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Assessing the Appropriateness of the Cultural Formulation Interview in Conceptualizing Reverse Culture Shock

Katja Nielsen
Minnesota State University, Mankato

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By

Katja Nielsen

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Katja Nielsen

This thesis has been examined and approved by the following members of the student's

committee:

X_____

Advisor: Angelica Aguirre

X_____

Committee Member: Jeffrey Buchanan

X_____

Committee Member: Kristie Campana

Abstract

Utilizing the Cultural Formulation Interview (CFI) to identify social and cultural variables predicting the cross-cultural experience of reverse culture shock, this study aims at clarifying the process of re-acculturation of international students in the United States by comparing quantitative and qualitative measures. Thirty-two participants completed demographics and questionnaires and 18 decided to further partake in the CFI. Results from the Reentry Shock Scale as well as the CFI indicate that a majority of individuals experience problems and distress associated with returning home, yet to varying degrees and intensity. Through assessment of each participant's experience with reverse culture shock, twelve out of 18 (66.7%) were accurately assessed compared to their actual data score on the Reentry Shock Scale. Additionally, thematic analysis of the CFI prompted seven themes related to the process of reverse culture shock. Three of these themes have in previous literature been associated with high reverse culture shock and thus substantiate the validity of the CFI as an appropriate measure in conceptualizing and assessing reverse culture shock.

Keywords: Reverse culture shock, cultural formulation interview, international students

Introduction

The international student population in the United States is among the largest compared to other countries and exemplifies an increasing desire for international relations worldwide (Glass, Streitwieser, & Gopal, 2021). The U.S. has been of interest to international students since World War II (Jenkins, 1983) and has persisted in part to the quality of higher education (Israel & Batalova, 2021). However, international students experience a host of adjustment difficulties and within a cross-cultural framework, one must consider how cultural factors influence human behavior. Specifically, how do individuals adapt to new cultural circumstances (Berry, 1998)?

Currently, 914,095 international students reside in the U.S. (Open Doors 2021 Report on Enrollment Trends, 2021) and a large body of literature has investigated the cultural adaptation of international students to the dominant cultural group of the U.S. (Brabant, Palmer, & Gramling, 1990). Most recognized is the phenomenon of culture shock which depicts the distress associated with adapting to a new culture (Berry, 1997). In particular, the sudden loss of familiar symbols and cues, as well as shared language and norms evoke feelings of anxiety and frustration in the sojourner (Adler, 1975; Oberg, 1954). Yet, it is important to acknowledge the overall process of acculturation in consideration to cultural adjustment of international students. That is, upon sustained contact with a foreign culture an individual will adopt the values, beliefs, and behaviors of that cultural group (Singaravelu & Pope, 2007). This process primarily occurs as a response to cultural expectations of the host culture, yet assimilation occurs to varying degrees in each individual (Berry, 1998; Berry 2008). Nonetheless, any modification of behaviors and belief systems abroad may come to influence the reentry process (Piaget, 1985). This is especially true for international students who are temporary settlers in the U.S. and frequently return home during their stay abroad.

Reverse Culture Shock

Readjustment in a cross-cultural perspective involves transitioning back into one's home culture after living abroad (Adler, 1981). The concept of returning home is for many international students perceived as a natural occurrence either intermittent of their studies or post-graduation (Singaravelu & Pope, 2007). This is primarily due to the presumption that they will return to familiar surroundings and life as it was before they left (Freedman, 1986). Yet, this is not the reality for all students. A broad scope of literature in the field of cultural adjustment has recognized that the process of returning home can be more difficult than moving to a new culture (Adler, 1981). Equivalent to culture shock, the phenomenon of reverse culture shock or reentry shock is associated with cultural adjustment difficulties but is experienced upon returning home after living in another cultural environment (Seiter & Waddell, 1989). Specifically, reverse culture shock encompasses the stresses and challenges related to readjusting and reassimilating into one's home culture (Gaw, 2000). The effects of reverse culture shock are often psychological and psychosocial in nature. Symptoms include depression and anxiety (Sahin, 1990; Rogers & Ward, 1993; Gaw, 2000; Kaplan et al., 1994), interpersonal problems (Seiter & Waddell, 1989; Brabant, Palmer, & Gramling, 1990; Minoura, 1988), loneliness and alienation (Uehara, 1986; Gaw, 2000; Kaufmann, 1989; Dettweiler et al., 2015), grief about the loss of friends and experiences (Chamove & Soeterik, 2006; Dettweiler et al., 2015; Uehara, 1986), cultural identity difficulties (Ebuchi, 1988; Presbitero, 2016), and decreased life satisfaction (Presbitero, 2016). Several other symptoms have been identified in the decades of investigating the phenomenon and demonstrate the diverse experiences of sojourners as they navigate life transitioning between two cultures.

Theories of Reverse Culture Shock

Though research studies agree on the definition of reverse culture shock as a transitional phase characterized by psychological difficulties, most studies disagree on which elements of the cross-cultural experience significantly predict reverse culture shock. Earlier theories of reverse culture shock attest to a readjustment pattern that is similar to that of culture shock. Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) therefore extended the famous U-curve associated with culture shock to the W-curve to symbolize the process of returning home (see appendix A for a visual of the W-curve). Data supported the notion that students who travel overseas go through distinct phases in order of adjusting to the host culture. These include (a) excitement about the new culture, (b) culture shock as characterized by difficulties and stress associated with living in a new cultural environment, and (c) successful adjustment to the new culture. Individuals returning home are, therefore, believed to experience the same phases, yet in this instance, it is (a) the excitement of returning home, (b) reverse culture shock that is experienced as distress and problems associated with readjusting to the cultural environment of their home country, and lastly (c) readjustment to the home culture. Support has been found for a time component related to reverse culture shock and a return to baseline for people experiencing reverse culture shock (Dykhouse & Bikos, 2019). This means, that a majority of individuals who return home will after a certain amount of time readjust and have no to little distress associated with being in their home country. Adler (1975) suggested that the individual undergoes personal changes and values clarification during their time overseas that follows the transitional stages of the U-curve. The identity changes that follow the assimilation with the new culture thus influence a person's self-concept (Wang, 1997) and haveled to further investigation of identity changes as the main cause of reverse culture shock.

