

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PREFERENCES FOR  
COPING STRATEGIES, COUNSELING  
APPROACHES AND COUNSELOR  
CHARACTERISTICS

By

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Introduction.....	2
Purpose of the Study.....	4
Definition of Terms.....	5
International students.....	5
Coping Strategies.....	5
Counseling Approaches.....	5
Counselor Characteristics.....	5
Significance of the Study.....	5
Research Questions.....	6
Limitations.....	6
Organization of the Study.....	7
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	8
Introduction.....	9
Coping Strategies.....	9
Counseling Approaches.....	17
Counselor Characteristics.....	21
International Students.....	27
Summary.....	33
III. METHODOLOGY.....	35
Introduction.....	36
Participants.....	36
Instruments.....	37
Research Design.....	38
Procedure.....	38

Analysis of Data.....	39
IV. FINDINGS.....	40
Introduction.....	41
Stress.....	42
Coping Strategies.....	42
Counselor/Counseling Preferences.....	43
Embarrassment/Attitude.....	45
Difficulty with English and Stress.....	45
Religious Faith and Coping.....	45
Problems that International Students would Seek Help.....	46
Counseling Approaches.....	47
Counselor Characteristics.....	48
International Student’s Coping Strategies.....	49
One-Way ANOVA Analysis.....	49
V. CONCLUSION.....	53
Introduction.....	54
Discussion and Conclusion.....	55
Problems that International Students would Seek Help.....	55
Preferred Counselor Characteristics.....	55
Preferred Counseling Approaches.....	57
Preferred Coping Strategies.....	58
One-Way ANOVA Analysis.....	60
Limitations.....	62
Further Study Suggestions.....	63
REFERENCES.....	64
APPENDIXES.....	73
APPENDIXE A - DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE.....	74
APPENDIXE B – CONSENT FORM.....	90
APPENDIXE C – INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL FORM.....	93

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1.....	95
2.....	96
3.....	98
4.....	99
5.....	100
6.....	101
7.....	102
8.....	103

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

## *Introduction*

International students make significant contributions to the diversity of university campuses. International students and their families encounter a variety of problems in U.S. universities. Some of these problems are unique to international students, while others are common to all students. Common challenges experienced by both international students and American students are homesickness, a need to cultivate new peer relationships, and a need to become independent (Cheng, Leong, & Geist, 1993). Zhang and Dixon (2001) suggested that Asian international students experience similar problems as American students, but often in amplified form. Some of the issues unique to international students included adjusting to a new university system, dealing with financial worries, being uprooted from familiar social support systems ( Komiya & Eells, 2001), experiencing culture shock (Brinson & Kottler, 1995; Bulthuis, 1986), experiencing limited language proficiency (Deressa & Beavers, 1988; Parr, Bradley & Bingi, 1992; Takahashi, 1989), being subjected to racial or religious discrimination (Halpern, 1993; Hayes & Lin, 1994), and losing social support (Hayes & Lin, 1994).

Although counseling services are available for both domestic and international students, studies suggested that international students generally either do not seek or hesitate to seek counseling services from counseling centers on campus for various reasons (Arkoff, Thaver, & Elkind, 1966; Ebbin & Blankenship, 1986; Mau & Jepsen, 1990). An additional study indicated that international students harbor different attitudes towards the idea of seeking counseling (Dadfar & Friedlander, 1982). Research also demonstrated that international graduate students are more likely to be married and that their spouses are unable to work due to immigration regulation (Yi, Lin, & Kishimoto,

2003). Their spouses tend to stay at home with their children. While U.S. universities are aware of the needs of international students (Lin & Yi, 1997), more attention should be paid to counseling services for international students' spouses and families (Yi et al., 2003). Given these difficulties faced by international students and their families, it is beneficial to consider the kinds of problems for which international students seek counseling services, as well as preferences for counselor characteristics and approaches. Numerous authors suggest that counselors need to have knowledge of and respect for other countries and cultures (e.g., Gladding, 2003; Sue & Sue, 2003), though few empirical studies examine approaches for providing counseling services or counselor characteristics preferred by international students. A study by Zhang and Dixon (2001), however, demonstrated that Asian international students view culturally-aware counselors more favorably than culturally-neutral counselors. Additionally, Asian international students perceive culturally-sensitive counselors as more competent and credible than culturally-neutral counselors.

International students and their families can utilize several resources to deal with their problems and to cope with daily stress. These resources include religion, social networking, and family (Hayes & Lin, 1994). International students tend to seek professional help when they cannot resolve their problems through the three resources mentioned above.

The issues previously described may impact whether international students will seek help from professional counselors. Since the U.S. hosts approximately half of the world's total number of international students, it is essential to know more about



international students' counseling preferences (Baker & Al-Timimi, 2004; Poyrazli, Kavanaugh, Baker, & Al-Timimi, 2004).

### *Problem Statement*

This research addresses the kinds of problems for which international students would seek professional counseling and the counseling approaches and counselor characteristics international students prefer. We are also examining ways in which international students cope with their problems. Furthermore, we will compare responses of international students from different countries of origin.

### *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this study is to identify and to understand the following:

- 1) the types of problems for which international students will seek a professional counselor,
- 2) the attitudes of international students for counselor approaches and characteristics,
- 3) the preferences of international students for counseling approaches and counselor characteristics.

The previous literature suggests that further research on counseling preferences of international students is needed. We will also examine coping strategies used by international students. There are several studies that provide information related to international students' preferences for coping strategies, counseling approaches and counselor characteristics.

An exploratory research study will be conducted at Oklahoma State University, a university in the mid-western United States. Descriptive statistics will be generated for the responses provided by international students. Frequency analysis and correlation analysis will be performed on the data. Multiple regression analyses will be utilized to consider the extent to which participant demographic data will predict, problems for which international students will seek counseling, preferred coping strategies, preferred counseling approaches, and preferred counselor characteristics. Implications for counseling practice will also be discussed.

#### *Definition of Terms*

International students – students enrolled at a college or university who are not U.S. citizens.

Coping strategies – strategies in which a psychologically healthy individual uses to develop relationships. It involves compromise, communication, agreement, disagreement, and decision-making.

Counseling approaches – different counseling therapy approaches and different theoretical orientation in counseling.

Counselor characteristics – characteristics of counselors which affect a client's impression of counselors and counseling.

#### *Significance of the Study*

A study of this type is extremely significant to many different mental health professionals working in the United States. This study will bring insight to mental health professionals about counseling international students. Also, it provides information to mental health professions about how to handle international students' concerns while

they are in counseling. It further prepares graduate counseling programs to understand how to counsel international students, as well as provide training to student counselors. The information gained from this study will prove most useful to administrators and faculty members in higher education settings. It is useful to administrators because it provides information about the cultural and social needs of international students. It is useful to faculty members because they can use the results to evaluate and improve their counseling graduate programs to better respond to the needs of international students.

### *Research Questions*

The main questions that will be answered at the conclusion of this study are: 1) What kinds of problems do international students seek help from a professional counselor? 2) What counseling approaches do international students prefer? 3) What kind of counselor characteristics do international students prefer? 4) In what ways do international students cope with their problems? 5) Does variations in country/region of origin affect the responses of international students?

### *Limitations*

A significant limitation to this study is the use of the online survey. The researcher is never sure if individuals are expressing their true attitude, interest, values, or personality, as opposed to a “socially acceptable” response. Another limitation of this study is the generalization of the study. Since the study is being carried out at one university, the same results may not apply to other institutions in the United States.

### *Organization of the Study*

Four main components are addressed in this research proposal: the introduction of the topic, a review of literature related to the question, a section on methods, and a section on data collection and analysis.

The introduction discusses the necessity of this study, identifies the people benefiting from this information, and defines selected terms. The section that reviews related literature provides additional information regarding the preferences of international students for coping strategies, counseling approaches, and counselor characteristics. It is organized to examine and to discuss previous research and scholarly works related to the focus of this study. The third section is the methods section, which includes a description of the subjects, instruments, and design of this research study. Information about how the data is analyzed is also provided.

CHAPTER II  
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

## *Introduction*

In this part of the research proposal, a review of related literature on international students' preferences for coping strategies, counseling approaches, and counselor characteristics is presented. Following the literature review is a summary of the most relevant information related to the research questions. The methods section and the analysis section will be discussed following the literature review.

Folkman & Moskowitz (2004) indicated that many different studies have been conducted regarding coping in the field of behavioral science, medicine, public health, and nursing. Through these studies, researchers sought to enrich our understanding for why some individuals are better able to manage the stressful situations they encounter in their lives than other individuals. The widely accepted definition of coping is derived from the work of Lazarus & Folkman (2004), Folkman & Lazarus (1980), and Lazarus & Folkman (1984). They defined "coping as thoughts and behaviors that people use to manage the internal and external demands of situations that are evaluated as stressful". The coping process is initiated when an individual's goals have been harmed, lost, or threatened. Coping responses are initiated in an emotional environment. One of the most often used coping tasks is managing negative emotions in a stressful situation. Emotion also plays a part in the coping response. Emotions play an integral part in the coping process throughout a stressful encounter as an outcome of coping, as a response to new information, and as a result of reassessment of the status of the encounter. If the encounter has a successful resolution, positive emotions will prevail; if the resolution is unclear or unfavorable, negative emotions will prevail (Lazarus & Folkman 2004). In Folkman and Lazarus (1980,1985), the researchers differentiated between two major

styles of coping: problem-focused and emotion-focused. The problem-focused coping directly deals with the sources of stress whereas emotion-focused coping tries to handle thoughts and feeling associated with the stressor. Individuals engaged in problem-focused coping strategies display coping behaviors that manage the person-environment relationship aimed directly at the source of the stress (Stahl & Caligiuri, 2005). Shiota (2006) indicated that individuals who use problem-focused coping strategies direct their attention and energy toward constructive action when responding to the negative event. The researcher expressed that problem-focused coping may be the most appropriate strategy when faced with a practical problem such as personal failure or too much to do in a short period of time. Stahl & Caligiuri (2005) suggested that emotion-focused coping strategies refer to the regulation of emotions that results from the stress. Fellow researcher, Susan Folkman and her colleagues (Folkman, Lazarus, Gruen, & DeLongis, 1986) identified that there were many unique coping strategies within many different problem-focused coping strategies and emotion-focused coping strategies. These include confronting, distancing, self-controlling, seeking social support, accepting responsibility, avoiding problems, planning problem solving, and reappraising positively. Carver, Scheier & Weintraub (1989) suggested that problem-focused and emotional-focused coping styles should be further divided into four dimensions. The first dimension closely resembles the problem-focused coping; the second dimension involves scales that are designed to assess emotion-focused strategies. Originally this second dimension was considered as a problem-focused strategy, but later was labeled as the second dimension. The third dimension demonstrates seeking social support to obtain advice or to express emotions. The last dimension-corresponds to avoidance behavior, a behavior in which

individuals avoid dealing with either the problem or the associated emotions (Litman, 2006).

