

Vegetarians at the BBQ

Preparing students for culture shock
and cross-cultural living

Anjali Hammond, University of Utah
Dan Hart, Arizona State University
Claudia Giannetti, University of Denver
Aaron Rose, Brigham Young University

Preparing outbound U.S. students for Culture Shock

Aaron Rose
International Internships Coordinator
International Study Programs
Brigham Young University
aaron_rose@byu.edu

Preparing for Culture Shock through:

- Orientation taught in credit-bearing prep course
- Peer mentoring

Culture Shock Orientation taught in credit-bearing prep course



Methods

- Taught by Administrative Coordinator, Faculty Directors, or Student Mentor “Facilitator”
- Designed to meet the needs of the specific students, course and faculty
- 60-90 minute discussion
- Lecture format, simulations, peer-led discussion (former participant or international student), Q & A, quizzes

Audience

- Students, many have been abroad before, juniors, seniors, know language (for many, this becomes a much needed reentry briefing)
- Faculty and administrators

Content

- Culture Shock Curve: Honeymoon, crisis, recovery and understanding, biculturalism
- Culture as an Iceberg: Cultural artifacts, language, beliefs, basic human needs
- International experience is a return to infancy: relearning basic skills
- Disclosure on potential physical, psychological, and cultural challenges
- Speaking without Speaking: simulation on non-verbal communication
- Reentry debriefing

Culture Shock Discussion from “Coping with Culture Shock”

Anthropologist Kalvero Oberg refers to culture shock as the “psychological disorientation” experienced by people suddenly living and working in a different cultural environment.

What is culture shock?

- A sense of confusion over expected role behavior
- A sense of surprise, even disgust, after realizing some of the features of the new culture
- A sense of loss of the old familiar surroundings (friends, possessions, and so on) and cultural patterns
- A sense of being rejected (or at least not accepted) by members of the new culture
- A sense of loss of self-esteem because the inability to function in the new culture results in an imperfect meeting of professional objectives
- A feeling of impotence at having little or no control over the environment
- A strong sense of doubt when old values (which had always been held as absolute) are brought into question

Robert Kohls' list of culture shock symptoms:

- Homesickness
- Boredom
- Withdrawal (for example, spending excessive amounts of time reading; seeing only other Americans; avoiding contact with host nationals)
- Need for excessive amounts of sleep
- Compulsive eating & drinking
- Irritability
- Exaggerated cleanliness
- Family tension and conflict, including marital stress
- Stereotyping or hostility toward host nationals
- Loss of ability to work effectively
- Unexplainable fits of weeping
- Physical ailments (psychosomatic illness)

Oberg's 4 stages of culture shock



Honeymoon stage

- Euphoria
- Newness, exoticism, excitement
- Unrealistically positive
- Often occurs when people are staying with Americans in American-style accommodations (haven't taken the plunge into the local culture)
- Similarities between host country and U.S. are entertained (people are all the same – which is not the case)

Crisis Stage

- Irritation & hostility
- Things taken for granted at home no longer exist
- Small problems become insurmountable obstacles
- Cultural differences, not similarities abound
- Getting together with other Americans to criticize the locals
- Time to give up and go home, the honeymoon is over
- Just stick it out

Adjustment Stage

- Recovery
- Understanding of how to operate within the new culture
- Cultural cues & patterns of behavior are making sense
- Language becomes comprehensible
- Problems of everyday living are being resolved
- Things just seem more natural and manageable
- Ability to laugh at one's situation

Biculturalism

- Full recovery
- Ability to function effectively in two different cultures
- Confusing local customs are now understood and appreciated
- You don't have to "go native" to understand and appreciate
- Many customs are missed upon return home



Adler indicated that culture shock is good: when pain is high, the motivation is powerful to acquire new knowledge and skills. It brings us to confront our own cultural heritage. If the crisis stage is too high, they may be unable to learn.

- Discussion on Culture shock solutions

Quiz for Prep Seminar

- What is culture?
- Explain in your own words how the cultural iceberg analogy helps you understand a new culture?
- What is ethnocentrism and how does it apply to you as you live, study and work abroad?
- What is cultural relativity and how can you apply this in your experience abroad?
- Can we overcome our ethnocentrism completely? If not, what can we do to minimize our cross cultural blunders?
- What are the stages of culture shock?
- Explain the difference between monochronic and polychronic time?
- What is sacred space, and when do we know if we have crossed the threshold into another culture?
- Why do you want to have this experience abroad?
- What have you done to prepare yourself for this experience?

