PERCEPTIONS OF COUNSELOR EFFECTIVENESS:
A STUDY OF TWO COUNTRY GROUPS

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The focus of this paper is on two groups of students: Singaporean and U.S. college students. The paper examines the perceptions U.S. and Singaporean college students have of two different counseling approaches—the directive and the nondirective approach. The theoretical hypothesis of this study is that perceptions of counselor effectiveness given two counseling styles (directive and nondirective) will differ according to the country of origin of the students, with Singaporean students favoring the directive approach.

Singaporean international students were chosen because student admissions to U.S. colleges from Singapore have been increasing in recent years. In the 1993/1994 academic year, there were 4,823 Singaporeans admitted to U.S. colleges (Institute of International Education, 1994). Of this total, 75% (n = 3,623) are undergraduates, 22.1% (n = 1,064) are graduate students, and 2.8% (n = 136) are of other student status (Institute of International Education, 1994). It has been predicted that these numbers will continue to increase due to the consistently strong Singapore dollar (Ho, 1993). While no formal reports are available about the problems faced by Singaporean students overseas, an article published in a local Singapore newspaper, The Straits Times, (Ho, 1993) reports that Singaporean students experience adjustment problems, heavy study demands, culture shock, fear of getting involved in crime and violence in the host country, automobile accidents, and issues related to graduation and re-entry. This shows that Singaporeans do form a pool of potential international clients.

I chose to do a comparative study with a sample of U.S. students so as to gain a perspective of how perceptions of counselor effectiveness may vary with country of origin. Comparative data may help to answer the question of whether counseling interventions based on Western theories of personality and therapeutic change will be suitable for use with a Singaporean student population. The United States is also the host country for approximately 65% (n = 67) of the Singaporean students in this study (the other 35% [n = 36] of the Singaporean sample were international students studying in British Columbia, Canada). The results of this study can be used to further understand the host culture as well as the international sojourner.

Singaporean students are from a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious independent Asian nation, which is modern, industrialized, and growing in affluence. This population is educated in the English language and has been exposed to the values and lifestyles of the West. Their multi-cultural composition and their socialization through an education based on English as a medium of instruction,  

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2 The Singaporean students in this study are studying in either the U.S. or Canada.
Is There A Preferred Counseling Style Among Asians?

Do counseling style preferences differ between Asian and U.S. students? Studies on this topic yield results which show clear differences. Most of the studies suggest that Asians prefer a more directive counselor, while U.S. (and Canadian) students prefer a nondirective counselor.

In a study of 50 Hong Kong international students, who were exposed to one of two simulated videotaped counseling sessions between a Chinese counselor and a Chinese client, using either a directive or non-directive counseling approach for an emotional adjustment problem (the loss of a love relationship), Exum and Lau (1988) found that international students viewed the non-directive counselor as having low credibility, and would not attempt to seek this counselor's services again. Counselors who were self-confident, gentle, and nurturing were preferred. Preferred counselors also provided structure, gave interpretations and provided solutions to problems.

In a similar study with Cantonese students studying in Canada, Waxer (1989) compared Chinese students' and Canadian students' preferences for directive and non-directive counseling approaches. The subjects were 70 Cantonese and 45 Canadian students who were asked to read transcripts of both Carl Rogers (non-directive style) and Albert Ellis (directive style) counseling 'Gloria', from the film, 'Three Approaches to Psychotherapy'. They then rated the counselors on the dimensions of directiveness, forcefulness, repetitiveness, sensitivity, politeness, and willingness to have either of them as their own therapist. Results indicated that the Canadian students were more willing to have Rogers as their own therapist compared to the Cantonese students. This happened despite the fact that speech patterns in the Cantonese language were reiterative, and somewhat parallel to Rogers' reiterative style of communication. Although the Cantonese students did not view Rogers to be as repetitious as the Canadians perceived him, they were still more willing to see Ellis as a therapist when compared to Rogers. Although the Cantonese students shared the same perception with the Canadians that Ellis was more direct, forceful, less sensitive, and less polite than Rogers, they did not rate Ellis as harshly as the Canadians did. The authors concluded that a directive, advice-giving approach in counseling is the approach of choice when working with Asians.

Kim (1992), in part of her study, concludes that there are differences between Asian nationality groups in the ways that they perceive counselor effectiveness. In her study, 89 Japanese, 110 Chinese, and 120 Korean students were asked to read a transcript portraying either a directive or non-directive counseling approach and then rate the counselor on the Counselor Effectiveness Rating Scale (CERS; Atkinson & Wampold, 1982). The results indicated that across all nationality groups, the counselor who used the directive counseling approach received higher ratings for counselor expertness, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and utility than the non-directive counselor. However, across counseling approaches, it was evident that the Chinese subjects consistently gave the highest ratings to counselor expertness, trustworthiness, and attractiveness, while Korean participants gave the lowest ratings on all the CERS variables.

The findings also showed an interaction effect between country and gender for perceived counselor expertness and utility. Among Japanese participants, female subjects gave higher ratings than male subjects for counselor expertness and utility, while among both Chinese and Korean participants, male subjects gave higher ratings than females on these variables. An interaction effect between country and length of stay in the U.S. was found for counselor trustworthiness. Among Japanese and Koreans, participants who had stayed a longer period in the U.S. gave higher ratings to the counselor regarding trustworthiness while for Chinese participants, the order was reversed.

In another study on 72 male Korean international students, Kang (1993) investigated the effects of counselor ethnicity, counseling style and acculturation on perceptions of counselor effectiveness. The men completed a scale to measure acculturation, and listened to one of four randomly assigned audiotaped recordings of a simulated counseling session where the counselor (Korean or Caucasian-American) was using one of two different counseling styles (directive or nondirective). They then rated the efficacy of counseling using the Counselor Rating Form (CRF; Barak & LaCross, 1975) and the Counselor Effectiveness Rating Scale (CERS; Atkinson & Wampold, 1982). Kang's results showed that the counselor was rated more positively when employing a directive counseling style, and that a Korean counselor was preferred over a Caucasian-American counselor, especially when employing a directive style. Acculturation did not appear to moderate the men's perceptions of counselor effectiveness.
However, a significant interaction was found between counselor ethnicity and acculturation, such that the significance of counselor ethnicity tended to lessen with increasing levels of acculturation.

