

Counseling Issues for International Students

PASTORAL CARE AND COUNSELING FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS  
STUDYING IN THE USA

By

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## Counseling Issues for International Students

## Abstract

Educational opportunities in the USA continue to attract thousands of international students from around the world. Their presence represents adjustment and other psychological needs that deserve addressing. The focus of this study is to demonstrate how pastoral care and counseling discipline can respond to the needs represented by the international students in the universities and colleges. I will begin by defining pastoral care and counseling as a discipline and how it is related to practical theology. Historical background of practical theology demonstrates that pastoral care and counseling is a part of practical theology as it is one way in which the Church seeks to meet the needs of humanity in general. Counseling is a tool which the Church can use to bring healing to the congregation as well as to the society.

Because international students represent many cultures, the pastoral care and counseling professionals providing service will be dealing with pastoral counseling in a multicultural setting. In the study I will demonstrate that it is critical for the discipline of pastoral care and counseling to include multicultural counseling in training professionals in the field. The study will include discussion on competencies necessary for pastoral care counselors to provide counseling service to international students.

## Counseling Issues for International Students

## Outline

Chapter One: Introduction 7

*Status of Research* 8

*Methodology* 10

*Model of Research* 12

*Summary* 18

## Chapter Two: Rationale for Providing Pastoral Care and Counseling to Foreign

Students 19

*A Significant Population* 19

*Global and Historical Significance* 23

*A Growing Phenomenon* 25

*Potential World Leaders* 28

*Representing Wider Cultural Diversity Trend* 30

*Unique Psychological Needs* 32

*Summary* 37

## Chapter Three: Pastoral Care and Counseling as a Field of Practical

Theology 39

*Emergence of Practical Theology as a Theological Discipline* 39

*Practical Theology from Historical Perspective* 42

*Developmental Stages* 42

## Counseling Issues for International Students

<i>The Coining of Practical Theology</i>	45
<i>Practical Theology from Contemporary Definitions</i>	49
<i>Pastoral Care and Counseling as Practical Theology</i>	59
<i>Multicultural Pastoral Care and Counseling as Practical Theology</i>	83
<i>Summary</i>	88

## Chapter Four: Counseling Issues Encountered by students in the Foreign

Land	89
<i>Methodology</i>	89
<i>Narrative Study Cases</i>	93
<i>Specific Adjustment Issues</i>	114
<i>Cultural Attitude Towards Counseling</i>	115
<i>Academic Expectations</i>	117
<i>Difference in Approach to Learning</i>	120
<i>Political Crisis at Home</i>	124
<i>Death and/or Serious Illness at Home</i>	126
<i>Culture Shock</i>	127
Chapter Five: Culture Shock and Re-entry Issues	135
<i>Reverse Culture Shock Defined</i>	136
<i>Causative Factors of Reverse Culture Shock</i>	140

## Counseling Issues for International Students

<i>Personal Changes in the Student's Life</i>	140
<i>Attitude and Expectations at Home</i>	147
<i>Attitude Towards Returning Home</i>	149
<i>Giving Up New Relationships</i>	151
<i>Exposure to and Appreciation of New Value Systems</i>	153
<i>Environmental Changes at Home</i>	155
<i>Applying the Acquired Academic Knowledge</i>	157
Chapter Six: Unique Challenges in Providing Pastoral Care and Counseling to International Students	162
<i>A Challenge to Traditional Counseling Approach</i>	163
<i>Specific Unique Challenges</i>	166
<i>Diversity of Cultures Represented</i>	166
<i>Limited or Lack of Training for the Counselors</i>	182
<i>Cultural Perceptions in Counseling</i>	190
<i>Diversity of Religious Beliefs</i>	196
<i>Cultural Attitude Towards Mental Illness</i>	205
<i>Economical Realities</i>	207
<i>Summary</i>	210

## Counseling Issues for International Students

Chapter Seven: Competencies Necessary for Providing Counseling to	
International Students	211
<i>Cultural Awareness</i>	212
<i>Awareness and Appreciation of Own Culture</i>	213
<i>Awareness and Appreciation of Cultural Differences</i>	220
<i>Ability to Identify and Utilize Community Resources</i>	232
<i>Financial Resources</i>	234
<i>Community Support Network</i>	237
<i>Ability to Adopt Flexible Approaches in Counseling</i>	247
<i>Home Visits</i>	250
<i>Informal Approach to Counseling</i>	251
<i>Ability to Provide Service in the Midst of Diversity of Belief Systems</i>	254
<i>Ability to Prepare Students for Readjustment at Home Culture</i>	256
Chapter Eight: Conclusion	260
<i>Why Pastoral Care and Counseling Must Respond</i>	260
<i>It is a Strategic Ministry</i>	260
<i>It is a Needed Ministry</i>	262
<i>It is a Challenging Ministry</i>	263
<i>It is a Challenge to Pastoral Care and Counseling</i>	265
<i>Concluding Statement</i>	267

## Counseling Issues for International Students

### Chapter 1

#### Introduction

According to Yi, Giseala and Kishimoto (2003) the number of foreign students studying in the USA between 1999/2000 and 2000/2001 increased by 6.25% to 547,867. The Institute of International Education (2004) reported that there were 572,509 international students studying in the United States in 2003/2004. These foreign students represent more than 180 countries (Komiya and Ells, 2001; Spencer-Rogers, 2000).

They represent people of diverse backgrounds as well as a significant population that require special attention in any field addressing the needs of humanity. Their presence in the USA and away from their home countries means that they are adjusting to a culture that is foreign to them. Pastoral care and counseling profession cannot ignore the needs represented by this diverse population. This study will involve an attempt to demonstrate the need for and the challenges of providing pastoral care and counseling to international students.

#### *Status of Research*

I find no research that addresses the counseling needs of international students from a pastoral counseling perspective. However, there are some studies that are related to the subject from the perspective of psychology, multicultural

### Counseling Issues for International Students

counseling and counseling in general (Boyer & Sedlacek, 1989; Pedersen, 1991; Sodowsky & Taffe, 1991; Toupin & Son, 1991). Boyer & Sedlacek (1989) did a study that focused on international students' use of the counseling centers. The result was that only 13% sought counseling help while an overwhelming majority of 87% did not seek any help from the center. Other research yielded similar results (Gim, Atkins & Whitely, 1990; Lee & Mixson, 1995).

Sodowsky (1991) did another study that focused on how international students perceived the credibility of the counselor. He found that cultural sensitivity is very important for international students' ability to give credibility to the counselor. Some of the studies focused on the counselor's training to meet counseling needs for the foreign students (Sodowsky & Taffe 1991). However, D'Andrea, Daniels and Heck (1991) did a similar study focusing on how a particular model of multicultural training impacts counselor's effectiveness in counseling foreign students. The study suggested that training counselors to be sensitive to cultural issues is more difficult than helping international students adapt to the foreign culture. Other studies focused on the needs of particular cultural groups among the international students (Toupin, 1991; Gim, Atkinsons & Kim, 1991 and Marks, 1987).

Another area of study focused on issues students confront when they return to their countries of origin. Ansel (1993) did an extended study to find out



### Counseling Issues for International Students

how students from India were adjusting after their return home. The research indicated that when students return to their countries of origin, they suffer from reverse culture shock, which complicates their reintegration process. This makes it difficult for the returning student to function well in society after extended period of study overseas. Marks (1987) discussed the issues and gave suggestions on how to help the students lessen the adjustment problems as they re-enter into their original countries and cultures.

Since there is no research that addresses the subject from pastoral care and counseling perspective, the study will rely on the research and other written materials in these and other related fields. From the same materials I will seek to identify the emotional issues experienced by international students during and after their studies in the United States. The counseling techniques developed in the fields of multicultural counseling will also be a part of the study. My intention in this dissertation is to seek integration of these techniques with principles drawn from the field of pastoral care and counseling.

The study will involve drawing principles that will be useful in defining competencies helpful in providing a framework for pastoral care and counseling to international students and, possibly, other immigrants. These competencies will be a product of careful study, analysis and integration of techniques developed in the fields of pastoral counseling, psychology, counseling in general

### Counseling Issues for International Students

and multicultural counseling and other related fields. While some of the studies focus on counseling of internationals from particular geographical background (Toupin, 1991; Gim, Atkinsons & Kim, 1991 and Marks, 1987), this study will focus on international students in general.

The purpose in this study is to address the issues common to international students regardless of their gender, ethnic and national backgrounds. The focus will be on issues determined, by other studies, to commonly affect international students irrespective of cultural upbringing and other variations. This is not to claim that all international students do experience the same issues all the time. Rather the argument is that there are issues that tend to affect foreign students regardless of the learner's cultural, national, personal and religious background.

### *Methodology*

As demonstrated above I find no literature addressing the issue of pastoral care and counseling for international students. Therefore the approach I will take in this dissertation is to integrate the findings of other counseling disciplines such as psychology, counseling in general, and multicultural counseling and development, social work and other related fields. The purpose is to study issues and counseling approaches the various disciplines have developed in counseling international students and in addressing counseling issues for those who are culturally different. This means that the research will involve literary analysis

### Counseling Issues for International Students

that will culminate in integration of applicable principles for providing pastoral care and counseling for foreign students.

The exception is for chapter 4 where narrative study is used to demonstrate how the counseling issues found by other disciplines impact international students. The narrative study will focus on six international students to whom I have provided spiritual care in their times of crisis. The experiences of these students will be discussed in conjunction with the issues found to be common among international students. The narrative study will demonstrate the extent to which some of the issues can impact the students in their adjustment process overseas. In essence the narrative study will illustrate how complex and serious the adjustment issues can be for the foreign students. The stories will help emphasize the urgency of meeting the counseling needs of students who are seeking education overseas.

#### *Model of Research*

McCann and Strain (1985) regard any example of practical theology a “simply a *model* within a larger genre” (p. 33). To them model is the same thing as theory. They go on to explain the reason for models of practical theology by stating: “Model-theory allows us to establish the perspectival limits and possibilities of practical theological discourse” (pp. 33-34). In other words

## Counseling Issues for International Students

models promote free discourse but with framework to promote a particular focus in perspective and approach.

According to Kelsey and Wheeler (1995) the idea of theological discourse and different models owes its originality to Edward Farley who “inaugurated unprecedented streams of essays and monographs on the nature, purpose, and organization of theological study and theological schools” (p. 181). Since then different models and theories of practical theology have been developed by various scholars (McCann and Strain 1985; Heitinik, 1999; Lang, 1999).

For example Poling and Miller (1985) outlined what they considered six models based on two axes. One axis is aimed at bringing “together a variety of interpretations into some normative unity” (p. 31). The second axis “describes the relationship of church and society” (p. 33). The six types or models address issues of formation of the Church, the formation of society, Church’s vision on society and the Church’s faithfulness to its mission as a congregation.

Browning (1991) outlined three movements he considered first in theology and theological education. He begins with descriptive theology which he sees as describing the “contemporary theory-laden practices that give rise to the practical questions that generate all theological reflection” (p. 47). In this stage of theology the researcher seeks to understand meaning of practices in relation to issues affecting and generating certain behaviors. It “describes practices in order to

## Counseling Issues for International Students

discern the conflicting cultural and religious meanings that guide our action and provoke the questions that animate our practical thinking” (p. 48).

Historical theology is the second movement. The focus is to find meaning in the norms already accepted by society from history. The question is “What do the normative texts that are already part of our effective history really imply for our praxis when they are confronted as honestly as possible” (p. 49). In essence this movement challenges what may be acceptable norms and practices in the Church. The purpose is to engage the community of believers in hermeneutical dialogue with accepted texts.

The third movement is systematic theology. In this movement the acceptable practices or texts are integrated with contemporary experience. “Systematic theology tries to gain as comprehensive a view of the present as possible” (p. 51). The attempt is to examine the Gospel and its applicability to present situation. Two questions guide systematic theology: “The first is, What new horizon of meaning is fused when questions from present practices are brought to the central Christian witness? The second is, What reasons can be advanced to support the validity claims of this new fusion of meaning” (pp. 51-52)? These questions are aimed at subjecting the Christian faith or theology to philosophical testing (Brown, 1999).

## Counseling Issues for International Students

Browning (1991) moves then to a fourth movement which he terms “Strategic Practical Theology”. He sees this approach of practical theology as answering four fundamental questions. The first question is “How do we understand this concrete situation in which we must act” (p. 55)? The question assumes that practical theology addresses concrete rather than abstract situations. It is the concrete situation that gives direction to the application of theology. The focus is the particular situation from which the theological inquiry arises. “This consists of the special histories, commitments, and needs of the agents in the situation” (p. 55).

The second question is “What should be our praxis in this concrete situation” (p. 55). The issue here is the application of practical theology to a specific situation. According to Browning, “It brings the fruits of historical and systematic theology into contact with the analysis of the concrete situation first began in descriptive theology and now resumed in strategic practical theology” (pp. 55-56). This is where practical theology takes the Church beyond ministries to its congregation and to society in general. To Browning (1999) going beyond the Church while maintaining “clerical paradigm, strategic practical theology is concerned with areas of *praxis* that relate to the church’s activity in the world as well as its ministries within its own walls” (p. 62).

## Counseling Issues for International Students

Third, there is the question of critical defense. He asks “How do we critically defend the norms of our praxis in this concrete situation” (p. 56). The argument here is that practical theology must defend its claims. He proposes five validity claims or dimensions:

- (1) the visional level (which inevitably raises metaphysical validity claims);
- (2) the obligational level (which raises normative ethical claims of rightness in Habermas’s sense of this world);
- (3) the tendency-need or anthropological dimension (which raises claims about human nature, its basic human needs, and the kinds of premoral goods required to meet these needs—a discussion which Habermas believes is impossible to conduct);
- (4) an environmental social dimensions (which raises claims that deal primarily with social-systemic and ecological constraints on our tendencies and needs); and
- (5) the rule-role dimension (which raises claims about the concrete patterns we should enact in our actual praxis in the every day world) (p. 71).

The fourth question which has to do with communication is: “What means, strategies, and rhetorics should we use in this concrete situation” (p. 56)? This is where practical theology attempts to touch people’s lives according their needs. The approach is to meet people where they are and to bring about needed

## Counseling Issues for International Students

transformation. In essence this question addresses the issue of the practicality of practical theology. “For confessional narrative, or cultural-linguistic approaches to strategic practical theology, this last question – the question of strategies and rhetoric – often is thought to be the totality of practical theology” (p. 56).

This dissertation is based on this model of strategic practical theology. Counseling needs of the international students provide a concrete situation in which praxis and action take place. The study will address issues facing the students and how practical theology can provide framework for responding to these needs. The religious and cultural diversity means that the situation provides room for “analysis of the various religio-cultural narratives and histories that compete to define and give meaning to the situation” (Browning, 1991).

Discussion on the history of practical theology, its relationship with pastoral care and counseling, and multicultural counseling addresses issues of language and rhetoric in addressing the situation. In other words to what extent does languages developed in other fields like psychology appropriate in addressing human needs from practical theology perspective. The fact that the focus is on international students means that the Church is challenged to go beyond its walls and concern itself with the needs that exist outside the Church community. It goes further and push the Church to concern itself with global issues.



### Counseling Issues for International Students

The study addresses Browning's fourth question by discussing various means and strategies for meeting the needs of the international students. Browning stresses the need for the Church to look within and without for resources as means of meeting the needs. To him "Christian education in pluralistic modern societies draws on ecology of interacting resources located both within and outside the Church" (Browning, 1991, p. 235). This dissertation will challenge the Church to look to the community not only for ideas but also for other resources including funds.

In chapter 2 I will discuss the rationale for providing pastoral care to international students. This addresses the second question posed by Browning (1991), "How do we critically defend the norms of our praxis in this concrete situation" (p. 56)? In the study I also discuss the rationale for applying findings from behavioral sciences to pastoral care and counseling. This is important as Brown sees the concern here as relating to rationale for adopting particular approach. "The critical defense of the norms of action is what distinguishes the revised correlational approach to practical theology from all simple confessional narrative or cultural-linguistic approaches" (p. 56).

#### *Summary*

The demographic significance of the international student population in the universities and colleges in the USA demands that pastoral care and

### Counseling Issues for International Students

counseling professionals respond to the needs they represent. Since there are no studies that focus on pastoral care and counseling for foreign students, I will seek to utilize findings from other fields like psychology, multicultural counseling and other related fields. The purpose is to integrate them with principles developed in the field of pastoral care and counseling in order to develop competencies for providing service for international students. This methodology will involve literary analysis and integration of different fields. The model of study chosen for the dissertation is strategic practical theology as envisioned by Browning (1991).

## Counseling Issues for International Students

### Chapter 2

#### Rationale for Providing Pastoral Care and Counseling to Foreign Students

In this chapter I will seek to demonstrate that providing pastoral counseling to foreign students is of critical importance. Certain factors make the need for addressing the issues represented by these students a ministry of great necessity. First international students represent a significant population. Secondly, they represent a movement with global and historical perspective. Thirdly, they represent a growing phenomenon in the campuses. Fourthly, they are potential world leaders. Fifthly, they represent an overall diversity growth in the United States. Finally the foreign students have unique psychological needs. Each of these points deserves discussions.

#### *A Significant Population*

Students from around the world continue to seek educational opportunities in the United States of America. Marks (1987) reported that in 1984, there were 338, 894 international students studying in 2,498 colleges and universities. Smolowe (1992) reported that there were over 400,000 internationals studying in the United States. Zhang and Dixon (2001) stated that in five decades, between the late 1950s to 1994-1995, the international student population in the USA grew from 47,245 to 452,635 (p. 253). According to Sakurako (2000) the population.

## Counseling Issues for International Students

grew from 29,813 in 1950-51 to 453,787 in 1995-96. Komiya and Ells (2001)

found that in 1997 the Department of Education reported that approximately

500,000 foreign students were studying in American colleges and universities.

The Institute of International Education (2004) listed the top twenty countries that

send the highest number of students to the USA. The following is the list of the

top twenty countries ranked according to the number of students they sent.

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>2002/03</b>	<b>2003/04</b>
<b>WORLD TOTAL</b>	<b>586,323</b>	<b>572,509</b>
1 India	74,603	79,736
2 China	64,757	61,765
3 Korea, Republic of	51,519	52,484
4 Japan	45,960	40,835
5 Canada	26,513	27,017
6 Taiwan	28,017	26,178
7 Mexico	12,801	13,329
8 Turkey	11,601	11,398
9 Thailand	9,982	8,937
10 Indonesia	10,432	8,880
11 Germany	9,302	8,745
12 United Kingdom	8,326	8,439
13 Brazil	8,388	7,799
14 Colombia	7,771	7,533
15 Kenya	7,862	7,381
16 Hong Kong	8,076	7,353
17 Pakistan	8,123	7,325
18 France	7,223	6,818
19 Malaysia	6,595	6,483
20 Nigeria	5,816	6,140

## Counseling Issues for International Students

The International Institute of Education (2004) commended that “While two of the four leading places of origin of international students from Asia have seen decreases in 2003/2004, India, China, Korea, and Japan continue to represent a growing concentration in international student enrollments in the U.S. higher education. Students from the leading four places of origin, all in Asia, comprise 41% of all international students” (<http://opendoors.iienetwork.org/file>).

The slight decrease between the 2002/03 and 2003/05 is “attributed to a variety of reasons, including real and perceived difficulties in obtaining student visas (especially in scientific and technical fields), rising U.S. tuition costs, vigorous recruitment activities by other English-speaking nations, and perceptions abroad that international students may no longer be welcomed in the U.S” (<http://opendoors.iienetwork.org/file>). It is important to note that International Institute of Education does not view this slight decline as representing the overall growth of international students coming to study in the USA. In spite of occasional decline the number has continued to grow.

Important to note also is the commitment of the United States government to attract more international students. Patricia Harrison, Assistant Secretary for Education and Cultural affairs was quoted as stating ““The United States remains the best place in the world to seek the benefits of higher education, and we are working in a concerted way at the Department of State and in related agencies to

## Counseling Issues for International Students

convince international students that they are welcome here”

(<http://opendoors.iienetwork.org/file>). In this case it is safe to assume that the trend will continue to be that of growth rather than decline.

The increasing number of international students was a factor in the rapid growth of the culturally different students in the USA universities in general (Hayes and Lin, 1994; Zhang & Dixon, 2001). Merta et al (1992) stated that “During the 1960s and 1970s enrollment of racial/ethnic minorities and foreign students at U.S. universities more than double; by 1980 one in five students was culturally different...” (p. 214). Rao (1995) sights an example of Harvard that “In the 1940s, the class was predominantly American; in 1992, more than half of the students in the class were foreign students” (p. 274). This represents a rapid growth and it is an example of the reality that schools of higher learning continue to attract foreign students in large numbers.

The fact that international student population is named as impacting multicultural growth in the institutions of higher learning confirms the reality that the presence of the foreign students is significantly felt in American universities and colleges. Given the reality of examples sighted above any discussion of multiculturalism in universities must include international students. It is a population that cannot be ignored and deserves the attention of professional counselors.

## Counseling Issues for International Students

*Global and Historical Significance*

The growth of internationals seeking education on foreign soil is worldwide and not limited to the United States (Tatar & Horenczyk, 2000; Ward, 1998). For example Luzio-Lockett (1998) saw similar growth in Britain. She stated, “The influx of a substantial proportion of non-British students into higher educational settings in Britain obliges us to focus on the reality of what might be termed as *in-transit* population” (p. 209). The statement implies that international student population is also growing in Britain.

Tatar & Horenczyk (2000) sight Israel as one of the destinations for international students. The growth of the foreign learners in their universities has necessitated counseling centers to allocate “significantly more personnel and financial resources during the last decade to deal with a marked increase in the number of students, many of whom are immigrants from the former Soviet Union” (p. 49).

According to Chambers (1950) “FROM THE BEGINNINGS of universities, centers of learning have attracted scholars from beyond national boundaries. Varying somewhat in prevalence from century to century, there has always been a fellowship transcending differences of race, religion, and nationality among those who devote themselves to the discipline of higher learning” (p. 32). The reason he gives for this global movement in search of

## Counseling Issues for International Students

education is that “The interdependence of all the world's peoples, now greater, more complex, and more manifest than ever before, gives redoubled emphasis to the promise inherent in ‘crossfertilization’ of cultures, and multiplies opportunities for the advancement of human welfare in every corner of the earth” p. 32). One report estimated that there were more than a million worldwide in 1996 (Hxue et al, 1996). The idea of students pursuing higher learning away from their home countries is global.

Neither is the idea new. It has historical roots (Chambers 1950). According to Huxur et al (1996) “Even in the Middle Ages, universities have attracted foreign scholars and students to their communities” (p. 3). Wehrly (1988) agrees that the idea of sojourners seeking education away from their home lands is not new. She states that the practice “has been occurring since the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries when European students began traveling beyond the borders of their home countries to participate in advance studies at cities like Paris and Salerno” (p. 3). The point is that the practice of students seeking education outside their home lands has been going on for many years. With such historical roots, the practice is likely to continue as many opportunities avail themselves for learners to pursue studies in different countries.

While circumstances have changed, history demonstrates that the trend will continue to grow and expand as sojourning students continue to be driven by



### Counseling Issues for International Students

the desire to pursue learning in foreign countries. Circumstances and reasons for the pursuit may change with time, but the practice is an ongoing phenomenon. As Huxur et al (1996) states, “Although in contemporary times, universities are, for a variety of reasons, more nationalistic than was the case in medieval period, the tradition of the wandering scholar remains very much alive” (p. 3).

One of the changes that affect the trend is the rapid growth of the centers and geographical locations, as more countries continue to attract these foreign learners. According to Wehrly (1988) “At the beginning of the 1980s, about two thirds of all the international students in the world were studying at higher education centers in Canada, France, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, the United States, and the West Germany” (p. 4). The desire for learning which continues to motivate sojourners to seek education beyond their countries of origin is rooted in history. They also come with adjustments issues that challenge the counseling professions. Their presence is especially a challenge to pastoral care and counseling providers.

#### *A Growing Phenomenon*

One of the main reasons for the increase in the number of foreign students is economical. Many universities seek foreign students because they are able to pay their own way without a need for financial aid (Susan 1990). In Canada

## Counseling Issues for International Students

international students pay four times more than the local residents (Arthur, 1997; Driedger, 1998). In this case it is a business for the universities to have foreign students because their presence means financial gain for the hosting institution as well the hosting country.

Marks (1987) saw a wider and a more global economical reason for such a growth in international population in the USA universities. To her the rationale is “based on a concern for national and world problems, foreign trade, level of foreign investments, and number of Americans traveling and working abroad” (p. 120). One can see from this statement that economical factors play an important role in the recruiting of foreign students. Trade and investments imply that business and financial gain are among the main reasons foreign learners are recruited and encouraged to seek education in the USA. In addition, National Association of Foreign Students Advisors (2004) reported that in 2003 foreign students injected close to \$13 billion into the USA economy. This confirms that economical advantage is one of the motivating factors and reasons why the number of foreign students has grown and will continue to grow.

Another reason, the universities and colleges value the presence of internationals on their campuses, is that the quest students enrich the classrooms and campus experience with cultural and global values which are critical for the

### Counseling Issues for International Students

domestic students as well as the professors (Driedger, 1998; Marks 1987). In the field of professional counseling the need for contact with other cultures is strongly emphasized for training professional counselors (Constantine & Gloria, 1999; Diaz-Lazaro & Cohen, 2001; Lee et al, 1999). International students provide valuable resources to meet this need.

Some institutions value the presence of foreign students enough to provide full scholarship for some students. Pedersen (1991) outlines five motivations. One is the assumption that the knowledge gained will promote global understanding and consequently improve world peace. Secondly, knowledge from the sojourning students will promote cultural tolerance. Thirdly, shared culture will result in world homogeneity and stability. Fourthly, intercultural contact will result in interdependence. Finally, one will gain a better knowledge of himself or herself by interacting with those from other cultural backgrounds.

All these points support the fact that the hosting nations see advantages in having international students on their campuses. The fact that the universities value the presence of the foreign students means that they will continue to promote their campuses overseas to recruit more foreigners. Natural outcome will be a continued growth of foreign learners on American institutions of higher learning. It is a growing phenomenon that requires the attention of the counseling professions.

## Counseling Issues for International Students

*Potential World Leaders*

Many of the students seeking further training in the USA, are graduate students in the fields of engineering, mathematics and science. According to Pedersen (1991) universities are becoming more and more dependant on international students in the same fields. In other words as much as the students need the education the hosting institutions also need the foreign sojourners. Goldberg (1990) reported that over half of the doctorates awarded to engineering students in 1989 went to foreign students. Holden (1993) stated that over 100,000 graduate students in United States were internationals. He further stated that 60% of the Ph.D. degrees awarded in the field of Engineering and 50% in math went to international students. These numbers suggest that the foreign students in the United States are among the brightest and have the potential of becoming top leaders in their fields, countries and the world in general.

This upsurge of foreign students in the top universities created some complaints. Some felt that the foreign students were favored over the minorities in America, while others saw it as giving away the tax payers money to other countries (Holen & Gibbons, 1993; Rosendahl, 1993). Universities were forced to defend their positions by explaining that they are simply choosing the brightest and the most qualified students (Holden & Gibbons, 1993). The complaints

## Counseling Issues for International Students

demonstrate that the presence of the international students is strongly felt in the university and college campuses.

The concept that internationals studying in the USA are potential world leaders is backed by examples. Lau (1982) observed that Dr. Kwame Nkuruma was an international student who experience humiliation in the United States. In one incident he asked for a drink and an American “pointed him to a spittoon” (p. 30). He eventually returned home to become the first president of Ghana for 14 years. He sighted also Mengitsu Haile Mariam who received his military training at Aberdeen, Maryland. He too had a humiliating experience, but later returned to his country of Ethiopia where he took power and expelled all Americans.

Rentz (1987) listed other former international students who ended up in leadership positions after returning to their home countries: “El Salvador (Jose Napoleon Duarte at Notre Dame); Philippines (Corazon Aquino at College of Mount St. Vincent, New York); Mexico (Miguel de la Madrid at Harvard); Zimbabwe (the Rev. Canaan Sodindo Banana at Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington DC); Malawi (Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda at University of Chicago and Meharry Medical College in Tennessee); Sweden (Ingvar Carlsson at Northwestern); Greece (Andreas G. Papandreou at Harvard); Belize (Manuel Esquivel at Loyola); Iceland (Steingrimur Hermannsson at Illinois and California Institute of Technology; and King Birenda Bir Bikram Dev. of Nepal (Harvard)”

## Counseling Issues for International Students

(p. 10). NAFSA, (National Association of Foreign Students Advisors) (2004) listed over 175 former international students who returned and assumed key leadership positions in their home countries and in international agencies.

The point is that these students who have left their homelands to study overseas may end up in places of leadership and key positions upon returning home. This makes it of critical importance that counseling professionals seek ways of ministering to these men and women who have the potential to impact their countries and the rest of the world in their capacity as decision makers (Christian Century, 1962). The implication is that meeting the needs of international students can be an indirect way of meeting the needs of the countries they represent and of the world in general, especially those who may take leadership roles in the United Nations agencies.

*Representing Wider Cultural Diversity Growth*

The presence of international students in the USA colleges and universities is only one element of a growing cultural diversity in the country (Jacob & Greggo, 2001; Silva-Neto, 1992). Jacob & Greggo, (2001) point out that while little attention is given to the needs of the international students, their growth in population “is a part of the rapid shift occurring within American society as the racial and ethnic composition becomes more diverse” (p. 74).

## Counseling Issues for International Students

Sakurako (2000) links the growth of cultural pluralism in American colleges and Universities with the steady growth of international student population.

Pedersen (1991) echoed the same sentiment when he acknowledged the necessity of developing relational skills in a society populated with people from different cultural backgrounds. He stated that “The skills of adapting to cultural diversity will become an important resource for helping people learn about one another and about themselves in a multicultural society such as the United States” (p. 12). According to National Association of Foreign Students Advisers (NAFSA) (2003), this means the need to promote multiculturalism is not new to the society.

The call for counselors to be culturally sensitive is growing (Ancis and Sanchez-Hucles, 2000; Constantine & Gloria, 1999; Lee et al, 1999; Manese et al, 2001). The same call “can also be linked to multicultural training concerning the counseling and transitional issues experienced by international students” (Jacob & Greggo, p. 75). This means that the society is aware that the country is becoming multicultural and must address these cultural issues. International students present a unique element to the process because, unlike other foreigners who migrate to settle in the USA, they, for the most part, are transitional as they are here, temporarily, and will be returning to their home countries (Arthur, 1997; Jacob & Greggo, 2001).

## Counseling Issues for International Students

*Unique psychological needs*

Chen (1999) described three levels of stress. One is stress that comes from harm directed to damaging the individual psychologically. The second one is threat or anticipated harm that has not taken place yet. The third one is a challenge for the individual to have enough resources to overcome the threats. For an international student “Language barriers, lack of knowledge of the host culture, difficulty in adapting to the host country customs and lifestyle, maladjustment to the physical environment could all be experienced as threatening and challenging to an individual” (p. 49). The experience becomes a psychological challenge, especially, since stress is influenced by “how people perceive and differentiate harm, threat, and challenge” (p. 50). In a foreign culture the international student anticipates challenges that are uncertain and they may not have resources to overcome. Based on study and personal experience Wehrly (1988) concluded that “the stress experienced by most international students is ongoing during most of their period of study in the United States” (p. 4).

The presence of international students is a challenge for those seeking to provide counseling services. According to Komiya and Ellis (2001) the stress level among international students is complicated by the fact that the foreign sojourner is unlikely to seek counseling help when needed. Sakurako (2000)



## Counseling Issues for International Students

stated that “given the evidence that the demands for cultural adjustments frequently place international students at greater risk for various psychological problems than are students in general, it is important that sufficient and readily accessible mental health services be established for them” (p. 137). The point is well taken but as mentioned above, foreign students are less likely to seek counseling help even if the mental health care services are offered. There must be a different method to make the services accessible to the international learners.

When an international student enters a college campus in the United States, he or she leaves behind a familiar culture and family support (Hayes & Lin, 1994). They come to a strange land and must adjust to a new culture while carrying a full load of study. Their temporary status creates a unique challenge for counselors and other caregivers (Mori, 2000; Tartar & Horenczyk, 2000). The sojourning learner finds himself or herself involved in “many sociocultural, environmental, and psychological adjustments” (Chen. 49).

According to Pedersen (1991), “When international students arrive at overseas universities, the circumstances suddenly and simultaneously impose a variety of competing and sometimes, contradictory roles that must be learned” (p. 10). This means that the student is not only learning a new culture but also a behavior that his or her culture may consider unacceptable. Thus the learning sojourner must overcome the newness of the culture as well as the cultural bias

## Counseling Issues for International Students

about a particular behavior. According to Wehrly (1988) even “Meeting basic needs of food, clothing, shelter, and safety are often stressful because of vast cultural differences between that of the students’ home countries and the culture of the university community to which they have been transported” (p. 4).

One of the uniqueness of the stress experience by the foreign learner is that it comes as a shock for the student who comes without preparation to deal with the new culture. Jacob and Greggo (2001) state, “Often these students are faced with the challenges of learning the intricacies of daily living and survival in a foreign environment without adequate information or preparation” (p. 76). The experience becomes complicated when the new sojourner has to face the unexpected change in the midst of educational demands that require full load of studies. As a result “It is not unusual during this process of adaptation for stress-related psychological difficulties such as anxiety, sense of loss, loneliness, helplessness, and depression to occur” (Chen, 1999, p. 49).

Pedersen (1991) sees a direct relationship between the student’s cultural adjustment and emotional stability. He states “When the requirements of those roles are realistically perceived and effectively learned, the student’s experience is likely to be ‘successful,’ but when the roles are not accommodated, the resulting identity diffusion and role conflict may affect the student’s emotional well-being”

## Counseling Issues for International Students

(p. 10). In other words the student's success in the foreign country is affected and even determined by success in cultural adjustment.

The statement is well taken, but the experience for the international student remains a challenge. Combination of limited cultural understanding and language barrier means that "stress in one way or another becomes an unavoidable psychological factor for international college students" (Chen, 1999, p. 49). Professional counselors, particularly pastoral counselors, must define ways of helping these students address the barriers that make life difficult and sometimes unbearable for the foreign learners trying to adjust culturally while pursuing academic goals.

Gregory (1997) saw the need for the universities to prepare to meet the emotional needs for the foreigners entering their campuses. His concern echoes the sentiments that internationals represent emotional and psychological needs that require special attention. Jacob & Greggo (2001) see the same dilemma that continue to face colleges and universities when they state, "An increasing dilemma facing institutions of higher education is addressing the unique and common concerns facing the growing population of international students in the United States" (p. 74).