Wester , Kuo & Vogel (2006) suggested that coping strategies are inadequate when accounting for coping strategies of persons from a collective background, such as individuals of Asian descent. Kuo, Roysircar, & Newby-Clark (2006) suggested that individuals of Asian descent often use culturally specific methods of coping, including engaging the assistance of others and approaching problems from a collective perspective in addition to a personal or individual perspective. Cross (1995) suggested that members of collectivistic cultures, such as many Africans, Asians, and Latin-Americans, may place greater importance on relational coping strategies (i.e. indirect coping) or practices when they experience problems. Indirect coping is defined as the use of strategies designed to adjust to stressful needs by changing the self rather than the situation (Cross, 1995). On the other hand, Western culture usually uses direct coping strategies, including asserting disclosure, expressing one's own thoughts, and confronting others, often evident in problem-focused and emotion-coping styles (Lucas, 2002). Direct coping is defined as the use of strategies designed to actively manage, resolve, or influence stressful experiences through one's own endeavors, as in through problem-solving and support seeking (Cross, 1995).

Markus and Kitayama (1991) proposed that Eastern and Western cultural differences, for example, individualism versus collectivism, may lead to more than two distinct notions of the self, as well as separate feelings, thoughts, and actions of the individuals from those cultures. It is reasonable to expect that people from different cultural backgrounds would have different coping strategies and styles. Research



demonstrated that Asian-Americans and Hispanics use more indirect coping strategies when they face stressful situations (Weisz, Rothbaum & Blackburn, 1984). Aldwin and Greenberger (1987) reported that they failed to find a significant difference between the coping strategies of Asian-American and Caucasian-American students. However, Chang (1996) found that Asian-American students used significantly more problem avoidance and social withdrawal strategies than Caucasian-American students. On the other hand, there were no significant differences found in the use of problem solving, cognitive restructuring, expression of emotions, social support, and self-criticism. These findings suggest that although Asian-Americans tend to use more disengagement types of strategies than Caucasian-Americans, Asian-Americans are as engaged in their problem- and emotion-focused efforts to cope with stressful situations as are non-Asians.

Studies on different cultural group's preferences on types of coping strategies provided a mixed picture. In Aldwin and Greenberger (1987) the coping strategy of reframing was significantly correlated with perceived parental traditionalism for Korean-Americans. On the other hand, the coping strategy of acceptance was significantly correlated with perceived parental traditionalism for European-Americans. Lee and Liu (2001) discussed that Asian- American students would prefer to engage in more approach-oriented coping, such as active coping, reframing, planning, acceptance, emotional support, and religion, when compared with avoidance-oriented coping, such as self-distraction, denial, disengagement, emotional venting, and substance use, to manage family conflict. Moreover, individuals using avoidance-oriented coping display greater psychological distress. However, there is a lack of cultural differences between direct and indirect coping strategies. Lee and Liu (2001) suggested that most college students,

regardless of cultural group, were more likely to employ direct coping strategies to manage intergenerational family conflicts than indirect coping strategies. Adwin (1994) indicated that when individuals face different stressful situation, they may apply direct or indirect coping strategies accordingly. For example, college-age children may appraise family conflict as a stressful situation that can be better managed by using direct coping. Therefore, direct coping may be preferably used to maintain family harmony and to avoid some serious conflict that might occur if the problem is not addressed directly. Asian-American and Hispanic students may be more inclined to use indirect coping strategies only when they believe that they cannot or should not change the situation (Ramirez, 1999). The research of Lee, Su & Yoshida (2005) reported that Asian Americans were equally likely to use problem-solving coping and social support seeking when family conflict arises. On the other hand, social support seeking was found to be a relatively effective strategy only when family conflict was perceived to be high. Problem solving, however, was a relatively useful coping strategy when family conflict was perceived to be low. On the other hand, social support seeking was found to have a moderate effect on the relationship between family conflict and positive effect, and also a small effect on the relationship between family conflict and somatic distress. The above results illustrated that the social support seeking coping strategy is slightly more effective than other coping strategies when there is high family conflict. Their research reported that problem-solving coping strategy has a smaller effect on the relationship between family conflict and positive effect when compared with social support seeking coping strategy. Although Narikiyo & Kameoka (1992) suggested that Asian-American college students view talking to family or friends and spending time with others as a more helpful coping

strategy than Caucasian-American students, Chang's (1996) research demonstrated that Asian-Americans are not more inclined than Caucasian-Americans to seek support from others when coping with a stressful situation.

Yoo and Lee (2005) reported that when Asian-Americans have a strong ethnic identity, it would be more effective to use approach-type coping strategies to maintain one's overall well-being when experiencing high levels of racial discrimination. Their research hypothesized that a strong ethnic identity was associated with more a frequent use of social support and problem solving coping when individuals are faced with racial discrimination. However, their results revealed that Asian-Americans with a strong ethnic identity and high use of cognitive restructuring or problem solving coping were buffered from the effects of racial discrimination on well-being only when racial discrimination was perceived to be low. Research suggested that Asian-Americans have a harder time if they used approaching type coping strategies in the condition of frequent encounters of racial discrimination. This suggested that the approaching-type coping strategies may not be useful for individuals who have a strong ethnic identity. It concluded that for Asian Americans who are dealing with stressful circumstances, coping strategies that are more indirect and culture specific may be more appropriate than approach-type coping strategies.

Wang, Chan, Thomas, Lin and Larson (1997) conducted a study involving coping style and personal responsibility as factors influencing the perceptions of Chinese international students regarding people with physical disabilities. Results showed that coping style was more potent than responsibility in terms of the differences of the scores. The findings suggested that when counseling Chinese people with physical disabilities, it

may be important to focus on resolving both psychosocial adjustment and vocational adjustment issues as priorities in vocational rehabilitation. Also, it showed that it is important for Chinese people with disabilities to project a positive coping image in social situations.

Research literature about coping strategies of immigrant students demonstrated that Korean students were more likely than Japanese and Chinese students to endorse religious practices as a form of coping. Also, it showed that Japanese students were significantly more likely than Chinese students, and Chinese students were significantly more likely than Korean students to seek social support. Also, Chinese students were significantly less likely than Korean and Japanese students to use creative activities to cope with problems (Yeh and Inose, 2002).

Shiota (2006) reported that individuals have a “coping style” that contains a combination of one or two kinds of preferred coping strategies that individuals use more often than others. Dispositional use of the two strategies would be very likely to produce immediate positive emotions during or after a negative event.

In terms of gender, Chang (1996) failed to find any evidence of gender differences in Asian-American and Caucasian-American students for coping criteria. In a study of Asian adolescents’ coping strategies, avoidance coping and engagement coping were found to be used more often than other coping strategies (Wester et al., 2006). However, Sheu and Sedlacek (2004) reported that female college students across racial groups were less likely to implement avoidance coping strategies than were male students.

Regarding coping strategies of ethnic minority college students and their help seeking behaviors, Sheu and Sedlacek's (2004) research demonstrated that Asian-Americans were found to have a higher tendency to implement avoidant coping when compared with White Americans and African Americans. However, both White Americans and Asian Americans were more likely to use wishful thinking as a coping strategy than were African Americans.

In the overall research on coping strategies, there are only a limited number of studies that address the coping strategies used by international students. The research findings derived from the work of Moore and Constantine (2005) suggested that many African, Asian and Latin American international students acknowledged the importance of close family members and friends when dealing with problems and stress. Also, they would consider their feelings toward these family members and friends in determining the amount of information they would like to share with them. Moreover, many of the African, Asian and Latin American international students considered connecting with family members and friends as an important coping strategy that they use frequently. In the article, "Common Stressors Among International College Students: Research and Counseling Implications" by Charles P. Chen (1999), it is indicated that some common stressors of international students are second language anxiety, educational stressors, and sociocultural stressors. Sakurako (Chako) Mori's (2000) paper, "Addressing the Mental Health Concerns of International Students", reported that the demands for cultural adjustments usually put international students at higher risk for various psychological problems than domestic students. However, his research also revealed that counseling services were significantly underused by this population. Critical cultural differences in

basic beliefs about mental health problems made international students hesitant to seek psychological help. Also, international students' unfamiliarity with the basic concept of counseling contributed to negative or inappropriate expectations of counseling. Moreover, lack of access to the resources would be another reason for international students not being able to seek psychological help when needed. Most of the research found in literature was focused on Asian Americans, African Americans, Latin Americans, and Caucasian Americans. There are only a few studies related to international students and their coping strategies. Therefore, more research is needed to explore the preferred coping strategies of international students.

There is increasing concern about preferences for counseling on different counseling approaches. Research has been conducted in the past five to six decades about different counseling approach preferences. However, a mixed picture of preferences was demonstrated in these studies. Sonne and Goldman (1957) investigated the preferences of authoritarian and equalitarian personalities for client-centered and eclectic counseling. Results suggested that a client's personality is related to the effectiveness of the counseling approach used. High school students in the study with more authoritarian attitudes seemed to have a greater preference for an eclectic approach than did those with a lower level of authoritarian attitudes. Holen and Kinsey (1975) investigated preferences for behavioral, client-centered, and psychoanalytic approaches, and the results indicated that the behavioral approach was more highly preferred and believed more effective than either the client-centered or psychoanalytic approach. There were no significant differences found between the ratings of client-centered and psychoanalytic approaches. Throughout the past four decades, the psychological field has been very prone to the

matching models, that is, matching various clients with various counselor characteristics. Matching models are based on the assumption that matching the clients and counselors in terms of specific cognitive or attitudinal styles would make more favorable subjective ratings of counselors by clients and vice versa. Fry & Charron's (1980) study indicated that the matching of clients would bring greater interpersonal attraction and maximum proficiency in treatment interactions than random pairing or specific mismatching. Lyddon (1989) reported using the matching model in the investigation of the relationship between a person's dominant way of knowing (rationalism, metaphorism, or empiricism) and the preference for the three counseling approaches (rationalist, constructivist, and behaviorist), and the findings revealed that individuals significantly preferred the counseling approach hypothesized to represent an epistemological match between individual and approach. It seems that different approaches to counseling and psychotherapy would reflect different philosophical values or worldviews. Therefore, adhering to this assumption, if a client is going to counseling holding a set of philosophical values, it can be inferred that they will be more attracted to a particular approach to counseling (Lyddon & Adamson, 1992). In the follow-up study by Lyddon & Adamson (1992), support was provided for the contention that individuals may be inclined to prefer a counseling approach that is congruent with their philosophical predispositions.

Miller, Springer & Cowger (2004) examined individuals with different Holland personality types and their preference for a specific counseling orientation. Results revealed clear trends that some Holland personality traits would have a stronger preference for specific counseling approaches. The authors suggested that personality

traits can be an important factor to consider when determining a person's preferences for counseling approaches. Neufeldt (1978) conducted a study on individuals' cognitive characteristics and their preferences for behavioral or insight counseling, where behavioral counseling was considered to be based on concrete experiences and insight counseling was considered to be based on more abstract thoughts and interpretations. Results suggested that a client's cognitive characteristics are predictors of their expectations and preferences in counseling. The results seemed consistent with the studies by Lyddon (1989), Lyddon & Adamson (1992) and Miller et al. (2004). Kivlighan, Hageseth, Tipton & McGovern (1981) also supported those findings. They conducted a study of people-oriented and task-oriented individuals and their responses to Vocational Preference Inventory. Results revealed that counseling approaches that were congruent with personality types were found to be more effective than counseling approaches that did not match personality type. Rochlen & O'Brien (2002) investigated the relationship of male gender role conflict, attitudes towards career counseling and also the preferences of different career counseling styles. Results revealed that men preferred a more directive approach to career counseling over a more contextual, emotionally oriented approach. Most of the research above was conducted with Caucasian Americans, with the personality traits of minority ethnic groups and international students not considered.

