Acculturation, Identity, and Graduate Study Abroad

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Agenda

- Acculturation: What is it? Why it is important?
- Strategies of Acculturation
- ABC’s of Acculturation
- Identity challenges and changes
- Implications for graduate student study abroad
You flash a friendly smile, and say “Hi” at someone walking past you on the street, and they scowl and ignore you.

What is your reaction? How do you feel about the person’s reaction to you? How do you think about it? What do you do about it?
Acculturation

- **Acculturation**: The process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between cultural groups and their individual members (Berry, 2005).
- Changes that occur as a result of continuous first-hand contact between individuals of differing cultural origins (Ward, 2001).

- **Acculturative stress**: Stress reactions in response to life events that are rooted in the experience of acculturation (Berry, 2005).
Berry’s Strategies of Acculturation

Identity with the Home Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity with the Host Culture</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Marginalization</td>
<td>Separation</td>
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<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Assimilation</td>
<td>Integration</td>
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Berry, (2005)
Ward’s ABC’s of Acculturation

- **Affect**
  - Stress, coping, adjustment, well-being

- **Behavior**
  - Adaptation to behavioral demands, “fitting-in”

- **Cognition**
  - Social identity, self-description/concept

Ward, (2001)
Affect Findings

- Stress Appraisal
  - Higher Wellbeing: Challenge
  - Lower Wellbeing: Threat, Loss
- Effective coping strategies
  - Active coping
  - Planning
  - Acceptance
  - Positive reinterpretation
- Ineffective coping strategies
  - Behavioral disengagement
  - Denial
  - Venting Emotion
## Behavior: Socio-cultural Adaptation Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Empathy-Relatedness</th>
<th>Impersonal Endeavors and Perils</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Making friends</td>
<td>Dealing with someone who is unpleasant/cross/aggressive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accepting/understanding the local political system</td>
<td>Getting used to the local food/finding food you enjoy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding the locals’ world view</td>
<td>Dealing with people in authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taking a local perspective on the culture</td>
<td>Dealing with the bureaucracy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding the local value system</td>
<td>Getting used to the pace of life</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seeing things from the locals’ point of view</td>
<td>Dealing with unsatisfactory service in stores and restaurants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding cultural differences</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Being able to see two sides of an intercultural issue</td>
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Ward & Kennedy, 1999
Behavior Findings

SCAS Scores over Five Time Periods

- SCAS Total
- Cult Empathy
- Imp. Endorsers
Cognition: Identity

Psychological identity refers to a subjective feeling of consistency and continuity of self across situations that provides a sense of stability and serves as a guide for making key life choices. A stable identity develops over time through a process of experimentation, reflection, and observation that peaks in adolescence and may continue into early adulthood.
Identity Components

- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Family roles (son/daughter, mother/father, etc.)
- Career/work/professional
- Ideology
- Religion
- Culture
  - National
Identity: Context

Erik Erikson *Identity, Youth and Crisis* (1968).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Period</th>
<th>Stage Description</th>
<th>Social Relationships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adolescence (12 to 18 years)</td>
<td><strong>Identity vs. Role Confusion</strong></td>
<td>Teens need to develop a sense of self and personal identity. Success leads to an ability to stay true to yourself, while failure leads to role confusion and a weak sense of self.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Adulthood (19 to 24 years)</td>
<td><strong>Intimacy vs. Isolation</strong></td>
<td>Relationships Young adults need to form intimate, loving relationships with other people. Success leads to strong relationships, while failure results in loneliness and isolation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Adulthood (25 to 65 years)</td>
<td><strong>Generativity vs. Stagnation</strong></td>
<td>Work and Parenthood Adults need to create or nurture things that will outlast them, often by having children or creating a positive change that benefits other people. Success leads to feelings of usefulness and accomplishment, while failure results in shallow involvement in the world.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Marcia’s Formulation

- **High Exploration/Search, High Commitment/Affirmation**: Achieved Identity
- **High Exploration/Search, Low Commitment/Affirmation**: Moratorium
- **Low Exploration/Search, High Commitment/Affirmation**: Foreclosed Identity
- **Low Exploration/Search, Low Commitment/Affirmation**: Identity Diffusion
Further Identity Issues

- First time identity is constructed, future changes require disequilibrium and reconstruction
- MAMA cycle
- Later stages incorporated into identity
- Later reformulations are eased by earlier successful resolutions
American Identity: Home vs Abroad
Identity and ABC’s

- Pre-Departure Commitment/Affirmation (C) correlated significantly with Post behavioral adaptation difficulties (B).
- Pre-Departure Commitment/Affirmation (C) is related to lower Flexibility, higher appraisal of cultural experiences as Threats, stronger Negative Affect and higher Anxiety (A).
- Pre-Departure Exploration/Search (C) also correlated significantly with Post behavioral adaptation difficulties (B).
- Pre-Departure Exploration/Search (C) correlated significantly with the appraisal of acculturative stress as a Threat, Critical Thinking, Negative Affect, and Depression (A).
Discussion

- Higher Pre-Departure Commitment/Affirmation may indicate a more fixed, potentially rigid identity; thus less amenable to intercultural adaptation; or a more tender, tentative formulation.

- Higher Pre-Departure Exploration/Search may open the Study Abroad student to more identity questions and anxiety, thus more negative affect if unresolved.

- Impact of intergroup contact anxiety and symbolic anxiety
Issues for Graduate Study Abroad Students

- Age related identity focus may alter these findings
- Life experience provides perspective
- Disequilibrium/disruption of identity
- Moratorium, reformulation
- Reflection/critical thinking/emotional regulation
Waiting to be served

You and your group have been waiting to be served for over 30 minutes in a local restaurant.

Compare and contrast American vs Spanish cultures.
# U.S. Cultural Values (as viewed by other cultures)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>U.S. Values</th>
<th>Some Other Countries' Values</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Control over the Environment</td>
<td>Fate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Tradition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time and Its Control</td>
<td>Human Interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality</td>
<td>Hierarchy/Rank/Status</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individualism/Privacy</td>
<td>Group’s Welfare</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-Help</td>
<td>Birthright Inheritance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>Cooperation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Future Orientation</td>
<td>Past Orientation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Action/Work Orientation</td>
<td>&quot;Being&quot; Orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informality</td>
<td>Formality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directness/Openness/Honesty</td>
<td>Indirectness/Ritual/&quot;Face&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Practicality/Efficiency</td>
<td>Idealism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Materialism/Acquisitiveness</td>
<td>Spiritualism/Detachment</td>
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ABC contributions

- Affect: Positive reinterpretation (more time for socializing)
- Behavior: adaptation over time (pace of life)
- Cognition:
  - Reframing to fit with Spanish cultural values.
  - Expanding meaning perspectives to include “slowness” as valuable in some cases.
Conclusions

- Acculturation and the ABC’s are a useful framework for thinking about study abroad.
- Graduate students differ in life experience and life cycle emphases.
- Reflective thinking/processing is key to constructing a useful, growthful narrative.
- Cognitive identity in the form of culturally based values and beliefs can both help and hinder positive study abroad outcomes.