

# Cross cultural change, adjustment and culture shock: UK to USA

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**SUMMARY** *Globalisation of the hospitality industry has resulted in continuously increasing numbers of international student sojourners whose desire to experience and learn about new cultures is frequently accompanied by an aim to develop their linguistic and professional skills. This paper focuses predominantly on United Kingdom students' perceptions of their international placement experiences in the United States of America. Issues pertaining to cultural diversity, cross-cultural adjustment, culture shock, culture surprise and acculturation are discussed. A deductive approach was adopted, with cluster sampling. Quantitative and qualitative evidence pertaining to perceptions of the phases of adjustment, culture shock, culture surprise and preparation material received from the university placement office was collected. Data from academic placement tutor interviews (n=2) then student questionnaires (n=38), focus groups (n=2) and in-depth interviews (n=4) were triangulated employing SPSS and network analysis. The findings showed that the majority of students suffered culture shock due to their changed circumstances, yet the experience was not deemed wholly negative. Culture shock was linked to language problems, lack of preparation, cultural differences and frustration at work. Culture surprise was evident in feelings of comfort, belonging and security. Cross-cultural adjustment focused on peers, hosts and work-related stress; an alternative model for cross-cultural adjustment emerged. Key recommendations include education and training to raise levels of awareness of culture shock in preparation for cross-cultural change. It is concluded that culture shock may be moderated by culture surprise, hence accelerating cross-cultural adjustment, particularly when cultural distance is small.*

**Key words:**

*industrial placement; internship; cross-cultural change; cross cultural adjustment; UK; USA*

## INTRODUCTION

The desire to add an international aspect to hospitality management programmes has contributed to the increase in industrial placements (placements is used here synonymously with internships) abroad. In 1998, it was estimated that 50,000 United Kingdom (UK)

students were on a placement at any one time (Harvey, Moon and Geall 1998). International placements have been linked to increased graduate potential and have become increasingly popular. One consequence of global growth trends in the hospitality and tourism

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industries is the employers' attraction to graduates with international work experience. Hechanova-Alampay, Beehr, Christiansen and Van Horn (2002) point out other manifestations of such trends: a desire to learn languages, to appreciate cultural diversity and to 'hone' professional skills' in an international environment. Students on placement abroad change their 'home' base from one culture to another. The adaptation period associated with this change is termed "cross-cultural adjustment" (CCA). Various theories exist that describe the transitional period, the most prominent being the U-curve that represents three phases (elation and optimism, frustration and depression then satisfaction and confidence) before acculturation is achieved. Changing location to a new culture can invoke 'culture shock' (CS) (Furnham and Bochner 1986), a term that originated from Oberg (1960) who determined it as an unanticipated, negative response to a new experience.

A positive aspect of confrontation with a new culture, culture surprise has also been identified (Ineson 2002). It is CCA associated with the changing environment of an international placement that is the focus of this paper, in which interns' perceptions of their experiences including CS and culture surprise are discussed. It is important that interns adapt to new cultures quickly in order to operate effectively; it is common for UK hospitality and tourism students to complete an internship in the United States of America (USA). Klineberg (1981) noted that preparation affects individuals' experiences and Huettman-Roberts (1998) questioned the level of preparation students are given prior to cross-cultural travel; CCA can be hindered by lack of preparation. Causes and symptoms of CS are predominantly negative, as indicated by Oberg (1960) whose conceptual base was used here although its applicability is questioned. The preparation of UK students for USA internships is evaluated, students' perceptions of CCA are ascertained and causes of unsuccessful adjustment, CS and culture surprise are established. Recommendations are made for students, managers, placement tutors and researchers.