International students often travel to the U.S. at an age where they are formulating core values, beliefs, and a general lifestyle for themselves (Martin, 1984). Young individuals without a

firm perception of themselves, are therefore more susceptible to experiencing changes in their core beliefs and consequently their identity (Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1963). In a study by Chamove and Soeterik (2006), 93% of the students reported that they had changed a lot during their time abroad. The personal changes experienced by international students relate to feelings of uniqueness and autonomy, linguistic improvements, values clarification, and a sense of independence (Raschio, 1987). As the student return, they may face the existential question of who they are as they discover the discrepancies between their new self and old self (Singaravelu & Pope, 2007). Consequently, interpersonal problems may arise as the individual is expected to conform upon return home, especially in collectivistic cultures where larger cultural differences exist (Sussman, 2000; Akhtar et al., 2019). These interpersonal problems related to changes within the individual suggest personal adjustment issues, and personal adjustment problems upon return have been linked to higher levels of reverse culture shock. Specifically, individuals would report negative affect such as alienation, loneliness, a sense of not belonging, and isolation (Gaw, 2000). These results are consistent with Chamove and Soeterik (2006) who also found that respectively 53% of the students reported that they did not feel at home and 43% had difficulty relating to their friends as they returned.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that changes in identity and self-concept naturally include alterations of belief systems, values, and behaviors. Other researchers, therefore, believe that reverse culture shock is related to the learning theory. The learning theory suggests that the more successful a person is at adjusting to a foreign culture, the more difficult it is to adjust back (Sussman, 1986). Presbitero (2016) found support for this theory as cultural intelligence was positively correlated with reverse culture shock. Individuals who can effectively function in culturally diverse situations are therefore more likely to adapt to the host culture and will experience changes in their values, attitudes, behaviors, perceptions, and belief systems that

subsequently will make it harder to readjust (Christofi and Thompson, 2007). This becomes evident as they return and their new values and beliefs conflict with the accepted beliefs of the home country (Austin, 1983; Martin, 1994). Other studies have found similar results indicating that more strongly adaptation to the host culture led to greater psychological difficulties upon return home (Dykhouse and Bikos, 2019). In general, students with greater reverse culture shock were more skeptical about their home culture as they returned (Wielkiewicz and Turkowski, 2010; Kranz and Goedderz, 2020).

Despite the decades of research on reverse culture shock, many individuals who live in foreign cultures do not anticipate the difficulties associated with returning home. The unexpectedness of reentry problems along with personal changes often exacerbate the distress experienced by the returning sojourner (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963, Sahin, 1990; Rogers & Ward, 1993). As a result, researchers have investigated the role of expectations in the readjustment process. There are multiple facets to the role expectation plays in the problems associated with reverse culture shock. Expectations related to the returnee often include the prospect of an easy entrance into a successful career and the transferability of skills acquired during their studies (Adler, 1981; Butcher, 2002). However, this is not always the case as many find themselves disappointed with the job opportunities in their home country (Adler, 1981). Even though the discrepancies between expectations and actual experiences are associated with anxiety and depression, its connection to reverse culture shock is still in question (Roger & Wald, 1993; Szkudlarek, 2010).

Expectations of the family must also be considered. Often, friends and family expect the individual remains the same. This becomes highly problematic in cultures where the individual may have adopted new worldviews that do not apply to the general norms and beliefs within their home culture. Brazilian women who had studied abroad in the U.S. experienced greater

adjustment problems related to interpersonal relationships than their male counterparts (Gama & Pedersen, 1976). The authors attributed this to the conservative values in Brazil that influenced women's independence and agency, which they had achieved in the U.S. Other researchers discuss the impact of family ties and the expectation of parents for their child to take care of them in older adulthood (Butcher, 2002). These expectations, whether they be from the returning student themselves or the family, can have a great impact on the psychological problems of the individual including grief that cannot be openly acknowledged or expressed, along with anger, guilt, sadness, loneliness, and depression (Kaufmann, 1989; Butcher, 2002).

The Current Study

As portrayed, there are multiple explanations and theories revolving the phenomenon of reverse culture shock. Unfortunately, the various inconsistencies in measures and methodology across research have left a fragmented understanding of the phenomenon (Dykhouse & Bikos, 2019; Szkudlarek, 2010). Specifically, researchers have investigated reverse culture shock in the context of their own culture (Akhtar et al., 2018). This has especially been problematic because studies have utilized nomothetic instruments despite the social and cultural diversity of the target population (Akhtar et al., 2018). Additionally, previous research has focused on the outcome of reverse culture shock and description of difficulties, instead of explaining the actual process of re-acculturation (Chamove and Soeterik, 2006). As a result, cross-cultural assessment of the phenomenon has been neglected for the sake of new and often understudied theories related to the reentry process. This study will, therefore, investigate the cross-cultural experience of reverse culture shock in an international student population residing in the United States through culturally sensitive assessment. Specifically, the Cultural Formulation Interview from the 5th edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) will allow for standardized and unbiased data collection while exploring the

student's worldview and understanding of their own experience with reverse culture shock (Shepherd et al., 2014). As a result, this project will take an idiographic approach to understanding and explaining the phenomenon of reverse culture shock as it is uniquely experienced by the individual.

Finally, the study will utilize a method of triangulation as proposed by Szkudlarek (2010), who states that there is no cohesive or comprehensive understanding of reverse culture shock that is empirically supported. By comparing two methods of investigation while cross-checking with previous literature, should, therefore, allow for a holistic understanding of the phenomenon while compensating for one method's weakness. Furthermore, it will allow us to test the validity of the methods and their respective findings. This will be a central feature of this project, as it is hypothesized that the Cultural Formulation Interview will be a valid measure in conceptualizing and assessing reverse culture shock through a comparison between the quantitative and qualitative measures.

The Cultural Formulation Interview

Most individuals have been or are continuously exposed to multiple cultures that come to form their identity and shape their understanding of the world (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). A person's cultural and social background can serve as a source of strength yet may also exacerbate psychological and interpersonal difficulties during adaptation. The Cultural Formulation Interview (CFI) was presented in the American Psychiatric Association's (2013) *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th ed.; DSM-5; p. 749-751) to aid clinicians in assessing the impact of cultural, social, and historical contexts on psychological distress and symptom expression. The CFI is a semi-structured interview comprised of 16 questions that cover four domains: (1) cultural definition of the problem, (2) cultural perception of cause, context, and support, (3) cultural factors affecting coping strategies and past help-

seeking behaviors, (4) and cultural factors influencing current help-seeking. This interview also captures the influence of family, friends, and community members on the individual's illness experience. Additionally, it is suggested that involvement in both the home and host culture should be assessed. The questions of the CFI should also be rephrased to fit the cultural and social background of the client; demographic information should therefore be obtained prior to the interview.

The CFI has frequently been used in working with cultural minority groups (Roche et al., 2015) such as migrants, immigrants, or indigenous because it is a culturally responsive assessment tool that addresses a person's socio-cultural identity (Roche et al., 2018; Zora et al., 2020; Singh et al., 2021). The CFI allows clinicians and researchers to further assess and understand a client or participant's beliefs, worldviews, idioms of distress, and the meaning of such instead of categorizing people by their skin color or ethnicity (Roche et al., 2015). In research, the CFI has been used with various cultural groups and for various diagnoses. In one study, the CFI was used to assess the mental health and help-seeking behavior of Spanish-speaking individuals who had immigrated to the U.S. from various Latin American countries to understand how to enhance culturally responsive mental health services (Díaz et al., 2016). Through thematic analysis of the interviews, they were able to identify unique aspects of the participants' experiences that would come to form trauma-specific treatments, work with establishing trust, as well as the guilt and nostalgia associated with being an immigrant far away from one's family members. The CFI is thus able to disclose important information about the acculturation process of immigrants and minority groups as well as the problems they face in their daily lives. It is, therefore, estimated that the characteristics and purpose of the CFI make it suitable for a target population of international students in the U.S. Furthermore, this study will apply a similar thematic analysis because it allows for specific patterns to emerge within the data

set from which salient themes related to the experience of reverse culture shock of international students can be generated. It is hypothesized that the broader and more holistic understanding of the re-acculturation process will be uncovered through this analysis as well as further determining the usefulness of the CFI in conceptualizing reverse culture shock.

