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ACCULTURATION DIFFERENCES AMONG INTERNATIONAL  
STUDENTS AT WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

by

Kemal Aydin

A Thesis  
Submitted to the  
Faculty of The Graduate College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Arts  
Department of Sociology

Western Michigan University  
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1997

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Kemal Aydin

# ACCULTURATION DIFFERENCES AMONG INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Kemal Aydin, M.A.

Western Michigan University, 1997

The acculturation of international students at Western Michigan University was studied in this thesis. Acculturation variables of perceived prejudice, observance of cultural practices and social ties, and language usage were measured. The results of this study shows that in terms of perceived prejudice, Western Michigan University's international students (except European and Hispanics students) tend to move away from a stimulus. Acculturation and language usage, however, indicate that there is no significant acculturation differences among the respondents. International students at Western Michigan University seem to prefer integration as reflected in a commitment to pluralism. In summary, international students at Western Michigan University prefer multiculturalism and pluralism rather than assimilation into or rejection of American society.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Since 1950, many international students have come to the United States. They have come to obtain education or training not available in their home countries, attain prestige through a degree from a United States institution, escape unsettled political or economic conditions, or learn more about the United States. However, in doing so, they face challenges in terms of language, adjusting to a different academic system and a different culture.

The acculturation process is one of the important processes affecting international students. This study concentrates on international student acculturation. A study of the acculturation of international students attending Western Michigan University is important, because very little is known about this group, despite its visibility and its strong socioeconomic, professional and cultural contributions to the university's academic life and work.

#### The Concept of Acculturation

When viewing a complex phenomena such as acculturation, it is often useful to return to the early, original conceptualizations; these may serve both as anchors and as beacons in the ensuing search. Use of the concept of acculturation appears as early as 1880. There are, however, four classic formulations:

(1) Redfield, Linton, and Herkovits (1936); (2) Herkovits (1938); (3) Linton (1940); and (4) the Social Science Research Council summer seminar (1954).

Redfield (1936) defines acculturation in the following way:

Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups. Under this definition acculturation is to be distinguished from culture change, of which both one aspect and assimilation, which is at times a phase of acculturation. It is also to be differentiated from diffusion, which while occurring in all instances of acculturation, is not only a phenomena which frequently takes place without the occurrence of the types of contact between peoples specified in the definition above, but also constitutes only one aspect of process of acculturation. (p. 8)

In the 1954 formulation by the Social Science Research Council, acculturation was defined as:

.... culture change that is initiated by the conduction of two or more autonomous cultural systems. Acculturative change may be the consequence of direct cultural transmission; it may be derived from non cultural causes, such as ecological or demographic modifications induced by an impinging culture; it may be delayed, as with internal adjustments following upon the acceptance of alien traits or patterns ; or it may be a reactive adaptation of traditional modes of life. Its dynamics can be seen as the selective adaptation of value systems, the process of integration and differentiation, the generation of developmental sequences, and the operation of role determinants and personality factors. (p. 10)

From these definitions, we may derive a number of features and dimensions of the phenomenon for our contemporary use. One is the basic nature of the phenomenon; a second is the characteristic course of acculturation; another is the levels at which it takes place.

Nature: Acculturation requires the contact of at least two autonomous cultural groups; there must also be change in one or the other of the two groups

which results from the contact. Although in principle, change can occur in either of the two parties (Bailey, 1937), in practice one group dominates the other and contributes more to the flow of cultural elements than does the weaker of the groups.

Process: This brief discussion suggests that there may be a characteristic three phase process to acculturation: (1) contact, (2) conflict, and (3) adaptation. The first phase is necessary, the second is probable, and some form of the third is inevitable (Padilla, 1990).

At the core of the notion of acculturation is the contact (physical or symbolic) between two groups. This can occur through trade, invasion, enslavement, educational or missionary activity or through telecommunications. Without contact there is no acculturation; so this condition is centrally important. Such variables as the nature, purpose, duration, and permanence of contact contribute to the acculturation phenomena where it is not mutually desired, or where contact is short-lived. Sodowsky and Carey (1992) found that those who had lived 6+ or more years in the USA were significantly more acculturated than were those who had lived 3 to 5 years or 0 to 2 years. Kurtines and Arnalde (1978) also reported a linear relationship between behavioral acculturation and time in the USA.

The results of both this study and Sodowsky and Carey's show that when compared to permanent immigrant residents, international students who have come to the USA for a short time seem to increase acculturation and language usage as they increase their length of stay in the USA. In this study, those who

just came to the USA and had lived in the USA for a longer time used English more than those who had lived here two or three years. But those who had lived in the USA for two or three years did not like to use English. After 4+ years they used more English. These results show that international students who come for the first time like the new environment and culture. After a while they miss their own culture and language, but after 4+ years they increasingly began to use English. For acculturation, however, there is no-significant difference among the respondents. One possible reason may be that international students come here for a short time and for different purposes. The greatest acculturation will take place where the goal is a deliberate takeover of a society (e.g., invasion) or through the acquisition of its skills or beliefs (e.g., education) over a long period of time (e.g., settlement) (Padilla, 1990). Conflict will take place only in the case of some degree of resistance, but common experience shows that groups do not lightly give up valued features of their culture. Thus conflict, at some point during contact, has been the general rule.

Level: Although the concept of acculturation originated within the discipline of anthropology and has most often been treated as a cultural group phenomenon, the original formulations included the term “individuals” in their discussion and referred to psychological acculturation--that of the group and that of the individual (Grave, 1967). When considering the three phases during the course of acculturation, it is apparent that contact, conflict and adaptation are all phenomena which are of equal relevance to group and to individual levels of analysis.

## Varieties of Adaptation

Adaptation is a useful concept in the study of acculturation (Berry, 1970). If adaptation is viewed as the reduction of conflict, it may be used to examine possible variations in this third phase of acculturation. Three varieties or modes of adaptation are outlined: (1) adjustment, (2) reaction, and (3) withdrawal. In adjustment, changes are made which reduce the conflict by retaliating against the source of the conflict; native political resistance or aggression are examples of this modes. These three varieties of adaptation are similar to the distinctions in the psychological literature made between (1) moving with or toward, (2) moving against, and (3) moving away from, a stimulus.