Prep Seminar Bibliography

- Argyle, Michael "The Laws of Looking"
- Ferraro, Gary. "Coping with Culture Shock". The Cultural Dimension of International Business. Prentice Hall College Div.1997. pp. 145-156.
- Hall, Edward T., Mildred Reed Hall "Monochronic and Polychronic Time"
- Hall, Edward T. "The Sounds of Silence"
- Ting-Toomey, "Intercultural Communication: An Introduction." Communicating Across Cultures. New York: Guilford Press, 1999. pp. 3-24
- Morrison, Terri, Wayne A. Conaway, and George A. Borden. Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands. Holbrook, Massachusetts: Adams Media Corporation, 1994.

Peer mentoring



Peer mentoring

- International students meet one-on-one or in small groups with departing students
- “Study Buddies” language exchange
- Dinner exchanges
- International Student Clubs
- Student mentors working for study abroad office

THE AMBASSADOR PROGRAM:

Transitioning into the New
and Negotiating the Old

Anjali Hammond, Coordinator, International Programs
International Center
University of Utah
Email: ahammond@sa.utah.edu
Tel: (801) 585-5759

The University of Utah's Ambassador Program



Program Goals

- Help new international students overcome their culture shock using a model of peer mentoring
- Promote positive interaction among international students and host country students
- Facilitate the enrollment and retention of international students
- Facilitate re-entry and cultural re-adjustment for returned study abroad students

Program Administration

- Joint project between International Student Services and Study Abroad
- Coordinator of international orientation program matches the students and administers the program
- Study abroad office has secondary role - helps with recruiting returning study abroad students and training

Recruiting



We look for returned study abroad students or international students who have—

- A keen interest in international issues
- Leadership abilities
- Students who have “been there and done that”
- Ability to communicate clearly
- Attended the university for at least 6 months

The Training Process

Workshop

- Share their international experiences and the culture shock they faced
- Empathy: allow them to see what new students experience
- The services of the IC and the Orientation process
- Intercultural communication skills
- Information packets and expectations

During the weeks before orientation

- Send students' e-mails to ambassadors

The program has reduced anxiety and culture shock among new international students by giving them more individualized attention.



Future Goals

- How can we use our Ambassadors to get our international students through the more difficult stages of culture shock? i.e. crisis stage
- Develop certain Ambassadors as Head or Lead Ambassadors to take charge of group activities
- Create innovative programming ideas that help students overcome their culture shock throughout the year

BACK IN THE USA... RE-ENTRY: Working Through the Transition Back at Home

Claudia Giannetti
Advisor, Study Abroad Office
University of Denver
Email: cgiannet@du.edu
Tel: 303-871-3555

Challenges

- Large numbers of students
 - 80% of students go in the Fall term
 - 20% of students go in Winter or Spring terms
- No mandatory re-entry course required

“Culture shock is the expected confrontation with the unfamiliar; re-entry shock is the unexpected confrontation with the familiar”

R. Michael Paige-Co-author *Maximizing Study Abroad*, University of Minnesota.

Top Ten Re-entry Challenges

- 1. Boredom
- 2. “No one want to hear”
- 3. Reverse homesickness
- 4. Relationships have changed
- 5. People see the wrong changes
- 6. People misunderstand
- 7. You can't explain
- 8. Feelings of alienation/critical eyes
- 9. Inability to apply new skills and knowledge
- 10. Loss/compartimentalization of experience

From Bruce LeBrack, *What is Up With Culture*, School of International Studies, University of the Pacific.

The University of Denver Study Abroad Programs Background

Study abroad numbers have greatly increased:

Y 2002 ---- 200 students
Y 2003 ---- 400 students
Y 2006 ---- 540 students

This represents an increase of 170% since 2002

Reason for change:

- The Cherrington Global Scholars Program:
- Students study abroad at no additional cost beyond that of a term at DU.
 - DU also pays student's airfare to and from destination
 - Visa applications fee, required permits to study and insurance mandated by the host country or university.
 - DU waives any application and program fees (some exceptions apply).

