Culture Shock & Working Abroad

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A representation of possible patterns of migration based on proposed length of stay and motives for migration.
A representation of possible patterns of migration based on geographic distance and cultural difference

**Amount/quality of change**

- **Much** change
  - **Short distance**: Much change
    - i.e. a few miles across a national border; movement from very rural to urban setting; from island to mainland
  - **Intermediate distance**: Intermediate change
    - i.e. movement within a continent to an area which shares some traditions but not others
  - **Far distance**: Much change
    - i.e. travelling from one continent to another with different language, climate, religion as well as major social, economic and political differences

- **Little** change
  - **Close distance**: Little change
    - i.e. movement within a homogeneous community
  - **Far distance**: Little change
    - i.e. Movement from one close homogeneous ethnic community to another (i.e. on another continent) but with similar traditions; social, economic and political institutions
## Outcomes of cultural contact at the individual level: psychological responses to 'second culture' influences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Multiple-group membership affiliation</th>
<th>Effect on individual</th>
<th>Effect on society</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reject second culture, exaggerate first culture</td>
<td>Chauvinistic</td>
<td>Culture I norms increase in salience. Culture II norms decrease in salience</td>
<td>Nationalism. Racism</td>
<td>Inter-group friction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vacillate between the two cultures</td>
<td>Marginal</td>
<td>Norms of both cultures salient but perceived as mutually incompatible</td>
<td>Conflict. Identity confusion. Over-compensation</td>
<td>Reform. Social change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesize both cultures</td>
<td>Mediating</td>
<td>Norms of both cultures salient and perceived as capable of being integrated</td>
<td>Personal growth</td>
<td>Inter-group harmony. Pluralistic societies. Cultural preservation</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact variables</th>
<th>Between members of the same society</th>
<th>Between members of different societies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Type</strong></td>
<td><strong>Example</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time-span</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Subcultures in multicultural societies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Make a life in</td>
<td>Subcultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of involvement</td>
<td>Participate in society</td>
<td>Subcultures</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Majority minority</td>
<td>White and black Americans</td>
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Source: S. Bochner, Cultures in Contact: Studies in Cross-Cultural Interaction, Oxford, Pergamon, 1982
The flavour of Oberg's observations may be gathered from this quote:

Culture shock is precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse. These signs or cues include the thousand and one ways in which we orient ourselves to the situations of daily life: when to shake hands and what to say when we meet people, when and how to give tips, how to give orders to servants, how to make purchases, when to accept and when to refuse invitations, when to take statements seriously and when not. Now these cues which may be words, gestures, facial expressions, customs, or norms are acquired by all of us in the course of growing up and are as much a part of our culture as the language we speak or the beliefs we accept. All of us depend for our peace of mind and our efficiency on hundreds of these cues, most of which we are not consciously aware. . . .
Some of the symptoms of culture shock are: excessive washing of the hands; excessive concern over drinking water, food, dishes, and bedding; fear of physical contact with attendants or servants; the absent-minded, far-away stare (sometimes called ‘the tropical stare’); a feeling of helplessness and a desire for dependence on long-term residents of one's own nationality; fits of anger over delays and other minor frustrations; delay and outright refusal to learn the language of the host country; excessive fear of being cheated, robbed, or injured; great concern over minor pains and irruptions of the skin; and finally, that terrible longing to be back home, to be able to have a good cup of coffee and a piece of apple pie, to walk into that corner. drugstore, to visit one's relatives, and, in general, to talk to people who really make sense.” (Oberg, 1960, p. 176)
WORKING ABROAD

Oberg (1966) mentions at least six aspects of culture shock:

1. **Strain** due to the effort required to make necessary psychological adaptations.

2. **A sense of loss** and feelings of deprivation in regard to friends, status, profession and possessions.

3. Being **rejected** by/and or **rejecting** members of the new culture.

4. **Confusion** in role, role expectations, values, feelings and self identity.

5. **Surprise, anxiety, even disgust** and indignation after becoming aware of cultural differences.