But addressing the issue cannot be the responsibilities of the universities and colleges alone. The reality is that the need is much wider and requires serious

## Counseling Issues for International Students

attention by counselors. The problem is that most counselors are not prepared to deal with the counseling issues represented in the international communities (Merta, Ponterotto & Brown, 1992; Mori, 2000; Zhang & Dixon, 2001). Thus Jacob & Greggo (2001) state that “The trend has significant implications for counselors and counselor-trainers who may encounter international students in college counseling settings or within various community service agencies” (p. 75).

While foreign students’ emotional and psychological needs are greater than that of the national students, there is very little being done to address their needs (Abe & Zane, 1990; Estrada et al, 2002; Huxur et al, 1996; Komiya & Ells, 2001; Mori, 2000). Obviously counseling in the west was developed to address issues that affected the local culture. The problem is that the counseling disciplines have neglected to pay attention to the demographic changes that continue to transform the society into a multicultural community.

The presence of the international student population has intensified the need for cultural awareness in the USA, and yet literature addressing the counseling needs for the foreign students remain very limited (Huxur et al, 1996; Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999). For pastoral care and counseling professionals the issues present unique challenges in their approach to ministry. According to Augsberger (1986) “This is a time for pastoral theologians to claim the unique

## Counseling Issues for International Students

vantage point offered by their integrative stance and multidisciplinary training and vision” (p. 19). To him this is a challenge for pastors to be relevant to the issues and challenges of the present age. This is a call that “must begin with a shift in the way we define the essential nature of pastoral counseling and broadened model of the pastoral counselor as a person, as a professional, and as a culturally capable therapist” (p. 19).

International students represent emotional and psychological needs that are unique and that require attention by the counseling professionals (Abe & Zane, 1990; Luzio-Lockett, 1998; Mori, 2000 Zhang and Nixon, 2001). Therefore counseling professionals need to prepare counselors to address multicultural needs for foreign students. Jacob and Greggo (2001) expressed the same need when they stated that “Consequently, there is a need to provide awareness and knowledge about the needs of international students in training culturally sensitive counselors” (p. 75). They emphasized that, “Counselors training programs should provide further training to graduate trainees so that they can begin to understand and adequately address the cultural and psychological adjustment issues faced by this group of students” (p. 75). It is obvious that their concern demonstrates that international students represent counseling needs that are unique and challenging to counseling profession.

## Counseling Issues for International Students

### *Summary*

The chapter has demonstrated that it is of critical importance for the pastoral care and counseling professionals to provide service for the foreign students. Not only do the foreign students represent a growing population, they also represent unique psychological needs that require special attention by the professional counselors. The chapter pointed out also that the kind of service these international students receive can impact their home countries and the world in general as many of them return as top leaders with important decision making capacity. These factors demonstrate the importance of meeting the needs represented by the foreign students in the USA.

## Counseling Issues for International Students

## Chapter 3

## Pastoral Counseling Defined as a Field of Practical Theology

The previous chapter has demonstrated the significance of meeting the counseling needs of the foreign students in the USA. In this chapter I will seek to demonstrate that providing pastoral care and counseling to international students is a matter of practical theology for the Church. To do so I will begin by defining practical theology from historical perspective, demonstrating its role in meeting needs of humanity. I will then define pastoral care and counseling and demonstrate that it is a part of practical theology.

*Emergence of Practical Theology as a Theological Discipline*

According to Fowler (1985), the emergence of practical theology as a discipline is a product of four factors. One is the recognition that throughout history, the Church has always developed theology as a means of affecting change through Christian presence in individuals, institutions and society at large.

According to Hulme (1981) the Church as a witnessing community has a mission “to reach out as a leaven in society with the gospel of reconciliation” (p. 165). He sees this mission as going beyond ministry to the individuals in the congregation. The Church has the responsibility to address social structures that “may be unjust or even oppressive to certain people” (p. 165). To him the church can take

## Counseling Issues for International Students

advantage of the numbers in the congregation and use it to address these issues and affect change in the society in general.

In this understanding practical theology is a reminder of the Church's responsibility in affecting change in the world. Wood (1984) agrees with the same concept. He describes practical theology as calling "attention to the fact that Christian witness is a practice, a deliberate, patterned, purposeful activity; and it identifies this fact about Christian witness as the distinctive concern of the theological discipline which bears this name" (p. 253). This witness includes every aspect of the Church's activities within the congregation and outside the congregation. To Christians this means "their participation in politics, and their response to what befalls them, as well as by their verbal affirmations" (p. 253).

The second factor characterizing the emergence of practical theology as described by Fowler is that, secular techniques, for affecting personal and social change in society, has permeated the Church. Examples of such techniques include counseling, administration, education and evangelization. Fowler is concerned that these secular techniques have been adopted without criticism. While Hulme (1981) expresses similar concern he believes that pastoral counselors can borrow from secular psychotherapy and still "function within their own unique perspective" (p. 17). To Fowler practical theology is there to help the Church think theologically in adopting the secular techniques.



## Counseling Issues for International Students

Thirdly, theology is under pressure to address issues relevant to the contemporary society without compromising the Christian traditional doctrine. “In all pluralism and secularism of contemporary society, theology is under increasing pressure to speak a language that is faithful to the Christian story and vision, and at the same time addresses the felt experience and recognized and unrecognized hungers of contemporary people” (Fowler, pp. 45-46). In essence theology needed to reflect the doctrine of the Church while addressing social issues affecting society as a whole. This required critical inquiry of the subject in order to make it contemporary without compromising doctrine.

Fourthly, there exists a need for theology to address Christianity, deeply, as it relates to its commitment to particular churches but without appearing to promote sectarianism or isolationism. Thus he states “The new practical theology aims to frame and generate a language for the sharing of the ethical and spiritual riches and the imperatives of Christian faith in public, and address the issues that threaten the common good” (p. 46). In essence practical theology demonstrates Christian commitment to the Church and to meeting the needs of the suffering outside the Church. It is concerned with the issues affecting the Church and society as a whole. In doing so the discipline cannot avoid addressing issue of diversity of doctrine while making sure the Church is not isolated from other religions.

### Counseling Issues for International Students

The task in this chapter is to discuss the relationship between practical theology and pastoral counseling in a multicultural setting. In order to discuss the relationship between the two disciplines it is necessary to define both for clarity. I will begin by discussing practical theology from historical perspective in order to demonstrate how it is related to pastoral counseling.

#### *Practical Theology from Historical Perspective*

##### *Developmental Stages of Practical Theology*

Practical theology is a discipline that evolved over the years and through cultural, ecclesiastical and historical changes. The practice existed before the name came into existence. Fowler (1985) discussed Edward Farley's definition in four phases of history. The first phase which Farley (1983) named Theology/Habitus, referred to the existential experience or knowledge of God which begins in the New Testament times and is rooted in Hellenic philosophy of early Christianity.

Concerning this understanding of God, Farley (1983), states, "In that literature, God was the one, true, archetypal theologian, because only God had true, archetypal self-knowledge" (p. 23). In other words theology is rooted in the knowledge and the understanding of God's nature, and true knowledge of God is attributed to Him alone. Maddox (1990) defines the term on a relational bases.

## Counseling Issues for International Students

His description is that, it is “a cognitive and affectional disposition or orientation toward God, others and creation” (p. 651). In other words theology has to do with relationship with God, people and nature in general.

This phase of theological study did not address the relationship between historical revelation and personal experience of God. Fowler (1985) defined this form of theology as an “inquiry that does not sharply distinguish between spirituality’s struggle to allow the self to be centered and formed by the love of God and the cognitive effort to apprehend the truth of God’s revelation in history” (p. 3). In reality the theory lacked practical application.

The second phase of Farley’s definition is Theology/Science, which was a product of medieval Christianity and medieval universities. He saw this phase as carrying forward Theology/Habitus and adding systematic approach and exposition to the study of theology. Theology was treated like any other secular subject such as philosophy and astronomy. As a discipline it became a subject deserving further study and inquiry as to its relationship to other disciplines. Farley (1983) stated, “There is of course, a set of courses and designated faculty called systematic theology within a larger faculty of studies, but this genre we are talking about is not a sub-discipline. It is simply the one, single science, parallel to philosophy, rhetoric, and astronomy, with its own object and proper method” (p. 23). Here systematic theology was seen as an independent scientific study that

## Counseling Issues for International Students

stood side by side with other fields of science.

It is interesting to note that the development of Theology/Science occurred at the period when the Roman Catholic was gaining popularity and affecting the society in Europe. According to Clebsch and Jaekle (1983) Permeation of Roman Catholicism in society was evidence by the fact that “Religious conformity became the foundation on which social cohesion was built, and the universality and unity of Christian Europe found twin symbols in popes and Holy Roman Emperors” (pp 23-24). They further explained that cure of souls became the duty of the ministers as divine power was at the center of emotional healing for society.

Theology/Habitus and Theology/Science disappeared in the 17<sup>th</sup>. century when modern university introduced critical approach to the study of theology. According to Farley (1983), in this third phase, Theology/habitus and Theology/Science was replaced by Theological Sciences. Such critical approach to theology gave rise to compartmentalization of theology in keeping with the other university disciplines. Hence, the emergence of theological faculties, that included Old and New Testament, dogma, and church history. Theology assumed a status similar to law, liberal art and medicine. The term theology was now a reference to a cluster of relatively independent studies.

### Counseling Issues for International Students

Compartmentalization of theology gave rise to a new challenge on how to relate the different faculties in order to maintain unity. This challenge led to the development of a new literature, Theological Encyclopedia which marked phase four of Farley's definition. The disappearance of Theology/habitus and Theology/science, according to Farley (1983), created a serious problem of defining theology faculty and justifying its existence in the universities. The issue prompted the German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher who pioneered the coining of practical theology as a discipline (Forrester and, Maddox 1988, Campbell 1972).

#### *The Coining of Practical Theology*

Schleiermacher argued that theological sciences were professional disciplines with goals just like medical and legal sciences (Farley 1983). To him the unity of the theological sciences was teleological and practical. This marked the beginning of practical theology as a discipline. He described ministers as leaders in the society on the same level as doctors and lawyers in their fields. The influence of ministers went beyond the confines of their churches or congregations. Therefore, the education of ministers in the university was no less important than that of physicians and lawyers (Farley 1983). If universities existed to train leaders the ministers should be beneficiaries since they too were leaders in society.

## Counseling Issues for International Students

According to Farley (1983) Schleiermacher rejected theology/habitus and theology as a science. He stated, “There are discrete academic fields of teaching and research that are unified generally by their contribution to the training of clerical leadership of the church and more specifically by their relation to the essence of Christianity” (p. 25). In other words while ministers were leaders in society like lawyers and doctors their services were practiced particularly in the Church.

Schleiermacher described practical theology as the crown of theology which maintains and perfects the Church (Campbell, 1972; Fowler, 1985; Giles, 1984; Rumpf, 1959). To him philosophical theology was the root and historical theology the stem (Dingemans, 19996). According to Campbell, Schleiermacher described the Church as “the fellowship of those who share in God-conscience.” (p. 217). Thus practical theology according to Schleiermacher applied only to the Church and her participants.

While Schleiermacher succeeded in coining the term practical theology, his approach was never implemented (Fowler 1985). Campbell (1972) outlined three major problems that lead to the demise of the approach. One is that its relationship to historical theology and dogmatic theology drifted apart. Practical theology was treated as applied theology implying that the other disciplines are not practical and practical theology has no academic relevance. As Campbell

## Counseling Issues for International Students

stated, “On the other hand it removes the independence status of practical theology, making it into a subsection of dogmatics, whilst on the other hand it opens systematic theologians to charges of irrelevance and inapplicability from practical theologians” (p. 218).

Secondly, its status as an academic discipline became questionable as scholars could not decide whether it was an art or science. The problem was the view that practical theology was reduced to a matter of techniques that more experienced pastors taught the younger pastors. The result was that “its status within academic environment became questionable” (p. 219)

The third problem was that the definition limited its application to those who are active in the Church. It failed to address issues affecting society at large and how the Church can respond. Practical theology became the means by which spirituality was maintained in the Church. Concerns affecting society became secondary to the pastors. This meant that the Church “was quite ill-equipped to cope with the radical questioning of the place of the Church in the world evident in post-liberal theology” (p. 219).

Nevertheless Schleiermacher’s contribution led to more discussion and further academic development of the discipline. Two approaches emerged. In Europe spiritual leadership of the Church dominated the field which was

## Counseling Issues for International Students

considered of less importance in the academics where philosophical and historical approaches played a more prominent role (Dingemans 1996; Westerhoff 1984; Whyte, 1973). In the United States the discipline developed into highly specialized fields with each field maintaining a separate department in academic settings including seminaries and universities (Whyte, 1973; Dingemans, 1996). However, the differences between the European and American approach is narrowing as European scholars are shifting to adopt the American model which is strongly influenced by social sciences (Dingemans 1996; Rumpf, 1959; Westerhoff 1984; Whyte, 1973).

As the American and European models become more identical the discussion shifts to other issues. One issue deserving attention is how to define the relationship between theory and practice. Rumpf (1959) sees the tension arising from the way students understand field work and the way pastors understand ministry. The concern is that many times students in seminaries do not see the relationship between “what he is getting in academic pursuits and what he is giving in practical pursuits.”(p. 143). His point is that there must be a balance between the practical as well as theoretical aspects of ministry. Both play equally important roles in ministry.



## Counseling Issues for International Students

Farley (1983) saw the loss of theology/habitus as the reason for the development of separation of theory from practice. Therefore he suggested that one of the ways to address the issue is the restoration of theology/habitus or theological understanding, because “theological understanding is the telos, the aim of any course of theological study, whenever it occurs.” (p. 37). Secondly, he proposed the restoration of theology/science as a means of discovering the ways in which various aspects of theology contribute to the discipline. His third recommendation is the incorporation of praxis in the context of social and political sciences into the study of theology. It is this third recommendation that addresses the practicality and academic aspect of practical theology.

*Practical Theology from Contemporary Definition*

Maddox (1991) narrows down the definition of practical theology to two aspects. One is the subject field and the other is the task. On the subject there are five areas. First, ‘Pastoral Ministry’ which described the field as “the range of tasks involved in the pastoral ministry” (p. 162). The focus is to address the tasks involved in the pastorate. This definition became the standard for seminaries and other training institutions according to Maddox.

The second one is ‘The Life of the Church’ which grew out of discontent and a call for theology to become more relevant to the whole Church by entering into greater dialogue with the sciences. It resulted in a broad definition of the

## Counseling Issues for International Students

church ministry to include all the church members instead of limiting to the clergy. The term ‘practical theology’ was favored over ‘pastoral theology’.

The third field is ‘The Life of the Church in the World’. Here the mission of the Church becomes the focus. The discussion deals with the way in which the Church can affect change in the world. Even discussion of worship begins to center on “how they prepare for, encourage, or express ministry to the world” (p. 163). Social and human sciences play a major role in analyzing the world. Maddox sees the ultimate result as turning “back towards the earlier understanding of practical theology as moral theology” (p. 163).

The fourth field was termed as ‘Religious/Moral Life in the World’. The focus here is the moral responsibility of the church in society. This does not mean holding the Church responsible for every issue in the work of creation in the world. “Rather, attention is directed to the moral/religious dimensions of general human culture” (p. 164).

The fifth field was ‘Human Spiritual/Existential Experience’. The focus in this discussion is more on human experience than on action. The human experience include “temptation and the contradictions that call life into question.” He further defines the purpose as “to help guide the life of the soul” (p. 165).

Maddox then discusses what he termed as ‘The task of practical theology’. In this debate the idea that practice is merely derived from theory and that theory

## Counseling Issues for International Students

is merely a reflection of practice is rejected. “Instead, they have argued for the need to see authentic human actions (as contrasted with mere technique) as both meaning-discerning and meaning-laden” (p. 165). The term ‘praxis’ came into use to describe the relationship between action and reflection. Praxis in this sense represent “neither pure theory nor mere technique, but *phronesis*-a wisdom that interrelates the universal and the particular” (p. 166). In order to capture the importance and meaning of praxis in practical theology Maddox discusses four areas.

The first of these areas is about applying theological theories into the subject field. This involved applying previously developed theories from systematic theology to the Church. This concept did not develop popularity among many scholars. Most of the scholars, according to Maddox, “advocate a more formative role of practical theology” (p. 166). In other words practical theology is more than making systematic theology practical. It is a discipline with its own identity and formation.

Analyzing the subject field was the second proposed understanding of practical theology. The assumption in this discussion is that “the overall project of theology is a correlation of the Christian truth with the present situation” (p. 167). The task assigned to practical theology is to utilize human and social

## Counseling Issues for International Students

sciences to analyze the current situation. The information derived from the analysis is fed back “into the larger theological enterprise” (p. 167).

Thirdly, there is the idea of developing critical theory from subject field. In this proposal the argument is that practical theology must go beyond description to critical reflection. The challenge is to come up with the norms for the critical reflection. The suggestion is that the norms be drawn from the actual practice of the practical theology whose task is to clarify “the implicit theological convictions of contemporary ecclesiastical praxis...and then critiquing that praxis in light of its immanent norms” (p. 167).

The fourth is correlating theological theory and praxis. This approach pushes the idea of critiquing further by articulating the task of practical theology “as the correlation of critically-appraised theological theory with critically-investigated praxis” (p. 167). While emphasis differ with those advocating the concept, all “stress the need to preserve a dialectical relationship between the analysis of present praxis, the determination of theological norms, and the critique of present praxis in the light of these norms” (p. 168).

Defining practical theology in terms of its field and its task places practicality on theological studies. Application of the term ‘Praxis’ makes practical theology academic as well as practical. Theory and practice are both subject of reflective criticism and yet they complement each other. Rumpf (1959)

## Counseling Issues for International Students

saw the same idea when he stated that “Practical theology is a vital part of theological studies and service in which all Christians are engaged.” To him practical theology “contributes to the other disciplines even as it is contributed to in a process of interaction that reaches from the seminary to the field of service and back again” (p. 143).

Wood (1984) also warns against emphasis on practicality of practical theology to the point of losing the importance of its theoretical aspect. To him “Practical theology studies the practice (or praxis) of witness: it asks by what standards this practice is to be judged, and it proceeds to make the relevant judgments of past, present or prospective witness” (p. 253). Thus the discipline is practical as well as academic.

According to Ogletree (1983) “Theology is practical in the sense that it concerns, in all of its expressions, the most basic issues of human existence.” To him practical theology “has to do with human pilgrimage in its totality: with its meaning and significance, with the determination of appropriate responses to the realities we confront during its course, with the growth of persons in community, with the construction of institutions suited to human well-being” (p. 85). In this definition there is no dichotomy between practice and theory in the field of theology. It is clear also that Ogletree views practical theology as application of theology into the totality of human existence.

## Counseling Issues for International Students

Browning (1981) agrees with the above definition when he states that practical theology “should be seen as the theology of the human life cycle, both what this cycle should be when conceived normatively and what should be done to restore it when its development has been arrested (p. 159). In other words practical theology addresses issues that affects every aspect of human development and experience both individually and collectively (Boyce 1960, Browning 1981, Hunter 1990).

Browning (1989) argues that theology by nature is practical and therefore practical theology is not a sub-discipline of theology. Practical theology is theology. His logic is that philosophically, human beings move from practice to theory and then back to practice. In other words people form theories from what they already practice and then apply the theory back to the same practice, or in essence standardize the practice. He proposes what he calls ‘strategic practical theology’ to describe “church disciplines or religious education, pastoral care, preaching, liturgy, social ministries and so forth” (p. 8).

Tracy (1983) places human transformation as top criteria in practical theology. He states “My claim is that practical theology attains its public character by articulating praxis criteria of human transformation as well as an explicitly theological ethic” (p. 51). The models of human transformation are provided by “psychology, social science, historical studies, cultural anthropology,

## Counseling Issues for International Students

philosophy, ecological theories, and religious studies and theologies” (p. 76). By including psychology and social sciences, Tracy implies that counseling and other related disciplines have a part in practical theology. Lovin (1992) agrees with the implication. He states that theologians “make extensive use of contemporary social theology, seeking to understand in the most general terms the ways that societies function, the ways in which ideas are communicated and the ways in which religious concepts can be made plausible and authoritative in modern secular society” (p. 125).

What then is practical theology? Maddox (1990) sights what he considered true characteristics of practical theology. First, he states that it seeks to “unify various theological concerns (tradition, Scripture, experience, reason, etc.), around the common focus of norming Christian praxis” (p. 665). The emphasis is to highlight the unifying factors in the various aspects of theology. One way or another all must address application of theology to Christian life and practice.

Secondly, it must be holistic, seeking to address Christian actions as well as ideas and confessions. To be practical, theology must address how one relates his or her theological understanding to daily living and what goes on in the world. The logic is that “when theology is pursued as a practical discipline, a central task

## Counseling Issues for International Students

will be the norming of those forms of theological activity that most actively shape human character” (p. 666).

Thirdly, primacy of praxis must be at the core of its methodology. In theological activity, praxis should be the beginning and the ultimate goal. This does not mean that theological norms come from praxis. Rather it means that “the needs and challenges arising from Christian praxis in the world are what spark authentic theological activity” (p. 666). This is an affirmation of careful reflection of doctrine and the application of the same doctrine to the issues affecting the world.

Fourthly, practical theology is by nature an agent of transformation as it seeks to change lives. Practical theology must go beyond simple understanding and analyzing of truth. It must always “seek not only to understand but also to correct Christian life” (p. 667). This means that practical theology address needs affecting humanity as well as needs for change in the individual lives.

The fifth characteristic is that its professional nature should not result in isolation from the community of the believers. The emphasis is that “theological activity needs reflection of the breath of persons involved in Christian praxis to preserve its vitality and wholeness: it needs to be communal in its process” (p. 667). Practical theology calls upon the Church to be inclusive of people from all walks of life.



## Counseling Issues for International Students

The communal nature of practical theology must first, take into consideration, the importance of involving individuals as well as community participation. Secondly, members of the community must involve the disadvantaged who are likely to be left out. Thirdly, the elitists or the theologians in the Church cannot be excluded from the community. Finally theological understanding does not stem from majority vote. Rather “Criteria of authenticity for Christian life and belief would remain, and keeping the community conscious of these may be the most important contribution of professional theologians to a communal practical theology” (p. 668).

Fifthly, practical theology must be contextual. This characteristic demands that the discipline address the contemporary and cultural issues wherever it is applied. The major concern here is the strife to make practical theology applicable to contemporary as well historical concerns. It has to do with applying Christian doctrine to current issues affecting humanity.

Finally, practical theology, according to Maddox is “occasional, i.e. concerned more to address pressing issues as they arise than to formulate programmatically an abstract theological system.” (p. 668). The call is for theologians not formulate abstract theories for addressing issues that do not exist. Theology does not exist just for the sake of existence. It is there to address contemporary issues affecting individuals and society. The promotion is for

## Counseling Issues for International Students

theologians to address problems and issue as they occur. The discipline is not for abstract thinking. It should be addressing issues that are current rather than debating on anticipatory issues that are not in existence.

It is clear from this study that practical theology is a discipline that continues to evolve as a means for the religious community to address concerns that affect mankind in general. It is practical as well academic in the sense that it is an inquiry, which involves critical and analytical study. The application of practical theology is to the issues affecting mankind individually and society as a whole. To accomplish its task practical theology uses languages known and accepted by society (Boyce 1960, Bozzo 1970). In this sense the languages of social and psychological sciences can be applied.

Wood (1984) described practical theology from sociological and cultural perspective. To him it is a discipline that “studies the influence of social and cultural forces upon the shaping of Christian witness as well as upon its reception and effects, and it asks how witness may be most appropriately borne within a given set of circumstances” (p. 254). To do so it draws from historical and philosophical theology. In other words practical theology must address contemporary issues taking into account the current cultural, social and psychological influences on society.

## Counseling Issues for International Students

*Pastoral Care and Counseling as Practical Theology*

In defining practical theology I have established that it is a discipline concerned with addressing issues affecting humanity in Church and in society (Brown, 1981; Rumpf, 1959; Woods, 1984). How is pastoral care and counseling a part of practical theology? According to Clinebell (1990) pastoral counseling is “The utilization by clergy of counseling and psychotherapeutic methods to enable individuals, couples and families to handle their personal crises and problems in living constructively” (p. 198). It appears from this definition that Clinebell sees pastoral counseling basically from the perspective of the functional office of the clergy. In other words it is pastoral counseling because a clergy is providing the service. The definition fails to define the process from theological perspective. Such definition creates concerns as expressed by theologians addressing the role of practical theology in the helping process (Browning 1981, Lovin 1992).

Braceland and Farnsworth (1969) attempted to define pastoral counseling in terms of its difference from giving advice or counseling and psychotherapy. Its difference from advice is that “it aims at change in the person, brought about by new religious understanding and occurring in the context of a relationship with another person” (p. 5). They see the difference with psychotherapy in the fact

## Counseling Issues for International Students

that “it does not deal with truly unconscious conflict, which are the concern of the psychiatrist” (p. 5). The problem with this definition is that there is no clear distinction between what he considers unconscious conflict and other problems that drive people to counseling.

Knowles (1970), speaking from his experience as a Southern Baptist counseling minister and national leader, emphasized the theological aspect that the pastoral counselor brings in to the counseling relationship. He states that “The pastor brings to his counseling work the concept of God and a theology of man, the world, the nature of the church and its ministry. He also makes use of specific spiritual resources such as prayer, scripture, and sacraments. In other words, he is pastoral counselor because of his role as a shepherd of the congregation, his theological perspective, and his spiritual resources” (p. 27).

Oates, (1976) puts more emphasis on the pastoral counselor’s ability to tap into the belief system and draw from the spiritual resources. To him “the pastor is at best a practical mystic in touch with powerful belief systems and with the powers of blessings and curses in the universe” (p. 10). The idea is that the pastoral counselor brings in a divine intervention that is not present in other forms of therapy. This divine intervention implies that the pastoral counselor adds a special charisma to the counseling process because “the power of the pastor’s

## Counseling Issues for International Students

being points to the presence of God” (p. 10). However this does not address the issues that exist between psychology and pastoral counseling.

According to Braceland and Farnsworth (1969) the battle between the two disciplines began when Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, depicted religion as an illusion. Two conflicting issues came into play. On one hand the psychologists saw religion as the bases for some of the psychological problems people encountered. On the other hand the religious faithful saw psychology as reducing God to nothing but a father image or a creation of human’s mind.

The battle between psychology and religion became another war between religion and science and “it would take a long time until the various aspects of the problem could be seen in proper perspective” (p. 4). They also see the battle as coming to an end because now “the quarrel between religion and psychiatry is seen as having been based on false assumptions; and while old suspicions die hard, the two disciplines are coming to realize their common ground” (p. 4). They however acknowledge that the same problems still exist between the two disciplines.

There are two major issues that continue to surface when addressing the relationship between pastoral counseling and psychology. One has to do with the extremists who are described by Pfrimmer (1978) as reacting from the extremes of both disciplines. On one side are those who declare that “psychotherapy is

## Counseling Issues for International Students

unnecessary, that psychological problems are a result of sin, and that only conversion experience...will restore wholeness” (p. 22).

Pruyser (1968) appear to support this position when he describes psychology and psychiatry as “fragmentary, inelegant, inconsistent and incomplete clinical knowledge of personology...” (p. 27). He sees the theories as disorderly because they rise out of “clinical theories which by definition are disorderly” (p. 27). The disorderliness of the clinical theories stand in contrast to “the systematic, rational and logical tenor of the basic theological discipline” (p. 27). Seen in this light one cannot help but see the need to reject psychology completely in favor of theology in pastoral counseling.

On the other extreme are those “who maintain that psychology is all-sufficient, that sin is merely a label of psychological disturbances, and that therapy can restore both mental healthcare and one’s relationship to God, if indeed the existence of God is even granted” (Pfrimmer, p. 22). According to Pfrimmer (1978) the problem is based on one error which treats human relations and relationship with the divine as identical. To him the best alternative is the middle ground in which the divine and human relationships are viewed as related only in a functional sense. The assertion is that “the horizontal and vertical dimensions of the existence are related, but related only by which one may prevent or facilitate the development of the other” (p. 23).

## Counseling Issues for International Students

Braceland and Farnsworth (1969) see the problem as emanating from “misunderstanding of the whole human ideal” (p. 4). To them discovery of science, which includes psychology, has simply made life more meaningful. The result of applying these psychological techniques is that “Man no longer has to be content with mere existence; he now has the luxury of working toward fulfillment as a human being” (p. 4).

Pfrimmer (1978) goes on to explain his point that “Acts of sin may indeed produce psychological symptoms just as psychological disturbances may produce acts of sins” (p. 23). Psychological symptoms resulting from act of sin may include guilt and repression of guilt feelings. On the other hand the psychological symptoms may be a hindrance to the person’s relationship with God by acting as a block to recognition of sin.

Pfrimmer uses an example of a woman who engages -in extramarital affairs and represses the feelings of guilt to the point of developing psychosomatic illnesses that may land her in a psychological treatment. This is a case in which “psychological symptoms perform the function of preventing the recognition of sin” (p. 24). Pfrimmer then recognizes the importance of psychotherapy because to him “Poor psychological health may be detrimental in the sense that it may prevent the awareness or acceptance of God’s grace in one’s life because one has

## Counseling Issues for International Students

not experience love and acceptance in the human realm” (p. 24). The implication is that theology without psychology may prove ineffective in some situations.

It is important to recognize that Pfrimmer’s arguments are based on the belief system rooted on theological understanding that acts of sin creates separation from God and the individual who sins. The only way to restore such relationship is for the individual to receive forgiveness from God and that restoration is through conversion in which the person makes a moral choice to obey God.

This belief system is reflected in his statements. For example he says that psychological symptoms “can prevent one’s conversion, one’s salvation, by hindering or impeding the development of faith, and also by blocking the awareness of the need for God in one’s life” (p. 25). This conversion is based on the individual’s ability to recognize sin in his or her life and therefore turn to God for healing and wholeness.

Thus he warns that “To deny the human sense of separation and the real entrance of the vertical dimension into human experience is to deny the validity of human experience and faith in the redemptive work of the God-man, Jesus” (p. 27). While other pastoral counseling theologians may not agree fully with this position the point he makes about relationship between psychology and faith



## Counseling Issues for International Students

addresses one issue that pastoral care counseling professionals may encounter in their clinical practice (Ahlskog, 2001; Eschmann, 2000; Jensen, 2003; Springer et al, 2003).

The second major and most commonly addressed problem has to do with the integration of psychology and theology in pastoral care and counseling. The problem here is not a rejection of psychology per se. Rather it is a concern over the extent to which psychology has impacted the discipline of pastoral counseling to the detriment of the discipline losing its theological roots.

Hulme (1981) expressed this concern when he stated that pastoral counselors were losing their uniqueness because of strong influence from the field of psychology. While he agreed that pastoral counseling can and should incorporate other forms of counseling technique, his concern was the balance between psychology and theology. He stated that “when pastoral counselors function primarily with psychological rather than theological concepts, they are not only failing those who seek their help for religious reason, but they are also failing to fulfill their complementary role in a teamwork approach with other members of the helping professions” (p. 17). In other words theological approach to life is a contribution to counseling that pastoral counselors should not abandon. Evans (1958) demonstrated this point by stating that “When a person seeks out a clergyman rather than a secular counselor for assistance, he is usually

## Counseling Issues for International Students

well aware of divine disapproval already, and tends to see the clergyman as the representative of this disapproval” (pp. 174-175). In essence the clergy represent God’s presence. He then is fit to address the quilt issues the individual is experiencing in his relationship with God. The clergy is most qualified to address the issues from psychological and theological perspective. According to Hulme (1981) pastoral counselors should utilize other forms and theories of counseling without losing their uniqueness, the theological perspective (Charry 1993; Pruyser 1968).

The influence of psychology on pastoral counseling continues to be a concern that needs to be addressed (Ahlskog, 2001; Eschmann, 2000; Jensen, 2003; Stone, 2001). The concern is that pastoral counselors are relying on psychology rather than spiritual resources for helping the needy clients. By so doing they are abandoning their foundation for ministry. Ahlskog (2001) analyzed a meeting that took place in April 1999 between American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC) and Council of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapists. The meeting was intended to demonstrate that the two disciplines were moving towards integration.

Ahlskog (2001) saw three major problems. First, he noted that the motivation for the psychotherapists was financial in the sense that spirituality is now recognized as an area that needs to be treated and counselors can be

## Counseling Issues for International Students

reimbursed for addressing the issue. Secondly, he points out that the psychotherapists failed to recognize the importance of religion in spiritual care, an important component of counseling for pastoral counselors. In other words pastoral counselors function out of their religious convictions, which lack in the other psychotherapists. Thirdly, during public interactions pastors are not willing to discuss which religious tradition influences their approach to ministry.

Ahlskog concludes that the two disciplines could not be integrated because “Neither field has publicly owned a distinctive position to which other could offer critical responses in the service of advancing integration” (p. 4). He saw the disparities as too deep for any genuine integration to take place. To him, “Interdisciplinary cooperation is a useful process but it’s still just a process. No genuine integration” (p. 4).

Jensen (2003) acknowledged the challenges raised by Ahlskog and many others. However, his conclusion is that integration is possible. He outlined three components that would make this possible. One is that the therapist can treat the relationship between client and God in the same way as any other significant relationships. Secondly, he suggests involvement of religious community and religious text in the process. Thirdly, the therapist maintains neutrality to avoid authoritarianism.

## Counseling Issues for International Students

Phil (2002) suggests that Freud, whom he credited with the first scientific study of the dynamics of the unconscious, was influenced by religious leaders. As such psychology did not develop entirely independent of religion. He argues that, while most psychologists do not use religion explicitly in their practice they cannot avoid addressing the subject. The reason is that their “ideas about the operation of the human psyche often have had profoundly religious, spiritual, and theological implications just as Darwin’s *Origin of the Species* has had profound implications for Judeo-Christian use and understanding of the scripture” (p. 122).

He sees theology as changing and cannot be considered absolute. As people’s experience an understanding of God change, so must the shaping of theological understanding. His conclusion is that “aspects of God are knowable to us through the mechanism of the human psyche as they are being revealed to us by depth psychology, and that these burgeoning understandings must inform the work of the church and its ministries” (122). It is clear that he sees the influence of psychology in the ministry of the Church positively. In other words psychology enhances the ministry of the local church.

Stone (2001) did an analytical study of the major authors of pastoral care from 1949 to 1999. The study revealed a strong reliance on therapy rather than spiritual resources. He found that in the literature written by pastoral counselors, “most of its theory and methods grow out of theoretical constructs and

## Counseling Issues for International Students

psychotherapeutic modalities of long-term clinical practice, even when written for pastors in the congregational context who primarily do short-term counseling” (p. 184).