The previous three studies (Exum and Lau, 1988; Kang, 1993; Kim, 1992; Wexer, 1989) on counseling style preference were analogue studies which used non-client subjects. A study by Yau, Sue, and Hayden (1992), however, used actual counseling clients. The researchers examined the differential attitudes of seven clients (six international and one Caucasian-American), towards two counseling approaches (non-directive or client-centered approach and problem-solving approach) within and across four counseling sessions. The client-centered approach was defined by the use of open-ended questions, reflective and affective responses, paraphrases, and summaries. The problem-solving approach was defined by the use of suggestions, advice-giving, problem-solving, closed questions, and client guidance. All clients first listened to an audiotaped counseling session demonstrating both a problem-solving approach and a client-centered approach, and rated both approaches. The clients then rated these two counseling styles in actual counseling sessions they had with a counselor.

The researchers found that when the clients rated the two approaches they experienced during counseling, no overall preference was found— the clients appeared to have found both approaches helpful. The students seemed to prefer different styles at different points of the counseling relationship; their preference perhaps linked to a particular need at a certain point in time. For example, at one time, preferring a decisive, action-oriented process, and at other times, preferring less direction, and more unconditional support.

Greater variability, however, was found in the clients' preferences for the two approaches when they listened to the simulated audiotape than when they actually experienced the two approaches during their own counseling. The researchers make the point that their study fails to support the findings of previous studies that international students prefer a directive counseling style and add that analogue designs may have accentuated the differences in preferences between directive and nondirective styles in previous studies.

Like studies on counseling style preference using Asian international students, studies using Asian-American informants suggest that a directive style is also preferred. Atkinson, Maruyama, and Matsui (1978) conducted two studies to examine the effects of counselor race and counseling approach on Asian-American students' perceptions of counselor credibility and utility. Both studies were analogue in nature, where a counselor's audiotaped performance in a simulated counseling session with an Asian-American student was rated. In both studies, the subjects were randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditions differing on counselor ethnicity (Asian-American versus Caucasian-American) and counselor approach (directive versus non-directive). Counseling approach was represented by two audiotaped transcripts where the counselor's responses varied so as to portray a logical, rational and directive counseling style, and also a reflective, affective, and non-directive counselor style, respectively.

In the first study, the dependent measure was the Counselor Effectiveness Rating Schedule (CERS; Atkinson & Carskaddon, 1975). A total of 52 Asian-American university students rated the counselor in their experimental condition on five dimensions: (a) the counselor's knowledge of psychology; (b) the counselor's ability to help the client; (c) the counselor's willingness to help the client; (d) the counselor's comprehension of the client's problem, and (e) whether the counselor was someone the client would want to see if the client had a problem to discuss.

In the second study, 48 Japanese-Americans from the Young Buddhist Association rated the counselor in their experimental condition on a questionnaire adapted from the Counselor Effectiveness Rating Schedule (CERS: Atkinson and Carskaddon, 1979). This instrument measured counselor expertise, trustworthiness, and utility.

The results showed that in both studies, the counselor was rated as more credible and approachable when employing the directive counseling approach than when using the non-directive counseling approach. Also evident in the first study, was the finding that racial similarity was a significant factor in determining how much credibility was given to a counselor. This finding was, however, not replicated in the second study, where the counselor's race did not determine the perceptions of the Young Buddhist Association participants with the counselors they rated.

Although the results of this study are significant, there is one major shortcoming. Each group of subjects across both studies probably varied in their level of racial awareness and acculturation. The Asian-Americans of the first study were members of an activist group, and were probably more ethnically
sensitive than the Young Buddhist Association group, which was probably more religiously-oriented, perhaps less ethnically sensitive, and as the authors admit, more acculturated than the first group. These differences were not taken into consideration prior to the study and therefore were potential confounding variables, limiting the generalizability of the study.

In a recent replication of Atkinson et al. (1978), Atkinson and Matsushita (1991) investigated the effects of counselor ethnicity and counseling style on perceptions of counselor credibility for Japanese-Americans of varying levels of acculturation. As in the earlier studies, 68 Japanese-Americans were randomly assigned to one of four simulated counseling sessions which differed by counselor ethnicity (Japanese versus Caucasian-American) and counseling style (directive versus non-directive). The directive counseling style was characterized by the counselor proceeding in a rational intellectualized manner, using questions to elicit specific information, while the non-directive counseling style was characterized by counselor restatements of the problem, paraphrases, and summaries. Each subject listened to an audiotape of a counseling interview, and then rated the counselor on the Counselor Effectiveness Rating Scale (CERS; Atkinson & Wampold, 1982). All subjects also answered the Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale (SL-ASIA; Suinn, Rickard-Figueroa, Lew & Vigil, 1987) which measured their level of acculturation.

Contrary to earlier findings (Atkinson et al., 1978), no main effect was found for counseling style. However, there was a significant interaction effect between counselor ethnicity and counselor style. The Japanese-American counselor using the directive counseling approach was deemed most effective and was the counselor students were most willing to see, while the Japanese-American counselor using the non-directive counseling style was rated lowest on counselor attractiveness and utility. Both counseling styles were perceived to be compatible with Caucasian-American counselors.

Contrary to the authors' expectations, Japanese-American students who scored in the middle-range on the acculturation scale found counselors to be more attractive as sources of help than did the more acculturated subjects. However, acculturated Japanese-Americans perceived an ethnically-similar counselor as more attractive than an ethnically-dissimilar counselor. These findings suggest that acculturation may not have a direct linear relationship with attitudes toward counselors and counseling services.

