The acculturation experience
of Chinese international students in South Korea:
Coping and perceived changes in the cultural transition[*]

Yu Young Lee   Hanjoo Kim   Suk Kyung Nam   Ling Jin   Eunjoo Yang[†]

Korea University

This study examined coping strategies and perceived changes of the Chinese international students in South Korea. A total of 56 Chinese students participated and data was analyzed using the concept mapping method. The results showed that Chinese international students adopted developing language proficiency and using social networks as important coping strategies. They also perceived a wide range of changes including changes in the cultural and personal self. However, the perception of these coping strategies and changes differed by the length of stay. Chinese international students who stayed longer reported using specific coping strategies for mood regulation, which was distinctive from the coping strategies used by students who stayed for a shorter period of time. Students who stayed longer perceived negative changes as well as positive changes, while students who stayed for a shorter period reported predominantly positive changes. The findings indicate that university staff needs to understand and sensitively respond to the distinctive experiences of Chinese international students which vary across time.

Key words : Chinese international students, South Korea, acculturation, coping, perceived changes

In recent years, increasing attention has been paid to international students through the internationalization of higher education. The globalization of higher education which started in Western societies has expanded to the Asian societies, including South Korea. Many Korean universities have been aggressively recruiting international students, resulting in the increase from 12,314 in 2003 to 75,850 in 2009; the enrollment of international students in Korea has increased by more than six times over the past seven years(Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology, 2009). Among them, students from Mainland of China represent about three-quarters(70.5%) and are one of the fastest growing populations in Korea. The increased number of Chinese international students has posed challenges to the Korean universities to understand their unique demands and experiences and to develop systematic approaches to assist their adjustment in the cultural transition. Consequently, there have been increasing interests in understanding cultural adaptation of Chinese international students in South Korea(Ha, 2008; Jeong, 2009; Lim, 2009; Song & Li, 2008).

The cultural transition of international students involves acculturation. Acculturation refers to the process of adapting to cultural changes which may include changes in values, beliefs, expectations, norms, roles, cultural behaviors, and psychological functioning(Koneru, Mamani, Flynn, & Betancourt, 2007). In other words, acculturation involves how individuals cope with the cultural transition and what personal changes are yielded from the transition. Among the personal changes experienced by international students, the most commonly studied one is psychological distress. International students experience unique stressors and emotional pain, known as, "uprooting disorder", which consists of alienation, loneliness, nostalgia, depression, a sense of helplessness, and other identifiable psychological symptoms(Zwingman, 1978).

The previous studies have shown that international students report feeling depressed, anxious, and lonely because of the loss of their social support networks(Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994; Yang & Clum, 1995), their lack of language proficiency, and their academic performance(Hayes & Lin, 1994; Kagan & Cohen, 1990; Ying & Liese, 1994). In addition, international students' acculturative stress correlates with depression(Wei, Ku, Russel, Mallinckrodt, & Liao, 2008). This is because international students who have experienced acculturative stress may refrain from self-disclosing and avoid sharing their experiences related to personal failures with peers as well as being afraid of losing face and feeling embarrassed, making them vulnerable to depression(Wei at al., 2008).

However, international students experience positive changes as well(Carlson & Widaman, 1988; Kitsantas, 2004; McCabe, 1994). The experience of studying abroad offers international

students the opportunities to develop higher political concern, cross-cultural interest and cultural cosmopolitanism(Carlson & Widaman, 1988) as well as to enhance cross-cultural skills and global understanding(Kitsantas, 2004; McCabe, 1994). Moreover, several studies also suggested that international students become more independent and self-confident, while experiencing less prejudice, hostility, and anxiety toward other nations(Comp et al., 2007; Murphy -Lejeune, 2002).

Most studies are concerned with the consequences of acculturation of international students, or psychological distress or other personal changes. However, a relatively small number of studies investigated how international students cope with acculturation(Ward & Kennedy, 2001). Coping refers to individual's efforts to manage specific external or internal demands (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Coping strategies are categorized as problem-focused and emotion-focused copings(Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Ryan & Twibell, 2000) or active and passive copings(Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989; Zadivar, 1996). Effective coping strategies can improve one's general health, social functioning, and emotional state(Ryan & Twibell, 2000).

International students use a wide range of coping strategies to adapt to a new culture, and these strategies(i.e., reflective, suppressive, and reactive coping strategies) differ in their effectiveness. Previous literature on international students' coping strategies has reported that international students use more dysfunctional coping strategies than domestic students. For example, international students often use suppressive coping, strategies which strengthens the association between perceived discrimination and depression(Khawaja & Dempsey, 2008). However, other research has shown that international students are more likely to employ more adaptive coping styles such as optimistic, confrontive, supportive, and self-reliant than other styles such as, evasive, emotive(ventilation of feeling), palliative(i.e., efforts to make one feel better) and fatalistic(i.e., pessimism, hopelessness, and feeling of little control over a situation) (Ryan & Twibell, 2000). These results imply that international students actively employ a variety of coping strategies that may have differential effects on their adaptation to a new society. Therefore, understanding coping strategies of international students is an integral component in depicting the full picture of the experience of international students.

Another component of an international student's experience is their length of stay in a host country. The length of stay may be important in shaping the perception of acculturation experience of international students. Even though there were inconsistent results on the relationship between the length of stay and the adjustment of international students(Lysgaard, 1955; Vergara et al., 2010; Sumer et al., 2008), it may be because of a nonlinear relationship

between them. Individuals may show the fluctuation in the level of adaptation over time, initially feeling excited about new environment, but feeling "less-adjusted" as time goes by, which is part of the "U-curve hypothesis" (Lysgaard, 1955). International students may seem "lonely and unhappy" until their recovery stage in which they found themselves adapted to the host country more easily, and as they settled down, individuals may once again return to a high level of well-being state. Therefore, the longer the international students stay, the less stressful they may feel.

To summarize, personal changes and coping are central aspects of the acculturation experience of international students and the length of stay may be an important factor in shaping the acculturation experience. Therefore, understanding these aspects of the acculturation experience can help to understand how international students undergo cultural transitions and to develop systematic approaches that assist their adaptation.

In regard to South Korea, Chinese international students are the majority of the international student group. These students often expect few cultural differences when moving to South Korea as opposed to moving to Western societies because it is part of Asian culture. Such expectations may help with the initial transition, however, these expectations cause greater difficulties when encountering cultural differences. Chinese international students grew up in a socialist country for many years(Galchenko &

Vijver, 2007), while Korea became a capitalist country which embraced liberty and tradition(Ha, 2008). In addition, in Korea specifically, the demand for higher achievement in education is very high. Therefore, in terms of these cultural differences, it could have an impact on how well Chinese international students adjust to living in Korea(Nam, 2010).