While the study supported the fact that the movement owes much to Freud, Stone (2001) found that pastoral care counselors make more references to Carl Rogers than any other psychologists. The trend, according to Stone (2001) is that the writers he studied made “extensive references to psychological theorists, none of them seems to draw to any extent upon the resources of spiritual direction and spirituality....” He continued to state that “Reference to spiritual resources and disciplines, in the present study, tend to be generalized and somewhat vague” (p. 185). It is clearly demonstrated here that behavioral sciences have had a great influence in the field of pastoral care and counseling. Obviously pastoral care counselors have found value in utilizing behavioral sciences in their practice.

Eschamann (2000) acknowledged that Carl Rogers was the major player in introducing psychology into pastoral counseling. However the influence resulted in the discipline becoming easy for one to teach, learn and evaluate. Negatively, “the deficit in theory and theology of client-centered pastoral care, has not been dealt with in a thorough way to this day” (p. 421). In other words the pastoral care counselors applied principles from the behavioral sciences but did not have a specific theoretical framework from which to function. Phil (2002) on the other

## Counseling Issues for International Students

hand warns that “Developing theologies on the principle doctrines of the Church—through humanity, God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, salvation, atonement, eschatology—need to be informed by or at least cognizant of theories of depth psychology” (p. 125). To him theology will not survive if it ignores the realities of advancing sophistication of psychology. In other words psychology enhances and play a critical role in the application of theology to humanity.

The issues of integration of behavioral sciences and theological training in pastoral counseling remained a source of tension and confusion in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Eschmann, 2000). Pastoral counseling theologians needed to address the issue. According to Eschmann (2000) the leader theologian in the field was Thurneysen whose teaching into the late sixties emphasized God taking initiatives in speaking to mankind and addressing the issue of sin and the need for confession and absolution. This thinking tended to agree with Thiessen (1979) who defined practical theology as the area of theology which “treats the application of theology in the regeneration, sanctification, edification, education, and service of men” (p. 20). Pastoral counseling would come under the category of serving men.

Eschmann (2000) acknowledges that this concept which he calls Kerygmatic Pastoral Care, has some strength. First it frees man from the responsibility of affecting change in the souls of men and women. Rather, it is God who does the work while the human person simply witnesses. Negatively

## Counseling Issues for International Students

the approach has the potentiality of “leaving the person seeking help in the position of being ‘preached at’ instead of ‘listened to’” (p. 420). He goes on to state that “Furthermore kerykmatic pastoral care is difficult to evaluate in practice and hardly teachable and learnable in theological seminaries or in special courses” (p. 420). In essence while the approach has practicality in the Church it lacks what is necessary for it to be academic and practical at the same time.

Stone (2001) notes, however, that there is a new trend in which pastoral counselors are now acknowledging theological and spiritual resources. He sees it as positive shift that “pastoral counseling is becoming more in touch with its theological roots” (p. 186). The downside to this trend according to Stone is that “there is less ongoing assessment of the field’s underlying psychological base” (p. 186). He fails to give any example of this trend. Eschmann (2000) agrees that the current movement is leaning towards using spiritual resources in providing counseling help. He states that “In connection with sociological approach also the rituals of church and life and their stabilizing affect upon persons-formerly strongly criticized by psychoanalysis-receive increased attention in the newer theory of pastoral care” (p. 422).

Phil (2002) developed further the integration of the two disciplines by explaining the complementary function of depth psychology when addressing issues from pastoral counseling perspective. To him there are issues that cannot

## Counseling Issues for International Students

be addressed theologically due to the complex nature of psychological condition of the individual client needing help. He explains that “The bits and pieces, the shards and fragments, or our psyches may be so far flung and unintegrated that we may need to do substantial integrative work before we can even begin to have any sense to have God’s grace or presence in our psyches” (p. 123).

The implication is that human problems can be so complex that deep psychological analysis is necessary before one can apply theology. It does not mean that theology as a discipline lacks depth in dealing with human problems. Rather, as he further states, “there may well be times in which mental disease is the way in which God claims our attention in our psyches and in our lives. This is so because even intimation of the infinite God cannot be suddenly held in the container of the tiny human psyche” (p. 123). In other words the pastoral counselor must take into consideration the divine purpose of suffering and that there may be some theological good in suffering. Such spiritual benefits can only be addressed theologically.

The integration of the two is complementary in the sense that psychology informs the pastoral care professional of the need to focus more closely on “possible intra-psyche meanings, causes, and origins of feelings, motives and actions” (p. 127). This will further aid ministers in helping people “find more



## Counseling Issues for International Students

authentic healing through deeper understanding of themselves, their motives, feelings, actions, their religious beliefs and experiences” (p. 127). Evans (1958) supported this principle when he stated, “In particular, we should appreciate not only the truth of the Christian Gospel, but also its therapeutic value, and its relation to the discoveries of psychotherapy” (p. 178).

Schlaugh (1987) agrees that psychology and theology are complementary in pastoral care and counseling process. Although his focus is on pastoral psychotherapy, the concept of the two disciplines complementing each other in the counseling process is clearly stated. For example, to him, the discipline “involves the observation, understanding, and interpretation of religious and moral, as well as psychological, dimensions; it utilizes theological and ethical, as well as psychological resources” (p. 322). Phil (2002) on the other end sees the integration as having some historical value and meaning. He sees psychology and psychotherapy as originating in religion and that the Church simply “needs to draw on the body of knowledge developed by its own progeny-depth psychology” (p. 133).

Seen in this light one can see how the two disciplines can be utilized in helping clients achieve healing. Psychology becomes a tool that complements rather than substitutes theological application in pastoral care and counseling.

Phil’s (2002) conclusion is that “A greater understanding of the structures

## Counseling Issues for International Students

and mechanisms of the psyche is important to deeper understandings of relationships with God, of the vicissitudes of spiritual life, of the meaning of ritual and the sacraments, to more profound and relevant scriptural hermeneutics and theological understandings” (p. 134). He further states “Depth psychology has given us new and powerful tools by which to examine and understand faith and faith experiences” (p. 134).

Ewing (1990) described the term pastoral counselor in two ways. First, it is a reference to a pastor who provides counseling as a part of his ministry. Secondly, “it describes the function of a pastor who practices pastoral counseling at a level of competence beyond that of the general practice of ministry and who skillfully integrates religious resources with insights from the behavioral sciences” (p. 859). The two definitions demonstrate that pastoral counseling can be defined in a broad and narrow sense.

According to Boyd (1969) there are three factors that make pastoral counseling therapeutic. One is that there must be a sanctioning body that endorses the practicing professional. In this case the sanctioning body can be American Association of Pastoral Counselors. (Clinebell, 1990; Ewing, 1990). Secondly there must be a suffering individual seeking help from the professional. Thirdly, there must be emotional transaction between the client and the counselor. To him, “The therapeutic situation, then, involves a mutual reciprocal, emotional

## Counseling Issues for International Students

transaction between two people” (p. 20). This description subjects the profession to a broad definition. For example if a counselor is sanctioned by a denomination and he or she provides counseling that meets the criteria of a seeker and emotional transaction the relationship becomes therapeutic and therefore pastoral counseling is taking place.

In a narrow sense pastoral counseling is a profession or a discipline reserved for practitioners with specific training and certification (Jordan, 1997; Ewing, 1990; Holifield, 1990 ). In the United States, the recognized body that certifies pastoral counselors is American Association of Pastoral Counselors (Hurding, 1995; Clinebell, 1990; Ewing, 1990). According to Jordan (1997) “Pastoral counselors are clergy and others who have received graduate training in both religion and behavioral science for a clinical practice that integrates psychological and theological disciplines” (p. 8). American Association of Pastoral Counselors certifies pastoral counselors, accredits counseling centers and sets standards for education and training of pastoral counselors and counseling centers (Clinebell, 1990; Ewing, 1990; Holifield, 1990).

In the same narrow sense pastoral care is regarded as a distinct ministry with a separate training known as Clinical Pastoral Education. Among the accrediting agencies are Association of Professional Chaplains which is non-denominational and National Association of Catholic Chaplains (Trip, 1990). The

## Counseling Issues for International Students

two associations are also responsible for the training and certification of the supervisors who provide the Clinical Pastoral Education.

Tripp (1990) sees the danger of not having a professional association to offer credible accreditation. He says that one cannot expect the clients to judge the professionalism of those providing their services. To him, “only members of the same profession are qualified to judge whether one of its members possesses the knowledge and skills to practice the profession in a responsible way” (p. 149). He sees the goal of certification as “the recognition and measurement of competencies” (p. 149). The same principle of training and certification applies to both disciplines. However the process of training and certification make each of the profession distinct from the other.

Hunter (1990) distinguishes the two disciplines by focusing on the scope and duration of each practice. To him pastoral care is broader and inclusive. It refers “to all pastoral work concerned with the support and nurturance of persons and interpersonal relationships, including everyday expressions of care and concern that may occur in the midst of various pastoring activities and relationships” (p. 845). In this understanding pastoral care is inclusive of all forms of caring and support given within the context of religious community.

Pastoral counseling on the other hand “refers to caring ministries that are more structured and focused on specifically articulated need or concern.

## Counseling Issues for International Students

Counseling always involves some degree of ‘contract’ in which a request for help is articulated and specific arrangements are agreed upon concerning time and place of meeting; in extended counseling a fee may also be agreed upon, depending on the institutional setting and other considerations” (p. 845). Thus he sees pastoral counseling as being more structured, requiring extended period of time and contract, and more focus than pastoral care.

However, in this study, pastoral care and counseling is used to refer to a broader and inclusive understanding of the discipline. Ewing (1990) acknowledges this reality when he states “Validation and accountability are granted by the person’s religious group. Most Christian and Jewish groups ordain persons for ministry; however, other processes are often employed to designate pastoral counseling as a specific ministry, both for ordained and non-ordained persons” (p. 859). In this sense it is the religious group that determines who is qualified for certain aspects of ministry.

In his discussion of grief in pastoral care, Oastes (1976) uses the term “pastoral care” in the same broader sense. He states that “When I use pastoral care, I am referring to the total set of resources of church and community that a pastor uses to prevent and to meet grief and separation” (p. 1). Campbell (1987) defined Pastoral care as “that aspect of ministry of the church which is concerned with the well-being of individuals and communities” (p. 188). He identifies four

## Counseling Issues for International Students

main pastoral functions, which include leading, guiding, sustaining and reconciling. Clinebell (1987) acknowledges that the same functions belong to the field of pastoral counseling.

O'Connor (2003) raises arguments that support the broad definition of pastoral counseling to include pastoral care. He asserts that there is no clear distinction between pastoral care and pastoral counseling. To support his point he discusses the arguments that are used to support the differences between the two disciplines.

One is that it is the caregiver who initiates relationships in pastoral care while it is the client that initiates the relationship in pastoral counseling. Secondly, pastoral counseling has contract with the client while pastoral care has none. Thirdly, while pastoral care occurs in a home or Church setting pastoral counseling occurs in an office or a community setting. The fourth argument is that pastoral counseling is long term while pastoral care is short term. Fifthly, pastoral care deals primarily with religious and spiritual issues while pastoral counseling deals with psychological issues. The sixth distinction is that pastoral care is more general while pastoral counseling is specialized.

O'Connor (2003) found that these distinctive were in both disciplines. For example he taught a course on short term therapy for pastoral counselors and

## Counseling Issues for International Students

chaplains working in emergency room and those working in long term care facility. Included in the students were also family therapists. The evaluation indicated that all the groups found the course equally helpful in their ministry. It made no difference whether the students were dealing with short term care or long term care. His conclusion is that the two disciplines are basically the same with the only differences on the emphasis. While acknowledging that the separation between the two disciplines has enriched pastoral ministry with diversity, he states also that “The distinction, however, is not based on evidence and there is more common ground” (p. 14).

Historically, pastoral counseling movement owes its origins to Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) movement which celebrated 75 years of existence in 2000 (Jernigan, H. L. 2002). While the idea of CPE started to formulate at the turn of the century, the movement began flourishing in 1930 to 1967 when Association of Clinical Pastoral Education came into existence (Cotterell & Nisi, 1990). The movement developed into a tool used to “teach the skills of ministering to persons in crisis and at the same time teaches insights and understanding into the person and into the student” (Cotterell & Nisi, p. 136). It is the primary training program for pastors, chaplains and others desiring to function as spiritual care providers (Clinebell, 1990; Westerhoff, 1984, Hurding,

## Counseling Issues for International Students

1995). It was through Clinical Pastoral Education that psychology and behavioral sciences were introduced into the field of practical theology (Clinebell, 1990). Introduction of psychology lead to the development of pastoral counseling as a specialized discipline (Holifield, 1990; Gilmore, 1990).

By applying the broad definition of pastoral care and counseling I am including all types of care that utilize theological, sociological and behavioral disciplines in meeting spiritual, emotional, psychological and social needs for individuals, families and communities. This will comprise pastoral counseling, pastoral psychotherapy, pastoral psychology, and pastoral care (Schlaugh, 1987; Morris, 1986). Hurding (1995) acknowledged that “the distinction between psychotherapy and counseling is becoming less sharply defined” (p. 81).

The purpose of choosing the broad definition is not to deny the reality of the differences noted by various scholars (Morris 1986, Schlaugh 1987, Pruyser 1968, Hurding 1995). It is the intention of this study to draw principles that will be applicable in any of the disciplines addressing human issues from behavioral and theological perspective. Secondly, the choice of a broader definition is an acknowledgement that there are no fixed models that address multicultural pastoral counseling as the discipline is still in the developmental stage (Silva-Netto 1992). Thus principles drawn from the study will contribute to the process



## Counseling Issues for International Students

of development as more scholars within the field continue to address the issue of applying pastoral counseling to diversity of cultures.

From the above study it is clear that practical theology is a discipline that emphasize the need to reflect the practicality of theology in the sense that it addresses issues affecting the church, society and mankind in general (Maddox, 19991; Wood, 1984). Farley (p. 934) summarized the definition of practical theology as “(1) A field of study in clergy education covering the responsibilities and activities of the minister and usually including preaching, liturgies, pastoral care, Christian (Church) education and Church polity and administration. (2) An area of discipline in clergy education whose subject matter is the life and activity of the church as it exists in the present. (3) An area or discipline of theology whose subject matter is Christian practice and which brings to bear theological criteria on contemporary situations and realms of individual and social action”. Browning (1981) emphasized the fact that practical theology encompasses every aspect of life within and beyond the religious community.

Practical theology must, in a broad sense, grapple with issues such as social justice, psychological and emotional adjustment, questions regarding the role of spirituality in suffering and many other factors that are important for individuals and societies to live as normal lives as possible. Pastoral care and

### Counseling Issues for International Students

counseling on the other hand seeks to address the same issues on a more specific and personal level by integrating behavioral sciences and theological disciplines. In this sense pastoral care and counseling is practical theology, and it simply reflects the ongoing evolution within the discipline. Augsburger (1986) defined pastoral counseling as “a liberating and healing ministry of the faith community that is based on a relationship between a pastor (or pastoral team) with counseling skills and a family or person who come together to engage in conversation and interaction. The relationship is a dynamic process of caring and exploration, with a definite structure and mutually contracted goals, and occurs within the tradition, beliefs and resources of the faith community that surround and supports them” (p. 15).

#### *Multicultural Pastoral Care and Counseling as Practical Theology*

The focus of this study is pastoral care and counseling in a multicultural setting. So far the study has demonstrated that pastoral care and counseling is practical theology. Since the research will focus on multicultural pastoral care and counseling, I will give a brief definition to demonstrate how multicultural counseling relates to pastoral care and counseling. The task in this section is to define multicultural pastoral care and counseling. To do so it is important to understand multicultural counseling as a discipline in order to demonstrate how it relates to pastoral care and counseling.

## Counseling Issues for International Students

Lee & Richardson (1991) stated, “Broadly defined, multicultural counseling is a helping process that places the emphasis for counseling theory and practice equally on the cultural impressions of both the counselor and the client” (p. 3). In essence multicultural counseling takes into account not only the client’s culture but also the culture of the therapist. Both cultures play an important role in the process. Augsburger (1986) described a culturally sensitive counselor as one affected by diversity of forces. He states, “Having to appreciate the impact of the historical, social, religious, political, and economic forces that have shaped the identity and values of all human beings, they are sensitive to the effects of racism, economic exploitation, political oppression, historic tragedy, religious prejudice, or the absence of these on the personality or interpersonal adjustment” (p. 20). But to be an intercultural pastoral counselor one must have the skills to enter into another’s culture while retaining his or her cultural background. To him, “The intercultural pastoral counselor who is at home on the boundary crosses over and returns with effectiveness, freed by theological groundedness to function as a mediating and reconciling person” (p. 47).

Augsburger (1986) also sees the important role of the pastoral counselor’s theology in the counseling relationship. He states that “Theology on the boundary

## Counseling Issues for International Students

is committed to the authentic presence and genuine dialogue between cultures, faiths, and values” (p. 47). Lee & Richardson (1991) see differences in social status, language and culture as issues that the helping professional must consider in counseling the culturally different client (Ibrahim, 1991).

Lee (1991) further defines culture as “a multidimensional concept that encompasses the collective reality of a group of people” (p. 11). In a more elaborate sense Murray and Zentner (1997) defined culture in three ways: “Culture is the sum total of the learned ways of doing, feeling, and thinking, past and present, of a social group within a given period. These ways are transmitted from one generation to the next or to immigrants who become members of the society. Culture is a group’s design for living, a shared set of socially transmitted assumptions about life, attitudes, roles, and values. Culture is a complex integrated system that includes knowledge, beliefs, skills, art, morals, law, customs, and any other acquired habits and capabilities of the human being. All provide a pattern for living together” (p. 5). In a sense culture informs the individuals the acceptable behavior, ways of thinking and relating.

Any counselor desiring to provide counseling to the culturally different must understand that each culture has values and expectations that will affect how the individual client responds (Corey, 1986). The challenge is that each culture has its own sets of rules and expectations. Murray and Zentner continue to state

## Counseling Issues for International Students

that “All cultures, subcultures, and ethnic groups possess certain values, customs, and practices common to every culture; share certain values, customs, and practices with some other cultures and have certain customs and practices unique only to that group of people” (p. 6).

Augsburger (1986) stressed that in training pastoral counselors, one must consider the effects of the culture in development and appreciate validity of equality in value between the secondary and the dominant culture. He further stated, “Training and practice models must be grounded in sociocultural systems thinking. All human psychology is embedded in its cultural context, and all counseling must take the personal and the contextual with equal seriousness” (p. 14).

One cannot counsel effectively without considering the cultural context in which the counseling needs arise. The way the individual views reality is affected by the cultural upbringing. Therefore, “The pastoral counselor views the universe, its cultures and its peoples from a theology that addresses both universals and particulars. Culture is the form, theology is the content of human experience”(Augsburger, 1986, p. 78). Meaning of relationships, morality and family systems are products of culture (Rome, 1969). According to Corey (1969) “ethical and professional practice entails finding effective ways to provide psychological services to meet special needs of diverse cultural groups” (p. 349).

### Counseling Issues for International Students

In essence counseling needs are culturally informed.

In this study multicultural pastoral counseling will be defined as any counseling or caring in which the counselor factors in theological and cultural issues in the counseling session. A culturally sensitive pastoral counselor will seek to understand the impact of the culture on the issues facing the client or clients (Silver-Netto, 1992). At the same time he or she must be aware of his or her belief systems and culture. “Awareness of ones own culture can free one to disconnect identity from cultural externals and to live on the boundary, crossing over and coming back with increasing freedom” (Augusburger, 1986, p. 13).

The emphasis is that a pastoral counselor must be able to enter into cultural interaction with his or her client and still maintain his own cultural values and beliefs. The belief system of the counselor and that of the client will play an equally important role. The goal is to interpret theological belief system in such a way that issues affecting the clients are addressed within the totality of their background. Thus, multicultural pastoral counseling is practical theology in a multicultural setting as it seeks to apply theology to changing lives and addressing issues affecting individuals and society as a whole. (Augsburger, 1986; Browning, 1981; Maddox, 1990; Maddox 1991; Rumff, 1959).

## Counseling Issues for International Students

*Summary*

Practical theology has existed throughout history as a means by which the Church addressed needs affecting humanity. It is demonstrated in this chapter that pastoral care and counseling is a part of practical theology in the sense that it is a means in which the Church addresses psychological and behavioral issues of the believers and humanity in general. Multicultural pastoral care and counseling is also a part of practical theology as it is an attempt to provide care and counseling from cultural perspective.

Providing pastoral care for international students is within the realm of practical theology since the students are a part of the multicultural group in need of spiritual care. With this understanding the following chapter will now focus on discussion of the counseling issues the foreign students encounter in the foreign land.

## Counseling Issues for International Students

## Chapter 4

## Counseling Issues Encountered by Students in the Foreign Land

This chapter will address issues that affect international students during their study overseas. Narrative study on specific cases will demonstrate how these issues impact the students and complicate their ability to get help. The transient nature of the students in the study limits the amount of time I was able to spend with the subjects and the ability to follow each story systematically. The stories in the narrative study will be integrated with the issues documented in the finding of other research scholars in the field.

*Methodology of the Study*

This chapter will begin with a narrative study of 6 students to whom I provided spiritual care when they were facing crisis. The six students were chosen because of the significance and relevance of the issues they presented in their encounter with me. In my 19 years of ministry to International students the six students represented the most significant issues in terms of the complications and severity of the problems they presented. Also in observing and reading what other internationals experience, I see the same issues showing up to some degrees among other foreign students. Their experiences embody and reflect the experiences common to other students from different countries. In essence there



## Counseling Issues for International Students

is a universality in the problems presented by the six chosen students. This will be demonstrated in the study.

First, it is important to define narrative research in order to understand its place in academic research. Narrative research is academically accepted as a form of inquiry based on observation of life experiences of the subjects under study (Atkinson, 1999; Behar-Horenstein and Morgan, 1995; Burnford, Fisher, and Hobson, 1996; Hones & Cha, 1999; Gergen, 1998).

Thomas & Brubaker, (2000) stated “In recent decades, individuals' descriptions and interpretations of their personal experiences have been increasingly accepted as suitable versions of research by academicians of a postmodern persuasion” (p. 110). Hones & Cha (1999) explain the rationale for narrative research in terms of personal and social stories. They state “The focus on individual lives enables narrative research to place social theory in a practical light, as well as to connect an individual's personal history with the social history of his or her life span. Finally, narrative research is marked by subjectivity. The focus on the subject's ‘voice’ and story are seen as a positive contribution of the narrative genre to social science research” (p. 208).

Cochran (1990) sees two aspects of narrative research. “The first is concerned with developing a well-founded story that is faithful to life. The second

## Counseling Issues for International Students

is concerned with drawing out the meaning, plot, or explanation embedded within a story (or set of stories). While each might be conducted without the other, each often complements the other as phases of a single project” (p. 78). Explaining the benefits, he stated "Along with other qualitative methods, the great advantage of narrative research is that it offers the possibility of a greatly expanded scope for questions that are of direct significance to practice" (p. 83).

According Hones & Cha (1999), "There is an increasing use of narrative inquiry within the broader field of educational research" (p. 205). They see narrative research as focusing “on the lives of ordinary people, individuals whose lives are in part defined by racial, class and gender boundaries constructed by the dominant culture” (p. 206). They differentiate narrative research from other forms of research by stating that “Narrative inquiry can be distinguished from other types of qualitative research by its focus on the individual, the personal, nature of the research process, its ‘practical’ orientation and its emphasis on subjectivity...” (p. 208).

According to Young & Borgen (1990) there two kinds of narrative research. “The first kind of narrative research is descriptive ; its aim is to render the narrative accounts already in place which are used by individuals or groups as their means for ordering and making temporal events meaningful. The criterion for evaluating this kind of narrative research is the accuracy of the researcher's

## Counseling Issues for International Students

description in relationship to the operating narrative scheme. The second kind of investigation is explanatory ; its aim is to construct a narrative account explaining ‘why’ a situation or event involving human actions has happened. The narrative account that is constructed ties together and orders events so as to make apparent the way they ‘caused’ the happening under investigation” (p. 78).

Behar-Horenstein and Morgan (1995) describe narrative research “As an entity with a beginning, middle, and end, story has a dynamic that is created and interpreted through the lived experiences of a person or a participant observer who offers a vicarious interpretation of an individual's personal story” (p. 143). In other words narrative study involves drawing meanings from observing life experiences of the individual subjects under study. The focus of this chapter is to analyze the issues observed in the real lives of selected students in conjunction with those found by other researchers.

It is clear from the above definitions that narrative research involves several factors. First it can be an observation of life experiences of an individual or individuals with focus on meaningful events. In this case the researcher focuses on individual life stories and draws meaning from the experiences of the subjects. Secondly it can be an observation and reconstruction of certain events with the purpose of finding out reasons and causative factors of the same events. In this case the researchers comes after the events have occurred and seeks to find

### Counseling Issues for International Students

meaning by reconstructing the events and finding out why and what caused certain events to occur. Thirdly, narrative research can be subjective as the findings are based on the observation by the researcher or the verbal report of the subjects. This is why in this study the interpretations of the experiences of the students involved will be integrated with the findings of other research in the same field. The issues affecting the subjects are discussed in the lights of findings by other studies.

In this study the events or experiences of the subjects will be discussed as examples of the issues addressed by other research scholars. Throughout the discussion the case studies will help the reader relate the issues to the stories in the case studies. The cases will serve as examples, of different issues that will emerge from the rest of the studies throughout the chapter.

#### *Narrative Study Cases*

##### *Case Study #1*

My relationship with Peter began when one of the volunteers, in a ministry I was involved, brought him to a Christian fellowship. Initially he seemed calm and well adjusted. He talked about his life and how he was raised in a foreign country because his parents were refugees. He was involved in a war that overthrew the government of his homeland and so he became a part of this new regime that got into power through the war. His government sent him to the

## Counseling Issues for International Students

United States for military training. But why was he in this particular city instead of the place of his training?

Peter explained that while receiving his training he became suspicious that political leadership in his country wanted him back because he was seen as a traitor. Why was he seen as a traitor? He explained that he spoke up against issues of corruption and bad treatment of those whom the new regime perceived as enemies of the government. The complaint seemed logical. He then convinced his training officer about the suspicion and was eventually granted refugee status and secretly sent to the new city where he became a part of the Christian fellowship. The story came across as genuine and no one saw any reason to doubt. However, things began to change.

Peter lived in an apartment complex in which he had a room but there were others with rooms in the same building. One day a phone call came and it was Peter complaining that one of the residents verbally abused him and he needed to move out. He headed for another city to stay with a friend. A week later he was back and needing a place to stay because that other city was not welcoming. He found an apartment and a job but soon complained that the neighbors were threatening to kill him. He claimed that, people were checking his mail and talking about him whenever he passed by. Eventually he quit his job

## Counseling Issues for International Students

claiming that his life was in danger because some people wanted to kill him. By now it was obvious that Peter was experiencing serious psychological problems.

For a long time every attempt to convince Peter to seek counseling proved fruitless. One day he did agree to admit himself to a psychiatric hospital.

However, he managed to convince the psychiatrist that he was just fine. He was discharged from the hospital but his problems continued to mount. He started to view everyone he knew suspiciously claiming he or she was after his life.

Peter moved out of the city in search for peace and comfort. About two years later, I received another phone call from a friend describing a student, hundreds of miles away, who had to move out of his relative's house because someone in the family wanted to poison him. The student turns out to be Peter. Unfortunately the phone call did not result in further relationship between me and Peter. He disappeared without informing the family where he was going.

Three issues emerged as I began to work with Peter. First he was paranoid and suspicious of everyone that got close to him. The government was after him. Friends were after his life. Neighbor and even place of work were all after him. According to Morris and Snyder (1993) "To meet the diagnostic criteria for paranoia, the individual must have a chronic and stable persecutory delusional system of at least six months' duration " ( p. 28). They also described what they considered general paranoia. To them "Those criteria require persistent

## Counseling Issues for International Students

persecutory delusions or delusional jealousy; emotion and behavior appropriate to the content of the delusional system; at least a one-week duration of illness; the absence of symptoms of schizophrenia such as bizarre delusions, incoherence, or marked loosening of associations; no prominent hallucinations; the absence of depressive or manic syndrome; and the above criteria not caused by an organic mental disorder” ( p. 29).

Peter’s behavior is definitely delusional and it has lasted way longer than six months. It seems like everyone that take interest in him becomes an enemy. Another description of paranoia is that "Untoward chance events are perceived as personal provocations at the hands of presumed enemies" (Kantor, 1992, p. 8). Fits with Peter’s interpretation of people’s interest in him as an attempt to control his life.

Secondly, Peter continued to resist any idea of going for counseling. Further discussion in this chapter will demonstrate that this behavior is common among international students. However, in order to gain some understanding of Peter’s behavior and what might have contributed, it is important to understand his background.

Peter came from war and research has demonstrated that post traumatic syndrome is a common problem experienced by people after participating in war, and evidenced by similar behaviors as displayed by Peter (Hendin & Haas, 1984;

## Counseling Issues for International Students

Marten, 2001; Murray, 1992; Sloan & Arsenault, 1995; Weinfeld, Sigal & Eaton, 1981; Williams & Sommer, 1994). Post traumatic syndrome is described as "a debilitating condition that some people develop after experiencing or witnessing an extremely traumatic event." (Gorrell, 2002).

Hendin & Haas (1984) warn that to understand the effects of Post Traumatic Disorder, one has to look at the mental and emotional status of the individual before during and after the trauma. Discussing veterans who suffer similar disorder they stated, "Who the veteran was before combat is highly significant, and sometimes decisive, in shaping the way in which the posttraumatic stress disorder develops. This does not imply that a personality disorder was present in the veteran or would have developed without the stress of combat, or even that such individuals are more vulnerable to stress in any general sense" ( p. 37). The argument is that one has to look at the issues that may have existed before the individual went to war.

In the case of Peter prior issues in his life may have been the primary reason for his response to the experience of war and travel overseas. However the focus of this study is to examine his experience, as an international student, in the light of the experiences of other students. To what extend is his experience common among other internationals? This is one of the questions the study will address in this chapter.



## Counseling Issues for International Students

Obviously Peter's situation is complicated by the fact that he is in a foreign country and adjusting to a new culture. As it will be demonstrated in the study, his refusal to go for help is a cultural issue common among foreign students coming from non-western countries (Hayes & Lin, 1994; Komiya & Ellis, 2001; Arthur, 1997; Mori, 2000). In essence Peter's experience in war left him traumatized. Coming to the USA put him in position where he was dealing with the Post traumatic syndrome (Danitz, 1997; Murray, 1992; Sloan & Arsenault, 1995; Weinfeld, Sigal & Eaton, 1981) while trying to deal with a reality of being in a foreign culture. One can see how the combination of the two forces could have caused serious problems for the sojourner. He is also away from home and familiar family support. Lack of support system can be a factor in intensifying his experience (Hayes & Lin, 1994).

*Case Study #2*

Dan is another student who ended up in Nebraska where he received a Masters in clinical psychology from a prestigious university. He also got a job with a well known company and seemed very successful. He won respect and trust from his landlord who gave him a substantial discount in rent. Dan was enrolled in a Ph.D program and was doing well until problems began to surface.

First, it was some news regarding some minor conflict between his relatives that were not getting along. The situation did not seem that serious. But

## Counseling Issues for International Students

it affected him emotionally as he began to feel guilty that it was his absence that caused the conflict between the relative. “If only I was home” he kept repeating. Things began to deteriorate for him as he continued blaming himself. He began to suffer so much from depression that it affected his ability to work. Meanwhile he was developing some serious psychosomatic symptoms like frequent stomach pains, headaches and high blood pressure. Every effort intended to help him seek psychiatric help proved unfruitful. Meanwhile things continued to get worst. He became disoriented to time and place. The situation compelled him to take a sick leave due to severity of the illness.

The friends discovered that Daniel’s uncles lived in South Carolina. They then convinced him to visit South Carolina and spend time with his family. Amazingly, one month in South Carolina made a big difference in his life. He returned to Nebraska as normal as he was before. His memory was back and he was ready to move on with his education.

What did the family do that became a healing factor in the life of Daniel? Jenkins (1991), argues “that culture is of profound importance to the experience of depression, the construction of meaning and social response to depressive illness within families and communities, the course and outcome of the disorder, and thus to the very constitution of depressive illness” (p. 8). The implication here is that culture determines how individuals and families respond to depressive

## Counseling Issues for International Students

experiences. It is also implied in the description that family dynamics play a major role when one is dealing with depression.

Dan's experience of losing meaning in life, not being able to work and displaying paranoia reveals symptoms of depression (Ainsworth, 2000; Jenkins, 1991; Kantor, 1992). The same symptoms of depression are common in those born and raised in the American society (Gil-Rivas, Greenberger, Chen & Lopez-Lena, 2003; Mirowsky & Ross, 1989).

One problem with depression which was evidenced by Dan's experience is the fact that by the time it is recognized it may be too late. "The reason is simple. Depression is a sneak thief, slipping into a life gradually and robbing it of meaning, one loss at a time. The losses are imperceptible at first, but eventually weigh so heavily that the person's life becomes empty. Once begun, the course of depression varies with the individual and with the form of the illness. Untreated, it can last weeks, months, or even years" (Ainsworth, 2000, p. 3). For Dan by the time he was diagnosed with depression he was already critical with symptoms of disorientation as shown above.

Complications for Dan resulted from the fact that he was also dealing with cultural issues coupled with being in a foreign country. Cultural adjustment is emotionally tasking even without having to deal with issues of depression (Davie, 1947; York, 1994). In this case Dan was dealing with both issues that were

## Counseling Issues for International Students

powerful enough to impact his life drastically. Being away from culture of origin, having no family support and maintaining a negative view of counseling added up to make the situation near impossible. Without a healthy view of counseling it is impossible for him to consider seeking help in spite of the emotional turmoil going on his life.

As it will be demonstrated in this chapter, resistance to counseling is a common experience among international students. Dan's refusal to seek professional counseling was a reflection of international students attitude towards counseling in general. It was not something new.

*Case Study #3*

Rita came from a country in Asia and lived in the USA long enough to become a citizen. She attended a prestigious university and graduated with honors. She then transferred to another prestigious university where I met her and linked her with a host family. It was in her second year that problems began to develop for Rita. First, she developed anxiety fearing that she might not make the grades. Indeed her grades began to go down causing her anxiety to heighten even much more. The heightened anxiety was making it difficult for her to concentrate causing her grades to suffer even more. She also began to suspect that the professors did not like her and were causing her to fail.