In a similar study with a sample of Korean-Americans, Foley and Faqua (1988) randomly assigned 60 subjects to one of four experimental conditions based on counseling approach ('directive', where the therapist functioned in the role of a father figure who gives advice authoritatively and provides solutions to client's problems; 'non-directive', where the therapist functioned as a sounding board for enumerating alternatives or options rather than responding to the client as a problem solver), and status configuration (older male Korean counselor with younger male Korean client versus older Korean male client and younger male Korean counselor). Subjects in each experimental condition read written scripts of the simulated counseling session and then rated the counselor on the Counselor Rating Form (CRF; Barak & LaCrosse, 1976) as well as the Counselor Effectiveness Rating Schedule (CERS; Atkinson & Carskadon, 1975).

Both measures yielded a preference for counselors using a directive counseling style. However, no significant effects were found regarding the quality of counselor performance across the different counselor-client status configurations. The authors attribute this latter finding to the fact that status configurations were not discernible via the written scripts.

Previous studies reviewed on counseling preference styles of Asian-Americans (Atkinson et al., 1978; Atkinson & Matsushita, 1991; Foley & Faqua, 1988) suggest that a directive counseling style is the counseling approach of choice. The findings of a study by Mokuau (1987), however, contradict this finding. Mokuau's (1987) study focused on the counseling style preferences of 56 Asian-American and 56 Caucasian-American social workers. The participants were randomly assigned to one of six experimental conditions differing by counseling style (directive versus non-directive); by social worker ethnicity introductions on an audiotape (Asian-American social worker and Caucasian-American social worker); and by the client's presenting problem (ethnic versus non-ethnic). The ethnic problem presented in the audiotape focused on anxiety derived from identity conflict, while the non-ethnic problem was one that was not presented in a cultural context and focused on anxiety pertaining to interpersonal relationships. The subjects listened to a simulated counseling session and rated the counselor on the Relationship Inventory (RI: Barrett-Lennard, 1956) and the Counselor Rating Form (CRF; Barak & LaCrosse, 1975).
Contrary to findings of other studies reviewed in this paper, results indicated that the social worker using the nondirective counseling approach was perceived by both Asian- and Caucasian-Americans as more effective, empathic, warm, and congruent, when compared to the social worker who was more directive. The researchers did point out, however, that these findings may be attributed to the fact that the Asian-American social workers tended to perceive themselves as acculturated and Western-oriented and may have, therefore, been a correct 'fit' with the non-directive approach. Also, the client problem of cultural identity conflict may have been more appropriate for a non-directive approach.

In summary, it can be concluded that a directive counseling style is preferred by both international students (a large proportion of whom were Asian) and Asian-Americans (Atkinson, Maruyama, and Matsui, 1978; Foley and Faqua, 1988; Exum and Lau, 1988; Wexer, 1989; Kim, 1992; Kang, 1993). Only one study reported findings that supported a preference for a non-directive approach (Mokuau, 1987). No overall preference for either the directive or non-directive approach was found in two studies: Atkinson and Matsushita (1991) on Japanese-Americans, and Yau, Sue, and Hayden (1992) with international students. However, an interaction between counseling style and counselor ethnicity was found in Atkinson and Matsushita's (1991) study, where Japanese-American counselors using a directive style were clearly preferred to Japanese-American counselors who used a non-directive style. The results of the Yau et al. (1992) study which used actual clients provided a compromise, where students preferred different counseling styles (client-centered or non-directive and problem-solving or directive) at different points in time during the counseling process.

While most Asian samples appear to prefer a directive counseling style, there still is evidence to the contrary. A major difficulty in finding an answer to the question of counseling style preference is the lack of consistency in defining and operationalizing directive and non-directive approaches. In his review of the literature on counseling style preferences, Goh (1992) deliberately omits a definition for 'directive' and 'nondirective' counseling as he had not found consensus among researchers. Many of the studies reviewed did not give a clear definition of what constituted each of the counseling styles under investigation. Some studies were plagued by a small sample size and inadequate sampling procedures. All the studies, except Yau, Sue and Hayden (1992), were analogue in nature, and used non-client volunteer subjects. A difficulty with analogue studies is that they are artificial in nature, and thus have limited external validity. Often, we are not told which part of the counseling process was simulated in the analogue audiotapes, videotapes, or written scripts. When information is given regarding which part of the counseling process is simulated, it is usually a simulation of an initial counseling session. This, in and of itself, does not give a true picture of the counseling process. The Yau et al. (1992) study attempted to address this problem by using actual clients across four counseling sessions. It is, therefore, of little surprise that their findings did not establish a clear preference for just one approach, but rather for different approaches at different times. This study suggests that a supportive and unconditional relationship, with the opportunity for self-reflection and personal problem-solving combined with a structured, goal-oriented counseling style, could be a viable approach for counseling international students.

This paper will highlight the findings of a study which examines the perceptions of counselor effectiveness from the perspectives of two groups of college students: U.S. and Singaporean international students.

The Sample

The sample consisted of 103 Singaporean students studying in the U.S. and Canada, and 108 United States college students. Student leaders at four U.S. colleges and two Canadian universities were contacted with the assistance of the Embassy of the Republic of Singapore in Washington, D.C. and Singapore student advisors in Los Angeles, and Burnaby, British Columbia. Through the student leaders, Singaporean international students attending the six universities were invited to participate in the study. A total of 103 Singaporean students volunteered to participate. These students were from the University of California at Berkeley (n = 15), the University of Minnesota (n = 19), the University of Wisconsin at Madison (n = 30), the University of San Francisco (n = 3), the University of British Columbia (n = 15), and the Simon Fraser University (n = 21).
A sample size of 108 U.S. university students from the University of Minnesota formed the U.S. sample. These students were volunteers who were recruited through advertisements made in undergraduate and graduate level classes and through open announcements on university bulletin boards. Of the total sample, 121 were female (57.3%) and 90 male (42.7%). There were significantly more males than females for the Singaporean group (females = 40, males = 63). This is consistent with the demographic structure of Singaporean international students in the U.S. as a whole (Personal communication with Lim Siong Fun, the Embassy of the Republic of Singapore, Washington, D.C., February, 1995). Conversely, there were more females than males in the U.S. group (females = 81, males = 27), \( \chi^2 (1, N = 211) = 28.19, p < .001 \). This was a sample of convenience (consisting of nonclient volunteer participants) and not random, and thus not representative of a national sample of U.S. or Singaporean international students.