All three are possible varieties of acculturation by non-dominant groups, but they do not exhaust the list of possible types. Of the three, two are clearly negative, in the sense that they represent negative attitudes toward the dominant group. The one positive variety is undifferentiated, and does not do justice to the available options. One way to expand these three varieties is by giving dichotomous 'yes' or 'no' answers to two questions of crucial importance to all groups and individuals undergoing acculturation: 'Is my cultural identity of sufficient value to be retained?', and 'Are positive relations with the larger (dominant) society to be sought?' In this manner, four distinct varieties of assimilation may be identified: (1) acculturation, (2) integration, (3) rejection, and (4) deculturation (Padilla, 1990) (see Table 1).

Table 1  
Varieties of Adaptation

Varieties of Acculturation	Retention of Cultural Identity	Positive Relationship to Dominant Society
Assimilation	No	Yes
Integration	Yes	Yes
Rejection	Yes	No
Deculturation	No	No

The results of this study shows that in terms of perceived prejudice, Western Michigan University's international students (except European students) tend to move away from a stimulus. Acculturation and language usage, however, indicate that there is no significant acculturation differences among the respondents. In terms of assimilation, integration, rejection and deculturation, the results indicate that international students at Western Michigan University seem to prefer integration as reflected in a commitment to multiculturalism and pluralism. In summary, international students at Western Michigan University prefer multiculturalism and pluralism rather than assimilation to or rejection of American society. The results also indicate that international students acculturate to some degree to USA society as well. The results indicate that there is no rejection or deculturation. When international students return to their home countries, they take some degree of culture from both the USA and other cultures.

By answering “yes” to the question “Are positive relations with the dominant society to be sought?” we have two positive varieties of acculturation (moving toward) which are distinguished by the contrasting value placed on the retention of cultural identity: assimilation and integration. In the case of assimilation, one must relinquish his/her cultural identity. Integration, however, implies maintenance of cultural integrity as well as the movement to become an integral part of a larger societal framework. Therefore, in the case of integration, the option taken is to retain cultural identity and move to join the dominant society. At this point in the analysis, a third essential question must be recognized: ‘Who has the right to decide the first two questions?’ Clearly, in some monocultural societies, the integration option, although desired by the “outside” group, may be denied by the dominant society. In contrast, in multicultural societies, the integration decision is permitted or even encouraged by the larger society. Thus, a more elaborate analyses of the positive types of acculturation is required to deal with this political reality. First, however, let us examine the negative types of acculturation that are identified when answering ‘no’ to the question of establishing or maintaining positive relations with the larger society. Rejection refers to self-imposed withdrawal from the larger society. However, when imposed by the larger society, it becomes one of the classical forms of segregation. Thus the question of having the political power to decide upon options comes to the fore again.

Finally, there is an option which is difficult to define precisely, possibly

because it is accompanied by a good deal of collective and individual confusion and anxiety. It is characterized by striking out against the larger society and by feelings of alienation, loss of identity, and what has been termed acculturative stress. This option is decculturation, in which occurs with groups who are out of cultural and psychological contact with either their traditional culture or the larger society. When imposed by the larger society, it is tantamount to ethnocide. When it is chosen for whatever reason, it constitutes the classical situation of 'marginality' (Stonequist, 1935). When the group's right to choose option is taken into account, even more varieties of acculturation become identifiable (see Table 2). In part the right to choose option relates to the degree of tolerance for cultural diversity which is present in a society, both at the individual (attitudinal) and group (community, institutional and governmental) levels. When many cultural groups are present in a society, it is known as a plural society (Berry, 1977).

Similarly, there are two varieties of assimilation distinguished in Table 2: (1) the melting pot occurs when the groups move freely into the larger society, and (2) the pressure cooker occurs when the groups are coerced into it. Both lead away from a plural or multicultural society toward a unicultural or monistic one.

The rejection option shown in Table 1 is separated into two varieties in Table 2: (1) withdrawal (self segregation), previously discussed as a basic form of adaptation; and (2) the classic form of segregation, where group distinctiveness and separation is enforced by the dominant society. The deculturation option can



Table 2

## Varieties of Acculturation as Determined by Group Response

Varieties of Acculturation	Retention of Cultural Identity	Positive Relationship To dominant society	Group right to chose options
Multicultutalism (Pluralism)	yes	yes	yes
Pluralism	yes	yes	no
Melting Pot	no	yes	yes
Pressure Cooker	no	yes	no
Withdrawal	yes	no	yes
Segregation	yes	no	no
Marginality	no	no	yes
Ethnocide	no	no	no

Note: Four main categories in Table 1 are divided into 8 subcategories in Table 2 in terms of group responses.

be considered only with difficulty, for as noted above, it is attended by a good deal of personal and societal confusion. Moreover, it is unlikely that any group will voluntarily select this variety of acculturation. However, some stabilized forms, such as many marginal groups, are remarkably resistant to change and may continue to exist, at least to some extent, because they are valued by their members. Other forms, when imposed by the dominant society, really constitute a type of ethnocide.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Acculturation has been theoretically viewed from unidirectional as well as bi-directional perspectives. Unidirectional acculturation has been seen as synonymous to assimilation, being defined as 'change of cultural patterns to those of the host society' (Gordon, 1978, p. 169) and as 'the acquisition of values of a host society by members of a minority or immigrant group' (Le Vine & Padilla, 1980). On the other hand, if one defines acculturation bidirectionally in terms of Mexican American culture and Anglo culture as an example, ranging on a continuum from low commitment to Mexican American culture and high commitment to Anglo culture, to equal preference for both cultures; or high commitment to Mexican American culture and low commitment to Anglo culture.

Similarly, Szapocznik and Kurtines (1980) stated that in a bicultural context where there is ethnic community support as well as the domination of the majority culture, acculturation consists of a complex process of relinquishing and/or retaining the characteristics of the immigrants cultural origins. An example of this type of situation would be the case of the Cuban population in the Dade county area (Miami) which has created two identifiable cultural communities with sizable Hispanic as well as Anglo influences, the process of acculturation tends to take place along both of these cultural dimensions.

The acculturation process could be used to conceptualize and study the changes that international people experience with first hand contact with the dominant United States society. Additionally, the acculturation process offers a promising approach to understanding the adjustment difficulties of international students as they attempt to acculturate or accommodate to a host society. Olmedo (1970) stated that there are three trends in the psychological research on acculturation. First, there is an increased emphasis on studying within-culture group phenomena rather than between culture group differences. Second, the original interest in the acculturation of Native Americans in the United States has been diversified to include Hispanics and Asian Americans. Third, there is a greater demand for precision of definition and measurement of acculturation, which has led to the development and application of a variety of assessment methods of acculturation (Sodowky & Plake, 1992).

