

# On Cross-Cultural Adaptation

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This is the most immediate fruit of exile, of uprooting: the prevalence of the unreal over the real.  
—Primo Levi (*If This Is a Man/The Truce*)

## Introduction

When we travel today, the world seems familiar. Upon arrival, we can expect to be greeted by signs of home in even the most exotic and far-flung land: from the stores we pass and the products displayed to the clothes worn by the locals, the cars they ride in, even the coffee cups or soda cans in their hands—we can identify all of these, brand names as well-known to us as the names of friends and family, assuring us that we haven't really left home at all. Strangeness has been replaced by a comforting recognizability, allowing a nearly effortless transition from home to foreign country. This is, of course, the product of economic interdependence: global consumerism has erected a world of goods and services that ignores national boundaries; when we travel abroad, we are contained and sustained by a system designed to make spending easy, wherever in the world we find ourselves. Yet the strangeness of foreign travel persists, and is perhaps even heightened by superficial similarity. This becomes more evident the longer one stays and the more one ventures from the safety of hotel or shopping center or guided tour: the first symptoms of culture shock gradually, and often insidiously, make themselves felt, reminding one that the global economy has not erased cultural difference after all.

The vacationer may notice these differences in passing, and even find them charming or amus-

ing; they become material for anecdotes to be shared when asked, after returning home, about one's experience abroad. And after all, it is often a taste of the unknown that drives one to choose a foreign vacation in the first place: local color, a sense of the exotic, of apparent but illusory risk; in short, a thrilling yet sufficiently tamed wilderness. It is only those who remain for an extended period—for business, or to study, for example—who become truly aware of the extent to which what initially appeared familiar actually camouflages a completely unknown world, subject to rules which may seem not only mysterious but arbitrary and even menacing. The sojourner, as compared to the tourist, is one who stays after the exotic charm has worn off, offering himself up fully, whether deliberately or inadvertently, to the experience of culture shock, with its perhaps two most salient characteristics: homesickness and displacement.

Homesickness can be taken to refer to a looking back, to a desire for return to what has been left behind, while displacement involves facing—or being unable to face—the strange land in which one finds oneself. These two characteristics represent, in other words, the familiar and the unknown. Yet, as will be shown in this paper, they are not discrete but interconnected, acting on one another: homesickness, bringing memories of the familiar world left behind, exacerbates feelings of displacement, and displacement in turn increases homesickness. The above quote by Levi

is relevant here: when he speaks of the “unreal,” Levi is referring not only to the strangeness of the foreign land but, more importantly, to what occurs within the sojourner when he recalls his own land, which he has taken with him as a sort of memento on his travels, and which is gradually transformed the longer he remains away from home. There is a cliché which states that to travel abroad is to rediscover one’s own land, suggesting that even as one moves away one is simultaneously returning, but with new eyes and a new perspective. The reality, as will be seen, is often more complex.

This paper will examine cross-cultural adaptation as it pertains to the sojourner, exploring the issue of what it means to have a “home away from home.” After living abroad for a sufficient period of time, one might well feel *at* home; but this does not necessarily mean that one feels he or she *is* home. Can one truly find a home, in the most profound sense of the term, in a foreign country? If so, on what factors—both environmental and psychological—does such successful adaptation depend? To what extent does the linguistic and cultural distance between the home culture and the new culture play a role in adaptation? These are some of the questions which will be considered, through an interdisciplinary examination of the existing literature, in the following pages.