## BACKGROUND

Downey and Deveau (1987) stress that industrial placement is the most worthwhile education a hospitality student can receive and Herrick (1987) found that students who had completed a placement entered the workforce with less anxiety, higher perceived self-worth and increased general and specialist skills than

those who studied without a placement. The placement not only increases potential for graduate employment (Downey and Deveau 1987; Leslie 1991), but also increases knowledge of the industry and aids interpersonal and personal development. A placement abroad impels the sojourner to face cross-cultural change, which requires learning and cooperation. Hofstede's (1980, 1991) work has been accredited as the conceptual foundation for cross-cultural research (Fernandez, Carlson, Stephina and Nicholson 1997).

Based on his dimensions, the USA: UK cultures exhibit a high degree of similarity (Individualism 91:89; Masculinity 62:66 Power distance 40:35; and Uncertainty avoidance 46:35). Interestingly, Furukawa (1997) found that the greater the cultural distance (cf. Kogut and Singh 1988) between Japan and the foreign community in which an international student was placed, as measured by the Cultural Distance Questionnaire, the greater the psychological distress of that student. However, as the cultural distance between the USA and UK is quite small, it might be expected that interchange between these cultures would be unlikely to trigger CS and CCA would be relatively easy for UK interns.

CS was outlined by Oberg (1960) as an individual's persistent negative feelings evident through depression, frustration and disorientation on moving to a new culture. He identified six aspects of CS: the strain and effort required to adapt to this 'new environment'; a sense of loss, referring to the friends and possessions left behind; rejection by the new culture; confusion in personal roles and values; surprise and anxiety; and a feeling of powerlessness as it becomes apparent that the individual cannot cope with the new environment, thus creating a wholly negative view of the actual outcome of experiencing a culture. He names the evolving symptoms: loss; rejection; confusion; anxiety; and impotence, which Nash (1967) associated with loss of creativity that might result in loss of initiative, loss of confidence and lack of trust of others. More extreme symptoms (Jandt 1995) are over-concern about health, hygiene and safety, fear of physical contact with locals, homesickness and alcohol and drug abuse, surely applicable only if the CS severe; Hypothesis (1) predicted that *symptoms such as over concern about health and hygiene would not be experienced by the students in question.*

CS has been associated with age, education, past experience and self-efficacy skills (Furnham and Bochner 1986; Selmer 1995). UK students' placements tend to fall during year two or three of their three or four year

courses, when the majority range between 19 and 22 years of age. The ultimate consequence of CS is failure to adapt to the new environment (Smith and Harris Bond 1993); preparation and ways in which individuals deal with stress are likely to be determinants of CS and, in turn, CCA. Although Storti (2001) advises that frustration from an offensive CS incident is a short-term symptom, he suggests that if an individual does not succeed in this adaptation, s/he will not be able to work effectively.

The ultimate consequence would be inability to perform in the workplace, indicating that if the symptoms are not identified and dealt with early on, the experience would continue to be negative (Marx 1999); therefore, CCA is imperative in order to survive cross-cultural change. According to Black and Gregersen (1991), CCA is the level of comfort or ease that a sojourner feels when confronted with the change to a new culture, suggesting that if an individual is welcomed into a new culture, or if the cultural norms are similar to those with which the individual is familiar, adjustment is easier; the level of comfort increases as the level of uncertainty decreases. Hence if a sojourner is not welcomed, CCA takes longer, that is, until the new culture is learned. On this basis, Hypothesis 2, *a feeling of initial welcome is associated with ease of adjustment*, is put forward.

Influential factors relating to ease of CCA have been identified as 'self efficacy' (Black and Mendenhall 1991), 'cultural novelty' of the host environment (Black and Gregersen 1991) and 'social support' (Pedersen 1991). The latter is a particularly difficult issue as evidence indicates that students who felt isolated were less likely to adjust, although Pedersen had shown earlier (1975) that the problem could be remedied by an increase in social support from a fellow national. Subsequently, Ward, Bochner and Furnham (1997) found that such contact had an adverse effect on interaction with the hosts, which inhibited adjustment. Hence, Hypothesis (3): *support from a fellow national is negatively related to interaction with host nationals*. The process of CCA has been described as a 'U-curve' (Lysgaard 1955), implying that sojourners are likely to experience three phases (high) elation and optimism; (low) frustration and depression then (high) feelings of satisfaction and confidence (Furnham and Bochner 1986).