## Counseling Issues for International Students

Eventually, Rita was forced to drop out of school because she was not making the grades. Her host family worked hard to convince her to see a psychiatrist. Eventually she began to receive counseling and showed signs of improvements. However, one day she noticed that the counselor was recording time at the beginning and at the end of each session. She asked the counselor if that meant she was going to pay for the sessions. The counselors stated in a joking way, “You can pay when you get a good job.” That was it for Rita. The counselor was not trustworthy. He was there only to make money of her. She immediately quit coming to the counseling session. No one was able to convince her to go back.

Life continued to prove very difficult for Rita. She withdrew from everyone and started living on welfare. She confined herself to her apartment and going out only to buy food. Failure to complete school was such a big issue that life seemed to lose meaning for her. Why did the fear of failure to complete her degree become so catastrophic? Why such an anxiety in the first place?

Working with her I found out that rejection had been a part of Rita from childhood. She stated that she was an unwanted child and her mother died at childbirth. Her siblings wanted nothing to do with her. So she lived in an orphanage and later wandered from home to home before becoming completely independent. All these years she has felt rejected by society. These past issues

## Counseling Issues for International Students

complicated her ability to adjust culturally while carrying a full load of studies. In spite of being bright enough to easily win scholarship in a prestigious university, emotional stress hindered her from succeeding. She lost everything because she was not able to cope with her emotional problems complicated by cultural maladjustment.

According to Kirkpatrick (1955) “culture together with natural environment, heredity, and variable or personal-social behavior constitute fundamental factors shaping the destiny of individuals and groups. Cultural inconsistency in association with scarcity, differences, and clash of motives seems interwoven, in a somewhat causative way, with the troubles and problems of human beings” (p. 176). Family is an important cultural institution that helps shape the life of the individual, and determine how one can deal with life issues (Biller, 1993; Duane, Stewart & Bridgeland, 2003; Kirkpatrick, 1955). Studies suggest that family stress can affect the child’s ability to develop emotional and even physical illnesses (Biller, 1993). Other studies suggest that even when placing troubled juveniles in homes, parental support is still of great significance for the learning of the juvenile (Schwartz & Auclair, 1995).

Rita’s family became an institution of rejection and therefore she did not learn to deal with issues of life. Artiles & Hallahan, (1995) found that family rejection for adolescent children with learning disability can have negative

## Counseling Issues for International Students

consequences. To them, "Rejection places children with learning disabilities at risk for socioemotional maladjustment. Children need to feel accepted and that they belong. When they do not find acceptance at home or at school, they are in danger, especially during adolescence, of entering peer groups that may provide them with emotional support but frequently lead to antisocial behaviors" (pp. 182-183).

After studying early childhood rejection Stevens & Gardner, (1994) concluded that "Clearly, the anticipation of the loss of a nurturing, protective person in the first few months of life can be said to impinge upon the consciousness of a person who is helpless, particularly helpless to prevent the absence of that other person. When mothering ... or the mothering person is neglectful or rejecting and the infant is particularly immature and helpless, the absence becomes traumatic and, according to this application of repetition-compulsion, the threat of loss of nurturance, protection, and security will revitalize the affective component of the trauma" (p. 107).

Rita's family rejection traumatized and placed her in danger of becoming antisocial. This also meant that she did not have cultural stability since she had no family to assist her in learning about her own culture. One can see the complications she faced trying to adjust socially to a foreign culture without social skills from her own culture.

## Counseling Issues for International Students

*Case Study #4*

I met Tim at the University campus. At first he was just like any other student going from one class to another. However, as our friendship developed it became apparent that Tim was under so much stress that he feared his grades were going down. Indeed his ability to concentrate was greatly affected by the anxiety. But what caused such a serious anxiety? Tim came from Ethiopia but his family worked and lived in Kuwait. We met at the time of the Gulf War.

When the war broke out Tim lost contact with his family and he found himself without the financial support that he normally received from his parents. Missing his family and losing financial support combined to create serious crisis for him. Who was there to understand the serious issues Tim was experiencing? To an average American the war was going very well and the enemy was losing. But to Tim the war was putting him out of touch with his family and source of support and yet there was no one to identify with his suffering. He found himself lonely and having to keep his pain and the suffering to himself.

Unfortunately my contact with Tim was limited and it was years later that I learned of Tim's decision not to continue with his education due to emotional stress and financial problems. He became a taxi driver just to survive. What did it mean for Tim to quit his studies and give up the dream that caused him to leave his family and travel all the way to the USA?



## Counseling Issues for International Students

Cild (1998) did a study of American Indian children who were separated from their families and put in boarding schools without or with very limited opportunities to visit home. His conclusion was that many of them suffered psychologically due to stress from homesickness. When combined with issues of being in a foreign country psychological pain can be overwhelming. “The overall experience of many refugees, including the trauma of relocation, isolation from family and friends, problems with acculturation, and the economic stresses associated with the inability to find and hold a job may increase depression, lower self-esteem, damage psychological well-being, hurt coping skills, and increase anger and frustration” (Mayadas & Segal, 2000, p. 219).

By being in America Tim was vulnerable to all the above symptoms. But now he was facing fear of not knowing if his family was still alive. At the same time lack of financial support and the need to continue with his education created a psychological crisis for him. All these, plus the need to adjust culturally, combined to intensify stress and depression (Kirkpatrick 1955; Mayadas & Segal, 2000; Potocky-Tripodi 2002).

*Case Study #5*

Paul came from a country in Asia. He applied for a college in the United States. Excited about being accepted into an American college, he signed every form without reading the content. Upon arrival on campus, the student

## Counseling Issues for International Students

discovered that one of the forms he signed contained strong restrictions that made it very difficult for him to adjust to the campus life and consequently to the American society. His movements were restricted because the institution felt it was their responsibility to ensure that the student concentrated on studies and not social life.

Four years of study in this college left the student longing to know the American life style but never had the opportunity. Upon graduation he had an opportunity to do practical training which meant that his student status allowed him to work and earn money for one year. Some friends of his family welcomed him to their home and gave him free room and board. Everything was going well until problems began to surface. The family complained that Paul was rejecting every suggestion they gave him.

In my listening to the family and to Paul the issue came down to one problem. He interpreted any suggestion the family gave as people telling him what to do and how to run his life. And yet his survival depended on the host family helping him adjust culturally to the USA. Unfortunately the family felt that every discussion became a reason for sharp arguments.

When I met the student, he had a professional job under practical work permit. The job was prestigious and promised a permanent position at the end of

## Counseling Issues for International Students

the year. However, it was obvious that some psychological problems were beginning to affect every hope he had in life. When the employer suggested to him that healthcare insurance was a part of requirement for employment he took that as another way for someone attempting to control his life. This relationship with his employer was affected. This led to him losing his job.

Eventually Paul moved from the city and found an apartment in a city away from the environment in which he was known. He managed to find a part-time job with an income that barely met his financial needs. Meanwhile the expectation from home was that anyone going to America becomes successful and should only return home with degrees and money.

The student found himself trapped. On one hand he missed his family at home. On the other hand the idea of returning home without money and no guarantee of getting a job was unthinkable. Meanwhile friends who did not travel overseas were settled with families and doing well financially. After eight years overseas he had nothing to show. At the same time life in America did not offer him much hope. His world felt like a prison with no way out. He accepted no advice because to him that constituted surrender of his life to the control of other people.

My initial assessment was that the problem stemmed from the restrictions placed in his life in College. However, after listening to Paul more issues

## Counseling Issues for International Students

surfaced. At home he grew up under an extremely religious Muslim mother who put all kinds of restrictions in his life. When he left home he thought he was finally getting freedom to do what he wanted to do. However, college became another bondage.

Studies suggest that abused children tend to internalize the negative experience received from parents (Whitbeck, 1999). For Paul the experience coupled with the issue of being in a foreign culture magnified the problems into major psychological issues. More studies reveal that while parental control has positive effects, it can also have a negative consequences on individual's psychological development (Amato & Booth, 1997; Pomerantz & Eaton, 2000). For Paul parental control left him unable to adjust to life without feeling afraid of people replacing his mother to control his life.

Obviously Paul's experience at home left him psychological scars that resulted from his mother's control. Given that relationship, home culture was something he was trying to escape. But that left him also without any cultural stability and knowledge of how to address issues in life (Stevens & Gardner, 1994). In the United States, he found himself without that cultural base from which to address issues in his life. At the same time he was trying to adjust to a new culture without the skills of coping with adjustment process.

## Counseling Issues for International Students

*Case Study #6*

Lydia was a student in one of the East Coast universities. Her husband was also a student and both were doing well raising their children who did well in the schools they attended. One day the news came from home that her uncle who raised her from childhood was very sick and about to die. I knew Lydia and her family well. When she came to talk to me about the issue she had one complaint about her pastor. “He immediately talked about donating money for my trip home,” stated Lydia referring to her pastor. “I am dealing with the possibility of my uncle dying and all my pastor is thinking about is that I came for money”.

Why was she upset with her pastor’s immediate offer to help with the transportation? Cultural issues were emerging here. In her culture relationship of caring and sympathy was the most important gift he could give her at that time. Offering money made her feel like she came to beg. The pastor on the other hand was thinking practically. Possibility of death at home means she needed to go and grief with the family. That was indeed a need but not the focus of the visit according to Lydia. Nevertheless, arrangements were made and soon, with the help of her Church, she was able to go home and spend time with her uncle.

She returned to the United States before her uncle died. However a few months later the news of his death arrived. Lydia grieved but was able to return to her normal life and was able to do well with her studies and her job. But things

## Counseling Issues for International Students

did not stop there. Another devastating phone call. The same disease that claimed the uncle's life had also claimed the life of her brother. Meanwhile another close relative was undergoing surgery for the same illness. What did it mean for her to lose two relatives while she studied far away from home?

According to Potocky-Tripodi (2002) "The most commonly observed mental health problems of immigrants, and particularly refugees, include grief, alienation and loneliness, decreased self-esteem, depression, anxiety, somatization, paranoia, guilt, post-traumatic stress disorder, and substance abuse" (p. 484). International students share similar issues as they share the commonality of being away from familiar culture and environment (Arthur, 1997; Burak, 1987; Emougu, 1985; Huxur et al, 1996; Pedersen, 1991).

As it will be demonstrated below, the case studies above represent some of the serious issues that international students encounter during their studies in the United States. In order for pastoral care providers to meet the counseling needs of international students it is important to understand the uniqueness of the issues one faces when dealing with sojourning students.

*U-Curve Theory*

For many years the theory of U-Curve was accepted as a standard for understanding adjustment process for international students when they enter a

## Counseling Issues for International Students

foreign land (Ward et al, 1998). The theory claimed that adjustment problems were encountered between 6 to 12 months of residency abroad (Ward et al, 1998). According to Lysgaard (as in Ward et al, 1998, p. 278), “Adjustment as a process over time seems to follow a U-shaped curve: adjustment is felt to be easy and successful to begin with; then follows a ‘crisis’ in which one feels less well-adjusted, somewhat lonely and unhappy; finally one begins to feel better adjusted again, becoming more integrated into the foreign community.”

According to the theory the sojourner experiences greatest difficulties in the first six month and then the degree of difficulties drops significantly after six months and then rise again six months later. The problem with this theory according to Ward et al (1998) is that first it is based on cross-sectional studies rather than longitudinal which is more appropriate for this kind of study. Cross-sectional study assumes that everyone experiences and reacts the same way under particular circumstances. Secondly, cultural adjustment is not clearly defined and sometimes psychological and social adjustments are used interchangeably. Ward et al (1998) see fundamental difference between the two adaptive processes. They see psychological adjustment as “largely influenced by personality, social support and life change variables while sociocultural adaptation is more strongly affected by cultural distance, amount of contact with host nationals and cultural knowledge” (p. 279).

## Counseling Issues for International Students

Ward et al (1998) did another study with 35 Japanese students who studied in New Zealand. The subjects responded to four questions that were given in sequences. First, within 24 hours of arrival, second at four months, third at six months and the fourth at 12 months. The purpose was to examine sociocultural and psychological adjustment within the period of six months.

The study resulted in conclusions that differed from the U-Curve theory. “Adjustment difficulties decreased between entry and four months of overseas experience with no further significant changes at the 6 and 12 month testings. In addition, as predicted, the magnitude of the correlation between psychological and sociocultural adjustment increased over time, with significant differences found between point of entry and 1 year of residence abroad” (p. 286).

Their conclusion was that “U-curve model of sojourner adjustment should be rejected, and more promising conceptual perspectives such as stress and coping theories and culture learning approaches be further and more profitably investigated” (P. 290). One important result of this study is to note that one cannot group international students into one category. So many other variations affect how they interact and adjust to the environment and culture of the host country.

While the study above disagrees with the finding of the U-Curve theory, it does not negate the reality that foreign students experience adjustment issues



### Counseling Issues for International Students

during their study overseas. The case studies demonstrate the reality and the seriousness of the social and psychological problems that affect students seeking to further their education in a foreign land. The uniqueness of these issues poses a challenge to pastoral care and counseling professionals seeking to help international students adjust culturally while pursuing academic ambitions. It is therefore important to discuss these issues in order to demonstrate the need and the uniqueness of reaching international students through pastoral care and counseling services.

The narrative studies covered so far in this chapter will serve as examples and demonstrate the seriousness of these issues in the lives of international students. The issues are drawn from studies done by other scholars in the field. The purpose is to integrate the experiences of the students and the findings of research studies.

#### *Specific Adjustment Issues*

Adjustment issues affecting international students in their studies overseas include cultural attitude towards counseling, academic expectations, difference in approach to learning, death and/or serious illness at home, and culture shock. Each of these issues will be discussed individually. The case studies will serve as examples to illustrate how severe these issues can be for some students.

## Counseling Issues for International Students

*Cultural Attitude Towards Counseling*

Each of the narrative case studies done in this chapter concurs with the finding that foreign students resist the idea of seeking counseling help from a professional (Hayes & Lin, 1994; Komiya & Ellis, 2001; Yau, Sue & Hayden, 1992). Why is it so? Wehrly (1988) outlined several reasons. First, in the non-western countries counseling help comes from the family and not outsiders. Problems should not go outside the family context. Secondly, there is a stigma attached to anyone seeking psychological help. It is viewed negatively in the non-western cultures including industrialized countries like Japan. Thirdly, as a result of these cultural constraints, the concept of counseling remains strange in the minds of international students. Fourthly, and even after a student agrees to seek counseling, the problem of self disclosure is an issue.

Peter (case study #1) was able to convince the therapist that he was doing fine when in fact his emotional condition was very critical. He could not disclose the fact that he was under stress. According to Wehrly (1988), “western expectation for self-disclosure and dealing with feelings during counseling sessions may be considered not only alien, but extremely threatening and demeaning” (p. 6). This was evident when Peter was conversing with me one time. After he explained every stressful situation he was under, my response was simply to acknowledge the evidences that he was under stress. But immediately

## Counseling Issues for International Students

Peter responded by stating “No, I am not under stress. In fact I sleep well.”

Obviously, it was uncomfortable for him to admit even to a friend that he was experiencing an emotional problem. In some cultures psychological problems are viewed negatively and sometimes associated with immoral thoughts (Boyer & Sedlacek, 1989; Mori, 2000).

Cultural attitude towards counseling is a factor that those seeking to help internationals cope with life in the foreign country must address. With this understanding one can see why it was difficult for each of the cases above to seek counseling help. What makes the situation so critical is that without help things can get gravely worst for the students. Dan’s resistance to suggestion for counseling in spite of the tremendous stress is a good example. It is importance to note that when he did go to counseling none of his friends knew about it.

Resistance to the western form of counseling and absence of family support leaves the student without help and vulnerable to serious complications socially, psychologically and spiritually. Pastoral counselors seeking to impact the lives of international students must think of different approaches that will draw the student to counseling because resistance is common (Arthur, 1997; Mori, 2000; Smith et al, 1999). One cannot set up an office and expect foreign students to come seeking help in spite of the need for counseling.

## Counseling Issues for International Students

*Academic Expectations*

Why did the fear of academic failure affect Rita (Case study #3) and Paul (Case Study #5) so much that they ended up losing every opportunity accorded to them? First, international students who travel to study abroad have to deal with high and maybe unrealistic expectations back home (Oropeza, Fitzgibbon and Baron, 1991). Chen (1999) found that academic performance for foreign students have either negative or positive effect in their adjustment process. Describing students from South-east Asia, Fernandez (1988) stated “Because education is a valued commodity in the home countries of Southeast-Asian students, the necessity to succeed and not return home as a failure is a stress” (p. 161). The expectation is to do better than their performance at home. Once the thought of failing entered Rita’s mind it created an overwhelming fear complicated by worry that she will look like a failure to the people she represented from her home.

Chen (1999) sees another reason for such an emphasis on academic success. “If students perceive they are academically successful, they are likely to feel more confident in living in the new environment. Otherwise, they may feel that things are out of control, and that there are harms and threats to their welfare” (p. 52). For a foreign student trying to fulfill personal and family goals for his or her study, this feeling of things being out of control can be devastating. Rita

## Counseling Issues for International Students

demonstrated this reality when her academic ability was completely clouded by the fear of failing to the point of giving up her educational pursuits.

Many of the foreign students were chosen because of their top academic performance (Chen, 1999). Their success or failure can affect the chances of others desiring to come for further studies (Burak, 1987). Thus family pride and sponsoring agencies can create pressure so that the “need for high achievement then becomes a critical stress factor for many foreign students” (Oropeza, Fitzgibbon and Baron, 1991, p. 281). The situation is worsened by the fact a “C” grade for some of the students constitute a failure (Burak, 1987; Chen, 1999). The feelings of failure like the case of Rita (Case Study #3) can have a spiral effect that will continually worsen the student’s emotional instability and rendering him or her unable to perform academically and socially.

On a personal level education is the main purpose of a student traveling overseas (Fernandez, 1988). Failure to achieve it can be catastrophic as the individual students feel the weight of disappointing family, friends and home country (Naughton, 1985, Council of Graduate Schools in the US, 1991, Emoungu, 1985). Arthur (1997) stated “The threat of failure, whether real or perceived, and returning home to face embarrassment of self, family, or sponsors, coupled with the financial resources allocated for the international student can be immense pressure” (p. 262).

### Counseling Issues for International Students

Secondly, even without the pressure from family and sponsors, the thought of not succeeding in education is in itself a cause for serious anxiety, which can affect the student's concentration necessary for effective learning. Again Rita is a good example. She had no family or sponsoring agent to worry about. However, she was afflicted by pressure she placed on herself to succeed. The pressure affected her ability to concentrate creating more anxiety, which resulted in her quitting school. When a student is unable to concentrate, his or her grades will be affected causing further complication in the anxiety level. An effective pastoral care and counseling professional must take into account the issues of academic performance and expectation from the student and the country of origin.

Some of the students are on scholarship and their financial support depends on their ability to perform academically. At the same time language barrier, for the students from non-English speaking countries, can be a factor in their ability to learn (Wehrly 1988). All of these factors increase the chances of a student experiencing serious psychological problems related to academic performance (Oropeza, Fitzgibbon and Baron, 1991). Feelings of obligation to please and satisfy family, friends, supporting agencies and country of origin can be so overwhelming to the student and may lead to serious emotional crisis. Emoungu (1985) stated that South African students could not concentrate in their

### Counseling Issues for International Students

studies as they worried about their families' safety during periods of unrest. All these factors may heighten the student's level of anxiety, which will have the effect of causing the student to fail. An effective pastoral counseling program, for foreign students, must take into account the possible emotional issues caused by academic pressure.

#### *Difference in Approach to Learning*

Besides the fact that a student is operating under much pressure to succeed, some other factors can affect his or her performance and even lead to further failure. Idowu (1985) sighted the difference in the system of education in the United States. He pointed out that, Nigerian students, who are used to essay exams, experience stress and anxiety when they have to adjust to multiple choice questions and frequent quizzes.

In his study of Taiwanese students, Parker (1999) noted difficulties foreign students encounter in the academic environment in the United States. One of them is the emphasis on competition in which the foreign students sees success as doing better than others. In the United States sometimes students are assigned to study in groups. A student, who views success in terms of outperforming others, will find it difficult to study in a group setting. The concern is that the student cares only about getting the right answers while neglecting learning

## Counseling Issues for International Students

through team effort. “They will exhibit a genuine and determined work ethic, but they were, as a group, unfamiliar with designing or assessing cooperative group activities” (p. 7). The experience can be stressful for the foreign student who, besides trying to adjust to the new concept, may feel like an outsider in the group setting.

Wehrly (1988) observed the same problem when he stated that “International students may experience differences in teaching and learning strategies in classes here in the United States as compared to education in their own countries” (p. 5). To him rote learning is a method applied as a standard for learning in many countries. The fact that students from these countries “are expected to synthesize and draw their own conclusions from what they read (in a foreign language) may be an entirely new assignment” (p. 5).

Then there is the issue of one getting used to informality in the class room. In the United States students and professors interact and relate informally. But international students “may come from a culture where it is inappropriate for students to develop any personal rapport with faculty, and they may feel uneasy being more than passive receivers of the written or spoken word: the teacher presents the information and the student receives it” (pp. 5-6). The concern is that while American approach to education encourages critical thinking, students who



## Counseling Issues for International Students

are used to receiving, retaining and recalling information may find class room atmosphere difficult.

Thirdly Parker found that while the American system of education emphasized the importance of the learning process, international students tend to be task oriented. The idea of discovery learning did not seem valuable to them, because “they wanted to know the specific task and the most efficient way to accomplish the task” (p. 7). Trying to cope with the new approach to learning can affect the student emotionally and academically. Arthur (1997) saw similar problems with foreign students studying in Canada. The adjustment is “complicated by cultural differences from previous educational settings and the demands to quickly master changes in other roles in the host culture” (p. 260).

Fourthly, Parker found that due to language difficulties some international students did not understand the issue of plagiarism. He noted that, in spite of explanation, some students were quoting different authors word for word without using quotation marks and without giving credit to the original authors. He points out that this is just one example of language problems internationals encounter. “When confronted, the students would genuinely attempt to rewrite the passage or cite the quote, but many times the limitations of language and translation confounded the intent and clarity of the writing” (p 7). Chen (1999) points out

## Counseling Issues for International Students

that “If international students do not have adequate language skills, they may find themselves at a disadvantage in their academic and social lives” (p. 51)

Arthur (1999) agreed that language plays an important role in the student’s ability to learn. In her study of foreign students in Canada, she noted that the student’s academic and social success depended very much on his or her ability to communicate with fellow students and others in the host culture. It is also a factor that will impact counseling relationships. Arthur further states that “A limited vocabulary from which to describe concerns and symptoms, combined with anxiety of seeking counseling assistance, may explain the embarrassment and sense of inadequacy expressed by international students who seek counseling assistance” (p. 263).

Luzio-Lockett (1998) also described similar dilemma for international students studying in Europe. She appealed for a change in helping international students in their learning when the problem is language. To her the international student is subjected to a foreign language, foreign system of education which he or she has to learn to understand while “adjusting to an educational system which, in the contemporary political climate is itself undergoing continuous change” (p. 209). The point is that language problems can be a major issue for an international student trying to succeed in an American system of education.

### Counseling Issues for International Students

The problem of dealing with a different system of education is also complicated by the fact that the foreign student has to think about the relevancy of his or her education in the home country. Wehrly, (1988) expressed the same concern when he stated that “the students are usually trying to determine how much of what they are learning is really relevant to their home culture” (p. 5). In essence while an international student is adjusting to a foreign method of learning, he or she is psychologically addressing the issue of practical application of the acquired knowledge.

Unfamiliar system of education is a challenge for an international student. When the style and the language of learning are both foreign, the learner finds himself or herself in serious emotional problems because of stress that result from the pressure for success while dealing with the unknown in terms of culture and language (Chen 1999; Merta et al, 1992; Mori, 2000). In other words the pressure to succeed is complicated by language deficiency and unfamiliar style of learning.

#### *Political Crisis at Home*

Tim (Case study #4), left home when everything was fine. His family members had good jobs and were able to finance his education in the USA. He left home hoping to return and find it the way it was when he left. He had no reason to anticipate a crisis like the Gulf War, which cut off his support and communication with his family. He found himself in a serious dilemma that he

## Counseling Issues for International Students

was totally unprepared to address. War or political unrest in a student's home country can be a devastating experience and a source of serious anxiety, especially when family and financial support are lost (Council of Graduate Students in the US, 1991; Burak, 1987). The matter is complicated by the fact that everything happens so unexpectedly and hits a student who is already dealing with academic pressure in a foreign environment. Communication breakdown with the family is in itself a serious source of psychological anguish. When it is coupled with financial problems, the issue can become too overwhelming for a student who may have no one to provide any form of support.

War or political unrest can cause other problems for the student.

Sometimes the political change involves a change of relationship between the student's country and the United States. In this case the student may be identified with a country considered an enemy of the United States (Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1991). Fear of repercussions may keep the students isolated and unable to share deep hurts. Meanwhile the demands of maintaining academic load of study to maintain student status remain unchanged (Oropeza et al, 1991). In some cases the student may actually experience prejudice for being from a country considered an enemy.

In the case of Tim, he was forced to drop out of school to find a way to survive. Dropping out of school meant giving up a life time dream. Education

### Counseling Issues for International Students

was the reason the student traveled to the foreign land. Inability to complete his or her academic goals can also devastate the student as it is another significant loss. Take for example the case of Rita (Case study #3). Though not due to war or political unrest, her inability to complete her education was devastating enough to force her to live in isolation even up to the present time. All these losses can render the student unable to cope with the grief while dealing with cultural adjustment (Council of Graduate Students in the US, 1991).

#### *Death and/or Serious Illness at Home*

Students leave their countries and families to study abroad with the expectation of returning to the same home and the same people they left behind. That was the case for Lydia (Case Study #6). She left home hoping to return and celebrate her accomplishments with her whole family. Losing her uncle and her brother meant also that she lost her dream to some day celebrate her achievements with her family. The situation was devastating. News about death and serious illness in the family come as a shock. The student may feel guilty for being away from the family at such a difficult time (Burak, 1987; Emougu, 1985; Naughton & Ed, 1985). Though it was not the case for Rita, for some students death of family members could mean a loss of financial support (Burak, 1985; Naughton et al, 1985).

### Counseling Issues for International Students

Grieving is a painful process for anyone. But when it is coupled with all the complications of being in a foreign country and separated from loved ones while trying to adjust in a new culture it becomes overwhelming and can create serious crisis for the individual. Critically important is the fact that the international may not think of sharing these personal problems with a counselor (Sandhu et al, 1991; Werhly, 1988). Meanwhile the pressure of studies and the need to maintain good grades continue to increase the level of stress for the foreign student.

Inability to share problems with others means that the professors may have no way of understanding the dilemma of the grieving student. Any sign of failure academically may lead the professor to conclude that the particular student is not applying necessary effort. The student may in turn interpret the professor's attitude as insensitive and uncaring. One can see how this can complicate the situation and make life unbearable for the international student. Without help in dealing with grief the student may not have a way of addressing the issue. Care providers must think about the issue of grief and possibility that the student may be experiencing without verbalizing to anyone.

#### *Culture Shock*

Silva-Netto (1992) defines culture as “the learned and shared system of meanings used by the cultural participants to respond to situations, to create

## Counseling Issues for International Students

environments, to define roles, to design goals, to establish boundaries, to structure relationships, to interpret social behaviors, to facilitate communications, to generate decisions and actions, and to engage in multifarious human activities” (p. 137). Augsburger (1986) defines culture in terms of values. To him “Culture integrate themselves around a central cluster of values” (p. 76). He sees the same values as taking “the form of institutions, structure, and political establishments” (p. 76).

Students from other countries bring their cultural values that are rooted in structures and forms foreign to those in the host culture. They have a way of understanding relationships, expectations of roles, communications and many other expectations in life (Fernandez, 1988; Foust Ed., 1981; Komiya & Ellis, 2001). Their cultural upbringing informs them about life and how to interpret and respond to difference circumstances. When their cultural value systems conflict with the foreign culture the result can be psychological pain and confusion (Abe & Zane, 1990; Gilton, 1994; Jackson, 1974). This is because survival in the new culture requires the student to make rapid adjustments so that he or she can fit into the society. According to Arthur, “The need for rapid understanding and demonstration of appropriate role behavior in the host culture may be the source of considerable stress, resulting in identity diffusion and role conflict...” (p. 264).

## Counseling Issues for International Students

Sometimes the process of adjusting to a new culture means dying to the culture of origin. “The familiar culture must die in the sojourner, and the process of dying is multiphasic. Denial, anger, negotiation, and acceptance form some of the phases of adjustment a sojourner must experience in order to adapt to a new culture” (York, 1994, p. 48). The experience can be painful and complicated for the sojourner.

Foreign students’ lives are not limited to the classroom. They have to adjust to a foreign life style which includes foreign foods, climate, cultural norms and expectations regarding relationships (More, 1987; Mark 1987). How a student responds to the experience of being in a foreign culture can have serious effect on his or her ability to perform academically. According to Taft (as cited in Merta, Stringham & Pontrotto, 1988) “Culture shock is the feeling of impotence on the part of the stranger who cannot deal competently with his (her) environment owing to unfamiliarity with cognitive aspects of the culture and inability to perform the necessary role-playing skills” (p. 242). In essence culture shock results in the sojourner’s inability to reconcile the norms of the new culture and that of the original culture.

According to Hunter and Whitten (as cited in Gilton, 1994), “Culture shock is ‘a common psychological response to exposure to an unfamiliar culture [which] is characterized by disorientation, heightened anxiety, and more rarely by



## Counseling Issues for International Students

depressed or paranoid behavior” (p. 54). Gilton (1994) further states that “Culture shock occurs when a person in a new culture finds that the unwritten rules that worked at home culture no longer work” (pp. 54-55). Fernandez described culture shock in terms of its unpredictability. He stated that “The outstanding features of culture shock include the inability to make any sense out of the behavior of others or to predict what they will say or do” (p. 158).

Experience of culture shock may include fatigue, burn outs, disorientation, and feelings of helplessness (Snow, 1997; Fernandez, 1988, Gilton, 1994). Arthur (1997) sees culture shock manifesting itself “in psychological symptoms such as depression, social withdrawals, academic problems, loneliness, hostility towards host culture members, or psychological reactions such as insomnia or vague physical symptoms” (p. 265). Culture shock in this research refers to the experience of one feeling helpless and hopeless in trying to adjust in a new culture. In this sense the feelings of helplessness and hopelessness describes the intensity which distinguishes culture shock from the normal experience of cultural adjustment in a foreign land.

Gilton (1994) described three phases of culture shock. One is the euphoric state in which the sojourner is first introduced to the new culture. In the second phase the newcomer discovers that the rules that worked in his or her culture do not work in the foreign culture. The problem in this phase is that the sojourner

## Counseling Issues for International Students

has not learned the new rules yet. The sojourner begins to develop objectivity, in the third phase, in his or her attitude towards the foreign culture. At this stage he or she can see advantages and disadvantages of the new culture. The degrees of such an experience differ according to the individual's ability to cope and availability of support system.

Arthur (1997) reflected the same stages when she summarized U-curve experience. She stated that "Stages progress from initial excitement and optimism about encountering a new culture, a shift toward the bottom of the U-curve to reflect difficulties with cultural differences and resulting negative affect, and the later stage of recovery as strategies for managing in the host culture are mastered" (p. 263). While U-Curve theory was seen, in this study, as inadequate it is important to note that students do experience different level of stress at different times during their cultural adjustment.

In providing counseling help to the foreign students it is important to understand that adjustment process takes a student through different stages in life experiences. Thus the counselor needs to take into account the reality that the need of each student will differ depending on the stage she or he is at the time service is provided. However, as Ward et al (1998) found these stages do not always apply the same way with each student. Therefore it is important that the counselor treat each case uniquely.

### Counseling Issues for International Students

The effect of culture shock can be devastating and may result in serious psychological and physical symptoms, which may seriously interfere with the student's ability to function academically and socially (Moore, 1987; Oropeza, Fitzgibbon & Baron, 1991). Jackson (1974) observed how serious culture shock can affect the individual. He stated "But culture shock strikes its victims so hard that it almost seems incurable; 'Wonder Pills' have little effect against what Cousins calls 'compassion fatigue,' a malady of the spirit upsetting the moral and mental equilibrium of its victims. The only sure cure for such a person appears to be a trip home, either on leave or permanently" (p. 235). It is noteworthy that Jackson is not advocating a mandate to send home anyone experiencing serious problems adjusting to a new culture. His purpose in this statement is to describe the magnitude of the problem of culture shock as experienced by the foreigners.

Dan, (case study #2) is a good example of such serious symptoms of culture shock. He was doing well in school, had a good job and almost a free room and board. These were commodities that any international student will cherish in an American college. And yet in spite of all these privileges he was not able to cope and almost lost everything. It is noteworthy that he got well only after spending time with his family and enjoying that family support. Obviously, absence of family support and familiar environment made his cultural adjustment

### Counseling Issues for International Students

unbearable to the point that he developed serious psychological problems.

Not only did the family provide support for Dan. They talked about home, prepared familiar food and simply allowed him to enjoy the stories and the experiences familiar to him from the past. The experience was therapeutic enough that over six months later he was back to normal and able to concentrate on his studies and job. His psychological and physical ailments resulted from inability to cope with the foreign culture and environment. A few months with the family resulted in him retuning back to school and able to function normal.

#### *Summary*

Pastoral care and counseling professionals seeking to help students with their spiritual, social, psychological and emotional problems must learn to address issues of cultural adjustment affecting the students who are seeking to adjust to the new culture. Adjustment issues that can affect the student in the foreign country include cultural attitude towards counseling, academic expectations, different approach to learning, political crisis at home, death or serious illness at home and culture shock. Pastoral care provider must address these issues in order to help the foreign students maximize their stay in the host country.

## Counseling Issues for International Students

## Chapter 5

## Reverse Culture Shock and Re-entry Issues

Adjustment for the student is not limited to the foreign country. In this chapter I will demonstrate that when students return to their home countries, they face yet another adjustment that is even more challenging than the adjustment in the foreign country. Discussion in this chapter will include factors that complicate readjustment process as students return and reintegrates into the culture of origin.

When students study overseas they undergo changes that eventually affects how they adjust to their home countries. Pai (1997) acknowledges the importance of reverse culture shock by stating that “For returnees, the major tasks may be making a reentry adjustment; for their home countries, the challenge may be dealing with the impacts (political, social, economical, technical, educational, etc) posed by the returnees. Among all types of returnees, international students and their reentry require particular attention” (p. 2). Students returning to their home countries do face major adjustment challenges and the pastoral care providers and counselors must address.