### **Towards an Understanding of Cross-cultural Adaptation**

What, first of all, do we mean when we speak of a “sojourn”? Broadly speaking, among the varieties of travel abroad, the “sojourn is defined as a temporary stay in a new place” (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001, 142). The term “sojourner,” then, refers to an individual traveling between cultures. It has been argued, however, that the term results in (sometimes erroneously) characterizing the sojourner as one whose visit is necessarily centered around the completion of a particular and temporary objective, after which the he or she intends to return to the home culture (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001, citing

Ady, 1995, and Klineberg & Hull, 1979). The sojourner, whatever his or her motive for traveling to another culture (e.g., business or study) is therefore often situated between the tourist, on the one hand, and the immigrant, on the other, with needs and issues that are specific to the sojourn. It is important to mention, at least in passing, that although in this article we will, for purposes of convenience, speak of the sojourn as if it comprises a single experience, in fact the purpose of the sojourn will necessarily affect the result of the experience. A businessperson working abroad will face different obstacles than those faced, for instance, by an international student. Adaptation is in part dependent upon the nature of the sojourn, since the psychological stress experienced and the communicative skills required for success will vary according to the sojourner’s goals and the setting in which she finds herself. Regardless of purpose, however, one factor remains constant: “It is important that ... sojourners adapt to the new culture rapidly in order that they may operate effectively in whatever they are doing” (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001, 142).

### ***Linguistic and cultural distance***

*Cultural distance*, also known as *ethnic proximity* (Kim, 2004), plays a role in the sojourner’s ability to function successfully in the host culture (Redmond, 2000). The notion that cultural distance influences adaptation is built upon the assumption that “societies can, in principle, be located on a continuum of how close or distant they are with respect to their (empirically established) sociocultural features ... [T]he culture-distance hypothesis predicts that the greater the cultural gap between participants, the more difficulties they will experience” (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001, 9, citing Babiker, Cox, & Miller, 1980). There is considerable research in support of this hypothesis. To cite merely one study of 644 international students at a university in the Midwestern United States, it was found that the European and South American students were able to form bonds and achieve suc-

successful integration more easily than the students from Asian countries (Redmond & Bunyi, 1993). This result, which is fairly typical, seems not only to indicate that ethnic proximity facilitates adjustment, but further points to the significance of culturally distinct approaches to education in areas such as participation, autonomy and group work; these culture-bound differences shape the expectations that learners bring to the classroom (McCargar, 1993). For instance, students from cultures where learners are expected to listen quietly without questioning the instructor may be expected to have more difficulty adjusting to a classroom environment in which open discussion is encouraged than peers already accustomed to such a setting. From the perspective of the teacher, evaluations of academic performance may be based on the teacher's own culture-bound notions of what constitutes a "good student" (Cortazzi & Jin, 1997). For those working abroad, culturally-related corporate differences in areas such as organizational management and employer-employee relations can affect the sojourner's ability to effectively conduct business in the target culture (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001).

Cultural distance also influences the ways in which interactants communicate with one another, an aspect of interaction known as *communicative style* (Barnlund, 1989). Communicative style can be seen as one aspect of *cognitive style*, defined by Berry as "a self-consistent manner (or "style") of dealing with the environment" (2004, 173). Since communicative style expresses socio-cultural identity (Spreckels & Kotthoff, 2010), the requirement to change style, a necessary part of adjusting to life in another culture, ultimately involves altering one's own sense of self. (The relationship between identity and adjustment will be addressed in greater detail below, in the *Intercultural Identity* section.) We may postulate, then, that for the sojourner greater differences in communicative style between home and host culture will require and result in greater changes

in identity.

The above indicates that what the sojourner brings with him is more than merely what is sometimes called "cultural baggage," i.e., a set of beliefs and assumptions from the home culture. Baggage can be set aside; but how does one set aside the very ways in which he perceives and experiences the world? Arguably, even the most basic cognitive processes are mediated (if not determined) by culture. This view is grounded in the work of Vygotsky (1978) and his emphasis on what he considered the intertwined and inseparable relationship between culture and individual thought. Even those qualities which we might consider most fundamentally human, and therefore most universal, such as the expression of emotion, may nevertheless possess a cultural dimension (Berry, 2004). There is, for example, a body of research which suggests that displays of emotion are affected by home-culture acculturation processes (Ekman & Friesen, 1969). Studies comparing Japanese and Americans have found differing responses to facial expressions such as fearful faces (Moriguchi, et al., 2005), and the relationship between smiling and perceived attractiveness (Matsumoto & Kudoh, 1993). Ratner, a strong advocate of the Vygotskian position, has gone as far as to assert that "cultural mechanisms even determine where psychological functions are localized in the cortex" (2008, 20). If this is true, it suggests that the obstacles to be overcome by the sojourner in adapting are far greater than simply setting aside old baggage in order to pick up new baggage in its place. As Berry (1976) has pointed out, effective changes in cognitive style may involve far more than minor and superficial shifts in behavior.

