

Chapter 3

Chinese International Students in the United States: Adjustment Problems and Coping Behaviors

In this chapter, the review turns to the literature concerning how Chinese students adapt to American higher institutions. Special challenges Chinese students face while studying in the United States will be discussed. Additionally, their beliefs and behaviors regarding coping and psychological help-seeking will also be reviewed. Lastly, Berry's conceptual framework for stress-coping will be presented.

Chinese Students' Adjustment Issues

International students of different countries of origin experienced different adjustment problems in the United States, in spite of some common difficulties. Perkins (1977) cautioned researchers to pay more attention to the adjustment problems peculiar to their own (international student) group.

Culha (1974) investigated the needs and concerns of international students at the University of Minnesota. Significant variations were found between Canadian, European, and Chinese student groups in terms of the opportunity to become familiar with American culture and having American friends. Those students who were least likely to have a satisfactory involvement with American culture and making American friends were the Chinese group.

In a comparative study, Perkins (1977) found the peculiar problems for Chinese international students are English proficiency and dealing with racial or religious discrimination, homesickness, separation from family in the home country, and unfriendliness of people from the community, which hinder their adjustment to American culture.

Yao (1983) found that in general Chinese students had problems in many areas, including financial difficulties, adjustment to language, schooling, lifestyle, value system, limited career choices and employment prospects because of their language

barriers, parental high expectations for their education and their return to the family, mate selection, and visa change to live permanently in the United States.

Sue and Zane (1985) compared American-born Chinese students, American students, and Chinese international students. They reported that Chinese international students had the most social and emotional difficulties and faced significant social and academic hardships, although they achieved good academic performance.

In a study conducted at the University of Memphis, Feng (1991) reported that the problems particular to Chinese students are financial problems, poor language skills and academic concerns, cultural differences, and social isolation.

At the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Xia (1992) investigated and compared the adjustment problems from a sample of 215 Asian students from eight different countries or territories. According to Xia's findings, the challenges identified by students from the PRC are English language barriers, financial aid, and religious service areas.

Henderson et al. (1993) found most Chinese students in their study isolated from the campus community: they had few non-Chinese friends, used campus facilities much less, and felt unsafe and discriminated against.

Timm and Wang (1995) examined how Chinese students participated in classroom discussions and interacted with Americans including their instructors and classmates. The study found that although a large percent (75%) of Chinese students reported that they had social contact with Americans outside of the classrooms, about half of them regarded these experiences as negative. The survey also showed that Chinese students had very limited interaction with their instructors and classmates in classrooms. Chinese students attributed their lack of interactions with Americans to a number of reasons that include feeling uncomfortable interacting with Americans, being busy, lack of interests, language barriers, and the convenience of many other Chinese nationals being around.

Sun and Chen (1997) argued the dimensions of difficulties mainland Chinese students' encountered in the United States can be categorized as deficiencies of language and culture.

Zhang and Rentz (1994) pointed out international students from the PRC may face particular adjustment challenges, which are different from those experienced by other Asian students. According to Zhang and Rentz, several factors have contributed to the Chinese students' adjustment problems: (1) financial problems, (2) a lack of understanding or knowledge of modern American society, (3) the influence of the Chinese educational system, (4) growing up amid an officially sanctioned negative characterization of the United States, and (5) decision-making styles that emphasize the family rather than the individual.

Surveying the extant literature, two general themes concerning Chinese students' adjustment problems were identified: they are academic adjustment problems and sociocultural adjustment problems.

Academic Challenges

Language Barrier

Chinese students' difficulties with English are identified and discussed in a number of research studies (Kao 1987; Lou 1989; Chang 1990; Ye 1992; Yeh 2000; Wan 2001). Empirical studies agreed that language proficiency is the major source of stress and resulted in much frustration for students from China at American universities and colleges (Perkins 1977; Lin 1998; Sun and Chen 1997; Wan 2001). Kao (1987), for instance, studied the problems of Chinese students who attended universities in the Washington, DC area. The findings revealed that Chinese students viewed the English language as the major obstacle to their academic success. At the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, Chinese students' academic experience revealed that they have difficulties in academic writing (Ye 1992). When dealing with the image of Chinese students as well adjusted and high achieving, Donovan (1981) pointed out that this image is clouded by limited English proficiency and social adjustment which characterized many of the students from China. Li (1993) concluded that language-related problems were common among Chinese international students, since a vast majority of them did not have an English-speaking environment when they were in China, and it was the first time for most of them to sit in a classroom where the lecture was delivered in English with a targeted audience of English speakers.