In considering the impact of previous experiences with counseling, Hensley, Cashen & Lewis (1984) found that students who had previous experience with counseling preferred a behavioral approach for both vocational-educational concerns and personal



concerns. However, those students who did not have previous experience in counseling did not have a preference for any type of counseling approach.

A study on the individualistic and collective approaches to counseling was conducted by Shilo & Kelly (1997). Results suggested that an individual's preference for a collective or individualistic approach is situation specific. Also, there is no relationship between personal orientation to individualism-collectivism and preference for a comparable counseling approach.

A thirteen-year comparison in patterns of attitudes toward counseling was conducted by Rule & Gandy (1994). Results indicated that males in 1989 showed a significant decrease in interest in Behavioral Counseling as compared to those in 1976. On the other hand, combining the male and female samples for both years, the males expressed a significantly greater likelihood than did females in seeking a Gestalt counselor.

An exploratory study examining the influence of gender and ethnicity on college student preferences for individualistic and relational-focused counseling approaches showed that there were no significant differences across gender and ethnicity. However, there was a small tendency for women and African American individuals to rate counselors conducting relational-focused counseling approach more positively than did men and White individuals (Lewis & Tucker, 2002). Tom Yee Yau, David Sue & Davis Hayden, in their study, "Counseling Style Preference of International Students" reported that in contrast to past research findings, there was no overall preference found for either approach. Preferences for a particular counseling style also changed from session to

session. This study seemed to contradict most of the previous research on international students' preferences for counseling style.

Research has been conducted on the extent to which client preferences for particular characteristics of counselors influence whether a client seeks help, the duration of counseling and subsequent client evaluation of counseling (Boulware & Holmes, 1970). Strohmer, Leierer, Hotard & Stuckey (2003) examined the client's preference for the counselor's age, disability status, education, gender, and race. Their findings revealed that disability and other counselor characteristics were not important factors for most clients in determining their counselor preferences. Relatively few individuals expressed preferences for any of the five counselor characteristics above.

Studies on Mexican American preferences for culturally similar counselors have yielded inconsistent results. Some researchers that examined Mexican American perceptions of counselor attributes (for example, expertness, attractiveness, trustworthiness, and competence issues linked to cross-cultural sensitivity) found that Mexican Americans did not seem to favor ethnically similar over ethnically dissimilar counselors (Acosta & Sheehan, 1976; Atkinson, Casas, & Abreu, 1992). On the other hand, Lopez, Lopez and Fong (1991) reported that Mexican American college students preferred to have counselors or psychotherapists of their own ethnic background. Also, their research showed that middle-level acculturated students had a greater preference for ethnically similar therapists than the lower acculturated students. The male participants in the experiment with middle and high acculturation rates preferred the ethnically similar counselor significantly more than the low-acculturated students. Those findings suggested that ethnicity may play an important role in counselor preferences of Mexican-

American college students. In the same research Mexican American women preferred a Mexican American counselor. This preference applied to both the personal problem hypothesized by the experimenter and the general problems for which students seek help in counseling. However, Atkinson and Wampold (1991) suspected the accuracy of Lopez et al.'s (1991) results because they believed the simple choice methodology used in that cross-cultural counseling research provided a weak, unrealistic test of preferences for counselors and portrayed Mexican Americans as basing their preferences only on ethnic schemata. They critiqued the experiment as having no discriminating features for the counselor other than his or her ethnicity. As a result, the research of that nature would be viewed as incapable of determining the relative importance of the counselor's ethnicity. They suspected that even though Mexican Americans may prefer counselors of the same ethnicity, this may result in a very weak preference when compared with other counselor characteristics, such as the counselor's effectiveness. A follow-up analysis of the research methods carried out by Lopez and Lopez (1993) indicated that both methods applied by Lopez et al. (1991) and Atkinson & Wampold (1991) have their own strengths and weaknesses. They concluded that it is important for researchers to use multiple methods to assess counselor preferences. They suggested naturalistic studies would be the ultimate goal in determining the validity of a method or methods. Studies reporting ethnic minority perceptions based on counselor competence and credibility, rather than preferences based solely on ethnicity, indicated a general but mixed trend favoring ethnically similar over ethnically dissimilar counselors (Atkinson & Matsushita, 1991; Hess & Street, 1991). The research of Abreu and Gabarain (2000) indicated that when the data was analyzed in the absence of social desirability, Mexican American college

students expressed stronger preferences for a Mexican American counselor than for a European American counselor across both academic and personal concerns. However, when the social desirability factor is taken into consideration, preference ratings for Mexican American and European American counselors were no longer found to be significantly different. This suggested that social desirability may play a role in preferences for counselor ethnicity across problem type.

A study conducted by Helms and Carter (1991) demonstrated that Caucasian American's racial identity attitudes predicted their social-class and counselor preferences. On the other hand, African American's racial identity attitudes predicted their preference for Caucasian American male counselors. Caucasian American's preferences for same-sex counselors were predicted by their demographics and racial identity attitudes. Results suggested that the racial identity and demographic models operate differently in different racial groups. Atkinson, Furlong & Poston (1986) reported that the top five preferred counselor characteristics of African Americans were more educated, similar attitudes and values, older, similar personality, and same ethnicity respectively. This result indicated that although African American college students preferred an African American counselor over a Caucasian American counselor, other counselor characteristics were more important to them than ethnicity of the counselor. The result also suggested that African Americans valued the counselor's expertise. There was no evidence found in the study that African Americans who expressed a strong commitment to African American culture would have a different preference for counselor characteristics than those African Americans who showed a weak commitment to African American culture. The study of Ponterotto, Alexander & Hinkston (1988) replicated and extended the study of Atkinson

et al. (1986) on African American's preference for counselor characteristics. Results revealed that African Americans preferred a counselor who is similar to them. Also, in this study, the African Americans in the study ranked preference for a counselor of the same ethnicity second compared to the same counselor variable of the previous study. A similar study by Atkinson, Poston, Furlong & Mercado (1989) was conducted to measure preferences for counselor characteristics of Caucasian-American, Asian-Americans, and Mexican-American students. Results indicated that rank order preference for counselor characteristics were almost identical across the three ethnic groups. They all prefer a counselor who had similar attitudes, similar personality, and more education, and was older than the individual. Moreover, Asian Americans and Caucasian Americans in the study ranked counselor ethnicity seventh and Mexican-Americans ranked same ethnicity sixth among the previously identified counselor characteristics. American Indians and White college students were surveyed to determine their preferences for various counselor characteristics when facing academic or personal problems. The methodology was an extension of the study conducted by Atkinson et al. (1986). The findings suggest that Caucasian American and American Indian students preferred a counselor with similar attitudes and values. Similar ethnicity appeared to be more important to American Indian than to White students, especially for those with a stronger sense of involvement with American Indian culture. For American Indian students similar attitudes and values were ranked first or second (Bennett & BigFoot-Sipes, 1991). BigFoot-Sipes, Dauphinais, LaFromboise, & Bennett (1992) replicated the study with American Indians. Their findings suggested that American Indians who expressed a strong commitment to Indian culture indicated a primary preference for talking with an American Indian

counselor. The female American Indians in their study expressed a strong preference for talking with a female Indian counselor. They expressed a strong preference to talk to an American Indian counselor whether the problem was concerned with academic or personal matters. In a similar study done by Ester and Ledoux (2001), results reported that when the experiment is conducted with at-risk high school students, if given a choice, most subjects preferred to enter into counseling with a counselor similar to them. It appeared that issues of similarity and difference are integral to understanding the nature of counseling relationships. American Indian females were found, in a study by Littrell and Littrell (1982) to have the strongest preference for a counselor of the same gender. However, the same-sex preference for the counselor is independent with how they dress. The same result was found in the study of Haviland, Horswill, O'Connell and Dynneson (1983). Native American students have a strong preference for Native American counselors, regardless of problem situation. Moreover, males preferred male counselors, where females expressed they prefer a female counselor only when they seek help for personal issues.

For the preference of counselor characteristics of Italian and Greek Americans, research showed that regardless of gender, lower acculturated Italian American students had a stronger preference to see an ethnically similar counselor. Similar results were found with Greek Americans, regardless of gender, with lower acculturated Greek Americans having a stronger preference for seeing an ethnically similar counselor to discuss a personal problem (Ponterotto, Rao, Zweig, Pieger, Schaefer, Michelakou, Armenia & Goldstein, 2001)

Regarding relationships between religion, gender, and preferences for a counselor's use of religious interventions in counseling, Schaffner and Dixon (2003) found that students with high religiosity expressed stronger preferences for a counselor's use of religious interventions than would students with low religiosity. Also, women would express stronger preferences for religious interventions in counseling than would men. There is a limited number of studies on religion's impact on counselor characteristics and counseling preferences.

Regarding preference for the counselor's gender, there is a mixed picture. Gender was the most frequently preferred counselor characteristic in Strohmer et al.'s (2003) study. In addition, those who indicated a preference for a counselor's gender would prefer a female counselor. In a study conducted by Simons and Helms (1978), college women and non-college women preferred female counselors to male counselors. Another investigation conducted by Johnson (1978) illustrated that male students expected counselors to be less masculine than did female students. Moreover, those students who had gender preferences for their counselors had more stereotyped expectancies for counselor characteristics than did students with no preference. In a study conducted by Yanico and Hardin (1985), student subjects expressed no preference for psychologist gender for dealing with vocational problems, though men indicated a slight preference for a male psychologist. For personal-social problems, women subjects expressed a preference for a female counselor. However, the degree of preference and strength of preference varied across problems. The study by Bernstein, Hofmann and Wade (1987) yielded results that demonstrated a preference for male counselors over female counselors for all concerns other than problems with sexual issues. Also preferences for

male counselors were expressed more often, for vocational/academic and social/interpersonal concerns than for personal/intimate problems.

Other counselor characteristics like age and attire have been investigated.

Regarding the age of the counselor, Donnan and Mitchell (1979) found that chronological age and maturity affect preferences for counselors among elderly persons. The effect of counselor attire on the client was researched by Hubble and Gelso (1978). Their findings suggested that clients experienced significantly lower anxiety with counselors in causal versus highly casual attire, although no differences emerged between traditionally and casually attired counselors. The clients' report of their own typical dress was a crucial moderator. Those whose attire was typically casual exhibited the most positive reaction to traditionally attired counselors, whereas those whose dress was typically highly casual demonstrated the most positive reaction to casually attired counselors.

Mau and Jepson (1988) compared Chinese and American graduate students' preferences for counseling. Results revealed that Chinese and American students have somewhat different preferences for a counselor's characteristics. More than half of the suggested characteristics indicated statistically significant differences between the two groups. Also, both groups agreed in general that these selected counselor characteristics were not of great concern to them. Chinese students preferred counselors who have the same racial background when they seek help for personal concerns. Also, they view their counselors to be more credible and competent when compared with the data of Asian Americans. Also, the findings suggest that Chinese students prefer an older counselor when they seek help for personal problems. American students, on the other hand, were less concerned about their counselor's ethnic background. However, both Chinese and



Americans did not show preferences for the sex of the counselor. On the other hand, female students from both cultures would prefer a female counselor rather than a male counselor to work with their personal problems. In relation to international students, Zhang and Dixon's (2001) paper, "Multiculturally Responsive Counseling: Effects on Asian Students' Rating of Counselor", reported that the students in the culturally responsive condition rated their counselors as significantly more expert, attractive, and trustworthy than those in the culturally neutral conditions. The results of their study suggested that it may be important for counselors to acknowledge their international client's culture.