The students ranged in age from 18 to over 40+ years of age. The largest age group represented were the 18-24 year olds (71.1%), followed by 25-30 year olds (18.5%), the 31-40 age group (5.7%) and the over 40 age group (4.7%). There were no significant differences in ages between Singaporean and U.S. students, \( \chi^2 (3, N = 211) = 4.23 \). The Singaporean group were mainly Chinese which formed 42.2% (n = 89) of the total Singapore-U.S. sample, with significantly smaller percentages of Malays (0.5%, n = 1), Indians (4.3%, n = 9) and Eurasians (1.4%, n = 3). Caucasian Americans formed the largest U.S. ethnic group which formed 41.2% (n = 87) of the total Singapore-U.S. sample, with much smaller numbers of African Americans (2.8%, n = 6), Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders (3.8%, n = 8), Latino/Chicano/Hispanic Americans (0.5%, n = 1), and Native Americans/Alaskan Natives (0.9%, n = 2). There were other Singaporeans (1.2%, n = 1) and U.S. students (1.2%, n = 4) who indicated their affiliation with ethnic groups other than those mentioned above.

Undergraduates formed 80% (n = 169) of the sample while the remaining 20% (n = 42) were graduate and adult special students. A total of 40 fields of study were represented by the sample, with many Singaporean students coming from the business and engineering fields. This reflects the current population demographics of Singaporean international students studying in the U.S. (Personal communication with Lim Siong Fun, the Embassy of the Republic of Singapore, Washington, D.C., February, 1995). Most of the U.S. students came from the fields of child psychology, psychology and education. This probably resulted in the larger number of women in the U.S. sample.

Of the total sample, 53.1% (n = 112) had seen a counselor before. A little over a third of the Singaporeans (n = 37) and slightly more than two-thirds of the U.S. students (n = 75) had been to a counselor before. Significantly more Singaporeans than U.S. students had not seen a counselor before, \( \chi^2 (1, N = 211) = 23.79, p < .001 \). Approximately 36% of the total sample previously had some form of academic counseling, while 27% had counseling for personal concerns and only 8% had seen a counselor for career-related issues. Significantly more U.S. students than Singaporean students had gone for career counseling, \( \chi^2 (1, N = 211) = 4.73, p < .05 \) and personal counseling, \( \chi^2 (1, N = 211) = 37.81, p < .001 \). However, as many Singaporeans as U.S. college students had seen a counselor for academic-related issues, \( \chi^2 (1, N = 211) = 2.61 \).

The length of stay reported by Singaporean students ranged from a few months to nine years in the U.S. with 45.6% (n = 47) of the students having stayed up to two years, and 54.4% (n = 56) of the students having stayed between two and nine years.

**Method**

All U.S. and Singaporean respondents watched a videotape of a simulated counseling session where the counselor was using either a directive or a nondirective approach, and then rated the counselor they viewed on the Counselor Effectiveness Rating Scale (CERS; Atkinson and Wampold, 1982).

*The simulated counseling videotapes*

Directive and non-directive counseling styles were presented via videotapes of simulated counseling sessions. An analogue versus a naturalistic method was selected to allow control over the experimental stimulus. It was reasoned that carefully scripted and produced videotapes would outweigh
the benefits of investigating actual 'live' counseling sessions. Also, simulated experimental stimuli are less bound by ethical dilemmas like the possibility of breaching client confidentiality and of jeopardizing client welfare for the sake of saving the experiment. Videotapes, rather than audiotapes or transcripts of the session were chosen to approximate an actual counseling session. Also since most Singaporean students have little or no experience of counseling, a videotape would provide them with the full flavor of a counseling encounter. Two different counselors were used for each of the directive and nondirective counseling videotapes. This was done to control for the possible effects of counselor characteristics.

The scripts used in the videos were originally developed by Atkinson, Maruyama, and Matsui (1978), and used in an audiotape format in their 1978 study, as well as more recently (Atkinson and Matsushita, 1991). The scripts were also the basis of transcripts used by Kim (1992) in her study of counseling style preference among East Asian international students.

The Atkinson, et al. (1978) scripts were designed to describe either a concrete, rational, and directive style, or a reflective, affective, and nondirective style. Each script simulates a counseling session between an undergraduate college student and a college counselor regarding a conflict between the client and the client's parents about the client's choice of college major and hence, career. While the client statements are identical across the scripts, the counselor statements are identical for only the first 16 statements and differ for the last 29 responses. Atkinson, et al. (1978) reported that the scripts were validated by 19 counseling graduate students (15 non-minority, 4 minority). The raters listened to audiotapes portraying either a directive or nondirective style, and analyzed the final 29 counselor statements according to Tilly and Zimmer's (1973) taxonomy of counselor responses. For the directive script, two-thirds of counselor responses were identified as either establishing "cognitive set" (an introduction and invitation by the counselor to proceed in a rational, intellectualized style) or "eliciting specificity" (any counselor response designed to elicit a response from a client in a specific area). For the nondirective script, three-fifths of the counselor responses were categorized as either restatement ("literally repeating client responses") or summarization ("paraphrases that condense the semantic content"). Eighteen of the 19 raters correctly identified the scripts as directive or nondirective. Of 15 nonminority raters, 11 judged the counselor to be most effective using the nondirective style, and two judged the counselor to be most effective when using the directive style, while two raters expressed no preference. All four minority raters rated the directive style as most effective.

