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# Returning home and Leaving Again: A Phenomenological Investigation of a Sojourner's Experience

Victoria Christofi

*University of Tennessee - Knoxville*

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Victoria Christofi entitled "Returning home and Leaving Again: A Phenomenological Investigation of a Sojourner's Experience." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Psychology.

Charles L. Thompson, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Howard Pollio, Joy DeSensi, P. Gary Klukken

Accepted for the Council:

Dixie L. Thompson

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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Acceptance for the Council:

Anne Mayhew

Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate

Studies

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

RETURNING HOME AND LEAVING AGAIN: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL  
INVESTIGATION OF A SOJOURNER'S EXPERIENCE

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Victoria Christofi

August 2003

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Christakis and Marika Christofi, and to my brother Pavlos, who have always believed in me and supported me from many miles away. Without them I would not have had the inspiration and faith that was crucial in achieving my goals.

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I wish to thank my friends in Cyprus, Yiota, Hen, Irini, Freda, Elena, and many others who have been my cheering squad for many years now. You have provided me with the gift of friendship that has lasted many years and prevails strongly to this day.

I wish to thank my auntie and uncle and cousins in London who have always shown how proud they are of my academic successes. And most importantly I wish to thank my family: My parents for supporting me, trusting me, and for making so many sacrifices so that I may have this educational experience. I wish to also thank my brother for reminding me of my youth and my roots and for looking up to me as his big sis.

## ABSTRACT

Two studies were conducted for this project. The goal of the first study was to describe the structure of the experience of individuals who have returned home after their stay abroad. The goal of the second study was to describe the structure of the experience of individuals who have returned to the country in which they studied, after having returned home. To accomplish these goals, phenomenological interviews were conducted with seventeen participants. In the first study, nine participants were interviewed in their own country after they had been abroad for their studies. In the second study, eight participants were interviewed; these individuals were back in the country in which they studied after going back home for a period of time. Participants in the first study responded to the question of “Please describe your experience of returning home after your study abroad.” Participants in the second study responded to the question: “Now that you are back in the U.S. after being at home, what are some specific experiences that stand out for you?” Questions were followed by probes as needed for the purpose of clarification.

Interviews were audio-taped, transcribed, and the data analyzed. The analysis was done in the context of research groups. In these groups, members read the transcripts with the goal being to understand the participant’s re-entry experience. These groups provided a more varied interpretation of the data than if the researcher had read the transcripts alone.

By moving back and forth between parts of each transcript and the whole of the transcript, thematic meanings began to emerge. By comparing separate transcripts to each



other, groups of meaning units began to emerge to become a theme. The name given to the theme conveys the essence of the entire group. Some themes have a sub-theme, and all taken together, describe the experience of the participant.

Themes that emerged were of a bipolar nature indicating that participants' experience ranged from one end of the spectrum to the other. Themes that emerged in the first study were contextualized (grounded) by the theme of Cultural Comparison. From this ground, three bipolar themes emerged: Shock/Adjustment, Freedom/Restriction, and Changing/Static. Internal Change and External Change were sub-themes to the theme of Changing/Static.

The themes that emerged in the second study also were grounded by the theme of Cultural Comparison. From this ground, five bipolar themes emerged: Conflict/Peace, Reality/Idealization, Freedom/Restriction, Changing/Static, and Comfort/Discomfort. Frustration and Ambivalence were sub-themes for Conflict; Adjustment and Identity were sub-themes for Changing/Static. There were no sub-themes that emerged from any of the remaining themes.

The implication of the findings is that there is much to be learned of the experience of returning home after an extended stay abroad. The scarcity of research in this area leads to the conclusion that returning home has been underestimated and not typically seen as a difficult transition process. The findings of this study indicate otherwise, and illustrate the difficulties and frustrations experienced by many re-entering sojourners. This leads us to the famous question Thomas Wolf once asked – can you go home again?

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **Introduction**

Culture shock is an area of concern that has been widely studied and richly documented in the literature (Adler, 1972, 1975; Baty & Dold, 1977; Becker, 1968; Brislin, 1981; Church, 1982; Furukawa, 1997). An area far less studied is that of re-entry to one's home country after a sojourn abroad. Researchers in a variety of disciplines including anthropology, psychology, international education, and sociology have been interested in the phenomenon of re-entry culture shock – a process of readjustment to home after a stay abroad. It has been found that individuals returning home after an extended stay abroad experience difficulties re-adjusting to their home country. Some researchers believe that these adjustment problems may even be more intense and severe than adjustment problems that take place when one enters a foreign country (N. Adler, 1981; P. Adler, 1972; Austin, 1983; Kobayashi, 1978, 1981; Martin, 1984).

An area of study that has been neglected by researchers is what happens to the sojourner who has returned home, and then decides to go back to the country of sojourn. By having more information on the experience of re-entry, institutions could be made aware of what may be helpful for individuals who are going back home and what programs or interventions may help with the transition process.

In 2000 there were 515,000 foreign students enrolled in colleges in the U.S. Compared to 179,000 in 1976, it is obvious that there is a large increase in the number of students choosing to come to the U.S. for their education. In 1998 there were a total of 660,477 immigrants admitted into the U.S. for employment (Immigration and Naturalization service, May 1999). It is unknown what percentage of this group will choose to remain in the U.S. In 1985 there were a total of 18,113 foreign doctoral recipients in science and engineering and 40.1% of these students had firm plans to stay in the U.S. By 1997, the total doctoral recipients in science and engineering went up to 26,847 and 49.7% of these recipients had firm plans to remain in the U.S. and not return home (National Science Foundation, Division of Science Resources Studies, 1999). Given the large number of people coming to the U.S. and choosing to stay, it is important to gain insight into this group of individuals. An interesting question is why these individuals choose to stay in the U.S. rather than return home and specifically, for this dissertation, why some of the people who did go back home, chose to come back again to the country of their sojourn.

### **Problem statement**

Many studies have been done on entry into a foreign culture (for example, Arensberg & Niehoff, 1964; Foster, 1962; Oberg, 1960). Fewer studies have been done on re-entry to one's home country and many of these have been quantitative (for example, Rohrlich & Martin, 1991; Tamura & Furnham, 1993; Rogers & Ward, 1993). No studies have been

done on re-entry to the country of one's sojourn after having gone home. The purpose of the current study, therefore, is to provide an in-depth description of these experiences. Two research questions were of interest: First, what is their experience of going home after one's sojourn abroad? And second, what brought these individuals back to the country of their sojourn, and what is their experience of being back?

### **Theory**

This research was conceptualized in terms of certain concepts drawn from Piaget's theory of cognitive development. According to Piaget, individuals strive to achieve a state of balance or equilibrium. When they are in this balanced state, they interact efficiently with the environment. When, however, people are in a state of disequilibrium this efficiency diminishes (Piaget, 1978/1985). What this means is that as one encounters diversity and novelty in the environment, one's ability to understand and interpret the experience constantly changes (1936/1952).

Piaget believed that adaptation is a two part process. First, assimilation is the interpretation of new experiences in terms of an existing scheme. Second, accommodation is the modification of familiar schemes to account for new information. In this study, the new information is actually the home environment. It will be seen that even though home is not typically seen as 'new,' due to internal changes in the returning sojourner and due to external changes in the home environment, that does turn out to be 'new' information. Identifying whether returning



sojourners use assimilation or accommodation to organize this new information will be discussed and hypotheses established as to which would be more beneficial and/or useful to the person.

### **Rationale for the study**

The purpose of this study was to use phenomenological methods to describe the experience of returning home after an extended stay abroad and then also to describe the experience of returning to the country of one's sojourn after having been home. The first part of the study describes the experience of participants who had been abroad for over three years and who are currently back home. The second part of the study concerns individuals who had sojourned for a period of over three years, returned home for a period of time, and who are currently back in the country of their sojourn. The goal is to gain insight to the experiences of both those individual's who returned home and remained there and those individuals who went home, and for whatever reason, chose to go back to the country of their sojourn. Participants were identified through contacts with members of the Cypriot community and were subsequently contacted to discuss participation in the study.

### **Operationalization (Definition of Terms)**

**Home culture:** the culture in which the sojourner was socialized and which provided the initial cultural adaptation.

**Host culture:** the culture that the sojourner has entered for a variety of reasons such as educational or occupational for a finite period of time.

**Sojourner/returning expatriate/returnee, re-enterer:** A person who leaves her/his home culture to study, or work abroad with the intention of returning after a significant period of time (Returnee, returning expatriate, and sojourner are terms used interchangeably in this study).

**Re-entry/re-acculturation:** The re-adjustment period of the sojourner into the home culture and the time a person needs to re-integrate into the social, psychological, and occupational networks of his/her culture (Martin, 1984).

**Culture shock:** The effect on an individual when she/he becomes immersed in a culture that is different from her/his own. Feelings such as isolation, rejection, frustration and homesickness may be brought about by exposure to a new culture.

**Re-entry culture shock:** The effect on an individual when she/he returns home after a sojourn which may have symptoms similar to, or more intense than, those listed under culture shock.

**Repatriating sojourner:** The individual who has left his/her home culture for educational or occupational reasons, returned home after the sojourn, and then re-entered the culture of the sojourn.

**Existential-phenomenological research method:** An interview procedure that usually begins with one open-ended question focused on eliciting a clear and accurate description of a particular aspect of human experience.

**Bracketing interview:** An interview where the researcher was asked the

same question as the participants. The goal is for the primary investigator to put aside her pre-existing ideas with the hope being to allow the participant to describe his/her experience freely with minimal bias from the researcher.

**Hermeneutics:** The theory and practice of interpretation.

**Hermeneutic Analysis:** Focuses on the meaning and interpretation of a text.

**Hermeneutic Circle:** A process of moving repeatedly from the parts of a text to the whole of the text, since one piece cannot be understood without an understanding of the other.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **Literature Review**

The field of cross-cultural adjustment has been of growing interest to researchers. Theories have been developed on a rich research base related to the topic of sojourner adjustment. The first part of this chapter focuses on the concept of culture shock, which is then followed by a presentation of some of the theories that have been developed to understand cross-cultural experience and sojourner adaptation. A subsequent section will focus on research done on the sojourner's experience of returning to the home culture.

#### **Culture shock**

A great number of studies have been concerned with what one experiences when one enters a different culture. Several researchers suggest that "culture shock" is so prevalent that it is commonly viewed as a normal process in entering a new culture (Adler, 1975; Arensberg & Niehoff, 1964; Foster, 1962; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Lundstedt, 1963; Oberg, 1960). Culture shock can occur, therefore, when an individual becomes immersed in a culture different from his/her own (Westwood, Lawrence & Paul, 1986). The intensity of culture shock is highlighted in Oberg's (1960) early definition of culture shock: "a disease precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse" (p.177). However shocking the experience

of entering a new culture, it is expected that most individuals eventually will adjust to the new culture (Martin, 1984).