Americans, who study or spend time overseas, also, become victims of reverse culture shock (Gaw, 1995, Huff, 2001). Thus, the issue is universal in the sense that it affects not only students coming to USA, but also Americans going

### Counseling Issues for International Students

overseas (Hogan, 1983; Jackson, 1974). Hogan (1983) described the dilemma faced by Americans who return after a period of time overseas. To him “the returnee must re-arrange with his/her education or profession, peers, and family.” The reason is that “An unsuccessful reentry may pass from euphoria to alienation and rejection leading to either geographic or psychological expatriation” (p. 14).

The experience can be so severe that some end up choosing to leave their home and return to the foreign country (Hansel, 1993; Hogan 1983). The fact that some find it necessary to return to the host country indicates the severity of the problem and the need for the profession of pastoral care and counseling to take it seriously and prepare counselors to address it. According to Hogan (1983) unsuccessful reentry is the reason why the sojourners feel devastated enough to want to return to the host country. Before discussing reasons for the reverse culture shock or reentry it important to define what is meant by “reverse culture shock”.

#### *Reverse Culture Shock Defined*

Huntsberger (1989) defines Reentry as “the experience of a person going home after academic training and adjustment to changes within oneself and changes at home” (p. 6). After years of hard work and a long process of learning, the student has to say good-bye and return to the country of origin. Perhaps it should be a happy experience for one returning home to family, friends and

## Counseling Issues for International Students

familiar culture. The reality is that it is not an easy experience. Research indicate that students returning home after years of study abroad encounter another long process of adjustment, more difficult than the adjustment to the foreign country (Marks, 1987; Isa, 2000).

Arthur (1997) suggested that international students “may enter another period of cultural transition as they face discrepancy between their personal learning and the degree of change in their relationships and other living conditions in their home countries” (p. 264). According to Frazee (1997) sojourners who adjust well in a foreign country face more problems in adjusting at home. The positive experience overseas becomes the reason for difficulty in adjusting to the culture of origin.

According to Huff (2001), reverse culture shock “results from the psychological and psychosomatic consequences of the readjustment process to the primary culture” (p. 246). This definition acknowledges the fact that reverse culture shock can cause serious emotional issues that are easily manifested in physical as well as psychological pain. Betina (1993) did a study on returnees from India and found that some experienced adjustment problems even years after their return home.

Huff (2001) discussed variables related to re-entry. One is that the length of time one stays at home country after returning from overseas will lessen the

## Counseling Issues for International Students

severity of the culture shock experience. Secondly, the younger the returning student the easier it is for him or her to adjust to the culture of origin. Thirdly, lack of social support can complicate the returnee's readjustment to the culture of origin.

Foust et al (1981) described issues of reentry in four different categories. First he classified personal issues as one category. He saw the psychological, emotional and physical stresses that one encounters during adjustment to own culture as belonging to this category. Other factors he included in the same category are identity crisis, insecurity, uncertainty about education and career plans, professional frustrations, and lost of the benefits of leaving abroad.

Secondly, he discussed what he considered social issues, which may include relational issues and acceptable behavior. Complications occur when the sojourner encounters conflict between that which he or she learned and internalized abroad and what the culture of origin considers acceptable. In this case the acquired behavior may be in conflict with the acceptable rules of contact.

Such a conflict can cause stress for the returnee and the people in the home culture (Pai, 1997). Other factors included in this category are changed behavior, feelings of isolation and alienation, boredom, superiority complex on the bases of having traveled overseas, jealousy, inability to integrate and resentment.



### Counseling Issues for International Students

The third is cultural issues and concerns, which addresses how the returnee relates to the culture of origin. In this category he describes the issues of objectivity and criticism of the returnee's home culture. In other words to what extent is the student objective in criticizing his or her culture? Secondly, to what extent is the returning student informed and appreciative of his culture and country? Other issues include feeling of alienation, problems in adjusting to educational system at home and feelings of frustrations due to limitation in being able to affect change in society.

The fourth issues are categorized as political. The returnee may return home only to find political changes that are unfavorable to him or her. The political climate may conflict with the view of the returnee. In some situations, the former student will experience a sense of dissatisfaction with home country compared to the host country. The returning sojourner may find that he or she has developed international outlook that will create a sense of dissatisfaction if the same outlook is not shared by the foreign policies and international relations of his or her home country.

From above discussion it is clear that reverse culture shock is an experience that affects returning student in variety of ways. It is also an experience resulting from a conflict between home culture and what one acquires

### Counseling Issues for International Students

in terms of culture, experience, knowledge and worldview in the foreign land. In order to address the issue, it is important to understand the factors that cause students to undergo such negative experiences upon returning home. What are the factors that cause a returning student to experience such difficult time in making adjustment to his or her home country? Research indicates that there are several factors.

#### *Causative Factors of Reverse Culture Shock*

##### *Personal Changes in the Student's Life*

Isa (2002) did a study on wives of Japanese men who worked in the United States and then later returned home to settle. While the women did not necessarily represent returning students, the fact that the study addressed issues of reentry after a length of stay overseas make some of the experiences relevant to those of returning students. The study, which focused on adjustment in terms of space and time, revealed that returning Japanese women found it very difficult to adjust to their culture of origin. Upon their return, they discovered that what was familiar culture when they left home was no longer familiar, as they had gotten used to another culture whose view of space and time differed from that of the Japanese.

Readjustment to Japanese customs and life style proved to be a very

## Counseling Issues for International Students

difficult process simply because of unconscious acculturation that took place during their residency overseas. While residing in the USA, they became accustomed to free space, driving any time they chose and maintaining privacy. Back in Japan the crowded condition of the cities, slow pace of using public transportation and small space in their homes took a significant meaning and made it very uncomfortable for them to adjust. According to the study, many of the women experienced depression and some sought treatment for emotional distress.

Such experience of inability to cope with adjustment in one's own culture of origin is not unique to women who find themselves having to move overseas due to their husbands' job transfers. The same can be said of students returning home after study overseas. Wilson (1993) did a study of returnees from Australia, Ecuador, Norway and Sweden. On personal change an overwhelming number of participants indicated that they experienced significant changes and continued to feel torn between home country and the host country. At least one found himself calling the host families in the United States and referring to them as parents. The experience was so internalized that he felt a sense of family affiliation in the foreign country.

When the student lands in a new country, the experience is that of being in

## Counseling Issues for International Students

a strange environment and culture. This initial experience causes the student to idealize home where everything is normal, unlike the hosting country where everything appears strange and different. In the mind of the sojourner, home becomes the ideal place and as a result, he or she begins to develop expectations that may not be realistic (Institute of International Education, 1998; Huxur et al, 1996; Gaw, 1995). Frazee (1997) suggested that over a period of time the same student begins to adjust, though sometimes unconsciously, while the idealization of home country continue to develop in his or her mind.

While idealization of home is taking place in the student's mind, life styles in the foreign country become a part of his or her experiences and adjustments (Betina, 1993; Ward, 1999; Frazee, 1997). This process of acculturation takes a long period of time in which the student goes through many stages (Fernandez, 1988). The student gets used to some of the conveniences that may not available at home country. For example availability of telephones, ownership of a vehicle, ability to go to a store any time and many other conveniences that may not be a part of the student's culture at home. Practically the individual is adjusting and getting used to the new culture, but mentally the idea of home being the norm continues to develop (Isa, 2002; Lerstrom, 1995; Barbian, 2002; Hayes & Lin, 1994).

### Counseling Issues for International Students

Studies indicate that foreign students do better psychologically and socially when they identify with the host country (Ward and Rana-Deuba, 1999). According to Foust et al (1981) social satisfaction in relationships is key to overall adjustment in the foreign country. The reason is that “Satisfaction relationships facilitate access to information that is needed to live in the new culture” (Foust et al, 1981, p. 9). Ward and Rana-Deuba (1999) further stated, “For socio-cultural adaptation, by contrast, host national identification functions as the primary influence on the adjective outcome and clearly is linked with a reduction in social difficulties” (p. 435).

More studies indicate also that most international students prefer relationship with host nationals than with other foreign students (Hayes and Heng-Hue, 1994). This preference may mean that during their study in the foreign country the students will invest in friendship relationships with the students from the hosting nation. Combination of these two factors, the positive effect and the preference of foreign students to relate to the host culture, means that most international students will bond relationships with the people from the host country. Ironically, this experience has the opposite effect during reentry process, which means ending these relationships.

Adjusting well to the foreign culture is necessary to the student. However

## Counseling Issues for International Students

research suggests that individuals who adapt well in a foreign culture have the most difficulties in readjustment back home (Frazee, 1997). Hogan (1983) explained that bad experience overseas can make returning home a relief which may contribute to an easier adjustment. He goes on to suggest that “If, on the other hand the student was ultimately very gratified with his/her foreign experience, reentry may mean the abrupt removal of potent re-enforcers” (p. 18). The reality is that the process of adjusting to the new culture requires personal changes as a necessary process of acculturation (Frazee, 1997). Such changes affect ones way of thinking and interpreting reality. The reason is that the “development of an open mind, receptive to different ideas, concepts and behaviors, is crucial to success in an intercultural situation” (Foust et al p. 17).

While it is healthy for the sojourner to broaden his or her understanding, such a process of adopting new concepts will impact the returnee’s thinking for the new concepts become a part of his or her life. This suggests that adjustment and readjustment process for an international is a complicated process. One has to make every effort to adjust in the foreign country and then make even greater efforts to readjust to the culture of origin. In a sense, the returnee goes home unaware that he or she has become a foreigner to the home culture (Pusch and Loewenthal, 1988). Other studies, however, indicate that for students with

## Counseling Issues for International Students

multiple reentry experiences, readjustment back home is much more smoother than those reentering for the first time (Wilson, 1993).

Personal changes can lead to identity crises for the returning individual. Isogai et al. (1999) discussed the issue as related to the returning Japanese students after study in the United States of America. Her finding indicated that many Japanese find themselves being identified with Americans when they return home. But in America they are identified as Japanese. She states, “After a while, the returnee feels rejected by both cultures. Denying one of the other culture is painful because it feels like denial of a part of one’s own identity” (p. 497).

People’s personalities and behaviors are affected by the attitudes of the people around them. Relationships means interacting with and learning different world views from the people with whom we relate. Thus, Isogai et al, 1999, further states “Individuals who grow up in two or more cultures are, therefore, likely to acquire multiple sets of behaviors to elicit desired image...”(page 499). The identity crisis is well expressed by Horoiwa (1986, as cited in Isogai et al, 1990, p. 497):

For example, a simple question such as, “Where are you from?” can be disturbing to the returnee. Furthermore, the issue of changing behaviors add another element to their

## Counseling Issues for International Students

struggle with identity. “By pouring beer for a man, am I no longer an independent woman?” “By expressing my agreement with a group when I disagree deep down inside, have I become a hypocrite?” Questions such as these can trigger identity issues for many people who equate behavior with core identity.

If, as suggested above, a returning student upon arriving home finds that he or she is viewed as a stranger at home culture, the experience can be devastating. The student’s need to belong is seriously challenged and the result can be very painful. Lack of prior preparation can render the returning individual helpless and unable to cope with the challenge. Wilson (1993) found that for returning Norwegians and Swedes the issue of identity is important. He suggests that the returnees can cope by identifying themselves as intercultural.

The challenge of returning home is more than giving up all the conveniences and material possessions to which one becomes accustomed. It involves a complicated mental adjustment from the newly adopted to the original pattern of thinking (Huxur et al, 1996). The issue becomes more challenging by the fact that the returning individual is not aware of the changes that take place in his or her life and may find out upon returning home. A returning student crosses



### Counseling Issues for International Students

two cultural bridges, one that surround the foreign culture and one that surround the culture of origin (Marks, 1987). The sojourner is normally aware of the adjustments necessary in the foreign culture. The home culture adjustment is not natural and comes as a surprise for the returning individual (Huxur et al, 1996).

The excitement of returning home, or overly optimistic expectations (Marks, 1987), clouds the student's need to address these changes before the time approaches for departure from the host country. Unlike the departure from home, this adjustment is final. The student is saying good-bye to everything he or she has come to appreciate and to which he has become accustomed. According to Pusch and Loewental (1988) it is a process that will never end "in the sense that they are unable to become part of the home culture in a way that they were before departing. They may and often do continue searching for ways to extend or recreate the overseas experience and/or ways to use the competencies they have acquired by living in another country and culture, possibly with little success" (p. 7). The returning student need to understand that going overseas changed his or her life and that going home will mean a life long process of adjustment.

#### *Attitude and Expectations at Home*

Expectations and attitudes from friends and family pose another challenge to the returning students seeking to adjust in his or her home culture. In his study

## Counseling Issues for International Students

of returning high school students Wilson (1993) noted that some students felt their families and friends considered them bragging when they tried to share about their experience overseas. The wives of Japanese corporate sojourners reported the same experience when they returned to Japan (Isa, 2000). Family and friends at home are not able to identify with the student's experiences overseas (Marks, 1987). Hence the misunderstanding that the student is bragging when he or she tries to share the overseas experience.

The problem goes deeper as the student's newly developed attitudes and independence become obvious. People at home do not expect the returnee to have changed (Pusch and Lowewenthal, 1988). The result is a confrontation between the student's changed perspectives on issues and family's traditional expectations (Fourst, Ed. 1981). While the host country may be tolerant and understanding of the sojourner because of the fact that he or she is a foreigner in process of adjustment, "People at home are not likely to be so tolerant, and will exert a great deal of pressured on the returnee to conform. The foreigner is far too important to be 'lost' to foreign influence" (Pusch and Loewental, 1988, p. 7). The returnee is then confronted with the unexpected pressure from family. Such a pressure can prove to be a source of stress (Fourst, Ed., 1981). Attitudes and expectation at home are some of the factors that create culture shock experience for the returning

## Counseling Issues for International Students

sojourner. He or she has to find a way to adjust to home culture while dealing with family pressure.

*Attitude Towards Returning Home*

Pai (1997) did a study on Taiwanese students who returned home after at least one year study in the USA. The purpose was “to examine relationships among 11 selected factors and reentry difficulty, life satisfaction, psychological well-being of Taiwanese student returnees from the United States” (p. 2). The study concluded by noting several factors that had negative effects on reentry process.

First, female students experience more difficulties than the male students. Secondly the students who did not consider returning home as a priority, found that adjusting to home culture was a difficult experience. Thirdly, those who returned simply because of expectations by family or lack of job opportunities in the foreign country also experienced more problems in adjusting to their country of origin.

On the other hand those who went overseas, knowing for sure that staying in the foreign country was not an option had little difficulty adjusting upon returning to their home countries. It was the same for those whose return was a result of personal preference. Their adjustment was much easier. This study suggested that a student whose plan to go home is clear from the beginning have

### Counseling Issues for International Students

enough time to prepare during the course of studying overseas. Such preparation makes reentry to home culture much easier.

In regard to satisfaction the study concluded that personal preference in returning home, treatment at home country, satisfaction with overseas experience and positive attitude towards job market at home had significant positive effects on the adjustment process of the returnees. If a student returned home because he or she considered it a priority and a positive decision, that student experienced much more satisfaction upon returning to his or her home country.

On psychological well-being the study concluded that students, who return because they knew from the beginning that staying was not an option and that returning was personal preference and that treatment at home was a welcoming experience, had a high level of satisfaction. It did not matter if the student returned because of government sponsorship or simply because he or she preferred working at home culture. The idea of going overseas with a clear sense of returning home made it much easier for the returning student to experience a sense of psychological satisfaction.

The point is that students who view their return negatively will find it much more difficult to adjust after returning from study overseas. Positive attitude and expectations on the other hand made it possible for the returning

### Counseling Issues for International Students

student to adjust well and find satisfaction upon returning home. This demonstrates the need to help returning students prepare mentally and emotionally before traveling back to their countries of origin. It suggests also that it is important to begin reentry preparation from the beginning of study overseas. This will give the returning student a chance to anticipate the challenges and prepare so that nothing comes as surprise.

#### *Giving Up New Relationships*

One way in which students adjust in the foreign country is by forming friendships with others from the host country and other countries (Ward and Rana-Deuba, 1999). The study has already demonstrated from research that during the time of cultural adjustment, students prefer social contact with the host country (Hayes & Lin, 1994). Some develop academic relationships with their professors. Others find American host families who adopt them. Over the years These relationships can be strong and the attachment very real. Many times the student is not aware of the depth of the bond within the relationships.

Graduation comes and the student has to face separation from the people with whom he or she has bonded in one way or another. Again the separation is not as temporary as it was when he left home. It is a final separation from people with significant impact in the life of the student. Hence, another grieving process. Without any help and proper preparation the process can prove to be very difficult

## Counseling Issues for International Students

for the returnee. According to Pusch and Loewenthal (1988), “Grief work has to be completed before the returnee can get on with becoming part of the home culture, but there will probably always be feelings of nostalgia for the sojourn abroad” (p. 7). Among the students Wilson (1993, pp. 475-476) studied, from Ecuador, one of the students wrote and stated:

I cried for two months. I just loved my (American) family. I think about my family every day. It was really hard. I was happy to see my family and friends here, but part of my heart is in Upper Peninsula (Michigan). Every time I talk to them, it seems like yesterday.

The quotation above indicates the extent to which foreign students can bond with the American families or friends. When the time comes to return home giving up these bonds of relationships can prove to be very challenging for the individual returning home after years of study overseas. This is one of the areas of concern for any professional providing counseling service to international students. The returning individual needs help to prepare for the time he or she has to say goodbye to the people who have become a part of his or her life. Lack of good preparation can leave the student vulnerable to unexpected stress.

## Counseling Issues for International Students

*Exposure to and Appreciation of New Value Systems*

During their time of training and education the students interact with the new culture and may acquire new value systems as a result of the interaction (Huxur et al, 1996). One may find capitalism more attractive though it is not a part of his home culture. By interacting with the new culture the student may discover some problems in the value system of his or her culture. In some cases, one may find it necessary to adopt a new religion (Foust et al, 1981; Oropeza et al, 1991). Taking these ideas home can create conflict with their original cultural values. The new ideas may be totally rejected at home. The conflict leaves the student feeling lonely and isolated.

In some cases complications are intensified when changes in the life of the students involve adoption of the foreign culture and value system to the point of rejecting his or her cultural values totally. According to Foust et al (1981) such “alienated returnee reacts negatively to the home culture, criticizing its dominant values, beliefs and norms while glorifying the cultural beliefs and values in the foreign country” (p. 25). According to Triandis (1991) some may “even ‘overshoot’ and become more like the host culture than the average member of the host culture” (p. 60). The student is caught between loyalty to family and country of origin, and the newly adopted customs and norms (Oropeza et al, 1991).

### Counseling Issues for International Students

The fact that family and friends at home do not expect such double loyalty will compound emotional pressure on the returnee making the adjustment process even more challenging (Pusch and Loewenthal 1988). In this case, the returning sojourner will find it difficult to adjust to a system, which she or he has rejected whether consciously or unconsciously. Pusch and Loewenthal (1988) see the adjustment complication as a process that will not end but will get better over time. Counselors of foreign students must have this change in mind as they prepare the students to return to their home countries.

Change of value system can occur even when one is holding on to and appreciating her home culture. Betina (1993) described the experience of some of the Indian students in her study. One of them, Amrita is a good example. While studying in the USA she saw many pitfalls in the American culture. Some of the pitfalls included welfare system, abortion laws and many others. She was aware that while she rejected some of the value system in the USA, she knew also that she had adopted some that she considered acceptable.

Fully aware of the cultural difference in India she went home prepared to submit to her original customs and norms, and even went as far as accepting an arranged marriage. However, even such preparedness did not exempt her from experiencing frustrations. One of the complaints was the fact that she was always the one to make concessions to the family and to her husband. Her values did not



### Counseling Issues for International Students

seem important to the rest of the family members. The challenge for her was finding a balance between the values she adopted overseas and remaining in submission to the cultural expectations at home. In some cases her integrity was challenged as she tried to hold to the values she acquired in the foreign country and still remain submissive to the demands of her home culture.

#### *Environmental Changes at Home*

A returning student expects to find the same home and the same people he or she left years ago (Institute of International Education, 1998). The reality is that while the student is undergoing changes overseas, home does not stay the same either. According to Marks (1987) the returning international student needs to remember that he or she is going home “not as the same individual who left, but as one who is returning to a culture that is changing even as the individual is changing” (p. 122). A returnee from Russia stated, “Encountering unexpected changes may be stressful and make it difficult for you to find a new niche and to realize your plans” (Institute of International Education, 1998, p. 35).

According to Betina (1993) the returning students often find that relationship with friends have changed, sometimes dramatically. In her study of returnees from India, she found that “a more common pattern was found, even among those student who returned to the same city they left, that their former circle of classmates was not longer around” (p. 24). Friends may have moved or

## Counseling Issues for International Students

gotten married and thus establishing other bonds of relationships (Betina, 1993; Lerstrom, 1995). In some cases students may return only to find a different political climate due to change in government which may mean the support one expected from the former government is no longer there (Foust et al, 1981, Lerstrom, 1995).

Adjustment to these changes becomes complicated when the returning sojourner does not expect to deal with them and therefore is not prepared psychologically. Raschio, (1987), found out that many students expected their family and friends to take interest in their experience, but were “shocked to find that only rarely was the entire family or full circle of friends able or willing to listen” (p. 158). In his research Raschio (1987) further discovered that this experience resulted in the students feeling rejected.

Changes at home means that the returning students find themselves dealing with double loses. They lose relationships with the host country and then they find that the home they knew before traveling overseas is not the same. What they knew before departure is also lost. This experience is well expressed by a Canadian students who returned and was surprised by the reverse culture shock he found himself having to confront. “When our gaze revealed the home returned to as not the one fondly remembered, we realized we had lost not only

## Counseling Issues for International Students

our American existence, but our former Canadian existence” (Huxur et al., 1996, p. 12).

The experience is a three way grieving process. The student grieves when he or she says goodbye to home country. Leaving the foreign country constitutes another experience of grief. To his or her surprise upon arriving home, the home he or she left is no longer there. Hence, the third phase of grief, which can be more complicated because it is unnatural and the sojourner does not expect.

It is noteworthy that the above example refers to a student from a country like Canada, which is so close geographically and culturally to the USA. The experience can be much more difficult for the student returning to a country with greater geographical distance and cultural difference than that in the USA. “The greater the differences, the greater the re-acculturation difficulty for the student. The larger the culture gap, the greater the stress in traversing it in either direction” (Institute of International Education, 1998, p. 35). For a returning international student going home can be a double edge grieving process. There is the loss of the relationship with the host country and then the loss of the home he or she knew before departure to the foreign country.

*Applying Acquired Academic Knowledge*

The first challenge is student’s ability to apply acquired knowledge and trying to function without academic and technical support which is available

## Counseling Issues for International Students

in the USA. Academic achievements in the foreign culture involve peers and professors who help provide support and direction to the student (Spencer-Rogers, 2000). Suddenly, the time comes when these relationships come to an end. Going home may mean losing source of encouragement and challenge for excellence in the particular field of study. For some it may mean going to function alone without others of the same educational background. According to Fouad (1991) “The infrastructure that supports research in the United States may not exist in their home culture. This may include secretaries, lab assistants and technicians, capital equipment, and smooth mechanism to order supplies and materials” (p. 69).

This means that one can get all the training and education but return less prepared to function effectively in the home country. While education in the United States expands the student’s knowledge and understanding in his or her field it also exposes the sojourner to technical and other professional help that may not be available in the home country. Lack of preparation to transfer the same knowledge without all the amenities available in the foreign country can create stress for the returning individual.

Secondly, there is the challenge of finding employment opportunities at home country. In her study of returnees from India, Betina (1993) discovered that the students considered “finding a job upon their return was a top priority

## Counseling Issues for International Students

even among those who had no immediate need for an income” (p. 21). The returnees reported that finding a job was “difficult, frustrating and disappointing” (p. 21). In other words education and training overseas does not guarantee employment at home.

Difficulty in finding appropriate job after hard work of studying in the foreign country can complicate the reentry process especially for the students who return home with high expectations for employment (Huxur et al, 1996). It is a source of stress for a student to discover that in spite of all the learning overseas, he or she discover that jobs are not as available as one expected. “Graduates who have difficulty finding an appropriate job upon their return can be expected to experience more stressful re-entry process than those who return to a past position, or to a promotion, or who are able to make new start in a challenging job” (Institute of International Education, 1998, p. 36).

Spencer-Rogers (2000) did a study on career needs for international students. She categorized the foreign student into two groups. The US-focused students represented those who reported a plan to stay in the USA upon the completion of their studies. Those who planned to return to their country of origin were considered return-focused. Of the 227 students who participated in the study 77% indicated the need for counseling advice on career planning. The study also revealed that while some students may choose to reside and seek

### Counseling Issues for International Students

employment in the United States, the majority, between fifty-five and seventy percent do return home eventually. This makes it important to emphasize career development in counseling internationals on reentry issues.

The 227 students surveyed indicated that the greatest career concern included immigration rules on jobs for international students, need for advisory on career plans and about job market in America. Overall the study concluded that international students ranked work experience, job search skills and career development at the top of their concerns. This means that vocational counseling is of great importance to the returning international students.

In providing pastoral care and counseling for international students, one must consider the issues related to reentry for those returning overseas. The changes that must take place while the student is abroad will affect how he or she adjusts to the country of origin. While studying overseas the individual adopts to a new culture, acquires new perspective or worldview and becomes accustomed to the foreign value system. Meanwhile changes at home means that the same student will not return to the same home and culture.

The student's learning means getting used to professional help and availability of technical and other support that may not be available in the country of origin. During the period of study overseas the student also bonds with friends and families who become a part of the student's life. Returning home means

### Counseling Issues for International Students

giving up all these relationships and experiences that have great impact in the life of the returning individual going back to his or her country of origin. In reality a student going to study overseas must go through adjustment process from the time of departure from home to the time he or she returns. The experience of reentering into one's home culture creates challenges that those seeking to help international students must address. This is one of the challenges that make providing pastoral care and counseling to foreign students a unique experience requiring unique approach to the counseling process.

#### *Summary*

Returning home after years of studies overseas can be a challenge for the sojourners. Factors that make reentry difficult for the student include personal changes, attitude and expectations at home, attitude towards returning home, giving up new relationships and exposure to and appreciation of new value system, environmental changes at home and application of knowledge acquired overseas. These factors contribute to the student's difficulty in adjustment at home country.

## Counseling Issues for International Students

## Chapter 6

Unique Challenges in Providing Pastoral Care and Counseling to  
International Students

Providing pastoral care and counseling for international students is uniquely challenging. The argument in this chapter is that those seeking to minister to foreign learners in universities and colleges must face some unique challenges. The intention is to demonstrate that providing pastoral care and counseling to foreign students calls for a unique preparation on the part of the care provider.

Siegel (1991) raised a series of questions that any professional seeking to provide counseling service to an international student need to consider: “What assists us in understanding the dilemmas of identity and role conflicts that international students face in confronting the values of a new society? Does our experience form of counseling interventions expand or take issue with a particular theoretical finding? Do we find interconnections between theory and practice?” (p. 72).

Although these questions were raised in the context of general counseling, they are applicable to pastoral counseling as well. Issues of identity, adjustment in a new culture and the need for proper intervention are important in providing pastoral care and counseling to foreign students (Luzio-Lockett, A, 1998; Komiya



## Counseling Issues for International Students

L & Ells, T, 2001; Watkins, C 2001). The questions are intended to challenge counseling professionals to think and develop effective interventions for students from backgrounds that are different from the dominant or local culture. The cultures represented by international students remain a formidable challenge to the counseling profession.

In the last two chapters the discussion was on counseling issues related to entering a foreign culture as well as reentering the culture of origin. The focus of this chapter is the uniqueness and the challenge of applying pastoral care and counseling to those from other countries seeking to study in the USA. First it is important to understand that providing pastoral care to foreign students is a part of multicultural challenge that counseling professionals need to address. Counseling disciplines must learn to incorporate multiculturalism in their training. This constitutes a challenge to the traditional approach to counseling.

*A Challenge to Traditional Counseling Approach*

Pedersen (1991) made a strong statement regarding the need to incorporate multicultural issues in preparing professional counselors. “The world is changing quickly. Multicultural issues have suddenly become critically important. Disparities that could long be overlooked are now urgently important” (p. vii). His emphasis is that the counseling profession has waited too long to

## Counseling Issues for International Students

incorporate the subject of cultural issues in the professional training. He further saw the need to persuade counseling professionals who are skeptical to see the need and the benefits of learning to and developing skills for multicultural counseling.

The need for multicultural training for pastoral care and counseling professionals is well stated by Augsburger (1986). “The time has come for the pastoral counseling movement to function from an expanded, intercultural perspective. The counseling theories and therapies that have emerged as modes of healing and growth in each culture, useful and effective as they are in their respective locales, are too limited, too partial to serve human needs in a world community where peoples of many cultures meet, compete and relate” (p. 13). His statement reflect the complexity of dealing with cultures that are from around the world and yet have to find life meaning in a context of co-existing and relating with one another in spite of differences in world views and interpretation of reality.

The reality is that pastoral care counselors can no longer rely on traditional approach to counseling developed to address issues from the western cultural perspective. The profession must seek to adjust its method of providing counseling to the various cultures that continue to grow particularly in the United

### Counseling Issues for International Students

States. Among these cultures are the international students who represent many subcultures. Counseling needs for international students present multicultural challenges for the pastoral care and counseling professionals. Their needs require a reevaluation of the current counseling approaches and theories

In discussing counseling issues for international students, Oropeza, Fitzgibbon and Baron (1991) found that counseling needs for international students constitute challenges that are felt even on campuses. They found that mental health crisis pose the greatest challenge. They concluded that “The legal, ethical, and psychological intricacies in dealing with the emotional problems of foreign college students create demands on a variety of services including foreign students affairs offices, student health services, counseling centers, and student residence and student life services” (p. 280).

The demand created by the mental needs of the foreign students is complicated by the fact that the students come from diversity of cultures and that they are away from home. The above statement reflects the complexities of issues one faces when counseling foreign students. They also demonstrate the need to incorporate multicultural training for all counseling providers. Such integration require the profession to take into consideration the unique issues represented by the foreign students. It is a challenge to reevaluate an old custom in order to

### Counseling Issues for International Students

adopt a new approach. It forces the profession to a new way of thinking and practicing counseling.

#### *Specific Unique Challenges*

Providing counseling service to international student requires a unique approach in counseling. The reason is that the needs represented by the foreign students are different from the psychological needs experienced by clients born and raised in an American society. Several factors make it a unique experience to provide counseling to students from around the world.

To develop and apply effective methods of addressing counseling issues for international students require a clear understanding of the challenges involved. These issues include diversity of cultures, limited or lack of training for counseling professionals, cultural perceptions of counseling, diversity of religious beliefs, cultural attitude towards and interpretation of mental illness and economical realities. They represent the issues discussed in this chapter as making it a challenging experience for pastoral counselors to provide counseling services to international students. These factors are a challenge not only to individual counselors but also to counseling as a discipline.

#### *Diversity of Cultures Represented*

Providing pastoral care and counseling to a multicultural group is a formidable challenge. Lee and Richardson (1991) captured the enormity in their

## Counseling Issues for International Students

statement that “The rise of cultural pluralism has had an important impact on the counseling profession.” They further stated “Major changes in population demographic have been the impetus for the evolution of multicultural counseling as a significant discipline within the helping profession” (p. 3). Diversity of cultures is here to stay and counseling profession must address. The presence of many cultures in the USA constitute a challenge because they bring differing value systems and ways of interpreting reality that each professional cannot ignore. In essence each client requires the counselor to consider possible new approaches in the counseling process.

The implication is that each individual in these groups comes to the counseling session with unique experiences that complicate perception of issues affecting life in general. This means they represent enormous challenge, which pastoral care providers face when dealing with international students who are from diverse ethnic, racial, national and religious backgrounds. Diversity of cultures can be complicated first by the issue of Macro and Micro culture that tend to converge in one person. Second there is the issue of multiplicity of the cultures that the counselor has to address. Thirdly, there is the tendency to stereotype the students from particular countries.

In this study, the terms “Macro” and “Micro” are used relatively to describe grouping of cultures. “Macro Culture” refers to groups of cultures that

## Counseling Issues for International Students

maintain distinctive differences while they share some commonalities. The individually distinct cultures are referred to as “Micro Cultures.” The terms are relative. For example a country can be considered a Macro Culture with the ethnics considered “Micro Cultures.” At the same time one can consider a region like Asia as “Macro Culture” and the countries in the region as “Micro Cultures.”

*Convergence of macro and micro cultures*

Bogis (1979) supervised a Clinical Pastoral Education with students from different cultural backgrounds. The group included a new student from Taiwan, one priest from India, a third generation Japanese-American woman from Nebraska and two black American students, a woman from California and a man from Detroit. He observed several factors relating to complications of cultures and sub-cultures.

The Japanese-American student always considered herself an American with no foreign cultural influence. To her surprise during the CPE program she discovered that she identified with the Taiwanese student in some aspect of her cultural values and experiences. For example, in her relationship with other adults, she always saw herself as a little girl needing to grow up. She thought that was simply an issue of her personality trait. Participation in this CPE program helped her discover that the concept emanated from the oriental culture, which emphasized that she needed to respect elders and consider herself as young.

## Counseling Issues for International Students

In this case, macro culture, which is her Asian heritage enabled her to identify with the Taiwanese student who is an Asian. Her micro culture, Japanese heritage, was a part of this macro Asian culture. Though she was an American and felt that culturally she identified with the American culture, she was not totally divorced from her Japanese and Asian cultures. In a sense one can say she had two macro cultures, Asian and American.

The student was dealing with the reality that she was a part of a foreign culture, and the fact that this same foreign culture was a part of multiple sub-cultural experiences that helped shape her perception of self. Some of her Japanese experiences found identity with the other Asian experiences, which made it possible for her to identify with the Taiwanese student. The complication is that the trainee did not understand that she was a part of several cultures including the American culture, a larger oriental culture and smaller family culture. It took the CPE experience for the student to discover that three cultural values were a part of her personality.

When diversity of cultures converges into one individual's experience, complications can result especially during counseling session when one is dealing with issues of relationships and personal growth. Each cultural aspect affects the way the individual perceives issues in different circumstances. What makes it

## Counseling Issues for International Students

even more challenging is the fact that, like in the case of the Japanese American, the individual is not aware of the multiplicity of cultural heritage in his or her life.

In this one case CPE was instrumental in helping her discover the complexity of her cultural upbringing.