Important Topics to Address in a Re-entry Program

- Reflection about the experience abroad & re-entry adjustment—returnee involvement
- How to connect experience with interaction on campus and local community—this helps in keeping experience alive
- Other international opportunities: volunteer, internships, graduate school, other short-term study
- Connection between study abroad and future professional, career and personal goals—alumni network and other professional from different fields

Re-entry Activities at DU

- **Welcome Back Dinner for the Cherrington Scholars**
 - Formal gathering involving students, faculty and staff
 - Round table set up facilitates guided conversations on reflection of experience.
- **Colorado/Wyoming Re-entry Conference**
 - Coordinate re-entry event and efforts with other area/state universities
 - The format of a professional conference makes it more appealing for student to attend. Also, going off campus to another location is more enticing for students.
 - Time of year held varies between Winter or Fall terms to accommodate quarter vs. semester systems.

Conference Core Themes

- Readjustment Discussion—returnees stories
- Marketing international experience into the career search—Resume and Interviewing tips
- Alumni Panel—recent graduates tell their stories
- Connecting experience with life on campus, community and home
- Opportunities Fair: graduate schools, fellowships, volunteering, going abroad again

Other Activities

- Student organized socials:
 - International Association of SA returnees
 - DU Students' Programming Board
- Career Services sessions
- American Politics Overseas lecture
- Informal gatherings to address reflection and readjustment issues

New Perspectives on Re-entry

- Development of a strong informal network of returnees on campus—students helping students cope with emotions
- Elements of re-entry seem to be much different now:
 - Technology allows students to remain highly connected with US culture, family and friends while abroad
 - Disconnection and immersion may not be as profound—many students attend US-center programs
- Reflective discussion becomes harder in larger group setting
- Improving pre-departure orientation by emphasizing that study abroad is a cycle that involved a before, a during and an after stage.

Culture Shock 'Simulations'

Dan Hart
Manager, Study Abroad & Exchange Programs
International Programs Office
Arizona State University
Dan.Hart@asu.edu

Culture Shock Simulations:

- BaFa' BaFa'
- BARNGA
- Visiting Experts
- Culture-specific scenarios
- 'Speaking Without Speaking'

BaFa' BaFa'

- Two cultures are created for this simulation: Alpha and Beta cultures. The Alpha culture is a relationship oriented, high context, strong ingroup-outgroup culture. The Beta culture is a highly competitive trading culture.
- After participants learn the rules of their culture and begin living it, observers and visitors are exchanged.
- The resulting stereotyping, misperception and misunderstanding becomes the grist for the debriefing.
- Requires much preparation and two to four hours to facilitate

BARNGA

- In this simulation, participants play a simple card game in small groups. Each group plays the game by different rules, but players are not informed that the rules are different in each group.
- Players may not speak to each other but can communicate only through gestures or pictures.
- Simulates real cross-cultural encounters, where people initially believe they share the same understanding of the basic rules. In discovering that the rules are different, players undergo a mini culture shock similar to actual experience when entering a different culture.
- Requires little preparation to facilitate effectively, requires minimal time, and requires a minimal number of participants.

'Visiting Experts'

- In this simulation, two groups are created: visiting experts and host community members.
- Visiting experts are briefed on their objectives in obtaining information from the community members they will be meeting.
- Community members are trained on the communication norms within their culture, including a general aversion to influence from outsiders.
- Meeting takes place in the setting of an 'informal reception'

Culture-Specific Scenarios

- Students are presented with a hypothetical scenario that they may be likely to encounter themselves within their host culture.
- Discussion of their reaction to the scenario is the key in helping them understand specific cultural differences they can expect.
- Examples presented today are quite old, but can be modified to fit within your particular context.
- Be careful of stereotyping!

References

- BaFa' BaFa'
<http://www.simulationtrainingsystems.com>
- Hofstede, G. J. & Pederson, P. (1999). Synthetic cultures: Intercultural learning through simulation games. *Simulation & Gaming*, 30, 415-440.
- Stringer, D. M., & Cassiday, P. (2003). *52 Activities for Exploring Values Differences*, Boston, MA: Intercultural Press
- Thiagarajan, S. & Steinwachs, B. (1990). *BARNGA: A simulation game on cultural clashes*. Boston, MA: Intercultural Press