However this theory has been criticised for its generalisation concerning the initial excitement phase and period of severe depression (Church 1982) and for its

lack of validity in previous studies (Black and Mendenhall 1991). Furthermore Ward and Kennedy (1999) showed that students were at their lowest in the first month, reporting feelings of loss, anxiety, stress, confusion, and disappointment from unmet expectations, isolation and alienation. A relatively linear model showing positive feelings increasing over time was devised by Kealey (1989), supported by Hechanova-Alampay et al. (2002). It appeared that the U-curve model might be too extreme for the present study as different students adjust in different ways (Kealey 1989); two contradictory views exist, "entry euphoria" and initial feelings of sadness (Ward and Kennedy 1999). Therefore it was hypothesised (4) that *students' CCA would not be identical to that of the U-curve model*.

The aim of the industrial placement centres on the acquisition of competences through practical learning and reflection, cultural and business environmental awareness and recognition of the linkages between academia and the real world. It aims to improve students' learning via integration of work experience and classroom instruction. Universities provide preparatory assistance including interviews, booklets and presentations, emphasising the evaluation and development of the students' transferable skills; the placement may be described as challenging and developmental, inducing self-discipline and responsibility; it offers a valuable opportunity for students to develop and evaluate personal skills (Kiser and Partlow 1999). Preparation tends to focus on administrative and operational aspects of the experience, such as accommodation and pay. There appears to be a lack of preparation on CCA and CS that Kealey (1989) put down to the fact that every student is different and will react differently to change. Burgoon, Buller and Woodall (1989) raised the issue that people who are socially inept in their normal environment are candidates for unsuccessful cross-cultural encounters.

The implication that sojourners need to be socially confident in order to participate in culture learning, suggests that students' social skills should be developed prior to placement. Klineberg (1981) promoted preparation before cross-cultural travel, insisting that it had a direct effect on the sojourners experience, supported by Storti (2001) who believed that cultural differences must be addressed before departure and then re-emphasised to be retained in the individual's mindset. In this vein, Hickson and Pugh (1995) had advocated "cultural learning" which focuses primarily on learning the characteristics of a culture as opposed to adjusting

to it although they admitted that CCA is a much harder process to master than learning, due to the ethnocentricity of adjustment. The notion of learning from the hosts and developing working relationships with them aids the process of CCA. By obtaining such valuable cultural knowledge and skills, the sojourners should be able to not only adjust to their new environment but also prosper in it. Periods of homesickness are assured (Jandt 1995); previous experience of living abroad has been linked to successful CCA (Selmer 1995); therefore a lack of such experience may evoke CS. Kaye and Taylor (1997) noted that a lack of training in CCA maximised CS but it seems that practical applications of theories may be lacking. A study of students who went abroad on placement (Huetteman-Roberts 1998) found a consensus that had they been prepared for the cultural norms of the host country, their experience would have been much more productive. Hypothesis (5) stated that: *a lack of preparation concerning cultural differences is positively related to CS*.

Furnham and Bochner (1986) agreed with Oberg that entering a new culture is potentially an unpleasant, confusing and disorientating experience but then Walton (1990) pointed out that CCA was initiated with a stage of excitement moving on to 'disillusionment' often followed by CS with the realisation that the environmental change introduces new, unlearned concepts (Kaye and Taylor 1997). Feichtinger and Fink (1998) suggested that individuals who spent more than three months in a different country experienced CS, the stages of which are represented in a U-curve, mirroring the CCA theory, with elation as the initial stage followed by a low when the differences and feelings associated with CS are manifested and a rise as the individual learns to deal with these differences; finally acculturation is achieved. They noted also that sojourners who are alone in a new environment are susceptible to CS. There seems to be some similarity then, between models of CCA and CS, which questions whether or not the 'mandatory' feelings of CCA have been categorised under the CS syndrome. Marx (1999) formed a less negative view of CS; she described it as a normal reaction and part of the routine CCA process leading to Hypothesis (6): *CS is a routine part of the CCA process*. Although most writers imply that CS has negative impacts, Adler (1986) and Marx (1999) hinted that there might be positive outcomes. Ineson (2002:3) termed these outcomes 'culture surprise', defined as "a feeling of well-being and comfort experienced by those who come into contact with new cultures" (cf.

