to my apartment I am too tired to think.

The fear of victimization causes some international graduate students to refrain from sharing their views and concerns with their advisors.

I feel it is not going to help, [so] why should I put myself in this position. If for example, I have problems with my research and I do not get enough help from my advisors, I keep trying.

There is nobody in this university that I can go to with my problems. The best thing is to keep quiet if you want to graduate (male, Asia).

Students would rather leave the department or transfer to another university than risk confronting the instructor or advisor. This emotion-focused strategy is noted by a South American female in the College of Agriculture:

My advisor does not care... He does not have any time for students. He is too occupied with his own research. One day I told him I need at least five minutes of his time. I wanted to talk to him about my plan of study, thesis committee and research topic, I already have 15 credit hours. He did not want to talk to me. Instead, he told me to go and ask his other advisees. I do not want to talk to students about my problems. I am considering transferring to another university. My friends also tell me that I should transfer.

Suffering silently is also used as a coping strategy by some respondents. A South American female who had a problem

with courses because she did not get advising on how to choose courses, sums it up this way:

I did not do anything; instead I suffered through the course. I did not even go to the professor. I suffered silently, studying very hard at times spending sleepless nights.

Problem-focused coping

When an individual employs direct action in order to change the stressful situation, problem-focused coping is used. According to respondents only talking about problems and not acting upon them was not the only strategy used to deal with problems, Specific steps are taken to solve the problem as reflected by a female from the Middle East.

If I have a problem with an instructor I would solve it with him. I would not just put my hands between my knees and pretend it is not happening. If it does not help I would go to my advisor, then lastly I would go to the Head of the Department. This would be the very last step; you know it is usually solved by talking to the person involved, it never even goes to the advisor.

To cope with the English problem the same respondent noted: "I read, listen to English speakers and try to listen how they use certain words. I also speak to other internationals. I speak and lead discussion groups to Moslem women in English."

According to a Middle Eastern male, a problem resulting from cultural understanding was coped with by talking to the advisor or instructor or even a colleague, and explaining in order to be understood. To an African male a problem with the roommate is dealt with by talking: "I say to my roommate, if you have a problem do not harbor it to your heart, let's discuss it."

About lack of interaction between American students and international students, an African male noted:

International students should initiate interaction, because people would not know whether you are friendly or not. I realize that when I am in a class I keep looking around for somebody that looks friendly to me and I talk to that person. So that when I have a problem or miss a class I have somebody to share notes with. I initiate contact. You see, people become very difficult to talk to when they are quiet.

Those respondents who reported having confidence in solving their problems also shared the same strategy of coping with their problems, that of analyzing the problem and coming up with the solution.

When I have a serious problem, for example I just had one with my best friend, I deal with it by myself and I have experience in solving my problems. I write down my feelings and thoughts; that way I can analyze my problem (male, South America).

An African male shared the same strategy "If I have a problem I can sit down here and talk to myself. I do not need somebody to help me solve my problems. I know I can solve my problems."

Religion, support from family in the home country, fellow nationals, and support from other international students played a key role in coping with problems for the respondents. A male from the Middle East noted:

I am proud of being a Moslem. I think I am better; my religion has given me strength, confidence in myself. I think if there was no mosque in this campus it would have been a disaster for me because I spend most of my free time there.

Another male respondent from the Middle East reiterated the same idea: "When I am depressed I get into my car and go to the Mosque; that is where I can talk about my problems with people that speak my language, who also can understand me. I usually go to my apartment feeling better."

An African male noted "talking to my wife on the phone always helps me through a problem, I do not even care how much it costs; it is like a drug to me. If I did not call I would have been crazy by now." The same strategy and opinion was shared by an Asian male who commented:

I have cried more than I had for the whole of my life since I came to this country. When I can no longer handle it I call my wife. Telephone bills are nothing compared to saving my sanity. At

times I talk to my boss back home or fellow nationals here on campus.

All the respondents sought emotional support from nonprofessional sources. They were aware of the counseling services but did not use them because,

I have people I can go to when I have a problem. I have my friends. Although I know there are counseling services available to students on this campus I have not really needed to use them. I do not have a problem that can take me there. I consider myself capable of solving my problems (male, South America).

Respondents reported relying on emotional support from spouse, roommate or advisor as exemplified by the following comment: "I consider my husband as a source of emotional support, but it depends on the type of problem I have. At times I talk to my friend or advisor" (female, Middle East).

Suggestions

Respondents were asked to give suggestions on how they can be helped in dealing with their problems. The suggestions are important in developing programs for these students. Respondents made suggestions regarding three areas: (1) academic, (2) support services, and (3) sponsoring agencies.

Academic. According to respondents areas that needed attention were library orientation as reflected in a comment by a female from the Middle East "For me as an international

Moslem woman, I do not know how I can be helped because I don't need the recreation center. I need library orientation." With reference to appropriate courses, the following advice was offered:

The assumption is that the work we have done in our home countries is the same as that of Americans. When they (advisors) look at the courses you have taken back home they assume you are ready for graduate courses which is not always true. Some advisors refuse to listen to students when they ask for a lower class to prepare themselves (male, Africa).

The final suggestion focused on the graduate college's responsibility to provide survival skills:

This university should take the responsibility of raising the intercultural awareness of its faculty and staff, seminars and presentations should be organized to educate them. Advisors should be willing and available to assist the international graduate student, share the secret of survival in the America graduate school (male, Africa).

Another African male suggested: " Pre-departure information [sent by the university] should include things that would be of cultural shock to foreign students."

Support Services. Suggestion were made regarding the lack of a support person on an informal place for international student to socialize and talk about their frustrations and problems. A South American female sums it

this way:

We need a person who knows about this university, who also knows about international students. For me that person should have an experience as a foreigner. At times we need a person just to talk to, a person who can relate to our problems. It would be better if there was a place where international students can sit and talk to each other informally about their problems. It would help to know that there are people that are experiencing the same thing as you are.

Sponsoring Agencies. Some comments were directed to funding agencies. An African male respondent commented:

I suggest that the sponsoring agencies should make it possible for students to visit their families at least once in their program or arrange for the immediate family members to visit the student. I think it is unreasonable for these agencies not to allow family members to visit.

A similar response was also provided by an Asian male:

"Sponsoring agencies should gather all the information about the university and the department they are placing the student and advise the student accordingly so that the student can be well prepared."

Summary

Academic achievement, completion of the programs, and achieving objectives were reported to be the major goals of

the respondents. Failure to meet the above-stated goals was perceived as threatening.

According to respondents when the situation is perceived to be unsolvable because of lack of resources emotion-focused forms of coping are employed (e.g., "I do not have money to go home and visit my family. . . I work until I am too tired to think about them"). Respondents who have confidence in their problem-solving skills tended to employ problem-focused coping strategies (e.g., "I sit down and analyze my problem very well"). Social support was reported to play an important role in coping with problems by respondents. Support came from religious affiliation, family members, fellow nationals, other international student, foreign student advisor, and academic advisor. None of the respondents reported to have used the counseling services available on campus.

