

# 旅の始まりは帰国後に：リエントリー文化サバイバル期間という隠れた異文化経験を個人の成長と学習に生かすために

## The Journey Begins When One Returns Home: the Re-entry Cultural Survival Phase as a Hidden Dimension of the Cross-cultural Learning Experience

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### Keywords

異文化経験学習, リカルチャーレーション, リエントリー, 文化サバイバル, 逆カルチャーショック

Cross-cultural learning experience, reculturation, cultural survival, Reverse culture shock, Re-entry experience

### ABSTRACT

異文化経験としてのリエントリーカルチャーショックと文化サバイバルは複雑で、かつダイナミックなものであるから、時として、個人に思わしくない結果をいろいろな意味で引き起こすきっかけになる事がある。初めて新文化と遭遇する時と同じように、自文化への再進入期間をポジティブなものとするためには、その準備をする事が重要な課題となってくる。しかし、留学が大学教育の選択肢の一つになってきた今日、自文化に再進入する・リエントリーする事に関して、十分な研究は行われていない。

この論文では、まず、留学プログラムの枠組みの中で、リエントリー文化サバイバルが異文化間の経験として個人に引き起こす問題を検証する。その上で、留学・国際交流の実務家がどのようにして学生を支援できるか、実践的な事柄をあげる。リエントリー前とその最中で、学生を継続的に支援していくのが、理想の形となる。

The impact of re-entry cultural survival as part of the cross-cultural experience is dynamic and complex, and

can sometimes trigger unhealthy consequences for individuals. Therefore, preparing for returning to the home culture, in a similar way that one prepares for going to the destination culture before departure, plays a key role for managing the re-entry cultural survival phase successfully. Education abroad has become one of the mainstream options for many university students around the world. However, preparation for coming back to one's home culture has not been receiving enough attention despite the fact the volume of mobility of people has considerably increased. The purpose of this article is to first raise awareness of the issues and consequences regarding re-entry cultural survival as part of the cross-cultural experience in education abroad programs. In addition, the article gives practical suggestions to assist education abroad advisors and administrators in organizing cross-cultural re-entry activities, so that they can provide adequate support for education abroad returnees. Providing support for people before and during the re-entry cultural survival phase would assist returnees a great deal in managing their experience of returning home.

## Introduction

Leaving is exciting, but returning is exhausting, as it is said in an old saying in the Japanese language. For many reasons, coming back to a home culture is more difficult, sometimes, than going to a new culture. As more people move between cultures for jobs, education, or even just for an extended vacation, seemingly this notion has been accepted as common knowledge amongst the professionals who work with students and employees of many global organizations.

When one goes from one's home culture to a destination culture, the adjustment process sometimes requires one to become adjust to the new culture. At the beginning of this new stage in one's life in the new culture, one would encounter a phase, "cultural survival" (Stewart, 1986, p.109) that involves a great deal of confusion and disorientation, and continues to last from a few days to a few months depending on individuals. Just like the initial entry into the new culture, returning to the home culture requires another process, one of reculturation, to get oneself back to the home culture: the re-entry cultural survival phase.

Stewart (1972) argued that "Mere mastery of desirable and taboo actions" (p.20) in a culture does not equip individuals with effective interactions

across cultures. "In particular, going native is neither possible nor desirable" (p.20). What is important is to settle into a "third culture" originally defined by Useem (1999), "a generic term to cover the styles of life created, shared, and learned by persons who are in the process of relating their societies, or sections thereof, to each other." (1999).

Education abroad professionals need to consider initiating and creating a third culture amongst returning students so that they do not feel isolated or alienated in their home culture, or have difficulty adjusting to school. According to Stewart (1972):

...he [a participant] should adopt a third culture based on expanded cross-cultural understanding. The first step in doing this is to understand the assumptions and values on which one's own behavior rests. (p.20-21)

Increasing one's own familiarity of the home culture by contrasting with other cultures allows one to manage behaviors potentially problematic in the re-entry cultural survival phase of returning home. Cross-cultural training is provided to ease the struggle of individuals during new arrival phases, and is designed to assist participants with being able to effectively interact with the local members of the new location. This is also the case for the re-entry

experience, and the training should be designed and implemented for the returnees. The true cross-cultural journey, in fact, begins when one returns to his/her home culture because many things familiar at home can be discovered for the first time to have new meaning.