In an article by Senel Poyrazli, Philip R. Kavanaugh, Adria Baker, and Nada Al-Timmi, titled "Social Support and Demographic Correlates of Acculturative Stress in International Students," it was reported that half of the number of the world's international students study in the United States. Students enrolled in colleges and universities in United States represented roughly 170 foreign countries, and the article indicated that the number of students is expected to be increasing in the coming years. The authors argued that more research is needed on international students in the United States, and they contended that through such research, we may be able to better understand their needs. Cheng, Leong and Geist (1993) suggested that there were some common problems experienced by international students and United States students, for example, homesickness, the need to develop new peer relationship in the new school, as well as the need to achieve autonomy. Their study suggested that Asians have different personal and emotional problems than Caucasians as assessed by the Brief Symptom Inventory. Results of their study reported that Asians scored significantly higher than

Caucasians on obsessive-compulsiveness, interpersonal sensitivity, depression, phobic anxiety, paranoid ideation, and psychoticism. The results supported the idea that Asians experience a greater degree of personal and emotional problems than do Caucasians. Regarding Asian students' rating of counselors, research has shown that multiculturally responsive counselors were perceived to be more favorable by Asian international students than were multiculturally neutral counselors on the social influence variables of expertness, attractiveness, and trustworthiness. Participants rated both counseling conditions positively, but the culturally responsive condition was rated significantly higher on all dimensions. Also, Asian international students view culturally sensitive counselors as more competent and credible than the culturally neutral counselor (Zhang & Dixon, 2001). Bulthuis (1986) suggested that the differences between Americans' lives and values and international students' expectations of culture may create problems for international college students. For example, the differences of expectations related to the fast pace of life, individualism, egalitarian values, more casual friendship patterns, and emphasis on independence in life-style and education may complicate their adjustment to the United States. Brinson & Kottler (1995) conducted a study of the reasons that international students often do not access support services on university campuses. Interviews were conducted to find out why they were underutilizing university counseling services. Reasons included different cultural values, culture shock, family pressures, loneliness, feeling different, and loss of identity. Takahashi (1989) suggested in his research on suicidal Asian patients in the United States that language barriers, characteristics of Asian logic, atypical depressive symptoms Asians often manifest, introverted aggression, interdependence, reticence, submissiveness, and the concept of

privacy and confidentiality, all have a profound impact on the experience of Asians living in the United States and their inclination to seek help. He suggested that language barriers are among the most crucial sources of stress for international individuals who live in the United States. For international people for whom English is a foreign language, acquiring English language proficiency, especially in the adult years, may require a relatively long period of study, strong linguistic ability, and a broad knowledge of the adopted culture. In a study of the academic and nonacademic needs of international students, Parr et al. (1992) underscored the need for intensive study of the English language and the benefits of English language proficiency for international students when taking examinations. They suggested that international students attending American colleges or universities were mostly concerned about having adequate time with an advisor and about understanding lectures. Halpern (1993) reported that international students were disappointed with relationships and with their experiences of racial/ethnic prejudice and discrimination. Hayes & Lin (1994) reported that one of the valid barriers that international students often encounter is the prejudice from members of the host culture. Prejudice can be a powerful barrier that hinders international students from developing social networks. Moreover, different students will encounter different prejudices depending on their own specific stigmatized characteristics. The report also suggested that international students experienced a great sense of social loss when moving to another country for the first time. It seemed that when they moved to America, international students lost the shared identity that comes from being with family and a familiar culture and environment. Also, international students may suffer from loss of social supports because of international students' limited ability to communicate. English

proficiency is an important factor for international students' social adjustment, as well as for their academic performance. As Mau & Jepson (1990) suggested, Chinese students and American students perceive the seriousness of problems differently. They suggested that Chinese students have a greater tolerance for and acceptance of eccentric or deviant behavior, and also would be less likely to define a situation as problematic. Therefore, they are less likely to obtain outside help, for example, from a counselor. Arkoff et al. (1966) suggested that Asians are neutral or acquiescent toward many of the items in his questionnaire, and they expressed the belief that mental health could be enhanced through exercising will power and avoiding unpleasant thoughts. Also, they viewed counseling as a directive, paternalistic, and authoritarian process. Such a negative impression about counseling may hinder international students from seeking counseling help when needed. Also, Ebbin and Blankenship (1986) compared the frequency and reasons for visits to a health center between international and domestic students. They found that international students would use health centers more frequently than local students. However, there was an increased trend of the utilization of the health center for psychiatric problems such as anxiety, depression, insomnia, and sexual dysfunction. This suggested that they would prefer to go to a health center to seek medical help for psychological problems because of the negative stigma of counseling. Dadfar & Friedlander (1982) conducted a study on international student's attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help. Their findings revealed that international students perceived counseling as non-trustworthy and inappropriate for solving personal difficulties. From these previous studies, it can be construed that international students have a negative view of counseling, which may suggest why the psychological services are underutilized. "Utilization of Counseling

Services by International Students” is an article written by Jenny K., Yi, Jun-Chih Giseala Lin and Yuko Kishimoto (2003). This article addressed the utilization of counseling services by international students at a major university in Texas. The study examined the demographic characteristics of international students, who sought counseling services, as well as their referral resources, types of services sought, and their self-reported presenting concerns. They found that those students who used the counseling center for career counseling were more likely to be younger, female undergraduates. However, for those students who used the counseling center for personal problems, they were more likely to be older, male graduate students. International students’ top three concerns when seeking counseling were “Academics/Grades”, “Anxiety”, and “Depression” for undergraduates, and “Depression”, “Time Management”, and “Relationship with Romantic Partner” for the graduate students. Lin and Yi (1997) reported that there is an increasing number of international students studying in the United States. They were concerned about the ability to best provide culturally sensitive campus and community programs and services to help Asian international students adjust to the United States.

Regarding counseling itself, Gladding (2003) suggested that when doing group work with culturally diverse populations, it is recommended that counselors understand the cultural backgrounds of their clients before attempting to work with them. Also, he suggested that counselors examine their own thoughts and feelings about people who are culturally different from them so that they can understand any biases or prejudices for different ethnic groups. Sue & Sue (2003) suggested that counselors should be open and respectful of different cultures. Also, counselors should acknowledge their own limitation

on their cultural knowledge and invite clients to educate them. In this way, clients would feel more respected and would be more open to the counseling process. Also, counselors should explore their own values, so as to avoid culturally sensitive assumptions and stereotypes in the counseling session. It is most helpful for counselors to be exposed to different cultures so as to cultivate a better understanding of people from different cultural backgrounds.

Another article related to international student's attitudes toward seeking counseling was written by Noboru Komiya and Gregory T. Eells (2001) titled "Predictors of Attitudes Toward Seeking Counseling Among International Students." They reported that emotional openness, distress level, sex, length of stay in the United States, and prior experience with counseling services would all predict international students' attitudes toward seeking counseling. Results indicated that international students who were more emotionally open, who were female, and who had received counseling previously possessed more open attitudes toward seeking counseling than did other international students.

#### *Summary of Literature Review*

The literature review for this study discussed previous research on coping strategies, counseling approaches, counselor characteristics, and attitudes toward seeking counseling. The literature revealed that preferences in coping strategies, counseling approaches, and counselor characteristics are factors that may affect attitudes toward seeking counseling. Most of these studies were conducted with Caucasian American or other ethnic minority Americans. The limited research investigating those factors with international students was reviewed. Given the large number of international students

attending universities and colleges in the United States, it is essential that further research be conducted on the needs and preferences of international students for counseling.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY



### *Introduction*

In this section of the research proposal, three main aspects of this study will be addressed: a description of the research participants in this study and how they were chosen; the instruments that were used to collect data for this study; and the design of the study and its appropriateness in answering the research questions. The last part of the methods section will also provide a description of the procedure that will be used to conduct this study.

### *Participants*

The university selected for the study is a large state university in the mid-western United States. The university enrolled 1734 international students in fall semester of 2005. In that year, 1069 of the international students were male and 665 of them were female. In terms of the educational level of these students, 133 were freshmen, 108 were sophomores, 152 were juniors, 289 were seniors, 583 were masters, 450 were doctoral students, and 19 were special students. There were a total of 682 undergraduate and 1033 graduate full-time international students enrolled in this university in the fall of 2005. In terms of marital status, 634 were single and 35 were married students at the undergraduate level and at the graduate level, there were 226 who were single and 188 who were married. There were 645 students who did not provide information about marital status in 2005. Also, there are 14 students who withdrew during the fall 2005 semester. The study will be distributed to the international students through the form of an online survey.

Accessibility is an important factor for choosing this university to conduct the study. The researcher is a graduate student in this university. The researcher will have

access to staff and administrators in offices whose cooperation and support are needed to conduct the study, for example, the office of International Students and Scholars (ISS).

### *Instruments*

The instrument that will be used in this study is an online survey that contains 16 items that assess demographic information and 47 items that assess preferences for coping strategies, counseling approaches and counselor characteristics. Each item is rated on a 6-point, Likert-type scale ranging from strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree. For this study, some items are modified and adopted from the Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale (ATSPPHS). The wording of the questionnaire will be modified and changed in order to suit the English reading level of international students. Some other items were developed by the researcher in order to collect information about coping strategies, reasons for seeking counseling and self-reporting problems and concerns of international students.

Fisher and Farina (1995) stated in their research that ATSPPHS has a strong psychometric property. The test-retest reliability over a 4-week period was 0.80 and over an 8-week period was 0.84. The coefficient alpha was 0.84. Support for the construct validity of the instrument was obtained through examination of the point biserial correlations between the respondents who had sought help and those who had not. From the definition of Brown 1988, p.150, the point-biserial correlation coefficient is a statistic used to estimate the degree of relationship between a naturally occurring dichotomous nominal scale and an interval (or ratio) scale. The correlations were 0.24 ( $p < .03$ ) for women and 0.49 ( $p < .0001$ ) for men (Komiya & Eells, 2001). The ATSPPHS has been

used in studies with students from Asian American cultures and international students. In the research of Dadfar and Friedlander (1982), they found that international students who had sought help either in the United States or with their home countries (22%) had more positive attitudes toward seeking counseling than did those who had never received any help through counseling (78%). Also, in the research of Atkinson and Gim (1989), they used ATSPPHS in assessing the attitudes of Asian American students from Chinese, Japanese, and Korean backgrounds. They found that attitudes were a result of levels of acculturation. In the study of Atkinson, Ponterotto, and Sanchez (1984), they used the ATSPPHS in assessing the attitudes of Vietnamese college students toward seeking professional help. Results indicated that there was a significant relationship between ATSPPHS scores and independent rankings of providers by Vietnamese students.

### *Research Design*

The design chosen for this research study is descriptive and exploratory, and involves the collection, analysis, and interpretation of responses made by participants in an on-line survey.

The research used in this study is appropriate for answering the previously stated research questions. It is appropriate because it will be used to describe the kinds of problems which international students would seek help from a professional counselor, the counseling approaches, and counselor characteristics that they will prefer. It will also be used to examine the ways in which international students cope with their problems.