Suggestion from respondents indicated that there was a need for better communication of university and departmental policies among the university, the sponsoring agency, and the student, this was recommended to be done before the student makes his/her decision of a university. Having someone available to listen to international students' problems and help them adjust was also recommended. Comments from respondents indicated that part of international graduate students' problems result from the pressure to fulfill requirements from sponsoring agencies.

Summary

The information international students had on arrival about the United States affected the way they viewed their experiences, and how they dealt with these experiences. Although international students did not realize that they suffered from culture shock, they reported of experiencing discomforts that indicated symptoms of culture shock. They preferred to interact more with other internationals or students from their home countries. The successful completion of the program was viewed as the major goal by all the respondents. The achievement of the major goal was viewed as very crucial, and influenced all activities. Time was used exclusively for academic related activities. The major advisor was viewed as a crucial element in successfully achieving the major goal. Utilizing emotional support from family and friends played as a key coping strategy.

In Chapter V, the results are interpreted and discussed in light of the research questions for the study and related research literature. Implications of the findings for practice and further research are identified in Chapter VI.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS

In this chapter, the data presented in Chapter VI are discussed and interpreted within the context of the research purposes and questions described in Chapter III. The data are also examined in light of prior research findings.

Problems Experienced by International Graduate Students

Respondents reported having problems in three major areas: academic and language, socio-cultural, and personal.

Academic and Language

Academic problems resulted from varied expectations of the role of the advisor or instructor. These expectations were based on different cultural backgrounds of the students which are different than those of American professors. The advisor was expected to perform multiple roles: assist with personal problems, plan an academic program, make decisions on issues relating to an academic program, and liaise with the sponsor. These roles demand that the advisor be available to respond to students' needs.

Another creating an academic problem was the status of authority given to the professor. To some international

students, this meant the professor can not be challenged as a result, to be seen as arguing or challenging the professor was avoided by respondents. Shan'a (1979) and Story (1982) confirm this finding. According to Kunze (1977), "the academic program should be relevant to the student's needs and requirements upon returning to his/her home country" (p. 916), but findings from this study still indicate that specialization of American professors was reported to be a disadvantage to international students from developing countries who still need general information in their subject area.

Comments from respondents indicated that the first semester at an American university was very difficult and respondents who were in their first semester were more anxious about their academic performance than those who had been in their programs for two semester and longer. This finding seems to challenge the U-curve hypothesis (Lysgaard, 1955) which stated that foreign students experience better adjustment at their initial stage of the sojourn.

The importance of adequate language skills can not be overemphasized for the graduate students who have to write examinations, defend their views in class discussions, and eventually prepare a thesis. Those respondents who came from non-English-speaking countries reported fluency in English language as a major problem. They reported having difficulty in expressing themselves and as a result did not attempt to participate in class discussions. They also had

difficulty in understanding examination questions. problem results in academic performance which is below the student's ability. Respondents who came from English speaking countries reported that being understood by American students and professors was a problem, but they themselves did not have difficulty understanding Americans. They reported having no problems with written tasks.

Respondents reported English language skills as very important in integrating to the host culture, participating in class discussions, understanding examination questions and writing and defending their dissertations. This finding confirms those of Meloni (1986) and Heikinheimo and Shute (1986) who reported the difficulties experienced by international students because of the lack of English language proficiency.

Socio-cultural

Respondents did not perceive themselves as suffering from culture shock; however, when asked specific questions they reported feelings and behaviors that indicated symptoms of culture shock. They exhibited anxiety as a result of their loss of familiar signs and symbols of social interaction furnham & Bochner (1986). According to Church (1982), "culture shock is most commonly viewed as a normal process of adaptation to cultural stress involving such symptoms as anxiety, helplessness, irritability, and a longing for a more predictable and gratifying environment"

(p. 540).

Anxiety manifested itself in such behaviors as stomach problems resulting from "American food," feelings of loneliness and feeling that "I do not belong here," longing to be with fellow nationals or other international students and avoidance of local people (e.g., "I do not need to interact with Americans interaction with other international students is enough for me"). Although respondents did not see themselves as experiencing culture shock, failure to understand gestures, facial expressions, customs, or norms created a source of frustration as in one respondent who commented on the unpredictability of Americans: "One day they greet you with a smile the following day they act as if they do not know you." The feeling of not belonging manifested itself for many respondents: "I wish I did not have to be subjected to this misery; if my country had good universities I would not have come here. " These symptoms of culture shock suggested by interviewees' responses are consistent with those described by Oberg (1960) and Church (1982).

Respondents described their experience of cultural shock primarily in terms of what they expected based on the information they got while in their home countries regarding the United States. Respondents' actual encounter with the American culture sometimes confirmed what they already knew about the United States ["Americans are always rushing, "they are always busy," or "they are not sociable"]. Some

stereotypes were not confirmed: "I found Americans to be hardworking and serious people." As students were more exposed to the Americans and their culture, they agreed that Americans are human beings with both strong and weak qualities.

Pre-departure information about American culture was reported to be valuable in helping the student adjust to the United States. They reported that having prepared themselves made adjustment less stressful.

The respondents' social contact patterns could be grouped into three distinct social networks, consistent with those identified by Bochner, Mcleod and Lin (1977). The first pattern is interaction with compatriots only: "I interact with students from my country; we do not feel good if we can not talk our language and eat our food". The second pattern is interacting with significant host nationals such as professors, academic advisors or international student advisors. The third pattern is acquaintances with a multicultural group of friends. Those who have not adjusted well to culture shock preferred interacting with fellow nationals or other international students. This was common for respondents who are from an Islamic background; they felt interacting too much with host nationals would result in compromising their beliefs. This finding is consistent with those of previous research which suggests that the greater the cultural differences between the student and the host culture, the greater the likelihood

that misunderstandings would occur (Bochner, 1981; Pendersen, 1991).

The emotional support patterns of the respondents took the same patterns as those of social contact. Emotional support or social support provided by interpersonal relationships plays a crucial role in determining a person's adaptive functioning and sense of well-being. The interesting finding of this study is that all the respondents reported to have identified a source of emotional support. These were usually the academic advisor, international student advisor, family or friends. Emotional support from family members here in the United States or abroad played a crucial role. This finding is consistent with that of Pendersen (1975) which indicated that international students utilized, as a source of help for solving personal problems, their fellow nationals, the faculty advisor and the international student advisor, for specific problems. Although research suggests that interaction with host nationals is the single best predictor of successful adaptation (Bochner, 1981), respondents' interaction patterns indicated that the social and emotional needs of those internationals whose culture is very different from that of the United States were best met by interacting with fellow nationals or other international students. This provided a setting in which cultural values could be expressed, and the maintenance meaningfulness.

The importance of academic achievement to the

respondents made interaction with professors and academic advisor very crucial. This finding confirms previous research findings on friendship patterns of international students which suggest that international students do not associate with host nationals (Bochner, Mcleod & Lin, 1977; Klineberg, 1982; Klineberg & Hull, 1979). Interaction with American students was mentioned only for academic purposes. The maintenance of home country values serves an important function in protecting the student's self-esteem, sense of worth, and successful accomplishment of academic goals (Pendersen, 1991).

