



Outline

- What is culture shock?
- What causes culture shock?
- How can I cure culture shock?

What is culture shock?

What is culture shock?

- First definitions emphasize *communication*
- Oberg popularized the term *culture shock* as the **"anxiety that results from losing all of our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse"**
 - K. Oberg, Cultural shock: Adjustment to new cultural environments, *Practical Anthropology* 7 (1960), pp. 177–182.
- Weaver says culture shock has **"three basic causal explanations:**
 - (1) the loss of familiar cues,
 - (2) the breakdown of interpersonal communications, and
 - (3) an identity crisis"
- G.R. Weaver, Understanding and coping with cross-cultural adjustment stress. In: G.R. Weaver, Editor, *Culture, communication and conflict: Readings in intercultural relations*, Ginn Press, Needham Heights, MA (1994), pp. 169–189.

What is culture shock?

- Later definitions emphasize *psychological explanation*
- Adler writes that “**culture shock is primarily a set of emotional reactions to the loss of perceptual reinforcements from one's own culture, to new cultural stimuli which have little or no meaning, and to the misunderstanding of new and diverse experiences. It may encompass feelings of helplessness, irritability, and fears of being cheated, contaminated, injured or disregarded.**”
- Adler, P.S. 1975. The transitional experience: An alternative view of culture shock. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 15 4, pp. 13–23.

What is culture shock?

- Culture shock is a normal but **unpleasant** and **negative** experience
- But has **positive** effects as a
 - learning experience
 - increase intercultural understanding
ethnocentrism -> ethnorelativism
 - enhancement of self-efficacy
- Milstein, T. 2005 Transformation abroad: Sojourning and the perceived enhancement of self-efficacy. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 29(2): 217-238

What is culture shock?

- **Tourists:** brief visit to foreign culture
<6 months
- **Sojourners:** temporary stay in foreign culture
>6 months – 5 years
- **Immigrants:** stay in foreign culture forever
- **Refugees:** forced out of home culture

Culture shock for Tourists

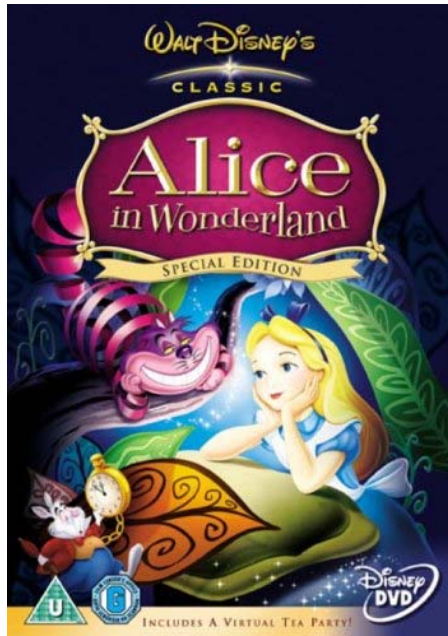
- Shortest and most superficial exposure
- Variable effect
- Can experience high levels of
 - physical stress,
 - psychological discomfort, and
 - cultural disconfirmation