Using the Atkinson, et al. (1978) scripts, videotaped recordings of four simulated twelve-minute counseling sessions were made: two where the counselor uses a directive counseling style and two where the counselor uses a nondirective style. Two female Caucasian-American advanced doctoral counseling psychology graduate students (henceforth known as Counselor A and Counselor B) role-played the counselor. Both women have approximately ten years of experience each in counseling college students and have M. A. degrees in counseling. Trained counselors, instead of actresses, were used to play the role of the counselors in the videotapes so that the simulation would be realistic. Each of the counselors role-played both the directive and non-directive scripts with a female Asian international student who role-played the client. The latter was a Korean international student from the Department of Theater Arts and Dance, and majoring in Directing. The counselors volunteered their services, while the 'client' was paid $75 for each video-production session. A professional video technician filmed each counseling session. The role-players followed the Atkinson, et al. scripts exactly. Both counselor and client had audio prompters which they simultaneously listened to as they role-played their scripts. Besides ensuring that the role-players presented the Atkinson et al. scripts accurately, the audio prompters also ensured that the counseling styles portrayed were consistent across the videos.

Content validity of the videotaped sessions were ascertained by a total of twenty helping professionals who previewed and evaluated the tapes independently. The reviewers were senior counseling psychologists (n = 8), doctoral counselors-in-training (n = 10), and master's level students from other helping professions (n = 2). Each previewer was asked whether she/he thought the counselor they had watched used a directive or a nondirective style. They were also asked to rate the level of directiveness of the videotapes, and were given the opportunity of adding in any comments they had about the video. Out of twenty people who previewed the videotapes, eighteen identified the tapes correctly (that is, directive or non-directive). They generally agreed that the videos were authentic and realistic.
The Counselor Effectiveness Rating Scale (CERS).

This instrument, developed by D.R. Atkinson and B.E. Wampold (1982) consists of 10 semantic differential-type items and yields a total score, as well as scores on four scales: (a) Expertness, (b) Attractiveness, (c) Trustworthiness, and (d) Utility. The first three of these scales are measured by three sets of three items each. Each item measures a particular concept of one of the three constructs. 'Expertness' consists of items on expertness, competence, and skill. 'Attractiveness' consists of items on friendliness, approachability, and likeability. 'Trustworthiness' consists of items on sincerity, reliability, and trustworthiness. The fourth scale is 'Counselor Utility', and indicates the client's degree of willingness to seek the services of that counselor again. This construct is measured by a single item: 'The counselor as I am willing to see for counseling in the future'. All items are rated on a seven-point bi-polar scale (1 = bad, 7 = good). Procedures for scoring the CERS are presented in Appendix J. The internal consistency reliabilities for this instrument are based on a study of 206 college undergraduates who viewed a portion of the Carl Rogers' segment of the film, "Three Approaches to Psychotherapy" (Shostrom, 1966). Cronbach alpha coefficients for Expertness, Attractiveness, and Trustworthiness have been reported to be .88, .78, and .75 respectively, and the total score reliability was reported to be .90 (Atkinson & Wampold, 1982). The construct validity of the instrument was evaluated using a maximum likelihood factor analysis with varimax orthogonal rotation. The percentage of total variance accounted for by the Expertness, Attractiveness, and Trustworthiness factors were a total of 66.6. The instrument has concurrent validity with the Counselor Rating Form (Barak and LaCrosse, 1975) of .79 for Expertness, .73 for Attractiveness, and .75 for Trustworthiness. The CERS has also been used by Ponterotto and Merta (1987) to measure the effectiveness of peer counselors of newly arriving foreign students.

Internal consistency reliabilities were also calculated for the CERS in the present study. Cronbach alpha coefficients for Expertness, Attractiveness, and Trustworthiness were .86, .82, and .76, respectively, while the internal consistency reliability for the whole instrument was .91.

Procedures

All students were randomly assigned to watch a videotape of a simulated counseling session where the counselor was using either a directive or a nondirective counseling style. Some of the time, however, especially with the U.S. college students, where only one or two were present for the study, a video was selected to be shown. The video assignment in these cases depended on how many students had already watched a particular video and how many more students were needed to meet the target number for that condition.

A total of 51 Singaporean students watched a directive counseling video, with approximately half of these students (n = 26) watching Counselor A using the directive style and the other half (n = 25) watching Counselor B also using the directive style. The remaining 52 Singaporean students watched a nondirective counseling video, with a little over half of them (n = 27) watching Counselor A using nondirective counseling and the other half (n = 25) watching Counselor B also employing a nondirective counseling style. An equal number of U.S. students watched a directive or a nondirective counseling video. Fifty-four students watched a directive video with exactly half (n = 27) watching Counselor A using the directive approach and an equal number (n = 27) watching Counselor B using a directive approach. Similarly, an equal number of students (n = 54) watched the nondirective counseling videos, with half of the students (n = 27) watching Counselor A in the nondirective mode and the other half watching Counselor B also in the nondirective mode. (See table 3.3 for distribution of students by counselor, counseling style and country of origin). After watching the video, students rated the counselor on the Counselor Effectiveness Rating Scale (CERS; Atkinson and Wampold, 1982). The respondents were also asked to write any comments they had about the counselor they had viewed. An additional piece of paper was provided for this purpose.

Tests

A two (counselor: A vs B) x two (country of origin: Singapore vs U.S.) x two (counseling style: directive vs nondirective) multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with the four subscale scores of the CERS as dependent measures.

The findings of these analyses are illustrated in Tables 4.22 to 4.24, and in Graphs 4.3 and 4.4. Tables 4.22 and 4.23 present the means and standard deviations for CERS scale scores by counselor,
counseling style and country of origin, while Table 4.24 presents the results of the multivariate analysis of variance.