Although most of the respondents did not perceive having been discriminated against they constantly reported the feeling that they needed to prove their academic ability. Their comments indicated that they were looked upon by some professors as less capable than American students.

Personal Concerns

Respondents did not regard loneliness as a problem because they all reported to have acquaintances/friends. They, however, overwhelmingly reported being homesick. Homesickness was triggered when they experienced a problem. The perceived inability to solve the problem caused depression. The presence of a spouse or relatives did not affect the feeling of homesickness. Respondents reported that they did not feel lonely, but that they missed their

country, family, and food. Respondents who were married but were without their families reported experiencing loneliness, homesickness and depression. These findings are consistent with those of Klineberg and Hull (1979), which indicated that the presence of a spouse or living with a foreign student has a positive effect on the foreign student's life and work.

The Perceived Ability to Manage the Problem

Respondents portrayed themselves as capable of solving their problems, therefore, they did not perceive consulting counseling services personnel as necessary. In situations where respondents had to deal with the professor, some respondents exhibited behaviors of helplessness. Professors were perceived as important factors in achieving academic success and any threat to successful academic achievement was perceived as a major problem. According to some respondents there was no one they could go to with their problems. The loss of cultural support system made it difficult for these students to identify or even use the services provided by the university.

Coping Strategies

Successful coping depends on correctly identifying the problem and analyzing the seriousness of the consequences if the problem is not solved. For the purposes of this study,

respondents were asked to identify their problems and the perceived effect if the problem were not solved. The major goal of all the respondents was academic achievement; as a result anything that was perceived to impede academic achievement was reported to be a major problem. Those students who were in their first semester were more concerned and more anxious about their performance than those who had been in their programs longer. They reported studying more and spending less time or no time on recreation because of the pressure to perform well academically.

Loneliness and homesickness were coped with by keeping busy, working to exhaustion or putting it out of the mind by studying and involvement in religious activities. Maintaining contact with family in the home country played a significant role in coping with some problems; telephone calls played a major role in this regard. Problems involving professors or advisors called for coping strategies that were emotion-focused in nature. Respondents reported resigning themselves to make the best of what could not be changed. Contemplating changing departments or even leaving the university to alleviate the problem, and sharing concerns and getting guidance from a fellow national, other foreign students, or an advisor were employed often as coping strategies.

Respondents who perceived themselves as capable problem solvers acted directly on the problem by analyzing the

problem and thoughtfully figuring out the solution. For example, one respondent reported sitting down and writing the problem down and analyzing it step by step.

The pressure of academic performance took away the willingness to be involved in extra-curricular activities and resulted in lack of social contact with host nationals. The fact that respondents viewed themselves as temporarily in the United States developing social relationships and understanding the American culture a lower priority.

Summary

Adjusting to life in another culture can cause emotional reactions due to feelings of displacement and unfamiliarity, and the status of being an outsider. Because the environment is unfamiliar, an individual experiences anxiety about whether his/her behavior is appropriate or not. Sojourners may become upset if their expectations of the host country were too high and those expectations were not confirmed. People want to feel accepted by others and want to feel at home, but often they cannot since they have the status of outsider. In their own culture people learn appropriate responses to a wide variety of social stimuli. In another culture, appropriate behavior is difficult to formulate because the stimuli people receive are ambiguous. This stressful situation contributes "to feelings of powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, self and social estrangement, and social isolation" (Furham, 1986, p.

49). Interviewees seemed not to realize that their physical ailments could have been caused by the stress of cultural shock (Brislin, 1981).

According to respondents the main purpose of being in the United State was to pursue a graduate degree, and as a result all their time was spent in academic related activities. The lack of understanding the American educational system, inadequacy of language skills, and the demands of cultural adjustment took time and energy that should have been directed to studies away from these students.

Although both emotion-focused and problem-focused coping strategies were used, the important coping modes employed included telephone calls home, letters from home, association with fellow nationals for speaking native language and interacting with other internationals to make sense of things.

There were no differences based on gender and nationality in problems perceived and coping strategies employed. However, those students who had excellent academic achievement at the time of the study, indicated confidence in their problem-solving skills.

Commentary

International students serve as a link between the host country and their home countries. Graduate international students are people who would be key players in shaping the

policy of their countries in one way or another. If intercultural understanding and world peace is the objective of international education as the mission statement of this mid-western university indicates, then the experience of these students should be made less stressful and as positive as possible. University administrators and personnel dealing with international students need to constantly assess the services and relevance of the programs provided to these students.

Four disturbing elements repeatedly emerge from the data in this study:

1. Conflict. The life of international students is filled with conflict. Conflict in cultural norms and expectations (food, religion, behaviors, social status), conflict in academic expectations (lab work, choices, specific versus general focus, authority), support mechanisms (religion, family, friends, fellow internationals versus Americans or university, socio-cultural interaction versus academics) and finally conflict in meeting family responsibility versus fulfilling sponsoring agency requirements.

2. Crisis. The conflict prevalent in the life of international students creates stress and a state of crisis. Crisis in convincing self, peers in class, and the professor that they are capable students when they do not participate in class discussions, when they do not know whether what they learned (years ago) in their home countries is relevant

in an American classroom. Crisis in communicating their concerns and needs with professors and administrators without jeopardizing their programs. Crisis in convincing their families that responding to family emergencies and responsibilities come second to abiding by the sponsoring agency's requirements, and completing the program.

3. Coping. International students are coping, at times, in ways that are not necessarily healthy but the coping strategies employed do help them achieve their major objective. The information they need to survive in an American institutions is provided but not necessarily when they need it. Also evident is that the information and facilities provided is not used or disregarded (recreation facilities, counseling services, advisement). International students are provided comfort through familiarity and success. Their religion, their family, and their peers provide a familiar support base. Their relationship with their academic advisor and the ability to succeed in classes gives them confidence and comfort.

4. U-Curve. Contrary to the U-Curve hypothesis (Lysgaard, 1955), graduate international students experience more anxiety and stress at the beginning of their programs, and the stress becomes less intense as the student develops confidence in solving problems. Academic success in the first semester gives the international student confidence that the major objective (successful completion of the program) will be met, thus lowering the stress level.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides a summary of the study of international graduate students' problems and coping strategies. Following the summary is a advice for institutions, agencies and people. Research questions emerging from the study are also presented for interested investigators.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify the problems reported by international graduate students, examine the different strategies they, employed how they reflect the coping strategies described by Lazarus, Avrill, & Opton (1974), and generate advice for practice.

Research Methodology

Qualitative method was utilized to collect and analyze data. This method is best suited for studies that focus on insight, discovery and interpretation (Merriam, 1988). The method used includes talking to people, observing their activities, reading documents, and responding to their nonverbal cues (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Data Sources

Three sources of data were utilized in this study to gather information: people, settings, and documents. The sample was selected using the criterion based method which requires an establishment of standards essential for units to be included in the investigation before the researcher finds the sample that has the necessary properties.