### *Procedure*

The study is distributed to international students through an online survey in a large mid-western public university during the summer and fall semesters of 2005. The

project was approved by the university's Institutional Review Board. The students' names and email addresses were obtained from the most comprehensive list of international students at the office of International Students and Scholars (ISS) of that university. Students were notified by email that directed them to a website that begins with a consent statement. If they consented to participate in the study, students were instructed to click on a button that took them directly to the survey. In addition to the questions pertaining to their attitudes and preferences for counseling and counselor characteristics, participants were asked demographic questions regarding their age, gender, region of origin, marital status, nuclear family constellation, years in college and their major.

#### Analysis of Data

Descriptive statistics were generated for the responses provided by international students. One-Way ANOVA analysis was utilized to consider the extent to which a participant's country of origin predicted preferred coping strategies, problems for which they would seek counseling, preferred counseling approaches, and preferred counselor characteristics. Implications for counseling practice will be discussed.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

The 372 international students who completed the survey ranged in age from 17 to 47. The gender of the participants was 58% male and 42% female. The countries of origin with highest percentages of participants were India (39%), Southeast Asia (13.4%), Europe (13%), and China (11%). Among the 372 international students, 42.6% were master's students, 29.7% were undergraduate students, and 27.7% were doctoral students. In terms of marital status, 80% were single, 19% were married, and 1% were divorced. Participants living in the United States for less than one year represented 23.3% of the sample. Participants living in the U.S. between 1-2 years represented 30.8%, and 27.8% represented participants living in the U.S. between 3-4 years. Hinduism was identified as the religion of 32% of participants, 29% declared themselves to be Christian, 9% Buddhist, 8% Islamic, and 15.3% declared that they have no religion. Religion was reported to be very important to 32% of participants, 38% considered religion important, 13% not very important, 11% not important, and 6% reported that they are not sure about the importance of religion to them. Fifty-four percent of participants indicated that they were aware that counseling services are available for international students on campus, and 46% were unaware that counseling services are available for international students on campus. Surprisingly, a large percentage of participants (88%) declared that they had been to a psychologist or counselor for help with a personal or family problem, and 12% denied that they had been to a psychologist or counselor for help with a personal or family problem. However, we have to be cautious that international students may interpret counseling in a boarder term than domestic students.

In the survey used in this study, participants indicated the extent to which they agree or disagree with each statement, in a Likert-like format ranging from strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, and strongly disagree. In our reporting of the data, we grouped strongly agree, agree, and somewhat agree to connote agreement, and strongly disagree, disagree, and somewhat disagree to connote disagreement.

### *Stress*

For those completing our survey, results indicated that 37.3% agreed and 62.7% disagreed that they are stressed about their difficulties with the English language; it also expressed that 50.4% agreed and 49.6% disagreed that their studies are stressful for them; it concluded that 30% agreed and 70% disagreed that their relationships are stressful for them; it showed that 30.5% agreed and 69.5% disagreed that they experience difficulties talking to university faculty members; and, 41.3% agreed and 58.7% disagreed that adapting to American culture is a major challenge for them (See Table 2).

### *Coping Strategies*

Regarding coping strategies used by international students, results expressed that 55.2% agreed and 44.8% disagreed that they turned to their religion or spiritual beliefs for comfort when they had problems; it showed that 77.5% agreed and 22.5% disagreed that they turned to their family for comfort when they had problems; it concluded that 71.3% agreed and 28.7% disagreed that they generally solved their own problems without anyone's help; 77.1% agreed and 22.9% disagreed that they talked to their friends and colleagues about their problems for advice and support; 21.2% agreed and 78.8%

disagreed that they talked to clergy or elders of their religion when they had problems; 67.9% agreed and 32.1% disagreed that they exercise to help reduce their stress; and, 45% agreed and 55% disagreed that they talked to their professors about their problems (See Table 2).

### *Counselor/Counseling Preferences*

When asked about the importance of confidentiality in counseling, results showed that 96.6% agreed and 3.4% disagreed that if they were to seek help for their problems from a counselor, it would be important to them that their confidentiality be respected. Regarding the professionalism and qualifications of their counselor, 85.6% agreed and 14.4% disagreed that they wanted their counselor to be very professional in his/her appearance; 72.6% agreed and 27.4% disagreed that they wanted their counselor to have at least a doctoral degree; and, 80% agreed and 20% disagreed that they wanted their counselor to hold at least a master's degree; and, 84.9% agreed and 15.1% disagreed that they wanted their counselor to be an expert on the problem they discussed with him/her. When asked about the preferred gender of their counselor, 21.1% agreed and 78.9% disagreed that they preferred their counselor be male, and 44.7% agreed and 55.3% disagreed that they preferred their counselor be female. When asked about religious similarity and cultural sensitivity, 24.1% agreed and 75.3% disagreed that they preferred their counselor to have the same religious faith as them; and, 64.2% agreed and 35.8% disagreed that it is important for the counselor to express interest in their culture; and,



24.9% agreed and 75.1% disagreed that they preferred that their counselor's cultural/racial/ethnic identity be the same as their own (See Table 2).

Regarding problems for which they would seek counseling, results concluded that 55.1% agreed and 44.9% disagreed that they would seek help from a professional counselor for depression; 48.1% agreed and 51.9% disagreed that they would seek help from a professional counselor for treatment of anxiety; 27.4% agreed and 72.6% disagreed that they would seek help from a professional counselor about difficulties adjusting to American culture; 37.4% agreed and 62.6% disagreed that they would seek professional counseling if they have relationship problems; 54% agreed and 46% disagreed that they would seek counseling if they have academic problems; and, 67.7% agreed and 32.3% disagreed that they would seek counseling if they have problems with career issues (See Table 2).

When asked about preferences for counseling style, participants expressed that 91.1% agreed and 8.9% disagreed that they preferred their counselor to be straightforward and direct; 96.3% agreed and 3.7% disagreed that it is important for their counselor to accept cultural differences; 88% agreed and 12% disagreed that a counselor would be most helpful to them if he/she provided solutions to their problems; 87.6% agreed and 12.4% disagreed that it is important that their psychologist/counselor understands them and their difficulties; 84.2% agreed and 15.8% disagreed that they preferred that their counselor relate to them more like a friend than a professional helper;

and, 19.3% agreed and 80.7% disagreed that they wanted their psychologist/counselor to address them formally (See Table 2).

### *Embarrassment/Attitude*

Regarding their comfort with counseling, it showed 37.9% agreed and 62.1% disagreed that it would be embarrassing for them to discuss family problems with a counselor; 35.8% agreed and 64.2% disagree that it would be embarrassing for them to discuss any personal problem with a counselor; 63.6% agreed and 36.4% disagreed that if they were to seek professional counseling, they would tell their family; and, 52.7% agreed and 47.3% disagreed that if they were to seek professional counseling, they would tell their friends. When asked about the helpfulness of counseling, 88.7% agreed and 11.3% disagreed that they think counseling is generally helpful (See Table 2).

### *Difficulty with English and Stress*

Perceived difficulty with the English language was significantly related to stress over studies ( $r=.41$ ), relationship stress ( $r=.31$ ), difficulty communicating with faculty ( $r=.53$ ), and difficulty adapting to American culture ( $r=.42$ ). All correlations were significant at the .01 level (see Table 3).

### *Religious Faith and Coping*

Perceived importance of religious faith was significantly related to the tendency of international students to turn to their religious/spiritual beliefs for comfort when they

had problems ( $r=.63$ ); to a tendency to turn to family for comfort when they have problems ( $r=.20$ ); and, to a tendency to generally solve their own problems without anyone's help ( $r=.34$ ). All correlations were significant at the .01 level (see Table 4).

International students most likely seek help from a professional counselor for the following types of problems: problems related with career issues, (67.7% reported that they preferred to seek professional help with career issues, and only 32.3% indicated that they not preferred to seek help from a psychologist/counselor with issues concerning with career), depression (55% indicated that they would seek help from a psychologist/counselor for depression and 44.9% reported that they would not seek help from a psychologist/counselor for depression), and academic problems (54% reported that they preferred to seek help from a psychologist/counselor for academic problems and 46% reported they would not seek help from a psychologist/counselor for academic problems). International students declared that there were some problems they would prefer not to seek help from counseling including treatment for anxiety (48.1% reported that they would seek help from a professional counselor on anxiety and 51.9% reported they would not seek help from professionals on anxiety issues), followed by relationship problems (37.4% indicated that they would seek help from professional counselors for issues related to relationships and 62.6% reported that they would not seek help from professional counselors on issues related to relationships) The problem least likely for international student to seek help from a counselor is about difficulties adjusting to American culture (27.4% agreed that they would seek help from professionals about difficulties adjusting to American culture and 72.6% reported that they would not seek

help from professional counselors when facing difficulties adjusting to American culture)  
(See Table 2).

International students mostly preferred counseling approaches as follows: in regards to counselors being sensitive to cultural differences, 96.3% of international students expressed that it is important for a psychologist/counselor to accept cultural differences, while 3.7% believed that it is not important for a psychologist/counselor to accept cultural differences; in regards to counselors being straightforward and direct, in regards to counselors providing solutions to their problems, 88% of international students preferred counselors to provide solutions to their problems, while 12% expressed that it would not be helpful for counselors to provide solutions to their problems; in regards to counselors understanding them and their difficulties, 87.6% preferred counselors to understand them and their difficulties, and 12% believed that it is not important for counselors to understand them and their difficulties; in regards to a counselor being an expert in the problem that international students are concerned about, 84.9% of international students agreed that it is important for counselors to be an expert on the problem, and 15.1% of international student participants reported that they do not view the expertise of the counselor as an important factor for the preference of counseling approaches; in regards to counselors relating to them more like a friend than as a professional helper, 84.2% agreed that they preferred their counselors to relate to them more like a friend than a professional helper and 15.8% declared that they would not prefer their counselors to relate to them more like a friend than as a professional helper  
(See Table 2).

International students preferred counselor characteristics as follows: 97% of international student participants expressed that if they were to seek help from a psychologist or a counselor, it would be important to respect their confidentiality. Only 3% of participants believed that confidentiality in a therapeutic relationship is not important for them. Results showed that 85.6% wanted counselors to be very professional in their appearance, whereas 14.4% reported that a counselor's appearance is not important to them. Among all of the participants, 80% of participants reported that they wanted their counselors to have at least a master's degree. Only 20% of participants reported that they do not have a preference on whether counselors have at least a master's degree. Results of the survey showed that 72.6% preferred counselors to have at least a doctoral degree, and 27.4% believed that it is not important for counselors to have at least a doctoral degree. About the gender of the counselor, 44.7% of international students preferred counselors to be female, and 55.3% did not prefer counselors to be female. 21.1% of international students preferred counselors to be male, and 78.9% did not prefer counselors to be male. Results showed 24.9% preferred counselors to be of the same cultural/racial/ethnic identity as themselves, and 75.1% did not have a preference on counselors' cultural/racial/ethnic identity. Also, among all the participants, 24.1% of international student participants preferred counselors to have the same religious faith as them. Result of the survey concluded that 75.3% did not prefer counselors to have the same religious faith as them. Only 19.3% of international student participants preferred counselors to address them formally, whereas 80.7% of participants did not prefer counselors to address them formally (See Table 2).