An essential first step in determining cultural distance and its place in adaptation is the identification of those key elements which distinguish one culture from another. Ideally, if Culture A and Culture B could be located on a continuum with respect to the prevalence of these elements, we might be able to quantify cultural distance. One

highly influential approach to this problem has been put forward by Dutch psychologist Geert Hofstede, whose research resulted in the creation of a number of ostensibly objective criteria to be applied when making cultural comparisons. Categories included *power distance*, *individualism*, *masculinity*, *uncertainty avoidance*, and *long-term orientation* (2001). While this is not the place for an in-depth critique of Hofstede's work, it is, for our purposes, important, given his work's wide acceptance, to consider three aspects of Hofstede's value orientations in order to assess their usefulness:

(1) Are the orientations accurate, objective, and free from cultural bias?

(2) Can the orientations be applied meaningfully to specific cultures and to individuals within cultures, and if so, how?

(3) Assuming the first and second conditions are met, to what extent do the orientations offer useful predictive value with respect to the sojourner experience?

Regarding (1), since the appearance of Hofstede's research, a number of methodological questions regarding his data gathering have been raised (McSweeney, 2002; Piller, 2011), intended to cast doubts on the validity and applicability of his findings. Even if we set these concerns aside, we must, in light of the claimed universality of Hofstede's categories, consider the possible role of hegemony here and in the field of intercultural communication in general, a discipline traditionally dominated by those educated in and associated with institutions in Europe and North America. For instance, concerning the individualism/collectivism axis, one of the most extensively researched and often used value orientations, it is possible to question whether the category, supposedly itself value-free, favoring neither one nor the other, is not itself grounded in Western European values biased toward individualism, independence, and autonomy. Holliday (2011) has pointed out how such a model sets cultures of the dominant "Centre-West" (perceived in

perhaps self-congratulatory fashion to be more individualistic) against those of the ostensibly more collectivist "Periphery." Holliday goes on to argue that "individualism/collectivism" is hardly a value-free descriptor, since "individualism" is presented as positive and "collectivism" as negative, the distinction arising from a Cold War-era mindset in which individualism is equated with progressive and democratic values and collectivism with repression and totalitarianism.

With respect to (2), to be of use to researchers Hofstede's model needs to go beyond generalities and offer concrete and accurate information about particular cultures. Piller (2011) has argued that the manner in which Hofstede's index is applied to specific nations, including scores for countries and regions, betrays nationalism and stereotypical notions equating "nation" with "culture." Holliday (2011) has examined the way in which the individualism/collectivism orientation has been used to perpetuate familiar stereotypes when comparing the U.S. and Japan. Hofstede's analysis is commonly applied not only to the nations indexed but to individuals from those nations, suggesting that his research offers predictive value with respect to individual value orientations, an approach disputed by Brewer and Venaik (2012), who assert that this represents a misapplication of Hofstede's work and that his cultural dimensions do not allow meaningful predictions to be made regarding individual behavior based on membership in a cultural group.

Regarding (3), if Brewer and Venaik are correct, the application of his work to the sojourner experience is invalidated, since that experience is always, in practice, a matter of a particular individual in a specific environment. Even if, however, his orientations and national scores do offer insights into cultural distance as it relates to the sojourner, an issue that has as yet not been sufficiently addressed in both Hofstede's research and in the work of those who have adopted his model concerns the practical usefulness of the orientations as indicators of success or failure in

adapting to life abroad. It is yet to be seen whether the model can be applied to the culture-distance hypothesis in such a way as to allow predictions regarding, for instance, the length of time required for adaptation, or the specific problems which must be overcome.