The previous study conducted with Chinese international students(Lim & Han, 2009) also emphasized these cultural differences and its ' effect on their adjustment. The results showed that they are inclined to isolate themselves in their own community in order to deal with psychological distress. This behavior leads students to a life similar to living on an isolated island keeping a psychological distance from Korean society rather than mingling with Korean students. It implied that Chinese international student who grew up in a socialist country for many years are more careful in the way they behave in living other countries and this tendency can be reinforced by hierarchical and male-dominated Korean culture.

Thus, we hypothesized that Chinese international students in Korea might undergo certain stresses from acculturation. Hence, this can be a factor that encumbers Chinese international students' adaptation; however thus far, very few published studies in Korea had been conducted on Chinese international students. Therefore, the study of Chinese students' acculturation experience is crucial.

Even though there were previous studies conducted with Chinese international students in South Korea, there are still several limitations in regards to current literature. Most of the studies focus on the negative aspects of personal change such as acculturative stress and psychological distress(Ha, 2008; Lim, 2009; Song & Li, 2008) while leaving other aspects of personal change and their coping processes relatively unexplored. Moreover, these studies only offer a list of elements of the experience that are clustered based on the researcher's perspective, rather than showing how these elements are configured on underlying dimension from the participants' perspectives.

Therefore, based on those limitations, this study investigated the acculturation experience of Chinese international students using concept mapping, which focused on two aspects of acculturation experience, personal changes and coping in the cultural transition. In order to conduct this study, first we investigated the overall individual changes and coping strategies not only those that had a negative impact, but positives ones as well. In addition, considering the possible role of the length of stay on personal changes and coping strategies, we included both short-term and long-term Chinese international students and compared the findings between the two groups. Furthermore, the concept mapping method was used as an alternative to the qualitative approach that provides a graphic representation of the responses

from the research participants. Concept mapping is a method used to analyze implicit relationships between data, such as ideas, images, words, locations, etc. It is used to statistically analyze the underlying principles within participants' categorization of ideas as well as the similarities within participants' subjective answers(Paulson, Truscott, & Stuart, 1999). Concept mapping is similar to the qualitative methods, in that both explore the subjective experience from the participants' perspectives. However, it is distinguished from the qualitative approach, as it employs quantitative analyses such as multidimensional scaling and hierarchical cluster analysis(Goodyear, Tracey, Claiborn, Lichtenberg, & Wampold, 2005). We believe that the results of this study would help to conceptualize the acculturation experience perceived by Chinese international students and provide information for university staff to respond more effectively to the unique needs and issues of Chinese international students.

Method

Participants

A total of 56 Chinese students participated in this study. Participants were recruited through announcements on public notice boards at a major university in Seoul, South Korea. Participants were divided into two groups, long

term and short term, based on the length of their stay in South Korea. Forty Chinese students, 12 men(30%) and 28 women(70%), enrolled in a degree program at a major university in South Korea were in the long-term student group. The age of participants ranged from 20 to 28 years (M=24.3, SD=3.5) and the length of stay was between 20 and 62 months(M=38.4, SD=10.6). The short-term international students group consisted of 16 Chinese students enrolled in an intensive language program at the same university participated. Among 16 students, 4(25%) were men and 12(75%) were women. Participants' age ranged from 19 to 30 years(M=22.9, SD=2.64) and the length of stay was between 4 and 18 months(M= 11.7, SD=4.3).

Procedures

Participants participated in two sessions, the response generation session and the classification session. The first session was purported to elicit participants' perspectives on their experiences without constraining their responses. Focus group interviews were used for the first session. One and a half-hour focus group interviews were conducted with 4 groups of long-term Chinese international students(10 participants each) and 2 groups of short-term Chinese internationals students(8 participants each). In the first session, participants were asked to respond to the two open-ended probes; 1) How do you cope to adjust in Korea?, 2) what have changed personally since you came to Korea? Participants were encouraged to report anything that came to their mind. After the first session, we combined all the responses from 4 focus interview groups and made response cards on which each response was written. The second session was conducted individually, and participants sorted the responses generated in the first session based on their subjective criterion of similarity. Each participant visited a psychology laboratory on an assigned time and was given the response cards and the instruction stating "please sort the cards that seem to go together into groups. You can decide the number of groups." The sorting tasks were conducted on two probes, respectively(27 for the first probe, 30 for the second with the long-term group; 17 for the first and 24 for the second with the short-term group), and took a total of 30 minutes on average.

Data Analysis

Concept mapping involves two multivariate analysis techniques, multidimensional scaling (MDS) and hierarchical cluster analysis to analyze the structural and relational feature within subjective responses. MDS technique is an analytical method that can be used to uncover or represent the structure of proximity data(Buser, 1989; Darcy, Lee, & Tracey, 2004). Unlike most analytical tools that examine

structure(e.g., factor analysis), MDS allows both idiographic and normative conclusions to be made by showing a broad range of data from individual responses to group responses. MDS models generate a geometric representation as well as proximity data which explains the configuration of the data items by the least number of interpretable dimensions(Young & Hammer, 1987). The geometric representation displays individual data items arranged in reference to the distance between points and items, with those farther away being more dissimilar and closer items being more similar.

In addition to MDS, hierarchical cluster analysis is a statistical method for classification. To be specific, hierarchical cluster analysis focuses on conceptually depicting similar groups of sorted items in a hierarchical structure. The main advantage of hierarchical cluster analysis is that it does not involve researcher's subjective assumptions. Unlike other statistical methods, such as discriminant analysis and automatic interaction detection, hierarchical cluster analysis follows fully inductive procedures(Gerard, 1957). Hierarchical cluster analysis is based on the calculation of similarities and dissimilarities between elements. The choice of which clusters to merge or divide is determined by a linkage criterion, which refers to a concept that all responses are represented as relative positional data and they are compared and clustered by considering the closeness of each item.