### **Theories explaining culture shock**

Given the prevalence of culture shock, numerous theories have been developed to understand this phenomenon. Three of these theories are the U-Curve hypothesis, the communication-centered model, and the cultural learning theory.

The U-Curve hypothesis views cross-cultural adjustment as a process with time being the crucial variable (Lysgaard, 1955). According to this view, when one first enters the host culture there is a shallow adjustment associated with one's excitement of a new experience. With the progression of time, however, a period of depression, withdrawal, or confusion follows. During this period, the individual feels homesick, misses the familiarities of the home culture and is confronted with new beliefs, values, and behaviors of the host culture. The final period is a time characterized by an increased understanding of the host culture and a greater adjustment to it (Lysgaard, 1955).

Kim (1988) developed a communication-centered model to understand sojourner adaptation. In this model she asserts that one's adjustment depends on two factors: The host environment's receptivity to the sojourner and the degree to which the sojourner communicates with members of the host culture. The assumption is that if the host culture is open and receptive to the sojourner and the sojourner has an adaptive

predisposition, there will be a greater interaction of the sojourner with the host culture and ultimately a more successful adaptation to the new culture (Kim, 1988).

Cultural learning theory conceptualizes sojourner adjustment using operant conditioning and social learning principles (Bochner, 1972).

Going to a new culture leads to the removal of positive reinforcements such as familiar food and friends. Instead, the individual is confronted with aversive stimuli such as a foreign language, unknown surroundings, unconventional values, behaviors and beliefs. Bochner proposes that this creates the culture shock that the individual faces and to help adjustment one must now find or create new reinforcements in this new culture.

### **Re-entry shock**

Many researchers have studied the experiences of a sojourner's entry into a new culture. The richness of the data concerning this topic is in stark contrast to the dearth of research and theories focused on the sojourner's re-entry into the home culture. The purposes of the next sections are: (1) to define re-entry and concepts that are related to the process, (2) to summarize the research on the re-entry process, and (3) to highlight some of the theories developed to explain the re-entry process.

Re-entry is the process of returning to one's home culture after a sojourn. Readjustment is the transition from the host culture back into one's home culture where one experiences familiar surroundings after living in a different culture for a significant period of time (Adler, 1981).

Adler (1976) defines readjustment as “the transition into one’s home culture after having lived or worked abroad” (p. 7). Just as entry into a new culture will result in culture shock for many sojourners, re-entry into the home culture may be followed by reverse culture shock. Uehara (1983) defines reverse culture shock as “temporal psychological difficulties that a returnee experiences in the initial stage of the adjustment process at home after having lived abroad for more time” (p.420).

### **Acculturation and re-acculturation**

Both processes of acculturation to a new culture and re-acculturation to one’s home culture are characterized by a sense of loss of familiar cues and both require one to integrate into a different cultural system. Martin (1984) has identified three major differences between the two processes. First, one has different expectations when one goes to a different culture as opposed to when one returns to her/his home culture. The individual who returns home usually does not expect to have readjustment issues since home is not ‘a new place.’ It is a shock, therefore, when home is seen through a different lens, one that is now clouded by the events, values, experiences, and ways of life of the host culture (Westwood, Lawrence, & Paul, 1986). Thus, the difficult transition of returning home does not match the expectations the sojourner has of re-entry, which is to slip easily back into a familiar culture. In addition to the sojourner’s own re-entry expectations of returning home, friends and family of the sojourner do not expect him or her to have any readjustment

issues (Martin, 1984). This expectation may result in a lack of social support which is essential to healthy re-adaptation to the home culture. This lack of social support, in addition to the lack of preparation from the sojourner, may lead the latter to feel out of touch with his/her own home. Social support has been found to be crucial for the returning sojourner so the lack of this support can contribute to anxieties and fears that may develop (Martin, 1984).

The second major difference between acculturation and re-acculturation lies in the concept of change. When the sojourner goes to a foreign culture, the individual both expects and experiences changes in the environment. A returning sojourner, however, in addition to having potential changes in the home environment, is also struggling with internal changes of values, attitudes, and behaviors (Martin, 1984). The student sojourner goes abroad at an age when he/she is at the peak of the developmental period regarding values, beliefs, and behaviors (Martin, 1984). Reverse culture shock therefore, is hypothesized to be due to their experiences abroad that have changed the sojourner (Westwood, Lawrence, & Paul, 1986).

The third difference between acculturation and re-acculturation of the sojourner is the awareness of changes that have occurred. The individual and the people around him or her are often unaware of internal changes that have occurred. Sobie (1986) and Austin (1983) suggest that personal attitudes change during the sojourn but it is only during re-entry



that these changes influence the individual thus making adjustment to re-entry even more of a challenge.

### **Challenges to readjustment**

Parallel to Martin's descriptions on the topic of readjustment to the home culture, Sussman (1985) highlights five difficulties the sojourner experiences upon his/her return home. First, the unexpectedness of the re-entry problems may cause the shock to be significantly worse. Most individuals going to another culture are likely to be anticipating adjustment difficulties whereas those returning home are not. Second, changes occur within the individual as a result of the sojourn. Third, changes occur in the home culture itself. Fourth, friends and family expect returnees to be the same as they were before the sojourn and are not expecting new behaviors or values. And fifth, friends and family often are not interested in the sojourn, and this is experienced with frustration and disappointment by the re-enterer (Sussman, 1985).

### **Consequences of re-entry**

As noted previously, since one is returning home there is the assumption and expectation that the re-entry transition is not going to be difficult.

Researchers have found, however,

that re-entry can be slightly more difficult than the initial transition into the unfamiliar host culture (Adler, 1983). In a study by Raschio (1987) participants were found to demonstrate re-entry adjustment problems ranging from mild emotional dissonance to a continuing sense of isolation.

Participants described feeling conflicted as they contrasted the two cultures and evaluated their own culture as an outsider would (Raschio, 1987). Comparing overseas sojourners to domestic travelers, results showed that the overseas returnees experienced much greater re-entry adjustment problems than their domestic counterparts (Uehara, 1986). In addition, it was found that in comparing the re-entry adjustment experiences of sojourning American students to domestic travelers, there were greater re-entry adjustment problems for those who sojournd abroad. The results showed that an important factor associated with re-entry adjustment is the change in the individual's value structure (Uehara, 1986).

Furukawa (1997) studied Japanese adolescents enrolled in a foreign exchange program and tracked them one year later on their return to Japan. Furukawa reported that these adolescents had significant psychosocial problems including more dissatisfaction with their lives and their home than adolescents who did not leave Japan (Furukawa, 1997).

Brabant, Palmer, and Gramling (1990) conducted a study that focused on the re-entry experience of sojourners and compared adjustment levels of females and males. Results of the study indicate that females experience more problems on re-entry than males where females face more family problems on re-entry to the home culture and find it difficult to cope with family expectations. These researchers suggest that the difficulty women face has to do with having to readjust to the family's

more conservative values and lifestyle in their home culture after having been exposed to a more liberal experience in the United States (Brabant, Palmer, & Gramling, 1990).

A study by Citron and Pica (1996) sought to identify longitudinal patterns for students' adjustment overseas and during re-entry. The authors found that individuals did not anticipate re-entry issues and because the re-entry phenomenon was not well-known, returnees tend to personalize their adjustment challenge and do not see it as an experience similar to those of other returnees. This personalization may lead to significant stress and even depression.

A study by Sorimachi (1994) examined how high school students returning home from foreign countries re-adjusted to their home country. The Socio-Cultural Adjustment Checklist (SCAT) was developed for this study to look at subjective feelings of adjustment. In addition, the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) was administered and both scales were given at three time periods: (1) during the sojourn abroad; (2) six months after the return home; (3) during the time of the study. Sorimachi found that regardless of length of stay abroad and regardless of the age of the participants, all students experienced some sort of culture shock upon re-entry.

Gama and Pedersen (1977) surveyed Brazilian graduate students who had been in the U.S. for their sojourn. These researchers found that female returnees had some difficulties adjusting to life with their families

and complained of a lack of privacy in addition to other value conflicts with family members. Gama and Pedersen also noted that most Brazilian returnees experienced conflicts related to their professional lives, such as a lack of intellectual stimulation, lack of facilities, excessive red tape, and so forth.

Kobayashi et al, (1978) and later Kobashi (1981) looked at Japanese children who had returned from a sojourn abroad. The researchers indicated that the children took a longer period to re-adjust to the home environment than to the foreign culture. In addition, it was found that the longer the duration of the sojourn, the longer the time needed to re-adjust to their home environment.

Werkman (1980) looked at returned Americans who lived abroad for one year and found that these individual's reported that it was less stressful to go to a new culture than to return home. Many returnees in this study described feelings of discomfort and dissatisfaction with their lives in addition to feeling restless, rootless, and nostalgic for a way of life with which they had become familiar and comfortable while abroad.

### **Coping styles upon re-entry**

Adler (1976, 1981) studied the re-entry experiences of returned Peace Corps volunteers and returned corporate personnel and developed a model to understand the experience of reentering into the home culture. Adler found two dimensions as crucial in her theory: the Overall Attitude, designated as "optimistic" or "pessimistic," and the Specific Attitude,

designated as “active” or “passive.” The combinations of these dimensions yield four coping style modes associated with re-entry into one’s home culture.

The first coping style is a proactive one that reflects the most growth. In this style, the individual provides him/herself with internal validation and is able to see the uniqueness of being bi-cultural. The individual can then use cross-cultural skills to integrate foreign and home culture experiences to function in their home society. The second coping style is characteristic of the alienated re-enterer who has a high need for external validation and reacts negatively to the home environment leading to a re-entry experience that is far more difficult. The third coping style is characteristic of the re-socialized re-enterer who also has a high need for external validation but she/he responds positively to the home environment even though it is perceived as a period of adjustment rather than growth. The fourth coping style generates the rebellious re-enterer who rejects the home environment like the alienated type but acts aggressively rather than passively against the home environment (Adler, 1981).

### **Variables affecting re-entry adjustment**

A number of variables have been identified which influence the re-entry experience. These include gender, nationality, status, language proficiency, age, educational level, previous cross-cultural experiences, location and duration of the sojourn, and readiness to return home (Martin,

1984). For example, Brabant, Palmer, & Gramling (1970) found that students who returned home more frequently during their stay abroad had fewer family problems upon re-entry to the home culture. Brislin and Van Buren (1974) suggest that time is an important variable for returning sojourners. The authors state that the longer the sojourner stays in the host culture the greater the likelihood he or she will acculturate and absorb the host culture's mentality which makes re-entry a lot more challenging.

A study by Rohrlich and Martin (1991) reveals that country of sojourn is also an important variable in determining one's adjustment upon re-entry. These researchers also have found a sex difference for re-entry adjustment where women are significantly more satisfied than men upon their return (Rohrlich & Martin, 1991). In addition, it has been observed that people who go on outings with hosts are more satisfied with life on their return to their home culture.