On questions related to international students' coping strategies, the results are as follows: 70% of individuals preferred to solve problems without anyone's help. 30% of individuals did not prefer to solve problems without anyone's help. Among all the participants, 68% of individuals exercised to reduce stress, and 32% preferred not to exercise to reduce stress. Results also showed 67% of participants preferred to talk to their friends and colleagues about their problems for advice and support. Results expressed that 23% of individuals did not prefer to talk to their friends and colleagues about their problems for advice and support. Among all the participants in the survey, 67% of international students who participated in the study turned to their families for comfort when they had problems, whereas 45% did not prefer to turn to their family for comfort when they had problems. Only 55% of participants turned to their religion or spiritual beliefs for comfort when they had problems, 45% of participants did not prefer to turn to their religion or spiritual beliefs for comfort when they had problems. About 45% of participants preferred to talk to their professor about their problems, and 55% of participants did not prefer to talk to their professor about their problems. Only 21% of individuals preferred to talk to clergy or elders of their religion when they had problems while 79% of individuals did not prefer to talk to clergy or elders of their religion when they had problems (See Table 2).

There are differences in the responses of international students from different countries/regions of origin. We divided the participants into different groups regarding the number of participants in our research. In this research, we are going to compare

Africa, Central/South America, China, Europe, India, and S.E. Asia because those regions/countries contained most of the participants in the study (See Table 1). Also, these countries/regions represent international students from different part of the world with a diverse cultural background. When comparing groups' responses about kinds of problems for which international students would seek help from a professional counselor, there was a significant difference between groups when they sought help from a professional psychologist/counselor about difficulties adjusting to American culture ( $F(10,337) = 5.343, p < .001$ ). It did not show significant differences between groups for other problems (for depression ( $F(10,339) = 1.068, p < .387$ ), for anxiety ( $F(10,338) = 1.515, p < .132$ ), for relationship problems ( $F(10,337) = 1.463, p < .152$ ), for academic problems ( $F(10,337) = 1.454, p < .155$ ), and for career issues ( $F(10,337) = 2.098, p < .024$ )) (See Table 6).

Regarding preferences on counseling approaches, international student groups demonstrated a significant difference between groups in the following questions: they preferred their psychologist/counselor to be straightforward and direct ( $F(10,334) = 4.521, p < .001$ ), and they preferred that their psychologist/counselor relate to them more like a friend than a professional helper ( $F(10,335) = 4.937, p < .001$ ). There is no significant difference in the following questions: It is important for the psychologist/counselor to express interest in my culture ( $F(10,336) = 2.081, p < .025$ ), I would want my psychologist/counselor to be an expert on the problem I would discuss with him or her ( $F(10,337) = 1.089, p < .370$ ), it is important for psychologists/counselors to accept cultural differences ( $F(10,337) = 1.673, p < .086$ ), a

psychologist/counselor would be most helpful to me when he/she provided solutions to my problems ( $F(10,337) = 1.866, p < .049$ ), and it is important that my psychologist/counselor understands me and my difficulties ( $F(10,334) = 2.852, p < .002$ ) (See Table 7).

Results of One-Way ANOVA analysis with counselor characteristics demonstrated that there is significant difference between groups in the following statements: If I were to seek help for my problems from a psychologist or counselor, it would be important to me that my confidentiality be respected ( $F(10,342) = 3.071, p < .001$ ), I prefer my psychologist/counselor to have the same religious faith as me ( $F(10,336) = 3.419, p < .001$ ), and I prefer that my psychologist/counselor's cultural/racial/ethnic identity be the same as my own ( $F(10,337) = 4.200, p < .001$ ). We cannot find any significant difference between groups in these statements: I want my psychologist/counselor to be very professional in his/her appearance ( $F(10,342) = 1.818, p < .056$ ), I want my psychologist/counselor to have at least a doctoral degree ( $F(10,338) = .973, p < .467$ ), I want my psychologist/counselor to have at least a master's degree ( $F(10,332) = 1.062, p < .391$ ), I prefer that my psychologist/counselor be a male ( $F(10,339) = 1.415, p < .172$ ), I prefer that my psychologist/counselor be a female ( $F(10,336) = 1.841, p < .053$ ), and I want my psychologist/counselor to address me formally (i.e. Mr. Mrs. Ms. Miss) ( $F(10,334) = 2.161, p < .020$ ) (See Table 8).

Results of One-Way ANOVA analysis with coping strategy indicated that there was a significant difference between different countries/regions of origin. There was a



significant difference in the following areas: turn to my religion or spiritual beliefs for comfort when I have problems ( $F(10,341) = 5.112, p < .001$ ), turn to my family for comfort when I have problems ( $F(10,344) = 3.308, p < .001$ ), talk to clergy or elders of my religion when I have problems ( $F(10,341) = 3.984, p < .001$ ), and exercise to help reduce my stress ( $F(10,343) = 3.739, p < .001$ ). However, we are not able to find any difference between groups in the following three questions: I generally solve my own problems without anyone's help ( $F(10,342) = 2.427, p < .008$ ), I talk to my friends and colleagues about my problems for advice and support ( $F(10,345) = 1.387, p < .184$ ), and I talk to my professor about my problems ( $F(10,345) = 1.594, p < .107$ ) (See Table 5).

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

While a large number of international students in our sample claimed that adapting to American culture is a source of stress for them, our results suggested that most international students did not experience stress associated with the English language, personal/social relationships, difficulties talking with professors, or adapting to American culture. Just like domestic students, international students considered their studies to be the biggest source of stress. To cope with stress, most international students turned to family and friends and engaged in exercise. Most did not talk with clergy or religious elders or professors in times of stress. A small majority did turn to their religious faith to cope with problems, and a considerable majority claimed that they generally solved their own problems without anyone's help. A large percentage of our sample reported that they had received professional counseling, debunking the view that most international students do not avail themselves of counseling services, and they appeared to have definite opinions about their preferences when it comes to counseling. Most preferred that their counselor have a doctoral degree or at least a master's degree, have a professional appearance, be an expert on their particular problem, and maintain their confidentiality. For a considerable majority, it appeared that their counselor be of the same religious faith or cultural/racial/ethnic identity to not be important, but it is important that their counselor expressed interest in their culture. Most reported that they would seek counseling for career issues, but would not seek counseling for relationship issues or problems adapting to American culture. A large majority wanted their counselor to be straightforward and direct, to be accepting of cultural differences, to provide solutions to their problems, to be understanding of them and their difficulties, and to relate to them more informally, like a friend. The international students in our sample did not appear to

be embarrassed about seeking counseling, and as many as 89% thought counseling to be generally helpful. These findings suggested that international students may hold more favorable attitudes and have a greater understanding of professional counseling than was once thought. We have to be cautious that international students may interpret counseling in a broader terms than domestic students. They may include career counseling, academic advising as counseling. Our findings suggested that international students who do have difficulties with the English language are more likely to have stress over their studies, have difficulty communicating with professors, and have issues with adapting to American culture. Furthermore, the more important religious faith is to international students, the more likely they are to turn to their religious beliefs to cope with problems.

The problems that international students would seek help from professional counselors include problems related with career issues, depression, and academic problems. International students declared that there were some problems they preferred not to seek help from counselors including treatment for anxiety followed by relationship problems. The least likely problem international students sought help for is about difficulties adjusting to American culture (27.4% agreed that they would seek help from professionals about difficulties adjusting to American culture and 72.6% reported that they would not seek help from professional counselors when facing difficulties adjusting to American culture

Results of the study demonstrated that international students preferred counselors to be sensitive to their cultural differences, to be straightforward and direct, to provide

solutions to their problems, to understand them and their difficulties, to be an expert in the problems that international students are concerned about, and to relate to them as a friend rather than a professional helper. With individuals from a diverse background, the research results go along with the research of Shilo & Kelly (1997) that an individual's preference for a collective and individualistic approach is situation specific. There seemed to be no relationship between personal orientation to individualism-collectivism and preference for a comparable counseling approach. Participants in this research demonstrated that they preferred counselors to be sensitive to their cultural differences, which matches with Zhang and Dixon's (2001) result that students in the culturally responsive condition rated their counselors as significantly more expert, attractive, and trustworthy than those in the culturally neutral condition. Therefore, it is important for counselors to acknowledge their international client's culture. Also, a majority of this research's participants are from an Asian cultural background which may explain why results indicated that international students preferred counseling approaches to be straight forward and direct and to provide solutions to their problems. Since many participants are from an Asian cultural background, which is more a collective cultural background, it is congruent with the research of Lyddon & Adamson (1992) about individuals' inclinations to prefer counseling approaches that are congruent with their philosophical predispositions. Many of the participants preferred their counselors to relate to them as a friend instead of helping professionals. Participants expressed preferences for counselors to be experts on the problems that are brought to them. This result goes along with Atkinson, Furlong & Poston's study in 1986 where the African American college students expressed that they valued the counselor's expertness. Also, since international students

have a cultural background different from the host country, it is understandable for international students to prefer counselors who are sensitive to their cultural differences. Moreover, there are some counseling approaches that international students preferred since they are the same as the preferences of the culture of the host country. International students preferred counselors to understand them and their difficulties, which implied empathy in the counseling process. It also fits the results of Holen and Kinsey (1975) in that the preference of counseling has no significant difference between the ratings of client-centered and psychoanalytic approaches. It seems that international students have preferences on different counseling approaches similar to the local students.

International students preferred that their confidentiality in counseling be respected, and preferred counselors to be very professional in their appearance, and to have at least a master degree, preferably a doctoral degree. The research conducted by Hubble and Gelso (1978), however, contradicted the international student preference for a professional appearance. Their study suggested that clients experienced significantly lower anxiety with counselors in causal versus highly casual attire, although no differences emerged between traditionally and casually attired counselors. The results of this study partly agrees with the results of Hubble and Gelso (1978)'s research because it showed that those whose attire was typically casual showed the most positive reaction to traditionally attired counselors, whereas those whose dress was highly casual demonstrated the most positive reaction to casually attired counselors. It appears that the counselor's gender is not important for international students though a lot of them do not prefer counselors to be a male. This is different from the study of Littrell and Littrell (1982) in which participants preferred a counselor of the same gender. The results of this

study are also different from the study of Haviland et. al. (1983) which states that Native American students have a strong preference for counselors who have the same ethnicity as them, regardless of problem situation. In that study, males preferred male counselors, whereas females expressed they preferred a female counselor only when they sought help for personal issues. However, this study demonstrated that regardless of the circumstances, male counselors are not preferred. Only 21% of participants exhibited a preference for a male counselor. Results of this study also differed from the study of Mau and Jepson (1988) in that both Chinese and Americans did not show preferences for the sex of the counselor. A majority of participants did not prefer counselors to have the same religious faith as them. Additionally, most of them did not prefer counselors to address them formally. This also tied into the research result that they preferred counselors to relate to them as friends rather than professional helpers.

