**Xiang Gao**

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**INYO 502**

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**Statement of Purpose**

The desire of assisting my family and friends in dealing with their negative emotions that spurred me to choose psychology as my undergraduate major. However, after four years studying, I found that counseling is just one aspect of psychology. During my summer internships in the Mental Health Center, I noticed that most people were suffering from job strain, which impaired their work engagement and work performance. Since a majority of Chinese employees will not ask for clinical psychology support unless they are severely affected, it is better for me to go into workplaces to provide psychological assistance to reduce employees’ work stress and improve their occupational health and well-being. Thus, I decided to apply for the Master of Industrial and Organizational Psychology program at George Mason University.

I majored in Applied Psychology at Dalian Medical University, China. Although my undergraduate curriculum and previous internships were related to clinical psychology training, these experiences raised my awareness of mental health. In addition, such experiences let me reflect on my strengths and on how I can utilize psychological theories and models in reality. When I have engaged in research projects, such as cognitive experiment (e.g., testing characters rotation mechanism in Chinese) and social survey (e.g., investigating the transmission mechanism of online public opinion), I have been intrigued by and responsible for data analysis. In addition, I really want to engage in or conduct more psychological research and test hypotheses in the future.

I am also experienced in assessment and training, which are important for becoming an IO psychologist. Since I had several internships in the Mental Health Center, I used psychometrical methods to assess employees’ mental health appropriately. According to the results of measurement, I identified the severity of mental disorders and recommended employees to receive an appropriate intervention from a clinical psychologist or a psychiatrist. Furthermore, I had internship experience in Aero-psychological Training Center, which evaluated pilots’ mental health status and their stress adaptation ability by using biofeedback and Polysomnogram equipment. In my undergraduate program, I engaged in several group training and therapy activities to help university students improve their mental health. Meanwhile, I used to be an organizer in the Dalian Medical University Red Cross. I organized various activities, such as HIV/AIDS awareness and peer education, CPR training, and hematopoietic stem cell collection.

The first time I came across IO Psychology was when I discussed the mental health issues in the workplace with HR staff that received clinical training in the Mental Health Center. Suddenly, I realized that their future project, the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), is my career interest and pursuit. Through reading research articles, I noticed there are differences in leadership style, job resources and work-family conflict between Chinese culture and American culture. Thus, I would like to compare these differences in order to help employees adapt well in a different cultural environment or provide suggestions to the managers who operate a multinational-employees team. Thus, I would like to conduct cross-cultural research related to occupational health.

Before applying for the Master IO Psych program at GMU, I contacted two current IO graduate students and received positive feedback about faculty, research projects, and career prospects. Moreover, I noticed that some professors (e.g., Dr. Lois Tetric) in the program at GMU conduct cross-cultural research and some professors and graduate students come from different cultures, thus I assume that I can learn more perspectives from the program. I would like to share my perspective to contribute to cross-cultural research as well.

Currently, I am an INTO Mason student. During this year, I have taken several psychological courses, such as PSYC 611 Advanced Statistics, PSYC754 Regression and PSYC633 Research Design. I am proficient in data analysis and research methods at present. Besides SPSS, I am concentrating on learning R as well. I know that psychology students must have a strong statistical ability; thus, I will improve my statistical ability and learn to use different statistical software in the future. Meanwhile, I agree that research design is as important as statistics; thus, I believe my knowledge of research design will contribute to conduct a research project in the graduate education program.

My current research interest is the relationship of work-family conflict in different cultural settings, and I do like the research-orientated master of IO Psychology program at George Mason University. I would like to obtain more research experience through the master program. Moreover, I desire to find an internship next summer to learn about how IO Psychological theories operate in reality. Further, I plan to pursue a Ph.D. program to conduct my personal cross-cultural research.