Methods

Participants

Participants were recruited from an institutional email list targeting the international student population at a university in Southern Minnesota. An email was forwarded to 1250 international students and included an explanation of the study and a survey link assessing their eligibility to participate in the Cultural Formulation Interview. Thirty-two participants (15 female, 17 male) completed the survey and 18 participants (6 female, 12 male) completed both the survey and interview. Participants were compensated for their time with a $10 gift card received upon completion of the interview.

The average age of the participants was 24.3 ($SD = 4.0$), ranging from 19 to 36. The average number of years spent in the United States was 3.87 ($SD = 2.06$), ranging from one year to nine years. Participants were from 18 countries and six ethnicities (see Appendix B for sociodemographic variables of participants).

Materials

In the preliminary survey, participants were asked to respond to a series of questions related to their demographics and experiences in their host and home country.

Reentry Shock Scale

The Reentry Shock Scale (Seiter & Waddell, 1989; see appendix C) was used to measure participants' perceived levels of reverse culture shock. The Reentry Shock Scale is comprised of a 16-items scale developed based on existing literature on the phenomenon (Austin, 1986;

Church, 1982; Freedman, 1986; Koester, 1985; Martin, 1984; Sussman, 1986; Uehara, 1986).

Questions revolve around distressing emotional states upon returning home, such as "I had

difficulty adjusting to my home culture after returning from abroad," and "Since I have been

abroad I have become more critical of my home culture's values." Responses were reported on a

Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree. Higher scores on the

scale indicate a greater level of distress associated with reentering one's home country. The scale

demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha = .84$) and has been used as the primary questionnaire

to measure reverse culture shock in previous research (Gaw, K. 2000; Kranz & Goedderz, 2020;

Presbitero, 2016).

Self Concept-Self Report Scale

The Self Concept-Self Report Scale (Combs, Soper, & Courson, 1963; see appendix D)

measured participants' self-concept related to psychological adaption, specifically when they

returned to their home country. This measure was included to understand how individuals

perceive themselves, especially in relation to their social context. The Self Concept-Self Report

scale is comprised of a 36-item scale that includes reverse-scored items. Due to the nature and

repetitiveness of the scale, the scale was reduced to 12 items: six positive and six negative self-

concept items. Positive questions included "I usually felt good and had lots of energy" whereas

negative questions included "I didn't feel important." Participants were requested to consider

each question in retrospect of their last return home. Responses were reported on a five-point

agreement scale, 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree, with higher scores indicating a

greater sense of self. The scale was found to have good internal consistency ($\alpha = .87$).

Cultural Formulation Interview

To understand the experience of reverse culture shock without the influence of bias of the

researcher, the Cultural Formulation Interview (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; see

appendix E) was employed. The Cultural Formulation Interview (CFI) is a semi-structured interview introduced in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th ed.) and utilized to systematically assess cultural factors from a person-centered standpoint. This means that cultural and social factors are addressed in the experience of reverse culture shock, thus demonstrating how cultural background may come to inform the unique experience of culture shock upon return home. Composed of 16 questions, the CFI is developed to be modified and adjusted by the researcher or clinician to fit the problem of concern, in this case, reverse culture shock. For this study, the interview was reduced to 15 questions and simplified to suit a population of non-native English speakers. Modified questions on the CFI included "What troubles you most about your experience with reverse culture shock?" and "When you are in your home country, do other people notice these problems you experience?"

Procedures

The Qualtrics online survey platform was used to gather demographic information and included inclusion criteria to further partake in the CFI. Eligibility was determined based on times traveled home (minimum one time). Participants would consequently fill out the survey and indicate at the end whether they wished to further participate in a 45-minute-long interview conducted at another day and time. Participants who accepted would be contacted and an interview was scheduled either in-person or on a private password-protected Zoom room.

During the CFI, the graduate researcher or a research assistant affiliated with the study would introduce the participant to the interview, inform them about the audio recording, and continue with the questions in the CFI. Participants would freely answer the questions. If a participant did not understand the question or needed further clarification, the research assistant would provide instructed explanations. Upon completion of the interview, the participants were thanked and emailed a $10 gift card.

Analysis

Due to the multimethod approach to data collection, both statistical and thematic analysis was applied. Thematic analysis, as introduced by Braun and Clarke (2006), is defined as a fundamental method to analyze meaningful patterns of themes within a qualitative data set. A deductive and inductive approach to analysis was applied, as each interview was analyzed with a theoretical framework in mind. Specifically, how does the content of the interviews relate to the research questions. However, the analysis also allowed for meaningful patterns to arise that would create subsequent themes and further enhance the understanding of reverse culture shock, thus utilizing an inductive approach to analysis.

The procedure of coding followed the six-phase process of conducting thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006): (a) familiarization with data collected through the CFI by reviewing audio recordings and transcripts, (b) generating codes by systematically investigating the data set, (c) interpreting codes into potential themes, (d) reviewing themes as relevant to the data and identifying extracts, (e) defining and naming themes through ongoing analysis, and (f) producing a final report with extract examples that relate to the theoretical framework and research question. A seventh step was incorporated, which included an analysis of specific themes and codes prevalent in each interview. This step would allow us to assess each participant's level of reverse culture shock and compare it to their score on the Reentry Shock Scale, thereby determining to what degree the CFI can accurately conceptualize the phenomenon.

Results

Statistical Analysis

The average score on the Reentry Shock Scale was 4.12 ($SD = .97$). This is generally lower than the average found by Seiter and Waddell (1989; $M = 4.4$, $SD = .96$), yet Presbitero (2016) also had slightly lower scores on the Reentry Shock Scale ($M = 4.02$, $SD = .48$). The

scores on the Reentry Shock Scale were normally distributed (see Appendix F for visual representation) and consequently allowed us to divide the total sample into three subsamples based on the mean and standard deviation. This separation, inspired by Kranz and Goedderz (2020), indicated that the majority of the sample (N=22) experienced moderate reverse culture shock (68.5%). Equally distributed, 15.6% of the sample experienced either high reverse culture shock (N=5) or low reverse culture shock (N=5) as their respective scores fell one standard deviation above (score > 5.09) or below the mean (score < 3.13). Scores on the Reentry Shock Scale ranged from 2.00 to 6.38 with one participant falling two standard deviations above the mean (score > 6.04) and one participant falling two standard deviations below the mean (score < 2.16).

These findings are similar to Kranz and Goedderz (2020) who used a less conservative cut-off point for the Reentry Shock Scale and found that a majority of the sample (68.0%) experienced moderate reverse culture shock, while 24.1% experienced high reverse culture shock. Using their cut-off points of three and five to indicate low, moderate, and high reverse culture shock instead of using the standard deviation of the sample, our results would have been closer in proximity. Respectively, 18.75% of the sample would have experienced high reverse culture shock, 71.9% moderate reverse culture shock, and only 9.4% would have low reverse culture shock, which is only slightly higher than Kranz and Goedderz (2020) of 7.8%. However, this study emphasizes that reverse culture shock is normally distributed, thus indicating that most individuals who have lived overseas will experience some difficulties as they return. The experience of reverse culture shock is, therefore, a normal experience in the readjustment process of international students.