The ways that international students cope with their problems are as follows: 70% of individuals preferred to solve problems without anyone's help. This contradicts with the research of Kuo, Roysircar, & Newby-Clark (2006), which suggested that individuals of Asian descent often used culturally specific methods of coping, including engaging the assistance of others and approaching problems from a collective perspective in addition to a personal or individualistic perspective. Our research result indicated that 70% of participants of the study preferred to solve their problems without anyone's help. The research of Kuo, Roysircar, & Newby-Clark (2006) suggested that there are long lasting beliefs that individuals of Asian descent often use culturally specific methods of coping, including engaging the assistance of others and approaching problems from a collective perspective. Contradicting with our expectations, although 68.7% of participants are from

an Asian descent, they did prefer to approach problems by themselves. 68% of individuals exercised to reduce stress, and 67% of participants preferred to talk to their friends and colleagues about their problems for advice and support. This contradicted the results of Chang (1996), who found that Asian American students used significantly more problem avoidance and social withdrawal strategies than Caucasian American students. My research indicated that there 67% of participants preferred to discuss their problems with their friends and colleagues. 67% of international students who participated in the study turned to their families for comfort when they had problems. The result fits with the research study of Narikiyo & Kameoka in 1992 in which Asian American college students viewed talking to family or friends and spending time with others as a more helpful coping strategy than Caucasian American students. There is a high percentage of participants in the study that agree they would seek support from friends, colleagues and family members when they are facing stressful situations. The research result fits with Chang's research of 1996 as well. Their study suggested that Asian Americans are more inclined than Caucasian Americans to seek support from others when coping with a stressful situation. In our study, the percentage of participants preferring to deal with the problem by oneself, to discuss their problems with friends and colleagues, and to turn to their family are almost the same. Also, our research supported the findings of Moore and Constantine (2005) that many African, Asian and Latin American international students acknowledged the importance of close family members and friends when they dealt with problems and stress. Many African, Asian and Latin American international students considered connecting with family members and friends as an important coping strategy that they used frequently. With only 55% of participants turning to their religion or



spiritual beliefs for comfort when they had problems, and 21% of individuals preferring to talk to clergy or elders of their religion when they had problems, our research contradicts with the research results of Lee and Liu (2001), which suggested that Asian American students preferred to engage in more approach-oriented coping, such as religion, when compared with avoidance-oriented coping. This research result indicated that only 21% of participants preferred to talk to clergy or elders of their religion when they had problems.

One-Way ANOVA was used to analyze the last question because we would like to know if the participants from different countries/regions of origin differ significantly from each other on their preferences for coping strategies, counseling approaches, and counselor characteristics. We wished to see if any of the groups from different countries/regions of origin differed significantly from each other in their responses to this same question, and it required one-way analysis of variance to accomplish this.

Regarding their preferences for the kinds of problems that international students would seek help, only difficulties adjusting to American culture ( $F(10,337) = 5.343, p < .001$ ) appeared to demonstrate significant differences on preference between participants from different countries/regions of origin. It appears that for other kinds of problems, different international student groups have very similar preferences.

Regarding preferences for counseling approaches, international student groups displayed significant differences in their preferences for having a psychologist/counselor

be straightforward and direct ( $F(10,334) = 4.521, p < .001$ ), and they preferred that their psychologist/counselor relate to them more like a friend than a professional helper ( $F(10,335) = 4.937, p < .001$ ). The fact that a majority of the participants were from an Asian cultural background may explain why results suggested that international students preferred counseling approaches to be straight forward and direct. Many participants were from an Asian cultural background, which is more a collective cultural background; it is congruent with the research of Lyddon & Adamson (1992) about individuals' inclinations to prefer counseling approaches that are congruent with their philosophical predispositions. Many of participants preferred their counselors to relate to them as a friend instead of as a helping professional. Again, it seems participants have very similar preference between groups in other counseling approaches preference.

For counselor characteristics, One-Way ANOVA revealed significant differences between groups in the importance they attach to their confidentiality being respected ( $F(10,342) = 3.071, p < .001$ ), having the same religious faith as them ( $F(10,336) = 3.419, p < .001$ ), and preferring that their psychologist/counselor's cultural/racial/ethnic identity be the same as their own ( $F(10,337) = 4.200, p < .001$ ). This suggested that international students from different countries/regions of origin might have different preferences for the importance of their confidentiality being respected. There were also significant differences between groups on the importance of counselors having the same religious faith as them. The general research result displayed that majority of participants did not prefer counselors to have the same religious faith as them. When compared with the results of One-Way ANOVA, it seemed the results varied with participant's identification

with their religion. I ran another One-Way ANOVA analysis to compare the participants' identification to their religion with their responses to the preference that counselors should have the same religious faith as them. Results indicated ( $F(5, 342) = 9.849, p < .001$ ) significant differences between groups, which means participants' identification with religion does affect their preference on whether counselors should have the same religious faith as them. It also demonstrated that whether participants preferred counselors to have the same cultural/racial/ethnic identity as them varied within groups.

In terms of coping strategies, there are significant differences between groups on whether a participant would turn to their religion or spiritual beliefs for comfort when they have problems, would turn to their family for comfort when they have problems, would talk to clergy or elders of their religion when they have problems, and would exercise to help reduce their stress. I ran another One-Way ANOVA to see if there are differences between their identification with their religion and if they would turn to their religion or spiritual beliefs for comfort when they have problems. It shows significant differences between groups ( $F(5, 347) = 68.048, p < .001$ ). Significant results ( $F(5, 347) = 13.222, p < .001$ ) also suggested that there was a relationship between their identification to their religion and if they would talk to clergy or elders of their religion when they have problems.

The limitation of the study is that data is divided in terms of different regions. However, there are different cultures within regions. For example, Japanese culture is different from Indian culture although they are within the Asia region. Therefore, we

suggest for further study, we should do research on specific countries. Since I ran some One-Way ANOVA analysis, we have to be cautious about existence of type II error in the result.

Further study suggests that we focus on differences between groups of international students' preferences on coping strategies, counseling approaches, and counselor characteristics. Also, we can research countries within a region and compare countries between regions to see if there are any differences between their preferences with coping strategies, counseling approaches, and counselor characteristics.

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## APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A  
QUESTIONNAIRE

# International Student Preferences for Coping Strategies, Counseling Approaches, and Counselor Characteristics

**Please respond to the following questions:**

1. What is your age?
2. What is your gender?  
 Male       Female
3. What country/countries are you from?
4. Undergraduate/ graduate status  
 Undergraduate  
 Master  
 Doctorate
5. Major
6. Marital Status  
 Single  
 Married  
 Widowed  
 Divorced
7. Language(s) in which you are fluent.
8. How long have you been a student in the United States?



- Less than one year
- 1 to 2 years
- 3 to 4 years
- 5 to 6 years
- 7 or more years

9. What is your religion?

- Agnosticism
- Atheism
- Buddhism
- Christianity
- Hinduism
- Islam
- Judaism
- Mormon
- None
- Other (please specify below)

10. How important to you are your religious or spiritual beliefs?

- Very important
- Important
- Not very important
- Not important
- Unsure
- Not applicable

**If single with no children, please skip items 11-16 and proceed to item 17**

11. Where is your spouse?

- Living with me here in the US (If you check this button, skip item #12)
- Living elsewhere in the US
- Living outside of the US

12. If your spouse is not living with you, how long have you been living apart?

- Less than 6 months
- 6 months to 1 year
- 1-2 years
- 3 years or more

13. For how many years have you been married to your current spouse?

14. If you have children, how many do you have?

15. Where is/are your child(ren)?

- Living with me (us)
- Living elsewhere with my spouse
- Other arrangements (please specify below)

16. Please state the age of each child starting from the youngest on the left.

**Please read each item and indicate your degree of agreement/  
disagreement with each statement.**

17. I feel stressed about my difficulties with the English language.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

18. My studies are stressful for me.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

19. My relationships are stressful for me.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

20. I experience difficulties talking to university faculty members.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

21. Adapting to American culture is a major challenge for me.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

22. I turn to my religion or spiritual beliefs for comfort when I have problems.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

23. I turn to my family for comfort when I have problems.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

24. I generally solve my own problems without anyone's help.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

25. I talk to my friends and colleagues about my problems for advice and support.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

26. I talk to clergy or elders of my religion when I have problems.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

27. I exercise to help reduce my stress.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

28. I talk to my professor about my problems.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

29. If I were to seek help for my problems from a psychologist or counselor, it would be important to me that my confidentiality be respected.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

30. I want my psychologist/counselor to be very professional in his/her appearance.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

31. I want my psychologist/counselor to have at least a doctoral degree.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

32. I want my psychologist/counselor to have at least a master's degree.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

33. I prefer that my psychologist/counselor be a male.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

34. I prefer that my psychologist/counselor be a female.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

35. I prefer my psychologist/counselor to have the same religious faith as me.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

36. It is important for the psychologist/counselor to express interest in my culture.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

37. I would seek help from a professional psychologist/counselor for depression.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

38. I would seek help from a professional psychologist/counselor for treatment of anxiety.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

39. I would seek help from a professional psychologist/counselor about difficulties adjusting to American culture.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

40. I would seek professional counseling if I have relationship problems.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree



41. I would seek counseling if I have academic problems.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

42. I would seek counseling if I have problems with career issues.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

43. I would want my psychologist/counselor to be an expert on the problem I would discuss with him or her.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

44. I prefer that my psychologist/counselor's cultural/racial/ethnic identity be the same as my own.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree

- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

45. It would be embarrassing for me to discuss family problems with a psychologist/counselor.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

46. It would be embarrassing for me to discuss any personal problem with a psychologist/counselor.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

47. I would prefer my psychologist/counselor to be straightforward and direct.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

48. It is important for psychologists/counselors to accept cultural differences.

- Strongly agree
- Agree

- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

49. A psychologist/counselor would be most helpful to me if he/she provided solutions to my problems.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

50. It is important that my psychologist/counselor understands me and my difficulties.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

51. I would prefer that my psychologist/counselor relate to me more like a friend than a professional helper.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

52. I want my psychologist/counselor to address me formally (i.e. Mr. Mrs. Ms. Miss)

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

53. I think counseling is generally helpful.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

54. If I were to seek professional counseling, I would tell my family.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

55. If I were to seek professional counseling, I would tell my friends.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

**If single and with no children, please skip items 56-60 and proceed to item 61.**

56. I would seek professional counseling with my spouse for marital problems.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

57. I would seek professional counseling with my family for family problems.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

58. If I were to seek professional counseling, I would tell my spouse.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

59. My spouse would not object to my seeking help from a psychologist/ counselor.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

60. I would want to seek help from a professional psychologist/counselor, if my child had serious emotional problems.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

61. Are you aware that psychological/counseling services are available for international students on this campus?

- Yes
- No

62. Have you ever been to a psychologist or counselor for help with a personal or family problem?

- Yes
- No

**If your answer to item 62 was "Yes", proceed to items 63 and 64. If your answer to item 62 was "No", proceed to Submit**

63. How many times did you meet with your psychologist or counselor?

64. How helpful were the services you received from your psychologist or counselor?

- Very helpful
- Helpful
- Slightly helpful
- Slightly unhelpful
- Unhelpful
- Very unhelpful

APPENDIX B  
CONSENT FORM

## **Informed Consent Form**

For participation in a research investigation

Conducted under the auspices of Oklahoma State University

This study is entitled **International Student Preferences for Coping Strategies, Counseling Approaches, and Counselor Characteristics**. The principal investigator is Rowena Hui, B.S.

This study will gather information about your preferences for coping strategies, counseling approaches and counselor characteristics. We are asking that you complete the following survey which will include questions about yourself, as well as your preferences for coping strategies, counseling approaches and counselor characteristics. The survey can be accessed by clicking on the link below; it should take no longer than 20 minutes of your time to complete the survey.