Variables affecting sojourner adjustment and readjustment include the individual's background, the host culture, and the re-entry environment. Variables such as gender, age, and readiness to return home, location and duration in the country of the sojourn all affect re-entry adjustment (Baty & Dold, 1977; Gama & Pedersen, 1977; Gullahorn & Gullahorn; Rohrlich & Martin, 1991). In contrast to the research done by Rohrlich & Martin (1991), Gama and Pedersen (1977) found that Brazilian women had more re-entry problems than men did after living in the United States. Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) reported that older

returnees had less difficulty readjusting than did younger returnees. They also found that students who returned from Europe faced less dissatisfaction upon their return home than those who sojourned in countries very different from their home.

Host culture variables may also affect re-entry adjustment where the variables such as location, duration of the sojourn, and amount of desire to return home influence the repatriation process (Martin, 1984). Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) noted that individuals who went to Europe scored higher in their satisfaction levels upon re-entry than those who went to less developed countries.

The re-entry environment has also been found to be significant in determining sojourner re-entry adjustment. Martin (1986a) found that relationships with friends were affected negatively, which influenced re-entry adjustment. In addition, research supports the hypothesis that individuals who adapt most successfully overseas have a more severe re-entry adjustment problem than those individuals who do not adapt overseas (Hara, 1984; La Brack, 1983; Smith, 1975). The line of reasoning is that the sojourners who adapt well to the host culture experience changes in their values, attitudes and perceptions and must subsequently integrate these changes with their home culture behavior and attitudes thus making re-entry difficult.

Bennett et al. (1958) suggested that the length of the sojourn is another variable that is significant to re-entry adjustment where the more

years abroad, the more difficulty upon the re-entry. Brislin and Van Buren (1974) suggest that the longer one remains in the host culture, the more difficult the re-entry process will be. This is because there is more chance for the sojourner to acculturate to the host culture thereby making returning to one's home culture a more difficult adjustment process. Brein and David (1971) and Brislin (1981) suggested that sojourners who had a smooth adjustment into the culture of the sojourn would have more problems readjusting at home due to their new ideas and behaviors, which may now conflict with the ideas and behaviors expected in the home culture.

### **The U- and W-curve hypotheses**

The U-curve hypothesis describes cross-cultural adjustment as a continuous process of change over time. Initially there is a sense of excitement when entering the country of one's sojourn. This is later replaced by frustrations associated with culture shock. Finally, the sojourner begins to accept the host culture and there is an increase in one's satisfaction (Lysgaard, 1955).

Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) extended the U-curve Hypothesis to illustrate a cycle of adjustment and readjustment experiences in the culture of their sojourn and consequently in their home culture. On returning home, the sojourner again experiences excitement but this is later replaced by re-entry culture shock so level of satisfaction decreases. Finally, it was proposed that there is an increase in satisfaction as the



sojourner has had more time to readjust to his/her home culture. Their hypothesis was based on a study of 400 American students in France in 1956 and 5300 American Fulbright and Smith Mundt grantees in 1958 & 1960 who had studied all over the world and then returned home. Most repatriates experienced re-entry difficulties, although their research identified age to be an important variable, for instance, younger student grantees had more intense difficulties than older grantees. The authors state that this difficulty for the young traveler may be explained by the fact that during re-entry there are many developmental changes in the individual as well as changes in the social and physical surroundings of the home culture (Gullahorn and Gullarhorn, 1963).

Research supporting a W-curve hypothesis includes a study done by Stringham (1993) which has found that sojourners express critical longings for various aspects of life overseas including friends made abroad and ways of life experienced abroad. Stringham has found that the early stage returnees express the strongest antipathy to their home culture and as time progresses their reaction becomes less intense (Stringham, 1993).

### **Assimilation and accommodation**

Another theory that is important in the context of travel-related experience is provided by Piaget's theory of cognitive development. Piaget believed that all living things strive to achieve equilibrium. When people are in this state of equilibrium, they interact efficiently with their environment. When people are in a state of disequilibrium however, this

efficiency diminishes (Piaget, 1978/1985). Piaget stated in his theory that as one encounters diversity and novelty in the environment, one's ability to understand and interpret this experience constantly changes. This understanding and interpretation occurs through what Piaget called the adaptation of schemes. Schemes are defined as organized actions that are generalized by repetition in similar circumstances (1936/1952).

Piaget believed that adaptation is a two part process. First, assimilation is the interpretation of new experiences in terms of an existing scheme. Second, accommodation is the modification of familiar schemes to account for new information.

In applying Piaget's theory to the experience of going to a foreign culture, it can be stated that when one enters a new culture, one encounters diversity and novelty. This may lead to what Piaget called a state of disequilibrium where current schemes of understanding the world are no longer helpful. These schemes were only helpful when the individual was in his/her own home culture. Now, however, the individual is thrown into a state of disequilibrium, as societal structures are different from the structures and schemes one has in one's home country. To become more balanced and be in a more peaceful state of 'equilibrium,' the student may use the process of accommodation which Piaget describes as modifying one's current schemes to understand and process this new culture.

Piaget's paradigm can also be applied to the re-entry process. When a student returns home after his/her sojourn abroad, he/she may be

trying to adapt by using assimilation. This means that the re-enterer attempts to understand his/her current home culture in terms of structures (or schemes) that have been modified through years of being in a foreign country. Assimilation, therefore, may not be effective in dealing with this 'new' data, and this may be what is contributing to some of the re-entry culture-shock. What would seem to be more beneficial for the returning student is to adapt using what Piaget called accommodation, where the returning sojourner modifies her/his current schemes to adjust to the information presented to her/him in the home culture. This may bring about a more calm state of equilibrium.

### **Treatment approach**

Befus (1988) used a multilevel treatment approach for culture shock. The researcher addressed physiological stress and how to use relaxation techniques, nutrition, and recreational activities to deal with the stress brought about by culture shock. The first level of treatment was designed to address physiological components. For example, physiological stress can be treated with deep breathing exercises and progressive relaxation. The next level of treatment was designed to deal with the behavioral aspects of culture shock where social learning theory was adapted to sojourners' daily lives. For example, new activities in the new culture are encouraged and sojourners are encouraged to discuss negative emotions in the new environment. A final level of treatment was designed to help sojourners cope with intellectual aspects of culture shock

and to help them with cultural expectations. The goal here is to understand how these are in conflict with their experiences in the new culture.

Overall, Befus (1988) found that sojourners who were in the treatment program scored lower on psychological distress items than sojourners who received no treatment.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **Method**

This chapter begins with some philosophical concepts central to existential-phenomenology, the underlying methodological base of the present study. After defining some relevant concepts, procedures used in the current study will be described and related to their philosophical bases.

#### **Philosophy**

Existential-phenomenological researchers are concerned with understanding and describing human experience (von Eckartsberg, 1998). The phenomenological position held by these researchers is that any sphere of experience can be described as a relationship between a person and her/his world. The result is a flow of structured, meaningful contents known as phenomena (Pollio, Henley, & Thompson, 1998). In existential-phenomenological research, one is interested in the thematic structure of some event or experience. Phenomena can be described in terms of figure and ground in which the ground recedes into the background while the figure(s) describe components of the phenomena that stand out against that ground.

In contemporary psychological research, the investigator deals with the phenomena of human experience. The purpose of this type of research is to investigate the experience of the participants' being in the world (Giorgi, 1985a). The focus, therefore, is not on external behavior in

an experimental situation, but rather with the participants' experience in ecologically significant situations.

Phenomenologists focus on the whole field of possible phenomena that may be experienced (Ihde, 1986). Heidegger replaced the word 'self' by the more encompassing word "Dasein" which may be paraphrased as "being human and interacting with the world one is in." This definition points to the phenomenological perspective that a person has no existence apart from the world and the person must be considered contextually and not as a separate object (Valle, King, and Halling, 1989).

Husserl (1859-1938) believed one should look for essences of phenomena. An essence is a condition without which something wouldn't be what it is. Ihde (1986) adds that invariants, which are another term for essences, are what the phenomenologist is seeking. The more a thematic pattern appears, the more significant it is in defining that phenomenon. Intentionality is another concept that is important for the phenomenologist. It is "the directional shape of experience" and together with the definition of Dasein offered above, suggests that consciousness is always directed toward some aspect of the world (Ihde, 1968, 41).

Ihde (1968) noted that when doing phenomenological research, it is important for the researcher to set aside his/her assumptions, a situation usually called epoché or bracketing. The term epoché is used to describe a critical feature of phenomenological research, which means to hold back the researcher's views with the goal of being able to see more

possibilities. If one's views are not "bracketed," they will ultimately affect one's research and not allow the participant to describe his/her own experience. If the investigator is able to bracket her own worldview, she will be able to describe some specific experience with more richness and detail.

Existential-phenomenological research focuses, therefore, on the spoken words of participants rather than on observed behaviors. The words of the participants, which describe their experiences, are the major research data. Transcripts of the interviews that describe the participants' experiences are read and reread. Relying on a hermeneutic analysis, themes begin to emerge from the protocols and these themes are used to describe participant experiences. It has been found that themes begin to emerge after six or seven protocols have been subjected to a careful interpretive analysis. When no new themes emerge, the analysis is halted (Colaizzi, 1978).

### **Data collection**

There are three parts to an existential phenomenological investigation: Bracketing, selecting, and phenomenological interviewing. Each will be described in the following section.

#### **Bracketing**

Before interviews are conducted, the primary investigator participates in a bracketing interview. The goal of this interview is for the primary investigator to come to know, and then to put aside, her pre-

existing ideas and expectations about the phenomenon under investigation. In the bracketing interview, the primary investigator is asked the same or a similar question as her participants. A phenomenological research group then analyzes the bracketing interview and themes are identified describing the primary investigator's experience. The goal is for the primary investigator to approach the topic with more awareness of her pre-conceived notions and to use this awareness to guard against imposing these expectations during the interviews and data analysis.

For the present study, the primary investigator selected an individual experienced in phenomenological interviewing to ask the same research question that would be asked of participants of the study. The primary investigator was asked 'what is your experience of returning home after an extended stay abroad?' The interview lasted for about one hour and the primary investigator spoke of the many comparisons she made between the U.S. and her home country. This description uncovered how restricted she felt in her home country, how unprofessional the work environment was, and how different the cultural expectations were specifically regarding male and female roles in society. (A more complete description of themes may be found in Appendix A).

### **Selecting**

Polkinghorne (1989) stated that a suitable research participant is anyone who is able to provide a description of the experience being



investigated. The participant has to be articulate and willing to talk of his/her experiences.