In this study, the data was coded using 2 X

2 matrices to generate a two-dimensional solution because it has been recommended that a two-dimensional solution be routinely fit if the purpose of the MDS is to visually display clustering results(Bedi, 2006; Jackson & Trochim, 2002). When an item was categorized with another item as similar, it was coded '1,' and if not, '0.' Then, it was reversely coded in order to represent the distance between the items. These matrices(2 probes respectively with the long-term and short-term groups) were analyzed using SPSS 11 for windows by computing and comparing the stress value with multidimensional scaling to represent the relative distance between items. Finally, the hierarchical cluster analyses were performed to identify whether the data are better depicted with a discrete, rather than dimensional, representation. It allows the identification of discrete clusters or groups of items from their relative placements on the underlying dimensions. In other words, clustering focuses on differences of type by examining how the generated themes were qualitatively different rather than the differences of dimension(MDS).

Results

The results on the coping and personal changes of the long-term Chinese international students are followed by those of the short-term students. Each included the stability of stress values of the MDS, the numbers of suitable

clusters decided by the cluster analysis, and the distinctive characteristics of each cluster.

Results from the Long-term Chinese International Students

A non-metric multidimensional scaling(MDS) procedure was performed on the data from the response sorting session. The MDS procedures resulted in a final stress value for a two-dimensional solution of .253 for the first question asking about coping, and .289 for the second question inquiring personal changes. Both results successfully satisfied the criterion of stability ranging from .205 to .365(Gol & Cook, 2004; Kane & Trochim, 2007). It was followed by hierarchical cluster analysis of the MDS similarity matrix to regroup items into internally consistent clusters. The resultant clusters were labeled by inspecting the constituent items, which are listed in Table 1 and 2. The graphic representations of the results are presented in Figure 1 and 2. Since distance is an indicator of conceptual similarity, categories falling closer together are regarded as conceptually similar categories.

Coping Strategies

Inspection of the clusters suggested several distinctive categories of coping and personal changes experienced by the long-term students. The first probe about coping yielded five clusters

of coping used by the long-term students: socializing with non-Chinese students, socializing with the Chinese students, regulating moods, developing language proficiency, and immersing in the Korean culture(see figure 1). The first cluster, 'Socializing with non-Chinese students' was composed of seven responses, all of which represented coping by connecting with non-Chinese foreign students.

The second cluster was 'Socializing with Chinese students,' which included coping strategies, such as having close relationships with other Chinese students and securing assistance from them. 'Regulating moods' was the third cluster characterized by five responses ranging from the use of social support to cognitive and behavioral strategies that can refresh their minds. The 'Developing language proficiency' cluster consisted of five responses reflecting the efforts to improve their Korean language proficiencies. The final cluster, 'Immersing in the Korean culture,' included seven responses describing various activities designed to help learn Korean culture. The underlying dimensions of the coping clusters were also examined.

The examination of the horizontal dimension of the map in Figure 1 revealed that the coping of the long-term students appeared to move along a continuum from the relationship-oriented strategies on the right end to activity-oriented strategies on the left end of the map. On the other hand, the examination of the vertical dimension showed a continuum with the overt

Table 1. The coping that long-term Chinese international students use to adjust in South Korea

| Category	Statement
Socializing with non-Chinese students	1. I try to date Koreans
	2. I try to get along with Korean friends
	8. I take a part in gatherings or parties as much as possible.
	21. I try to get close to Koreans.
	24. I avoid talking about some issues which could be touchy for Koreans.
	25. I get along with the friends from all over the world.
	27. I live with international friends(dorm, share house)
Socializing with Chinese students	3. I try to get along with Chinese friends
	4. I ask for some advice from other Chinese who are more experienced.
	5. I keep a close relationship with my Chinese friends.
Regulating moods	6. I often keep in touch with my family.
	7. I often go home(my country).
	14. I try to give positive appearance(dress up, make up).
	22. I lower the expectations about adjusting to Korea.
	23. I try to make myself calm and comfortable.
Developing language proficiency	9. I take part in a variety of activities(church, clubs, and volunteers).
	15. I try to be careful to use the honorific.
	16. I go to an academy to learn Korean.
	17. I try to talk to my Korean teachers more.
	26. I should be more fluent in Korean.
Immersing in the Korean culture	10. I go shopping.
	11. I watch Korean TV shows.
	12. I use Korean websites.
	13. I try to get interested in social and economical issue in Korea.
	18. I go traveling to various parts of Korea,
	19. I try to experience Korean culture(i.e., funerals, weddings).
	20. I try to have a part-time job in Korea.
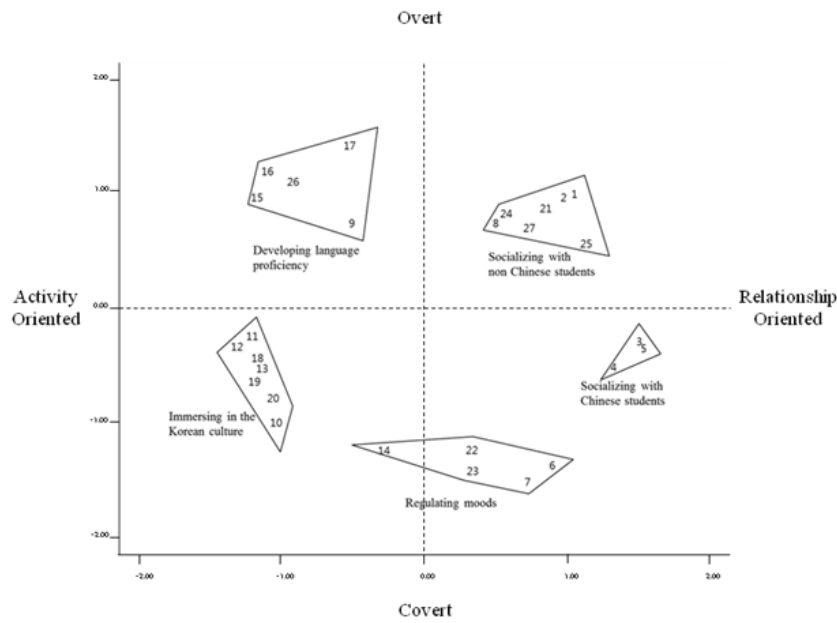
Figure 1. Concept map of 27 elements derived from the analysis of responses to the probe on coping

strategies on the top and the covert strategies at the bottom of the map.

Perceived Changes

The items generated by the second probe "How have you changed since you came to Korea?" shows that the long-term international students have experienced shifts and changes in various ways. The second probe concerning personal changes resulted in five clusters. These clusters were identified as: Changes in cultural self, Awareness of diversity, Changes by strain, Discreet speaking, and Changes in personal self(see figure 2).