According to Berry (1980) the variety of relationship options between a minority group and the dominant group enables a minority group to adapt to and reduce conflict with the dominant system. Therefore, acculturation is a dynamic process of relating to the dominant group, whereby the minority group selectively adapts its value system and cultural practices when involved in the processes of integrating with and differentiating from the dominant group. Instead of being phases in a linear process of attitudinal development, the acculturation options indicate the levels and degrees of adaptation to the dominant group that are chosen by the minority group.

Using the acculturation options, Berry and Padilla (1980) studied three adaptation options of international people in the United States: (1) assimilation into United States culture, which means becoming more similar to the majority group and relinquishing one's original culture; (2) integration of the culture of origin and the United States culture, which means maintaining one's cultural integrity as well as becoming an integral part of the majority culture; and (3) rejection of the United States culture and establishing an ethnic group enclave. The fourth acculturation option suggested by Berry called 'deculturation' or lack of cultural contact with either group, possibly suggesting the concept of marginality proposed by Sue (1981), was not included because, both theoretically and from the point of view of measurement, it may not be possible to define an individual as cultureless. According to the bicultural model, one can be more or less affiliated to a culture. It is also possible that deculturation or cultural marginality is related to acculturative stress or cultural crises experienced by immigrants or minorities involved in the acculturation process. Through factor analyses, Sodowsky and Plake (1991) identified several acculturation factors related to the adaptation experiences of international people: (a) perceived prejudice, (b) acculturation, and (c) language usage. The broader concept is assimilation, while acculturation is a sub-category of assimilation. Milton Gordon discusses acculturation as the acquisition of necessary survival knowledge and skills when an immigrant encounters the host culture. These three factors indicate whether a person assimilates, integrates, rejects, or deculturates. The higher the perceived prejudice

of the host society, the more adaptation difficulties. On the other hand, both acculturation and language usage indicate a positive attribute towards the host society. These three factors are the three dimensions of adaptation. The three factors are which can be variables measured by sociocultural indicators. They were tested on students from different continents using the sociocultural variables: length of stay, culture, religion, and gender.

Acculturation factors identified in this study are not used for predictive purposes. Under the acculturation variable in this study, there are 11 questions. These 11 question are the acculturative factors which focus on the relationships with American society, such as preferences for friendship, food, entertainment, etc. The more students share these factors with American society, the more acculturated they will become.

Perceived prejudice is an attitude of the dominant group towards the minority group. Perceived prejudice leads to a sense of alienation from the dominant group. This reflects Berry's notion that the apparent domination by the group with power causes the acculturation process to become conflictual or crisis-like, and reactive for the group without power before it adapts to reduce tension. Acculturation indicates preferences for friendships, trusting relationships, group identity, community ties, food, entertainment, religion, and cultural practices and festivals. Language usage facility refers to spoken languages, the language used when communicating with one's cultural group, and the language used when processing thoughts and images.

## Effects of Sociocultural Variables

There are several potential consequences emanating from the contact between two autonomous cultural systems or the consequences of direct cultural transmission. For instance, change "may be derived from noncultural causes such as ecological or demographic modifications" experienced by the impinging cultural group (Social Science Research Council, 1991, cited in Berry, 1980, p.10). Berry's ecological-cultural-behavioral theory of acculturation (Berry & Annis, 1974) proposes that acculturative influences include such additional cultural factors as Western education, wage employment, urbanization, settlement patterns, population densities, changes in socialization practices, and the pressure to change under the impact of these experiences. These influences act upon the traditional culture, altering it into a contact culture (or ethnic culture). The traditional culture is additionally influenced by the behavior of individuals and their interaction with the environment. This interaction creates a changing and influential ecology. So, Berry's theory of acculturation emphasizes a multidimensional interacting system. It has been suggested that acculturation options differ among minority people depending on their sociocultural characteristics (Garcia & Lega, 1979). For instance, one study of Asian Indian international people (Sodowsky & Carey, 1988) showed that the sociocultural variables of preference for ethnic food at home, and marital status were negatively correlated with a high degree of acculturation. A study of South Asian women in Canada indicated that the rich

philosophic and religious heritage of the women was influential in their ability to cope with the stress of conflicting cultural demands and adopt a dualistic (traditional-contemporary) view of life (Natio & Davis, 1988, p. 325).

A cross cultural study of Hispanic and Southeast Asian immigrants showed that successful acculturation was a function of the participants' residence status in the United States, with the Hispanic and Southeast Asian being significantly different from not only their immigrant counterparts but also each other. Also, the Southeast Asian refugee sample was the least acculturated and least satisfied (Wong, Rieger, & Quintana, 1987).

Such findings about the effects of sociocultural variables on acculturation support the recommendation that the study of the overall effects of a dominant culture on immigrants needs to be supplemented with efforts to study within group differences, such effort consequently, prevents over generalization and possibly stereotyping (Atkinson, 1983; Cases, 1985; Sue & Zane, 1987).

After reviewing the above literature Garcia and Lega (1979) suggested that acculturation options differ among minority people depending on their sociocultural characteristics. Sodowsky and Carey (1988) found that sociocultural variables of preference for ethnic food at home and marital status were negatively correlated with a high degree of acculturation. A cross cultural study of Hispanic and Southeast Asian immigrants showed that acculturation was a function of the participant's residence status in the United States.

On the basis of the literature review, I expect to find that:

1. There will be different responses by people from different continents, indeed people from the same continent.
2. Length of stay will be positively related to satisfaction with the acculturation process.
3. Culture and religion will influence attitudes toward acculturation.
4. The effects of gender will be minimal or non-existent, in that males and females will express similar perceptions of the acculturation process.



## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The modified version of the the American-International Relation Scale (AIRS) is used in this study. The original 34-item scale was developed by Sodowsky and Plake (1992) to assess the acculturation experiences of international students, scholars, and others in the US culture and to measure the perceptions of people from other countries relationship with Caucasian Americans. There are three subclasses of assimilation: (1) perceived prejudice, (2) acculturation, and (3) language usage. These three subclasses are three dimensions of assimilation measured by the AIRS. Perceived prejudice and language usage are variables that affect assimilation.