Participants in this study were both articulate and willing to talk of their experiences. Participants were people who had studied in America, England, Australia, South Africa, or Greece and obtained at least a Bachelor's degree. The primary investigator identified participants by talking to people in the U.S. who knew people who fulfilled the criteria needed to be a part of the study. These individuals were contacted and invited to participate in the study and, if interested, were provided with an informed consent form in English (Appendix B) or Greek (Appendix C) so that they could decide whether they were still interested in participating in the study. Additional participants were recruited using the snowball technique, where research participants informed the primary investigator of other potential participants.

Participants ranged in age from 24 to 50 years. Eleven females and six males participated. The first part of the study focused on individuals who had lived abroad between three and ten years and then had returned to Cyprus where they lived for one to five years. The second part of the study focused on individuals who had studied in America, returned to their country of origin, and then came back to America. These individuals returned home where they lived for a period of one to three years and had returned to America where they have been for a period of one to seven years.

### **The phenomenological interview**

As stated in the informed consent form (Appendices B and C), interviews would be audio-taped, transcribed, and then read aloud by a research group. The primary investigator addressed any questions or concerns that the participant had at this point. Anonymity was guaranteed by the use of pseudonyms and further protection of the participants' identity was described. In addition, the research group signed a pledge of confidentiality (Appendix D) before the interpretive analysis began and the primary investigator did all the transcriptions herself. Some of the interviews were conducted in Greek and in this case, any help the primary investigator needed from a translator, meant that the translator also signed a pledge of confidentiality (Appendix E). In addition, all materials (tapes, transcripts) were kept in a locked file cabinet in a secure room. The interviews took place in a private room in a library or in a private room at a public school.

Colaizzi (1978) stated that questions in the phenomenological interview should be oriented toward tapping into participant experiences. In the first study, each participant was asked the same open-ended question of: "What is your experience of returning to Cyprus after your stay abroad?" In the second study, each participant was asked "Now that you are back in U.S.A. after being at home, what are some specific experiences that stand out to you?"

Kvale (1983) recommends that participants be encouraged to talk about whatever aspects of their experience stand out so the interview format is unstructured. Once the initial question was asked, the interviewer only asked for examples or clarification of the participant's experience.

Following each interview, the primary investigator transcribed the audio tapes into typed protocols. Since some participants spoke in Greek, two transcripts were prepared; one in the original form and the other in a fully translated English version. The primary investigator and another bilingual consultant did the translation. It is during the transcription process that all identifying information was eliminated and replaced by pseudonyms.

### **Data analysis**

Colaizzi (1978) states that during data analysis, the primary investigator seeks not to inject her/his own ideas into the analysis but to seek themes and concepts that emerge from the participant's own description. A phenomenological research group takes part in only a portion of the data analysis where discussion among the group members and the researcher encourages a greater sensitivity to the words of the participant.

The goal of this part of the analysis is to produce a description of the structure of the experience. To achieve this goal, an interpretive procedure called the hermeneutic circle, is used to analyze the transcripts. The hermeneutic circle operates on the belief that one cannot understand

the whole of a phenomenon without understanding its parts, and one cannot understand the parts of a phenomenon without understanding the whole (Hoy, 1978). Interpretive data analysis uses this procedure, which involves the continuous process of relating parts of the text to the text as a whole and vice versa.

Six steps have been recommended for analyzing transcripts using this type of hermeneutic process (Colaizzi, 1978; Polkinghorne, 1989; Pollio, Henley, & Thompson, 1997). First, the researcher reads each protocol in its entirety to get a general understanding of the content. Second, the protocols are read through more carefully and each is divided into segments known as “meaning units.” A meaning unit offers an essential concept, which focuses on the phenomena under investigation (Polkinghorne, 1989). A new meaning unit is seen each time the participant shifts to a different topic, situation, or activity (Polkinghorne, 1989). Third, each meaning unit is analyzed individually and key quotations are isolated within each unit that best capture the meaning of that unit (Colaizzi, 1978). Fourth, the primary investigator clusters individual statements into themes. A theme is a term used to describe a pattern of similarity that appears in various areas of the text (Pollio, Henley, & Thompson, 1997). In developing themes, it is important to use the words of the participant to ensure that the researcher remains as close as possible to the experience of the participant as described by the participant (Pollio, Henley, & Thompson, 1997). Fifth, themes are

clustered together into more global themes, which are meant to encompass all of the transcripts. These themes describe a pattern of similarity across protocols and allow for a more complex and broad description of the participants' experience thus increasing the researcher's perspective on the phenomena under investigation. Global themes are then broken down into sub-themes, which often help to clarify each theme. Quotations from protocols are then selected to provide examples of each theme and sub-theme. Sixth, the transcripts are read through one more time and are compared to the global themes ensuring nothing has been omitted (Polkinghorne, 1989).

An interpretive phenomenological research group is an integral part of this process of data analysis. In this process, transcripts are provided to each member of the group. These transcripts are read aloud, and the group discusses what phrases they find stand out in each participant's description of the experience. Group members are encouraged to write notes on their copy of the protocol, which the primary investigator will use in the later phase of data analysis.

Having more than just a single investigator analyzing the data allows for different perspectives on each protocol, and it helps to ensure that the primary investigator's perceptions and expectations do not overly bias the results. The research group is also valuable when analyzing the bracketing interview, which is interpreted just like any other protocol

where group members seek to identify meaning units and essential concepts and phrases.

The above process was repeated for each participant's protocol. The themes of each individual were then collected and an overall thematic structure developed. This led to the formation of global themes and a structural diagram to depict each theme in its interrelationship to all other themes. One feature of the structural diagram is to have a figure/ground format. The rationale for this format is that experience is usually arranged in terms of multiple figures that stand out against a background, with neither figure nor ground as being fully understood without one taking into account the other (Polkinghorne, 1991).

## CHAPTER IV

### Results

#### Thematic structure of Study 1

The thematic structure includes a ground and three themes that are contextualized by that ground. Each of the themes are interconnected with one another, and all themes together define the overall structure of the re-entry experience. The experience of returning home after one's extended stay abroad is grounded (or contextualized) in the theme of Cultural Comparison. This is meant to suggest that participants described their re-entry experience primarily by comparing Cyprus to the country in which they had sojourned. From this ground of cultural comparison, three themes emerged: Shock/Adjustment, Freedom/Restriction, and Changing/Static. These themes in combination form an overall structure of the experience (seen in Figure 1). Themes are further identified below, and are illustrated by quotations taken from the interviews.

**Ground: Cultural comparison** – “Yeah I mean the whole way of life in the States is so different...it's just different in so many ways, just everything from A to Z. Just professionally it's different, the way society is, just things that you get used to” (Harriet). Another participant referred specifically to the pace of life in Cyprus as compared to the country in which she sojourned:

Well, I like the fact that it's an easy life here. Ok, we have

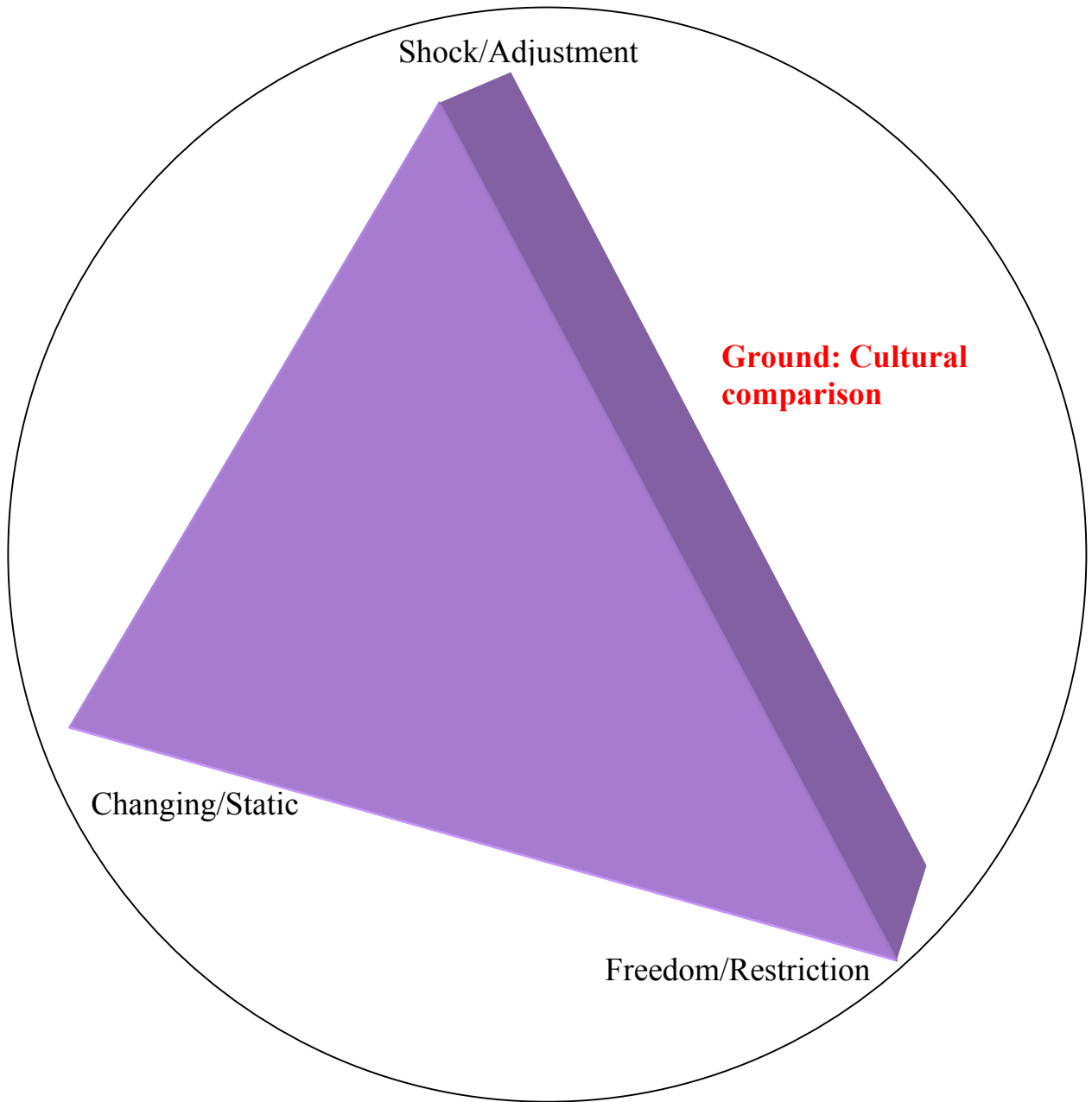


FIGURE 1:  
THEMATIC STRUCTURE OF THE EXPERIENCE  
OF RETURNING HOME AFTER SOJOURNING  
IN ANOTHER COUNTRY



stress and stuff like that but it's easy like laid back ok. Over there, it's like everything's rush this, rush that (Madeline).