### **The Current Reality of Re-entry cultural survival among Repatriates**

Providing support and facilitating learning based on cross-cultural experience contributes to one's condition in the re-entry cultural survival phase. However, the majority of repatriates including education abroad returnees whom I have encountered professionally conveyed their difficult experience returning to their home cultures. Most of them expressed their frustration with the fact that they have no opportunities to continue or take advantage of their cross-cultural learning at home as they explain their wonderful (and not-so-wonderful) transformative experience abroad.

Having lived abroad for almost half of my life due to my education and professional development, supporting and facilitating re-entry cultural survival has become an important consideration as I have gone through the experience myself. There are often opportunities to host workshops and seminars on re-entry cultural survival discussions, and a part of the session focuses on sharing experience at home. When the participants meet with others to share such experiences, the discussions always become the most dynamic activity. Many expressed their wish for having had such help and preparation for re-entry cultural survival when they initially arrived at their homes.

Unfortunately, despite the fact that preparing for cross-cultural experience is understood to play an important role for education abroad programs, the practitioners of international education either do not have enough time or expertise to provide such services for the participants (Martin, 1989). In

fact, very few studies are done concerning re-entry cultural survival (Austin, C. N., 1986; Ward, Bochner, and Furnham, 2001), and repatriation is the least paid attention among the various aspects of global assignments (Black, Gregersen, and Mendenhall, 1992).

Part of the problem in surviving the re-entry experience is structural; education abroad programs are constructed as isolated educational experiences within the curriculum between the partner institutions at home and abroad; each phase is believed to come with different learning, and often they were treated separately or not treated at all. The current structure of education abroad programs forces the participants to engage in unnatural learning processes without specific guidance and assistance. This assumption gives less attention to re-entry cultural survival as an important consideration of cross-cultural learning outcomes.

Lack of attention regarding re-entry cultural survival as part of overall cross-cultural experience only puts the participants in further difficult situations, and just like many other things about education abroad programs, the participants are left alone without any assistances to figure out how to manage their re-entry phase. For this reason, repatriates express their dissatisfaction and difficulties with returning to their home culture when the opportunities arise. Just like any other learning subject, effective and productive learning requires good guidance and facilitation, and this is no exception to re-entry cultural survival as a part of the cross-cultural experience in education abroad programs.

### **Understanding the Theoretical Considerations of Culture in Re-entry Cultural Survival and Cross-cultural Experience**

Stewart (2008) described culture as “a quagmire” and working with culture like putting teeth into

a jelly. Therefore, culture requires a map of the mind to navigate through it (Stewart, 2008). The ubiquitous and contextual nature of culture makes it difficult to grasp in conceptual ways. However, for the purpose of this article, the following approaches are applied to put culture into perspective within the framework of cross-cultural learning as a part of education abroad programs by borrowing theories in social psychology.

In order to articulate cultural differences in two different individuals or groups, two terminologies are invented by Stewart (1995) when he developed a cross-cultural training program called Contrast Culture Method (CCM): “reference culture” and “contrast culture” (p.48-50). These terms describe the identification of cultures that are represented in human behaviors of different individuals and groups in an cross-cultural interpersonal setting.

Reference culture is described as one’s most familiar culture which dictates appropriate behaviors depending on the context. According to Stewart (1995):

“One’s own culture, and thus a reference culture, is understood from the inside out as procedures for how to get things done. Experience of it tends to be unconscious and typically conveys the feeling that it its natural and normal, while that of other cultures is strange, exotic, or unnatural.” (p.48-49)

On the other hand, any other cultures that are unfamiliar and unnatural to oneself is called a “contrast culture”; the culture that contrasts with that of the reference culture (Stewart, 1995 p.49). Contrast culture may be sometimes described as a target or destination culture in education abroad settings.

Discovering one’s own culture by bringing about a consciousness of it is always possible, and one can always learn about one’s reference culture more

easily by having to contrast it with other cultures. “Taking advantage of this fact, we adopted the strategy of developing the other culture based on a contrast to reference culture” (Stewart, 1995, p.50). Even though these concepts are developed based on intercultural dimensions of cross-cultural interpersonal training (Stewart, 1995), the concepts can be appropriately applied to the topic of cross-cultural re-entry experience.

### **Grasping Cross-Cultural Re-entry Experience and Re-entry Cultural Survival**

The movement of an individual between a reference culture and destination culture in an extended period of time potentially causes difficulty during the re-entry phase of cross-cultural experience. Re-entry shock as a part of culture shock has received attention in the field of education abroad. Paige (2007) explained, “Culture shock is the expected confrontation with the unfamiliar; re-entry shock is unexpected confrontation with the familiar” (p.147). Thebodo (2009) described, “Re-entry can be defined as the often unexpected and sometimes difficult experience of re-adjusting to life in one’s home culture after living abroad.” A common idea here is that re-entry shock is something unexpected, and is sometimes a difficult cultural adjustment back into one’s home culture.