In the investigation of 268 Chinese students who studied in ten upper Midwest universities in the United States, Lou (1989) indicated that language problems were considered as the major adjustment problems. Lou further noted:

Oral English appears to be the most difficult problem for Chinese students. Speaking English and making oral reports in class have the highest problematic ratings among the English and communication problems. Writing papers and limited English vocabulary are also rated high by Chinese students. Reading text/materials does not appear to be a problem for Chinese students. (p. 22)

In terms of factors accounting for language difficulties of Chinese students, Wang (2003) suggested, from the point view of Chinese students, that there are four factors associated with their language barrier. They are the following:

1. The influence of Chinese language. "Chinglish" expressions are frequently used.
2. Lack of contextual knowledge or cultural background.
3. Lack of language training. The language training most Chinese students once received often fails to adequately help them to meet the academic demands of their programs.
4. Lack of chance to practice English. Many of Chinese students chose to hang out with other Chinese fellows instead of host nationals, which further hinder their language improvement.

Wang's study (Wang 2003) revealed that while Chinese students struggle with English to succeed in their academic study in the United States, they have found ways to deal with various situations. Sometimes they solve their problems on their own, such as practicing more to develop their language skills or changing to majors where language demands are relatively low. Sometimes they ask for repetition. Sometimes they ignore or act reticent. Sometimes they smile, pretending they understand. From a communication perspective, Lu (2002) identified circumlocution, confirmation check, approximation, clarification request, and appeal for assistance as effective communication strategies for Chinese students to deal with their language difficulties.

Incongruities in the Educational System Between China and the United States

Besides language barrier, Chinese students have experienced some other difficulties while studying in American universities. Several academically related problems can be traced to the differences between the educational systems of China and the United States. Since all of Chinese students were the product of the Chinese educational system, they inevitably had to adjust to the new systems as they began their graduate education in the United States.

In a survey conducted by Perkins (1977), Chinese students perceived "inadequacy of educational preparation" as a more important problem than did students from India. Donovan (1981) elaborated on the "educational shock" experienced by Chinese students. He stated:

P.R.C. students tend to assume that American education is basically like their own. Students from China regularly interpret what they see and hear in the United States in terms familiar to them. This leads the Chinese to expect people and institutions to act in ways that would never occur to many Americans. For example, the central government of China plays a major and direct role in the placement and supervision of all foreign students in the P.R.C. and in the administration of all colleges and universities. It is difficult for Chinese nationals to understand the highly decentralized and autonomous nature of American education. Similarly, schools in China provide a number of services and enforce a number of provisions that have no counterpart in this country. It is natural for Chinese students to assume that the school will provide housing and will specify precisely what courses to be taken-because this is what happened in China. Academic institutions play a very different role in China than they do in the United States, and much of what is done by Chinese institutions is left to the initiative and imagination of the individual in the United States (p. 2).

Empirical findings supported Donovan's arguments. In the study at University of Pittsburg, Lin (1998) reported that Chinese international students found the "rules" governing their academic experience in America were considerably different to those evident in their previous academic environment in China. Holmes (2004) also observed that Chinese MBA students in business school were unprepared for the

interactive nature of classroom communication and had problems interacting in a western academic setting.

Sociocultural Problems

Cultural Shock and Social Isolation

The push-oriented nature based on the economic hardships at home combined with the lack of knowledge about America means that cultural shock is enormous (Wang 1992). To most Chinese international students, America is strange and alien. Hence, social isolation is severe (Liu 1984).