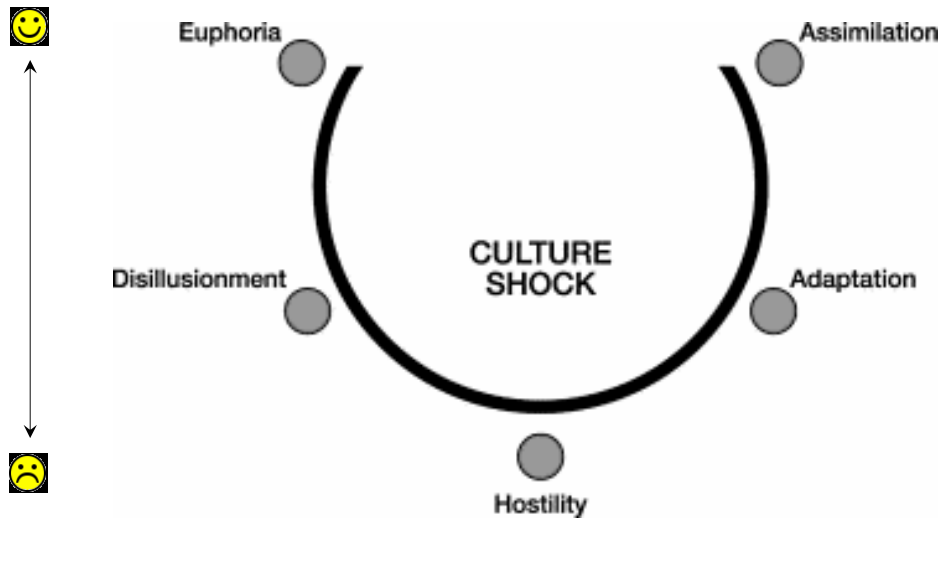
Culture shock for Sojourners



- Complex experience
- Many stages

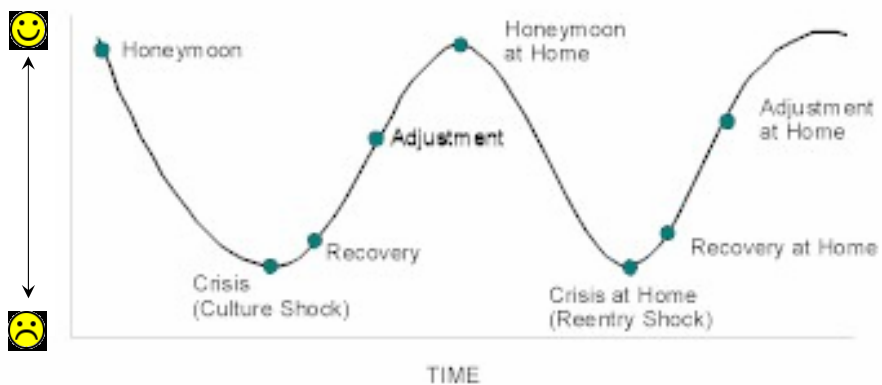


Culture shock for Sojourners



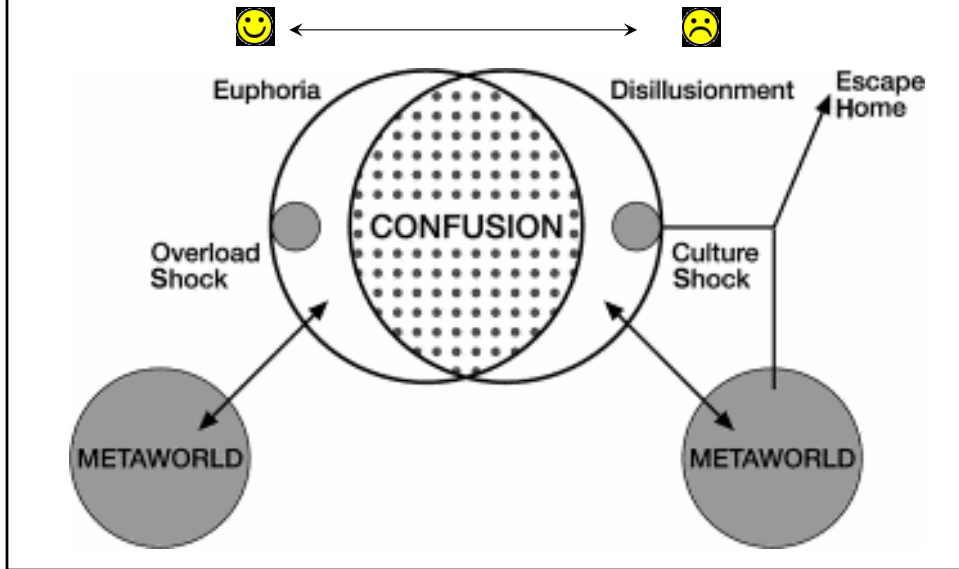
Culture shock for Sojourners

The W-Curve of Intercultural Sojourning

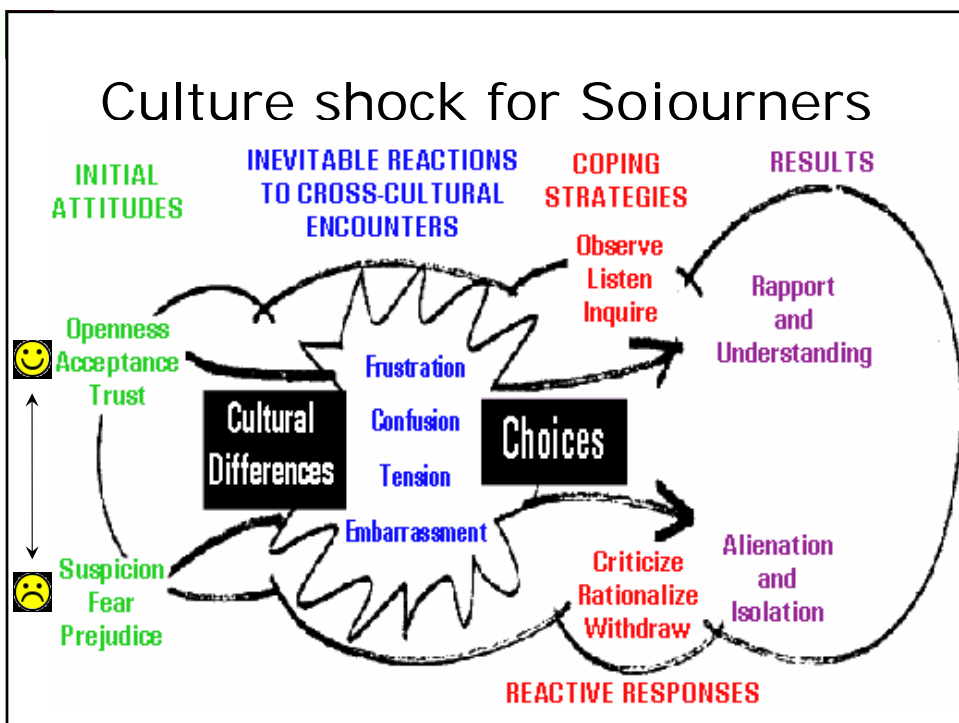


Based on Oberg (1960), and Gullahorn & Gullahorn (1963)

Culture shock for Sojourners



Culture shock for Sojourners



Culture shock for Immigrants and Refugees

- Profound and long-term process
- Issues of **identity** and **assimilation**
- Psychological, socio-cultural, and economic **adaptation**
- **integrative acculturation** is better than assimilation, separation, or marginalization.



"Welcome to America... You break it you bought it."

What causes culture shock?

What causes culture shock?

- Four factors:
 - cognitive
 - behavioural
 - phenomenological
 - Socio-psychological

What causes culture shock? cognitive etiology

- Culture Shock comes from mis-interpretation of cultural values, beliefs, behaviours, and norms of the new society.
- People ineffectively use their own cultures as the standard for interpreting, judging, and behaving in the new culture
- For example
 - **collectivist** societies (e.g., Mexico, Philippines) tend to place greater value on behaviours promoting in-group interdependence and in-group goals
 - **individualist** societies (e.g., United States, Great Britain) are likely to endorse behaviours related to independence from the in-group and to individual goals
- People from collectivist societies may interpret independence from the in-group, for example, as a sign of **disrespect** for the social group.
- In contrast, those from individualist societies may interpret the same behaviour as a sign of **maturity**.

What causes culture shock? cognitive etiology

- Major cultural differences in systems of thought

- **East Asian**
wholistic
- **Westerner**
analytic

- Nisbett, R.E et al 2001 Culture and Systems of Thought: Holistic Versus Analytic Cognition. *Psychological Review* 108(2): 291-310

Wholistic	Analytic
Continuity	Discreteness
Field	Object
Relationship and similarity	Category and rules
Dialectics	Foundational principles and logic
Experience-based knowledge	Abstract analysis

What causes culture shock? behavioral etiology