The study discovered also that the black students from California shared some major differences with one from Detroit. “It was with some sense of surprise, for example, that the two black students revealed to the rest that they experienced some vast differences in their own backgrounds and family values. In fact, as the group developed, it became evident that there were some major differences between the two, although, on the surface, both shared the same national heritage-that of being Americans” (p. 23). The American heritage was the macro cultural experience that the two shared in common. However the geographical separation created micro cultural experience that separated the two, though they shared the commonality of being Americans from the same black minority group.

The point is that even people who share the same nationality and the same language find themselves separated by diversity of cultural experiences. But in the case of the Japanese-American, those who think they share no cultural



## Counseling Issues for International Students

identity, may actually have much in common. The larger cultural experiences always influence the way one interprets his or her values from the sub-cultures.

The matters become more challenging when dealing with international students coming from difference countries representing different ethnic backgrounds. The pastoral care counselor faces the challenge of taking into account the identity represented from the larger culture as well as that which emanate from the sub-culture. He or she must also deal with those who are confused because they have become multicultural in their own experiences but are not aware as in the case of the Japanese American student.

*Multiplicity of cultures*

International students represent many nationalities. Each nationality comprises of diversity of ethnic groups that differ in terms of culture and world views. According to Marks (1987) there were 338,894 international students studying in 2,498 universities and colleges. Pedersen (1991) reported that “By the year 1988-1989, there were 366,354 international students from 186 nationalities” (p. 11). In 1991 407,530 international students represented 193 countries (Smolowe, 1992). Spencer-Rogers (2000) put the number of international students at 450,000 representing over 180 countries in 1995.

This number of countries represented in the foreign student population requires new thinking about counseling, for the professional counselors seeking to

### Counseling Issues for International Students

provide service for the sojourning students. While they share a commonality by the fact that they are trying to adjust during their learning in a foreign country, the reality is that their cultures differ from country to country and from one ethnic group to another. To complicate matters the fact that students from a particular country may share similar norms and customs, does not mean they all share exactly same cultural values. Individual nations have distinct ethnic groups with different cultural values (Spencer-Rogers, 2000).

While acknowledging the impossibility of training counselors to understand every country represented by students, Fouad (1991) states that the countries allowing students to come to the United States “multiplies the number of cultures that counselors may encounter particularly those in a university counseling center” (p. 67). He gives an example of one university, which, in September 1986, had a population of only 183 foreign students, and yet they represented 36 countries. Students from each of these countries may have come from diversity of ethnic groups with unique value system represented by each ethnic group.

The uniqueness, of each culture represented by the students, pauses a great challenge to any professional seeking to provide counseling services while remaining culturally sensitive. How can a counselor prepare to meet the needs of

## Counseling Issues for International Students

each student from such diversity of cultures? Each individual interprets reality and experiences according to the cultural perception instilled from childhood. Discussing heterogeneous society Silva-Netto (1992) warns that, “it is essential to look into the various culture-personality systems of the many ethnic groups which comprise that society” (p. 132). By culture-personality system he means the “human system composed of cultural determinant and cultural expressions of personality, the interrelationships of which produce a dynamically organized self-structure within the individual’s own unique adjustment to the environment, as well as that shared by the community” (p. 132).

Multiplicity of cultures is a complex issue that pastoral care counselors must address. The implication is that when a client comes for help he or she is bringing perceptions of reality influenced by culture which determines how the individual experiences and interprets issues of concern in the counseling process (Hinkle and Hinkle, 1992; Shimabukuro et al, 1999; Johanson 1992). When dealing with international students the reality is complicated by the fact that even those from the same country may represent diversity of cultures according to ethnic groups. With so many countries, each represented by culturally different ethnic groups, counseling international students is a uniquely challenging process.

Pastoral counseling must remain deliberate and creative in finding ways to meet the needs of the sojourning students. The task confronting the profession is

### Counseling Issues for International Students

how to design a counseling approach to a population of such a diverse background. Expressing the same concern Wehrly (1988) cited the fact that the international student population was on the increase and most of those entering the universities and colleges are from non-western countries. To him this rapid increase “brought the needs of these individuals to the forefront of challenges facing college and university student personnel workers” (p.4).

The fact that the university campuses feel the responsibility and the pressure to meet the counseling needs of these foreign students legitimizes the urgency for pastoral care & counseling professionals to provide their services to the same learning sojourners. It is therefore critical that pastoral care providers consider new and effective ways of meeting the counseling needs facing the international student population. The problem is how to meet needs represented by a people with differing world views and interpretation of reality. The challenge is for pastoral care to redefine its approach so as to address the issues of communicating care and counseling to clients who are foreign to the counseling process and represent cultures that are foreign to the counselor. This calls for a unique preparation on the part of the counselor.

#### *Tendency to stereotype*

One way to stereotype an international student is to treat all international students as one cultural group. Pedersen (1991) warns against such an approach

## Counseling Issues for International Students

that treats foreign students as though the only difference is between them and the American students. He stated, “There has been a tendency to confine international students to a rather narrowly defined role, isolated from their peers, when, in fact, there is probably as much difference between any two international students from different countries as between either of them and any American student” (pp. 13-14). The argument is that the professionals tend to look at the issues as representing two sides. One is the American culture and the other one is the culture of the international community. Such thinking denies the reality of the unique needs of the different cultural backgrounds that exist from student to student.

Wehrly (1988) spoke of the importance of dealing with each student as a unique individual with unique a cultural background. He states that it is “very important that counselors not stereotype the international student who comes for help” (p. 5). Developing a counseling theory appropriate for this culturally diverse student population is a problem not only for the counselors but also for those seeking to do research. Pedersen (1991) decrying lack of theoretical consistency for counseling the sojourning students says the problem is that “international students are such a diverse population, even when the same issues are researched, the findings are often contradictory” (p. 14). Stereotyping

## Counseling Issues for International Students

represent a failure to acknowledge the existence of cultural diversity among international students.

Diversity of cultures represented by the foreign student population is a challenge for any professional seeking to provide counseling to educational seekers from other countries. They represent needs and concerns that are diverse and different from the counselor who is trained to work with the American population. Their emotional and social issues are affected and sometimes caused by factors that are culturally foreign to the western counselor. The stresses they encounter are influenced by their worldviews affected by diversity of cultures and experiences. Such factors include “tradition of student’s country of origin and the openness and tolerance of the host country, and individual factors such as preparedness, self esteem, independence, emotional stability, endurance and maturity” (Huxur et al, 1996 p.7)

Another danger of stereotyping in multicultural counseling emerges from the tendency to group the students according to the country of origin. Such stereotyping according to Silva-Netto (1992) is unscientific and a product of failure to take the time and energy to do the hard work. He defines the understanding of a particular culture to mean “knowing the group-specific value systems, typical patterns of personality, social structures, systems of beliefs, legal

## Counseling Issues for International Students

codes that prescribe and proscribe behaviors, cultural goals and other cultural processes and products” (p. 136).

The problem with the above definition is that he does not explain how one can become competent in all of these cultures while dealing with a population of people with such a number of culturally diverse demographics. In other words does a counselor need to know each client’s cultural influences, value systems and their world-views in order to be effective? Obviously, it will take more than energy and willingness. Time is a factor that makes it near impossible. He is right in acknowledging the complications of the issues by stating that it takes hard work and not many have the energy to invest. The challenge for the professionals in the field is to design a practical way of addressing the problems. While stereotyping may be a sign of laziness, one cannot claim that mastery of the client’s culture is the answer. With so many cultural groups emanating from individual countries a different strategy is required.

There are many factors that must be considered when dealing with people from a particular country or ethnic group. Even those from a homogeneous society must consider the fact that “differences in value orientations are reflected in generation gaps, economic stratification, differences in religious orientations, political associations, and many other manifestations” (Silva-Netto, 1992, p. 136).

### Counseling Issues for International Students

Stereotyping of students according to countries of origin is an issue that complicates the counseling process for those desiring to provide therapy.

For foreign students to receive pastoral care and counseling help, the providers must consider cultural issues that each student will bring to the counseling relationships. Students from one country may share some similarities in the way they interpret and view life issues. However ethnic and family differences affect how each client perceives and interprets reality from the same experiences.

All these variations, deeply affected by cultural values, complicate the process of providing counseling service to the international population seeking education in a foreign country. The absence of founded theoretical framework for counseling international students remains a challenge in the field of counseling in general (Fernandez, 1988). It remains a challenge that pastoral care and counseling professionals must address in order to provide services to the international community (Augsberger, 1976).

Warning against stereotyping is not a total rejection of generalization. It is legitimate and sometimes necessary to generalize. As Althen (1991) observed, “For counselors to foreign students, the important thing is to be aware of one’s own generalizations or stereotypes, to use them cautiously as a starting point, and



## Counseling Issues for International Students

to be ready to modify them or hold them in abeyance in any given case” (p. 63).

For example international students share similar experiences in the sense that they are seeking education in a foreign soil away from familiar surrounding, culture and support system (Arthur, 1997; Triandis, 1991; Yoo & Thomas, 2001). This is a common experience that can apply to foreign students in general. But as stated above it is only a starting point.

This makes it appropriate to apply generalization as long as the counselor is aware and able to modify enough to meet specific needs represented by the client with a unique cultural understanding (Lee & Richardson, 1991). The issue is balance. Generalization has a place in the counseling process. But it must not cloud the importance of unique cultures represented in a particular population. Althen (1991) emphasized the importance of acquiring general knowledge on issues relating to adjustment in the foreign culture. But he also suggests that moving to more specific issues such as “values, communicative styles, and habits of thought of students from particular countries, can help counselors establish rapport with those students, approach their problems sensitively, and respond in ways most likely to be constructive” (pp. 63-64).

Avoiding stereotyping is in itself a challenge because it calls for approach to counseling that must deal with each individual uniquely (Augsburger, 1976;

## Counseling Issues for International Students

Lee & Richardson, 1991). Given the fact that the uniqueness is affected by cultural backgrounds and other variations, the process can be a difficult when one tries to provide pastoral care and counseling for the foreign students. It requires the professional counselor to approach the counseling relationship with the reality that the individual client's needs may be clouded by variety of cultural experiences and values. All of these must be taken into account for the counseling to be effective. While foreign students share some commonality by the fact that they are foreigners studying in a foreign soil, they have unique experiences as they are coming from different nationalities with differing cultural upbringing.

Pastoral care and counseling professional desiring to provide service to foreign student is constantly facing a challenge. He or she is dealing with a population whose cultural interpretation of reality is outside the traditional training that counselors receive in North America. Cultural consideration must include diversity of cultures from national, ethnic and personal perspective. Intercultural and interpersonal problems must be taken into account when dealing with students from overseas (Khoo, P. L. S, & Abu-Russian (1994). Lee & Richardson (1991) warns against professional counselors who tend to treat clients from a particular group as if they all share commonality in the way they experience and interpret reality. To them professionals who think that way “run

## Counseling Issues for International Students

the risk of approaching clients not as distinct human beings with individual experiences, but rather merely as cultural stereotypes” (p. 6).

*Limited or Lack of Training for the Counselors*

Lack of training for counselors is an issue affecting counselors in general. But pastoral care and counseling profession in particular face the same problem. Each of the two categories will be discussed.

*Lack of training for counselors in general*

The reality of inadequate training for professional counselors is well demonstrated by Parker (1988). Describing his experience in multicultural counseling after his graduate training, he discussed three cultural encounters that shaped his counseling approach. The first encounter was with a college student who was a Cuban immigrant. The issue for the student was that overcrowded conditions in her home distracted her from studies. Though she was a college student she still lived with her parents. The techniques Parker learned in training were not helpful to the dilemma the student was experiencing. He interpreted the student's problem as that of codependency with overprotective parents.

In the western culture individualism demands that a college student should be able to live independently and therefore the complaint of overcrowded home made no sense to Parker. In his admission, he was interpreting the issues from the

### Counseling Issues for International Students

western cultural perspective. He discovered that the counseling relationship lacked the understanding of the cultural aspect of the Cuban nationals, which value young people living with their parents until marriage. His training in counseling did not prepare him for this experience.

His second experience occurred when he attempted to train black peer counselors. He lost the group as he tried to insist on client-centered approach to therapy. Again, his approach was based on a theory developed according to his western cultural perspective in life. His training did not prepare him for the issues encountered by the black counselors. Through his failure to retain his students he learned that black students were dealing with issues that were different from the issues his education and preparation addressed. Perhaps there is room for applying client-centered therapy cross-culturally. However it was obvious that he was not able to use it or make appropriate application in this case. All the education he received as a counselor did not help him apply the counseling technique effectively as he dealt with the experiences of these students.

There was yet another experience. This time it was a black doctoral student seeking help on how to deal with an all white committee. The student felt that the committee was not supportive of his success in completing his degree program. Again he tried to apply his counseling techniques in helping this student. Like the previous cases he lost the counseling relationships because the

## Counseling Issues for International Students

student felt he was not sensitive to his issues as a black individual in an all white campus. Parker learned the hard way that his preparation to be a counselor did not equip him to address adequately the issues and the experiences of this minority student attempting to complete his education while dealing with a committee that did not seem to understand his needs.

It is quite possible that the problem was the student's misinterpretation of the professors' behavior and attitude. The reality is that the student was experiencing emotional problems not identified or addressed by the counselor's training. Parker then concluded that, "Through these three incidences, I became aware that I was not prepared to work with ethnic minority clients, nor did I know what to do to grow and change" (p. 93). Parker's experiences demonstrated lack of preparation for counseling professionals in dealing with the uniqueness of counseling needs for the clients from multiple cultural backgrounds and experiences.

While the participants in the above given examples do not represent international students, they demonstrate the complications of providing counseling services in a multicultural setting. More importantly, they demonstrate the need to prepare counselors to go beyond the traditional training and include the cultural sensitivity skills in the training programs. Multicultural counseling addresses, not only cultural perception of counseling, but also how

### Counseling Issues for International Students

needs and issues are perceived culturally. Perceptions of the counseling process, other issues and needs affect the expectation the client will anticipate during the counseling relationship. In his discussion on counseling individuals from another culture, Werhly (1988) stated that “The challenge for cross cultural counseling is how to gain a perspective on what it is that this person from another culture expects and how to work with that person” (p. 6).

Psychologists, counselors and other professionals providing counseling services are becoming extremely aware of the need for training in multicultural counseling (Merta, Sringham, and Ponterotto, 1988; Constantine & Gloria, 1999). The American Psychological Association places much emphasis on the importance of multicultural counseling to students during internship and considers it unethical for anyone to practice counseling without training in multicultural sensitivity (Foud, 1991; Constantine & Gloria, 1999).

While it is a positive move that the subject matter is attracting the attention of professionals in the fields of counseling, the issue cannot be addressed effectively unless training programs for counselors incorporate cultural issues. Fouad (1991) acknowledged that “Counseling psychologists currently are not trained to cope effectively with the myriad unique concerns that international students encounter” (p. 67). These concerns are affected by the cultural values

## Counseling Issues for International Students

that are diverse in nature. Corey (1986) expressed similar concern when he stated that “Too often, minority-group issues have been studied from a White middle-class perspective” (p. 349). He stresses that training programs fail to address mental illness as experienced by minority cultures. It is definitely an important issue in the field of counseling in general.

Shimabukuro, Daniels and D’Andrea (1999) expressed the same concern over lack of multicultural training for counseling professionals. They stated “Although spiritual beliefs and traditions play an important role in the psychological development of people from diverse cultural ethnic-racial backgrounds, it is distressing to note the lack of attention that has been directed to this aspect of human development by counseling theorists, researchers, practitioners, and educators” (p. 224). Their emphasis on spirituality is that it is a part of cultural reality. This statement underscores the fact that counseling professionals are not adequately prepared to address the issues affecting international students who represent diversity of cultures.

*Lack of training for pastoral counselors*

Along with attracting psychologists and other professional counselors the issue of multicultural counseling is also in the interest of professional pastoral counselors. However, in this research the literature addressing the subject in

## Counseling Issues for International Students

depth is very limited. The most comprehensive study I find in the field was done by Augsburger (1986) who spent five years doing extensive research that involved interviewing and learning from different cultures in thirteen non-western countries. He advocated the need for pastoral care and counseling to become multicultural in every aspect of their discipline. To him time has come for mankind to acknowledge the inevitable interdependency that exists globally.

The reason for this international interdependency is that “A new nationalism is evolving that expresses a people’s longing to live self-directed political lives in concert with other nations, to protect their interests against imperialism from other nations” (p. 19). The warning is that while people want to protect their independence and cultural heritage, no culture can live in isolation. Interdependency means that mankind must learn to relate and communicate with one another in spite of cultural differences. Thus he further states that “Ethnic, cultural, religious, and racial backgrounds can become heritages to be prized, protected, nourished, and cherished, as guides for life-style, but not as boundaries, barriers, or blocks to communication and cooperation between peoples” (p. 19). Pastoral care and counseling professionals must view cultural differences as prized commodity to be used to promote harmony and unity.

Augsburger’s research, that he did overseas, lead him to conclude that “The training of pastoral counselors must be broadened to include alternative



## Counseling Issues for International Students

worldviews.” His reasoning is that “The world has changed around us, while we in the Western education have persistently continued to teach as though Western models, values, and views of human nature and community were normative” (p. 14). Any profession desiring to thrive and affect change must adjust to the dictates of the society. In this case we are dealing with demographic changes which necessitate learning how to service people represented by diversity of cultures.

It is therefore critical that the western professionals recognize the reality that issues affecting human beings can be seen from different cultural perspectives and are affected by differing worldviews. The call by Augsburger (1986) for pastors to receive such a training, indicate that the issue remains a unique challenge for those seeking to provide pastoral care and counseling to the multicultural population. The need can be even much more complicated for international students whose stay in the USA is temporary and must adjust to the foreign culture and then return home for another adjustment in their home countries (Isa, 2000; Marks, 1987; Tartar & Horencyk, 2000). Without proper training it is impossible for the pastoral care and counseling professionals to effectively provide service to the sojourning students.

When Bogia (1979) wrote about multiculturalism in Clinical Pastoral Education, he gave the impression that it was a new experience. He stated, “we

## Counseling Issues for International Students

have recognized that every group is influenced by cultural factors, even when all members appear to share the same background” (p. 26). The fact that he found the concept to be new to him in 1979, means that his training did not expose him to this reality of multiculturalism in the American society. The statement underscores the reality that the profession needs to keep up with the cultural changes in the society.

Acknowledging the reality and complexity of cultural issues in pastoral counseling, Silva-Newton (1992) includes the Church and other mental health organizations. To him these agencies are becoming aware of the importance of setting ethnocentric goals but these “goals have often precluded recognition of the boundless variety and creativity of the human community and the limitless avenues through which God participates in the histories of societies and the biographies of persons” (p. 131).

His statement indicates that he recognizes the failure within the Church and professional counseling field to address the ethnocentrism, which is a hindrance to the incorporation of cultural issues and values in the counseling process. He further issued a challenge to the pastoral counseling professionals by stating “As our society evolves into a truly heterogeneous and pluralistic community, in both demography and intense consciousness, we as pastoral counselors are called upon to examine seriously the basic assumptions of our

## Counseling Issues for International Students

ministry” (p. 131). It is obvious that he sees the issue of shaping the pastoral care and counseling approach to adapt the changes in society as critical. These changes include the growing cultural diversity within the society. The increasing number of international students contributes to this trend that is changing the demographics of the United States population.

In spite of the acknowledgement of the need to address cultural values in pastoral counseling the issue remains a challenge. Much more remains to be done. For example, Augsburger (1992) decried lack of dialogue between different counseling professionals and those with other worldviews. He stated “Yet the rarity, the paucity, the oddity of such conversations is a puzzle-perhaps a clue to our mono-cultural capacity as counselors” (p. 97). His concern is that pastoral care and counseling as well as other professionals in the field of counseling are doing very little to address the issue.

Thus, he further states “We have published little, invested little, risked little in holding our counseling theories, theologies, and therapies under the light of other worldviews. If one knows but one culture knows no culture, then the therapist who understands only the values of her parent culture or the therapies of his native community does not understand value, culture, therapy, or community” (p. 97). Lack of efforts in developing theories of multicultural counseling remains a unique challenge in the field.

### Counseling Issues for International Students

The fact that professionals in the field of pastoral care and counseling acknowledge the absence of cultural consideration in the counseling practice, suggest that the profession is not providing necessary training for the counselors to address multicultural issues, especially those of international students

If cultural issues in general remain a challenge to professional counselors, counseling issues for foreign students are even much more complicated. Without proper training to address the problems affecting those who are studying away from their countries of origin, pastoral care and counseling professionals will miss the opportunity to affect change in the lives of those training abroad and away from their cultural upbringing. Unless the discipline recognizes this issue the training institutions for pastoral care counselors may become obsolete in the face of changing society (Augsburger, 1986). Moreover the results will be that the profession will fail to meet the needs of these students who have the potential of affecting global change as future leaders in the world.

#### *Cultural Perceptions in Counseling*

The perception that the counselor and the client bring into the counseling relationship is critical to the outcome of the counseling process. Cultural upbringing affects the way one perceives reality as it affects issues of personal and interpersonal relationships (Luzio-Lockett, 1998; Pedersen, 1991). For example, using the parable of the Samaritan woman Hinkle and Hinkle (1992)

## Counseling Issues for International Students

discussed ways the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:30-35 can be interpreted according to cultural perception.

They illustrate the cultural interpretation with the way a Filipino individual would interpret the parable. In the Filipino culture helping someone in need is a business because the person helped becomes indebted for life to the individual providing help. In this case the western culture may see the Samaritan as a good person while the Filipino culture will see the action as selfish and aimed at taking advantage of the wounded traveler.

The religious leaders would be considered the good people because they put aside their personal ambition and allowed the wounded Samaritan to help himself and thereby retain his freedom. They see the story as illustrating “the qualitative shift that can, and usually does, occur when a Western viewpoint is moved outside of Western culture, a shift out of monocultural encapsulation” (p. 104). The shift takes the individual beyond learning the meaning of words into experiencing an unfamiliar universe with complete sets of values and interpretations

According to Hinkle and Hinkle (1992) there are three levels of cultural interpretations of reality. One is egocentrism in which the focus is the self. In this interpretation the reader asks what the parable means to him or her personally. It is descriptive of a person who refuses to look at or understand

## Counseling Issues for International Students

issues from the perspective of another culture. Personal consciousness dictates the way egocentric person interprets the world of reality. An egocentric person would interpret the parable of the Good Samaritan according what it means to her or him.

The second interpretation moves the interpreter beyond egocentrism into ethnocentrism. The ethnocentric person remain culturally encapsulated and “is unwilling or unable to address experience outside of a particular ethnic heritage” (p. 104). The interpretation of reality is dictated by the individual’s ethnic or cultural interpretation. An example given is that of a European American’s “inability or unwillingness to understand the perspective of an African-American female from the urban northern United States” (p. 104).

Egocentrism and ethnocentrism become problematic when dealing with culturally different client. In egocentrism the counselors tend to mold clients into their own personal images, while in ethnocentrism the counselor molds the client into his or her own cultural image. These dangers are rooted in the ego ideal developed through the influence of the cultural upbringing.

The result is that “if an ethnocentric, culturally encapsulated western therapist were working with a non-western Filipino client, the therapist would likely see the client’s family orientation (a sociocentric or, in this instance,

## Counseling Issues for International Students

family-centered self) as evidence of a pathologically underdeveloped (i.e., undifferentiated) self” (p. 105). Here the danger is for the therapist to treat this cultural difference as a psychological malady. Without proper training, it is easy for counseling professionals to make such a mistake.

Multiculturalism, the third level is descriptive of the relationship in which the interpreter considers the cultural perception the client brings into the counseling process. The counselor operating at this level is open to differences in interpretation of reality and different ways of understanding life issues. This requires the therapist to acquire skills that enable him or her to enter into a foreign culture and still return to his or her own culture of origin (Augsburger, 1976). The process is not easy as it “involves intense, ongoing, and comprehensive submersion in the ‘otherness’ of an alternate culture’ reality, to the point where the individual begins to experience him – or herself as the ‘other’ within the normative reality of that culture” (Hinkle and Hinkle, 1992, p. 106). The reality is that one cannot achieve this level of multiculturalism by simply reading or intellectualizing the issue. It takes commitment and personal experience.

After working with Mexicans as well as Mexican Americans, Karaban (1990) experienced problems that led her to conclude that cross-cultural counseling may not be the best way to provide counseling help for the minority

## Counseling Issues for International Students

cultures. This conclusion is incompatible with multiculturalism as promoted by Hinkle and Hinkle (1992). One of the problems she encountered was her tendency to judge the culture of the clients. To her it is impossible for a counselor to avoid being judgmental when interpreting the cultural understanding of the client. “No matter how understanding or empathic one tries to be, a counselor is a human being and as such is not value-free, but carries with her/him the values of her/his culture which she/he assumes to be good” (p. 221). She proposes that counselors redirect their effort to helping the minority individuals provide counseling for their people.

Her conclusion is that “Counseling itself-as practiced by Western, Anglo, middle class, Anglo counselors-may not be appropriate to certain cultures.” To her “This type of thinking assumes that it is the Anglos who are/should be the helpers and it is the minority person who is likely to be the helpee-a very classist if not racist way of thinking” (p. 223). In making this statement she contradicts herself for in one hand, she is advocating that counselors only counsel people from their own ethnic backgrounds while suggesting that the same white community train the minority counselors who in turn will help their own people.

One has to wonder, if it is not possible for counselors to develop sensitivity to the culturally different, how can the same counselors train culturally



## Counseling Issues for International Students

different individuals to be good counselors to the people of their own cultural groups? If it is considered racist or “classist” for the white culture to provide counseling to the minority population, how is it different if the same white counselor assumes the responsibility of training the minority counselors? Whether one is training a minority counselor or providing counseling service to a minority client the need to be culturally sensitive remains the same.

Voss (1992) sees a broader issue in Karaban’s conclusion. He sees the conclusion as based on the assumption that “cross cultural counseling is a distinct counseling method in which one either does or does not engage” (p. 253).

According to Voss the ‘cross cultural counseling’ is a psychological hermeneutic rather than a distinct method of counseling. To him this broader definition provides “an important meta-framework to discuss the need for expanding our theoretical assumptions about human meaning contexts, and developing more interdisciplinary, multi-method, inter-cultural approaches to counseling that challenge the profession’s mainstream alignment with the dominant culture” (p. 255).

In other words the counseling professionals must accept the challenge to change and incorporate other methods that will enable them to expand their client base so that they include the culturally different. The challenge to change means remaining ready and willing to address issues represented by the clients whose

### Counseling Issues for International Students

perception of counseling is different. Pastoral care and counseling providers must maintain relevance by keeping up with demographic changes in the population. Perception of the counseling process by the culturally different client should not be a hindrance to an effective counseling experience.

#### *Diversity of Religious Beliefs*

Augsburger (1992) made a strong statement regarding pastoral counselors that “We are heirs to a multi-age-multi-cultural-multi-faith –multi-persuasion movement of healers and caregivers who touch others as the finger of God” (p. 97). Dealing with faith or spiritual issues in counseling is gaining popularity as “a number of professions have demonstrated increased interest in understanding how issues related to spirituality affect human development” (Shimabukuro, Daniels and D’Andrea, 1999, p. 221). By spirituality they mean “the unique ways that people integrate their beliefs about a transcendental, extraordinary reality into their worldview and personal identity” (p. 222). Such interests demonstrate the fact that these professionals see the value of spirituality in human development and understanding of issues (Malony, 1993; Hand, 1978, Augsburger, 1992).

The question here is why is it that historically counseling profession has avoided the issue of spirituality? Shimabukuro et al (1999) points out four factors that have contributed to the absence of spiritual emphasis in counseling. One is the failure for the contemporary counseling theories to recognize spiritual

## Counseling Issues for International Students

influence on psychological issues. Secondly, education programs for counselors do not address spiritual issues for their clients. Thirdly, due to lack of training, counselors are unable to see the relationship between spirituality and belief systems and how both affect the way clients find meaning in life. Fourthly, lack of knowledge on how different cultures use spiritual beliefs to deal with issues in life.

Spiritual issues should be of special concern for pastoral care and counseling professionals because the profession is rooted in theological understanding and interpretation of reality. Gerkin (1986) expressed concern about the possibility of the discipline losing its theological roots. He stated, “And yet it is the fact that the latest fashion among pastoral counselors is to talk about recovering pastoral counseling’s theological identity.” To him, “This suggests, of course, that in the time just past there were other concerns that were more fashionable: family systems theory perhaps, or the appropriation of object relations theory in pastoral counseling practice” (p. 3). The fact that there is a discussion on recovering the theological identity implies also that the identity was not totally lost.

Smith (1990), however, argues that pastoral counseling has lost its identity and it is no longer different from psychotherapy. To him the fact that pastoral counselors meet in professional offices, charge a fee from their clients and are

## Counseling Issues for International Students

distant from the Churches means that they are no longer distinguishable from other psychotherapists. He goes on to argue that if pastoral counseling is Christian then psychotherapy is Christian. “To recognize the identity between the theories and practices of the psychotherapeutic and pastoral counseling profession is to realize that the question of the theological justification of pastoral counseling is actually a question about whether the current practice of psychotherapy is truly pastoral” (p. 102).

While it is true that pastoral counselors have borrowed from the field of psychotherapy and vice versa the reality remains that pastoral counseling has its roots in theological understanding (Gerkin, 1986, Shimbukuro et al, 1999). One needs to realize that pastoral counseling, like any other ministry of the Church, has to address issues affecting society and in the language of the present culture (Augburger, 1992).

To do so the discipline has to borrow languages and approaches relevant to the society. In this case psychotherapy is a current means of helping people with psychological and spiritual malady. For example on the importance of language, Gerkin (1986) states, “It is by language that we express our sense out of what we experience. It is by language that we express our relationships. It is by language that we give things significance. To be human is to have language. It is

## Counseling Issues for International Students

by language that our world of meaning is disclosed” (p. 5). If the language of psychology is acceptable and understood by society then pastoral counselors can use the same language.

Fowler (1985) saw this as a necessary reality in society that is culturally diverse. He stated that, “In the pluralistic society, theology is under increasing pressure to speak a language that is faithful to the Christian story and vision, and at the same time addresses the felt experience and the recognized and unrecognized hungers of contemporary people” (p. 3). The implication is that meeting needs in the society is the goal and language is simply the means.

In order to help people in need, the pastoral counselor cannot ignore the language recognized by the society. The same language may be developed or initially adopted in the field of psychotherapy or any other field. According to Pruyser (1968), it is a reality that one cannot avoid psychological language as it has become a part of the society. The fact that society has accepted the language of psychology in literature, arts, press and medicine make it impossible for the Church to avoid. To him “it is inevitable that some degree of psychological mindedness affects even such logical enterprise as dogmatics, which used to sit on her regal throne raised by faith and reason above all other human concerns” (p. 22). If pastoral counselors are to affect people’s lives they must use concepts and

## Counseling Issues for International Students

words understood and accepted by society as channels to healing. Using the same language as the other therapists does not necessarily mean that the discipline loses its identity. Neither does it mean that it ceases to be theological in its understanding of issues facing clients.

The only danger is for the profession to water down the significance of the spiritual or theological realm in the practice. While that may have happened in the past (Hinkle and Hinkle, 1992, Augsburg, 1992), it is obvious that the discipline is recognizing the need to reclaim that identity if some of it has been lost.

According to Bozzo (1970), theology is a reflective aspect of religion and it “is concerned with aiding and fostering lived faith.” To him “It does not exist as an end in itself; its purpose is ultimately practical, dealing with possibilities and obstacles encountered in living a life of creative fidelity” (p. 420). If counseling means helping people overcome issues and improve their lives, then theology plays an important role in addressing these issues especially when the counseling involves issues of religion and faith.

Gerkin (1986) acknowledges the fact that the desire for counselors to go back to their theological identity means that the discipline has its roots in theological foundation. He sees faith as fundamental to the pastoral counselor and can be a part of therapeutic process. The question that Gerkin sets to address

## Counseling Issues for International Students

is how one can reconcile faith and therapy. In other words how can one reconcile psychology and pastoral counseling? Gerkin's answer is that "It occurs as they find in the immediacy of the therapeutic context, metaphorical images and themes, attitudinal postures and gestures, that somehow combine (critically correlate?) the deepest metaphorical meanings of the faith tradition in which their ministry is grounded and the best of psychological insight and adjustment" (p. 14). He goes on to conclude that "Thus faith and praxis are integrated in the liveliness of the responsibly careful, but spontaneously free interaction between counselor and counselee. Whenever that occurs pastoral counselors will have been faithful to both their faith and their therapeutic practice" (p. 15).

Gerkin's point is well taken. However, pastoral counseling cannot be confined to simply letting the faith of the counselor manifest itself through the web of the counseling process. This theory makes it sound as if the theological aspect of the counseling process occurs accidentally or by osmosis. The pastoral counselor must come to the counseling session prepared to do counseling from psychological and theological perspective. The counselor must be deliberate in applying theological understanding of human suffering. Schlaugh (1987) argued the same point by stating that the discipline "involves the intentional integration of psychological, theological, and ethical resources in an authentic, consistent, and coherent manner" (p. 325).

### Counseling Issues for International Students

The client coming to a counselor recognizes that the pastoral counselor is different from other therapeutic counselors and therefore the professional must meet that expectation. Malony (1993) argues against counselors being too rigid to consider addressing the issue of religion. To him “Counselors do well to go beyond any penchant they might have for individual self-determination and consider the strong possibility that those who come to them for help do indeed identify with the religious traditions available to them just as surely as they reflect the ethnic and cultural realities in which they live” (p. 242).

The above statement is in agreement with the study by Henderson et al (1992). The study compared clients that seek counseling from social workers and those that go to pastoral counselors. The results revealed that while the clients for both disciplines shared similarity in symptoms only clients that went to pastoral counselors were referred by clergy. The social workers received more referrals from psychiatrists and psychologists. The study further demonstrated that “the religious commitment of the client and counselor are factors in influencing the choice for a pastoral counselor” (p. 216). It is evident from the study that clients who seek counseling help from clergy irrespective of the issues, value spiritual aspect of the counseling and expect it from the pastoral counselors who should be best suited to meet spiritual needs of the clients.



### Counseling Issues for International Students

The pastoral counselor approaches his or her profession with the understanding that the clients bring spiritual as well as emotional needs that may be integrated in some form or another (Malony, 1993; Jensen, 2003; Schlaugh, 1987). Jordan (1997) suggested that pastoral counselors pay attention to religious beliefs of the clients, appeal to spiritual resources, which include the religious or church community and make use of other resources such as prayer, scripture reading and other practices related to religion and spirituality.

