

**CULTURE SHOCK AS A SOCIAL ISSUE**

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**Annotation:** Culture shock is a social issue that arises from the encounter between individuals and unfamiliar cultural environments. This scientific article examines culture shock as a significant social issue affecting individuals experiencing cross-cultural encounters. Drawing on interdisciplinary perspectives from sociology, psychology, anthropology, and intercultural studies, the article explores the causes, manifestations, and impacts of culture shock on individuals and society. Through a comprehensive analysis of research findings, theoretical frameworks, and case studies, this article aims to shed light on the complexities of culture shock and its implications for social cohesion, intergroup relations, and individual well-being.

**Key words:** Culture shock, relation, social issue, unfamiliar, CIE, positive, departure, humor.

"Culture shock" is a term used to describe the impact of moving from a familiar culture to one that is unfamiliar. It includes the shock of any new environment, meeting lots of new people and learning the ways of a different country. It also includes the shock of being separated from family, friends, colleagues and teachers--those people with whom you would normally talk during times of uncertainty and who provide support and advice.

When familiar sights, sounds, smells or tastes are no longer available to you, you can miss them very much. Jet lag and fatigue upon arrival can cause even little things to upset you. During your study abroad, fatigue and illness can also increase your feelings of culture shock.

The most important thing to remember is that culture shock is NORMAL, it GOES AWAY, and is even POSITIVE, since it is the state in which you will learn about yourself and from which you will emerge as a more compassionate, globally aware and mature individual. Some of the following information will be provided during the CIE orientation sessions, but please read this section completely and repeatedly during your study abroad experience. Your provider will undoubtedly also talk to you about culture shock, its symptoms and how to minimize it.

Culture shock, a term created by Kalvero Oberg in 1960, consists of distinct phases.

However, it varies among individuals in its severity, duration and in the phases through which an individual will pass depending upon the personality traits of the individual, the degree to which the individual has prepared himself or herself for the host country experience, and the length of the individual's stay, as you need a certain length of time to pass through all phases. Normally a semester study will produce most if not all phases.

One model of culture shock and its phases is called the W-Curve and was identified by Oberg. It includes not only the time spent abroad, but the period at home after the overseas experience, when the individual experiences "reentry shock" and then recovers and adjusts to being at home. The characteristics of these phases that the individual goes through are described below. Remember that you may not experience all of these phases or exhibit all of these behaviors.

*How to Deal with Culture Shock.*

Essentially culture shock is stress. Remember that the tools you use to cope with stress at home are the same ones to use while abroad:

- Remember that stress is normal.
- Keep in mind that the stress is temporary and will change and go away.
- Keep in mind the positive aspects of stress, particularly the fact that your culture shock is part of a journey of personal discovery and growth.
- Remember that you have gone through stressful times before and survived.
- Do your research before departure so that you have a better idea of what to expect.
- If you do not know or have not studied the language of the country, use RosettaStone to learn at least some basic language. This will go a long way into helping you greet people, read signs, get around the town, use transportation and do basic errands at stores, banks etc. You will feel very empowered. Be sure to also study the language of the country--most programs will require that you take 3-6 credits; if your program doesn't do so anyway. The payoff is enormous. People will engage you and respond to you very favorably if you try and speak their language.
- Keep a sense of humor about yourself.
- Take care of your health, eat properly, exercise and get plenty of rest.
- Establish priorities regarding the things you have to do, learn and adjust to and do the most important items first.
- Seek out other people. Don't isolate yourself.
- Be open and adopt a sense of adventure and open mindedness. Our attitude affects the way we see ourselves, experience others and encounter the world.
- Be patient with yourself and patient with the people and culture around you.
- Do not try to find a "little America" abroad. You'll be disappointed and you'll miss the unique features of your host country.

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