Extreme cultural distance lies between China and the United States. Cultural distance can be defined as the similarities and differences between the cultural of origin and the culture of contact (Ward 1996). The greater the difference between the two cultures is, the greater the cultural distance. Samovar and Porter (1991) noted there are maximum sociocultural differences between Western and Asian countries, and they cite the United States and China as an example of maximum cultural distance. Empirical research has suggested that there is a robust relationship between the degree of cultural distance and the degree of psychosocial distress experienced in cross-cultural transition (Ward 1996).

Sue and Kirk's (1973) quantitative study compared two ethnic group students in terms of their acculturation process on three measures and reported that Chinese students were more conservative in the sense of obedience and conformance to authority, more inhibited and conventional, less socially extroverted, less ready to express their impulses, and less socially concerned with other people. The study concluded that Chinese students had more difficulties in their adaptation and adjustment to American culture and campus life due to their cultural backgrounds, traditions, and family influence.

Henderson et al. (1993) theoretical-based research analyzed Chinese students' cultural shock at American universities. They pointed out that strong dependence on family, racial/ethnic discrimination, a different educational system, and "the shame culture" of Chinese people all contributed to the cultural shock of Chinese students and caused them to feel out of place and powerless in the new environment.

Graham's (1983) comparative study measured the relative degree of acculturative stress among students from nine cultural groups. The quantitative findings revealed significant differences across groups of students in assimilation patterns, affective contingencies, points of conflict, and cultural stereotyping. Findings also showed that Chinese students felt the most exclusion. Graham attributed the reason for Chinese students' social isolation to the traditional Confucian emphasis on scholarly achievement, such as hard work and a task-oriented ethic and high parental expectations, which alienated them from more fun-oriented and individualistic American students.

Financial Limitations

Financial concerns are a continuing severe problem for mainland Chinese students, especially for those who rely on the scholarship or financial aid in the United States (Feng 1991; Kao 1987; Ye 1992; Cao 1997). For them, lack of financial aid or inadequate financial resources is most often cited as one of the top ranking problems (Han 1975; Wan 2001). Situ et al. (1995) summed up Chinese students' financial difficulties as follows:

The financial situation may be particularly difficult for students from China, where the people live with relatively low annual incomes and face a very high monetary exchange from Chinese currency into U.S. dollars. . . funding usually comes from either university assistantships or from support from relatives (families). . . Whereas the assistantship generally pays for tuition and provides a small stipend, support from relatives is typically meager and unstable. This situation, also familiar to many American students, simply means that a part-time job must be sought. However, United States immigration regulations do not permit international students to seek off-campus employment. (p. 134)

In addition, most of the student loan programs at the college level available to American students are not available to international students. In a study conducted at Bradley University, Wan (2001) found that Chinese students are somewhat dissatisfied that financial support mechanisms available to American students often are not as applicable or as available to Chinese students.

Yao (1983) reported that, due to limited financial resources, many Chinese students live a modest life. They often fail to purchase adequate health and automobile insurance. Consequently, they may find themselves in desperate situations in the event of an illness or accident. Feng (1991) also argued that financial difficulty is closely related to and has an impact on other areas such as participation in social activities, academic achievement, social integration, and English language skills. Due to financial burdens, Chinese students show little interest in participating in social activities. They cannot afford expensive lodging; instead they prefer to live with other Chinese students who find themselves in a similar situation. This means that they speak Chinese all the time and have no opportunity to practice English at all. Their social interaction is heavily centered on the Chinese community, and they are therefore isolated from the host culture.

For the financial situations, there is a significant change in recent years especially after 2012 when affluent Chinese students flock to US schools. Most of these students are undergraduate students and from excessively rich families. Just as Lai (2012) argued, coinciding with China's rapid economic growth, a distinctive second generation emerged in the early 2000s comprising much more affluent students. Compared to the first generation who were graduates and generally reliant on scholarships to study in the United States, the second generation don't rely on scholarships anymore. Financial issues are not an issue to these students.