Pastoral care and counseling is rooted in theology and must not abandon its theological foundation. Integration of psychotherapy or other forms of counseling is simply adopting methods and means of accomplishing its purpose of caring and affecting positive change in society (Evans, 1958). Talking about the practicality of theology, Hunter (1980) suggested that it should be looking for ways to apply it to issues people face in life. To him practical theology should be “concerned with developing practical religious knowledge about caring for others, that is, how to care for others in their concrete contingencies and problems so as to stimulate or enable their life of faith and practical knowledge of God” (p. 69). In other words practical theology addresses the issue of applying faith and knowledge of God to every day issues of life.

Hunter goes further to state that practical theology in which religion and

## Counseling Issues for International Students

theology are effectively integrated can have a wider effect of changing society for the better. He states, “An approach to these practical concerns undertaken with religious seriousness and theological perspective may be precisely what is needed for helping our civilization develop more humanly rich and fulfilling traditions of the art of life, beyond the very superficial moral and religious methodologies that presently prevail” (p. 69). The inclusion of practices developed in other disciplines such as psychotherapy does not negate its theological foundation. It simply means that the profession is using every available resource to address issues affecting humanity.

It is therefore important to expect pastoral counseling to address the spiritual needs of their clients as these needs affect their lives. This is especially important for counselors dealing with a multicultural population as “multicultural experts have stressed that spiritual issues play a particularly important role in the psychological development of people from diverse ethnic-racial groups” (Shimabukuro et al, 999, p. 224). This makes it of critical importance that the training of pastoral counselors includes developing skills necessary for addressing the spiritual needs of their clients especially those from diversity of cultures.

International students come from diversity of cultural and religious backgrounds, which require careful consideration when dealing with their

## Counseling Issues for International Students

spiritual and emotional needs. For example, Naughton, Ed and Others (1985) discussed the effects of religious beliefs on how they respond to patients who attempt suicide. They sight examples of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam. According to their finding, all these major religions teach that suicide is wrong. However, Buddhism, and Hinduism do not condemn the individual who attempts suicide. But in the Islamic belief system, suicide is a crime that deserves punishment. It is however, different if the person attempting suicide is doing so as a sacrifice to help someone else. When suicide is self-sacrifice it is considered an honorable act. This is just one example in which one particular issue can have interpretation that is different from one belief system to another.

The examples demonstrate the challenge the pastoral counselors must face in helping international students adjust in the United States. Religious issues must be taken into consideration. The problem is that they represent a diversity of faith traditions with differing value systems (Naughton, Ed and Others, 1985; Johnson, 1992). It is therefore important that, in their training, pastoral counselors must acquire competencies that will help them address the spiritual issues of clients representing diversity of cultures. Acquiring such competencies is necessary for the effectiveness of the Pastoral counseling professionals (Shimabukuro et al., 1999).

### Counseling Issues for International Students

The adjustment needs of the foreign students cannot be divorced from The adjustment needs of the foreign students cannot be divorced from The adjustment needs of the foreign students cannot be divorced from their spiritual and religious issues. The spiritual issues the students bring to counseling process require the attention of the counseling professional. The challenge is how to address these needs when each client brings different value system based on his or her religious and cultural upbringing. This is one of the challenges that make counseling international students a unique experience.

#### *Cultural Attitude Towards Mental Illness*

One problem in counseling people from different cultures is the danger of the counselor misinterpreting certain behaviors as psychological illnesses when in the client's culture it is not the case. Torrey and Knable (2002) stated that some manic-like behaviors may be acceptable in some cultures and may have nothing to do with mental illness. After observing several examples from Africa and the Caribbean islands they concluded that "Many cultures have developed culture-specific means of expressing anxiety, fear, enthusiasm, and joy-expressions that may appear strange to individuals from other cultures" (p. 77). The challenge for the professional providing service is to differentiate between mental illness and culturally acceptable means of expressing different emotions and attitude.

### Counseling Issues for International Students

Pastoral counseling professionals need to understand that mental illness is culturally defined. Augsburger (1986) stated “The intercultural pastoral counselor is aware of the cultural shaping and labeling of mental illness”. He goes on to state that “What is normal and normative in each culture varies significantly, as does what is abnormal behavior in each setting” (p. 345). Providing counseling service to foreign students means learning to suspend judgement about what may seem like unacceptable behavior until there is a cultural interpretation of the same behavior. Likewise mental illness can only be defined from cultural interpretation. In this case one cannot rely on traditional method of diagnosing mental illness. Culture must be taken into account. This is a challenge when providing counseling in a multicultural setting.

#### *Economical Realities*

Counseling profession in the United States involves fees paid by the clients seeking counseling because the professionals offering the services make a living by the practice (Smith 1990). The expectation is that the counselor has an office and the clients come to him to seek counseling help (Smith, 1990; Stone, 2001; Jordan, 1997; Voss, 1992). Pastoral counselors must concern themselves with, not only earning a living, but also protecting themselves from possible suits of malpractice (Thomas, 1997). Thus charging a fee for the services is a necessity for survival of the discipline and the individual professionals.

## Counseling Issues for International Students

Describing financial reality and the dilemma facing the pastoral counselors Smith (1990) points out the fact that some pastoral counselors charge sliding fees for their services. However, he warned that “because of their dependence on fees, no pastoral counseling center can no longer survive if more than a small percentage of its counselees are paying small fees” (p. 103). He concluded that it is the reality of these economical circumstances that force most pastoral counselors to open their centers in communities with means to pay for the services. This leaves out the poor willing to seek help but unable to pay.

For Jacob (2001), financial issues created tension between his professional responsibility to the client and the need to satisfy the requirements of Health Maintenance Organization (HMO). The demands HMO placed on his professional practice proved too much that he finally decided to end his relationship with the organization. However, that did not free him from worrying about financial survival of his practice and that of his colleagues. “Our survival is an underlying component. If we cannot pay our bills, feed and educate our families, and provide something for retirement, we become needy craftsmen” (p. 284).

He goes on to ask “How long can we or our agencies survive as pastoral counselors when our experiences or reduced compensation from HMO contracts greatly outnumber those of increased compensation” (p. 284)? This struggle

## Counseling Issues for International Students

demonstrates the economical reality that pastoral care and counseling professionals must address in order to provide services to the needs of those who are without financial resources.

The reality poses two major challenges for the professionals seeking to provide services to the foreign students. One is that foreign students have limited financial means and therefore, may not have sufficient funds to pay (Chen, 1999; Idowu, 1985; Oropeza & Fitzgibbon, 1991). Arthur (1997) noted that international students in Canada faced similar financial hardships especially those who depend on their families for support. In his discussion on social and cultural causes of stress for international students, Chen (1999) stated “Financial concern is a practical and critical issue in international students’ daily lives.” To him “Without adequate financial resources, basic survival becomes an issue” (p. 55). Given this reality that financial survival is of a major concern for the foreign students, the thought of paying for counseling services remain inconceivable. It is an issue that pastoral care providers must face if they are going to serve the international student community.

Inability to pay is only one part of the issue. The second challenge facing the pastoral care and counseling provider is that foreign students are unlikely to voluntarily seek counseling from a professional (Boyer & Sedlacek, 1989;

## Counseling Issues for International Students

Komiya N. & Ellis, T, 2001; Wehrly, 1988). This complicates the matter because one has to be convinced that he or she needs a service in order to consider paying for it.

Bontrager, Birch and Kracht (1990) did a research on mental health needs of international students in the universities. One of the conclusions of the research was that “Though U.S. students typically go to a student counseling center for help with their concerns, international students tend not to take advantage of this service” (p. 25). The study concluded further that the foreign students do not even “utilize fully the counseling function of the international student advisor” (p. 25). The fact that pastoral care counselors are seeking clients willing and able to pay, means that foreign students will not receive help unless the profession come up with creative ways of providing and funding their services.

*Summary*

International students encounter emotional and psychological needs that affect their lives as they try to adjust to living and studying in a foreign soil (Fernandez, 1988; Fouad, 1991; Luzio-Lockett, 1998; Wehrly, 1988). They need help during this adjustment period. Pastoral care and counseling professionals desiring and willing to provide counseling services for them face some unique challenges. Diversity of cultures, lack of proper training, cultural perception in



### Counseling Issues for International Students

counseling, diversity of religious beliefs, cultural attitude and understanding of mental illness and economical reality remain strong obstacles to the professionals seeking to serve the international students community. These are issues that need addressing if pastoral care and counseling is going to meet the needs of the foreign learners.

## Counseling Issues for International Students

## Chapter 7

Competencies Necessary for Providing Pastoral Counseling for  
International Students

In order to provide adequate pastoral care and counseling to foreign students the issue of competency for the care providers must be addressed. Addressing the competency issue takes the challenge to the training of the counselors in the field. In chapter five the discussion focused on the unique issues one faces when counseling international students. This chapter will discuss suggested competencies that will help the profession enhance its effectiveness in providing counseling services for the foreign student community.

What then are competencies necessary for providing pastoral care and counseling to foreign students? Tartar and Horenczyk (2000) did a study on counseling foreign students in an Israeli University. They concluded by stating, “It seems important to reexamine the nature and effectiveness of counselors’ multicultural competencies in dealing with international students. These competencies refer in general to counselor awareness, belief, knowledge, and skills related to working within multicultural counseling contexts” (p. 59). Arthur (1997) stated that in addressing multicultural issues the counseling profession fails to equip the counselors for helping international students.

Yoo and Skovholt (2001) did a comparative study of depression,

### Counseling Issues for International Students

expression and seeking help among American and Korean students. One of the conclusions of the study confirmed the fact that there is a great need for training counselors, staff and health practitioners in the area of multicultural issues. The study revealed that Korean students responded better to counselors with cultural sensitivity. The implication is that it is of great importance that practitioners possess competencies necessary for meeting the needs of the clients represented by students from diversity of cultures. Other studies draw similar conclusions (Constantine, M. G. & Gloria, A. M, 1999).

In order for the pastoral care and counseling professionals to address the issue of counseling foreign students the discipline must deal with the problem at the training level. Those preparing to provide services for the sojourning learners must possess competencies that will enable them to serve effectively. The necessary competencies suggested in this study include cultural awareness, ability to identify and utilize community resources, ability to adopt flexible approaches in counseling, ability to provide spiritual care in the midst of diversity of belief systems and ability to prepare students for readjustment to culture of origin. Each of these competencies will be discussed below.

#### *Cultural Awareness*

According to Augsburger (1986) to be an intercultural person is not to be culture free. Rather it means being culturally aware. Cultural awareness comes

### Counseling Issues for International Students

in two levels for the counselor seeking to be multicultural in his or her profession.

One is awareness and appreciation of own culture. Secondly, awareness of the differences between own and the foreign cultures.

#### *Awareness and Appreciation of Own Culture*

Self-awareness is essential for anyone seeking to provide counseling to multicultural clients (Bolton-Brwonlee, 1987; Toropek & Reza, 2001 and Evans & Larrabee, 2002). First, self-awareness helps the counselor understand how cultural upbringing has influenced his or her understanding and interpretation of reality. In order to address the subject effectively it needs to be addressed from personal and professional level. It is not enough to address the issues from professional level. Counseling is a relationship and personal issues are critical in the counseling process. Silva-Netto (1992) uses the term ‘culture personality system’ a concept which he defines as “a human system composed of cultural determinants and cultural expressions of personality, the interrelationships of which produce a dynamically organized self-structure within the individual human”. To him, “This self-structure reflects the individual’s own unique adjustment to the environment, as well as that shared by the community” (p. 132).

In essence, cultural values determine how an individual perceives and experiences reality as an individual and as a part of a community. The way one perceives reality and relates to society is the product of cultural upbringing. An

## Counseling Issues for International Students

effective multicultural pastoral counselor must have an awareness of cultural influences in his or her life. This means making every effort to examine personal pattern of thinking and perception in the light of cultural background. It is self-examination that helps the counselor understand his or her behavior, attitude and relationships as influenced by culture (Chen, 1999; Pedersen, 1995). Without such an examination one faces the danger of inability to treat clients from diverse cultural backgrounds without being judgmental and prejudicial (Arredondo & Arciniega, 2001; Evan U Larabee, 2002; Toporek & Reza, 2001).

Secondly self-awareness helps counselors understand subconscious attitudes that can be detrimental to the counseling relationship. According to Toporek & Reza (2001) self-awareness is more than knowing one's own culture. It involves awareness of biases and prejudices that occur outside the professional life. They warn that "When a counseling professional examines their beliefs, values, and biases only at a professional level while ignoring their personal level, interactions with clients will be affected" (p. 20). They decry the fact that often awareness focuses only on professional aspect of ministry and not the beliefs of the counselor.

To illustrate the point they site an example of a female college counselor who believes that she treats the Latino clients professionally. However she may not be conscious of the fact that on the streets she tends to walk with caution when she

## Counseling Issues for International Students

sees Latino men. Thus, on professional level she may be treating the Latino clients without prejudice. However, on personal level she, unconsciously, does not trust Latino men. Such mistrust, if unchecked, can affect relationships between counselor and client.

Thus in developing competencies for professionals dealing with international students or other cultures it is important to address the issue from both professional as well as personal level. Unconscious personal attitudes can affect relationships during counseling sessions. Self-awareness in counseling foreign students is essential because cultural and personal assumptions affect the way one relates to the clients from other cultures. In order for a professional counselor to provide service without prejudice or bias attitude he or she needs to be aware of the existence of such attitudes towards other cultures and races. It is necessary if one is to be open minded to other worldviews represented by the multicultural clients (Althen, 1991; Pedersen, 1991; Toporek & Reza, 2001).

Thirdly, self-awareness enables the counselor to deepen his or her understanding of other worldviews. In order to properly interpret meanings from other worldviews one has to understand his or her own worldviews (Arredondo and Arciniega, 2001). Chen (1999) considers counselor's attitude and expertise as most important in providing counseling to foreign students. To him the effectiveness of the counselor depends on his or her ability "to recognize the

## Counseling Issues for International Students

necessity of challenging the cultural bias of her or his own untested criteria in counseling encounter or helping relationship” (p. 58).

Pedersen (1991) advocated the need for counselors to examine their own value system before attempting to provide counseling to foreign students. He stated that “Counselors need cultural self-awareness and sensitivity, an awareness of assumptions or values, openness to and respect for differing value systems, tolerance to ambiguity, willingness to learn with and from clients and genuine concern for people with different values” (p. 15). Ability to understand other’s worldview depends on ones ability to understand the difference between own culture and other cultures.

Fourthly self-awareness enhances the counseling relationships by challenging and helping the counselor develop accepting attitude. Awareness of self, enables the counselor to confront his or her personal values and biases (Bolton-Brownlee, 1987; Evans & Larrabee, 2002). By confronting such attitudes the counseling professional is then able to address areas where his or her attitude affects the counseling relationships with clients from other cultures. In describing counselors with self-awareness, Corey (1986) states “They are aware of their own values, attitudes, and biases and of how these are likely to affect minority clients” (p. 350). A counselor who is opened to self-scrutiny is more able to accept others with different values and interpretation of reality.

### Counseling Issues for International Students

The main purpose is to minimize the danger of biases, prejudice and misdiagnosing the client's issues during counseling session (Chen, 1999; Jacob & Greggo, 2001; Toporek & Reza, 2001). For one to accept and understand other world views he or she needs freedom from the cultural and professional limitations. Such limitations are based on narrowly defined approach to relationships that is understood only according to western worldviews (Arredondo & Arciniega, 2001; Beek, 1987).

Fifthly, self-awareness helps the counselor appreciate other cultures. Accepting other cultures is not enough. One needs to see and appreciate value in the way other cultures interpret reality (Augsberger, 1986). Speaking from personal experience as pastoral counselor in a multicultural setting Silva-Netto (1992) stated, "In multicultural setting I have been persistently compelled to examine my 'perceptual blinders.' In the process of doing this, I find myself developing new conceptions of reality, new images of our collective selves and our shrinking world, and some enthusiastic determination to grow beyond my cultural limitations and become truly 'cosmopolitan'" (p. 138). It appears here that examination of one's own cultural upbringing is key to understanding and appreciating other cultures and recognizing the limitations of own culture.

While developing self-awareness to his or her own culture the counselor must constantly remember that different cultures have other genuine ways of



## Counseling Issues for International Students

understanding and interpreting reality. Therefore the counselor's culture cannot be regarded as being more superior than that of the clients. According to Augsburger (1986) pastoral counseling personnel who are aware of their own cultures are also "fully aware that others may hold different values and assumptions, which are legitimate even when they are directly opposite to their own" (p. 20). Lee (1991) stated that "in order to become culturally skilled as a counselor, one must become more fully aware of his or her own heritage as well as possible biases that may interfere with helping effectiveness, gain knowledge about the history and culture of diverse groups of people, and develop new skills" (p. 210). Such skills involves the ability to appreciate the values different cultures bring to the counseling relationship.

Finally self-awareness is necessary if a counselor is able to enter into the experience of the culturally different client. Discussing the ministry of presence Augsburger (1986) stated that "Presence requires an integration of self-awareness with an awareness of the other" (p. 37). Self-awareness enables the counselor to be aware of the obstacles in his or her life that can hinder effective counseling relationships with the client from another culture. It makes it possible for the counselor to be genuinely transparent and address issues of superiority complex while allowing the care provider to enter into the experience of the culturally different client. "Such self-awareness permits more complete attending to others

## Counseling Issues for International Students

and a willingness to perceive as much of the other's experience as he or she is free to reveal" (Augsburger, 1986, p. 37). It is an absolute necessity for pastoral care provider wishing to empathize with the culturally different.

Implementation of self-awareness in the training of counselors is necessary if care providers are to be effective in counseling international student populations (Althen, 1991; Jacob & Greggo, 2001 Merta et al, 1988). However, Evans and Larrabee (2002) see challenges in providing training on self awareness. First, the counseling students may be forced to accept the reality of oppression in which she or he may have participated. The prevailing attitude is to deny it. Secondly, there is "the comfort students feel when they retreat to old, more familiar behaviors when the multicultural training is usually designed to break down these barriers by encouraging effective self-examination" (p. 27).

While the challenge exist, it remains essential that all counseling disciplines face and address the issue when training professionals to provide counseling service for the culturally different clients (Arredondo & Arciniega, 2001; Bolton-Brown Lee, 1987); Evans & Larrabee, 2002 ; Toporek & Reza, 2001). Based on their years of experience in teaching career development, Evans and Larrabee (2002) concluded that self examination is essential for counseling professionals wishing to provide counseling to the culturally different clients. To them "enhancement of instruction has a higher likelihood of being successful if it

## Counseling Issues for International Students

uses as a foundation, the personal examination of one's own career development patterns, personal attitudes, values, and biases that permeate current approaches to counseling" (p. 27).

*Awareness and Appreciation of Cultural Differences*

Silva-Netto (1992) observes that "the functional integrity of a society is not preserved by developing and spreading a single set of closely related cultural systems over the entire country." To him "The American experience suggests that the functional integrity is maintained by recognizing the importance of diversities in subcultural systems and by including these differences in functional ways within the system" (p. 133). By making this statement he was challenging pastoral care and counseling professionals to adjust to the reality that they need to develop ways of addressing cultural differences in the profession. Promoting the concept of allowing and accepting diversities to be the norm for the society means that the dominant culture must accommodate its services to all the emerging cultures. International students represent one of the cultures that need the services of pastoral care and counseling professionals.

In challenging pastoral counselors to change and adopt new methods of reaching the minority or the culturally different clients, Voss (1992) wonders if pastoral counselors have lost their passion for the culturally different. He asks, "Has the 'professionalization' of ministry, specifically, of pastoral counseling,

## Counseling Issues for International Students

injected a set of values and methods of helping which have not been based on any special love of or commitment to minority and poor people” (p. 257)? His concern is that the methods of helping promoted by the profession may be barriers to the changes necessary for the discipline to effectively provide counseling help to the culturally different. An effective multicultural counselor has to cross these barriers of methods that were not developed with diversity of cultures in mind. The challenge is how one can achieve this level of competency.

In their study of Asian students’ rating of counselors, Zhang and Dixon (2001) found that cultural sensitivity played an important role for counselors who were successful in achieving positive results. The study demonstrated that Asian students responded favorably to the counselors who were more sensitive to multicultural issues. They responded less positively to counselors who lacked multicultural sensitivity “on the social influence variables of expertness, attractiveness, and trustworthiness” (p. 259). To them the study clearly confirmed that clients from other cultures have a better experience in counseling relationship when the care provider is competent in cultural sensitivity.

Awareness of the cultures represented by the foreign students is important if the profession is to reach out to them. However, several factors need to be taken into account in discussing the need for the awareness of the cultures represented by the clients.

## Counseling Issues for International Students

First, Awareness of other cultures does not mean each counselor can master every culture she or he encounters (Fouad, 1991; Zhang & Dixon, 2001). That will be impractical. Fouad (1991) sees the impracticality from the training perspective. He states, “We cannot offer a course in counseling for each and every country counseling psychologists are likely to encounter, but we can help them to become familiar with some general cultural differences that will greatly impact on international students’ adjustment to life in the United States” (p. 67). The implication is that training should focus on general issues that have universally cultural implication when dealing with students studying overseas.

Silva-Netto (1992) agrees also that the task of mastering individual cultures is impossible. He sights the fact that American society “is composed of a massive stream of humanity speaking all kinds of languages and representing the incredible variety of nationalities, races, and religions that crossed oceans and continents, leaving home for vision of hope” (p. 132). With such a large number of cultures represented no counselor will have enough time to learn each individually. As such there must be a better and more practical way for counselors to gain enough knowledge that will be the bases for growth and development in learning to provide adequate service for the foreign learners who need the help of the pastoral counselors.

Secondly, Awareness and appreciation of other cultures is more than just

## Counseling Issues for International Students

knowing about the differences that exist in these cultures. For pastoral care professionals, it is a call for personal and professional commitment to learning and growing to be a multicultural person (Bogia, 1979; Lee et al, 1999; Locke, 1993; Arrdondo & Arciniega, 2001). This means personal change for the professional counselor who must be impacted enough by differences in cultures that he or she becomes multicultural in his or her thinking. In essence the professional counselor sees the differences as positive contributions in the counseling relationships and personal development.

Augsburger (1986) advocated that a truly multicultural pastoral counselor is one who is able to enter into another's culture and return to his or her own culture. "They can go beyond empathy, which assumes a common cultural base, and feels at home on the boundary between worldviews. They can enter into another's world, savor its distinctiveness, and prize its differentness while holding clearly to the uniqueness of their own" (p. 20). Silva-Netto (1992) described the experience as becoming a cosmopolitan, which involves moving from the limitation of cultural upbringing and learning to being a part of the society that is multicultural in nature.

Awareness and appreciation of other culture requires skills and attitude changes that impact the thinking of the counselor. The impact must go beyond simple knowledge of the foreign culture. They must impact the counselor

## Counseling Issues for International Students

experientially. For example according to Toporek and Reza (2001) a white counselor may be aware of his or her privileges in society but “may not recognize and acknowledge the impact of this privilege on an affective level” (p. 17). The changes must take place in the counselor’s attitude. According to Voss (1992) these changes are conversions in the sense that “they take place well within the person of the counselor, transcends technique or strategy, and provides a transcendental hermeneutic of what pastoral counseling require of the pastoral counselor” (p. 258).

Thirdly, to become a multicultural pastoral counselor requires one to take special interest and time to learn and develop an appreciation for such an experience (Voss, 1992; Zhang & Dixon, 2001). If awareness of other cultures requires personal change, then one must be interested enough to take the time to be immersed in the foreign cultures. Based on his experience Silva-Netto (1992) concluded by stating, “I also feel the irresistible need to grow in the area of cross-cultural sensitivity and competence, being able to function effectively and creatively within a wide variety of cultural contexts.” To him “This means being able to enter into the world of meaning and significance of other people, grasp their point of view, their hermeneutics of life, and realize the vision of their world” (pp. 138-139). One cannot achieve this level of understanding and experience without hard work and dedication

## Counseling Issues for International Students

A pastoral care and counseling professional must be competently aware of other cultures in order to understand issues from the cultural perspective of the client. Augsburger (1986) goes further and proposes what he termed “Interpathy”, a concept of combining sympathy and empathy and taking both a step deeper in understanding the counseling issues of another individual. He defines the concept as “an intentional cognitive envisioning and affective experiencing of another’s thoughts and feelings, even though the thoughts rise from another process of knowing, the values grow from another frame of moral reasoning, and the feelings spring from another basis of assumptions” (p. 29). He further states that “In ‘interpathic’ caring, the process of ‘feeling with’ and ‘thinking with’ another requires that one enter the other’s world of assumptions, beliefs, and values and temporarily take them as one’s own” (p. 29).

The problem with this assumption is the practicality. How long will it take for a counselor to develop the ability think and feel like a client from a foreign culture? In dealing with multicultural situation the purpose is to prepare counselor to respond to diversity of cultures. The profession must be practical in proposing the necessity of training counselors to function effectively in diverse populations. Cultural experiences are products of years of one being brought up in a particular culture (Luckmann, 2000; Spector, 2004). A year or two years of training cannot bring a counselor to the level of experiencing another culture as



## Counseling Issues for International Students

one's own. However, it is possible for the counselor to develop the ability to connect with people of diverse cultures by learning to delineate the cultural aspects to the issues presented by clients.

The point here is not to totally reject the concept of “interpathy” as envisioned by Augsburger. It may not be possible for one to gain the experience necessary to completely feel, think and view the world from another culture. However, it is possible for one to learn and develop the basic understanding of how cultures inform, shape and determine the worldviews. Such a basic understanding will then help the counselor become skillful in connecting with the issues raised by the clients from other cultures. I agree with Augsburger that as members of human race we share much in common. Also that pastoral counseling involves presence which communicates grace through dialogue.

Remaining open to receiving the client's beliefs and worldviews without judgment is indeed a part of the ministry of presence. Thus Augsburger is right when he states “Presence requires an integration of self-awareness with awareness of the other” (p. 37). The only issue of my disagreement is the extend to which the counselor is expected to go in the training. In this case ‘interpathy’ is practical only if it is viewed as a life long process of learning and growing for professionals interested in multicultural counseling experience.

Fourthly, for a professional to fully immerse himself, or herself in learning

## Counseling Issues for International Students

and growing to function effectively in a multicultural setting, field experience in the training and motivation is necessary. The training must go beyond the classroom setting and include actual experience with other cultures. Diaz-Lazaro and Cohen (2001) did a study on importance of personal contact in multicultural training. Their research suggested “that a multicultural counseling course with a strong cross-cultural contact component was effective in augmenting trainees’ overall multicultural counseling competencies” (p. 52). The participants in the study were students required to chose and work with a cultural group unfamiliar to them. The study concluded that “Both cross-cultural contacts and cognitive-didactic experiences are strategies that should go hand-in-hand in the development of multicultural counseling competencies” (p. 55).

In another research study Jacob & Greggo (2001) studied a university program that required counseling students to interact with international students on campus as part of their learning experience. One of their conclusions was that “International students offer an immense resource of information regarding counseling along with cultural and academic practices around the world and it is crucial to include them as valuable resource in sensitivity training with counselor-trainees” (p. 87). This means that through contact with international students counselors are able to gain knowledge and experience of worldviews that are different from the western perspective.

### Counseling Issues for International Students

The emphasis is that counselors desiring to provide care for foreign students must understand the worldviews that affect the students as they adjust to life in American universities. Thus making interaction with students a part of the training program is an effective tool in preparing the same counselors to provide service for the same culturally diverse student population. In essence it is a mutual benefit as the counselors learn from the students and develop skills that they can use to help same students adjust to the foreign culture. In the study the interaction with foreign students gave the counselors a first hand experience of the cultural issues that the sojourning learners bring to the host country.

Thus they concluded “If counselor educators recognize international students as a culturally diverse group in need of sensitive counseling interventions, then there are opportunities to provide mutually meaningful interactions for counselor-trainees and international students on campus” (p. 86). In this case the counselors in training are able to experience and appreciate cultural issues while the foreign students get help in their adjustment to the new country.

Another way to provide opportunities for counselors to gain experience in dealing with other cultures is through internship. Lee et al, (1999) did a study of sites that provide multicultural counseling training. Their study indicated that although the clinical supervisors play the primary role in assessing the

## Counseling Issues for International Students

multicultural competency, they found no indication that the same supervisors were competent in the area of multicultural counseling.

In explaining the reason for the lack of practical multicultural training for the counselors, Evans and Larrabe (2002) stated that one of the problems stems from the reality of demographic. To them “Some counseling programs are isolated and do not have culturally diverse student body nor is there easy access to a culturally diverse clientele” (p. 32). This concern raises two issues. One is that, though training centers exist for providing practical training, the interns needing multicultural training may not receive adequate supervision since some of the supervisor have less culturally diverse experience and may not be skilled enough to supervise and evaluate the progress of the learning counselor in the field. Secondly, there is the issue that the trainees can have difficulties finding culturally different clients.

However, Lee et al (1999) challenged the second notion of unavailability of clientele. Their study showed that “most directors of programs estimated that only 70% of their clientele were White/European American” (p. 71). They insist that there are other forms of cultural diversity which include different religions, disability, economic status and many others that can provide opportunities for counselors to experience and learn how to deal with culturally different clients. They conclude “It may therefore be a red herring for directors of programs to

## Counseling Issues for International Students

claim that lack of diversity in clients was a major reason for not providing better training in multicultural counseling skills. It may also be that directors of programs are not aware of the diversity that does exist on their campuses because their own definitions of diversity are too limited” (p. 71).

Knowing the urgency of equipping counselors, especially pastoral care counselors, to be competent in cross cultural counseling, the discipline must design ways of providing the training and work out the means for overcoming the obstacles (Augsburger, 1992; Silva-Netto, 1992; Triandis, 1991; Bontrager et al, 1990). Augsburger (1986) stated that “Movement from unawareness to awareness is facilitated best by encounter with more than just information about another culture” (p. 24). Cultural awareness of other cultures cannot occur without real experience with the foreign cultures (Manese, Wu & Nepomuceno, 2001). According to Augsburger (19886) the process of becoming truly aware of a foreign culture is gradual. Over time and “with repeated encounters, the strange becomes familiar, the exotic becomes accepted, the unbelievable becomes believable, and then the second culture becomes a second home” (p. 25).

The reality is that, dealing with international students means addressing issues of multiple cultures at the same time (Fouad, 1991; Pedersen, 1991; Spencer-Rogers, 2000). It may never be possible for any counselor to find a second home in any of the cultures represented by the students who come from

## Counseling Issues for International Students

many diverse cultures and some are here temporarily (Jacob & Greggo, 2001; Zhang & Dixon, 2001). However, one can develop general principles and skills that are helpful in understanding and engaging those who come with multiple cultural experiences. In other words one may be able to find a home in dealing with multiplicity of cultures and knowing how to connect with any culture even without prior knowledge of the same culture.

Like other counseling therapists, pastoral counselors face the challenge of providing services in a multicultural setting. Awareness and appreciation of other cultures is essential if the discipline is to realize its mission to the poor and the culturally different (Smith, 1990; Hinkle and hinkle, 1982). For pastoral counselors to appreciate cultural differences, training must include internship in which the trainees are immersed in cultures foreign to them (Arredondo and Acriniega, 2001; Chen, 1999; Diaz-Lazaro and Cohen; Jacob and Greggo, 2001; & Wu et al., 2001).

The training and experience will help the trainees understand and address the issues of bias, prejudice and inability to understand the issues from the client's worldview or cultural understanding (Ancis and Sanchez-Hucles, 2000; Chen, 1999; Constantine and Gloria; 1999; Evans and Larrabee, 2002; Fouad, 1991; and Parker, 1988). The training should only be the beginning as the learning must be

## Counseling Issues for International Students

a life time process.

This is a challenge for pastoral counseling discipline to make it a part of the training for counselors to include internship that incorporates learning with experience which involves working with multicultural clients (Jacob and Greggo, 2001; Lee et al, 1999; and Smith, 1990). Diaz-Lazaro & Cohen (2001) emphasize the importance of combining both contact and knowledge in preparing counselors for multicultural counseling. Awareness and appreciation of own culture and that of other cultures are necessary competencies for pastoral counselors preparing to reach to the international student community.

*Ability to Identify and Utilize Community Resource*

Multicultural pastoral counseling requires that the counselor apply new methods of counseling according to the needs of the client population. The discussion in chapter five addressed the economical realities as one of the great obstacles for providing counseling service to international students. First it was pointed out that limited financial resources is compounded by the fact that seeking counseling is not culturally acceptable in most cultures represented by the foreign student population (Mori, S, 2000; Boyer, S. P, and Sedlacek, W. E., 1989; Chen, 1999; Idowu, 1985; Oropeza & Fitzgibbon, 1991). Secondly it was pointed out that pastoral counselors need to charge a fee for their services because they have to earn a living from the services and because they need insurance to protect

## Counseling Issues for International Students

themselves from possible malpractice law suits (Jordan, 1997; Smith, 1990; Stone, 2001; Thomas, 1997; Voss, 1992).

After acknowledging the importance of providing pastoral care at a reduced rate Jacob (2001) acknowledges also that “The extent of the counselor’s ability to contribute to the common good is connected to his or her ability to be good to themselves” (p. 287). His argument is that one cannot take care of others effectively if he or she cannot take care of himself or herself because “A linkage exists between personal management of our care and our ability to affect the common good” (p. 287). His experience underscores the financial struggle that a professional pastoral counselor must address in order to continue the mission of providing care to all including those not able to pay.

These economical realities necessitate that professionals seeking to provide services for international students must find means of supporting their services. Speaking about the multicultural pastoral counseling among the poor Smith stated, “However, with the rise in medical and insurance costs and reduction of benefits, a non-fee-based practice of pastoral counseling might actually prove more helpful to larger numbers of such people” (p. 108). Providing free service will be possible only if there is another way of funding the practice.



### Counseling Issues for International Students

Given the realities of pastoral counselor's personal care and the need for insurance, the statement underscores the difficulty of providing pastoral care for the economically disadvantaged. Pastoral counselors, who serve the poor, must find ways of supporting their services. Foreign students are among those who struggle financially because of their limited resources (Chen, 1999; Idowu, 1985; Oropeza & Fitzgibbon, 1991). It is therefore a compelling need for the discipline to look into the community for available resources for funding the services.

Hoover (1990) discusses the need for marketing pastoral care. His description of marketing agrees with the concept of utilizing community resources to meet the needs facing those providing spiritual care. He states: "Marketing involve reaching into available resources to find answers for questions and solutions for problems" (p. 53). The implication is that the community has resources that pastoral care providers can use to meet the counseling needs of the international students or other needy sectors of the population. The challenge is for the provider to find ways of accessing these resources, which, in the case of reaching international students, include finances and social support. Each will be discussed briefly.