This form is designed to obtain your consent to participate in this research project. Data collection for this study will occur during the summer and fall semesters of 2005, and the results will only be reported in aggregate form (as total rather than individual responses). Information that you provide will be kept confidential and your name and identity will not be connected to your response in any way. The data from this research will be held in a computer in password protected files and the data will be kept for a period of no longer than five years, after which time it will be deleted. Potential benefits include a greater understanding of international students' preferences for coping strategies, counseling approaches and counselor characteristics, and hopefully this study will generate further research on this topic. There are no anticipated risks that are greater than those you probably encounter in your daily life.

For answers to pertinent questions about research subject's rights, you may contact Rowena Hui; (405) 332-3177 [rowena.hui@okstate.edu](mailto:rowena.hui@okstate.edu). For information on subjects' rights, contact Dr. Sue Jacobs, IRB Chair 415 Whitehurst (405) 744-1676.

I understand that participation is voluntary, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in the study at anytime without penalty. I have read and fully



understand the consent form. If I desire a copy of this consent form for my records, I will print one.

Please indicate your agreement to participate in this study by clicking on the appropriate link to indicate your acceptance or refusal:

[If you have decided to participate, please click on this link to complete the survey.](#)

[If you have decided not to participate, please click on this link to exit the research project.](#)

APPENDIX C  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
APPROVAL FORM

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Wednesday, April 20, 2005  
IRB Application No ED05102  
Proposal Title: International Student Preferences for Coping Strategies, Counseling Approaches, and Counselor Characteristics  
Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 4/19/2006

Principal Investigator(s)

Yee Yan Rowena Hui	Al Carlozzi
73 S. Univ. Place #7	434 Willard
Stillwater, OK 74075	Stillwater, OK 74078

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The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

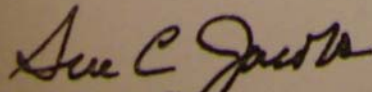
The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Beth McTernan in 415 Whitehurst (phone: 405-744-5700, emct@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Sue C. Jacobs, Chair  
Institutional Review Board

TABLE 1  
 FREQUENCY TABLE FOR COUNTRIES/REGIONS OF ORIGIN

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Africa (1)	22	5.9	6.0	6.0
Central/South America (2)	23	6.2	6.3	12.3
China (3)	40	10.8	10.9	23.2
Europe (4)	48	12.9	13.1	36.2
India (5)	145	39.0	39.5	75.7
Japan (7)	14	3.8	3.8	79.6
Korea (8)	7	1.9	1.9	81.5
Middle East (9)	16	4.3	4.4	85.8
South East Asia (6)	49	13.2	13.4	99.2
North America (10)	3	.8	.8	100.0
Others (11)	5	1.3		

TABLE 2

TABLE FOR DIFFERENT VARIABLES

Variables	Questions	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
Stress	17	37.3	62.7
	18	50.4	49.6
	19	30	70
	20	30	70
	21	40	60
Coping Strategies	22	55	45
	23	67	23
	24	70	30
	25	67	23
	26	21	79
	27	68	32
	28	45	55
Counseling Approaches	36	64.2	35.8
	43	84.9	15.1
	47	91.1	8.9
	48	96.3	3.7
	49	88	12
Counselor Characteristics	50	87.6	12.4
	51	84.2	15.8
	29	97	3
	30	85.6	14.4
	31	72.6	27.4
	32	80	20
	33	21.1	78.9
	34	44.7	55.3
35	24.1	75.3	
44	24.9	75.1	
52	84.2	15.8	

TABLE 2 CONTINUE

---

Variables	Questions	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
Problems to seek counseling	37	55.1	44.9
	38	48.1	51.9
	39	27.4	72.6
	40	37.4	62.6
	41	54	46
	42	67.7	32.3
Embarrassment	45	37.9	62.1
	46	35.8	64.2
Attitude	53	88.7	11.3
	54	63.6	36.4
	55	52.7	47.3

---

TABLE 3

BIVARIATE CORRELATION AMONG STRESS VARIABLES

<b>Variable</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
1. Difficulty with English	1.00				
2. Studies	.41**	1.00			
3. Relationships	.31**	.52**	1.00		
4. Communication with faculty	.53**	.43**	.39**	1.00	
5. Adapting to American Culture	.42**	.31**	.30**	.43**	1.00

\*\*p <.01

TABLE 4

BIVARIATE CORRELATION AMONG COPING VARIABLES

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Importance of faith/religion	1.00				
2. Turn to religion	.63**	1.00			
3. Turn to family	.20**	.32**	1.00		
4. Solve own problem	.34**	.43**	.18**	-.33**	1.00

\*p < .05. \*\*p < .01



TABLE 5

## ONE-WAY ANOVA TABLE FOR COPING STRATEGIES

## ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Q22	Between Groups	136.872	10	13.687	5.112	.000
	Within Groups	912.946	341	2.677		
	Total	1049.818	351			
Q23	Between Groups	61.914	10	6.191	3.308	.000
	Within Groups	643.933	344	1.872		
	Total	705.848	354			
Q24	Between Groups	38.818	10	3.882	2.427	.008
	Within Groups	546.944	342	1.599		
	Total	585.762	352			
Q25	Between Groups	20.623	10	2.062	1.387	.184
	Within Groups	512.905	345	1.487		
	Total	533.528	355			
Q26	Between Groups	64.185	10	6.419	3.984	.000
	Within Groups	549.440	341	1.611		
	Total	613.625	351			
Q27	Between Groups	97.951	10	9.795	3.739	.000
	Within Groups	898.478	343	2.619		
	Total	996.429	353			
Q28	Between Groups	31.092	10	3.109	1.594	.107
	Within Groups	673.096	345	1.951		
	Total	704.188	355			

TABLE 6

## ONE-WAY ANOVA TABLE FOR PROBLEMS TO SEEK COUNSELING

## ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Q37	Between Groups	21.171	10	2.117	1.068	.387
	Within Groups	672.189	339	1.983		
	Total	693.360	349			
Q38	Between Groups	29.202	10	2.920	1.515	.132
	Within Groups	651.308	338	1.927		
	Total	680.510	348			
Q39	Between Groups	79.144	10	7.914	5.343	.000
	Within Groups	499.163	337	1.481		
	Total	578.307	347			
Q40	Between Groups	26.147	10	2.615	1.463	.152
	Within Groups	602.368	337	1.787		
	Total	628.514	347			
Q41	Between Groups	31.264	10	3.126	1.454	.155
	Within Groups	724.587	337	2.150		
	Total	755.851	347			
Q42	Between Groups	43.742	10	4.374	2.098	.024
	Within Groups	702.565	337	2.085		
	Total	746.307	347			

TABLE 7

## ONE-WAY ANOVA TABLE FOR COUNSELING APPROACHES

## ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Q36	Between Groups	45.671	10	4.567	2.081	.025
	Within Groups	737.510	336	2.195		
	Total	783.182	346			
Q43	Between Groups	16.176	10	1.618	1.089	.370
	Within Groups	500.683	337	1.486		
	Total	516.859	347			
Q47	Between Groups	40.184	10	4.018	4.521	.000
	Within Groups	296.848	334	.889		
	Total	337.032	344			
Q48	Between Groups	13.077	10	1.308	1.673	.086
	Within Groups	263.438	337	.782		
	Total	276.514	347			
Q49	Between Groups	20.073	10	2.007	1.866	.049
	Within Groups	362.582	337	1.076		
	Total	382.655	347			
Q50	Between Groups	13.610	10	1.361	2.852	.002
	Within Groups	159.404	334	.477		
	Total	173.014	344			
Q51	Between Groups	66.162	10	6.616	4.937	.000
	Within Groups	448.963	335	1.340		
	Total	515.124	345			

TABLE 8

## ONE-WAY ANOVA TABLE FOR COUNSELOR CHARACTERISTICS

## ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Q29	Between Groups	23.080	10	2.308	3.071	.001
	Within Groups	257.028	342	.752		
	Total	280.108	352			
Q30	Between Groups	27.488	10	2.749	1.818	.056
	Within Groups	517.044	342	1.512		
	Total	544.533	352			
Q31	Between Groups	18.677	10	1.868	.973	.467
	Within Groups	648.773	338	1.919		
	Total	667.450	348			
Q32	Between Groups	19.583	10	1.958	1.062	.391
	Within Groups	612.131	332	1.844		
	Total	631.714	342			
Q33	Between Groups	19.805	10	1.980	1.415	.172
	Within Groups	474.412	339	1.399		
	Total	494.217	349			
Q34	Between Groups	39.498	10	3.950	1.841	.053
	Within Groups	720.969	336	2.146		
	Total	760.467	346			
Q35	Between Groups	65.443	10	6.544	3.419	.000
	Within Groups	643.099	336	1.914		
	Total	708.542	346			
Q44	Between Groups	57.225	10	5.722	4.200	.000
	Within Groups	459.129	337	1.362		
	Total	516.353	347			
Q52	Between Groups	28.713	10	2.871	2.161	.020
	Within Groups	443.797	334	1.329		
	Total	472.510	344			

VITA

Yee Yan Rowena Hui

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PREFERENCES FOR COPING STRATEGIES, COUNSELING APPROACHES AND COUNSELOR CHARACTERISTICS

Major Field: Counseling

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Hong Kong, China, August 11, 1980.

Education: Graduated from St. Paul's Co-Educational College, Hong Kong, China, in May 1999; received Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology and Economics from University of Wisconsin-Madison in May 2003; completed the requirements for the Master of Science degree in Counseling at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in July, 2007.

Experience: Research Assistant, UW-Madison William Hoyt Counseling Psychology Lab, March 2004 to August 2004; Counseling Intern, Student Counseling Center, June 2005 to December 2005; Peer Group Leader, Families and Schools for Health, August 2005 to May 2006; Counseling Intern, Sequoyah Middle School, August 2006 to December 2006.

Professional Memberships: American Counseling Association, member; Chi Sigma Iota Counseling Academic and Professional Honor Society International Omega Sigma Chi Chapter, founding member, vice president/ public relation officer.

Name: Yee Yan Rowena Hui

Date of Degree: July, 2007

Institution: Oklahoma State University

Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS PREFERENCES FOR COPING STRATEGIES, COUNSELING APPROACHES AND COUNSELOR CHARACTERISTICS

Pages in Study: 103

Candidate for the Degree of Master of Science

Major Field: Counseling

Scope and Method of Study: Descriptive, Questionnaire

Findings and Conclusions: The sources of stress for international students and their preferred ways for coping with problems, as well as their preferences for counselor characteristics and counseling approaches, were examined in this study. Significant results suggested that there is a relationship between their identification with their religion and if they would talk to clergy or elders of their religion when they have problems, and between countries/regions of origin and several counselor characteristics.

Name: Yee Yan Rowena Hui

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ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Dr. Al. Carlozzi

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## ABSTRACT

The sources of stress for international students and their preferred ways for coping with problems, as well as their preferences for counselor characteristics and counseling approaches, were examined in this study. Significant results suggested that there is a relationship between their identification with their religion and if they would talk to clergy or elders of their religion when they have problems, and between countries/regions of origin and several counselor characteristics.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Dr. Al. Carlozzi

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