- Culture shock occurs because individuals do not know the **systems of rewards and punishment** associated with the **verbal and nonverbal behaviours** in the host culture.

» Behaviours that were **positively** reinforced in the **home** country would elicit **negative** stimuli in the **foreign** country.



What causes culture shock? phenomenological etiology

- Culture shock is a **transitional experience** from a state of **low** self- and cultural awareness to a state of **high** self- and cultural awareness
- Individuals experience culture shock because they **can not** use their own cultural references to **convey and validate central aspects of their identity** in the new culture.

What causes culture shock? phenomenological etiology

- For example
 - "politeness" as one of aspect of one's self-identity
 - **social rules for politeness vary cross-culturally**, so a person may not be able to convey and validate this aspect of self-concept in a different culture in the same way as in their own culture.



What causes culture shock?

Socio-psychological etiology

- culture shock relates to individuals' **feelings of well-being in the host culture**, the social adjustment component refers to individuals' capacity for **effective social interaction** with host members.
- **psychological** dimension of culture shock can be understood in terms of **cultural dissimilarities** and of **feelings of loneliness** in the host country.
- **social** dimension of culture shock can be explained in terms of
 - (a) individuals **lacking the appropriate cultural knowledge** about the host country
 - (b) individuals having **strong cultural identities** that would make them less likely to adapt to the host culture.

How to cure culture shock?

DON'T PANIC



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Curing culture shock

- Takes **time**
- **Prepare** yourself for cultural adaptation:
 - knowledge
 - skills
 - abilities
 - attitudes



Curing culture shock

- pursue information gathering;
- look for logic;
- make sense of the environment;
- use wisdom and patience;
- use humour;
- have faith in yourself;
- don't pity yourself;
- be **mentally, physically, and socially active**;
- get sufficient rest;
- maintain a balanced diet;
- take reasonable risks;
- ask for help;
- and use **friends and family** as emotional support.