**Results: Quantitative Data**

Multivariate analysis of variance conducted on the four scales of the CERS did not yield any significant counselor, country of origin or counseling style main effects. However, the analysis yielded a two-way interaction effect of counseling style by country of origin, Hotelling's $T^2 = .07$, $p < .01$ (See Table 4.24). Univariate analyses of variance (ANOVA) on each dependent variable were conducted to assess the extent to which the dependent variables contributed to the significant multivariate effect. Results of these univariate analyses of variance showed that the scale Counselor Expertise contributed significantly to the multivariate effect, $F = 7.15$, $p < .01$. Further examination of the means of the Counselor Expertise scores for directive and nondirective counseling styles revealed that Singaporean students rated both counselors significantly higher when they were using the nondirective counseling style (Counselor A: $M = 5.09$; Counselor B: $M = 4.88$) than when they were using the directive style (Counselor A: $M = 4.15$, Counselor B: $M = 4.76$). In contrast, U.S. students rated the directive counselor significantly higher (Counselor A: $M = 5.43$; Counselor B: $M = 5.01$) than the nondirective counselor (Counselor A: $M = 4.58$; Counselor B: $M = 4.67$). Graphs 4.3 and 4.4 illustrate these relationships.

**Results: Qualitative Data**

Each student was asked to write written comments about the counselor they viewed on videotape. This request for comments was optional. Approximately 81% ($n = 83$) of the Singaporean students and 68% ($n = 73$) of the U.S. students responded to the request for written comments about the counselor they watched.

Since the three-way multivariate analyses of variance conducted on the CERS scores by country of origin and gender did not yield any counselor effects, the students' comments were grouped according to counseling style—either directive or non-directive, and country of origin. Four major groups resulted: (a) Singaporeans and directive style, (b) U.S. students and directive style, (c) Singaporeans and nondirective style, and (d) U.S. students and directive style. Comments from each of these categories were examined. The findings will be reported under the headings, 'Directive style', and 'Nondirective style'.

**Directive style**

**Comments from Singaporean students.** The written comments indicated that the Singaporean students had a somewhat negative perception of the directive counselors they viewed on the videotapes. Although some comments were positive, for example, some students felt that the counselors using the directive style were able to lead the client toward finding her own solution to the problem, many other students had negative comments. Some students felt that the session was "too instructive", and felt like a "CNN interview", with the counselor acting like a reporter asking a barrage of questions. One student stated, "I don't think I will feel free to talk to this person—she sounds more like my teacher, rather than my friend". Many also commented that the counselors seemed "detached", "distant", and "not friendly enough". Many commented that the counselor did not offer useful information, and that the information provided could have been obtained by the student herself. A number of students felt that the counselor did not understand the cultural background of the Asian client, or that this issue was not sufficiently addressed. One said, "The counselor doesn't understand the client's predicament as she seems to know nothing about her client's fear about letting her (the client's) parents down. The counselor makes things seem so easy when it is not, in reality." Another expressed: "It seems the counselor is approaching the session from a white American cultural worldview". Students also commented on the non-verbals—that the counselors seemed stiff, unemotional and monotonous. One said, "Though she smiles, and appears receptive, there is a discernible gap between counseled and counselor". Many said, "I don't see much warmth", or, "In my opinion, counselors need to be more friendly and warm". Another described one counselor as being too formal. Echoing this, yet another commented that the counselor was, "very official about her job—her responses are calculated and precise and at times, even smacks of 'roboticism'".

**Comments from U.S. students.** Students from the U.S., however, had more positive impressions of the directive counselor than did the Singaporeans. They found the counselors to be "approachable";
"willing to listen", "calm and collected", "friendly", "trustworthy", "easy to talk to", and "knowledgeable". Many commented that the counselors were able to allay the client's anxieties, and help her sort out her own feelings. They commented that the counselor did not push the client into making a decision, neither did they "just tell the woman what to do". Many described the counselor as a "guide", who "drew out issues", "eased tension", "helped the client see alternatives", "provided insight", and "suggested options". One client commented, "The client seemed to be helped a lot. Overall, I think she (the counselor) did a good job". Other positive comments were, "The counselor gave good, sound, competent advice"; "The counselor was polite, objective"; "The counselor was a source for other resources"; "The counselor was tuned into the needs and happiness of her client". Adjectives used to describe the counselor were, "easy-going", "attentive", "supportive", "open", "sympathetic", and "understanding".

The U.S. students also had some negative impressions. Like the Singaporeans, some perceived the directive counselors as "distant", "slow to warm up", and "not very friendly". Many of those who did not perceive the directive counselors favorably, commented that they tended to have a "Eurocentric bias" and "did not consider the importance of elders and family in the client's life". One said, "I can tell the counselor has no experience in dealing with ethnicity and the respect Asians have for their parents". Other negative comments included: "I'm very uncomfortable with this counselor. She is a poor listener wanting to make the session in her own direction"; and "My friends could have told me the same thing for free!".

Nondirective style

Comments from Singaporean students. The comments Singaporeans had about the nondirective counselor were mixed, with approximately half of the students having a favorable impression and the other half not liking the nondirective counselor's approach at all. Those with a favorable impression commented that the counselors were "competent", "well-trained", and "very professional". One said, "The counselor did not give solutions nor tell the student what to do. Instead, she would ask questions that helped the student talk more freely and realize what she should do. In my opinion, it is a good way to counsel a person". Adjectives that were used to describe the counselor included, "likeable", "friendly", "caring", and "approachable". Many felt positive about the fact that the counselors were able to encourage the client to express her feelings, talk through her issue and problem-solve on her own. One commented, "...I like the counselor for her attentiveness and for her ability to create situations whereby the client is able to solve her own problems".