The American-International Relation Scale (AIRS) has been validated in a study conducted at the University of Nebraska by Sodowsky and Plake (1992). It was distributed not only to students but to non-students immigrants as well. After reviewing the original questionnaire, four items were excluded (13, 14, 30, 32) because they were not relevant to Western Michigan University students. Thirty-nine items were used for this study. Eleven more demographic questions were added. The wording of the four original open-ended questions has been changed, but the meanings are the same.

In this research, Subscale one, perceived prejudice, consists of items 9, 10,

11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 21, 23, 24, 28, 29, and 30. These questions deal with stereotypes, fashion, physical appearances, relationships, etc. Subscale two, acculturation, consists of items 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 17, 20, 22, 25, 26, and 27. These questions deal with relationships with United States society. Subscale three, language usage, consists of items 1, 2, and 4.

The first eight questions asked the respondent to circle the number corresponding to the statement that best describes him. Questions 9 through 30 were constructed on a Likert scale format (1-Strongly agree, 2-agree, 3-tend to agree, 4-tend to disagree, 5-disagree, and 6-strongly disagree).

The four open ended questions were:

1. Please describe how your national origin is related to your sense of who you are.
2. Could you please describe an example of how you are normally treated by Americans.
3. Please state how you respond to Americans.
4. Please write in the name of your country.

### Participants and Procedure

There are approximately 1700 international students including CELCIS (Career Language School) at Western Michigan University (International Student Office, Western Michigan University, 1996). For this project, questionnaires were distributed to approximately 95 international students (October, 1996). Eighty

International students completed this survey. There were 6 different continents represented in the international student population. These included African, Middle East, South Asian, East Asian, European and Spanish heritage. Of the students 7 were African, 16 Middle Eastern, 11 European, and 32 South Asian (Japan, China, S. Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Singapore, etc.). Eight students from East Asia (Pakistan, India, etc.) and 6 South American students completed this questionnaire. Sixty (75%) of the total sample were male and 20 (25%) were females. Eight freshmen, 6 sophomore, 5 junior, 19 senior, 34 graduate students, and 8 Celcis students completed this questionnaire. Questionnaires were distributed in October by hand to classrooms, dormitories, married housing apartments, student associations, the Bronco mall, etc. Eighty completed questionnaires were analyzed. While following the classical random sampling method is desirable and preferred, the expense involved in mailing questionnaires as well as the usual delays in returning the completed document mitigated against the use of that ideal method. I used what is referred to in the literature as a “convenience sample” I distributed questionnaire to international students and they distributed to others, using a snowball technique. I went to the Davis Hall/Bigelow Hall resident advisor whom I know. They distributed to Davis and Bigelow’s non-American students. I also distributed 10 questionnaires in the Kalamazoo Islamic Center. During the African student meeting, 6 of the African students completed their questionnaires. I picked up the completed questionnaires after 3-5 days. Thus, there are biases and sampling errors in using this data gathering strategy.

## Data Analyses

Completed questionnaires are analyzed by using multivariate analysis of variances (MANOVA). The questionnaires were composed of a total 39 items, with no item loading saliently on one or more factors. The alpha internal consistency reliabilities of the subclasses--perceived prejudice, acculturation, and language usage--were measured. The questionnaires have multiple choice and Likert items, with one indicating strong affiliation with one's nationality group, suggesting rejection of the United States society; six indicating strong affiliation with US society, suggesting assimilation. The middle score indicates an ability to accept both worlds, with denial of neither, suggesting integrated biculturalism.

Using the same multivariate and univariate procedures, comparison of subscale scores by the independent variables residence status, length of stay, religion, and gender were accomplished.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

In this study questionnaire items were scored 1 to 6. For perceived prejudice the lower number indicates higher perceived prejudice and higher numbers indicate less prejudice. Statement 13 on the questionnaire is a good example of the structure of the questionnaire: “No matter how adjusted to American ways I may be seen as a foreigner by Americans.” There were six options for responding to this: (1) Strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) tend to agree, (4) tend to disagree, (5) disagree, and (6) strongly disagree. Thus, a “one” indicates strong perceived prejudice while a “six” indicates the least prejudice. On perceived prejudice, European international students scored higher. This means they perceived the least amount of prejudice.

For the six international students groups, African, Middle East, European, South Asian, East Asian, and South American (Hispanic), a significant MANOVA,  $F(15.212)=3.203$ ,  $P<.001$ , was followed by significant ANOVA for all three subscales:  $F(5.74)=5.2626$ ,  $P=.0003$  (Perceived prejudice);  $F(5.74)=2.2347$ ,  $P=.0596$  (Acculturation); and  $F(5.74)=2.1149$ ,  $P=.0730$  (Language usage).

For perceived prejudice, the means of the African ( $M=50.57$ ), South Asian ( $M=52.03$ ), East Asian ( $M=52.13$ ), and Middle East ( $M=53.44$ ) were significantly

higher than the mean of European ( $M=68.55$ ) and Hispanic ( $M=64.67$ ) at the .05 level indicating that African, South Asian, East Asian and Middle East students perceived more prejudice than European and Hispanic students (see Figure 1). It seems that non-Western students perceived significantly more prejudice than Western students. Six Hispanic students completed this questionnaire, four of whom were married to Americans. This kind of sociocultural variable may affect their perception of prejudice. Both the USA and Europe have some cultural and racial background. For this reason, European students may more comfortably express them than the other group.

As can be seen in Figure 2, the mean scores for acculturation of Middle East students ( $M=42.75$ ) were significantly less than the mean of East Asian ( $M=38.25$ ), South Asian ( $M=38.31$ ), African ( $M=39.71$ ), European ( $M=40.46$ ), and Hispanic ( $M=40.83$ ) at .05 indicating that Middle East students were the