6. **Feelings of impotence** due to not being able to cope with the new environment.
New concepts of shock

- Invasion shock
- Reverse culture shock
- Re-professionalisation/re-licencing shock
- Business shock
- Race Culture Shock
- Moral shock
Mental Health & Migration

USA
• 1903 Ellis Island Screening
Mental Hospital Figures: Foreigners Over-represented
(70% Foreigners)

Two Schools of Thought
Eugenics
Social Welfare

• Odegaard (1935)
Presdispositional: The vulnerable migrate
Socialisation Model: The stress of adaptation

UK
• Dutch, French, German, Scottish Kings
• Post-war history and research

AUSTRALIA
• British L
• West, North, Central European L
• South European H Language
• East European H War Experiences
Factors relating to risk of psychological disturbance among Australian immigrants

1. War experiences - particularly in eastern European refugees

2. Housewives - particularly middle-aged, non-assimilated southern Europeans whose families had been assimilated via work or school

3. Single men - particularly those with a pre-emigration history of psychological problems

4. Adolescents - particularly those caught between the culture (language, traditions, values) of their parents and their Australian peers

5. Professionals - who dropped in status because of the non-recognition of their qualifications

## Extent of assimilation and explanations for different mental-health patterns of the four immigrant groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mental Illness</th>
<th>Explanations for differential mental illness rates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Irish      | Higher than natives | 1. Late age of marriage, consorsious view of sex, large celibate adult population living in the parental home  
2. Lack of emotional closeness between male members of the family which extends to a basic distrust of all other members  
3. Ambivalent relationship between mothers and sons with a concomitant, emotionally blackmailing mother being associated with alcoholism and schizophrenia |
| West Indian | Higher than natives | 1. Direct and indirect prejudice and discrimination in the occupational and social sphere  
2. Alienation and frustration due to high hopes of material success not being fulfilled |
| Indian     | Lower than natives | 1. Highly selected migration of the successful, upwardly mobile, ambitious, psychologically stable  
2. Relatively supporting community and family life with an extended family and active participation in the cultural and religious life  
3. Flexibility in the culture of origin which often shows considerable ingenuity and adaptability in their adjustment |
| Pakistani  | Lower than natives | 1. Highly selective migration as above  
2. Relatively supportive social network  
3. Worse adjustment than Indians due to a less flexible culture, stronger ties with Pakistan and the view that migration is temporary to acquire wealth before eventual return |

Psychological Research into Students/ Sojourners

- Foreign student Syndrome
- U and W curve hypotheses/ stage-wise theories
- Friendship patterns
- Culture Distance Index
Foreign students’ syndrome
“Vague physical complaints, a passive withdrawn attitude & a general dishevelled appearance.”
Foreign students over represented in university medical centres.
Foreign students somaticize their problems to avoid loosing face.
Problems include: Racial discrimination
Language problems
Accommodation difficulties
Separation reaction
Dietary restrictions
Financial stress
Misunderstandings
Loneliness
Academic challenge
Stage-wise theories:
the shape of curves

Since Oberg (1960) it has been fashionable to describe the 'disease' of culture shock in terms of a number of stages (Smalley, 1963). These attempts have all been descriptive and tend to overlap.

Oberg (1960) listed four stages of shock:
1. **Honeymoon stage.** An initial reaction of enchantment, fascination, enthusiasm, admiration and cordial, friendly, superficial relationships with hosts.

2. **Crisis.** Initial differences in language, concepts, values, familiar signs and symbols lead to feelings of inadequacy, frustration, anxiety and anger.

3. **Recovery.** The crisis is resolved by a number of methods such that the person ends up learning the language and culture of the host country.

4. **Adjustment.** The sojourner begins to work in and enjoy the new culture, though there may be occasional instances of anxiety and strain.
View of food in the host country (rated on a 9 point scale) as a function of time spent there