No significant differences were found for gender ($t(30) = -1.44. p = .76$), age ($r = -.03, p = .871$), or years spent in the U.S. ($r = .238, p = .20$) on the Reentry Shock Scale. Due to small and

varying group sizes, it was not possible to test statistical differences between ethnic groups. Yet, a one-tailed Pearson's correlation showed that reentry shock was weak, yet significantly correlated with self-concept ($r = -.35$, $p = .026$). Specifically, participants experiencing greater reverse culture shock had lower self-concept. This may illustrate the discrepancy between a student's new and old self after living abroad that may negatively impact their self-concept as they return home.

Thematic Analysis

Following the six-step procedure of thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) seven themes related to the reentry process were generated based on meaningful patterns identified throughout the data set (see Appendix G for a table of themes and their respective codes and descriptions). Though each theme may uniquely explain the cross-cultural experience of international students in the United States, the themes are interconnected and must be understood within a larger theoretical context and in relation to the research question.

Personal Growth

Upon traveling to the United States, international students must navigate a new environment and take responsibility for their own life and well-being. As a result, international students experience personal changes and develop a sense of independence. These changes are often considered positive aspects of life abroad as the individuals find themselves more confident, mature, extroverted, and headstrong. However, the implications for readjustment to the home culture are paradoxical in nature. For some students, these changes allow them to further blossom in their home country: "*I grow up so much when I was in the U.S. Responsibility for everything. I think I got mature so that's why, when I am back in Japan, I am not shy and I am like, I have confidence in English, and I feel so confident in myself. I think I got better myself when I come back to Japan.*" Yet for others, personal changes of extraversion and openness were

intercorrelated with a sense of freedom they never had at home: *"Slowly, I really began to open up and become more extroverted, where, you know, I got involved in so many things where it was in Nepal, I wasn't involved in anything growing up, because my mom wouldn't let me."* Thus, similar personal changes led to varying experiences upon returning home due to the difference in cultural norms and traditions.

For some international students, growing up in a collectivistic culture, the freedom and individualism gained in the United States became another turning point in their personal development and growth. They found themselves feeling empowered as they were able to make their own choices without having to worry about what their family, friends, or community would think or say. Oftentimes it became a central part of who they were: "*From going to like being restricted to coming to a country where I can join whatever organization I want, I can go out and party if I want, (...) I can hang out with guy friends without someone pointing fingers at me. It was really liberating. I would say I felt really complete and like myself."* Overall, individuals who travel across the world and assimilate into the main culture of the U.S. find themselves experiencing changes to their identity and self-perception. How their own home culture responds to these changes can often determine to what extent international students experience reverse culture shock.

Values, Norms, and Worldviews

A central feature of studying abroad is the process of acculturation where an individual will adopt the values, beliefs, and cultural norms of the main cultural group of the host country. In many instances, students' engagement with the environment and exposure to diversity in America expose them to various cultural norms and values that consequently make them consider their own worldviews. In some instances, these become fundamental moral values. "*Because the LGBTQ community is not a prevalent thing in India, I had never seen people from the LGBT*

community. I had no friends from that community. So I was shocked. And now I'm pretty much experienced and I know about it and I'm more open to it. When I went back home, I was like, "No, you cannot say that. That is wrong." I would like go on to explain them [parents] the whole thing." As indicated by the extract, changes in moral opinion and values can be a source of distress as the student has to instigate a debate.

Conflicts may further arise among the students and their friends and family in the home country due to conflicting beliefs and is a source of distress and frustration. In general, students find that their values have shifted so profoundly compared to their friends in their home country, that it becomes difficult to engage with them and socialize: "*When things interest me I get involved, but if things don't interest me I don't get involved. Especially wasting my time going to the bar and sitting and having unnecessary conversations. It doesn't interest me. Sometimes it is challenging to tell people, so I just keep myself away and then if they say: "You are selfish, you are proud" I just shut it out."* Several interviewees indicated that their change in values while simultaneously experiencing individualism in the United States had given them a need for privacy. Especially in collectivistic cultures, they often had to retract themselves to their rooms and ask for alone time to avoid being stressed and overwhelmed.

External Discriminating Identifiers

Traveling between cultures can often lead to discrimination or judgments in both host and home countries based on students' salient characteristics and identifiers. These specifically include language and physical appearance. Most international students speak with distinct accents that make them recognizable as international students in the U.S., thus an easier target for discrimination. As a result, a majority of international students practice their English and communication skills and find pride in overcoming the language barriers. However, when they return home, they may find themselves ridiculed or discriminated against for their new accent:

"*My friends don't like that [when I speak English], they think I'm being pretentious. When I go back and I say something in English, like I slip something and they're like "Oh my gosh, she's trying to be so American" you know that kind of stuff and I hate it. Because I mean, I've been here for five years.*" Students describe this as mean teasing or comments they get as they return, yet it causes them frustration, anger, and sometimes loneliness due to the lack of understanding from their friends and family, making it difficult as they experience life at home.

Similarly, a majority of the female interviewees experienced comments and judgments about their weight as they returned: *"I always get comments about my weight. I Hate, like I've been skinny my whole life. And I think Bahamians really like to comment on people's weight. But it's really insensitive. Some people be like, "You got really big" and then others sort of like "oh, you're still really small." I'm like, okay. So that's kind of annoying."* Most students brush it off and it doesn't seem to be a predominant stressor in their life as they return. However, other physical characteristics such as race have been linked to discrimination, particularly in the United States where some international students feel like outsiders and may be afraid and worry which makes them take specific precautions. "*When the pandemic hit in the U.S., I heard there were different measures against Asians. So, I feel like it's not good being Asian in the U.S. right now so that is when I went back. Because they cannot figure out if I am Chinese, you know, Japanese or Korean.*" For some individuals, returning home can thus be a source of protection from experiencing the stress associated with reverse culture shock because they escape the discrimination and hostile environment in the U.S.

Social Factors

A person's social life can have immense implications for their lives in the United States as well as in their home country. Reverse culture shock often has a psychosocial cause because international students have to engage within social contexts. Two aspects of a person's social life

become prominent in predicting reverse culture shock: social relationships in the U.S. and social relationships in the home country. For individuals who find themselves unable to form meaningful relationships in the States, returning home is easier and often more enjoyable: "*I never found a group of friends here that will make me feel like, oh, they're like my family. That is also a reason why I'm still attached to my previous relations. That is one of the reasons why I felt easier transitioning and I have not, I feel like I'm not really accepted here*." This primarily occurs when they also have strong relationships at home. Conversely, some students build relationships in the United States that become essential to them and powerful social support system: *"I always say like, "Oh I found my chosen family in the U.S.," because these are people that you know would do absolutely anything if I say "hey, I need help," or if I want to vent about something they're there for me. And I've never had that growing up."* For these students, returning home is associated with missing life in the U.S. and the friends they have made. Subsequently, they are more likely to experience symptoms of reverse culture shock. In general, international students often make friends with other international students because they relate to each other and share similar experiences. However, how closely connected these students are and how involved and accepted they feel in the U.S. can come to predict their experience when they return home.