As the above indicates, Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory has proven problematic both conceptually and with respect to practicability. Alternative models with possible relevance to the assessment of cultural distance and adaptation have been put forward by a number of researchers. Prominent among these is Berry's "Dimensions of Cultural Variation That Are Important in Intercultural Relations," these dimensions being *diversity, equality, conformity, wealth, space, and time* (2004, 170). Berry's model of Intercultural Dimensions is more concrete (and therefore potentially more useful to teachers and researchers) than models such as Hofstede's. For instance, as Berry points out, differences in the concept of time constitute one of the central causes of misunderstanding and conflict in intercultural relations. Triandis (1990), identifying orientations which affect the degree of ethnocentricity in intercultural contact, includes the individualism/collectivism axis and adds *cultural complexity versus simplicity* and what he terms "*tight*" versus "*loose*" cultures. Another axis of potential use in determining cultural distance is Field Dependence-Field Independence (FDI), which refers to an individual's degree of "autonomous functioning" (Witkin, Goodenough, & Oltman, 1979, 1138), an element described by Berry as "the extent to which an individual relies on or accepts the physical or social environment as a given, in contrast to working on it, for example, by analyzing or restructuring it" (Berry, 2004, 173).

### **Culture Shock**

To the extent that there is cultural and linguistic distance between a traveler abroad and his or her new surroundings, the experience is likely to entail some degree of *culture shock* (Oberg,

1960; Oberg, 1979). Culture shock can be defined as a psychological crisis which takes place when an individual enters a foreign culture. This crisis can lead to homesickness, a rejection of the new environment, feelings of helplessness, and various somatic disorders (Taft, 1977). The "shock" of finding oneself in a new environment produces stress as the individual is forced to begin a simultaneous process of *acculturation*, or learning about the host culture, and *deculturation*, i.e., unlearning those behaviors and assumptions which interfere with functioning in the new environment (Kim, 2004). (Although the term *acculturation* originally referred exclusively to the changes that occur in cultures after coming into contact with one another (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936), the meaning has since been expanded to include the psychological changes that take place at the individual level following entry into a new culture (Graves, 1967; Marden & Meyer, 1968).) The need for simultaneous learning and unlearning results in a conflict involving "the push of the new culture and the pull of the old" (Kim, 2004, 341). There will, in other words, necessarily be a tension between the need for intercultural contact and the opposing need for cultural maintenance, which can lead to two strategies for the sojourner or immigrant: assimilation or separation (Berry, 1980).

Numerous factors affect whether an individual living abroad chooses to embrace or reject the new environment, only some of which are under the control of the sojourner. Since adaptation involves interacting with the environment of the host culture in a "collaborative effort" (Kim, 1995, 192), the shared process of change, in which both sojourner and environment influence one another, will necessarily vary depending on the orientation and attitudes of the particular host culture regarding acculturation (Bourhis, Moise, Perrault, & Senecal, 1997). A host culture which is receptive to those arriving from other cultures creates a welcoming environment which contributes to adaptation; conversely, a culture

which is unreceptive to “outsiders” will tend to alienate the sojourner (McGuire & McDermott, 1988) and thus have a negative impact on the development of communicative competence (Kim, 1997). The degree of visible ethnic similarity between sojourner and members of the host culture can play a significant role here; physical differences may have an impact on integration/assimilation vs. separation/marginalization strategies (Berry, Kim, Power, Young, & Bujaki, 1989; Piontkowski, Florack, Hoelker, & Obdrzalek, 2000). Host-culture prejudice towards an immigrant and her home culture increases the probability of separation and adaptation failure (Berry, 2004). Individual behavioral shift is also tied to the behavior of the larger immigrant group, particularly in instances where the immigrant relies on the group for support and solidarity. As Berry has pointed out with respect to immigrant groups, “the pace and extent of individual change is clearly related to the degree of cultural maintenance in the individual’s own group” (Berry, 178), and cultural maintenance or shift is itself linked to a variety of larger social pressures affecting the relationship between the group and the dominant culture (Kanazawa & Loveday, 1988; McGregor & Li, 1991; Okamura-Bichard, 1985; Wei & Lee, 2001).