Data Collection

My position as an advisor to international students and also my international origin made collection of data possible. Data collection was done through document analysis, observation, and semi-structured interviews. All documents that were specifically prepared for international students by the university were reviewed. These documents included the Orientation Folder prepared by International Student Services office, Packet of information distributed by the Graduate College to prospective graduate international students and the Orientation Manual prepared by the Office of International Programs for sponsored international student. Observation was done by participating in the fall 1992 orientation. Semistructured, audio-taped interviews served as the major method of collecting data. As the study progressed it became evident that a set of questions was necessary to facilitate the interviews. A set of interview protocol was formulated although they were not followed strictly.

The data were retrieved and transcribed, after each interview meeting, interview notes were immediately reviewed and expanded after each interview meeting. Reviewing and expanding interview notes helped in developing additional questions and topics for the following interviews and for use during data analysis.

Data Analysis

The method used to analyze data in this study was inductive method which requires units to be formed. Units serve as a basis for defining categories. Units were taken from interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents. Units in this study included sentences, phrases, or paragraphs that have thematic value. For the purposes of this study, a unit was a single statement, a sentence, or a phrase which gave an insight to the definition of problems experienced, perception of the resources available in solving the problems, and the coping strategies employed.

Categories were formed by sorting the units according to whether they have the theme or same meaning. For better data management categories were then grouped into five broad themes according to whether they carried the same general idea: (1) information gathering processes, (2) sociocultural issues, (3) academic concerns, (4) personal problems, and (5) coping strategies.

Research Criteria

To avoid researcher bias and to ensure that this study is believable, and that the respondents have been accurately portrayed the following strategy was used: (1) Data and interpretations were taken back to the respondent and they were asked if the results accurately portrayed their opinions. (2) Interviews were conducted until no further new information was available from the respondents. (3) A colleague knowledgeable about the study, and who has interest in the study, was identified and requested to serve as a debriefer. Debriefings were held twice during the course of data collection. Also a detailed description of how data was collected and how categories were formed is provided for researchers who wish to replicate the study.

Presentation of Data and Findings

Analysis of the information obtained from interviews with respondents revealed five themes of data. (1) information gathering processes (2) socio-cultural issues, (3) academic concerns, (4) personal problems, and (5) coping strategies.

Information Gathering Processes

Information gathering processes included three categories of data: (a) expectations of the United States, (b) formal orientation, and (c) informal orientation.

Students' expectations of the United States played a

big part on how graduate international students adjusted. The constant comparison between what they expected and what they actually saw was a source of disappointment and/or relief to these students. There were differing views about the usefulness of formal orientation. Although a lesser number of respondents thought that they gained by participating in the orientation program than those who did not or felt it was a waste of time, later in the conversation more respondents indicated the importance of good and on going orientation. In fact, some respondents felt that more needed to be covered on the orientation program.

Socio-cultural Issues

Socio-cultural issues encompassed the following categories: (a) culture shock, (b) interaction, and (c) discrimination.

Culture shock refers to a normal process of adjustment to a new setting. Although respondents did not perceive themselves as suffering from cultural shock, the symptoms of culture-shock were apparent when they reported feelings of not belonging, missing native food, a need to speak the native language, preference of interacting with fellow nationals, failure to understand norms and cues of the United States. Also, problems resulted from cultural differences regarding what is considered appropriate educational experience.

Respondents reported interacting with Americans for academic purposes only. Lack of understanding the cultural norms and difference of religious beliefs inhibited positive interaction between the Americans and the respondents.

Respondents reported interacting with fellow nationals or other internationals which provided emotional support for these students. The majority of respondents had not personally experienced discrimination although they mentioned behaviors and acts that resembled discrimination, these were not perceived as acts of discrimination.

Academic Concerns

Academic concerns included four categories of data: (a) advising, (b) academic conflict, (c) language proficiency, and (d) expectation for academic achievement.

The primary goal of the respondents was academic achievement. The advisor was seen as a key factor in the successful completion of the program. The advisor as the decision maker regarding the student's program. This expectation created problems, American professors expect graduate students to take responsibility of their programs. Fear of victimization and thus not completing the program resulted in fear to challenge the advisor. Although respondents reported to experience a variety of problems, they perceived themselves capable of mastering the graduate work.

Personal Concerns

Personal concerns addressed the categories of (a) time budgeting, (b) loneliness and homesickness, and (c) problems with sponsoring agency.

Respondents reported of experiencing pressure resulting from, the pressure to earn good grades to secure funding and not to waste limited funds that their families sacrificed for their education, and the constant feeling that they should perform at the same level as American students. This pressure compels these students to spend their time exclusively in studies.

Most international graduate students have families. Leaving behind family responsibilities, friends and responsibilities was reported to be very stressful to international graduate students. The distance and financial constraints made it difficult for these student to go back to their home countries to take care of emergencies as they arose.

Coping Strategies

The reporting of data relating to the theme of coping strategies was based on Lazarus, Averill and Opton's (1974) theory of coping, which states that for a coping strategy to be selected an individual goes through an appraisal process whereby the potential outcome of a situation, and of the coping effort adopted by the person is evaluated. Four categories were identified under the theme of coping

strategies: (a) appraisal processes, (b) emotion-focused coping (c) problem-focused coping, and (d) suggestions.

International graduate students reported that education was their major goal and anything that threatened the attainment of this objective was perceived as a major problem. The major fear if the problem got out of hand was failing to graduate and losing the scholarship,

Respondents tended to employ emotion-focused forms of coping when the situation was perceived to be unsolvable because of lack of resources.

Respondents who had confidence in their problem-solving skills tended to employ problem-focused coping strategies. Emotional support was sought from non-formal sources. None of the respondent had used the counseling service available on campus.

Respondents' suggestions indicated that there was a need for better communication of university and departmental policies among the university, the sponsoring agency, and the student. The university should take the responsibility of educating the university community about cultural differences. Also indicated is that part of international graduate students' problems resulted from the pressure to fulfill requirements from sponsoring agencies. From this study four areas of concern became evident. (1) Conflict that fills the life of international students result from cultural norms and expectations. (2) The support system is found from religion, family, other internationals and the

positive relationship with academic advisor. (3)

International students choose coping strategies that do not interfere with the achievement of their objective, although these strategies may not be healthy. (4) International students experience a lot of stress and anxiety at the beginning of their program, the pressure becomes gradually less intense after they have developed confidence in their survival skills.

Conclusions

This study was a focus of three areas of concern: problems experienced by international graduate students, coping strategies employed, and how these coping strategies reflect those described by Lazarus, Avrill and Opton's (1974). Based on the findings of the study the following conclusions were reached:

Problems Experienced

International graduate students experience a variety of problems resulting from being away from their home countries. Areas of difficulty include loneliness, homesickness, academic advising, language proficiency, understanding cultural norms, and discrimination. Part of the difficulty results from fulfilling requirements from funding agencies. The perceived difficulties vary from one individual to another.