feelings corresponding with those of elation discussed by Furnham and Bochner 1986). From this debate, Hypothesis (7): *CS generates only negative experiences* and Hypothesis (8): *students on placement experienced culture surprise evolved*.

## METHODOLOGY

A deductive case study approach with a series of eight hypotheses was developed. The research population was British hospitality and tourism students, from the case UK University, who had completed, or were close to completing, an internship in the USA. Cluster sampling was employed and data were triangulated on the basis of interviews with placement tutors (n=2), structured student questionnaires (n=38: 13M; 25F, reflecting the gender bias on the courses), followed up with two focus groups (n=10: 6M; 4F) and in-depth interviews (n=4). It is accepted that this study is exploratory and limited that, as noted above, the cultural distance between the two countries is relatively small. Cluster sampling from one UK University can suggest bias. However in the USA the cluster of students was dispersed, so increasing the external validity of the findings. As the sample was small and the research did not aim to evaluate perceptions in relation to gender or age, stratified sampling was not utilised. Semi-structured interviews with key informants (coordinating UK placement tutor and UK tutor visiting USA) provided information on the preparation for students prior to the placement. Self-administered questionnaires provided a 'quick' overview of the sample; they were distributed and collected in sealed envelopes by a lecturer in the UK and the visiting tutor in the USA with 100% response, although two cases were discarded due to partial incompleteness.

Biographical data, including gender, prior travel abroad, and work experience, living and working conditions and job descriptions, were requested and levels of CS and culture surprise experienced were measured using closed and open-ended questions. In order to enrich the qualitative data, the UK based respondents who had experienced CS were asked if they would agree to participate in a focus group, conducted by a UK student peer, who had undergone an internship abroad. Her experiences, knowledge of the group and close understanding of the subject put her in a strong position to elicit in-depth feelings and opinions of people who had been in a common situation; the comfortable environ-

ment, informal atmosphere and common student experiences evoked spontaneous conversation and a high level of participation amongst the members. The focus group themes, derived and expanded from the literature and tutor interviews and linked to the hypotheses were: CCA; culture surprise; causes, symptoms, consequences and suggestions for reducing CS; and preparation for USA placements. Four follow-up interviews enriched the data set. The questionnaire and focus group were piloted to ascertain relevancy and understanding and, in the latter instance, to gain confidence and experience in conduct and moderation.

The interviews and focus groups were videoed and tape-recorded. The primary data were analysed using SPSS and network analysis; evidence from the interviews was triangulated with that from the questionnaires and focus groups. Chi square, Fisher's Exact and Mann-Whitney U and t-tests established significant differences, reported at  $p = 0.05$  or NS (not significant at 5% level). To maintain anonymity, the student respondents were coded by gender (M1, M2, M3, M4, M5, M6, F1, F2, F3 and F4) and the academic tutors (T1 and T2).

## FINDINGS

Although of the respondents were British, 30 had lived in the UK for all their lives and the remainder were from France, China, Barbados and Australia. It was the first visit to the USA for 21 of the students; of the 17 who had visited before, only one person had stayed for more than a month. On commencement of the placement, eight of the students had no work experience, 21 had previous full-time and 30 had part-time work experience. They were based in 14 hotels across the USA; although seven were 'alone', all but two of these interns worked alongside other students. The rest were in groups of two or three, with one exception of a group of seven. Accommodation was provided for 21 interns, five 'on-site' and 16 'away from premises'. Of the latter group, only seven were provided with transport. Seven were accommodated free of charge, nine had the cost taken out of their wages and five had to pay. Of the 17 who were not provided with accommodation, 13 were assisted in finding it; only four had to find it alone. Three of the 17 were provided with transport to and from work by their employers, eight used their own vehicles, four used public transport and two walked.