Environmental Factors

As students navigate life at home, they must interact and engage with their surroundings. Therefore, the simple infrastructure of an individual's home country can cause a lot of distress as the student compares the distinct differences between the environment in their host culture to their home culture. This is especially the case for international students from underdeveloped or highly populated regions or countries. For these individuals, congested traffic, noise level, crowdedness, and different rules and regulations were stressors as they returned. Some even

feared driving: *"Congested driving is very difficult. It's very different. Like I remember this time I didn't drive at all, I would just let my brother do that."* In conjunction, students in the interviews would also notice the organization and cleanliness of the U.S. which made it a more comfortable place to live. This was often in response to poor infrastructure and inefficiencies in their own country. In general, these concerns substantiate the new perspective of the students and the influence of life abroad.

Many international students also experience a lot of distress associated with traveling internationally. These include long flight hours, delays, stress associated with security checks, luggage, transportation, and worries about visa regulations. Yet, what became a greater source of frustration as they returned was adapting to the lifestyle and routines of their home country. For some, life in the U.S. had made them adopt a Westernized time schedule such as waking up and going to bed early as well as new healthy eating habits. As they returned, they struggled with a lifestyle of staying out late and eating unhealthy foods. Especially for some who had experienced the health benefits of this new lifestyle, expressing this to their family and friends became problematic and made them feel selfish. *"So, she [my mom] was talking to my aunt and I overheard her telling her that "Yes he is here, and he wakes up really early. He goes to bed really early. Doesn't like the food that I cook." Obviously, the foodstuff and the sleeping and all that that's when I thought of all my routines. I said maybe I'm just a little too much to myself."* But international students not only have to learn to readapt to the lifestyle of their home country and adjust their routines, they also have to return to the U.S. where they must reinstate their routines, thus becoming an additional stressor.

Consequences of Life Abroad

There are several consequences to life abroad as an individual return and must readjust. The most common repercussion is the need to reassimilate to the home culture and conform upon

return. Students express that they need to act, pretend, or change into a version of themselves from before they left. They need to be careful and consider how they speak, dress, and behave. Oftentimes, they do this to conform to the cultural norms and traditions of their home country: *"If I'm back home I have to act as a woman should, as they say, like I have to, you know, do my duties of cleaning the house and cooking food."* For most individuals, this is a difficult part of returning home as they must let go of their newfound freedom and values in the U.S. thus causing them frustration. Yet for others, they find it easy to return to who they were and see it as a protective source for reverse culture shock: *"In front of them [parents] I have to be the person that I was two years ago. I have to be like that, I cannot be the different person. So, I feel like I still have that version of my personality with me. So that is really easy to transition into whatever I was."* As exemplified in the examples, international students adapt in order to make things easier at home, to fit into their home country, and to please their friends and family. However, this often means that they have to hide their new self. *"I think the biggest thing is now I have to unlearn everything I've learned in America and then go back to that, you know, 16-year-old girl that had to do all that. (...) Just having to unlearn and hide my true self."* For a few, their need to pretend in front of others exacerbated their sense of not belonging; feeling like an outsider in the U.S. while simultaneously feeling like they had to cover up or pretend in their home country.

Another consequence of living abroad is the lack of interpersonal relationships in the home country. Some international students have spent several years in the United States and completed high school in the U.S. This has for some damaged their relationships at home as they have been unable to maintain or form new relationships. Because international students often relax in their home country, they can experience loneliness and isolation from the lack of close relationships: *"So I went to high school back in Chicago, and, you know, this is my college right now. So, if I go back to Korea, I only have two friends. So that was really big hardship for me. I*

was having a depression, actually. Lonely, sadness, and depression." Additionally, the lack of friends or an interesting life at home intensified the experience of boredom, feelings of unhappiness, and missing life overseas.

Protective Factors

As an individual travels overseas to study, they become susceptible to adapting to the new culture and thus more likely to experience reverse culture shock. Still, there are aspects of a person's social and cultural background that can serve as protection against stress associated with returning home. One such factor is a person's upbringing. Some international students have attended international schools where they not only speak English but also interact with people from various cultures. Others, have traveled with their parents as a child or are used to changing cultural environments, thus learned how to adapt to new cultural contexts. In these instances, the parents also serve as a protective source as they can support and understand their children as they embark on a life in the U.S. In general, parents play a central role in helping students readjust as well as dealing with any emotional stress they may experience in the host or home country. Accepting and supportive parents serve as a form of coping as students will call them in times of hardship and many international students maintain contact by calling home every day: *"I talked to them, my mom and my dad every day. So going home it's like not really that big of a problem because I talk to them every day. When I go home it's like time never really passed."* In this instance, international students are happy to reconnect with their parents in person and are excited to be back home.

Changes to a person's values and belief systems are often linked to greater reverse culture shock. Therefore, maintaining and having a strong connection with one's home culture's values can serve as a protective factor. For some students, the collectivistic culture of their home country is something they appreciate and value in an individualistic culture such as in the United States.

As they return home, they will not experience any distress associated with these values as they are maintained. *"Here's the thing in India, the family controls it might be perceived as being controlling but they're also there for you when you're in trouble and also, they're always there for you. It's like a safety net. So psychologically, it's more comforting, whereas here, you have the freedom to do what you want. But if you get into trouble or even if you fall sick, you're on your own."* For some students, living with parents and being dependent on them is a source of frustration. Yet for a person who finds value in collectivism and hospitality, it does not become a stressor because they see it as a source of something good compared to a culture where you cannot rely on anyone but yourself.

Not only do some international students value the collectivistic culture of their home country, but they also find value and a lot of pride in their nationality and cultural upbringing. Throughout the interviews, several students proclaimed that though they currently live in the United States, they will always be from their home country, and it will always be a part of them. For some, this became a great source of protection from reverse culture shock, because no matter how many years they have been in the U.S. they more strongly identify with their home culture. *"A lot of times, I just feel like, I guess I don't belong here. I feel like this part of me that's like, it can never be fulfilled, you know. I was born and raised in Thailand. So, no matter how long I've been here, I'm still gonna be Thai. You know, this is my identity."* As a result, the individual will always find it easier traveling home as they value central features of their culture.

The Cultural Formulation Interview and Reverse Culture Shock

To assess whether the Cultural Formulation Interview can accurately conceptualize reverse culture shock, each interview was assessed for the seven themes, specific features of each theme, and whether they exacerbated potential experiences of reverse culture shock or severed as a protective factor. The more themes of negative character related to returning home, the greater

the reverse culture shock score. Participants were ranked based on the respective subsamples created from the Reentry Shock Scale: low, moderate, and high reverse culture shock. Upon completion, the participants' rankings were compared to their actual scores on the Reentry Shock Scale. Out of the 18 interviews, twelve were assessed accordingly to the scores on the Reentry Shock Scale, thus 66.7% accuracy between the two measures (see appendix H for comparison chart). The Cultural Formulation Interview neither assessed people higher nor lower on reverse culture shock compared to the Reentry Shock Scale.