Coping Strategies

International graduate students utilized various mechanisms of coping, they include, interacting with fellow nationals and other international students, dependence on academic advisor, telephone calls and letters to family members, working to exhaustion, use of sleeping tablets and crying. The selection of a coping strategy depends on the personal attributes (belief, self perception, and health) and the type of the problem.

Lazarus, Avrill and Opton's Coping Strategy

Coping strategies employed by international graduate students do reflect those describes by Lazarus and his associates (1974). International graduate students first identify the problem and go through appraisal processes by assessing the seriousness of the problem. Because the major objective of these students is education, anything that threatens successful academic achievement is considered as a major problem. International students used both emotion-focused and problem-focused coping strategies. Academic advising is considered as very important, and so is the role of the major advisor.

Advice for Practice

The following advice for practice is offered for institutions, supporting agencies and people.

Institutions

Institutions enrolling international graduate students should periodically evaluate the services offered to these students to assess the appropriateness of such services. Faculty and staff should be educated on cultural differences through workshops and seminars, to help in dealing with individuals from intercultural backgrounds.

Advisors of international graduate students should make an effort to know the student's background to successfully assist the student through his/her program. It is also recommended that the advisor to international students should utilize the co-national group or other international students as resources for helping foreign student to adjust to the new environment and to preserve identity with home-country customs and culture. Teaching faculty should make an effort to encourage international students to participate in class discussions.

University and departmental policies should be clearly communicated with the sponsoring agency and the student before the student begins the program. Departments which require field work of any extended time should definitely communicate such requirements with the sponsor and the student so that consideration in estimating time for completing the program could be made.

Supporting Agencies

Funding agencies should clearly explain the scholarship

terms before the student leaves his/her country. Changes on the terms should be discussed with the student/s concerned and ample time given for adjusting to the changes, more especially, if the changes affect the student's plan of study.

Stress can be alleviated by funding agencies if provision is made for family members to visit the student, without imposing restrictive terms, or providing financial support for the student to visit the family at least once in their academic sojourn.

Personal Strategies

Information about the host country, university, and academic department should be gathered and thoroughly reviewed before leaving the home country. Arrangements for family responsibilities should be made well ahead of departure.

An effort should be made by international graduate students to understand, and know their advisors' interests, and if possible match their research topic accordingly.

It is important for students to build a network of support through family, peers or religious groups

Recommendations for Further Research

Questions suggested by this study that might be of interest for other investigators to pursue include:

1. What impact do international students have on the host

university and the community in terms of change in attitude and gain in knowledge about other cultures?

2. Given the high numbers of international graduate student; what effects, if any do, they have on the academic life of the host institution in terms of courses offered and course content?

3. What impact do international graduate students have on the research undertaken, to what extent do the departments rely on international students for teaching assistants, and how does this affect the quality of undergraduate teaching?

4. Given the fact that international students do not choose to utilize the services of the counseling center, are they more prone to suffer from severe depression, ulcers, high blood pressure and mental disorders? Also of interest might be an indepth study of the effect of cultural barriers to an advisor/advisee relationship.

Concluding Thoughts

The life of graduate international students is filled with stress and anxiety which results from returning to school after working for several years, leaving behind family responsibilities, the fear of not knowing whether one can still academically match up, and the loss of all that is familiar (language, culture, friends, food) because of moving from the home country. Things that these students took for granted suddenly required an effort to do. A feeling of inadequacy and a loss of self confidence occur

which could negatively affect the academic achievement of the student.

International students feel isolated because they feel foreign. They seek comfort in those they perceive more like themselves or those who can relate to their plight. It therefore, is advisable for institutions to strengthen and encourage the support systems that are more acceptable to these students rather than offer services that are not utilized.

REFERENCES

- Adelegan, F., & Parks, D. J. (1985). Problems of transition or African students in an American university. Journal of College Student Personnel, 26, 504-507.
- Addou, I. H., & Hodinko, B. A. (1989). The marital status and time in U.S. as correlates to English language proficiency of male Arab university students ED 309646
- Akpan-Iquot, E. T. (1980). An investigation of foreign students' problems in selected Oklahoma institutions of higher learning. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Stillwater, OK: Oklahoma State University.
- Altbach, P. G. (1991). Impact of adjustment: Foreign students in comparative perspective. Higher Education, 21(3), 305-23.
- Altbach, P. G., Kelly, D. H., & Lulat, Y. G. M. (1985). Research on foreign students and international study. New York: Praeger.
- Amoh, K. (1985). Newly arrived foreign students at a U.S. university: Their adjustment difficulties and coping strategies. Dissertation Abstracts International, 45, 2315A.
- Baber, E., Altbach, P., & Myers. (1984). Bridges to knowledge: Foreign students in comparative perspective. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Baber, E. G., Morgan, R. P. (1988). Boon or bane: Foreign graduate students in U.S engineering programs. IIE Research Report, N15, Institute of International Education, New York: NY.
- Baber, E. G., Morgan, R. P., & Torstrick, R. L. (1987). Foreign graduate students in U.S. engineering programs: Problems and solutions. Engineering Education, 78(3), 171-74.
- Boakari, F. (1984). The nationality group in cross-cultural adjustment: The case of Koreans and Taiwanese at the University of Iowa. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Ames, IA: University of Iowa.

- Bochner, S. (Ed.). (1981). The mediating person: Bridges between cultures. Cambridge, MA: Schenkman.
- Bochner, S., Mcleod, B. & Lin, A. (1977). Friendship patterns of overseas students: A functional model. International Journal of Psychology, 12, 277-294.
- Bourne, P. (1975). The Chinese student: Acculturation and mental illness. Psychiatry, 38, 212-216.
- Brein, M. & David, K. (1976). Intercultural communication and the adjustment of the sojourner. Psychological Bulletin, 76, 215-230.
- Brislin, R. W. (1981). Cross-cultural encounters: Face to face interaction. Elmsford, NY: Pergamon.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1986). Ecology of family as a context for human development: Research perspectives. Developmental Psychology, 22, 723-742.
- Chandler, A. (1989). Obligation or opportunity: Foreign policy in six major receiving countries. Education Research Report, N8, New York: Institute of International Education, New York: NY.
- Church, A. T. (1982). Sojourner adjustment. Psychological Bulletin, 91, 540-72.
- Clark, L. A., & Watson, D. (1988). Mood and the mundane: Relations between daily life events and self-reported mood. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 54, 296-308.
- Clarke, M. A. (1976). Second language acquisition as a clash of consciousness. Language Learning, 26, 377-390.
- Collins, P. L. (1976). Self-Perceived problems of international students attending Howard University. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Washington, DC: George Washington University.
- Crowson, R. L. (1987). Qualitative research methods. In J. Smart (Ed.), Higher education handbook of theory and research, Vol. 3 (pp. 2-56). New York: Agathon Press.
- Dillard, J. M., & Chisolm, G. B. (1983). Counseling the international student in a multicultural context. Journal of College Student Personnel, 23, 101-105.
- Dodge, B. (1961). Al-Azhar: A Millennium of Muslim Education. Washington, DC: Middle East Institution.