Half of the students (9M: 10F) had experienced CS; a chi-square test confirmed no significant gender differences ( $\chi^2 = 2.9$ ; NS). A Mann-Whitney U test on the extent to which it was felt (based on a horizontal numeric scale from 1-10) showed also no significant gender differences ( $z = -1.735$ ; NS). All of the volunteer focus group participants experienced CS to some extent, 50% (M2, M5, F1, F2, F4) severely and 50% (F3, M1, M3, M4, M6) only minimally. The majority of the students who were placed alone felt CS, suggesting that being alone increases the students' susceptibility to experience CS (cf. Feichtinger and Fink 1998). However, CS was felt also by 50% of the remainder; a chi-square test ( $\chi^2 = 0.63$ ; NS) revealed no significant difference according to the number of students placed together. Seven of the focus group students thought that being alone *should* encourage interaction with the hosts, contributing to the reduction of CS (cf. Furnham and Bochner 1986) but eight agreed that being alone was positively related to experiencing CS (cf. Feichtinger and Fink 1998). F4 claimed that solitude caused CS, saying that she would prefer the company of a fellow national. Although Selmer (1995) found that sojourners who had lived abroad previously would be less susceptible to CS, no significant difference was apparent in this small group nor was there any association between the accommodation provision and experience of CS ( $\chi^2 = 0.96$ ; NS). Two chi-square tests established no link between full-time ( $\chi^2 = 2.6$ ; NS) or part-time ( $\chi^2 = 0.96$ ; NS) work experience and feelings of CS, backed up by the focus groups in which only two of six students without work experience claimed this lack resulted in CS. Reasons given were low confidence at work, (cf. Harrison, Chadwick and Scales 1996) and, in contrast with the remainder of the sample, these two found the placement work 'hard!' CS was caused mainly by 'language problems', which had not been identified in the literature; students were annoyed by locals who constantly mimicked their accents and upset by their own lack of knowledge of terminology, such as zucchini and eggplant, and misunderstanding of vocabulary. M2 recalled with frustration being reprimanded in front of a customer for saying 'nought' as opposed to 'zero'.

Other work-related perceptions of American's included aggressive attitudes, strictness, 'brash and upfront' manner, rude behaviour, narrow-minded and culturally stereotyping the British whilst personal causes of CS were long drives to work and feeling isolated; the main outcome was homesickness. Fig. 1 summarises the focus groups' responses.

Figure 1

**CAUSES OF CULTURE SHOCK AND CONSEQUENT FEELINGS/ACTIONS BASED ON THE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (n=10)**

<i>Causes</i>	<i>Feelings/actions</i>		
Lack of preparation (n=9)	→ No awareness of possibility of culture shock (n=7) → Lack of knowledge of USA culture (n=2)		
Cultural differences (n=9)	→ Did not fit in (n=5) → Offended by attitude (n=4)		
Frustration at work (n=7)	→ Stress (n=7) → Negative attitude towards hosts (n=5)	→ Homesick (n=5)	→ Depression (n=7) → Depression (n=5)
Lack of integration with host nationals (n=4)	→ Isolation (n=2) → Rejection (n=2)	→ Homesick (n=2) → Homesick (n=2)	→ Depression (n=2) → Depression (n=2)
Lack of previous experience (n=2)		→ Low confidence (n=2)	→ Found work hard (n=2)
Being alone (n=1) Lack of support from placement office (n=1)		→ Isolation (n=1) → Isolation (n=1)	
Expectations not met (n=1)		→ Disappointment (n=1)	