Discussion

This study wanted to obtain a holistic conceptualization of the phenomenon of reverse culture shock through the use of a multimethod design. Specifically, the Cultural Formulation Interview (CFI; American Psychiatric Association, 2013) was utilized to investigate the social and cultural variables predicting the experience of reverse culture shock of international students in the U.S. To assess the validity of the CFI, while also providing a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, nomothetic measurements were included, such as the Reentry Shock Scale (Seiter & Waddell, 1989). The findings of this study indicate that reverse culture shock is experienced by most individuals who study abroad. In both the CFI and the Reentry Shock Scale, participants were most frequently experiencing moderate symptoms of reverse culture shock. These individuals could experience one to five problems upon return, yet most were not intense as proclaimed by the participants themselves, and therefore, did not cause severe distress. A few individuals, however, experienced high reverse culture shock. Most characteristic of these individuals was the personal growth they had experienced in the U.S. as well as changing values, morals, and worldviews, thus making them critical of their home country. These results are, therefore, important to communicate to an international student population. Especially when normalizing the readjustment process. While conducting the interviews, several participants

noted that they did not have reverse culture shock while simultaneously describing problems and difficulties they faced upon return home. This could indicate a discrepancy between their understanding of reverse culture shock and their actual experiences, or that the difficulties associated with returning home are often considered unacceptable.

The CFI was deemed appropriate to use in conceptualizing reverse culture shock due to the accurate assessment of a majority of the sample. Specifically, twelve out of 18 participants were given the same assessment based on the three subsamples of the Reentry Shock Scale and their actual data scores. In consideration of inconsistencies in assessment of the remaining six participants, it is important to look at the limitations of this study. One limitation that has been specified in the use of the CFI is working with a non-native English-speaking population. It must be considered whether the CFI should be conducted in the native language of the participant, yet the resources for this study as well as the diversity of the international student population did not permit for such measures to be taken. Of course, this problem also applies to the questionnaires as they were also written in English. In general, we need to consider that misinterpretations of questions could cause differences in answers on the CFI and Reentry Shock Scale. For instance, participant number 20 vaguely mentioned problems associated with interpersonal relationships at home, and additionally expressed joy and contentment about returning home. They, therefore, received an assessment of low reverse culture shock based on the CFI, yet their score on the Reentry Shock Scale was 4.88, indicating moderate reverse culture shock.

In other instances, the CFI assessed participants higher than their actual scores. Participant four experienced a range of adjustment difficulties such as having to conform upon return, changes in morals and worldviews, as well as fear and concern about traffic. This often prompts a moderate assessment of reverse culture shock, yet the actual score on the Reentry Shock Scale was 2.00. This was the lowest score of all the participants, yet the participant clearly experienced

problems and distress. This is related to the second limitation of the study, which is assessing reverse culture shock in retrospect. Most individuals were recalling their time back home and these memories were influenced by the time that had passed since their return to the U.S. For participant four, she hated her life in the U.S. and missed home after she came back after winter break. Scores on the Reentry Shock Scale may therefore be influenced by these changing perspectives, yet the CFI uncovers these by allowing the participant to express their varying experiences in their host and home country. Consequently, the CFI may be better at accurately assessing reverse culture shock compared to the Reentry Shock Scale. Further investigation, however, is needed to determine exactly where the CFI differs from the Reentry Shock Scale.

Through thematic analysis, seven themes were derived from the data set and provided a broader understanding of reverse culture shock experienced by international students. Three of these themes have been found to be significant predictors of reverse culture shock in previous literature and include Personal Growth; Values, Beliefs, and Worldviews; and Consequences of Life Abroad. The theme of Personal Growth encompasses similar features to the theory of identity changes proposed by Wang (1997). That is, a person will develop a new sense of self that can cause problems upon return as this new self does not align with who they previously were. Support for this theory was also found in this study as we applied the Self Concept-Self Report scale to assess an individuals' self-concept as they returned. A weak, yet significant correlation showed a negative relationship between reverse culture shock scores and self-concept, thus indicating that individuals do struggle with their sense of self as they return and find themselves in a new social context. In particular, individuals from collectivistic cultures experienced the independence and freedom associated with living in the U.S. that came to form a new sense of self (Sussman, 2000). Upon return, this did predict the experience of reverse culture shock,

especially in relation to interpersonal conflicts, just as previous research has identified (Akhtar et al., 2018).

The theme Values, Beliefs, and Worldviews attest to the conflicts that may arise upon return due to differences in cultural values and behaviors of the home and host culture (Seiter and Waddell, 1989). The greater changes in values and morals during life abroad, the more difficult it is to return, especially if the home culture is critical and more restrictive. Conversely, the more an individual identifies with their home culture's values and belief systems the easier and often more rewarding it is to return. These findings have also been identified in previous literature as highly predictive of reverse culture shock (Austin, 1983; Martin, 1984; Christofi & Thompson, 2007). Lastly, Consequences of Life Abroad had one subtheme predominant in most of the interviews: Conforming upon return. This specific feature relates to the pressure family and friends may exert on the returning student to act and behave in predictable ways (Freedman, 1986). That is, people expect the returnee to conform to who they were before they left, often resulting in increased distress. For several students, they found that this related to them, either in how they had to act, but also how they should dress and speak. Several studies have prior identified this to be one of the major causes of reverse culture shock and are closely linked to identity changes during the stay abroad (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Gama & Pedersen, 1976). The CFI was thereby able to identify issues related to the reentry process that has theoretical foundation in previous literature and further support these findings. This study, however, was unable to determine or comment on previous studies finding expectations related to life after graduation to be a central factor of reverse culture shock. Only one participant had returned home post-graduation, which was not enough to derive any significant interpretation across the whole data set, which primarily included current undergraduate and graduate students.

An additional theme frequently mentioned by the participants was Environmental Factors. A majority of the problems they faced were changes in their immediate environments and surroundings such as traffic congestion, noise, and danger. Others mentioned the cleanliness and structure of the U.S. that was sometimes deficient in their home country. This was something that did cause distress of the students because it made them realize the insufficiencies of their home country that could be unpleasant and sometimes considered hazardous to their safety. These factors have rarely been pointed out in past literature but are still aspects of the re-acculturation process that are important to consider. Lastly, External Discriminative Identifiers featured aspects of language and appearance. Interestingly, many students noted that their parents and friends would comment on their accents or weight as they returned. Several students said that friends would tease them or judge them for their American accents, while particularly female participants mentioned that their parents and friends would comment on how much weight they had gained. For some, this was frustrating, as these changes in language and appearance are directly linked to living in the United States. It is therefore important to consider the smaller aspects of daily living when considering the reentry process as they can be a source of frustration, anger, and isolation as people around them are often ignorant of life abroad and the readaptation process.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. Most research on reverse culture shock experienced by international students in the U.S. has assessed reverse culture shock post-graduation. In general, all literature on this phenomenon has investigated reverse culture shock upon the end of the study abroad as the student has returned home. This study, however, is using an international student population that is progressing through their education and return home is, therefore, a temporary phase rather than a permanent situation. Of course, this will influence the experiences of the students as they return home because they see it as a vacation, thus ameliorating the negative

thoughts and emotions associated with consequences of life abroad. However, this is also a strength of this study, as current research is missing an important feature of the reentry process. Specifically, individuals in this study who had experienced high levels of reverse culture shock did not want to return home and have consequently decided to stay in the U.S. Reverse culture shock, therefore, has detrimental consequences on an individual's choice about living in the U.S. or their home country. Future research should therefore look into what factors determine whether international students decide to stay and immigrate to the U.S.