One tricky element of re-entry cultural survival that makes it more complicated than the initial cultural survival in the destination culture is one’s own assumption about the home culture. According to Sussman (2002):

Expatriates are not expecting that coming home will cause any problems and these erroneous expectations can lead to repatriation problems being increased. (Sussman, 2002)

One would often assume that one’s home culture

remains the same as when one has left when nothing remains constant. The gap between the reality and one's assumption of the home culture create conflicts, and therefore requires another phase of "cultural survival" in the cross-cultural experience.

The friction caused by movement of an individual between the home culture and destination culture become a source of culture shock. Therefore, the differences between two cultures create friction and confusion inside individuals. Frustration and dissatisfaction about one's own conditions in a new culture is due to the fact that one is not functional in the destination culture (Sussman, 2002; Ward, Bochner, and Furnham, 2001). An ideal outcome of this adjustment process takes the form of acculturation where one would eventually occupy one's proper place and be able to function effectively as a member of the destination culture.

Similar symptoms of culture shock also appear during the re-entry cultural survival phase. After an extended period of stay in the destination culture, one's reference culture begins to shift toward the destination culture from the home culture. Sussman (2002) explained that this shift of reference culture and behavior is due to the fact that individuals have made adjustments and changes to their own thinking and behaviors in order to be more effective in the destination culture. Since one has to be functional in the destination culture, one would make adjustment to one's own behavior; consideration for appropriate behaviors in cultural contexts is influenced by the destination culture as outcomes of the acculturation process.

Since one has gone through the acculturation process to adjust well in the destination culture, then the reverse process also has to happen in order to be effectively functional in the home culture. Reculturation, or reversing the process which allows one's reference culture to change back from the destination culture to the home culture, must take place in the re-entry cultural survival phase. This is

not necessarily an easy process should one have to go through it without support.

## **Reconsidering Cultural Survival in Cross-cultural Experience**

The key to surviving the re-entry phase is to take advantage of these opportunities as personal learning and a growing process instead of isolated, intimidating, unpleasant events. In fact, the term 're-entry (or culture) shock' is misleading by itself because it seems to present the notion that frustration and dissatisfaction in cross-cultural experiences happen in a single shocking event in a moment or second. There is nothing isolated about the cross-cultural experience, and it is the continuous and accumulating nature of stresses caused by different events that eventually leads to a manifestation of symptoms.

Instead, the cross-cultural experience must be considered as a part of the learning and development process that flows as one form. For example, Sussman (2002) described re-entry cultural survival phase as a part of "cultural transition cycle." Bennett (1998) also suggested "that culture shock is in itself only a subcategory of transition experience...the reaction to loss and change is frequently 'shocking in terms of grief, disorientation, and the necessity for adjustment'" (p.216). Re-entry cultural survival and re-entry shock are also a part of transition shock in the cultural transition cycle as a part of cross-cultural experience between the reference and destination cultures.

An important consideration for learning across cultures focuses on being able to effectively function in a new culture: not only being familiar with the culture but also being able to interact with individuals in social settings. This is also the case for the re-entry experience in the home culture; one has to be able to be familiar with the home culture and be able to function in it once again. Bennett

(1998) suggested:

If we recognize transition shock as a defensive response to the dissonance we feel when our worldview is assaulted, we can learn to cope with the symptoms and develop methods of channeling shock?including culture shock?into personal growth (p.222)

Re-entry into the home culture is no exception to this notion, and it should be an opportunity to learn about how to effectively interact with people in the home culture. What needs to be understood is that effective learning does not occur organically, and requires someone to lead and guide during the process.

### **Practical Considerations for Advisors and Administrators of Education Abroad to support the returnees' cultural survival at home**

One of only few studies existing on the negative consequences of cross-cultural re-entry experience, Ward, Bochner, and Furnham (2001) adapting from the previous study, collected data on the psychological cost of re-entry experience (p.164). The top five issues cited in the study are: 1. Loneliness (30.3%), 2. Adjustment to college (27.3%), 3. Alienation (25.8%), 4. Depression (22.2%), 5. Trouble studying (22.7). The issues least associated with the experience are listed as: Insomnia (4.6%), Alcohol problem (4.5%), Sexual functioning (4.5%), and Drug addiction (0%).