Singaporean students who did not view the nondirective counselor favorably had this to say: "I find the counselor did not do much counseling"; "The counselor constantly confirmed and repeated what the person said, but I think I'd expect the counselor to do more as in talk and give input...sort of a third perspective on issues"; "The counselor should give more advice and not merely ask questions"; "The counselor doesn't help the student. She just listens and reinforces what the student feels about her plight"; "The counselor seems to be only making a summarized statement of what the client had previously said. The counselor is not giving the client any direction or help in solving her problems. I should say that the client basically identified the problem and came up with possible solutions on her own accord. This is definitely a counselor I do not want to see"; "The counselor seemed like a robot, reiterating everything that the student said; the counselor didn't give any advice, just asked questions; the counselor seemed cold, distant, unapproachable and I felt that she was doing her job for the sake of doing her job; she had no enthusiasm for it; I would hate to have a counselor like her". These comments seem to be saying that these students expected the counselor to be giving more suggestions and advice than she was.

Comments from U.S. students. Students from the United States also gave a mix of favorable and unfavorable comments about the nondirective counselor. However, it seemed that there were more negative comments about the nondirective counselor than positive comments, when compared to those of the Singaporean students. On the positive side, some students saw the counselors to be friendly, supportive, and able to encourage the client to discuss her feelings. Some positive comments included, "The counselor made no direct suggestions and allowed the patient to make all the decisions--this is good"; "She was very nice and comforting. I felt that if I were to go see her, she could help me with the issues as well. She helped her patient, though she also let the patient make up her mind herself".

Negative comments centered around the fact that the counselor made too many summarizations and paraphrases, and that this made the counseling session seem artificial. Most of the students thought that the counselors had not made enough suggestions: "She didn't give any insight or suggestions. I don't
think she helped very much"; "The counselor did not seem like a professional, or of much help"; "All she did was repeat what the girl was saying"; "She did not offer much in the way of alternatives for the girl's dilemma"; "The support she provides is equal to that some people can get from their close friends"; "She paraphrases in the same way every time, to me she seems machine-like. The client is progressing through her own thoughts very well, but I think this has little to do with the therapist"; "If I was talking to the counselor, it would really annoy me to have her--she would be repeating everything I said like in client-centered therapy".

Discussion

The results of this section were very surprising. It was hypothesized that Singaporean students would rate the counselors using the directive style higher than the counselors using the nondirective style. Indeed, the findings of the previous section on counseling expectations showed that Singaporeans, more than U.S. students, expected a counselor to be directive. However, the findings of this section show that Singaporeans perceived the nondirective counselor as being more expert than the directive counselor when they viewed the counselors in simulated counseling sessions on videotape. Conversely, the U.S. group perceived the directive counselors they viewed on the simulated counseling videos as more expert.

To shed more light on these findings, students' qualitative comments on the counselors were examined. Singaporeans, on the whole, had an equal mix of positive and negative comments for both the counseling styles presented on videotape. However, their comments about the nondirective counselor were more positive than those of the U.S. students. The Singaporean students perceived both counselors using the nondirective style as 'very professional', 'competent', 'likeable', 'friendly', and 'caring'. Many students felt positive about the counselors' ability to encourage the client to express her feelings, talk through the issue, and begin to problem-solve on her own. This sentiment was demonstrated in many of the comments made, for example, "The counselor did not give solutions nor tell the student what to do. Instead, she would ask questions that helped the students talk more freely and realize what she should do. In my opinion, it is a good way to counsel a person".

Singaporean students, however, tended to be much more critical of the directive counselor than were the U.S. students. The Singaporean students' frustration with the directive counselors were evident in their comments that the counselors were not friendly or warm enough, and that they did not understand the issue surrounding the bind that the Asian client was experiencing with her parents. The surprising observation was that, although a number of U.S. students also commented that they thought the directive counselors were not culturally sensitive enough, many of the U.S. students also felt that these counselors were able to encourage the student to share her feelings, and help her with some suggestions. The U.S. students described the directive counselor as, "friendly", "trustworthy", "easy to talk to", "calm and collected", "willing to listen", and "knowledgeable". Many described the directive counselor as a "guide", who did not "just tell the woman what to do", but who "drew out issues", "eased tension", "helped the client see alternatives", "provided insight", and "suggested options". Conversely, many of the U.S. students felt that the nondirective counselor made too many summarizations and paraphrases and did not give sufficient suggestions. These results seem to say that the U.S. students in this sample were asking for more direction in counseling, and were perhaps, disillusioned with a nondirective counseling style. This is captured in a comment made by a U.S. student, "If I was walking to the counselor, it would really annoy me to have her--she would be repeating everything I said like in client-centered therapy". Thus, the qualitative data seem to support the empirical findings that Singaporeans perceived the nondirective counselor as more expert than their U.S. counterparts did.

These findings are surprising because the literature on counseling style preference among Asians indicates that a directive style is consistently preferred (Atkinson, Maruyama, and Matsui, 1978; Exum & Lau, 1988; Foley & Faqua, 1988; Kang, 1993; Kim, 1992; Waxer, 1989). Only one study in the literature demonstrated that Asians preferred a nondirective counseling style (Mokuau, 1987). In the current study, it was thus hypothesized that Singaporean students would respond in a similar manner as the majority of Asian samples cited in previous studies, and therefore perceive the directive counselor more favorably. Also, in comparison with U.S. students, Singaporeans come from a more paternalistic, and lineal-hierarchical society, where the giving of advice and "being told what to do" is a part of life. Consequently, it was of little surprise that the findings of D'Rosario (1995) on counseling expectations showed that Singaporeans expected a counselor to be directive and tell them what to do.
At first glance, the findings of the current paper seem to contradict the findings reported in D'Rozario (1995) on counseling expectations. However, the current findings could be emphasizing a very important point—that expectations of counseling do not necessarily correspond with perceptions of counselor effectiveness or preferences for a particular counseling style. Indeed, Tinsley and Wescot (1990), and Tinsley (1992) have distinguished between the constructs of 'expectations', 'perceptions', and 'preferences': 'expectations' referring to a person's understanding of the probability that an event will occur; 'perceptions' referring to a person's knowledge of an event; and 'preferences' referring to the extent to which a person desires an event. In analyzing the construct validity of the Expectations About Counseling-Brief Form (EAC-B; Tinsley, 1982), Tinsley and Wescot (1990) concluded that the EAC-B stimulates cognitions about 'expectations' which are distinctly different from those of 'perceptions' and 'preferences'. Thus, it may be that the current study findings are also making distinctions between these constructs. The findings of this study may be indicating that although Singaporeans expect counselors to be directive, they perceive the nondirective counselors as more effective when they watched them on videotape. The findings may also be indicating that although Singaporeans expect counselors to be directive, they preferred the nondirective counseling style when they viewed it on videotape.