In general, this study allowed for a broader and more holistic perspective on the experience and process of reverse culture shock. One important implication is how reverse culture shock is uniquely experienced in each individual and that social and cultural variables influence the process of re-acculturation to varying degrees. Future research should, therefore, carefully consider what assessment instruments they are using and whether they are culturally sensitive to their target population. The CFI has proven an important tool in understanding what it is like being an international student in the United States, and the general well-being and concerns of each individual either in the States or at home. The cross-cultural context is, therefore, important to consider when working with international students as both cultures come to influence the individual in distinctive ways. To aid students with higher levels of reverse culture shock and distress, future research should investigate interventions that consider the changes each individual has experienced and what barriers or problems may arise as they return. Thus, allowing them to develop helpful techniques to cope, while simultaneously considering the importance of their home culture's values and norms.

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Appendix A

Illustration of the W-Curve
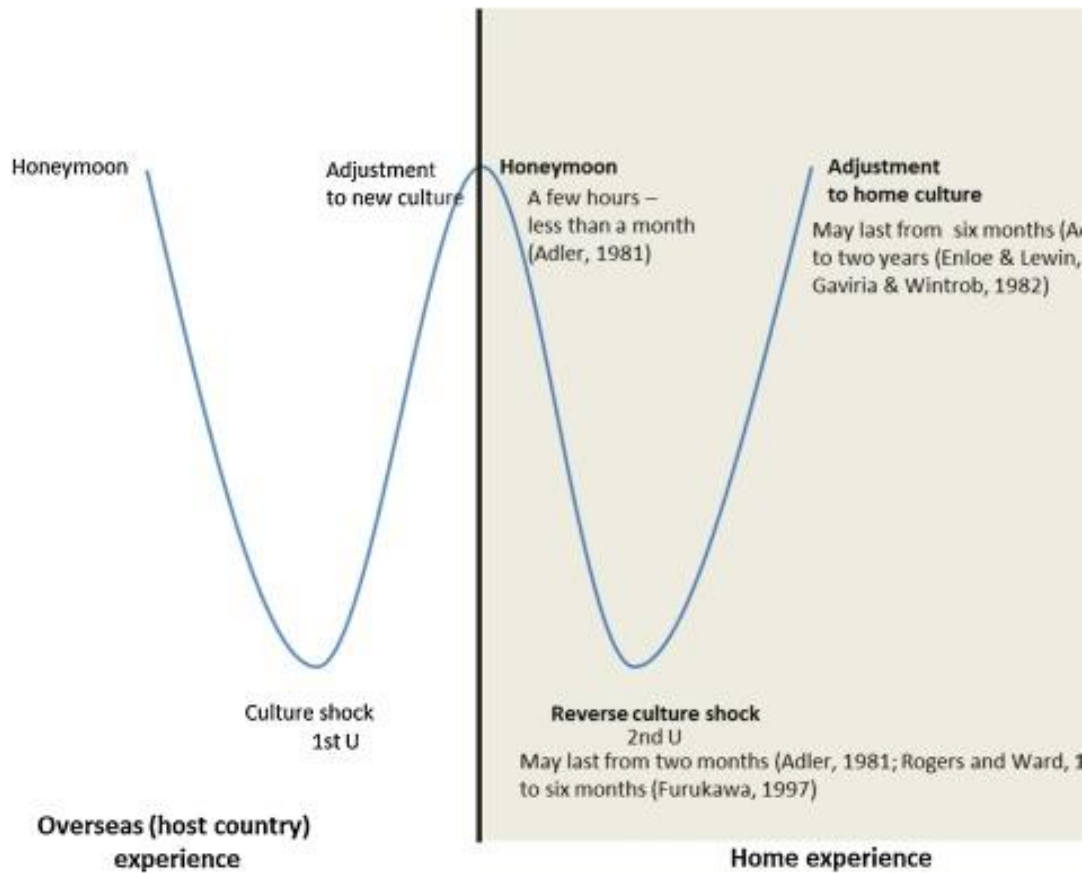
Figure A. Visual illustration of reverse culture shock as presented in the W-curve by Gullahorn &

Gullahorn (1963) that is a direct extension of the U-curve of culture shock.

Appendix B

Sociodemographic Variables

Table B

Sociodemographic characteristics of participants

Ethnicity and Country	Frequency
East Asia	
China	1
Japan	4
South Korea	2
Total	7
Southeast Asia	
Malaysia	1
Thailand	1
Total	2
Central Asia	
Turkmenistan	1
Total	1
South Asia/Middle East	
Bangladesh	3
Egypt	2
India	5
Nepal	2
Pakistan	3
Total	15
African Origin/Black	
Ethiopia	1
Liberia	1
The Bahamas	1
Total	3
Caucasian/White	
Azerbaijan	1
Czech Republic	1
Finland	1
Italy	1
Total	4
TOTAL	32

Appendix C

Reentry Shock Scale

Please consider the times you have returned home and answer the questions below:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
When I returned people did not seem that much interested in my experiences abroad.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Life was more exciting in the host culture.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My friends seem to have changed since I have been gone.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
When I returned home, I felt really depressed.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I had difficulty adjusting to my home culture after returning from abroad.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Since I have been abroad, I have become more critical of my home culture's values.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I miss the foreign culture where I stayed.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I had a lot of contact with members of the host culture.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel like I have changed a lot because of my experiences abroad.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
When I returned home, I felt generally alienated.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My friends and I have grown in separate directions since I have returned.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Life in my home culture is boring after the excitement of living abroad.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I miss the friends that I made in the host culture.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Since I have been abroad, I have become more critical of my home cultures government.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My friends and family have pressured me to 'fit in" upon return	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
The values and beliefs of the host culture are very different from those of my home culture.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Appendix D

Self Concept-Self Report Scale

Please consider the last time you returned home when answering how much you agree with each statement below:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I felt as if people didn't care if I was there or not	○	○	○	○	○
I felt happy most of the time.	○	○	○	○	○
People usually liked me	○	○	○	○	○
I didn't like my looks	○	○	○	○	○
I usually felt good and had lots of energy	○	○	○	○	○
I wasn't very sure of myself	○	○	○	○	○
I didn't feel important	○	○	○	○	○
Things were often too much for me to deal with	○	○	○	○	○
I thought I was a brave person	○	○	○	○	○
I thought I was pretty smart	○	○	○	○	○
I was not a nice person	○	○	○	○	○
People didn't think I was very important	○	○	○	○	○
It was fun being me	○	○	○	○	○

Appendix E

The Cultural Formulation Interview

Interview Questions Based on the Cultural Formulation Interview:

1) How would you describe your overall involvement in the United States? Are you a part of any campus organizations, work on campus, participate in campus events, or frequently engage in other campus or community work such as volunteering?

   a) How do you feel attending events on campus?
   b) How do you like working at your job? Are people friendly and accepting of you?