The first cluster 'Changes in cultural self' consists of eight responses showing that

long-term international students have experienced significant changes in terms of the cultural identity. 'Awareness of diversity' is a cluster which is composed of two responses which are related to concerns about other people's positions. 'Changes by strain' is a cluster that is qualified by various changes in attitudes or behaviors which can be induced by nervousness of being in foreign country. The cluster, 'Discreet speaking' includes two responses representing the fact that international students' are very careful when they are speaking in Korean. The last cluster is 'Changes in personal self'. This is composed of ten responses regarding international students' experience of changes in their affect and attitude after coming to Korea.

- 388 -

Table 2. The changes perceived by long-term Chinese international students since coming to South Korea

| Category	Statement
Changes in cultural self	1. I have become generous to everyone.
	4. I have not cared about distinguishing Koreans from Chinese.
	18. I have come to know more about my country(China).
	19. I have come to recognize strongly that I am Chinese.
	20. I have become more patriotic.
	21. I have come to closer to Chinese people.
	22. I have tried to help Chinese friends in trouble,.
	24. I have come to miss my country more.
Awareness of diversity	2. I have learned to understand other's positions.
	23. I have become more considerate of others' position.
Changes by strain	3. I have changed in perspectives to look at the problems.
	11. I have changed my mind to settle down in Korea.
	14. I have become nervous when I meet older people(the use of the honorific).
	25. I have experienced Korean life style(going to bed late, eating late, etc).
	26. I have cared about my appearance more.
	27. I have been more fluent in Korean.
	28. I drink more alcohol.
	29. I have been capable of managing my time.
Discreet speaking	15. I have tried to think more before I speak.
	17. I have talked less in class.
Changes in personal Self	5. I have been introverted.
	6. I have been extroverted.
	7. I have been more independent.
	8. I have been patient and strong.
	9. I have come to know about myself more clearly.
	10. I have lost my confidence.
	12. I have been more depressed recently.
	13. I have become lonely.
	16. I have lost curiosity and the desire to achieve my dreams.
	30. I have become mature.
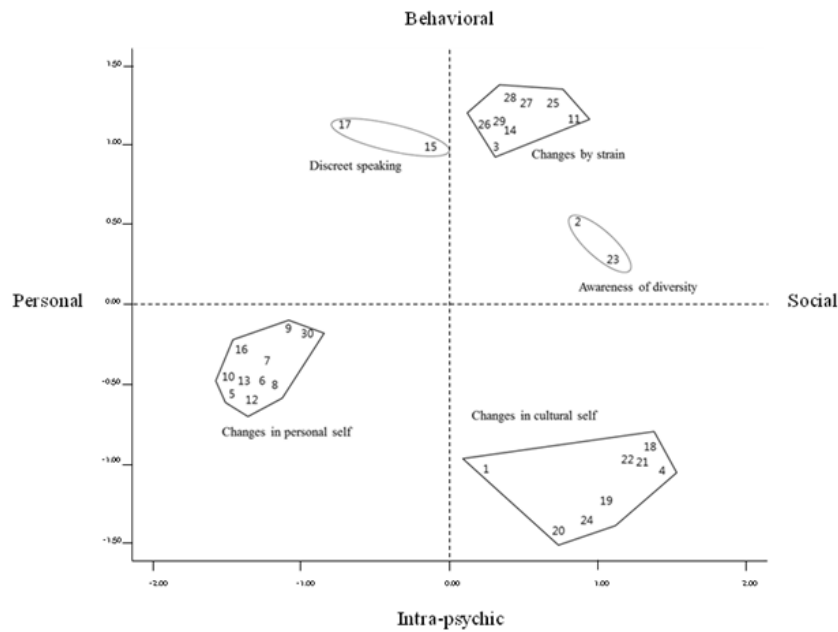
Figure 2. Concept map of 30 elements derived from the analysis of responses to the probe on perceived changes

The map in Figure 2 was examined to identify underlying dimensions. The horizontal dimension represented the domains where these changes are present. The responses on the left end belong to the personal domain, while those on the right end represent the social domain changes. The vertical dimension reflected a continuum with intra-psychic changes on the bottom and behavioral changes on the top.

Results from the Short-Term International Students

The same MDS procedures were performed with the short-term students and yielded a final stress value for a two dimensional solution of .275 for the coping question and .228for the personal change question, which represents stability of the results(Gol & Cook, 2004; Kane & Trochim, 2007). The clusters and corresponding responses are presented in Table 3 and 4.

Coping Strategies

The first probe about coping generated a rather limited list with the short-term students compared to those of long-term students. Four clusters of coping were found(see figure 3): Learning languages, Immersing in the Korean culture, Socializing with other Chinese people, and Being mindful of international relations.

Table 3. The coping of short-term Chinese international students use to adjust in South Korea

Category	Statement
Learning languages	2. I study Korean hard.
	3. I study English hard.
Immersing in Korean Culture	1. I watch Korean movies and TV shows.
	4. I try to make more Korean friends.
	5. I drink with Korean friends.
	6. I work part-time jobs(working as Chinese tutors, working in restaurants).
	7. I take part in a variety of activities(clubs, and volunteers).
	8. I try to experience various aspects of Korean culture.
	12. I travel or visit many places in Korea during holidays.
Socializing with other Chinese	9. I try to keep in contact with family more often.
	10. I get help from Chinese friends.
	11. I try to contact my home town family and friends more often.
	15. I try to find a solution with on-line Chinese communities when I am in trouble.
Being mindful of international relations	13. I avoid talking about some political issues which could be touchy (ex. Taiwan, Hong Kong).
	14. I don't compare Korea with China on purpose.

'Learning languages' includes two responses of studying Korean and English. The second cluster, 'Immersing in the Korean culture' is composed of diverse activities including socializing, traveling, and working, all of which contribute to understanding the Korean culture better. Four responses in the 'Socializing with other Chinese' cluster are related to asking help from family or Chinese friends. The final cluster, 'Being mindful of international relations' consists of two responses showing that they avoid sensational political issues while they talk to other Korean students.