The following participant used the concept of size when comparing countries and the impact of size on one's career:

Cyprus is a small country with...it's not like America or any other country like it's the land of opportunities and everything. Cyprus is totally different system... you are not getting a job according to your qualifications and what you as a person has to offer. It's who you know...If you don't know anyone in a high position, then forget it (Lenny).

One participant compared the people of Cyprus with the people abroad and the restrictions this places on her:

...the people are very different. The way the Cypriots live let's say compared with the people abroad. And the most important thing is that we are a small community let's say and one person knows the other so well that you cannot...well, you go to do something and you have to excuse what you are doing. Because they talk about you and you have to excuse yourself (Madeline).

Another participant talked about changes in himself and how they contributed to how he views Cyprus now when compared to how he viewed it in the past (when he had no other country to compare it to):

...now I have a different perspective to view the society here, I can compare it with something. Before I didn't, I thought that this is the way things are. And for the most part I still think that you know... when I see people doing something that is obviously so wrong and I'm thinking: "Why on earth would they do that?" Then you know, I think about it and I realize that they probably do not even realize what they are doing and why they should try to be different (Lenny).

**Theme 1: Shock/Adjustment** –“I think when I went back I was just really shocked at things. And um...I guess I was just looking at things differently” (Fred).

This bipolar theme focuses on the process of what happens upon re-entry back into one's home country. What was discussed by the participants is that they initially experienced shock upon their return home, although as time went by, they discussed a process of adjustment.

One participant highlighted the impact she experienced upon returning to Cyprus.

It's like culture shock again. Because when you're there for so long... when you come home in the summer time, when you come home to visit it's...you don't really get a taste of what it's like to really be back for...knowing that you're gonna be back for good (Jasmine).

Another participant noted:

Mmm. It was a shock (laugh). Ah, what I mean by that...uh...actually I had to make new friends, I had to get accustomed to the way of living here again though I knew how it was. Ah, but the most surprising thing to me was that I had to find a new ways to fill my time (Penny).

A third participant stated that his experience of returning to Cyprus was more shocking than his experience of going abroad:

Shocking. Way more shocking than basically going to America. Um... you know, when I was going there they informed us about the culture-shock and the... I had some seminars here on how to adjust, how to expect different things and everything. But I had absolutely no problem at all when I went there the first time. I mean I had difficulties but nothing that would frustrate me. Now I'm here for a year and everyday I get frustrated living here you know (Lenny).

Jasmine discussed how she went about adjusting to being back home:

The thing is that you realize that I will spend the rest of my life...you digest it, ok...this is it, I'm going to spend the rest of my life in Cyprus so I better cope with it. So...just go

along with that...you just go along with everything that comes on the way.

Another participant described the energy it takes to go through this adjustment process. She states:

I was looking forward to coming, I'm not saying, but the adjustment takes a lot out of you, it does really take a lot out of you (Penny).

One individual noted what happens after having been back in her home country of Cyprus for some time:

You start thinking from their side (Madeline).

This participant also described the differences she perceived in Cyprus compared to life abroad:

There's a different mentality, everything is...Um...and of course coming back here you had to adjust to another type of mentality and way-of-life and that sort of thing (Madeline).

Many participants described how Cypriot society has certain ways of functioning that are rather different from how things functioned in the country in which they had sojourned. One participant stated that there is:

...no customer service, no nothing in shops over here. And you might think uh, shops it's a pissy thing to talk about. But it counts though because it's your everyday dealing and your everyday life you know. So I think that's one thing

that gets on my nerves. It's that...that's the mentality that I'm talking about (Harriet).

**Theme 2: Freedom/Restriction** – “I even find that I'm really restricted here too. In that I'm not free to do what I want to do and I always think: Oh, somebody's going to see me or... because it's such a small place and everybody knows everybody” (Madeline).

The theme of freedom emerged when participants contrasted the freedom they had abroad to the lack of freedom they experienced when returning home to Cyprus. Women's roles, professionalism, societal expectation, and other aspects of Cypriot society were described in rich detail by participants and, taken together, led to the bipolar theme of Freedom/Restriction. One participant described a specific incident where during her Christmas visit to Cyprus:

I remember when once I came for Christmas there was a girl at the age of thirteen, fourteen. I was seventeen, eighteen and she was passing by and I was in the garden with my mother. And she says to my mother “huh, oh my gosh, she's not married yet!” I was shocked. She was thirteen. I mean this is the way everybody around thinks (Mary).

Many participants talked about the frustrations of trying to get a job in Cyprus and the lack of professionalism involved in the process and, in turn, how this leads to restriction in being employed. Participants talked

about needing “meson,” which is translated to “connections one needs to get a job.” Participants described how getting a job had little to do with one’s qualifications. This was illustrated by one participant:

You know somebody who is looking for a job and the first thing they ask you is do you have connections? How do you think you are going to get this job, do you know somebody in there? (Penny).

All participants talked about gossip as a pervasive aspect of Cypriot society and one that had a restrictive quality to it. One participant stated:

I would never judge anybody by the way they dress, the way... but not a lot of people here do that. You know if you go to a place let’s say and you are not properly dressed, people will probably talk about you (Ellen).

Another participant provided his own definition of gossip:

I mean what I define as gossip is that you are talking about somebody in a bad way, in a menacing way, in a way of like trying to diminish somebody, minimize something in a minimizing way. That’s what I consider as gossip (Fred).

Another participant described the theme of restriction in similar terms:

But still there are different ways and different ideas. Cyprus is a very small place, you can’t move around and just be

yourself because people are gonna talk and you know  
(Harriet).

One participant described how conflicted she felt when trying to balance her sense of freedom with a feeling of obligation to tell her parents what was going on in her life, especially since she was now living in their house:

And I was like: Why should I explain my behavior to you?  
But I had to because I felt that it was my responsibility. I was living you know, in their house and I had to give them you know, an idea of what was going on in my life. It mostly has to do with being independent when you are not anymore (Ellen).

Another individual illustrated this theme by stating how he expected to be happy to be rid of various responsibilities, which came from living alone, but was shocked when he moved in with his parents to find how different it was from living alone:

... even though it would seem that you know, coming back to an environment that people are taking care of your responsibilities would make you more happy, it made me you know, shocked. I wanted to get out of that environment. 'cause I got used to you know, having my own place, be responsible for myself and basically I don't have to report to anybody (Lenny).

Some of the participants described how the small size of Cyprus led them to feel restricted. One participant compared Cyprus to the country she sojourned in and stated:

Whereas in Australia I would say: 'Nobody knows me.' I could do... I could live my life. Whereas here I think about... just the fact that the place is so small um, sort of inhibits us from living our life to the fullest (Harriet).

**Theme 3: Changing/Static: Sub-theme: External** – “And it’s like a shock because you come back and everything is just the way you left it, nothing’s changed” (Harriet).

**Theme 3: Changing/Static: Sub-theme: Internal** – “So it’s not the same when you come back to Cyprus. You are not the same person. For me personally, I’m not the same person when I left” (Jasmine).

The bipolar theme of Changing/Static has two sub-themes. External changes describe what the participants perceive as changed in Cyprus upon their return; internal changes describe what specific changes participants experienced within themselves because of the sojourn.

#### ***External change***

One individual pointed to a major difference she perceived in the Cypriot people that may or may not have been there before she left for her sojourn to America. She states that Cypriots have:

“... Became more materialistic than they used to be (Penny).



Another participant discussed passionately how he views Cypriot society as changing:

And now we are importing McDonalds who has zero culture, it's a culture-destroyer because families won't stay home anymore and cook. They just say ok, let's just go to McDonalds. Because part of the food culture is the family sitting at home together eating. And it's destroying that and they are going to these McDonalds things which have zero culture. And if you bring in a zero into something, that something is going to become zero (Fred).

This same individual went on to describe other changes he sees in Cyprus:

I mean you can actually see that crime is going up. Divorce rates are rising. Everything that is rising over there is rising over here. And everything they are trying to fix in their countries is kinda now becoming a problem here. Which is, I mean, we are not picking the best things. We are picking up the bad stuff (Fred).

In contrast to the previous participant, this participant described how difficult it is to make changes in Cypriot society:

You know, everybody who is trying to change something, everybody else is like beat him up. It's like a system with a self-defense. You know like every system tries to preserve itself, you know the systems are built in such a way that

when something changes, they try to bring everything back to balance. That's how the Cyprus society is right now...So, I think something really drastic has to happen for major changes to happen (Lenny).

Another participant also shared how her perception of Cyprus had both changed and stayed the same, indicating the usefulness of using bipolar themes for this study:

But times are changing in this place too. Because that old generation is dying out so it's really what we and the generation below us, what we make of it in order for...and that's why things are changing. There's this...that old narrow-minded mentality is going but there's still certain attributes like manners and things like that that aren't changing. You know, they're more open to homosexuality and different races and things like that but there are other things that are always gonna be here. They'll never change you know (Ellen).

### ***Internal change***

Internal change is the second sub-theme, it concerns what participants view as changing within themselves because of their sojourn abroad. One participant described the importance of the years she spent abroad:

When I was in the States for those years, those really

important years, I think 19 to 20 whatever, those are really important years where you are growing up. You are learning to be independent, to have responsibility...So you've become this independent person. Essentially, I grew up there I think (Jasmine).

This participant continued to describe how adjustment is a developmental process:

I've learned to deal with it because there's nothing that I can do about it. I used to moan a lot and say "they make me sick." Now I can just switch off. That's just the way it is (Jasmine).

Another participant stated:

So that's one of the things that I think changed in these ten years whereas there are things that were always like that but I now see them differently because I have a different perspective (Mary).

This participant focused on age to further describe the sub-theme of perspective:

... I was 18 years old when I returned to Cyprus, it would be different the readjustment period and the settlement period, and the experience. You are younger, you don't think of a lot of things. I mean you return at 23, 24 years old and our personality has been modified, your character,

you change you are more mature, and there are many things that you see very differently than when you were 20 years old (Jasmine).

Of those participants who used Greek words during their interview, there seemed to be two instances where it was more likely for them to use Greek words. The first instance occurred when there was no accurate English word to describe what was intended. An example of this is the word “meson” which means political connections necessary to get a job. An example would be “Yeah. Meson sucks. Is there a word for it in English?” This quite clearly illustrates the difficulty this person had in finding a word in English to capture the meaning he was trying to convey and so he opted for the Greek word instead.

The second instance in which participants used Greek was when they were talking about the Greek language itself. Here they usually focused on the Cypriot dialect in comparison to the Greek dialect. One participant noted that she would say “Kai” (which is Greek) instead of the typically Cypriot “Je,” and she described how people in Cyprus would point out these differences in speech to her.