Note: Some respondents cited multiple causes

With one exception, the students felt that a lack of preparation contributed to CS, supporting Kaye and Taylor (1997) and proving Hypothesis (5). F3 and F4 agreed that they did not know enough about the American culture (cf. Huettman-Roberts 1998). F4 said that the lack of a promised phone call from the UK placement office on arrival in the USA contributed to CS; also, she had not received any advice on being alone: "I was not prepared for the homesickness I felt". She felt that her expectations had not been met and linked this to CS. "I was so shocked that they were not as nice as people had told me... they were not bothered about me; it was not what I expected." (cf. Ward and Kennedy 1999). However it was F4's first time away from home, which could have heightened her negativity. In spite of the apparent cultural proximity of the UK and USA, nine people believed that cultural differences led to CS. Four students said they did not fit in with the host culture and they perceived certain aspects of USA culture to be offensive, probably because of their own lack of cultural awareness and empathy. M4, M5 and F1 spoke of Americans as 'self-centred' and 'ignorant'; M1 felt that he was always 'on show' and F3 thought them to be rude.

Fig. 1 shows that seven of the students felt frustrated at work and three experienced pressure, both resulting in stress, determined by them as a cause of CS and a vi-

ew shared by Adler (1986). Furthermore, the seven students who were frustrated claimed that the stress led to depression (cf. Oberg 1960) and five of this group were stressed leading to the development negative attitudes towards their USA work colleagues; homesickness which led to further depression resulted. Six of the students agreed that depression was associated with CS (cf. Oberg 1960; Furnham and Bochner 1986). Church (1982) had criticised the severe labelling of depression, therefore students were asked to define the severity of their depression; three students felt depressed enough to leave but only F4 returned to the UK, which could indicate that depression was only severe in her case. Of the other symptoms, only 'rejection' coincided with Oberg's (1960) list. Furthermore, anxiety, over concern about health, hygiene and safety, fear of physical contact with locals and alcohol and drug abuse (Jandt 1995) were not mentioned therefore proving Hypothesis (1). With reference to Fig.1, nine students experienced an initial feeling of welcome; However, F4 was not met at the airport and not welcomed at the hotel which: "got the placement off to a terrible start". Everyone agreed that the initial feeling of welcome aided adjustment, therefore proving Hypothesis (2) in accordance with Black and Gregersen (1991).

Figure 2

**CROSS-CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT: PROBLEMS AND CONSEQUENCES FROM FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (n=10)**

Placed with fellow nationals (n=8)	→ Lack of integration with hosts (n=8) → Stick together with fellow nationals (n=8)	
Poor management at work (n=7)	→ Frustration (n=7) → Stress (n=7)	→ Bad attitude towards hosts (n=5) → Harder to adjust (n=6)
Lack of information about job (n=2)	→ Frustration (n=2) → Stress (n=2)	→ Harder to adjust (n=2)
No welcome from hosts (n=1)	→ Homesick (n=1) → Let down (n=1)	→ Bad attitude towards hosts (n=1)

Fig. 2 summarises the problems and consequences associated with CCA based on the focus group discussions. The majority (n=8) believed that support from a fellow national was beneficial when negative incidents occurred; F1 and F2 claimed they could not have coped without the fellow nationals when they were homesick (cf. Pedersen 1975).

However, being placed with fellow nationals leads to a lack of integration with the hosts (cf. Ward et al. 1997), hence proving Hypothesis (3). All but one of the students were frustrated and stressed due to a lack of information concerning the job and poor management at work. Everyone felt some stress during the placement and it was commonly perceived (N=8) that the more stressed the individual became, the harder it was to adjust (cf. Ward and Kennedy 1999). The main consequences of experiencing CS were failure to adapt to the host culture (N=3). Furthermore, the development of a negative attitude towards hosts attributed to frustration at work (N=5). The latter was determined as a cause of unsuccessful adjustment (cf. Furnham and Bochner 1986), and led to a lack of interaction. As F1 stated: *"Being so stressed meant that I started to resent the people I worked with so I did not interact with them and I suppose I did not adjust because I was just too stressed"* (cf. Oberg 1960). Ref. Fig. 1, nine students reiterated Klineberg's (1981) instruction that preparation could reduce CS, in particular (n=5) on cultural differences (cf. Storti 2001). M1 and M2 thought that the practice of cultural learning was a good idea (cf. Hickson and Pugh, 1995), but others disagreed. Four people believed that social skills should be assessed prior to placement (cf. Borgoon et al. 1989) and eight students thought that no-one should be placed alone although some interns had suggested earlier that placements with fellow nationals would hinder integration with hosts.