The examination of the horizontal dimension of the coping map in Figure 3 revealed that shot-term international students' coping strategies appear to vary on a continuum; relationship-oriented coping on the right end to activity-oriented coping on the left end. The examination of the vertical dimension suggested a continuum of the Chinese culture-oriented coping on the top and the Korean culture-oriented coping on the bottom of the map.
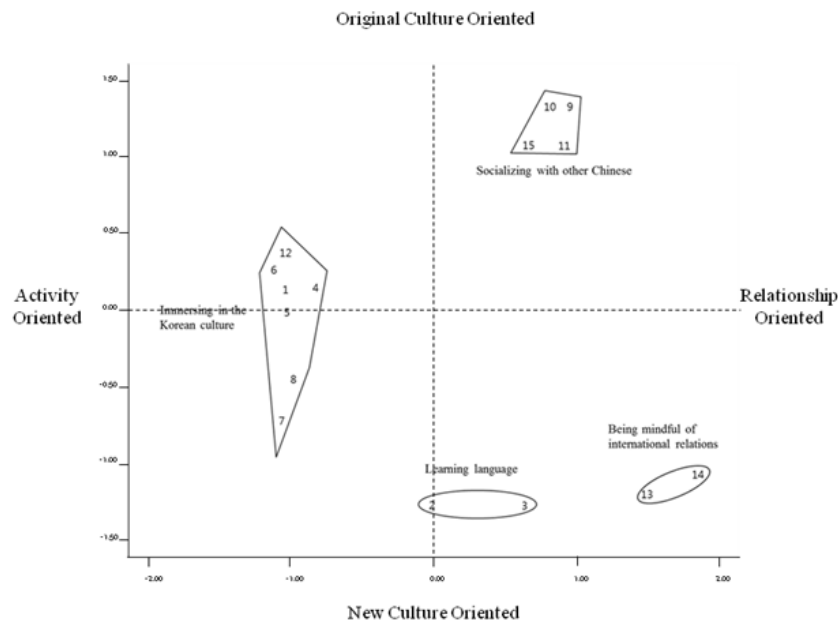
Figure 3. Concept map of 15 elements derived from the analysis of responses to the probe on coping

Perceived Changes

The second probe on personal changes generated four clusters with short-term students(see figure 4); changes in personal self, longing for hometown family and friends, increase in leisure activities, and changes in cultural self. The cluster of 'Changes in personal self' consisted of the responses concerning changes in intro or extroversion, independence, internal strength and patience, and other indicators of mental health and stability. The 'Longing for hometown family and friends' cluster were represented by the responses of feeling homesick. The third cluster 'Increase in leisure activities' documented the changes of how

they became less concerned about academic and more engaged in socializing and leisure activities. The last was 'Changes in cultural self' which was characterized by broadening cultural perspectives and valuing of their Chinese cultural heritage.

The examination in Figure 4 revealed same dimensional structure found with long-term students. The horizontal continuum represented the personal domain on the left end and the social domain on the right end of the map. In addition, the examination on a vertical continuum showed a dimension with the bottom representing the intra-psychic changes and the top reflecting behavioral changes.

Table 4. The changes perceived by short-term Chinese international students since coming to South Korea

| Category	Statement
Changes in personal self	5. I became extroverted.
	7. I have become more mature.
	9. I have become more independent.
	11. I have come to know about myself more clearly.
	19. I have become more generous to other people's circumstances
	21. I have more refinement in overall aspects.
Longing for hometown family and friends	12. I have tried to understand more about my family and friends.
	13. I have thought more about my family.
Increase in leisure activities	1. Stress from studying has decreased, I have done only what I want to do.
	2. Competitiveness with friends ha decreased, and I have become closer to friends.
	3. I have had opportunities to relax and had more time to play.
	4. Motivation to learn Korean has decreased.
	6. I have participated in a variety of activities.
	14. I drink alcohol more often.
	16. Relations with Chinese friends in my country have improved.
	20. I have met more foreigners(except Korean).
Changes in cultural self	8. I have come to love my country more.
	10. I have come to know more about my country(China).
	15. I have more interest in politics, economics, and current events.
	17. I have viewed problems such as political issues in Asia countries more objectively.
	18. I have broadened my view of the world.
	22. My cultural self-identity as Chinese has increased, I have become concerned about my behavior as a Chinese student.
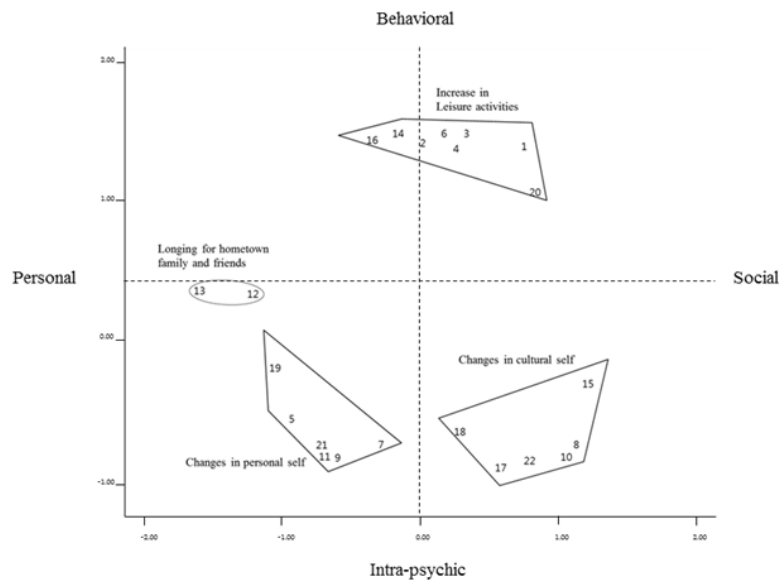
Figure 4. Concept map of 22 elements derived from the analysis
of responses to the probe on perceived changes

Discussion

The current study aimed to explore coping
strategies and perceived changes of Chinese
international students in Korea using MDS
analysis of concept mapping. The analysis of
MDS showed both similarities and dissimilarities
in the experiences of long-term and short-term
Chinese international student. Details of analysis
are discussed in regard to underlying dimensions
and clusters of coping strategies and perceived
changes, followed by limitations and suggestions.

Dimensions and number of clusters

The differences in the dimensions of coping
strategies were found between the two groups.

Specifically, the results with the both group
showed the same horizontal dimension of activity
oriented – relationship oriented strategies.
However, they differed in the vertical dimension.
The vertical dimension of long-term Chinese
international students represented overt – covert
strategies while that of short-term students
reflected the original culture oriented – new
culture oriented strategies. The difference in the
vertical dimension of coping strategies implies
that the longer exposure to a new culture
accompanies a shift from the overt, culture-
bound framework to the covert, individual-based
framework in the conceptualization of their
coping experiences. This shift appears to be
consistent with the previous finding that
international students who were exposed to

- 394 -

various cultural experiences focused on internal individual characteristics than observable cultural characteristics when detecting differences(Drews, Meyers, & Peregrine, 1996). Similarly, it appears that short-term students perceive their coping strategies within the two-culture context, while long-term students comprehend them within the individual context.