A strength of this current study is the fact that the ratings of counselor effectiveness did not vary significantly between Counselor A and B. This meant that the two different counseling styles could be analyzed without the fear of counselor characteristics being a confounding variable. The absence of counselor main effects can be explained by the effort put in by both counselors to keep to the standard counseling scripts as closely as they could. Besides putting in much practice, each counselor had audio-promters which helped them to accurately follow their prepared scripts. Also, each simulated counseling session was closely monitored so that both of the counselors would be consistent with each other. Both counselors had been carefully selected for this study—both had an equal number of years of counseling experience and graduate level education, as well as a genuine interest in counseling. Also, both the counselors were very committed to the success of the project.

Limitations of the Study

This study did not use representative national samples of both U.S. and Singaporean students and thus has limited external validity. All U.S. students were from the University of Minnesota, while Singaporean students were from two large mid-western state universities, two universities in California—one of which is a large state university and the other, a small private university, and two large universities in British Columbia, Canada—one of which is state-run and one which is private. Both student groups (Singaporean and U.S.) were samples of convenience and were not randomly selected. Also, there were significant differences in the gender compositions between and within the Singaporean and U.S. groups. While the gender composition of the Singaporean subgroup approximated the demographic composition of Singaporeans studying in the U.S., more could have been done to stratify the U.S. subgroup so that its gender composition matched the Singaporean subgroup more closely.

This study is also limited in its generalizability as it used a nonclient volunteer sample, and an analogue versus a naturalistic setting. Although a conscious choice was made to use simulated counseling videotapes for investigating counseling style, the findings of this study are limited in their generalizability due to the analogue nature of the study.

Another weakness of this study is that it did not control for possible social bias. As with all survey questionnaires, students responding to the three questionnaires used in this study could have done so in a socially desirable manner. This may be of concern with the Singaporean sample, especially with their responses to questions regarding their prior experience with counseling, and with the instrument on worldviews. Some Singaporean students may have found it difficult to acknowledge having had prior experience with personal counseling because of the social stigma attached to "having personal problems" in Singapore society.

Another limitation of this study pertains to its design. Ideally, the study would have been blocked by gender and ethnicity. That would mean that only female Chinese Singaporeans would form the Singaporean sample who would watch a female Chinese Singaporean counselor with a female Chinese Singaporean client, and white U.S. students would watch a white female U.S. counselor helping a white female U.S. client. This would ensure that the results of the study are not confounded by the variables of gender and ethnicity. Although no U.S. student in this study commented that they could not identify with
the Asian international client they viewed on the videotape, there still remains the possibility that their 
ratings of counselor effectiveness were based on their view of how effective the counselor was in helping 
an Asian client, and may not be reflective of their perception of the counselor's effectiveness should they 
have been the client.

Implications for Practice

The surprising results regarding counseling style are very important as they indicate that 
Singaporean students are quite comfortable with a counseling style that allows them as clients to share in 
the problem-solving with a counselor. The study also suggests that U.S. students may be comfortable with 
more direction in counseling. These findings, which are contrary to current counseling literature and the 
'common wisdom' of counseling practitioners, have important implications for the training of counselors 
who will work with U.S.-born as well as culturally different clients. Besides needing an awareness that 
directive counseling is not always the favored counseling style for a particular Asian international group, 
and that nondirective counseling is not always the favored counseling style for a particular group of U.S. 
students, counselors-in-training would also need to be aware that their client's expectations of counseling 
may not be congruent with what they want from counseling. Asking clients what they want from 
counseling may be more important than asking clients what they expect from counseling.

The findings on counseling style have important implications for the counseling of Singaporean 
international students and may be especially helpful to Singaporean overseas student advisers in their 
work with the many Singaporean students they serve overseas. These findings also have important 
implications for counseling in Singapore. An awareness that potential Singaporean clients may not 
always be seeking advice when they come in for counseling, as is generally the belief, can be incorporated 
in the training of helping professionals in Singapore.

Recommendations for Future Studies

Students' level of acculturation and prior counseling experience could be other independent 
variables to study in future. It would also be interesting to conduct a similar study in Singapore to see if 
any of the findings of this study may be associated with the fact that the Singaporean sample were 
international students. More research into what makes Singaporeans apprehensive about counseling in its 
present form in U.S. college counseling settings could complement this study. Perhaps, a qualitative 
approach to this question would provide more information. Further research on viable modes of helping 
would also provide more insight into how psychological services could serve Singaporeans better.

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Table 4.22

Means and Standard Deviations of the CERS Scales for Singaporean Students
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Table 4.24  
Multivariate Analysis of Variance of the CERS Scales By Counselor, Counseling Style, and Country of Origin

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Univariate F, (1,201)

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** p<.01
Graph 4.3

Mean Counselor Expertise scores showing Singaporean and U.S. students' ratings of Counselor A using directive and non-directive style.

Graph 4.4

Mean Counselor Expertise scores showing Singaporean and U.S. students' ratings of Counselor B using directive and non-directive style.

Note: S = Singaporean students
US = U.S. students