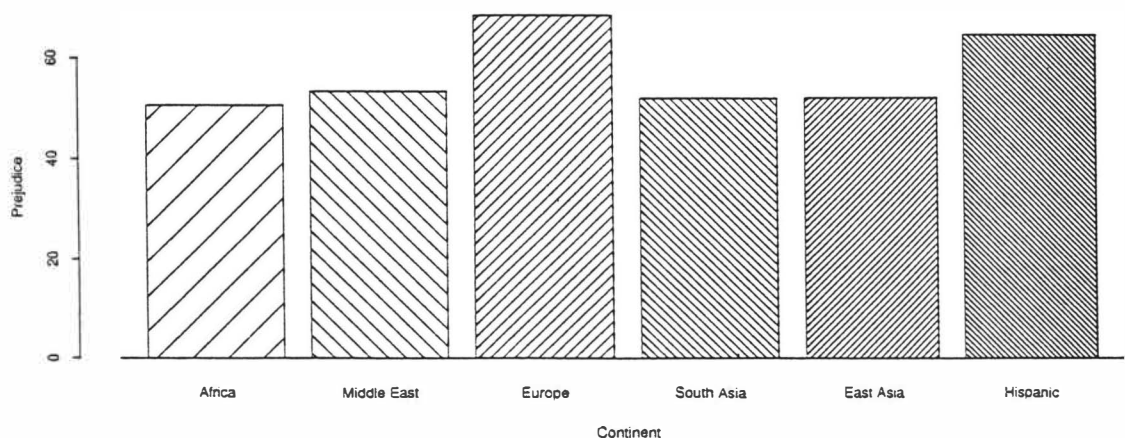


Figure 1. Perceived Prejudice by Continent for Western Michigan University International Students (October, 1996).

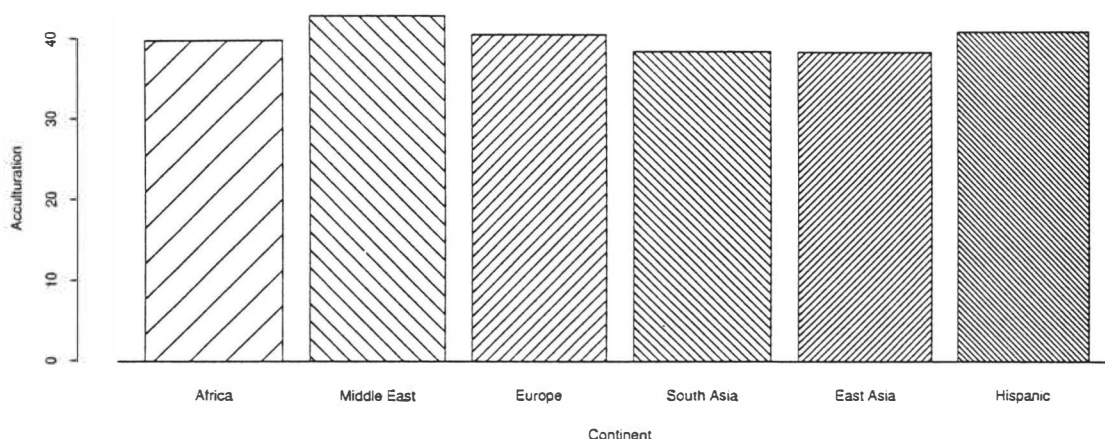


Figure 2. Acculturation by Continent for Western Michigan University International Students (October, 1996).

least acculturated. The higher the score, the lower the degree of acculturation. East Asian, South Asian, and African students were relatively more acculturated than European, Muslim and Hispanic students. Although some Asian countries are competing with the USA, it seems that students from Asia seem to like American culture and they want to become like Americans. Compared to Muslim students, their conflicts with the Western world are non-significant. Between the Western World and the Middle East, misconceptions play a big role. For African students, six African students completed this questionnaires. Some of them came to USA for political asylum. For this reason, their purpose of duration in the USA may affect their acculturation. For European students, although they have the same origin, they believe their European cultures to be superior to that of the USA.

For language usage, the means of East Asian ( $M=9.38$ ), European

( $M=10.46$ ), South Asian ( $M=10.56$ ), and African ( $M=10.71$ ) were significantly higher than the mean of Middle East students ( $M=11.94$ ) and Hispanics students ( $M= 12$ ) at the .05, indicating that Middle East and Hispanic student used English less than the others. Low scores indicate English usage is “high”; high scores indicate that English usage is low. South Asian, East Asian, and some African countries were colonized by Britain at one time. Their languages were English. Thus, they speak English more than the others. Secondly, they seem to envy to USA culture. Their perceived prejudice are also lower than the Middle Eastern students. Muslim students think that Western culture is destructive and against their culture. But Asian students do not have the same kind of prejudice Muslim students have. Thus, Asian and African students speak more English than Muslims. There are a lot of Hispanic people in the USA. Some of the respondents of this study were married to Americans. A lot of Americans want to learn Spanish. For this reason, married couple may speak more Spanish than English.

### Sociocultural Variables

They were five categories for length of stay: (1) less than one year to one year, (2) two years, (3) three years, (4) four years, and (5) five or more years. A non-significant MANOVA,  $F(12,215)=1.171$ ,  $P=.306$  was followed by non-significant ANOVA's for two subscales,  $F(4,75)=.2096$ ,  $P=.9323$  (perceived prejudice) and  $F(4,75)=1.0151$ ,  $P=.4052$  (acculturation).



One of the significant subclasses which revealed significant differences was  $F(4.25)=2.9143$ ,  $P=.0268$  (language usage). For language usage the means for those people who lived two years ( $M=11.06$ ) and three years ( $M=11.52$ ) were significantly less than those who lived for one year ( $M=10.25$ ), four years ( $M=8.67$ ), and five years ( $M=9.36$ ) at the level of .05 indicating that those who just came to USA and had lived in the USA for a longer time (more than four years) used English more than did those who had lived in the USA for two or three years (see Figure 3). In summary, increased length of stay in the USA seems to increase using English. However, those who had lived in USA for two or three years (kind of mid-range of residence) did not like to use English. The reason is that when international students first arrive in the USA they seem to like English. But after a while they appear to be seeking friends from their own country and thus using their native language. However, if they remain past this period, their use of English increases.