- Dodge, S. (1990). Culture shock and alienation remains a problems for many foreign students on U.S. campuses. Chronicle of Higher Education, 36(25), A33, 36.
- El-Agha, H. (1991). Arab students at five Oklahoma institutions of higher education: A study of academic achievement. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Stillwater, OK: Oklahoma State University.
- Ellis, M. E. (1978). Perceived problems of Non-Canadian and Non-European foreign students at a major university. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University.
- Fleishman, J. (1984). Personality characteristics and coping patterns. Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 25, 229-244.
- Furnham, A. (1986). Culture shock: Psychological reactions to unfamiliar environments. New York: Methuen.
- Fox, H. (1991). "Its more than just a technique": International graduate students difficulties with analytical writing. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Massachusetts.
- Giammarella, M. (1986). A profile of the foreign student at a public two-year college: The Borough of Manhattan Community College response to the financial problems of foreign Students. Community Review, 7(1), 6-13.
- Goetz, J. P., & LeCompte, M. D. (1984). Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research. Orlando, FL: Academic Press.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1989). Fourth generation evaluation. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Heikiheimo, P. S. & Shute, J. C. M. (1986). The adaptation of foreign students: Student views and institutional implications. Journal of College Student Personnel. 27(5), 399-406.
- Heppner, P. P., Reeder, B. L. & Larson, L. M. (1983). Cognitive variables associated with personal problem solving appraisal: Implications for counseling. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 29, 66-75.
- ✓ Hull, W. F. (1978). Foreign students in the United States of America: Coping behavior within the educational environment. New York, NY: Praeger.

- Klineberg, O. (1982). Contact between ethnic groups: A historical perspective of some aspects of theory and research. In S. Bochner (Ed.), Cultures in contact: Studies in cross-cultural interaction (pp. 320-335). Oxford: pergamon.
- Klineberg, O., & Hull, W. F. (1979). At a foreign university: An international study of adaptation and coping. New York: Praeger.
- Kunze, G. W. (1977). The role of the graduate college. Journal of Animal Science, 45(4), 912-918.
- Lam, M. P. (1979). The problems of Chinese students at the university of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.
- Larson, L. M., Piersel, W. C., Imao, R. A. K. & Allen, S. J. (1990). Significant predictors of problem-solving appraisal. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 37(4), 482-490.
- Lazarus, R. S., Averill, J. R. & Opton, E. M. Jr. (1974). The psychology of coping: Issues of research and assessment. In G. V. Coelho, & J. E. Adams (Eds.), Coping and adaptation (pp. 249-307). New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). Stress appraisal and coping. New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company.
- Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1991). Coping and emotion. In S. Manot, & R. Lazarus, (eds.), Stress and coping: An anthology. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Lee, M. (1984). Judgement of significant others and self-concept of students from developing nations. The Journal of Social Psychology, 122, 127-134.
- Lee, M. Y., Abd-ella, M., & Burke, L. (1981). Needs of foreign students from developing nations at U.S. colleges and universities. Washington, D.C.: National Association for Foreign Student Affairs.
- Lefcourt, H., Martin, R., & Saleh, W. (1980). Locus of control and social support: Interactional moderation of stress. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 47, 378-389.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). Naturalistic Inquiry. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

- Lysgaard, S. (1955). Adjustment in a foreign society: Norwegian Fullbright grantees visiting the United States. International Social Science Bulletin, 7, 45-51.
- MacCalla, J. (1979). Psychosocial stress variables affecting international students. Dissertation Abstracts International, 39, 5653B.
- McCrae, R. R. (1982). Age difference in the use of coping mechanism. Journal of Gerontology, 37, 454-560.
- McCubbin, H. J., Cauble, A. E. & Patterson, J. M. (1982). Family stress, coping, and social support. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.
- Meanaghan, E. G. (1983). Individual coping efforts and family studies: Conceptual and methodological issues. Marriage and Family Life, 16, 113-135.
- Meleis, A. I. (1982). Arab students in Western universities: Social properties and dilemmas. Journal of Higher Education, 53(4), 439-447.
- Meloni, C. F. (1986). Adjustment problems of foreign students in the United States College and universities. Center for applied Linguistics. (ERIC Document Reproduction Services No. 276296).
- Merriam, S. B. (1988). Case study research in education: A qualitative approach. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bassey.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1984). Qualitative data analysis: A sourcebook of new methods. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Miller, D. F., & Harwell, D. J. (1983). International students at an American university: Health problems and status. School Health, 53, 45-49.
- Monshi-Tousi, M. (1980). English proficiency and factors in its attainment: A case study of Iranians in the United States. TESOL Quarterly, 14, 365-372.
- Ng, J. T. P. (1981). Use of the Mooney problem check list for identifying psychosocial adjustment problems of international students at four universities in Colorado through the use of stratified random sampling technique. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Greeley, CO: University of Northern Colorado.

- Nezu, A. (1985). Differences in psychological distress between effective and ineffective problem solvers. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 32(1), 135-138.
- Oberg, K. (1960). Culture shock: Adjustment to new cultural environments, Practical Anthropology, 7, 177-182.
- Okoawa, A. (1985). Differential attitudes of Nigerian students towards seeking professional psychological counseling. Dissertation Abstracts International, 45, 3115B.
- Owie, I. (1982). Social Alienation among foreign students. College Student Journal, 16(2), 163-165.
- Pendersen, P. B. (1991). Counseling international students. The Counseling Psychologist, 19(1), 10-49.
- Pendersen, P. (1975). Personal problems solving resources used by University of Minnesota foreign students. Topics in Culture Learning, 3, 55-66.
- Pruitt, F.J. (1978). The adaptation of foreign students on American campuses. Journal of the National Association for Women's Deans, Administrators and Counselors, 4(14), 144-147.
- Roper, G. C. (1989). Caribbean students coping with the transition to a new culture: The role of age, gender, year in college and academic major. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. College Park, MD: University of Maryland.
- Sabie, T. (1975). Foreign students coping with the American culture at Eight selected American universities. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Nashville, TN: George Peabody College for Teachers.
- Schram, J. L. & Lauver P. J. (1988). Alienation in international students. Journal of College Student Development, 29, 146-150.
- Schwartz, K. (1987). The relationship between culture and stress: A comparison of Chinese, Saudi Arabian and American students' perceptions regarding problems in living, coping behavior and the effectiveness of coping. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Pittsburg, PA: University of Pittsburgh.
- Shana'a, J. (1979). The foreign student: Better understanding for better teaching. Improving College and University Teaching, 26, 243-246.