## Adler's five-stage theory of culture-shock development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>Emotional range</th>
<th>Behaviour</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>Differences are intriguing. Perceptions are screened and selected</td>
<td>Excitement, Stimulation, Euphoria, Playfulness, Discovery</td>
<td>Curiosity, Interest, Assured, Impressionistic</td>
<td>The individual is insulated by his or her own culture. Differences as well as similarities provide rationalization for continuing confirmation of status, role, and identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disintegration</td>
<td>Differences are impactful. Contrasted cultural reality cannot be screened out</td>
<td>Confusion, Disorientation, Loss, Apathy, Isolation, Loneliness, Inadequacy</td>
<td>Depression, Withdrawal</td>
<td>Cultural differences begin to intrude. Growing awareness of being different leads to loss of self-esteem. Individual experiences loss of cultural support ties and misreads new cultural cues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reintegration</td>
<td>Differences are rejected</td>
<td>Anger, Rage, Nervousness, Anxiety, Frustration</td>
<td>Rebellion, Suspicion, Rejection, Hostility, Exclusive, Opinionated</td>
<td>Rejection of second culture causes preoccupation with likes and dislikes; differences are projected. Negative behaviour, however, is a form of self-assertion and growing self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>Differences and similarities are legitimizied</td>
<td>Self-assured, Relaxed, Warm, Empathic</td>
<td>Assured, Controlled, Independent, Old hand, Confident</td>
<td>The individual is socially and linguistically capable of negotiating most new and different situations: he or she is assured of ability to survive new experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>Differences and similarities are valued and significant</td>
<td>Trust, Humour, Love, Full range of previous emotions</td>
<td>Expressive, Creative, Actualizing</td>
<td>Social, psychological and cultural differences are accepted and enjoyed. The individual is capable of exercising choice and responsibility and able to create meaning for situations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Friendship Networks
Host- National; Co- National; ‘Other- National’

1. A primary, monocultural network consisting of close friendships with other sojourning compatriots. The main function of the co-national network is to provide a setting in which ethnic and cultural values can be rehearsed and expressed

2. A secondary, bicultural network, consisting of bonds between sojourners and significant host nationals such as academics, students, advisors and government officials. The main function of this network is to instrumentally facilitate the academic and professional aspirations of the sojourner

3. A third, multicultural network of friends and acquaintances. The main function of this network is to provide companionship for recreational, 'non-cultural' and non-task-orientated activities
### Significant correlations (p.<0.05) between CDI items, symptoms, consultations and examination performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CDI item</th>
<th>Anxiety</th>
<th>Tiredness</th>
<th>Headache</th>
<th>Consultations</th>
<th>Exam success</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Climate</td>
<td>+0.18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.24&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Clothes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+0.27&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>-0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+0.30&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>-0.20</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Educational level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+0.32&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>-0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Food</td>
<td>+0.32&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>+0.30&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>6. Religion</td>
<td>+0.30&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>7. Material comfort</td>
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<td>+0.25&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>+0.20</td>
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<td>8. Leisure</td>
<td></td>
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<td>+0.24</td>
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<td>9. Family structure</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-0.25&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Courtship/marriage</td>
<td></td>
<td>+0.19</td>
<td>+0.27&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CDI +0.23<sup>a</sup> +0.26<sup>b</sup>

Source: E. Babiker et al., 'The measure of culture distance', Social Psychiatry, 15 (1980), 09-16. Notes: <sup>a</sup>p<0.02 ; <sup>b</sup>p<0.01 ; <sup>c</sup>p<0.001
Business people vs Students

1. Business people are usually posted elsewhere for a set, specific and relatively short period of time

2. Businessmen and businesswomen are posted abroad for a specific purpose

3. Business people have strong sponsorship.

4. A tour abroad often increases opportunities for advancement on return

5. In contrast to students (and some migrants), business people tend to be older and are usually more mature

6. Businesses often provide accommodation enclaves, 'old-hand' guides and a social-support network that insulate the foreigner against the initial difficulties and surprises of movement

7. Because businesses are primarily interested in the work their employees do, the employees’ time is carefully structured and scheduled

8. The social relationships both inside and outside the work place are probably more likely to be on an equal footing for business people than for students
Eight Theories for Culture Shock

1. Grief, Mourning, Bereavement
2. Locus of Control
3. Selective Migration
4. Inappropriate Expectations
5. Negative Life Events
6. Social Support Networks
7. Value Differences
8. Social Skills
Future Research

• Predicting culture shock from Hofstede’s theory
• Virtual travellers
• Migrant workers and illegal immigrants
• Globalisation and the decline of “culture”
• Help for those experiencing culture shock
• Understanding the most vulnerable travellers