Concern over Visa Status and Immigration

There is another very difficult situation that Chinese international students face while pursuing their goals in the United States: concerns about acquiring and keeping a US visa. Chinese students are required by immigration regulations to be full-time students in order to maintain their “F1” visa (student visa). This means they are not allowed to work more hours or to find an off-campus job, even if they have an urgent financial need to support their studies. Also, they cannot apply for student loans because they are neither citizens nor permanent residents of the United States. In a study conducted at Indiana University, Yeh (2000) reported that Chinese international students continually argued they lacked the same kind of resources as US students. Their experiences of being subjected to a marginal status and limited resources generated great anxiety about their future in the United States.

Visa issues are a salient problem when it comes to paying short visits to their families in China. Many Chinese students in the United States dare not go back to China because they are afraid they will be refused visas to return to school. The long separation from their families poses severe challenges to Chinese students.

Moreover, Chinese students face difficulties associated with changing their visa status if they decide to remain in the United States to pursue other life goals after graduation. There are very limited opportunities for foreign students to switch their student visas in order to become permanent residents of the United States. The only possibility for this switch is to be employed as having expertise under the “technical immigrant quota” system (Situ et al. 1995). As a result of this, many Chinese students decide to pursue advanced degrees (doctorate) or those technical-oriented majors in which Americans are relatively underrepresented to maximize their opportunities for future employment in the United States (Situ et al. 1995). According to Yeh (2000), many Chinese students view the F1 student visa as a barrier to their future employment in the United States. Yeh concluded that the chronic stress from the “marginal status” becomes a daily struggle for most mainland Chinese students in the United States.

Coping and Help-Seeking Behaviors

Barrier to Pursuing Counseling

Although studies demonstrated that Chinese students are experiencing more acute distress than other students (Bourne 1975; Klein et al. 1981; Yang and Clum 1994; Yeh 2000), signs of Chinese students’ stress may not be visible to outsiders as their cultural background tends to camouflage this. Chinese parents, traditionally, have taught their children to be quiet, studious, and not to draw attention to themselves.

Furthermore, cultural factors, “such as the shame and disgrace associated with admitting to emotional problems, the handling of problems within the family rather than relying on outside resources,” prevent Chinese students from seeking outside help (Chuang 1988, p. 2).

Research indicated that Chinese people are least inclined to move beyond family and social networks for mental health needs. They are less likely to seek outside help for emotional concerns. When investigating counseling preferences, Sue and Zane (1985) noted that Chinese students did not actively participate in counseling because they did not want to admit they had emotional difficulties and perceived it a shame to seek counseling. Mau and Jepsen (1990) confirmed that Chinese students find it difficult to admit that they have problems and are less likely to seek help and assistance.

The concerns of “saving face” and shame are integral to traditional Chinese socialization practices (Wilson 1996). To reveal any personal problems is regarded as personal weakness, a lack of resolve and determination, and reflects negatively on the individual’s family (Mau and Jepsen 1990). To “save face,” one is discouraged from expressing concerns and inhibited in seeking help beyond family or close friends. In addition, Chinese generally lack of familiarity of counseling concepts and counseling services, since professional counseling service are nonexistent in China.

Taken together, students from Asian countries, particularly from China, are generally reluctant to initiate a counseling relationship. Their reluctance to use professional psychological services may be related to “a lack of familiarity with counseling services, a greater dependence on family and friendship networks for support, and fear of stigmatization associated with needing formal counseling” (Wilson 1996, p. 24).

Apart from the factors above, researchers provided some hypothesis as to why East Asian students are unlikely to pursue counseling. Anthur (1997) suggested that anxiety about pursuing counseling as well as difficulty communication might prevent international students from expressing their concerns accurately.

Coping Resource and Social Support

Psychological Coping Strategies: Confucianism Endurance and Taoism “Take It Easy”

Focusing on the coping strategies that Chinese students use when encountering difficulties, Yue (1993) studied how students’ understanding of Confucianism and Taoism influences their behavior in handling the stresses they encounter in their social life and academic studies. He noted the strategies students employed that reflected Confucianism included self-reflection and endurance. Self-reflection involves examining and critiquing oneself in situations where one may be responsible for what has happened. The goal is to bring about internal harmony.