The above may apply to the sojourner as well as to the immigrant. For instance, those studying abroad often require greater social support than peers from the host culture (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001), as a result of which foreign students tend to form membership in three social networks, the central including friendships with other sojourners from the same culture, the second involving connections with members of the target culture, and the third involving fellow sojourners from other cultures (Bochner, McLeod, & Lin, 1977). In spite of its potential benefits in terms of learning, contact with members of the target culture generally plays the smallest role in the lives of the international student (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). In one study, it was found

that after one year studying abroad, seventy percent of respondents had formed no meaningful bonds with host nationals (Bochner, Hutnik, & Furnham, 1985).

This is likely due in part to homesickness, which can present a challenge when attempting to adapt to the host culture (Lu, 1990), and often results in efforts to seek out companionship and support from other members of the home culture. While adequate social networks can ease these feelings of homesickness (Hannigan, 1997), particularly when the networks consist of compatriots sharing the sojourn or immigrant experience, reliance on such support systems may also, in the long term, reduce opportunities for the exposure to the host culture which is required for successful adaptation (Kim, 2004). In short, a certain amount of homesickness, however unpleasant, may be a necessary stage through which the sojourner must pass if she hopes to adjust to life abroad. The extent to which feelings of loneliness and yearning for home become debilitating will depend on a number of factors, both cultural and personal. The ability to manage homesickness has been linked to the sojourner’s larger ability to regulate his or her emotional states effectively (Yoo, Matsumoto, & LeRoux, 2006), a topic addressed in more detail in the *Affective Orientation* section of this article.

Although commonly seen as a single, transitory experience encountered immediately upon arrival in the target culture, culture shock may in fact continue just as the process of acculturation and deculturation continues. Oberg, for instance, established four stages of culture shock which the sojourner must navigate: *fascination* with the new environment, followed by *hostility*, which leads to *adjustment* and ends in *acceptance* of the host culture (1979). Pederson (1995) argues that there are in fact five stages: *the honeymoon stage*, *the disintegration stage*, *the reintegration stage*, *the autonomy stage*, and finally *the interdependence stage*. The U-curve hypothesis (Lysgaard, 1955) posits that there is a tendency for sojourners to

“begin their cross-cultural adaptation process with optimism and elation in the host culture, followed by the subsequent dip or ‘trough’ in satisfaction and a recovery” (Kim, 2003, 248). Gullahorn and Gullahorn suggested that this U-shaped pattern may, if the sojourner remains for a sufficient period of time, repeat itself, describing in essence a repeated U or W, thus a W-curve (1963). The severity and duration of culture shock is tied to the sojourner’s ability to draw on a range of skills necessary for adaptation (Bochner, 1986), a subject which will be addressed below.

### **Adaptation**

Before considering the features of successful cross-cultural adaptation, it might be useful to define adaptation itself. Kim (2004) has described it as part of a “natural human instinct to struggle for an internal equilibrium in the face of adversarial environmental conditions” (339). From this perspective, cross-cultural adaptation can be viewed as merely one variation of an evolutionary process which takes place whenever an organism makes changes due to changes in its surroundings. The adaptation required of the sojourner may be especially challenging because of the particular difficulties which characterize travel abroad, but the need to adapt to altered circumstances is a fundamental part of the human condition, even if one never leaves one’s home culture. Kim has attempted to understand the adaptation process through an “open system” model which sees growth in the sojourner as part of an instinctive attempt to establish a balanced and harmonious relationship with the new environment. The stress associated with sojourning, often seen as a negative consequence of attempting to adjust to life in the host culture (see, for instance, Furukawa & Shibayama, 1995) is therefore, in this view, not a barrier to adaptation; on the contrary, stress is an engine of change: it is an important part of what drives the individual to adapt in order to find equilibrium.

