

[Special Issue: *International Issues in Psychology and Counseling*]

Guest Editor's Introduction

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This special issue on international issues in psychology and counseling was conceived as a selection of topic areas in psychology and counseling that are relevant to psychological theory, research, and practice in Asia, and have at the same time broader global significance. The issue focuses on three areas — international and transracial adoption, suicide by Asian women from rural backgrounds, and psychological trauma in the global context. Each of these areas has required an ecological framework of understanding that takes into account not only psychological factors, but also cultural, social, economic, and political dimensions. A discussant provides a reaction paper that follows each of the main articles.

The article on adoption addresses issues related to international adoption, with China as an illustrative case. It describes the context of international adoption and how China has come to be a leading source of transnational adoption. Policy, theory, and research related to transnational and transracial adoption are examined in relation to Chinese adoptees and their families. The authors present a framework and resources for psychoeducation that can serve adoptive families and

professionals who work with mental health, child development, and adoption issues. Further implications for counseling practice are discussed.

The article on suicide by young women in Sri Lanka provides a glimpse into the social and cultural milieu in which interpersonal dynamics result in self-harm for women. These women, like many in developing parts of the world such as rural China, have few options because of socioeconomic constraints and a cultural tradition of gender inequality. The lessons learned from the reported field research and the discussion of the limits of psychological interventions in developing countries can be instructive for other countries with similar economic conditions and sociocultural factors.

The article on psychological trauma calls attention to international work in trauma and the tendency of international relief workers and mental health professionals to apply frameworks of understanding and models of intervention that are derived from the West. After giving examples of trauma treatment in different cultural settings, the author raised a number of questions for conceptual development and empirical research that are needed in response to trauma in a global context.

The discussants further expand on the implications of the three articles by offering their knowledge and perspectives on each of the topic areas. As their reaction papers indicate, there are potential contributions to theoretical understanding, future research, as well as policy and practice. It should be noted, however, that such issues as those presented here require interdisciplinary understanding and problem-solving efforts that include the understanding of policy and frames of reference beyond what psychologists and counseling professionals would normally consider.

Marsella (2005) called on counselors to serve the world with a global consciousness and to contribute to social justice. If one were to follow the principle of “think global and act local,” there is much to do with the identified issues in our respective locations. It is my hope that this special issue will stimulate dialogue and research on other topic areas relevant to Asia that have global implications.

References

Marsella, A. J. (2005, April). *Justice in a global age: Becoming counselors to the world*. Invited keynote address presented at the American Counseling Association Annual Convention, Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.