#### *Financial Resources*

In order to meet the needs of international students, who are not able to pay, the professional counselor must learn to look to the community for financial

## Counseling Issues for International Students

help. One of these resources is the Church community. This is particularly important because, in chapter two of this study, it was pointed out that pastoral care and counseling has its historical roots in the Church. The same chapter demonstrated also that pastoral care and counseling was a means by which the Church community addressed psychological and behavioral issues afflicting the humanity in general (Campbell, 1987; Ewing, 1990; Maddox, 19991). Providing services for international students is in keeping with the same mission of meeting needs of humanity.

Recognizing the pastoral counseling as a part of practical theology, Fowler (1985) stated that, “Work in practical theology seeks to return to the dialectic between the church’s normative memory and vision and its struggles toward the action of Christian discipleship in the world” (p. 43). His emphasis is that the Church needs to affect change in the lives of people in the society and in the world. The Church can view the ministry of reaching out to international students as a strategic way to impact the world for the better. This makes it logical for the pastoral counselor to seek financial support in order to provide services for the poor and, particularly, international students.

A second resource available for the pastoral care and counseling professional is to seek financial help through grants and other resources that may be interested in outreach to the poor. According to Voss (1992) this is a

## Counseling Issues for International Students

conversion that “involves political shift from being a passive community observer to becoming an active community participant in the political and fiscal processes, especially those that allocate funds and prioritize services in the local community” (p. 259). In other words the pastoral counselor will need to make his ministry known in the community. It goes back to the same concept of marketing because it involves educating the community about the importance of the ministry to the foreign students. Learning to write grants may be a necessary skill for a pastoral counselor seeking to provide services to the international students (Voss, 1992).

Seeking financial help requires the counseling professional to convince the potential donors and political community leaders that it is a worthy course to invest in providing help for the international students. In chapter One of this paper, it was pointed out that international students who attend universities in the United States represent some of the brightest in their home lands (Holen & Gibbons, 1993; Rosendahl, 1993).

This means that these foreign students are potential leaders who are likely to end up in positions of leadership with the capacity to make decision that can impact the rest of the world (Christian Century, 1962; Lau, 1982). The logic is that helping foreign students can be a means to affect change in the world since they are potential world leaders. The pastoral care and counseling professional

### Counseling Issues for International Students

can use this argument to seek grants to support counseling services for the international students.

#### *Community Support Network*

Besides financial help, the pastoral care and counseling professionals need skills to utilize the community for other ways of supporting the counseling services for the foreign students. International students come from cultures where for the most part counseling is met through extended family (Boyer & Sedlacek, 1989; Hayes & Lin, 1994). Professional counselors can meet the need for the extended family by providing substitutes. This means one has to look to the community for families, individuals and organizations that may be able to respond to the challenge. Several resources are available for the counselor to utilize in meeting the community support network for the foreign learners.

#### *International students communities*

One available resource is the international student community where the more advance students can provide support and help to the incoming students (Arthur, 1997; Bontrager, Birch & Kracht, 1990). Pedersen (1991) suggests training international students to be peer counselors “as another approach which has had some limited success” (p. 47). The challenge he sees in this approach is that the students who are sought out for this purpose may not be interested in going through training.

### Counseling Issues for International Students

However, studies continue to demonstrate that, for their psychological wellbeing, international students need relationships with other fellow internationals and American students (Bontrager et al, 1990; Boyer & Sedlacek, 1989; Foust, 1981; Pedersen, 1991; Siegel, 1991; Yoo & Thomas, 2001). In this sense if the international students resist formal training, a different approach can be applied. Rather than approach it as a formal training, the counselor can simply create an atmosphere in which foreign students can learn to develop interest in building relationship with and helping the incoming students. This will help the student to learn without resisting the idea of being in a formal training. The informal approach can serve the same purpose.

Research done at the University of Minnesota indicated that international students seek help from fellow nationals when dealing with personal issues (Pedersen, 1991). This is a strong indication that the students are replacing the concept of the extended family with fellow international students. Thus a counseling professional may need to facilitate groups or locate already existing group organizations from different cultures and facilitate the student's participation in the groups' social activities (Arthur, 1997; Boyer & Sedlacek, 1989). Siegel (1991) suggested that "the counselor has a vital role in helping to build support network on campus and in the community" (p. 73). To him this network means that the counselor always have resources available before a

### Counseling Issues for International Students

student faces crisis. This means that the pastoral care provider will have to make an extra effort to locate the groups that may exist in the community so that when need arises he or she will have the necessary connections.

#### *Church community*

According to Hulme (1981), “The congregation as a local community of faith is the most unused, underdeveloped, and unorganized of all the unique resources of the pastoral counselor” (p. 153). It is another resource for support network available to the pastoral counselor. One can recruit individuals, from the Church, who will provide support for the needy international students. Describing the Church as an extended family Hulme further states that “In its family-like shape there is the potential for intimate sharing, providing one with the security of belonging” (pp. 153-134). In other words the Church can be a resource for providing a sense of belonging for the needy.

Crabb (1975) saw the Church playing an important role in meeting in bringing wholeness to the hurting individuals. He stated, “I am convinced that the local church should and can successfully assume responsibility within its ranks for restoring troubled people to full, productive, creative lives” (p. 16). To him people who are hurting need love and the Church is best structured to meet such a need.

### Counseling Issues for International Students

Another one of the reasons for international students not seeking counseling help is strong family relationships which, for the most part, is the means by which non-western cultures meet counseling needs (Beek, 1987; Hayes & Lin, 1994; Kerl, 2002; Komiya & Ellis, 2001; Sedlacek, 1989; Yau, Sue & Hayden, 1999; Wehrly 1988). This is because family relationship is very strong in the countries represented by the foreign students (Foust, 1981; Tang, 2002). The concept of providing a substitute family from the Church can be very helpful to the international students needing family support.

In his study of South-east Asian Students Fernandez (1988) came up with similar conclusion. He stated, “When working with individuals, counselors may want to take systems approach. Asians have a holistic perception of themselves; that is, individuals are considered a part of the larger family...Behavior of individuals is normally in compliance with the wishes of the family” (pp 164-165).

Agreeing with the same concept, Paniagua (1998) recommended family therapy for Asian clients because family is more important than the individual and privacy is foreign. In the absence of family, which plays such an important role in a foreign student’s life, it is important to consider substitute family for the sojourner. It is this family relationship that the students miss during their studies overseas.

## Counseling Issues for International Students

Lee (1991) emphasized the value of understanding the family dynamics when dealing with minority cultures. He agrees that it is because of family relationships and support that many of these cultures do not seek counseling help outside the family structure. To him it is critical to consider the role played by the immediate and extended family. He concluded by stating that “Culturally responsive counseling practice, therefore, must include an understanding of and appreciation for the role of family dynamics in mental health and well-being” (p. 15).

Beek (1987) observed the strength of family ties in the Javanese culture when he worked in a hospital setting. He found it almost impossible to provide one-on-one counseling. The reason is that “the family is very often present and if it is not, usually patients in the neighboring beds take part in the conversation, privacy being a largely alien concept in Java” (p. 118). This means that the family is always a part of the individual’s life and counseling problems are considered family issues. This is another example that demonstrates the value of family relationship in non-western cultures (Paniagua, 1998). It is the reason for the suggestion that a pastoral counselors substitute families to provide support for the needy foreign students.

Kinast (1990) sees the utilization of the Church members as a great



## Counseling Issues for International Students

resource for providing pastoral care for the needy. To him pastoral care should be provided, not only by trained pastors, but also by the common members of the Church community. He defines pastoral care as liberating. To him, pastoral care is an agent of the Church in “response to persons in their life cycle development or in moments of crisis...”(p. 11). He further explains that this involves “using resources of the person(s) cared for and the resources of the church in order to facilitate the mutual integration of the persons and the community of faith” (p. 11). The Church should be a good resource for family support needed in order to provide adequate service to the international student community.

According to Hoover (1990), Pastoral counselors can tap into these available resources, which they can use to meet the needs of the international students seeking psychological help. His vision of pastoral care goes beyond the church community and have a global impact. He states, “What is received from a pastoral care encounter is poured back out, through the members of the church, into the world at large” (p. 18). This is a concept that fits well with international students who end up, in literal sense, returning to their home countries around the world (Huxur et al, 1996; Marks, 1987; Werhly, 1988).

Malony (1993) emphasized the fact that pastoral counseling has its roots in the ministry of the Church. He states “Initially, let it be said that pastoral

## Counseling Issues for International Students

counseling is an integral part of the ministry of the church whether it be in a counseling office or in a church building or in the homes and elsewhere” (p. 244). Voss (1992) expresses the same concept when he states “Cross-cultural pastoral counseling requires that the pastoral counselor be an agent of compassion and caritas of the Church whose unity is based upon a radical embrace of diversity” (p. 262). Utilizing Church help should therefore be a natural step for the pastoral counselor seeking to extend services to foreign students.

One way to do this is to provide a host family for the student. Clinebell (1981) agrees with the notion of the Church providing extended family especially for those who do not have one. He argues that it is almost impossible for people to deal with problems in their lives without the support of the family. He sees the Church as a solution for those experiencing psychological problems and those with family and personal issues that hinder their development and participation in society. To him “an innovative strategy is needed to provide a variety of easily available networks of caring and mutual nurture for individuals and families within the community” (p. 229). He sees schools and churches as providing great opportunities for providing such a network

Foust (1981) found that providing a host family for a sojourner is very beneficial to the cultural adjustment. He states: “Families provide the further

## Counseling Issues for International Students

benefit of acting as extremely accurate cultural ‘barometers’ demonstrating as society’s values and norms, as well as its common language usages”. He continues, “In most cultures, the family represent the basic part of a social support system; by providing this kind of support to someone from another country, it can facilitate cross-cultural adjustment” (p. 20). This is consistent with the findings of other writers (Huxur et al, 1996). To meet the need for extended family relationship the pastoral care counselors can look to the Church for substitute families for the student. As already mentioned in this chapter, the Church has interest in meeting the needs of humanity in general (Campbell, 1987; Ewing, 1990; Maddox, 19991). Ministering to international students is an extension of the same mission of meeting humanitarian needs.

It is interesting that Vos (1992) makes a strong appeal for pastoral counselors to seek non-formal means of providing counseling. He lists different resources but does not mention the Church as one of the key resources. Knowles (1970) on the other hand sees the Church as the means by which psychological needs are met. He states, “The Church, when it is the church, becomes the redemptive, loving, healing fellowship.” He continues to appeal to the Church that “If there is any place in the world where broken and estranged persons- persons who do not know who they are and Whose they are – can find themselves, the church should be that place” P. 34. In essence the Church is the

## Counseling Issues for International Students

refuge for the needy in every area of life. It is a resource that pastoral counselors can utilize.

While he fails to identify the church as an alternative informal way of providing counseling Vos (1992) makes a theological argument that the Church has a responsibility of meeting humanitarian needs. He states that “This is possible because God himself has plumbed the depths of His involvement in our existence. He has done this not only in Jesus of Nazareth, but He seeks to do this in and through the concrete, historical, contemporary Christian Community” (p. 34). The argument is that the Church is theologically obligated to meet the needs of the suffering and the broken hearted. Doing so is doing that which God values and is involved. Reaching out to international students is a part of that mission.

Churches spent a lot of money sending missionaries and aid workers overseas. It is only sensible to inform the Church that reaching out to the foreign students is one of the most inexpensive ways of reaching the nations with God’s love and possibly changing the political climate that create the need for financial aid. As mentioned in chapter one the reason is that international students return home to their countries as top leaders. Some reach high political status including positions of presidents and Prime Ministers (Christian Century, 1962; Lau, 1982; Werhly, 1988).

This means that in some ways the future political world peace and stability

### Counseling Issues for International Students

in the nations that send their students to study overseas may well depend on the attitude these foreign learners take back to their homelands (Pedersen, 1991).

Werhly states “Many of these students will return home and become leaders in their own countries.” He continues “While they are studying abroad, however, some of these young people are the marginal men and women of today’s world” (p. 5). Pastoral counseling profession can make a difference by helping the Church reach out to these potential world leaders.

The pastoral care provider need skills necessary for developing relationships with the Churches and communicating the need for them to get involved in meeting the emotional, social and spiritual needs of the international students in the USA. Such skills include ability to raise awareness in the Church and to provide training for the Church leaders and parishioners interested in providing service to the foreign students. The training will facilitate the caring ministry and encourage the church leader to “recruit, train and continue to coach carefully chosen caring teams to provide better support for individuals and families experiencing major life crises” (Clinebell, p. 230). While Clinebell’s concern was the developing of growth groups in the Church the same principles can be applied to the ministry for foreign students.

#### *Religious and other organizations*

The third resource where the pastoral care counselor can get

### Counseling Issues for International Students

support in helping foreign students adjust to the foreign culture include religious and other organizations that focus on reaching international students. Voss (1992) consider this a “professional shift from an autonomous, privatized model of therapy to a more inclusive, collective, and collegial model of therapy” (p. 259).

A good example of Christian organization seeking to serve international students is International Students, Inc. (ISI). Established in 1953 ISI now serves in 300 cities, over 500 campuses and have more than 22,000 trained volunteers (isionline.org). Its missions states: “International Students, Inc., exists to share Christ's love with international students and to equip them for effective service in cooperation with the local church and others” (isionline.org). ISI volunteers and staff provide various services to students. Some of these services include teaching them about American culture, helping them with problems needing a native speaker, finding an American Christian mentor in their academic discipline, and (if interested) teaching them about our Creator God and the Bible. The student chooses the services that best meet his or her needs.

#### *Ability to Adopt Flexible Approaches in Counseling*

In chapter three the writer pointed out that international students do not seek counseling because of the stigma attached to counseling and also because counseling as understood in the western culture is foreign to the non-western cultures (Arthur, 1997; Boyer & Sedlacek, 1989; Fernandez, 1988; Wehrly,

## Counseling Issues for International Students

1988). Arthur (1997) suggests the need for counselors “to explore the systems and cultural practices used in the home culture to address problems” (p. 269). If a pastoral care provider is to reach the sojourning learners an alternative approach to counseling will be necessary. Key in this case is flexibility.

Flexibility means that counselors must think creatively of ways to apply counseling skills outside the traditional approach. Corey (1986) discussed some of the examples that explain why flexibility is the key to providing counseling to foreign culture. To him, “many minority clients may prefer active and directive counseling rather than a person centered approach.” The reason is that, “Because of their cultural background, some clients may place value on authority of a professional counselor” (p. 349). Other issues that may become culturally inappropriate include insisting on self-disclosure, expression of feelings and many others. Corey (1986) concludes that, “Counselors who hope to reach clients who are culturally different from them must develop a basic respect for these clients’ experiential world” (p. 349).

Chen (1999) studied factors that cause stress among international students. He concluded that “The counselor should be flexible and situational in using helping methods and counseling techniques, that is, helping approaches need to be framed and used within each particular context that is relevant to each individual”

## Counseling Issues for International Students

(p. 61). Providing counseling help to international students challenges the discipline of pastoral care and counseling professionals to think creatively and explore non-traditional means of delivering service in a multicultural setting (Arthur, 1997).

Lai (2003) discusses cultural issues that affect how one can minister to a Chinese client. He stresses that Confucianism is the key to understanding the Chinese culture and behavior. As a result of Confucianism influence, “Chinese people are expected to demonstrate high moral character, show respect for those who are in authority, and strive for harmony in relationships” (p. 48). The outcome of such a demand on behavior is a tendency for Chinese to save face in order to avoid making mistakes. Given this tendency a Chinese client is less likely to discuss personal feelings.

Thus Lai continues to state “That is one of the reasons the North American approach to pastoral care, which attempts to discover patient’s feelings through conversation, is a frustrating experience for many pastoral care providers when dealing with Chinese” (p. 50). He explains his reason for not being able to care for his fellow Chinese by stating, “I now realize that I had been given a North American pastoral care model (a culturally embedded model)” (p. 51). The challenge Lai faced demonstrates the need for pastoral counselors to adopt



## Counseling Issues for International Students

different approaches when dealing with internationals. Approaches suggested in this chapter include home visits and informal counseling.

*Home Visits*

One of the non-traditional ways of providing counseling help for a foreign student is for the counselor to visit the client at home rather than waiting for him or her to come and visit in the office (Siegel p. 73; Smith pp 107-108; Voss, 1992). Speaking of multicultural pastoral counseling for the minority, Smith (1990) made a strong appeal for the discipline to consider alternative approach to counseling in order to meet the needs of those who are not able to come to an office for help. One of his suggestions is that “pastoral counselors might revive and develop the discipline of pastoral visiting” (p. 108).

In Chapter 2 it was demonstrated that pastoral counseling is a discipline of practical theology that address needs of humanity from cultural, sociological and psychological perspective (Boyce, 1960; Bozzo, 1970; Hunter, 1980; Maddox, 1990). Pastoral visitation is one way of meeting the needs of the troubled international students and pastoral counselors need to consider it therapeutic (Voss, 1992). This appeal is especially interesting because it is calling on the discipline to utilize, not only the church community, but also using visitation, a method already known and available in the Church. In this sense the counselor can train and enable the Church volunteers to visit and assess the emotional needs

## Counseling Issues for International Students

of the students. This method allows the professional counselor to focus on visiting the students that requires more intense professional help.

Droege (1995) participated in a study that involved visiting 16 cities and meeting with over 500 community leaders interested in integration of faith and healing. As a result of this study he argued strongly for the involvement of the Church community in meeting healthcare needs especially of the minority or the disadvantaged. In his conclusion he appealed to the Church to take advantage of the opportunity of providing healthcare. To him the Church stood at a historical moment with opportunities to “make a major contribution to health reform by recommending ourselves to health ministry in congregations and communities and by giving priority to the needs of those who bear the greatest burden of suffering from preventable diseases” (p. 12). Promotion of healthcare communities in the Churches supports the need for pastoral counselors to utilize the Church for providing social and mental service to the international students. Visitation is one of the effective ways to meet such a need.

*Informal approach to counseling*

The second suggestion for alternative approach to counseling is to make the counseling experience more informal for the needy sojourner (Chen, 1999; Komiya & Ellis, 2001; Mori, 2000; Pedersen, 1991). The challenge for the

## Counseling Issues for International Students

counselor is to be creative and flexible enough to adopt methods that may go against the acceptable norms known to the counselor (Arthur, 1997; Pedersen, 1991; Voss, 1992). Arthur states that “Counselors must be willing to be more innovative and to move beyond the boundaries of traditional counseling protocol since these may be viewed as either intimidating or offensive by international clients” (p. 269).

Komiya and Ellis (2001) did a study on international student’s attitude towards seeking counseling. The findings supported the idea that international students do not seek counseling on their own. Therefore he suggested the need for counselors to “explore more nontraditional or culture-specific interventions to make connections with international student” (p. 158).

One can make counseling less formal and more acceptable to international students by applying direct and educational approach where the counseling session appear more of a learning program than a mental health treatment (Komiya and Ellis, 2001; Mori, 2000; Triandis, 1991; Yau, Sue and Hayden, 1992). According to Komiya and Ellis (2001) “These programs could also work to dispel common misperceptions about counseling by informing international students that in counseling, they will not be forced to engage in unwanted emotional expressions, nor will they be asked intrusive questions that would

## Counseling Issues for International Students

inappropriately evoke emotions” (p. 158). Merta et al (1992), suggested that “A review of the research in cross-cultural counseling reveals ample support for a directive counseling style for use with culturally different” (p. 214)

The counseling may involve an informal visit with the student on campus where the visit does not constitute traditional western counseling approach (Siegel, 1991). Arthur suggests that “It is not uncommon for international students to approach counselors in more informal settings such as hallways, on campus, or public areas” (p. 269). Pastoral care and counseling professionals can use the same method to accomplish the job of providing service to the foreign students.

Panigua (1998) suggested that another way to hold counseling is to allow extended family or friends to be present in the counseling session. He included “African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and American Indians” as among those who value extended family systems (p. 14). He warns however against stereotyping especially when defining extended family. His emphasis is that only the client can define what extended family means to him or her. To him the way to define extended family “is to listen to the client’s description of instrumental and emotional supports provided by any member of the community” (p. 15). Instrumental support includes material help like money and clothes. Emotional support includes counseling and advice.

## Counseling Issues for International Students

*Ability to Provide Service in the Midst of Diversity of Belief Systems*

Dawson (1948) emphasized the strong tie between religion and culture. He stated “Every culture represents a spiritual community and involves common beliefs and common ways of thought. Consequent mutual interpenetration of culture and religion. The cultural function of religion is both conservative and dynamic: it consecrates the tradition of a culture and it also provides the common aim which unifies the different social elements in a culture” (p. 46). This definition illustrates the importance spirituality play in any given culture.

In chapter five of this study it was demonstrated that international students represent diversity of religious belief systems. It demonstrated also that religious issues are of special interest for pastoral care and counseling professionals because of its theological and historical roots (Gerkin, 1986; Shimbukuro et al, 1999; Smith, 1990). Miller-Mclemore (1993) sees pastoral theology as a “field that is still trying to clarify its identity in relation to the academy and the church and its methods in relation to the social sciences” (p. 366). To her pastoral care and counseling is a part of pastoral theology.

According to Malony (1993) pastoral counseling is a ministry of the Church and it is identical with the ministry of the parish clergy in the sense that they both address issues of faith, pastoral care and spiritual living. It is therefore important to emphasize that pastoral care and counseling professionals have a

## Counseling Issues for International Students

special interest in addressing spiritual issues of the foreign students. In other words when pastoral care providers function in a community in reaching the needy it should be doing so as an arm of the Church community

Since foreign students represent diversity of spiritual beliefs the professionals in the fields of pastoral care and counseling must be skilled in providing care in the midst of religious diversity. This means that first the care provider must understand the importance of religious faiths in the human development and understanding of reality. According to Malony (1993) spiritual living pertains primarily “to the insights and understandings which lie behind attitudes and actions” (p. 144). Spiritual beliefs shape the way individuals interpret reality and address issues of life in general (Malony, 1993; Shimabukuro et al, 1999; Silva-Neto, 1988). Providing care and counseling for international student populations require that the care providers learn to appreciate spiritual dimensions the clients bring into the counseling relationship.

The importance of addressing these spiritual issues is well stated by Shimabukuro et al (1999). He explains that since spiritual beliefs play an important role in addressing personal and social problems in many cultures, “it is very important that counselors understand how the construction of these spiritual beliefs are linked to the way people react to problems they encounter in their lives” (p. 234). In other words pastoral counselors cannot ignore spiritual beliefs

### Counseling Issues for International Students

when addressing problems encountered by the students. Their belief system may be key to informing the student about the nature of a particular problem.

Paniagua (1998) warned that a clinician who does not understand functions of religions might interpret religious expression as psychological malady.

A pastoral care counselor skilled in addressing religious issues is able and must have the ability to articulate his or her own faith and how that faith and belief system affect counseling relationships with clients of different faith traditions (Naughten, 1985; Shimabukuro et al, 1999). At the same time he or she must develop the ability to identify spiritual issues presented by each individual client and how that affects the client's interpretation of reality. It does not mean that a counselor will muster all religions of the world. However the training must include study of major religions of the world and how they differ from the counselor's own belief system. Only then can a pastoral counselor be effective in helping the international student community from spiritual perspective.

#### *Ability to Prepare Students for Readjustment to Home Culture*

In chapter four of this study the focus of discussion was the descriptions of the issues of reentry that a student encounters when he or she returns to the country of origin. The same issues pose challenges to any pastoral care counselor seeking to provide help to an international student. The counseling

## Counseling Issues for International Students

process does not end with the student's adjustment in the USA. It was demonstrated in chapter five that readjustment to home culture is more challenging to the returning individual than the adjustment he or she encountered in the foreign country (Frazee 1997; Isa, 2000; Marks, 1987).

The issue is that the counseling professional need to think ahead about the student's welfare upon returning to the country of origin, and how he or she will adjust back home and find employment (Betina, 1993; Huff, 2001; Pai, 1997). In describing the seriousness of reentry issues for international students Hogan (1983) states "The failure to successfully meet the challenge of reverse culture shock can result in confusion and alienation or geographic expatriation or psychological expatriation" (p. 5). In other words a returning student may physically return to United States or may stay home but find himself or herself mentally and emotionally tied to the USA. He further warns that, "The extreme reaction is a zealous conversion to the alien culture, not unlike a cult experience" (p. 5). Returning home can be a very challenging experience for an international student.

The training of the pastoral care and counseling professionals must include familiarity with the issues of reentry described in chapter five of this study. They include personal changes in the student's life, attitude and expectations at home, student's attitude towards returning home, giving up new relationships, adaptation



## Counseling Issues for International Students

and appreciation of the new value systems, environmental changes at home and the ability to use academic knowledge acquired abroad.

In order for professional counselors to prepare a student for a successful return home he or she must learn to address these issues with the student from the time the student begins studies overseas (Hogan, 1983; Huntsberger, 1989; Marks, 1987). For example the counselor may need to help a student become aware of the psychological and social changes taking place in his or her life during the period of study abroad (Foust, ed., 1981). Hogan (1983) suggested the use of seminar and workshops to make the students aware of the need to prepare for reentry to home country.

Counselors need to develop skills in addressing issues of reverse culture shock for foreign students. The counseling profession must be competent in preparing the counselors to assist international students prepare for reentry adjustment when they return home (Foust et al 1981; Huff, 2001; Institute of International Education, 1998; Isa, 2002; Pai, 1997; Pusch and Lowewenthal, 1988). The issues include: familiarity with the political change in the student's country of origin, awareness of acculturation process in the student's life, keeping up with job market, availability or lack of availability of resources in the student's country and overall psychological impact of readjustment to home culture. Training of pastoral care counselors needs to include these issues of reentry

### Counseling Issues for International Students

adjustment if the professional is to provide adequate counseling and preparation for successful return home.

## Counseling Issues for International Students

## Chapter 8

## Conclusion

## Why Pastoral Care and Counseling Must Respond

In order to apply lessons learned from this study I will now summarize four points of appeal for the profession to respond to the needs of the international students. First, providing pastoral care and counseling to international students is a strategic ministry. Secondly, international students need the services of pastoral care professionals. Thirdly, it is a challenging ministry. Finally, providing counseling to foreign students is a challenge for pastoral care and counseling profession.

*It is A Strategic Ministry*

International students represent a growing population of intellectuals from all over the world. In chapter 2 I discussed the fact that these students represent the brightest and the most intellectual from their home countries. The study revealed also that most of the doctoral degrees in the top American universities are going more and more to foreign students. This means that the international students are on the cutting edge in technology and science. Providing service to them is strategic in the sense that the discipline will be helping men and women whose intellectual ability will impact the world through their scientific and technological application.

## Counseling Issues for International Students

Secondly, foreign students return home as potential leaders whose decision making can also impact the world. The study illustrated this point by naming many former international students who ended up in places of leadership in their home countries and international agencies like the United Nations. Any positive impact in their lives could translate into positive leadership when they arrive home or wherever they assume leadership positions. Rentz (1987) sights Mengitsu Haile Mariam of Ethiopia who received negative experience while studying in the USA. He returned home, overthrew the government of his country and opted for Marxism expelling all the westerners in the country. The decisions he made impacted the country for years.

It is critical for pastoral care and counseling discipline to extend services to the foreign students who may return with the capacity to alter the destiny of their home countries. Given the example above one can argue that reaching out to foreign students can be a way to make a difference in many nations and possibly affecting the lives of millions of people. A ministry to an international student could be an investment to a future world leader. A positive experience for a foreign learner could translate into a positive experience for millions of people.

## Counseling Issues for International Students

*It is a Needed Ministry*

While they are studying in the USA, the foreign students have unique psychological needs that call for the attention of counselors in general and pastoral counselors in particular. Some of the factors that contribute to the uniqueness of their psychological needs include negative attitude towards counseling, high expectation at home, differences in learning approaches, political crisis at home, family crisis caused by illness or death and overall culture shock. Any one of these issues can result in emotional stress for a student trying to adjust in a foreign environment while keeping up with academic demands.

Providing counseling for foreign students goes beyond adjustment needs in the USA. The student faces a reverse culture shock upon returning home to reenter into the culture of origin. Factors contributing to the problems of reentry include changes that take place in the student's life, attitudes and expectations at home, the student's attitude about returning home, ending of relationships that the sojourner develops overseas, adopting new value system, changes at home and applying the acquired knowledge at home country. All these factors come as a surprise to the student when he or she returns to the country of origin. The unexpected surprise complicates the matter for the returnee.

In order for the students to maximize their potentials, their adjustment needs must be taken seriously. Pastoral care and counseling providers are in a

### Counseling Issues for International Students

critical position to respond to these needs and make a difference in the lives of the sojourners who will in turn impact the world. They need help in adjusting to the foreign culture and in preparation for readjustment back home.

#### *A Challenging Ministry*

The study demonstrated that providing service for international students is not an easy task. Issues that make counseling international students a unique experience were discussed in chapter 5. The first is the fact that international students represent a diversity of cultures. Not only do these students come from many nationalities, they also represent different ethnic groups within their countries of origin. Each ethnic group can be culturally different from the others. The counseling professionals must avoid stereotyping students from a particular nationality as though they represent the same cultural experiences.

The second issue is limited or lack of multicultural training for pastoral counselors. It was acknowledged that there is much discussion in the field of counseling about addressing multicultural issues. The problem is that very little is being done especially in the field of pastoral care and counseling. The need for incorporating multicultural issues in the training level is very critical.

Cultural perception is the third issue that renders counseling international students a unique experience. The counselor and the client bring cultural

### Counseling Issues for International Students

interpretations of reality into the counseling relationship. The counselor whose understanding of reality is based on western cultures will have a difficult time dealing with an international whose interpretation of reality is based on a foreign cultural upbringing. The service provider must learn to understand the issues from the client's cultural perspective.

Fourthly, diversity of beliefs represented by the international students is another challenge to those seeking to provide help to the foreign learners. Addressing spiritual and religious needs is a matter of special interest for pastoral care and counseling professionals. The fact that the profession borrows languages and strategies from other counseling disciplines does not negate the fact that the identity of the profession is rooted in theology. The discipline must use the language of the society to address practical issues from theological understanding. Thus, addressing spiritual issues for internationals is an area that the profession should provide expertise. But the challenge is how to accomplish the task when individual clients bring in religious issues and experiences that are diverse.

Fifthly, the writer discussed cultural attitude and interpretation of mental illness as a unique issue in providing counseling help to the foreign students. Sometimes certain behaviors that may be considered symptoms of mental illness in the western culture can be legitimate ways of expressing emotions in other

## Counseling Issues for International Students

cultures. The counselor must learn to differentiate between what the client's culture accept as normal expression of emotions and what it considers as psychological disturbance. Proper diagnosis is critical in treatment of any illness. In this case, if the pastoral care professional misdiagnose the illness of the individual client, he or she cannot address effectively the real issues needing attention.

Finally economical realities count as another challenge for the profession when addressing the needs of international students. It was pointed out that counselors in the United States earn a living from the profession and must have malpractice insurance. This means there is an inevitable cost to practicing counseling in any form. The practice necessitates the charging of fees from the clients. Given the fact that international students struggle financially and have negative attitude towards counseling, it is impractical to imagine that they would consider seeking the services in spite of their needs.

*It is A Challenge to Pastoral Care and Counseling Profession*

The argument is that, historically and theologically, pastoral counseling is practical theology and it is an extension of the mission of the Church for meeting needs affecting humanity in general. International students represent one population of people that have unique needs that the Church cannot ignore. As a



### Counseling Issues for International Students

growing population, international students present needs that demand the attention of the pastoral care and counseling professionals. As a part of practical theology the discipline of pastoral counseling need to addresses issues affecting these foreign learners.

While providing pastoral care and counseling to foreign students is a challenge, the discipline is theologically and morally obliged to provide them with needed service. Because of the unique problems in providing services to foreign students, pastoral care and counseling must equip the counselors with competencies necessary to overcome the issues. The profession needs to face up to the challenges in order to remain relevant in a society that continues to change demographically. This means multicultural issues must be a part of training for pastoral care and counseling professionals preparing to reach a multicultural society. While providing service to international students presents a great challenge, it is a reality that the needs of this population cannot be ignored.

Competencies necessary for meeting counseling needs for internationals were discussed in chapter seven. First the counselor needs to develop awareness and appreciation of his or her culture as well as differences between cultures. Secondly, an effective counselor needs the ability to identify and utilize financial and social resources from the community. The third competency is the ability to

### Counseling Issues for International Students

adopt flexible approaches in counseling. Ability to provide pastoral care in the midst of diversity of belief systems is the fourth competency. Finally an effective pastoral counselor must be able to prepare the student for final readjustment to his or her home culture.

#### *Concluding Statement*

This study has demonstrated that international students from all over the world continue to seek education in the United States. They are among the brightest from their home countries and therefore have the potential of becoming key leaders and may have the capacity to impact political climate in their home countries as well as the world in general. Their presence presents an opportunity for pastoral care and counseling professionals to impact their lives with God's love. Through these students the profession can extend God's love to the countries they represent and possibly the world. Lau (1984) said it well: "Many of these highly gifted and intelligent young people are destined to become leaders of the social, political, economic and spiritual structures of their nations" (p. 9).

Providing service, however, is a challenge for pastoral care and counseling profession. The sojourners suffer from psychological and social problems complicated by the fact that they are away from their familiar cultures and support systems. Since professional counseling is foreign to students from non-western

## Counseling Issues for International Students

cultures it is more of a challenge for the professional counselor who has to adopt new ways of providing counseling in order to service the foreign learners. The issue becomes complicated when one realizes that the international students are unlikely to seek counseling on their own. This makes it necessary for the professional counselor to initiate the counseling relationship, a concept that is foreign to the sojourning student. While the concept is foreign the need remains real and pastoral care counselors must respond.

Pastoral care and counseling cannot back away from the challenge of bringing God's love to the needy in spite of the cultural issues that make the job difficult. Pastoral counselors are in a unique position to meet the needs of the foreign sojourners seeking education overseas. Their calling is a mission with a purpose to bring about healing to suffering humanity. Speaking about pastoral counselors, Augsburger (186) made a powerful appeal:

“In the face of human suffering, the pastoral counselor seeks to embody grace. In the dilemma of disaster and disease, the counselor offers presence and compassion. In the binds of injustices, injuries, and human insensitivity, the counselor works for justice and release from oppression” (p. 335). In other words pastoral counselors are there to communicate God's healing in every form of suffering affecting humanity. The discipline cannot stand by and watch any

### Counseling Issues for International Students

population experience physical, psychological and spiritual pain when their calling is to help alleviate suffering. As demonstrated already, international students are among those who experience much pain. The discipline needs to be equipped to respond and make a difference in the lives of the needy sojourners.

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