Adaptation requires changes in the way the sojourner *perceives*, *understands*, and *responds* to

the host culture (Kim, 2004). These three elements parallel what are sometimes called the ABCs of cross-cultural interaction: Affect, Behavior, and Cognition (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). Speaking of acculturation, Berry has similarly pointed to the need to examine sojourners’ “attitudes toward the process, their overt behaviors (continuity or change), and their internal cultural identities” (2004, 176). Cross-cultural adaptation therefore has two interrelated aspects: the inner adjustment involving changes in psychological processes, and the external indicators of adjustment to the new culture. Both are essential to what is commonly called “fitting in.” Setting aside the ideological question of whether and to what extent it should be necessary for immigrants to alter themselves to merge with the majority “mainstream”—in other words, the “melting pot” vs. “patchwork quilt” models (see Kim, 2004, for a discussion of the role of “host conformity pressure” in the process of adaptation)—the reality is that, for complex personal, social and economic reasons, the sojourner or immigrant often has no choice but to attempt to “fit in” in order to succeed or even survive. This fitting in requires the development of those abilities which will allow the individual to function effectively in the host culture. As Ward, Bochner, and Furnham have stated, “[a]daptation ... comes in the form of learning the culture-specific skills that are required to negotiate the new cultural milieu” (2001, 37).

It is an indication of the lack of a sufficiently interdisciplinary approach to the problem of adaptation that research disciplines have devised different terms to refer to this same set of skills. Within the field of second-language education, the acquisition of the skills necessary to communicate effectively is called *communicative competence*, consisting of *grammatical competence* and *sociolinguistic competence* (Canale & Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983). Within the fields of intercultural psychology and communication studies, essentially the same set of skills is called

*intercultural communication competence* (ICC) (Gardner, 1962; Littlejohn & Jabusch, 1982). Kim uses the term *host communication competence* to refer to the sojourner's ability to "decode" and "encode" information found in the host culture (2004). This competence is itself comprised of a number of related competencies which, together, allow the sojourner to interact effectively with members of the host culture.

Linguistic competence alone, then, is not enough to allow the sojourner entry to the host culture in a manner which will facilitate adaptation. Accent, for example, can be an important factor in gaining acceptance, as this is one way in which members of a culture distinguish fellow members from "outsiders," although changing accent to "fit in" is difficult and, for many learners, will present an almost insurmountable obstacle (Birdsong, 2006). Pragmatic and paralinguistic knowledge also play key roles in adaptation, since without an understanding of the appropriate use of language, necessarily context-driven and tied to cultural norms and values, problems can ensue (Gudykunst & Kim, 1984). To provide one example of this, the use of Japanese "hai" can result in misunderstanding for sojourners residing in Japan: it can be taken to mean "yes" when it might in fact be serving simply as a back-channeling device to assure the interactant of the listener's attention (Matsumoto, 1997). Aycan (1997) has argued that, for those living abroad to conduct business, there are three aspects to adjustment: psychological, sociocultural, and work-related. This can be compared to the work of Hammer, Gudykunst, and Wiseman (1978), who have identified three essential elements of intercultural effectiveness: (1) ability to manage psychological stress; (2) ability to communicate effectively; and (3) ability to establish interpersonal relationships.

#### ***Affective orientation***

The emotional state of the sojourner, and his or her attitudes regarding the experience, will also influence the ability to adapt. Aside from the intrinsic value of emotions as life-enriching, in