The study illustrated that many of the problems associated with the re-entry cultural survival phase appear to be ones that require social connections and facilitation to deal with the problems. This only confirms that what is really necessary for the current education abroad returnees is to provide support and assistance to those who have to go through re-entry

cultural survival before they leave the destination culture, so that they are aware of it. In addition, the support needs to be continuously provided after returning to the home culture, so that they know how to deal with it, and have someone to ask questions and assistance when necessary.

Since inconsistency and unfamiliarity of the immediate environment tend to be causes of these problems, creating a consistent and familiar environment assists the study abroad returnees by connecting with each other. The following list provides some suggestions that the advisors and administrators of education abroad can coordinate for the returnees:

- \* Organizing a seminar and social group to connect the returning students from abroad
- \* Conducting workshops to impart skills for re-entry cultural survival and to examine how cross-cultural experience can be reflected in returnees' future choices: Job search, graduate school application, resume writing, and interview skills
- \* Providing information about re-entry cultural survival and strategies
- \* Developing community networks to connect with local non-governmental organizations with cross-cultural mission and activities
- \* Utilizing social networking groups (Facebook or Mixi) to create virtual connections to enhance the networking in person
- \* Construct an accredited course focusing on cross-cultural training

Moreover, there should be a type of support group which can assist them with re-entry cultural survival phase while they are facing the difficulty of adjustment to the home culture. Even having a support group of students who are going through the re-entry cultural survival phase help each other to get through the tough time. These approaches can

fulfill some of the psychological issues articulated in the study by Ward, Bochner, and Furnham (2001). However, making the re-entry experience as a learning opportunity takes a lot more than just having support groups or awareness seminars. Developing a formal course in an education abroad program as a part of the home institution's curriculum is urgently needed.

## Conclusion

What is missing in today's education abroad programs is that even experiential learning requires guidance and facilitation in order to achieve learning outcomes effectively. Martin (1989) noted that one of the reasons why students do not always achieve effective learning from cross-cultural experience (studying abroad in this case) is a lack of training in learning from the cross-cultural experience. Unfortunately, still today, the dominant belief in cross-cultural learning focuses on trial and error: that one learns about a culture by simply experiencing it.

What is problematic here is much cross-cultural learning is believed to happen without any specific intention, guidance, or assistance; it is left all up to an individual participant to figure out and discover. According to Ward, Bochner, and Furnham (2001):

For most culture travelers, coping with adjusting to a novel environment are achieved on a do-it-yourself, trial-and-error basis. People might consult popular guidebooks, listen to 'old hands' talking about their experiences, and generally do the best they can to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills. Muddling through like this can be highly unsatisfactory experience and accounts for the many reported failure in psychological and sociocultural adaptation. (p.248)

In addition, students, faculty, and staff members get busy preparing for departure, so that they neglect

training for cross-cultural learning; some students, faculty, and staff members do not see the need of preparation for cross-cultural learning (Martin, 1989). A 'sink or swim' approach to experiential learning does not guarantee desired learning outcomes in cross-cultural learning. Students do not learn without proper instructions, and they need to be taught what to learn as well as how to learn in the destination culture (Martin, 1989).

The advisors and administrators of education abroad programs have to consider including a proper preparation for cross-cultural experience in their program design and implementation to reflect an experiential learning approach in their pedagogy and curriculum. If they do not, participants will continue to struggle with their cross-cultural experience and re-entry cultural survival.

According to Dewey (1938), there is an organic connection between learning and personal experience. Effective learning in education abroad occurs through engaging in and reflecting on concrete experience in authentic cultural contexts. According to Kolb (1984), "experiential learning can be described as a four-stage cycle involving four adaptive learning modes?concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation" (p.40). Student learning is "the result of the interaction, conflict, and resolution of these different learning modes" (p.40-41). Learning through cross-cultural experience requires concrete experience and self-conscious reflection on one's experience of the destination culture as a continuous process. The role of facilitators in this type of learning plays a crucial role in increasing effective learning across cultures.

Should re-entry cultural survival experience be considered as a learning and growth opportunity as Bennett (1995) suggested, then there must be more constructive approaches for guidance and facilitation. According to Ward, Bochner, and Furnham (2001):

There is now sufficient evidence, accumulated over several decades, to suggest that most people who cross cultures would benefit from some kind of systematic preparation and training to assist them in coping with culture-contact induced stress. (p.248)

No learning can happen effectively without guiding and facilitating, and proper instructions are especially necessary in the form of experience-based, student-centered, participatory learning across cultures. The field of education abroad in terms of pedagogy and program design requires a paradigm shift in order to focus more on teaching and learning.

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