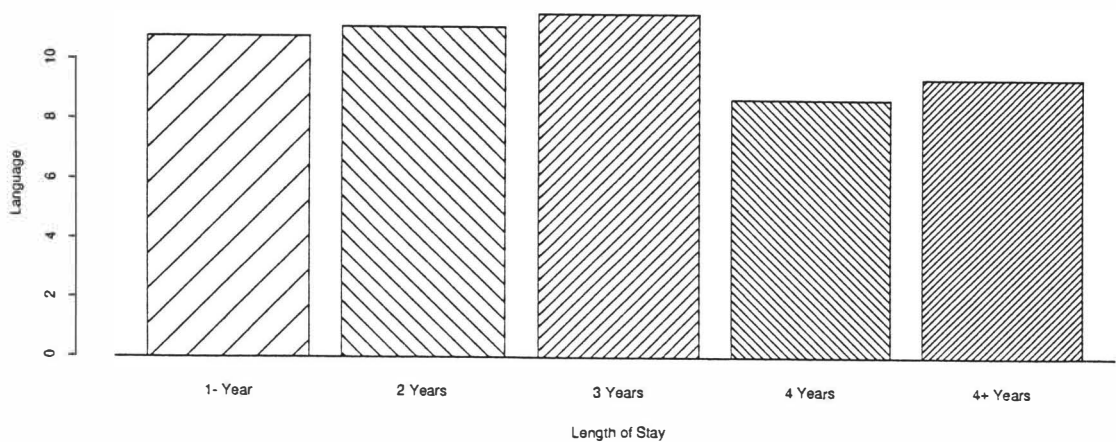


Figure 3. Language Usage by Length of Stay for Western Michigan University International Students (October, 1996).

## Religious Groups

There were four religious groups: Christian (29 students, 36.3%), Islam (28 students, 35.0%), Buddhism (10 students, 12.5%), others (1 student, 1.3%), and no religion (12 students, 15%).

A non-significant MANOVA  $F(12.215)=1.107$ ,  $P=.356$  was followed by non-significant ANOVA's for all three subclasses,  $F(4.75)=2.0142$ ,  $P=.1010$  (perceived prejudice);  $F(4.75)=.6320$ ,  $P=.6412$  (acculturation); and  $F(4.75)=1.0218$ ,  $P=.4017$  (language usage). For perceived prejudice, the mean score for Buddhists ( $M=48.90$ ), Muslims ( $M=53.04$ ), and no religion ( $M=56.50$ ), revealed significantly more perceived prejudice than Christians ( $M=59.57$ ) (see Figure 4). Buddhists perceived the highest amount of prejudice. Additionally, Muslim students perceived more prejudice than Christians and those with no religious affiliation, a commonsense expectation in a Christian dominated nation state.

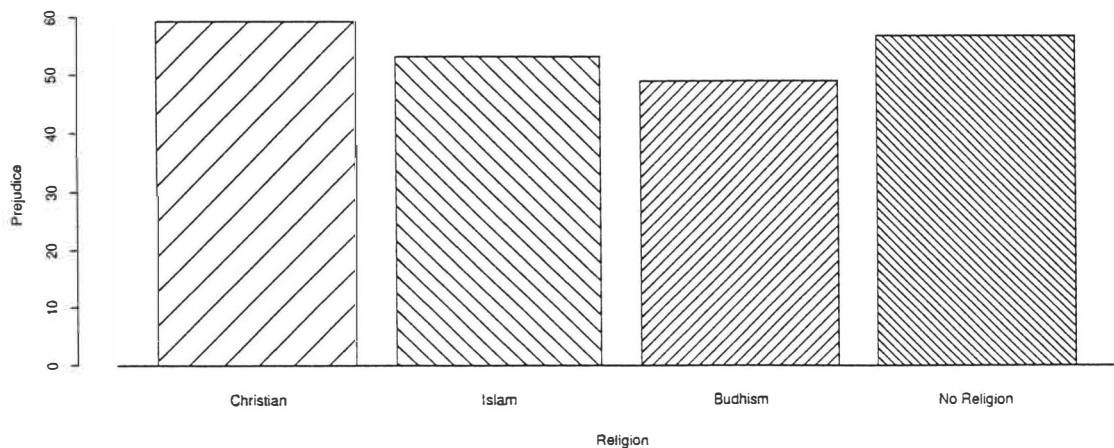


Figure 4. Perceived Prejudice by Religion for Western Michigan University International Students (October, 1996).

For acculturation, there were non-significant differences among the means for Christians ( $M=39.21$ ), Muslims ( $M=40.89$ ), Buddhists ( $M=39.20$ ), and those with no-religious affiliation ( $M=39.00$ ).

For language usage, there were non-significant difference among the means of Christians ( $M=10.83$ ), Muslims ( $M=11.21$ ), Buddhists ( $M=11.10$ ), and no religious affiliation religion ( $M=9.83$ ). It seems that students who are members of non-western religions perceived more prejudice and were less acculturated. For language usage, there were no significant differences.

Muslim students perceived more prejudice, were less acculturated, and spoke English less often than the others group. It seems that the United States' political and military difficulties and Western media projections about Muslim people has influenced how US citizens respond to them. For this reason Muslim students perceived more prejudice, were less acculturated, and used English less often. They thus maintain strong connections with their culture of origin and resist overt and covert pressure to assimilation.

For Buddhist students, almost all of them came from Asia. Different color of Asian students and historical conflict with Japan, Vietnam and economic competition with Asian countries may have affected their responses on perceived prejudice.

For gender, there are non-significant difference as determined by MANOVA  $F(3,76)=1.334$ ,  $P=.270$  (see Tables 3, 4, and 5). This was also true for ANOVA for all three scales:  $F(1,78)=.0232$ ,  $P=.7906$  (acculturation);

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations on Acculturation Subclass to Determine Differences Between Culture Groups and by Sociocultural Variable

<b>Variables</b> <b>Continent</b>	Perceived Prejudice			Acculturation			Language Use		
	n	m	sd	n	m	sd	n	m	sd
1-African	7	50.5714	13.79	7	39.71	4.23	7	10.71	2.06
2-Middle East	16	53.4375	6.06	16	42.75	5.62	16	11.94	1.17
3- European	11	68.5455	12.05	11	40.46	3.36	11	10.46	1.44
4-South Asian	32	52.0313	11.69	32	38.31	5.10	32	10.56	2.20
5-East Asian	8	52.1250	12.15	8	38.25	2.61	8	9.38	3.50
6- Hispanic	6	64.6667	7.45	6	40.83	3.06	6	12.00	1.55
<b>Religion</b>	n	m	sd	n	m	sd	n	m	sd
1- Christian	29	59.07	14.88	29	39.21	4.44	29	10.83	1.87
2- Muslim	28	53.04	7.61	28	40.89	5.41	28	11.21	2.83
3- Buddhism	10	48.90	14.26	10	39.20	3.88	10	11.10	3.04
4-No religion	12	56.50	9.24	12	39.00	5.19	12	9.83	2.22
<b>Years of residence</b>	n	m	sd	n	m	sd	n	m	sd
1-one or less	20	56.40	15.20	20	40.45	4.41	20	10.75	1.45
2- two year	17	54.00	13.67	17	38.59	4.95	17	11.06	1.44
3- three years	29	55.04	9.21	29	40.79	4.52	29	11.52	2.47
4- four years	3	60.33	15.37	3	38.33	2.27	3	8.67	1.53
5- more than five	11	55.46	11.93	11	38.27	5.35	11	9.36	2.98
<b>Gender</b>	n	m	sd	n	m	sd	n	m	sd
1- Male	60	55.53	11.23	60	39.88	4.56	60	10.58	1.99
2- Female	20	55.05	15.10	20	39.55	5.64	20	11.55	2.72

Note: The lesser the score, the greater the perception of prejudice, adherence to cultural practices and values of nationality group, and use of native language.