M1 and M4 shared the view that students could be placed alone if they felt strong enough, as evaluated by assessing social skills; the individual should make the final decision.

The U-curve theory of adjustment sparked much debate. It was agreed that the 'honeymoon' stage is followed by feelings of 'frustration and depression' then a rise to feelings of 'happiness and belonging' but two additional feelings emerged in this changing process, that is 'stress' following the honeymoon and prior to 'depression' and 'restoration of confidence levels' during the final rise up the curve. F1, F2, F3 and M5 had experienced feelings parallel to those shown in this adapted U-curve although F3 and M5 disagreed with the initial honeymoon stage; F3 explained that she experienced an initial happy period but considered the term 'entry euphoria' was too extreme. In contrast, M4 felt that the whole placement was generally good with fluctuating high and low periods throughout the year. F4 felt that the experience was wholly negative and M2 described a different experience altogether, which M1, M3 and M6 believed could also be applied to their experiences (See Fig. 3). Although this model of adjustment differs from that of Furnham and Bochner (1986), it shares similarities with the work of Kealey (1989) and Hechanova-Alampay et al. (2002). **A** represents the outset of the placement when feelings were described as "overwhelming"; **B** represents the start of the honeymoon period, which lasted for a few months (**C**). The decline to (**D**) signifies the time when things begin to go wrong, culminating in CS (**D-E**) at which point, strong feelings of isolation, depression and stress were described (cf. Oberg 1960; Adler 1986) with 'short-term' feelings such as frustration (cf. Storti 2001); withdrawal at work was also mentioned. In the long term, for some interns, these feelings contributed to negative attitudes



The majority (n=26) experienced culture surprise, proving hypothesis (8), precursors of which were the 'initial welcome' and 'friendly attitude' of the Americans, which promoted CCA; "*we felt wanted*"(M1). Feelings of comfort, belonging, security and appreciation were also mentioned (cf. Ineson 2002). These results would appear to contradict earlier derogatory comments about Americans. A paired sample t-test ascertained no significant difference between the mean levels of CS (6.36) and culture surprise (6.07) experienced by individuals. Re-entry shock was not part of the study although all but one of the focus group participants claimed that re-entry shock was suffered more than CS and culture surprise.

## CONCLUSIONS

Students value internships in the USA as a provider of essential industry experience, coupled with experience in cultural diversity. The majority reported CS, yet the experiences were not perceived to be wholly negative, which suggests that the less pessimistic views of Adler (1986) and Marx (1999) are sound; the solely negative views held by Oberg (1960) were not wholly applicable in this instance. However, certain findings agreed with Oberg (1960) regarding symptoms of CS. Therefore it is concluded that some of the work of Oberg (1960) is relevant today. Differences between the USA and UK cultures were perceived to be more prominent than might be assumed from Hofstede's work (1980) and their apparent cultural closeness in association with CS. Synonymous findings with problems of CCA were associated with a lack of initial welcome (Black and Gregersen 1991), the issue of social support (Pedersen 1975) and stress (Ward and Kennedy 1999). Black and Gregersen (1991) also mentioned self-efficacy and cultural novelty as seminal factors involved in the ease of adjustment, yet these issues did not surface here. Ward and Kennedy (1999) found that stress hindered adjustment; an association between work performance and stress was established.