However, such differences between the two groups were not found in the dimensions of perceived changes. The underlying dimensions of the perceived changes were identical in both long and short-term Chinese international students. The results showed the vertical dimension of behavioral changes – intrapsychic changes and the horizontal dimension of changes in personal domain – changes in social domain. These similarities indicate that the content of the perceived changes may vary between both short and long-term Chinese international students, but they organize their changes from an individual perspective rather than a cultural perspective regardless of the duration of stay. Despite such similarities in the dimensions, long-term students reported more diverse responses than short-term students. This may be simply because long-term students have stayed longer and have had more experiences in South Korea. Yet, it may also be partly because of the shift in the aforementioned framework found with long-term students. The longer they stay in a new culture, the more individualized and diversified their framework for conceptualizing

their experiences may become.

Coping strategies

The results yielded two sets of clusters of coping strategies with long-term and short-term Chinese international students. Long-term generated five clusters with 27 responses: socializing with non-Chinese students, socializing with the Chinese students, regulating moods, developing language proficiency, and immersing in Korean culture. Short-term students produced four clusters with 15 responses: learning languages, immersing in the Korean culture, socializing with other Chinese, and being mindful of international relations. Noticeably, developing language fluency and maintaining close relationships with individuals in the host country and in home country arethe common factors in coping strategies between the two groups. The importance of language proficiency has been repeatedly emphasized in the literature. The greater level of language proficiency facilitates cultural adjustment and lowers acculturative stress(Kao & Gansneder, 1995; Ward & Kennedy, 1993; Yeh & Inose, 2003; Yeh & Wang, 2000).

The use of social relationships also appears to be critical coping strategies for both long-term and short-term international students. This finding is consistent with the previous studies reporting that social support plays an important role in the adjustment of international students

by moderating acculturative stress and mental health symptoms(Lee, Koeske, & Sales, 2004; Misra, Crist, & Burant, 2003; Yeh & Inose, 2003). However, there are differences between the two groups in the target of the social relationships. Long-term students stated that they kept close relationships not only with Chinese students, but also with Korean students and other international students. In addition, they perceived that socializing with Korean and other international students as an independent category(Socializing with non-Chinese Students) distinctive from engaging in diverse activities to learn Korean culture(Immersing in the Korean Culture). However, short-term students reported that their major relationships were with other Chinese students. In regard to the relationships with Korean students, short-term students perceived that it was a part of their coping strategies to learn Korean culture although it didn't significantly influence the students' global awareness and international competencies. The results of this study imply that the multicultural competencies and perspectives of long-term students help them to expand the sources of social support, while short-term students' support system is rather limited.

In addition, only long-term students perceived the mood regulation strategy as an independent category of coping strategies. This indicates that the need to cope with emotional difficulties aroused by cultural transitions may be specific to long-term students. The category of Regulating

Mood included different psychosocial copings including relational, behavioral, cognitive, and emotional strategies. While some reported that international students used more dysfunctional copings compared to the domestic students (Khawaja & Dempsey, 2008), the finding of this study supports that long-term students employ quite adaptive coping strategies(Ryan & Twibell, 2000).

Perceived changes

Chinese international students reported various changes in self and perspectives. Long-term students reported five clusters with 30 responses: changes in cultural self, awareness of diversity, changes by strain, discreet speaking, and changes in personal self. Short-term students generated four clusters with 22 responses: changes in personal self, longing for hometown family and friends, increase in leisure activities, and changes in cultural self. The changes in cultural self and personal self were common for both groups, indicating that cultural transitions offer various challenges to transform their self-identity. In particular, the changes associated with how they see their country and ethnic group seem most obvious, as they experience the encounter of two different cultures. On the other hand, the changes in personal self reflect personal development facilitated by the acculturation experience.

Interestingly, the items of changes in cultural

self were nearly identical in both groups, yet the items of changes in personal self were relatively different. The short-term students reported only positive changes in themselves(e.g., "I have become generous to other people's circumstances", "I have more refinement in overall aspects."), whereas the long-term international students perceived not only positive but also negative changes(e.g., "I have lost my confidence", "I have lost curiosity and the desire to achieve my dreams"). Other clusters of long-term students also represent rather negative changes. In the category of Changes by Strain concerning changes caused by their attempts to deal with acculturation struggles, negative changes were represented by the items such as "I have changed my mind to settle down in Korea", "I drink more alcohol." The category of Discreet Speaking also indicated that they have become more cautious when speaking to others in South Korea. The perceived changes of short-term students were in contrast to those of long-term students. Short-term students reported that they have become more aware of the importance of family and friends, felt less stressed, and engaged in more leisure activities.

This may be due to short-term students being in the 'honeymoon stage,' where individuals are excited and fascinate by the new culture(Black, 1991), while long-term students have passed it and encountered more challenges aroused by the cultural shirt. Therefore, short-term students are inclined to see the new environment including

the Korean culture and people from a more positive perspective. Long-term students, in contrast, have moved beyond this fascinating initial stage and are faced with acculturation challenges and experience stress and adjustment difficulties. Moreover, this perception of negative changes is likely to be associated with the long-term students' unique coping category of mood regulation. Long-term students may perceive a need for coping with mood regulation because of the acculturation challenges and stress, yet they are still affected by strain and perceive negative changes.

Limitations and Implications for future research and practice

The results of this study provide a preliminary understanding of the perspectives of Chinese international students as well as conceptualize the experience of Chinese students' acculturation in South Korea, which serve as a basis for future studies and practice. However, there are still several limitations in this study. One of the limitations of this study is the limited scope of the sample used in this study. In particular, this study included only Chinese international students enrolled in a major university in Seoul. Although the concept mapping method may offer in-depth information of the subjective experience of research participants, its results can be affected by the characteristics of the sample, limiting the

generalizability. Thus, the findings of this study may have limited applicability to the international student groups with other nationals or enrolled in other universities. Second, the number of short-term students was smaller than that of long-term students. The differences in the sample size could have affected the generated responses or sorting, thus, the results of this study should be interpreted with caution. Another limitation concerns the arbitrary distinction of short-term and long-term students. We considered those staying less than 3 academic semesters short-term and those staying more than 4 semesters long-term because Chinese international students whom we spoke to informally reported that significant changes were often perceived during the second year. However, this anecdotal reports offer only limited support for the distinction used in this study. Thus, it may be important to follow up Chinese international students to accurately portrait their changes through time. Moreover, this study did not investigate the level of their adjustment such as general distress, academic adjustment, social adjustment, or life satisfaction. Even though the results showed that the types of various changes that could be related to adjustment, the adjustment indices themselves were not included in this study, which warrants the attention of future studies. Lastly, the retrospective nature and reliance on the self-reporting of participants could have resulted in important aspects of particular experiences being

forgotten or misremembered(Hill & Corbett, 1993).