- Seiffge-Krenke, I. & Shulman, S. (1990). Coping styles in adolescence: A cross-cultural study. Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 21(3), 351-377.
- Shandiz, M. T. (1981). Factors influencing students' adjustments and attitudes in the community of Oklahoma State University. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Stillwater, OK: Oklahoma State University.
- Spaulding, S. & Flack, M. J. (1976). The world's students in the United States. New York, NY: Praeger.
- Stone, A. A., & Neale, J. M. (1984). New measure of daily coping: Development and preliminary results. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 4, 892-906.
- Story, K. E. (1982). The student development professional and the foreign student: A conflict of values. Journal of College Student Personnel, 23(1), 66-70.
- Surdam, J. C., & Collins, J. R. (1984). Adaptation of international students: A case for concern. Journal of College Personnel, 25(3), 240-44.
- ✓ The Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac. (1991). The Nation Students, 27-28.
- Watson, D. (1988). Intraindividual and interindividual analyses of positive and negative affect: Their relation to health complaints, perceived stress, and daily activities. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 54, 1020-1030.
- Weisman, A. D. (1984). The coping capacity: On the nature of Being Mortal. New York, NY: Human Sciences Press.
- White, A. J., Brown, S. E., Suddick, D. (1983). Academic performance affecting the scholastic performance of international students. College Student Journal, 17, 268-272.
- White, R. (1974). An attempt at systematic description in G. V. Coelho D. A. Hamburg, & J. E. Adams (Eds.) Coping and Adaptation, 47-68. New York: Basic Books.
- Whitt, E. J. (1989). "Hit the ground running": The experiences of new faculty in School of Education at a research university. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University.
- Zikopolous M. (Ed.). (1992). Open Doors 1991/1992: Report on International Educational Exchange. New York: Institute of International Education.

Zikopoulos M. (Ed.). (1990). Open Doors 1989/1990: Report on International Education Exchange. New York: Institute of International Education.

APPENDIX A

DOCUMENT SUMMARY FORM

Date:

Name and description of document:

Event or contact (if any) with which document is associated:

Significance or importance of document:

Summary of the document:

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. What is your home country?
2. Which academic department are you in?
3. How long have you been at Oklahoma State University?
4. Have you been to the United States before this visit and have you visited another country prior this visit?
5. What country does your roommate come from?
6. Who do you interact with the most (fellow nationals, other international students, family, American students etc.)?
7. What country does your best friend come from?
8. Do you have any social contact with Americans?
9. Describe your week i.e. activities including school work and extra-curricular.
10. Do you have any contact with your neighbors? describe.
11. Identify any problem you are having or have had by checking those items on the following list that were a source of difficulty that affected your stay:
 - English language problem
 - loneliness
 - homesickness
 - personal depression
 - ill health
 - lack of contact with fellow students
 - difficulty adjusting to American food
 - problems relating to religion
 - lack of contact with Americans
 - insufficient academic advising
 - problems with the library
 - lack of personal counseling
 - lack of private place to study
 - difficulty with course work
 - difficulty dealing with the university administration
 - problems with professors/advisor
12. What did you do to solve your problem/s
13. How are these problems going to affect you if they are not solved?
14. Do you consider your efforts in solving the problem effective?
15. Did you participate in the orientation program?
16. What is your impression of the orientation (did it help

- you in solving your problems? if not what would you have liked to see included in the orientation program.
17. How often do you meet with your academic advisor?
 18. Would you like to discuss your problems with someone?
 19. How do you expect to perform academically this semester?
 20. Make a suggestion on how you could be helped in solving your problems.

APPENDIX C

LETTER TO RESPONDENTS

Dear International Graduate Student:

I am a doctoral student in Higher Education and Administration at Oklahoma State University and I am in the process of collecting data for my dissertation. The topic of my dissertation is "International Graduate Students' Problems and Coping Strategies." Data collection of this study will be in the form of interviews.

The purpose of this study is to identify problems experienced by international graduate students and strategies used to cope with those problems. I request your participation in this study. The result of this study may lead to the development of programs to assist international graduate students in dealing with their problems.

I will be contacting you by phone within the next few days to schedule an appointment. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to call me at 744-6535 (office) or 624-8828 (home).

I look forward to talking with you.

Sincerely,

Nomsa Elizabeth Mncadi

APPENDIX D

RESPONDENT CONSENT FORM

Investigator: Nomsa Elizabeth Mncadi

I, _____ understand that

a. the information obtained during this project will be kept in strict confidence and will be used for this research only.

b. information will be conducted by interview notes and voice recordings.

c. real names will not be used during data collection or in the completed dissertation.

d. The tape recordings and interview notes will be read only by the investigator and the conversation may not be shared

e. I may review the dissertation before the final draft is written, if I so wish, in order to confirm or deny the investigator's construction of my statements. If necessary, I may negotiate changes in those constructions with the investigator.

f. I may withdraw from the study at any time, but I will notify the investigator of such an action.

I agree to participate in this research project according to the preceding terms.

Respondent Signature _____

I promise to conduct the research according to the preceding terms.

Investigator Signature _____

APPENDIX E

EXAMPLES OF UNITS

Units are grouped according to themes.

Information Gathering Processes

I discovered that the cost of living is very high.
(African male, Agriculture)

I realized that what I expected was not true, at home people think so highly of America.
(African male, Agriculture)

Before I came to the United States, I was told something as result I was not shocked.
(African male, Economics)

I expected a big place like I usually see in movies.
(South American female, Home Economics)

I had something that I expected, for example, they [Americans] have been projected as lazy and fun loving, but I have discovered that they are hardworking and serious.
(Asian male, Agriculture)

I thought the country was big, developed and I thought everything was so good. I still feel the same but I now know that not all American are rich. there are very poor people.
(South American, male, Agriculture)

Orientation did not help me because I already knew things, I had been in an American university. The orientation does not help me with problems in the department.
(South American female, Agriculture)

I attended the orientation but it did not help me because I was thinking too much about my wife.
(African male, Agriculture)

I did not attend the orientation, I do not regret because first, is religious reason and also, we as Moslems have the Mosque. As Moslems we share something, we can speak to each other about our problems. We form a support group because we feel by gathering together we can solve our problems.

(Middle Eastern female, Education)
 I felt it was very useful [orientation] because they showed us a movie of other international students.
 (African male, Agriculture)

Socio-cultural

Americans seem to be very different from the people in my own country. I my culture if you know a person you ahow that you know that person all the time.
 (Middle Eastern male, Education)

When Americans meet a person they show a smile, but I have just discovered that the smile does not mean anything, it is not a sign of friendship.
 (Asian male, Agriculture)

What I have noticed is that Americans are very individualistic.
 (South American female, Human and Environmental Sciences)

I have a very special relationship with an American family I got through the Host Program.
 (African male, Economics)

I do not have any social contact with Americans and I do not think there is a need for me to have social contact with them.
 (Asian male, Agriculture)

I mix with Americans a lot. My roommate is an American and my girlfriend is an american.
 (South American male, Agriculture)

Right now it is very difficult to for me to have any social contact with American students, even the way we sit in class reflects that. I really do not care for interaction because I feel some Americans do not make an effort to understand our accent. They do not realize how much effort we make to understand theirs.
 (African male, Agriculture)

I interact with mostly international students in the department. After classes I interact with people form my own country. The reason is that we have time to talk about things back home and speak our language.
 (Asian male, Agriculture)

I participate a lot in activities involving Americans mostly through religious affiliation. I have presented talks to several groups in this community.
 (African male, Agriculture)

Academic Concerns

I have a very good advisor. He is very helpful and cooperative. I should say that the student/professor relationship is very good and informal.