### **Thematic Structure of Study 2**

The object of this second investigation was to describe the thematic structure of the repatriation process. Analysis of interviews revealed that the structure of this experience includes a ground and five figures that arise from that ground. Each of the themes was interwoven

with one another, illustrating the complexity of the repatriation experience. Even though participants were asked about their experience of returning to the country where they studied/worked, they all described the experience of returning to their home country and then compared this to the country of their sojourn. At the end of the interview, participants often made a brief statement about their repatriation experience.

The experience of returning to the country of one's sojourn after going home is grounded in the theme of Cultural Comparison. Participants described re-entry experiences primarily by comparing their home country to the country where they had sojourned. It is from this ground that five bipolar themes arose as figural: 1. Conflict/Peace, 2. Reality/Idealization, 3. Freedom/Restriction, 4. Changing/Static, and 5. Comfort/Discomfort. The themes are bipolar because the participants' experience lies somewhere on a continuum. Taken together these themes form an overall structure of the experience as presented in Figure 2. The arrows on the figure indicate how the repatriation process is not static but instead is fluid and continues in a circular manner as the person leaves the home country and then repatriates.

**Ground: Cultural comparison** – “Knowing two countries is difficult because you are always comparing the two” (Francis). Participants described their experience of returning to the country of their sojourn primarily by comparing their home country to the country of sojourn. This participant's statement illustrates the extent of this varied

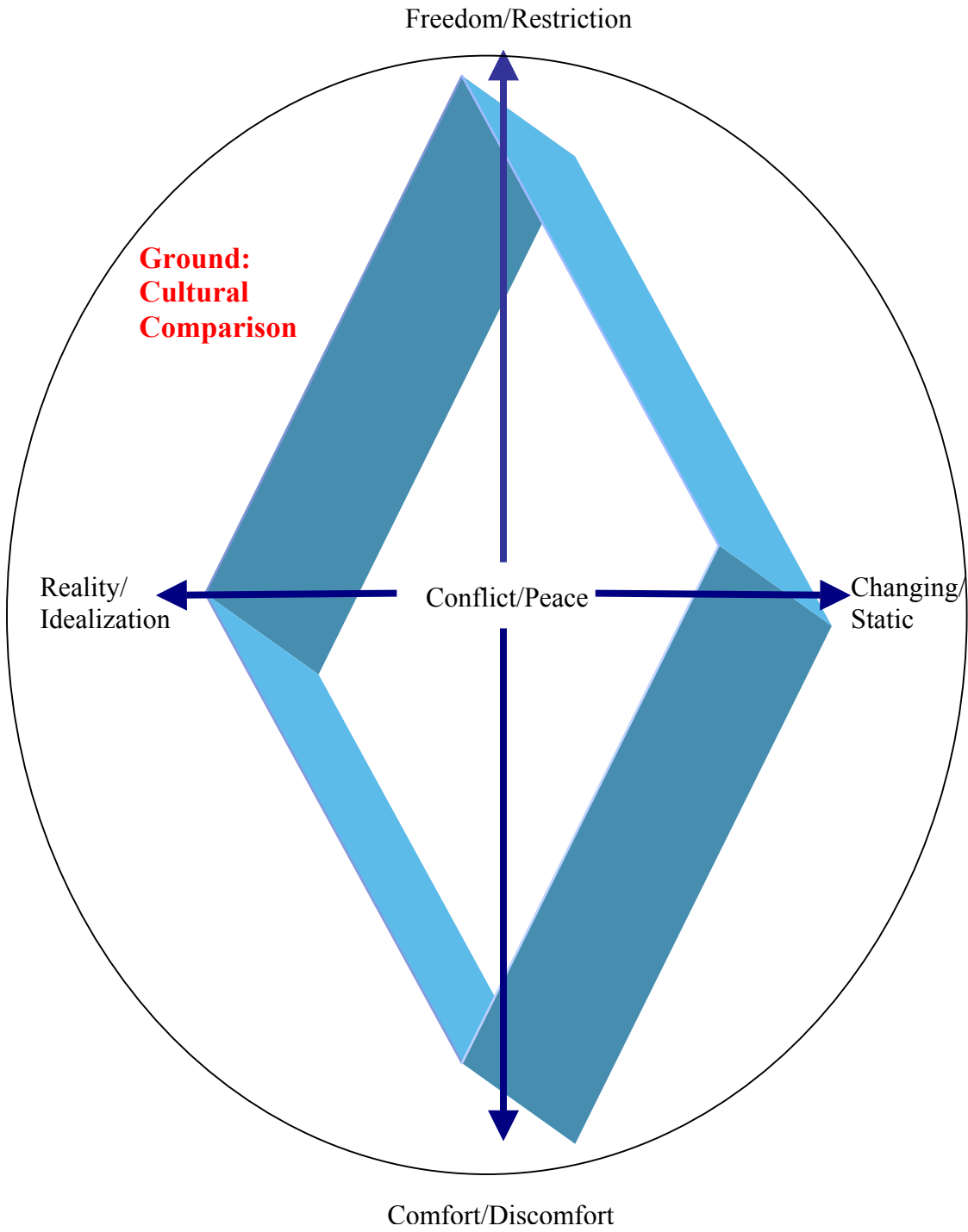


FIGURE 2:  
THEMATIC STRUCTURE OF THE REPATRIATION PROCESS

comparison:

I mean, compared to my experiences in America, home was exactly the opposite...It's just that I'm comparing what I experienced in the work environment over there and how reluctant people were over there (Larry).

Another participant described differences she perceived between the two cultures:

Also, it was nice to have to distances to travel. It was nice to have the options...travelling distances, not the same stuff over and over. The museums and the different culture...it's like the whole set of values is changing (Susan).

Another participant discussed her experience with friends and compared it to her experiences in her home country of Russia:

I made a lot of friends here. People who became a kind of family and I didn't have this experience in Russia (Olga).

A female participant summarized her experience:

The U.S. I would say is very different...Everyday life is easier here...some comforts here...I don't think there are so many crimes going on here (Natasha).

**Theme 1: Conflict/Peace** – “So it was definitely a struggle, especially at the beginning...in the first year everything seemed small and dusty...In the second year I still had that knot in my stomach” (Susan).

The theme of conflict/peace refers primarily to how participants feel about the two countries to which they have been exposed. Participants described in detail the personal struggle they feel between missing their home country and feeling as if they are unable to live in that country. This theme also encompasses feelings related to the people, institutions, or just the general way things function in their home country. Two sub-themes defined the theme of conflict: Frustration and Ambivalence.

### ***Frustration***

The first sub-theme, broadly defined, focuses on intense feelings of irritation, annoyance, and difficulties experienced at various institutions within the society of their home country and specific frustrations with the people that make up that society. One participant indicated:

Sometimes it's so annoying, but you know, maybe people that did not leave the country didn't notice...I was getting really irritated because I remember how it used to be to do these things and it was difficult for me (Troy).

A female participant described how difficult it was to re-enter her home country after being in the U.S., and then further described what it was like to return to the U.S.

Yeah, I came back to Russia. This was hard. This was hard...it's just exhausting...And here in U.S. I'm just normal (Olga).



Further highlighting the theme of frustration, a different participant stated:

[People in home country] had a really hard time understanding me...and they would tell me to my face that they had no idea what I was saying. So it got really frustrating...I had a really hard time adjusting to the German-ness of people again (Heidi).

A male participant further described this theme:

It became very frustrating to try to be the visionary aspect of my character, which was very open-minded, I had traveled, and I had seen the world. And now I was back home and wanted to do things that were maybe ahead of their time...It became very frustrating because I constantly had to battle against the system for the system to be a little bit more broad minded. Great resistance to accept anything beyond the status quo...and if the system wears you out enough, you just give up (Clarence).

### ***Ambivalence***

The second sub-theme within the theme of Conflict was a feeling of ambivalence participants described as being due to the fact that they feel some commitment to their home country but had difficulty actually living there after they have spent years abroad. One participant stated:

I had this almost panicky feeling at the pit of my stomach, like someone was grabbing my gut...I had this kind of a feeling deep down that I'd made a mistake and 'Oh my God what do I do now?'...And then there's my parents who are excited that I'm there and they're happy that I'm there and it's so hard to say to them 'um, you know, I don't really like it here (Susan).

This individual also felt the need to reconnect with her home country before she left and described how important it was to her to hold on to her cultural roots in order to pass them on to her own family:

It was a very intense experience...I had this finite time to reconnect with some of the positive things that I could find. I explored the island, drove around a lot and looked at stuff. I had a different appreciation of where I came from and who I was...I was able to appreciate a lot of the beauty that is there that I didn't appreciate before because I felt trapped in... I wish that my mom was closer... and my kid is American but I don't want him to not be connected with where I'm from. I think it's nice to have rich cultural roots. So I'm also kind of ambivalent about this religious thing because unless you are in college, the way to reconnect with other people of my ethnicity is to go to church (Susan).

Another participant talked openly of her ambivalence:

In the U.S. I feel like I am more appreciated...I'm just normal...But still on the other hand I don't feel that just because I'm here I don't want to know anything about my country anymore...I want to be connected to my country (Natasha).

An interesting metaphor was used by one participant in describing her experience:

I didn't feel comfortable here but I had that feeling I couldn't go back because I always would have wondered what would have happened. Like kind of between two chairs...it was like it wasn't quite comfortable here, I wasn't quite comfortable at home either. So I was in between two things...I would be on the two chairs, that I was trying to figure out where I was more comfortable and I wasn't really comfortable with either one. I wasn't comfortable with the thought of going home, but I wasn't comfortable with the thought of staying either (Heidi).

Another participant tackled the question of whether he would ever return to his country of origin:

I can't say if I'll be going back for sure. At this point in my life I'm saying I'd like to go back. That's what I'm saying and it's a true expression of what I feel. I would like to go

back. I can't say that I will go back. I don't know. I can't say it but I would like to go back (Clarence).

The uncertainty of the future and the lack of ability to commit to one country are illustrated by this participant:

So I do miss lots of things but at the same time my choice for now is to live here because I'm more comfortable here... But I don't know, I do get homesick because nothing can replace home anyway...I don't know, I miss both places. I miss all the friends, family, food, music, movies, something in the air that only home has. But at the same time I don't want to stand in lines everyday. I don't want to have problems with carrying cash...and it makes me think that maybe it's not a good thing that I came here because now I can't be completely happy anywhere (Clarence).

A different participant also provided a good example of the sub-theme of ambivalence:

I feel that being who I am and having to decide between two different countries is difficult. It's not such a black and white decision as I think it is (Francis).

Another participant provided a clear description of his experience of conflict:

There's some things that as I grow with age I think that one's roots are very very strong. They are very very dominant in a person. And the attraction back to those roots become stronger with age. Now the conflict that you end up with is that while you are being drawn back to your roots, at the same time when you've lived away for a while, your mind-set changes. You've lived in different surroundings, you get used to different things. And then you're in this tug-of-war, this internal tug-of-war to try and marry the two because you miss all these things that are related to your roots and then when you try to go back to them, you find out that there's a compatibility problem because you've been away long enough to have gotten used to a different way of life (Clarence).