Even though there are some limitations in this study, there are implications for further research and practice based on the results. The most important aspect in this study is the possibility of bridging the gap between quantitative studies and qualitative studies concerning the acculturation experience of international students in South Korea. To be specific, most of the previous studies concerning Chinese international students in South Korea have used qualitative methods that are often influenced by the researchers ' theoretical grounds. The use of the concept mapping method can help to conceptualize the cognitive structure of their experiences from the perspectives of Chinese international students. In addition, the majority of quantitative studies on international students were conducted in western societies (Lam, 2005; Tsang, 2001), which may not applicable to those in Asian countries. This study could be meaningful, as it may serve as a foundation to develop a research model that is more appropriate for Chinese and/or other Asian international students in South Korea.

Moreover, the findings of this study may have implications for university staff working with international students. The results of this study suggest that Chinese international students believe that language proficiency, immersion in a host culture, and extended social networks are integral in coping with acculturative stress. Thus,

relevant programs and services should be available to facilitate their coping. In addition, the support for Chinese international students needs to be tailored with the consideration of the characteristics of these students in different stages. Specifically, the negative personal changes such as feeling depressed or lonely are more likely to be experienced by long-term students than short-term students. Therefore, regular outreach preventions and counseling services by professionals with multicultural competencies could be effective in helping long-term international students.

Reference

Anderson, T. R., & Myer, T. E. (1985). Presenting problem, counselor contacts, and "no shows": International and American college students. *Journal of College Personnel, 26,* 500-503.

Berry, J. (2003). Conceptual approaches to acculturation. In K. Chun, P. Balls Organista, & G. Marin(Eds.), *Acculturation: Advances in theory, measurement and applied research*(pp.17 – 37). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Bedi, R. P. (2006). Concept mapping the client's perspective on counseling alliance formation. *Journal of counseling psychology, 53* (1)*,* 26-35.

Black, J. S. (1991). Managerial Behaviors & Job performance: a successful manager in Los Angeles may not succeed in Hong Kong. *Journal of International Business Studies, 22(1),* 99-113.

Buser, S. J. (1989). A counseling practitioner's primer to the use of multidimensional scaling. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 67*(7), 420-423.

Carver, C., Scheier, M., & Weintraub, J. (1989). Assessing coping strategies: A theoretically based approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 56,* 267-283.

Carlson, J. S., & Widaman, K. F. (1988). The effects of study abroad during college on attitudes toward other cultures. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 12*, 1 – 17.

Cha, M., & Chang, W. (2009). Learning through working: a case study of Chinese college students in South Korea. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education, 29*, 311-320.

Comp, D., Gladding, S., Rhodes, G., Stephenson, S., & Berg, M. V. (2007). Literature and resources for education abroad outcomes assessment. In M. C. Bolen(Ed.). A guide to outcomes assessment in education abroad (pp.97-136). Carlisle, PA: The Forum on Education Abroad.

Darcy, M., Lee, D., & Tracey, T. J. G. (2004). Complementary approaches to individual differences using paired comparisons and multidimensional scaling: Applications to multicultural counseling competence. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 51*(2)*,* 139-150.

Drews, D. R., Meyer, L. L., & Peregrine, P. N. (1996). Effects of study abroad on conceptualization of national groups. *College student journal, 30*, 452-461.

Galchenko, I., & van de Vijver, F. J. R. (2007).

The role of perceived cultural distance in the acculturation of exchange students in Russia. *Intercultural Journal of Intercultural Relations, 31,* 181-197.

Gerard, R. W. (1957). Units and concepts of biology. *Science, 125,* 429-433.

Gol, A. R., & Cook, S. W. (2004). Exploring the underlying dimensions of coping: A concept mapping approach. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 23,* 155-171.

Goodyear, R. K., Tracey, T. J., Claiborn, C. D., Lichtenberg, J. W., & Wampold, B. E. (2005). Ideographic concept mapping in counseling psychology research: Conceptual overview, methodology,and illustration. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52* (2), 236- 242.

Ha, J. H. (2008). A qualitative study of Chinese students' adaptation to Korean college life [in Korean]. *The Korean Journal of Counseling and Psychotherapy, 20* (2), 473-496.

Hayes, R. L., & Lin, H-R. (1994). Coming to America: Developing social support systems for international students. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 22.* 7-16.

Hill, C. E., & Corbett, M. M. (1993). A perspective on the history of process and outcome research in counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 40(1),* 3-24.

Jackson, K. M., & Trochim, W. M. K. (2002). Concept mapping as an alternative approach for the analysis of open-ended survey responses. *Organizational Research Methods, 5,* 307-336.

Jeong, E. I. (2009). Career-related adaptation of Chinese students in Korea: Focus on career-preparation behavior, sense of career identity, and career attitude maturity [in Korean]. *The Journal of Career Education Research, 22* (4), 109-131.

Kane, M., & Trochim, W. M. K. (2007). *Concept mapping for planning and evaluation.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kao, C.-W., & Gansneder, B. (1995). An assessment of class participation by international Graduate students. *Journal of College Student Development, 36,* 132 - 140.

Kagan, H., & Cohen, J. (1990). Cultural adjustment of international students. *Psychological Science, 1,* 133-137.

Khawaja, N. G., & Dempsey, J. (2008) A comparison of International and Domestic Tertiary Students in Australia. *Australian Journal of Guidance & Counseling 18,* 30-46.

Kitsantas, A. (2004). Studying abroad: The role of college student's goals on the development of cross-cultural skills and global understanding. *College Student Journal, 38,* 441 - 452.

Koester, J. (1985). *A profile of the U.S. student abroad.* New York: Council on International Education Exchange.

Koneru, V. K., Weisman, D. E., Mamani, A. G., Flynn, P. M., & Betancourt, H. (2007). Acculturation and mental health: Current findings and recommendations for future research. *Applied and Preventive Psychology, 12,* 76-96.

Lam, B. T. (2005). Self-construal and depression among Vietnamese-American adolescents. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 29,* 239-250.

Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal and coping*. New York, NY: Springer.

Lee, R. M., & Robbins, S. B. (1998). The relationship between social connectedness and anxiety, self-esteem, and social identity. *Journal of counseling psychology, 45,* 338-345.

Lee, J-. S., Koeske, G. F., & Sales, E. (2004). Social support buffering of acculturative stress: a study of mental health symptoms among Korean international students. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 28,* 399-414.

Lim, C. H. (2009). Acculturative stresses and adjustment elements of Chinese students' studying in Korea [in Korean]. *Korean Journal of Life Science, 18* (2), 93-112.

Lim, S., & Han, G. (2009). Socio-Psychological predictors of psychological maladjustments among Chinese students in Korea. *The Korean Journal of School Psychology, 6(3),* 413- 427.

Lysgaard, S. (1955). Adjustment in a foreign society. Norwegian Fulbright grantees visiting the United States. *International Social Science Bulletin, 7,* 45-51.

McCabe, L. T. (1994). The development of a global perspective during participation in semester at sea: A comparative global education program. *Educational Review, 46(3),* 275-286.

Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (2009). *Enrollment and attendance rate of foreign students.* Retrieved from http://www.mest.go.kr/web/275/ko/board/view.do?bbsId=41&currentPage=1&boardSeq=18202&mode=view

Misra, R., Crist, M., & Burant, C. J. (2003).

Relationships among life stress, social support, academic stressors, and reactions to stressors of international students in the United States. *International Journal of Stress Management, 10,* 137-157.

Murphy-Lejeune, E. (2002). *Student mobility and narrative in Europe: The new strangers.* London: Routledge.

Na, I. S. (2006). A study on the effects of acculturative stress and life stress among foreign Students [in Korean]. *NPO research, 5(2),* 159-197.

Nam, S. (2010). A Study on school adaptation patterns by grades and effects of acculturation strategies and cultural identity to school adaptation among Chinese students in Korea. *The Korean Journal of Education Psychology, 24(4),* 977-998.

Paulson, B. L., Truscott, D., & Stuart, J. (1999). Clients' perceptions of helpful experiences in counseling. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 46(3).* 317-324.

Ryan, M. E., & Twibell, R. S. (2000). Concerns, values, stress, coping, health and educational outcomes of college students who studied abroad. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 24,* 409-435.

Sandhu, D. S., & Asrabadi, B. R. (1994). Development of an acculturative stress scale for international students: Preliminary findings. *Psychological Reports, 75(1),* 435-448.

Song, W., & Li, N. (2008). Chinese student's early psychological adaptation according to their acculturation type [in Korean]. *The Korean Journal of School Psychology, 5* (2), 159

-173.

Sumer, S., Poyrazli, S., & Grahame, K. (2008). Predictors of depression and anxiety among international students. *Journal of counseling and development, 86* (4), 429-437.

Tsang, E W. K. (2001). Adjustment of mainland Chinese academics and students to Singapore. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 25*, 347-372.

Trochim, W. M. K. (1989). An introduction to concept mapping for planning and evaluation. *Evaluation and Program Planning, 12*, 1-16.

Wang, C-C DC, & Mallinckrodt, B. (2006). Acculturation, attachment, and psychological adjustment of Chinese/Taiwanese international students. *Journal of Conseling Psychology, 53*, 422-433.

Ward, C., & Kennedy, A. (1994). Acculturation strategies, psychological adjustment and sociocultural competence during cross-cultural transitions. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 1*, 329-343.

Wei, M., Ku, T.-Y., Russel, D. W., Mallinckrodt, B., & Liao, K. Y.‐H. (2008). Moderating effects of three coping Strategies and self-esteem on perceived discrimination and depressive symptoms: A minority stress model for Asian international students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 55*, 451-462.

Yang, B., & Clum, G. A. (1994). Life stress, social support, and problem-solving skills predictive of depressive symptoms, hopelessness, and suicide ideation in an Asian student population: a test of a model. *Suicide and Life Threatening Behavior, 24*, 127 -139.

Yeh, C. J. & Inose, M. (2003). International students' reported English fluency, social support satisfaction, and social connectedness as predictors of acculturative stress. *Counseling Psychology Quarterly, 16,* 15-28.

Yeh, C. J. & Wang, Y. W. (2000) Asian American coping attitudes, sources, and practices: Implications for indigenous counseling strategies. *Journal of College Student Development, 41,* 94‐103.

Ying, Y. W., & Liese, L. H. (1994). Initial adjustment of Taiwanese students to the United States: The impact of post arrival variable. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 25,* 466-477.

Young, F. W., & Hammer, R. M. (1987). *Multidimensional scaling: History, theory, and applications.* London: Erlbaum.

Zaldivar, D. F. (1996). Conocimiento y dominio del estres. La Habana: Editorial Cientifi-co Tecnica.

Zwingman, C. A. A. (1978). *Uprooting and related phenomena: A descriptive bibliotherapy.* Geneva: World Health Organization.

중국 유학생의 문화적응 경험: 대처와 지각 변화를 중심으로

이 유 영   김 한 주   남 숙 경   김   령   양 은 주

고려대학교 심리학과

본 연구는 재한 중국인 유학생들의 문화적응과정에서 그들의 사용하는 대처전략과 스스로 지각하는 변화양상에 대해 알아보았다. 한국에 거주하고 있는 56명의 중국유학생들이 연구에 참여하고, 개념도(concept mapping)를 이용하여 자료를 분석하였다. 그 결과 중국인 유학생들은 '언어적 유능감 향상'과 '사회적 네트워크 활용'을 중요한 대처전략으로 생각하며, '문화적 자기', '개인적 자기'의 변화를 포함하여 광범위한 측면에서의 변화를 인식하고 있음을 확인하였다. 대처전략과 변화양상에 대한 인식은 체류기간에 따라 차이를 보였는데, 장기 체류한 중국인 유학생들은 단기 유학생과는 달리 '기분조절'을 대처전략으로 삼았다. 또한, 단기 유학생들이 긍정적 변화양상을 우세하게 보고하는 반면 ,장기 유학생들은 긍정적 변화보다는 부정적 변화를 더 인식하는 것으로 나타났다. 이 연구 결과는 추후 대학 관계자들이 체류기간에 따라 다른 경험을 하게 되는 중국 유학생을 이해하고 민감하게 대응할 필요가 있음을 시사한다.

주요어 : 중국인 유학생, 문화적응, 대처전략, 지각된 변화