terms of intercultural experience, "[e]motions are important because they motivate behaviours" and are therefore an essential element in the process of adjusting to life in a new culture (Matsumoto, Yoo, & LeRoux, 2010, 44). Spitzberg and Cupach have also argued that, in addition to knowledge and skills, motivation plays an important role in the development of ICC (1984). Kim (2004) has identified three affective elements that contribute to adaptation: 1) a *positive attitude* toward the host culture; 2) *adaptation motivation*; and 3) *identity flexibility*. Similarly, Matsumoto, Yoo, and LeRoux, in their model of factors contributing to adjustment, identify openness and flexibility as significant, together with the ability to regulate emotion and think critically (2010). Although not addressed specifically, implicit in the above is the importance of curiosity, which may be another factor distinguishing successful sojourners from those experiencing negative outcomes, since "[i]nstead of resisting, adaptive individuals 'ride with' what comes their way, in a spirit of exploration" (Kim, 2004, 353). Another factor influencing adjustment is the ability to manage anxiety and feelings of uncertainty while in the host culture (Gudykunst, 2003). Gudykunst's Anxiety/Uncertainty Management Theory (AUM) posits that high levels of anxiety negatively affect the sojourner's ability to understand and adapt to the host environment; when the level of anxiety is too low, however, the motivation to interact with the host environment is reduced (2003). In this model, therefore, managing anxiety to those levels which permit and encourage effective communication is linked to adjustment. The affective elements discussed above—attitude, openness, flexibility, motivation, and anxiety management—can be addressed in part by adequate pre-sojourn preparation (see the Conclusion for a more detailed discussion of the role of preparation in the sojourn experience). They are also, however, at least in part, tied to pre-existing personality traits (Kim, 2004).



### ***Length of stay***

As Kim (2004) has pointed out, the question of adaptation has often been examined in the literature with respect to the initial experiences of those expected to remain in the host country for a limited period of time; the most dramatic changes in the sojourner will often take place during the first stage of exposure to the new environment. The challenges faced by those remaining indefinitely in the host country are less often addressed. Both length of stay in the host culture and the intention to either remain there indefinitely or to return to the home culture upon completion of a task can affect the way in which sojourners view their acceptance and their ability to successfully integrate while studying abroad. International students, residing temporarily in the host culture, may perceive greater discrimination than students who have immigrated to the culture and made it their permanent home (Sodowsky & Plake, 1992). They may also face disappointment as a result of a perceived gap between their expectations regarding the temporary experience abroad and the reality. Piller, for instance, citing her own (2010) study on study-abroad programs, found that “many Japanese and South Koreans who go abroad for an extended period to reach the desired level of English proficiency experience disillusionment, a loss of financial security and an increase in anxiety rather than the magical self-transformation they had expected” (2011, 166). Nevertheless, in spite of the differences in adaptation between short-term and long-term stays, many of the same factors influencing adaptation are at work in both cases. As Kim (2003) states, “even though the adaptation process plays out in time and, thus, is correlated with the individual’s cumulative change, what really contributes to this change is not the length of time itself but the individual’s communicative interface with the new environment” (247).

### ***Intercultural Identity***

If, even for the individual remaining in his or her home culture, identity is, at least in part,

socially constructed, context-driven, and subject to change (Duszak, 2002), the dynamic character of identity is brought into even higher relief when residing in another culture. Successful adaptation results in the formation of what Kim has called an *intercultural identity*, described as a “subtle and gradual reconfiguration of selfhood” (2004, 348) in which elements of the new culture are integrated into the sojourner’s identity, altering self-construal and perspectives regarding home and host culture (Belay, 1993, cited in Kim, 2004). Every individual “self” is in fact comprised of numerous distinct identities which reveal themselves in the various roles we play and the various interactions these roles require of us (Meyerhoff, 1996). The intercultural identity is one which is able to draw on new self-definition as the sojourner interacts with the host environment (Collier & Thomas, 1988).