Endurance involves tolerating stress with “civility and restraint for one’s sake and to preserve harmonious relationships with others” (p. 20). Frank’s (2000) findings echoed Yue’s study. In the study at the University of Denver, Frank found Chinese female students believe that challenges or difficulties were a natural part of life and that, if they endured them patiently, they would survive. Their cultural concept of *ren* or endurance contributed to their ability to persevere during periods of intense challenge and difficulty. According to Frank, each of Chinese participants was confronted by many challenges and changes during her sojourn in America, and they each practiced *ren* or endurance with courage, patience, and hard work.

In addition to using strategies that are based on Confucianism to cope with difficulties, Yue pointed out that Chinese students also use methods grounded in Taoism. Taoism is another important school of philosophy in Chinese history. The word Tao means “way.” In Taoism, the goal of life is to develop a relationship with the Tao. To cultivate the relationship, an individual seeks to free him- or herself from earthly distractions. These distractions include the influence of social norms, moral precepts, and worldly goals. This freedom enables an individual to be free of anxiety (Honderich 1995). The goal is for the individual to be at peace with whatever life brings. Strategies used by Chinese students that reflected Taoism included practicing attitudes of taking it easy and letting it happen. Taking it easy involves taking life as it comes and not fighting against what life brings. Yue (1993) noted that nonaction in Taoism does not mean to take a passive stance in addressing problems. Instead, nonaction means avoiding actions which are impulsive or contrary to one’s best interests. An attitude of letting it happen submits all matters of life to fate and Tao. In the study at University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Xu (2002) found quite a lot of Chinese students recommended employing a take it easy attitude toward English language difficulties.

Support Mechanism

Family Support

Empirical findings (Ye 1992; Ni 2005; Lin 1998) revealed that it is family members rather than outside resources that mainland Chinese students usually turned to for help when in crises or in trouble. Frank (2000) found that Chinese students usually called their family when feeling depressed or frustrated. Zhang (1992) pointed out, the existence of the close ties between Chinese parents and their children and the willingness of parents to sacrifice anything for the sake of their children’s education significantly contribute to Chinese students’ academic achievement.

Support from Chinese Student Community

There is a dichotomy in the function of the Chinese student community. On one hand, Chinese students tend to withdraw from social activities and confine their

interaction within their own community. Consequently, they are further isolated from American culture and lack of culture understanding. Language improvement is hindered as well. On the other hand, the Chinese student community is another available resource which provides support for mainland Chinese students. The Chinese community serves the Chinese students as a means to explore their new surroundings. Just as Feng (1991) reported, Chinese students are ready to help each other. As new students come, old ones always help them, show them around, and teach them about America. Also they tend to live together and interact with their Chinese fellows. Kao (1987) found that students from the PRC ranked other Chinese nationals as their most preferred sources of help for solving adjustment problems. Meanwhile, the Chinese community also becomes a very important mechanism to provide psychological support. Since most Chinese students have experienced varieties of stress in American educational settings, Chinese friends are the important source of emotional support. Although Chinese people do not usually or easily reveal their thoughts and feelings to others, it is not uncommon for them to share their sufferings or pressure (Li 1993).

Both strong family bonds and strong ties to the Chinese students community reflect the self-sufficiency of Chinese culture, both of which contribute to the Chinese students' social isolation from the American culture and provide necessary support when needed (Feng 1991; Zhang 1992).

Berry's Stress-Coping Framework

The conceptual framework for the current study is based upon Berry's (1997) *stress-coping framework*, which considers the cross-cultural experience as a major life event that is characterized by stress, demands cognitive appraisal of the situation, and results in affective, behavioral, and cognitive coping responses. The stress-coping framework focuses on the identification of those factors that function as significant stressors and impair sojourners' adaptation to the new environment. It also helps to identify those coping resources and strategies sojourners used to deal with their stress. According to Berry, both stress and coping are influenced by characteristics of the individual and the society (situation). The conceptual framework is presented as Fig. 3.1.