$F(1.78)=2.9113$ ,  $P=.0919$  (language usage). On perceived prejudice, there was no significant difference between male ( $M=55.53$ ) and female ( $M=55.05$ ). There was no significant differences on the acculturation scale between male ( $M=55.53$ ) and female ( $M=55.05$ ). There were no significant differences between male ( $M=10.58$ ) and female ( $M=11.55$ ) on the language usage scale.

Table 4

## One Way ANOVA Tests of Subscales

Group	<i>df</i>	<i>Hyp M<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>Error M<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>f</i>	<i>p</i>
<u><i>1-Continent</i></u>					
Perceived prej.	5.74	617.9663	117.4264	5.2626	.0003*
Acculturation	5.74	48.0872	21.5184	2.2347	.0596
Language Use	5.74	9.7413	4.6060	2.1149	.0730
<u><i>2-Years of res.</i></u>					
Perceived prej.	4.75	32.5570	155.3221	0.2096	.9323
Acculturation	4.75	23.5313	23.1823	1.0151	.4052
Language Use	4.75	13.1013	4.4953	2.9145	.0268*
<u><i>3- Religion</i></u>					
Perceived prej.	4.75	285.6653	141.8230	2.0142	.1010
Acculturation	4.75	14.9407	23.6405	.6320	.6412
Language use	4.75	5.0328	4.9256	1.0218	.4017
<u><i>Gender</i></u>					
Perceived prej.	1.78	3.5042	150.9729		.8793
Acculturation	1.78	1.6667	23.4761		.7096
Language Use	1.78	14.0167	4.8145		.0919

Table 5  
MANOVA

<i><u>Group</u></i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Continent	15.212	3.203	.000
Length	12.215	1.171	.306
Gender	3.76	1.334	.270
Religion	12.215	1.107	.356

#### Additional Significant Results

In general among the international student population, 39 students out of 80 (48.8%) speak mostly their first languages and some English, compared to 22 students (27.5%) who speak English and their first language equally. Forty-five students agreed that Americans try to fit them into existing stereotypes about their nationality groups, but 35 students disagreed with this statement. Statement 12: "When I do not dress in American fashion, Americans think I am odd, backward, and not to be taken seriously". Fifty-five students out of 80 disagreed with this statement, while only 5 of them agreed. Statement 13: "No matter how adjusted to the American way, I may be seen as a "foreigner" by Americans". Fifty-nine students out of 80 agreed while 21 of them disagreed with this statement.

Statement 15: "My physical appearance does not match the standards that

American have about good looks". Forty-seven students out of 80 disagreed, while 35 of them agreed. Thirty-nine students believed that: "The best way to appear less different to Americans is to become like American society and people," while 41 students disagreed with this statement.

Forty-four students answered that their group identities were mostly connected to the country that they came from; some indicated they were more identified with American society. Thirty-six students preferred American music, films, and entertainment to those of their countries of origin, while 44 students preferred those of their native lands. Fifty-seven students followed the religion and cultural values that they practiced in their home country; while 25 students did not practice the religion of their home countries. Forty-seven students agreed that they were rarely invited to the homes or parties of their American classmates, colleges, or neighbors. Twenty-one students out of 80 celebrated American religious or social festivals more than those from their own countries.

### Qualitative Analysis

A total of 36 students (45%) out of 80 answered question A: Please state how your national origin is related to your identity. As may be seen in Table 6, there appeared to be five themes in their answers:

1. A total of 15 students (18.75%) thought that the beliefs and values of their nationality group were related to their identity.

2. A total of eight students (10%) thought that their national origins were



Table 6  
Themes Derived From Qualitative Analyses  
of Responses to Open-Ended Questions

Questions and Themes	Number of students	% of responses
Question 1: Please state how your national origin is related to your identity.	33	45.0
Themes: - Beliefs and values of nationality group were related to their identity.	15	18.75
- National origin was closely related to their identity	8	10.00
- National origin was related to their identity in terms of costumes, language, clothing preference, taste...	4	5.00
- Both national identity and multicultural identity were related to their identity	6	7.5
- National origin was not related to their identity	3	3.75
Question 2: Please state how you perceive Americans treat you.	27	33.75
Themes: - Perceived Americans as treating them well	10	12.5
- Perceived treatment as dependent upon individual American	5	6.75
- Perceived Americans to be treating them equally	4	5
- Perceived Americans to be treating them negatively	3	3.75
- Did not care	3	3.75
- As a foreigner	2	2.5
Question 3: Please state how you respond to Americans	30	37.50
Themes: - Responded to Americans in a friendly way	10	12.75
- Behaved reciprocally with Americans	8	10
- Responded to Americans as they responded to everyone	4	5
- Responded to Americans in a reserved manner	6	7.5
- No American friends	2	2.5



closely related to their identity.

3. A total of four students (5%) thought that their national origin were related to their identity in terms of customs, language, clothing preference, etc.

4. A total of six (7.5%) students thought that both national and multicultural identities were related to their identity.

5. A total of three students thought that their national origin were not related to their identity.

A total of 27 students (33.75%) answered question B: "Please state how you perceive Americans treat you." There seemed to be six themes in the responses (see Table 6):

1. A total of ten students (2.5%) perceived American to be treating them well.

2. A total of five students (6.75%) thought that the treatment given by Americans depended on individual Americans: "Different people treated me differently, some are good, some are bad, etc."

3. A total of four students (3.75%) perceived American to be treating them equally (they have treated me equally fair, normally...etc.).