2) How would you describe your involvement in your home country? What did you spent most of you time doing when you traveled home?

3) Reverse culture shock is defined as the psychological stress involved in reentering one's home country after living abroad. Before this study, did you know about the concept "reverse culture shock" or "reentry shock"?

   a) If yes – when did you first become aware of this concept and how?

   b) If no – what were your initial thoughts upon hearing the term reverse culture shock? Did it remind of any specific experiences you may have had?

4) How would you describe your experience of reverse culture shock or the problems you face traveling between two cultures?

5) Sometimes people have different ways of describing their problems to their family, friends, or others in the community. How would you describe your problems to them?

6) What troubles you most about your experience with reverse culture shock?

7) Why do you think this is happening to you? What do you think are the causes of these thoughts, feelings, behaviors?

8) When you are in your home country, do other people notice these problems you experience?
   a) If yes – what do you think your family, friends, or others in your community think about your problem?
   b) If no – move on to question 9

9) Are there any kind of support that makes your feelings, thoughts, or behaviors better, such as support from family, friends, or others?

10) Are there any kinds of stressors that make your experience at home worse?

11) Sometimes, aspects of people's background or identity can make their experience more difficult or easy. Are there certain parts of your background that are important to you? For instance, your nationality of being from _____. But it can also be race, gender, sexuality, or religion/faith.

12) Are there any aspects of your background or identity that make a difference in how you experience traveling back home?

13) Are there any aspects of your background or identity that are causing other concerns or difficulties for you (both in the U.S. and home country)?

14) Sometimes people have various ways of dealing with the distress they experience when they travel home. What have you done on your own to cope with your feelings, thoughts, or behaviors?

15) What tools/resources do you think would be most useful to help reduce distressing feelings related to reverse culture shock? Do you think the university could or already have resources that could have helped you?

Appendix F

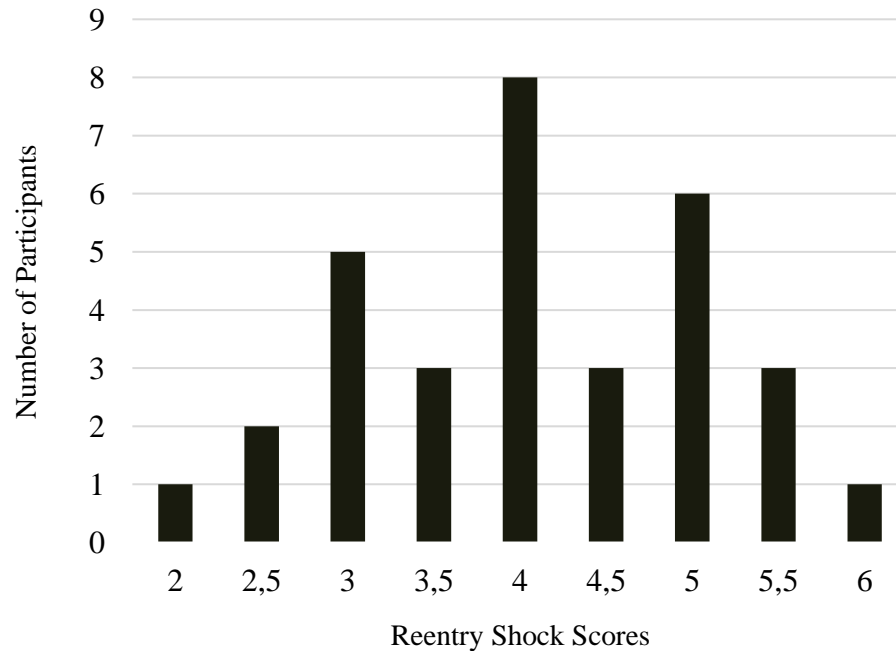Illustration of the Normal Distribution of Reentry Shock Scores

Figure F: Scores on the Reentry Shock Scale which follows the standards of a normal

distribution. Respectively, 68.5% fall within an average (3.13 < score > 5.09), whereas 12.5% of

the sample fall one standard deviation above (score > 5.09) or below the mean (score < 3.13).

Finally, 3.125% of the sample fall either two standard deviations above (score > 6.04) or below

the mean (score < 2.16).

Appendix G

Themes from the CFI, Codes, and Descriptions

Table G

Seven themes derived from the CFI and their respective codes and descriptions

Themes	Codes	Description
Personal Growth	Independence Personal changes Individualism Freedom	The core changes of personality that an individual experiences as they emerge themselves in a new culture. These are often internal changes that affect a person's self-concept.
Values, Beliefs, and Worldviews	Exposure to diversity Changing worldviews Morals Change in values Cultural norms	Essential changes in values and beliefs often as a result to exposure to a diverse student population in the U.S. These changes come to shape what an individual considers right and wrong and can cause interpersonal conflict upon return
External Discriminating Identifiers	Language Appearance Discrimination	External features that are often noticeable and therefore an easy target for discrimination or judgment.
Social Factors	Social life in the U.S. Religious Community Involvement Friendliness in the U.S.	Interpersonal relationships and connections in the U.S. that can influence how they experience returning home

Environmental Factors	Traffic Cleanliness and Structure Lifestyles Privacy International Travel	Visible differences in the host and home cultures' environments as a source of distress as well as lifestyles changes in the U.S. that are not appropriate or efficient in the home country.
Consequences of Life Abroad	Dependent Conform upon return Lack of social relations at home Boredom Missing life in the U.S. Not happy at home Lack of belongingness Choice about U.S. vs. home country Transition home and back to the U.S. Resistance from friends and family Lack of understanding	Symptoms as well as consequences of living abroad that becomes evident as the student returns. These often negatively influence the experience at home as well as exacerbate reverse culture shock.
Sources of Protection	Upbringing Interpersonal relationship at home Parental acceptance Maintain contact Collectivism Identity Language	Social or cultural factors that serve as protective factors against reverse culture shock and can either minimize the experience or inform about essential values of the sojourner.

Appendix H

Comparison Chart

Table H

Assessment of reverse culture shock of each participant from the CFI as well as each individual's actual scores on the Reentry Shock Scale as well as their respective category based on cut off points based on mean and standard deviation

Participant Number	CFI Assessment	Reentry Shock Score	Accuracy
1	Moderate	3.19 – Moderate	X
4	Moderate	2.00 – Low	–
6	Low/Moderate	3.5 – Moderate	X
7	Moderate/High	5.5 – High	X
8	Moderate	5.13 – High	–
15	High	6.38 – High	X
17	Moderate	4.00 – Moderate	X
19	High	5.38 – High	X
20	Low	4.81 – Moderate	–
22	Low/Moderate	4.13 – Moderate	X
25	Low	3.13 – Low	X
27	Moderate	4.75 – Moderate	X
28	Moderate	3.31 – Moderate	X
30	High	4.44 – Moderate	–
32	Low	4.00 – Moderate	–
39	Moderate	4.06 – Moderate	X
46	Moderate	4.88 – Moderate	X
51	Moderate	5.31 – High	–