Specifically, on the macro-level, characteristics of the society of settlement and society of origin are important. Discriminating features of these societies may include social, political, and demographic factors, such as ethnic composition along with salient attitudes toward ethnic and cultural out-groups. On the microlevel, characteristics of the individual and aspects of the situation exert influences on stress, coping, and adaptation. Berry's conceptual framework also distinguishes between influences arising prior to and during the sojourn. In the first instance, factors such as age, gender, education, and personality may be important; in the second, coping strategies or social support may be more relevant. Each of these variable sets is discussed below

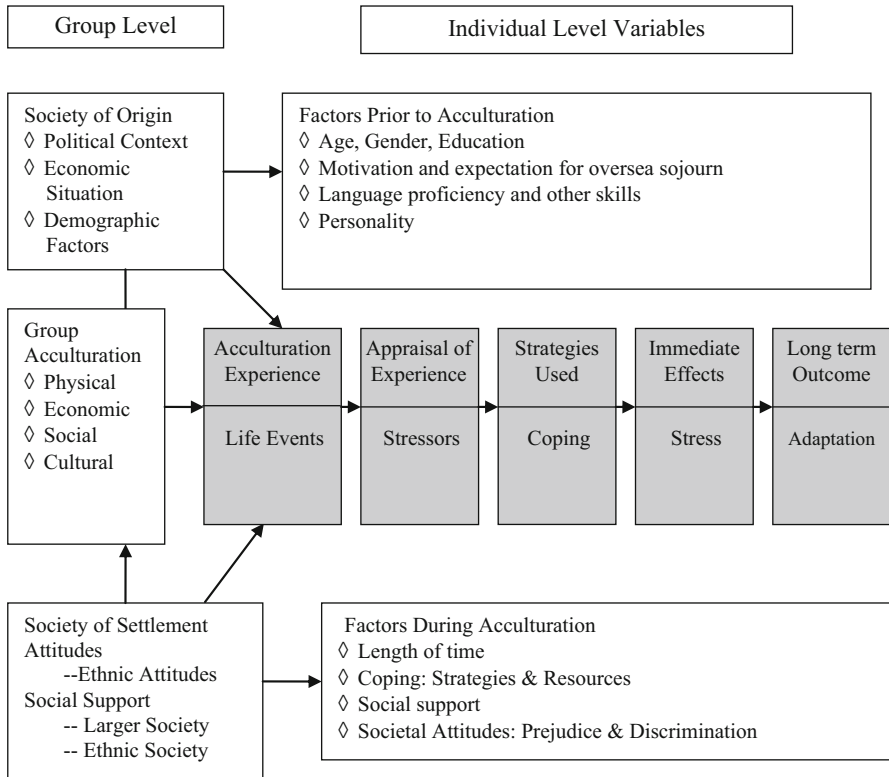


Fig. 3.1 Stress and coping framework for acculturation research

Factors in Berry's Model

Group-Level (Macro-Level) Factors

Society of Origin

The combined political, economic, and demographic conditions being faced by individuals in their society of origin need to be studied as a basis for understanding the migration motivation of immigrated individuals. Using original Chinese resource materials, Orleans (1988) has contributed to the understanding of Chinese policies and practices on foreign study by exploring several overall issues—such as China's concern about a "brain drain" as more Chinese students decide to stay in the United States. Additionally, the cultural characteristics need description to establish cultural features for comparison with the society of settlement as a basis for estimating the cultural distance. Samovar and Porter (1991) cited the United States and China as an example of nations with maximum cultural distance.

Society of Settlement

Both the historical and attitudinal situation faced by migrants in society of settlement need to be investigated. What are those general orientations a society and its citizens have toward immigration and pluralism? Does the society take steps to support the continuation of cultural diversity as a shared communal resource (e.g., multicultural curricula in schools)?

The discriminating features of the host society, such as ethnic composition, extent of cultural pluralism, and salient attitudes toward ethnic and cultural out-groups, are important. Wang (1992) noted that the culture and ethnic relations in a modern society characterized by rapid acculturation and group identity disintegration hold true for America. Yeh (2000) reported that Chinese international students expressed that they lacked the same kind of resources as US students. Their experiences of being subjected to a marginal status and limited resources generated great anxiety about their future in the US.