The U-curve theory of CCA seemed to be too simplistic for the present study; key negative and positive periods were lacking. The adapted model included frustration and stress before CS was suffered and a point at which confidence was restored prior to feelings of happiness and belonging. Findings on whether solitary placement induces CS were inconclusive due to personality, demographic and experiential variability.

It was commonly perceived that solitary placements should be avoided; however some students thought that being placed alone encouraged integration with hosts (cf. Furnham and Bochner 1986) and this decision should be left with individuals. Causes of CS that replicated the literature were lack of preparation (Kaye and Taylor 1997), frustration and stress at work (Adler 1986), depression and a negative attitude towards hosts (Oberg 1960). Although self confidence levels in the workplace were low for a few interns, due to lack of experience, in contrast with Harrison et al. (1996) this fact was not found to be a major cause of CS; neither were disappointment from expectations (Ward and Kennedy 1999), lack of previous travel experience (Selmer 1995) and nature of accommodation.

Although CS was suffered, culture surprise was experienced to a large degree. Feelings described complemented the literature (Ineson 2002) and were associated with an initial welcome, general friendly attitude, interest from hosts and, interestingly, similarity between the cultures (in line with Hofstede 1980); it appeared that CS was alleviated by culture surprise, suggesting that a balance between the two feelings is constructive. Students perceived that preparation was lacking in areas on CCA and CS whilst the tutors put strong emphasis on learning experience and argued that the placement is as productive as the student makes it. However, the fact that CS is suffered is of concern in terms of not reaping the full benefits of the placement.

Those interns who experienced greatest CS were most critical of the preparation. Re-entry shock was felt more strongly than CS or culture surprise; it was hard to adapt to the 'stable' University culture when they had changed so much; they felt totally unprepared for this 'shock' although they admitted that it had been emphasised by a visiting tutor. Discrepancies between comments from the students and the tutors are difficult to rationalise as the majority of students did not attend the UK preparatory lectures and presentations on the USA. The tutors believed that students had been offered the opportunity to be prepared adequately, including CS and CCA topics. The majority of the students did not agree but maybe they just had not attended or not been paying attention thinking, for example, that they would not be stressed.

Students need to prepare themselves for potential CS and coping with stress. First and foremost, they must pay heed to preparatory advice and not assume that

they will not have intense feelings. They should remain open to new experiences and accept elements that may appear shocking as opposed to reacting against them; each student must prepare him/herself mentally for an industrial placement as only individuals can assess how they might react to the change.

The placement location, unit and local cultural norms should be well researched in advance to increase familiarity; websites are recommended: personality traits should be assessed and discussed with tutors, who should provide stress relief information, including the 'new' model of adjustment so that individuals can relate to the 'normal' pattern. General awareness of CS should be raised through timetabled presentations devoted to the causes, symptoms and methods of reduction. In addition re-entry shock should be emphasised by the visiting tutor though prepared material related to general lifestyle and academic commitments. Lone students should be monitored closely, especially in the initial stages. It was a common perception (students and tutors) that first impressions are crucial and have a huge impact on overall experience. An initial welcome is paramount and therefore great emphasis should be placed on the orientation provided by the manager. High levels of stress at work have led to negative attitudes towards host colleagues. Therefore management styles and working relationships demand particular attention from the outset if employers are to maximise student effectiveness. Workplace mentors should monitor stress levels and provide advice to reduce stress throughout. Integration with host colleagues should be promoted and monitored continuously by managers.

In the present study, the sample size was small, particularly in the quantitative area, therefore, replication is necessary with a larger sample from several UK institutions to remove any bias, assess reliability and check external validity. It is recommended also that interviews should be conducted by an independent person who has no placement or tutoring experience. Further research investigating the benefits of cross-cultural preparation and its relationship with work performance, ideally with national dyads that exhibit contrasting cultural differences, is recommended including an examination of re-entry shock and gender differences in relation to CCA. Nevertheless, based on this limited study, it is possible that CS may be moderated by culture surprise and so accelerate CCA particularly when cultural distance is small.

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