(African male, Agriculture)

I need more advisement, my advisor let me think by myself and do things on my own. He wants me to solve problems by myself, although he supports me I need more guidance.

(Middle Eastern male, Education)

When I first came to this university I had a serious problem with my temporary advisor who did not check my background so that he could help me choose the right courses with the necessary preparation. I had to eventually drop one class and completed the semester with 6 hours which violates the regulations of the sponsoring agency.

(South American male, Agriculture)

I have noticed that instruction in American universities is too specialized. I have a problem because I am expected to go back home and teach and I need a more general information on the subject, not as specific as the one offered here.

(African male, Agriculture)

My advisor did not advise me well about enrolling to courses. I read the course catalog and I enrolled for the courses that were relevant to my career. I did not know that the course number mean something, for instance, the higher the number the higher the level of the course. When I eventually found out that I did not have the necessary preparatory course it was too late for me to drop the course.

(South American female, Agriculture)

English is a real problem. At times I want to say something and I do not know how to say it. I do not participate in class discussions even though I wish to say something.

(African male, Economics)

I miss questions in examinations because I did not understand the question and I miss out in class discussions because of my poor English language.

(South American female, Human and Environmental Sciences)

I do not have a problem in English because of my background. I do have a problem in expressing myself because of my accent.

(African male, Agriculture)

I do not have a problem in understanding American English, but Americans have a difficulty understanding me. What I have noticed is that Americans do not bother themselves about understanding an international person's accent.

(African male, Agriculture)

I have a problem with English in terms of expressing myself. At times when I say something in class it is interpreted wrongly because they have a problem understanding my accent.

(Asian male, Agriculture)

Writing term papers is a problem, I can not just write and give it to my instructor. I give it to somebody else before I can give it to my instructor.

(Middle Eastern male, Education)

Personal Concerns

I spend most of my time doing school related activities. I do not have time for social activities, I can but If I do, it is to my disadvantage.

(African male, Agriculture)

I do not do any sport even though I would like to, because I do not have time. I came back to study after seven years of work. It is harder for me to get back to school, right now it is really difficult to adjust.

(Asian male, Agriculture)

My biggest problem is financial, I have a year old son and expecting a little one soon, I have to support my family on meager income.

(African male, Agriculture)

I have never been personally been discriminated against. If there is discrimination in my department it has not affected the allocation of grades.

(Middle Eastern male, Education)

There is discrimination in my department. We internationals are allocated our offices in an older building which does not even have windows while American students have offices in the new nice building near the professors.

(South American female, Agriculture)

There are professors who look at international students as lazy. There is a lot of discrimination. This makes me have to work twice as hard to disprove that notion and show them that they are not better than us.

(Middle Eastern male, Agriculture)

Coping Strategies

I consider failing my courses as a major problem, because my sponsor would take me back home.

(South American female, Agriculture)

If I do not succeed I would mess up my first mission, which is to get my degree.

(Middle Eastern female, Education)

The fear of being discontinued by my sponsor and not feeling good about myself, that I have failed to meet my goals and the shame of going back to family and colleagues without finishing.

(African male, Agriculture)

Right now I do not have any fears because I am doing very well academically and I do not even think about how I can be affected if my problems are not solved because I have always solved my problems.

(South American male, Agriculture)

I consider myself as a person who can adapt to any situation, I do not think I have a problem.

(South American female, Human Environmental Sciences)

This is my first semester, and I am very anxious about my performance.

(African male, Agriculture)

Although I have been here for three years now , this is my toughest semester because I was disturbed when I was told I could not go home to do my research.

(African male, Agriculture)

This semester I will have a 4:00. International students are mostly on scholarships, those who get funded are screened very well.

(South American male, Agriculture)

When I had a problem with a course I did not tell anybody, instead I suffered silently through the course. I studied very hard at times spending sleepless nights.

(South American female, Agriculture)

To improve my English I read, listen to English speakers how they use certain words. I also speak to other international students. I lead discussion groups in English to Moslem women.

(Middle Eastern female, Education)

I think there is no need to talk about my problems because they do not get solved, this is not my opinion alone, other students feel this way too. They say "keep quiet because you will create a lot of problems and add more problems to yourself."

(Asian male, Agriculture)

When I have a problem I call my family. At times I spend more money on telephone bills than I spend on food.

(Asian male, Agriculture)

When I feel depressed I just go to bed, I take sleeping tablets and go to sleep.

(Middle Eastern male, Agriculture)

APPENDIX F

CATEGORIES

1. Demographic information

Information regarding country of origin, field of study, length of time in the U.S., prior travel experience, presence of spouse or relative in the U.S.

2. Cultural Shock/expectations

Information regarding the U.S. before arrival, confirmation or failure of confirmation of the information, feelings of not belonging, longing for the familiar, constant comparisons with home country, complaining about everything.

3. Social Contacts

Patterns of interactions.

4. Academic Advising

Usefulness of academic advisor, and general impression of the program/teaching quality.

5. English Language Fluency

Perceived mastery of the language. Effects of lack of language proficiency.

6. Discrimination

Description of incidents of discrimination.

7. Homesickness

Missing family, friends, food, native language and the familiar cues.

8. Loneliness and Depression

Feelings that there is no one who can understand you, no support group and feelings of helplessness and meaninglessness.

9. Time Budgeting

How time is used.

10. Coping Strategies

actions, thoughts and behaviors used to alleviate the stressful situation.

11. Source of Support

The presence or absence of a person/s to provide guidance and support.

12. Orientation

Participation or lack of participation, and comments related to orientation.

13. Academic Achievement Expectations

All reports related to how individuals expect to perform academically.

14. Suggestions

Comments and suggestions.

VITA

NOMSA ELIZABETH MNCADI

Candidate for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

Thesis: INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE STUDENTS' PROBLEMS AND
COPING STRATEGIES.

Major Field: Higher Education

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born at Umzimkhulu, Cape Province,
South Africa on Sept. 22, 1953, the daughter of
Genesisius and Gertrude Mncadi.

Education: High school certificate from Marianhill
High School, South Africa, 1973. Bachelor of
Arts in 1982, University of Zululand. Master of
Science in Curriculum and Instruction, Oklahoma
State University in May 1987; completed
requirements for the Doctor of Education from
Oklahoma State University at Stillwater in
December, 1993.

Professional Experience: Teacher, Lamontville High,
South Africa from 1982-1985; Graduate Research
Associate, Deans' Office at Oklahoma State from
1986-1990; Graduate Research Associate, Vice
President of Research and Academic Affairs at
Oklahoma State University spring 1990; Graduate
Assistant, Office of International Programs from
May 1990-July 1992; International Programs
Specialist, Office of International Programs from
August 1992-present.

Professional Memberships: National Association of
International Educators