Referring to Figure 2, it is clear that the theme of Conflict is connected to all the other themes. In every theme there is some level of conflict that the participant described which is delicately woven within the themes of Reality/Idealization, Freedom/Restriction, Changing/Static, and Comfort/Discomfort. As the other themes are described, it will become clearer how conflict is present in each of the themes.

**Theme 2: Reality/Idealization** – “And, I guess, because I've lived here for so long before I went back to college and developed my own ideas... And when you've been away from a place for a long time you get

this idealized view of things and you see things...you know, all the good stuff about it. And then when you go there and you realize ‘oh, there are stuff I forgot about, or stuff I didn’t realize before I left. Like there’s stuff that didn’t bother me before I left but it bothers me now that I’ve been away...so it’s definitely a struggle, especially in the beginning” (Larry).

Before some participants went back to their country of origin, they had certain expectations of what would be waiting for them. One participant illustrated this point:

Usually I think what happens in the human brain is that after a while you always tend to forget about the bad things and you think about the good things and the good things are the one’s that you miss. And then you go back and you say ‘oh, oh yeah, this is what I really couldn’t live in Cyprus (Troy).

Another participant described her experience of returning to her home country after being in the U.S.:

...It wasn’t as nice as I remembered it. There are lots of things, which you forget. For example, the garbage in the streets that was not picked up and it smelled. When you live there you start not paying attention to that but when you just came from here I was shocked. Then I started walking around and started remembering because I lived

there for many years. It's pretty much the way it looks. I think that's the main things that shocked me first (Olga).

Another participant noted:

Well, it was a nice surprise for me. I was expecting that I would have to learn new things, new tools and stuff like that, but I wasn't expecting that much improvement in the quality of work (Natasha).

**Theme 3: Freedom/Restriction** - "They were more open, they were more approachable [people in the U.S.]...I really liked this freedom and I realized that I'm able to do things...I don't know if it's what people call mentality or whatever, or how you perceive the world, how you understand the world, how you understand your place in the world" (Olga).

This theme refers to the freedoms that an individual reported as being aware of when he or she repatriated. These issues describe how each country made them feel specifically related to the freedoms that they perceived to have. Issues such as gender roles, open mindedness, and family for example are some that have emerged and will be illustrated.

This participant described her awareness of gender-roles within her country of origin:

And going back there I think what I felt a lot was angry.

That I realized that women were still objectified and treated as less than human sometimes...when I moved back home

it didn't occur to me that these things would bother me...I guess on the surface things seemed to have progressed a little bit as far as you know, society and people's attitudes. On the other hand, a lot of things stayed the same, like the way women are treated... We talk in this country [U.S.] about how women are still sometimes treated unfairly in the workplace but in Cyprus it's so blatant...I just have a different perspective of the world...I had left behind people who are open-minded and fun to be with (Susan).

Another participant described a frustrating experience related to the rules of England (the country where she studied) that she noticed after she went back to Cyprus:

Another thing I had a hard time with was that in England things go in an order and they go in the same order all the time... you have to climb the ladder and their rules...you cannot bend rules. And that makes a lot of people really inflexible too (Francis).

Another participant discussed the business spirit of people in his home country:

It's very hard to make people step out of their own comfort zone... Looking at something totally new throws them off and makes them feel uncertain (Troy).



An interesting choice of words was used by this next participant in describing the simplicity of American life which she later compared to the complexity of life in her home country of Russia:

Everything is explained and it's put in your mouth and you just have to swallow it...it's a country with just some comforts here, it's more simple here. When I went back home, it was a completely different experience. You have to ask or you have to know or you have to...so it's more simple here (Natasha).

This same participant spoke of life and family in her home country:

So in Russia you are just existing so you are not living the way you want to, but trying to feed yourself and pay bills and that's pretty much all...but in Russia family is more, I don't want to say more important, but wife and husband is like one person. They have everything together. And they help their kids no matter how old they are... And the kids help their parents (Natasha).

Another participant focused on how accepting people are of diversity in the different countries:

People are so much more open-minded in England compared to Cyprus...in England they accept the way people dress and the way people are. For example, anyone

over the age of thirty who is not married is seen to have a problem in Cyprus (Francis).

**Theme 4: Changing/Static** – “I think first of all I hated it here [U.S.] for the first two months because everything was so different, like even the food. Just absolutely everything. Then I started getting used to it and then when you actually get to know it better, the real life, I started to like it a lot actually” (Olga).

The theme of changing/static refers to a description of how the participant and his/her home country has changed (or has not changed) over time. There are two sub-themes within the theme of Changing/Static: Adjustment and Identity.

#### *Adjustment*

The first sub-theme is that of adjustment. Adjustment refers to a process participants described as undergoing when they returned to the home country or to the country of sojourn. Included in the description of this sub-theme are the changes participants noticed in either their home country or the country of their sojourn. Initially, participants often spoke of the adjustments they had to make in the country of the sojourn, and later they spoke of adjustments that they had to make to their home country. The first example is by a participant who spoke of readjustment to the country of his sojourn:

Maybe the change was like gradual, I don't know... I remember how it used to be to do these things and it was

difficult for me...at work I noticed that in the years that I was away the company is like a living organism, things changed, things improved (Larry).

Another participant described her initial reaction to returning home after being abroad:

I noticed how much people had changed and how...and on the other hand how some of the things stayed the same. I guess on the surface things seemed to have progressed a little bit as far as society and peoples attitudes. On the other hand a lot of things stayed the same...So it was hard for me and my husband to find people that we were comfortable with and people that you didn't have to do the fake small talk with and just feel comfortable with. So it was definitely a struggle especially at the beginning...As soon as you get there you are in a daze for a while. And then it sort of sinks in (Susan).

Another participant talked of her feelings of going home.

I was numb when I came back to Russia. I couldn't understand anything; nothing made sense to me anymore. Wow, this is probably the best way to describe it. Nothing made sense to me anymore (Olga).

This same participant also depicted the theme of adjustment as a series of steps:

Well, I didn't have a culture shock, which was nice...the culture shock that I had initially when I came to the U.S. Initially when I came to the U.S. I went through the first few weeks where it was all fun and all new and then I crashed and burned. I was really homesick. And then the second time when I came back that was not the case. And I had a much easier time adjusting (Olga).

Another participant went on to talk of changes within her home country:

Seeing how things have changed because they have changed incredibly. And it shocks me every time I go there how Americanized a lot of things have gotten (Heidi).

Language is also an issue some participants raise as something they must adjust to once they have left their home country and stayed abroad:

So often I feel like an outsider there [home country of Germany]. When I go over there it feels awkward seeing TV in German...And I always feel that when I speak German it feels like I'm speaking a foreign language. Like when I learned foreign languages, it felt like I was speaking Spanish or English. But it only takes me about a day to adjust...that usually goes away after a little while when I'm

there but in the first couple of days I'll be in the adjustment phase (Heidi).

Another individual described an interesting phenomenon:

Also, my experience in living here [U.S.] and then going back to Liberia...after four weeks there I'm ready to come back. I'm ready to come back to the U.S. I don't really know why that is. I guess I've gotten homesick the other way around (Troy).

### ***Identity***

The second sub-theme within the major theme of Changing/Static is identity. Identity refers to changes that occur in one's personality as a consequence of time and exposure to a new culture. Individuals describe themselves in a new way due to various experiences that have shaped their (new) identity. One participant described the experience of her interactions with others:

But sometimes you get reacquainted with people and you realize that you've changed and they've changed or you've changed and they've stayed the same (Olga).

The same participant described her experiences when she returned to her home country after being in the U.S. and then contrasted this with her experience of going back to the U.S. This is a good example of how the participant's definition of home changed:

I was so very much unhappy when I came back to Russia. I felt so much myself here in the States. In September I came back here and as I was approaching D.C. and about to land I almost started crying. And I didn't expect myself to have this strong emotion. I was also surprised of how glad I was to be back. 'Now I'm back! I'm back home!' That's how I felt (Olga).

Another participant illustrated the sub-theme of identity by coming to the realization that her ethnicity was a large part of her identity for a long time:

I just learned that to view myself, to see a lot of things, to accept the fact that I was the way I was because I am German. Because I always thought of myself as Heidi and then as German somewhere behind that...Here in the U.S. I first realized 'Oh my God, I'm me because I'm German.' And I kind of looked at this and asked 'what do I do that makes me different?' I realized that I changed a lot during that year (Heidi).

Another participant spoke of changes in her behavior, which led to changes in her identity:

I just started trying things and said 'it's not so bad' and then I actually started like them. I mean only one month ago I started drinking ice tea (Natasha).

The following participant described his culture and the role that men play in that culture in addition to how his identity is defined and whether it fits into that culture:

The country where I come from, is a very close-knit society. And usually people that come from a family background that is involved in business are expected to step into their father's shoes at some stage in their lives. So the natural thing for me to do was for me to come back and assume a role within the structure over there and what my father had created. Which was a great thing to be able to do. It was not only an opportunity but also a kind of honorable thing to do, it was an honor to be able to continue what was there through the family roots. Well, what I soon found out was that I had probably more energy than what the situation could take. So that led to me starting a number of business – started businesses that complimented my involvement in the family business. And...which was a very very interesting phase in my life because it gave me the ability to create things on my own and also really find my true identity of being who I was rather than the son of my father. Which I think is a very critical thing in every person's life, not just every man's

life, but every person's life to really find their true identity (Clarence).

**Theme: 5 Comfort/Discomfort** – “I felt more comfortable working with people in the U.S. than with people in my own country's work environments...the things that I'm doing here are meaningful to me and I feel connected with people” (Larry).

The fifth theme that emerged was that of Comfort/Discomfort. This theme refers to how participants feel either when they are in the country of their sojourn or in their country of origin.

A participant described her experience of returning to the U.S. after being in her home country of Russia for one year:

Being back here, well, it really felt good to be back. It really did, it really felt good. And I just...I felt really liberated (Olga).

This same participant spoke of her experience with language in the U.S. and how it changed over time which allowed her to feel more comfortable:

There was the accent there when I would say certain things. Initially I did have a problem with it. No matter how hard I'd try I could never say it perfect. Now I say, 'well, fine, who cares?' And people still...I mean I still mispronounce things, I say the wrong word, it comes out and I'm like 'actually I meant to say something else, sorry, it just



happens.' I've gotten more comfortable with that now  
(Olga).

Another participant talked of how she did certain things that  
Americans did and how it became more and more comfortable for her over  
time.

So now I'm drinking ice tea, I guess I'm getting  
Americanized... I started dressing more casually. I still  
cannot do everything that American girls do but I'm getting  
more Americanized. It's comfortable (Natasha).