### ***Assessing sojourner communicative competence***

According to Cushner and Brislin, the signs of having adjusted to the host culture can be found in four areas: successful personal adjustment; the formation of good interpersonal relations with members of the host culture (as viewed by those members themselves); effectiveness in performing tasks specific to the purpose of the sojourn; and the reduction of culture shock to levels consistent with what would be experienced if moving into a new situation in the home culture (1996). How can the researcher determine whether an individual has succeeded in adapting to life abroad? Subjective and objective measures, or, put another way, psychological and sociocultural measures (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001) are both relevant here. For instance, with respect to subjective measures, David (1971) has pointed to increased self-awareness as one feature which distinguishes adaptation; a sense of satisfaction and “belonging” is another (Brislin, 1981). Objective measures of adaptation may include tests assessing the development of communicative competence, including both linguistic and sociocultural competence, as well as indicators

such as academic achievement (Perkins, Perkins, Guglielmino, & Reiff, 1977). Tools such as the Social Readjustment Rating Scale (Holmes & Rahe, 1967) have been designed and implemented to allow a greater understanding of how stress affects the sojourner during the cross-cultural experience. Valid and reliable means of assessing the potential for adaptation are also necessary. One attempt to design such an assessment tool is the Intercultural Adjustment Potential Scale (ICAPS) developed by Matsumoto, Yoo, and LeRoux (2010). Measures like the Inventory of Student Adjustment Strain (Crano & Crano, 1993) can allow researchers, counsellors and others working with international students to gain a greater understanding of the particular types of stressors acting on the student, including education, language, personal issues, social problems, and concerns related to the student's host family. Finally, there are assessment tools developed for and by those in international business, such as the Peterson style indicator (2013), intended to measure culturally-related aspects of individual communicative style.

### Conclusion

As one would expect, the linguistic and sociocultural competence of the sojourner prior to embarking on the sojourn experience has a significant impact on successful adaptation after arriving in the target culture (Kennedy, 1999; Kim, 2004). Sufficient preparation is therefore of critical importance for the sojourner; such preparation includes the development of relevant linguistic skills, sociocultural education, and the setting of realistic goals regarding the sojourn experience (Black & Gregersen, 1990). To reduce culture shock and ease the transition into the new culture, "preparation, orientation, and the acquisition of culturally relevant social skills" all play meaningful roles (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001, 36). Prior to departure, training in cultural diversity can contribute to psychological

adjustment and lead to more positive outcomes following arrival in the target culture (Aycan, 1997; Bhawuk, 1990; Brislin & Pedersen, 1976). The extent to which policies and programs are in place at the institutional level to accommodate the sojourner will also have an impact on his or her later success. Research has shown that contact with the target culture prior to arriving can improve the chances of the sojourner forming bonds with members of the target culture (Pruitt, 1978). Kim, speaking of long-term settlers, makes a point which is also relevant to the sojourner when she argues for the importance of "training programs that address ... aesthetic and emotional co-orientation, interpersonal synchrony, adaptation motivation, and attitudes toward the host environment" (Kim, 2004, 357).

Finally, it should be noted that, by definition, the sojourn experience encompasses both travel and return. The purpose of going abroad is often to gain knowledge and experience which can then be put to productive use in the home culture. As Matsumoto has written with respect to those sojourners engaged in international business, "[p]eople who go on overseas assignments have a tremendous opportunity to learn new skills and new ways of doing their work that can help them when they return. They may learn a new language and customs, which will broaden their perspectives. They may make new friends and business acquaintances, and this type of networking may have business as well as personal payoffs in the future" (Matsumoto, 1997, 94). Therefore, one area which is beyond the scope of this article but nevertheless an important aspect of any sojourn, concerns the return to the home culture, which often initiates a new process of readjustment and reintegration. While sojourners may be prepared for culture shock upon arrival in the host culture, in many cases, they are unprepared for the challenges faced after returning home, which can include interpersonal problems and dissatisfaction with the return to their former life in the home culture (Ward, Bochner, &

Furnham, 2001). Re-entry shock may progress in a way similar to the pattern of excitement followed by disappointment and eventual recovery characterized by the U-curve hypothesis (Gaw, 2000). As Ward et al. point out, the difficulties of reverse culture shock can be eased through proper preparation for re-entry involving counselling and education regarding the re-entry process, particularly in cases where the sojourn is part of a formal institutional program. Just as preparation for the sojourn itself can contribute to a smoother transition into the host culture, preparation for the post-sojourn resumption of life in the home culture can assist the sojourner in gaining the most from the experience abroad.

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