Group-Level Acculturation

Group-level acculturation means that migrant groups usually change substantially as a result of living with two sets of cultural influences. Economic changes can involve a general loss of status or new employment opportunities for the group. Social changes might range from estranged old communities to new friendship or network. Cultural changes range from superficial changes in dresses or food to deeper ones such as language shifts, religious conversions, and value system changes.

Individual Level (Microlevel) Factors

Factors Existing Prior to Acculturation

Several factors existing prior to acculturation exert influences on individual's cross-cultural adaptations. In particular, one's age has a known relationship to the way acculturation proceeds. Age has been studied as related to foreign students' academic performance and adjustment difficulties. Studies examining the relationships between foreign students' age and their success adjusting on a foreign campus show inconsistent findings: some show younger students to have more adjustment problems than older students, and others show the opposite (Ward et al. 2001). Gender has variable influence on the acculturation process. Substantial evidence indicates that women may be more at risk for problems than men (Carballo 1994). Education is another factor which is associated with adaptations. Although higher education is predictive of lower stress, a common experience for migrants is a combination of status loss and limited status mobility, which increase the risk of stress (Bochner 1981). There is a relationship between the push and pull motivations and

expectations and stress and adaptation. *Push and pull motivations* were used to explain what may force someone to leave their home country or what may draw them from it to a new country. Incentives that attract people away from home are known as *pull factors*, and circumstances that may help an individual decide to leave their country are known as *push factors* (Ward et al. 2001). When immigrants have extremely intense or excessively high expectations about their life in the new society, and these are not met, this leads to greater stress.

Factors Arising During Acculturation

Acculturation strategies, coping strategies, and the social support show significant influences on individual's adaptation. Following Berry (1997), we can describe four acculturation strategies: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. From the point of view of nondominant groups, when individuals do not wish to maintain their cultural identity and seek daily interaction with other cultures, the assimilation strategy is defined. In contrast, when individuals place a value on holding on to their original culture and at the same time wish to avoid interaction with other groups, then the separation alternative is noted. When there is an interest in maintaining one's original culture while in daily interactions with other groups, integration is the option. Finally, if individuals vacillate between their original culture and the host culture, identifying with neither, nor for that matter being accepted in either, then marginalization is identified.

Related to acculturation strategies are the coping strategies. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) have identified two major coping strategies: problem-focused coping (attempting to change or solve the problem) and emotion-focused coping (attempting to regulate the emotions associated with the problem). Social support is another important factor linked to individual's psychological adaptation. For some, links with conationals are associated with lower stress (Ward and Kennedy 1993); for others, links to the members of the society of settlement are more helpful (Berry and Kostovcik 1990). In addition, how long a person has been experiencing acculturation strongly affects the kind and extent of problems experienced (Ward et al. 2001).

Summary

The literature review was divided in this way with the intention of providing a thorough presentation about the issues of concern to many Chinese international students. The influences on their behavior with regard to seeking support for these concerns were noted. This literature review provides the background to the study and also raises a number of questions which focus this study.

To date, no empirical research has focused solely upon understanding the stress and coping processes of Chinese international students in the United States.

Typically, research has been conducted on international students as a single population. Given that Chinese international students represent the largest number of international students in the United States and that they encounter a culture very different from their own, it is worth developing a deeper understanding of how these students cope with such stress. Research suggests that Chinese international students have the most difficulty adjusting to life in the United States. What makes this adjustment difficult and what do Chinese international students do to cope with this adjustment? Finally, what influences their thinking with regard to seeking support and help for their concerns? These questions are important and have not previously been addressed. Such research could help Chinese international students adjust better to life in American universities and could help American universities adjust to their largest group of foreign students. There does exist information on Chinese cultural beliefs and on the acculturation of Chinese people in America. Until now, however, there has not been any inquiry into the stress and coping processes of Chinese international students, who reside temporarily in the United States, away from China and Chinese culture.