4. A total of three students (3.75%) perceived American to be treating them negatively "badly, very bad, cold, etc."

5. A total of three students indicated that they do not care about how Americans treated them.

6. A total of two students (2.5%) perceived American to be treating them

as foreigners.

A total of 30 students (37.50%) answered question C: "Please state how you respond to Americans." There seemed to be five themes (see Table 6) in their answers.

1. A total of ten students (12.75%) said that they responded to Americans in a friendly way: "nicely, polite, gently"; "I treated him/her like a friend..etc."

2. A total of eight students (10%) said that they behaved reciprocally with Americans: "I treated them the way they treated me..etc."

3. A total of four students (5%) said that they responded to Americans as they responded to everybody else: "like any other person from my country, any other country, etc".

4. A total of two students (2.5%) said that they did not care about Americans. There is no indication that the "no care" response was neutral or hostile.

5. A total of six students said that they responded to Americans in a reserved and cautious manner: "I respond quite friendly, but am equally cautious, etc".

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

This research addressed the acculturation issues of international students at Western Michigan University. Whereas most counseling research on acculturation is on people of Spanish descent, this study included five additional groups. The application of the American International Relation Survey (AIRS) provided important insights about differences between cultural groups at Western Michigan University. African, Middle East, South Asian and East Asian students perceived prejudice significantly more than the European and Hispanic students. In fact, the European and Hispanic students disagreed that there was prejudice. European and Hispanic students did not believe that there was any prejudice.

Four questions were addressed in this study. The first question was whether students from different continents were different in their attitudes toward acculturation. The results indicated that there were no significant differences in terms of desire for acculturation and continent. As compared to permanent immigrants, international students come to the USA for a short time and for different purposes. They also spend most of their time on university campuses, thus there is not as much contact with American society as permanent residents have. For this reason there is no effort to acculturate toward American society. In fact, international students seem to prefer multiculturalism and pluralism. This does

not mean there is deculturation but that insignificant acculturation takes place. The broader concept is assimilation. Acculturation is a sub-category of assimilation. Acculturation is the acquisition of necessary survival knowledge and skills when international students encounter the host culture.

In term of length of stay, there was no significant difference in terms of length of stay, perceived prejudice, and acculturation. However, one of the significant differences was language usage. An increased length of stay in the USA seemed to increase the use of English.

In terms of culture and religion, for perceived prejudice the mean score for Buddhists, Muslims, and no religion revealed significantly more perceived prejudice than Christians. The Buddhist perceived the most prejudice. Additionally, Muslim students perceived more prejudice than Christians and those with no religious affiliation. It seemed that students who are members of non-western religions perceived more prejudice and were less acculturated. For Buddhist students almost all of them came from Asia. Different colors of Asian students and global economic competition may have affected their scores for perceived prejudice.

For gender, there was no significant differences among the different age and gender groups. For language usage and gender, female students seem to use a little more English than male. For prejudice and acculturation there was no significant difference among the different ages of students.

Muslim students perceived more prejudice and were less acculturated and spoke English less often than the other groups. It seems that United States'

political, historical, and military problems with the Middle East and media projections about Muslim people have influenced how US citizens respond to them.

Qualitative analyses of open-ended responses, however, suggested a range of themes in the respondents perception of how the white USA society treated them which included both positive and negative treatment. Although European students perceived less prejudice, all of the respondents tended to prefer the cultural values and practices of their own nationality group. Regarding the use of languages, most of the respondents used mostly their first languages and some English.

A relationship between perception of prejudice and acculturation is possible because European and Hispanic students perceived less prejudice and were more acculturated than the others.

In past studies (Sodowsky & Carey, 1988) on the sociocultural variable of residence status in the United States, international students tended to perceive prejudice significantly more than did permanent residents and visiting international scholars. For acculturation, the international students and scholars used English significantly less than did permanent US residents. International students and scholars mostly tended to use their first languages, while permanent residents mostly tended to use English.

Although this study only applied to international students of Western Michigan University, the results indicate that this study parallels the past studies

done by Sadowsky and Carey (1988). This study showed that non-white international students perceived greater prejudice directed towards them than European and Hispanic students. From these results one may hypothesize that non-white international students tended to reject the option of acculturation. Although it is useful to test different ages with these three variables (perceived prejudice, acculturation, and language usage), this study mainly concerned continents, length of stay, religion and gender.

Secondly, when international students come to the USA, they mix more with other international students than with American society. For international students, Western Michigan University is a meeting place to become acquainted with other international students. From these result, one needs to study international students relationship with other international students and Americans.

This study is concerned with international students, and hopefully will contribute toward reducing international students adaptation difficulties. I hope the International Students Office of Western Michigan University will use this information so that they can be more successful in assisting international students to achieve their academic pursuits.

## CHAPTER VI

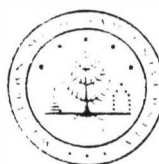
### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I have learned from this study that acculturation is a useful concept for explaining some degree of micro social change. The USA is a meeting place for international students. Such a place is a good environment for the development of multicultural and pluralistic views. Since the USA has a diversity of students, I was pleased to learn about people from many areas of the world as well as Americans.

**Appendix A**  
**Human Subjects Institutional**  
**Review Board Approval**



Human Subjects Institutional Review Board



Kalamazoo, Michigan 49008-3899  
616 387-8293

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## WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

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To: Dr. Douglas Davidson  
Kemal Aydin

From: Richard A. Wright, Chair  
Human Subjects Institutional Review Board

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Richard A. Wright".

Subject: HSIRB Project # 96-09-05

Date: September 13, 1996

This is to inform you that your project entitled "International Student Relations Survey at WMU," has been approved under the exempt category of research. This approval is based upon your proposal as presented to the HSIRB, and you may utilize human subjects only in accord with this approved proposal.

Your project is approved for a period of one year from the above date. If you should revise any procedures relative to human subjects or materials, you must resubmit those changes for review in order to retain approval. Should any untoward incidents or unanticipated adverse reactions occur with the subjects in the process of this study, you must suspend the study and notify me immediately. The HSIRB will then determine whether or not the study may continue.

Please be reminded that all research involving human subjects must be accomplished in full accord with the policies and procedures of Western Michigan University, as well as all applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations. Any deviation from those policies, procedures, laws or regulations may cause immediate termination of approval for this project.

Thank you for your cooperation. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Project Expiration Date: September 13, 1997

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