## **CHAPTER V**

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this chapter is to compare the results from both studies and to relate them to previous research in the field. This will include a discussion of previous research and theory, which will then be followed by how their findings are similar or dissimilar to those of the current study. Next will be a conclusion emphasizing the significance of the results and suggestions of what can be done in future research to enrich this field of cross-cultural study.

#### **Comparison of Study 1 and Study 2**

To highlight the impact of re-entry, it is necessary to consider what participants chose to focus on during the interviews. In Study 2, when asked to talk about specific experiences of returning to the U.S., participants spoke little of this experience and focused instead on the experience of going home and the challenges they encountered there. What may be implied from this selection of topics is that the most figural experience for them was not the experience of returning to the U.S., but that of going home in the first place. In this regard, participants in Study 2 produced very similar descriptions to those of Study 1. Both groups of participants focused, therefore, on the experience of returning to their home country. For instance, cultural comparisons were made between the home country and the country in which they sojourned on many different

domains such as work, social interactions, and relationships to name a few. Feelings of freedom and/or restriction also were discussed in both Study 1 and 2, where most participants felt more freedom in the country of their sojourn than in their home country.

Participants in both studies also described their experience of change (or no change) within the home country. Both groups spoke of ‘culture shock’ they experienced upon return to their home country although the participants in Study 1 spoke of attempts to adjust to the environment. This concern is in contrast to participants in Study 2, who spoke of their feelings of discomfort in their home country, which precipitated a move back to the country of their sojourn. These participants spoke of their expectations, which often were an idealized perception of what home would be like upon their return. For participants of Study 2, the ‘reality’ of home was described as disappointing and this led to the beginnings of what participants described as an “internal conflict.” This conflict was often between the comforts associated with the new culture (the place of their sojourn) and the difficulties of leaving behind their old culture (which was no longer what they expected). Some people described in symbolic terms how they saw themselves sitting on a fence between the two countries or as having one foot in each country, thus, making it difficult to have a solid footing in either place.

### **Reverse culture-shock**

Uehara's (1983) definition of reverse culture shock is very applicable to the results found in this study:

Temporal psychological difficulties that a returnee experiences in the initial stage of the adjustment process at home after having lived abroad... (p.420).

The results of both studies are congruent with this definition as many participants talked specifically of the "culture shock" they experienced upon their return home and the difficulties that came with it. They described how different things looked at home and spoke of intense feelings, frustration being a common one, when trying to readjust to being home. Many participants spoke of how their social interactions changed at home and became less fulfilling with their friends. They also spoke of how their job experiences were challenging in their home country especially in getting a job (as they needed political connections many times in order to get a job).

### **Acculturation and re-acculturation**

Martin (1984) identified three differences between acculturation and re-acculturation. Although the current studies did not look at the acculturation experience, the re-acculturation experience was an essential part of the studies. Martin first talked about different expectations the sojourner had when going to a different culture and how this expectation

was met with a very different reality when he/she returned home. It was found that the returning sojourner did not expect to go through an adjustment period when returning home, and this paradoxically led one to have adjustment difficulties just as Martin described.

The second difference Martin discussed was the concept of change. It was stressed that the individual is confronted with changes in the home environment as well as changes within themselves such as changes in beliefs, values, and behaviors. Participants of both studies spoke of changes specifically related to their home country as well as in themselves. Some participants spoke passionately about how their country had not changed during their sojourn, which surprised and often frustrated them. Some participants spoke of how they initially thought that changes had occurred in their home country but later realized that there were no such changes. In fact, they saw that it was the changes within themselves that had caused them to see their home country in a different light.

Martin makes the point that the age that most individuals go abroad to study is the peak developmental period regarding their worldview. This would influence them significantly upon their return as the sojourners would be considerably changed leading them to view home as even more foreign. To illustrate Martin's point, some participants in both studies spoke of how their values were greatly affected by their sojourn and how they saw this as a consequence of the influential age that they went abroad.

### **Cultural comparisons and conflict**

Raschio (1987) highlighted the difficulty of the re-entry process for sojourners. Raschio also stated that sojourners contrasted the two cultures and evaluated their own culture as an outsider would. This is consistent with the results of the current studies. The ground was Cultural Comparison in both studies. All themes emerged from this ground, highlighting its centrality for the participants. Participants in the current studies spoke of situations where they felt that they did not belong or did not feel comfortable in either place. Clearly illustrating the difficulty of the re-entry process is the instance where one participant stated that she had one foot in each place and, therefore, did not feel settled in either.

### **Gender and re-entry**

The study by Brabant, Palmer, and Gramling (1990), found that females faced more problems upon re-entry since cultural expectations were often more conservative in the home country. There are many instances where women in the present studies spoke of the difficulties they faced upon re-entry to their home country that are consistent with Brabant et al's results. For example, some participants focused on how women were objectified in his/her home country or how women were only valued as wives rather than as individuals.

### **Re-entry coping styles**

Adler (1976, 1981) developed a model in which four coping styles emerged and each was used to describe the re-entry experience. In general,

it was found that most participants in the current studies used the coping styles characteristic of the alienated or the rebellious re-enterers. For instance, this coping style is characteristic of one who reacts negatively to the home environment leading to adjustment being a very difficult process. In fact, it could be stated that for the participants in Study 2, this process of re-adjustment was so difficult, that the individual chose to leave the home country and go back to the country of their sojourn.

### **Assimilation and accommodation**

The results of the studies support Piaget's theory of cognitive development. It can be asserted, that the returning student may be trying to adapt by using assimilation, which means he/she is trying to understand his/her current home culture in terms of schemes that were modified through years of being in a foreign country. Assimilation however, may not be effective in dealing with this 'new' data that is set before the returning student. The data is new because although the sojourner is returning home, the environment is now different due to internal changes that have occurred over time as well as some changes within the environment. Dealing with this new data on the basis of schemes, which are comprised of information from the country of sojourn, may be what is contributing to the re-entry culture-shock.

What would be more beneficial, perhaps, for the returning student is to adapt using what Piaget called accommodation, where the returning sojourner modifies her/his current schemes in order to adjust to the new

information presented in his/her home culture. This may bring about more of a calm state of equilibrium and lead the individual to readjust to being home. The state of disconnection described by many of the participants in this study suggests they have difficulties when they first re-enter their home culture; that is, they are in a state of disequilibrium. Some of these individuals may remain in this state and this may be what leads them back to the country of their sojourn.

### **Conclusions**

The purpose of this study was to describe two different types of experience. The significance of this research concerns the fact that more and more people are studying abroad and are unprepared for life upon return to their home country. Several of these individuals return home and do not feel comfortable there anymore. These individuals have seen significant changes in themselves and/or in their home culture and have concluded that their needs can no longer be met by their home culture. This often raises significant concerns for these individuals and they are often faced with many internal conflicts where they battle between life in the country of their sojourn and life in their country of origin. The exposure to a different culture is oftentimes described in bittersweet ways. On the one hand, participants state that they are happy to have been exposed to a new way of life. On the other hand, they state that they currently feel troubled by not knowing which place they belong to, which place they call home.



The present research study was phenomenological in nature with the goal being to describe the re-entry experience. Hopefully, these results can be a starting point for other researchers who are interested in the field to find out more about the re-entry process and also to find ways to help with the transition process back to the sojourner's country of origin. Hopefully various strategies can be put into place that will help the student who is returning home deal with what some of the difficulties and challenges he/she may face. It will also be helpful to talk about their expectations of going back home and to perhaps talk to others that have already gone home and discuss their experience. The objective would be to prepare the returning student so that re-entry culture shock will not be traumatic and so that the adjustment process can be facilitated where the individual can, in essence, be re-aculturated into his/her home country.

A possible way to decrease re-entry culture shock is to provide a debriefing seminar or workshop for the returning student or businessperson. One may attend this workshop before one leaves the country of sojourn. Here, individuals who are knowledgeable about the re-entry process and re-entry culture-shock can provide information to the sojourner who is often unsuspecting of such upcoming events and experiences. The debriefing workshop may also be run in the home country of the individual soon after his/her return. It also may be helpful to have individuals who have already returned and been through the re-acculturation process themselves to attend these workshops. These

individuals may provide advice to the newly re-entered individual. It may also be useful for the returned student or businessperson to have on-going social support until he/she feels more comfortable in the adjustment to life in the home country. Social support can be in the form of groups and social gatherings where individuals of similar circumstances speak of their experiences.

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## **APPENDICES**

APPENDIX A  
RESULTS OF BRACKETING INTERVIEW

## APPENDIX A

### Results of Bracketing Interview

I participated in a bracketing interview in which I was asked the same question as my participants. A summary of that interview is presented here in order to describe my experience of returning to Cyprus after my extended stay abroad. While identifying the themes emerging from my experience does not eliminate bias, it does clarify what presumptions I held during the interview and thematization process.

The themes found in the bracketing interview emerged from the ground of Cultural Comparison. I described most of my experiences as they related to my experiences in Cyprus and how these compared to my experiences in America. In addition, I described my experiences in Cyprus as an individual who was raised in a non-Greek speaking country and described instances of discrimination I and my fellow non-Greek speaking cohort were confronted with.

Four themes emerged from the ground. The first theme was that of Shock, which focused on the mentality of the Cypriot people. The second theme was of being Greek Cypriot versus English-Cypriot. Here I described instances of being discriminated against because Greek was my second language. The third theme was Restriction versus Independence. Here I had respect for Cyprus and its traditions, but also felt that these traditions had expectations of women that were restricting my

independence. I described myself as rebelling from these expectations and preferring to choose a more independent lifestyle.

The fourth theme was Unprofessional atmosphere versus Societal need, which focused on whether my future aspirations would include going back to Cyprus. I felt that Cyprus provided nothing more than stagnation for my career and I also talked about “meson” which was the need for political connections in order to get a job. This conflicts with the fact that I thought that Cyprus needs professionals in my field and I wanted to provide for my country.

APPENDIX B  
INFORMED CONSENT IN ENGLISH

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Informed Consent (English)**

Title of Project: A phenomenological investigation. Returning home and leaving again: A sojourners' experience.

This research is designed to investigate the experiences of people who have reentered the country of the sojourn after their stay at home.

Individuals may have gone abroad due to educational or work experiences and have returned home. Now, after at least one year at home, these individuals are back in the country where they were for work or education.

It is your option to terminate your participation at any time without penalty or prejudice to you. The investigation involves two parts:

- 1) Explanation of the study and gaining of your informed consent, and
- 2) A discussion of your experience returning back to the country of your sojourn.

The length of the interview is anticipated to be approximately one hour, however, you may take any amount of time you would like, up to two hours. The interview questions will be open-ended, informal and conversational in nature. The interviews will be scheduled at a mutually convenient time at a local library.

Your participation in this study entails no unusual risks or discomforts. A dissertation based on this research will be prepared as partial fulfillment of degree requirements in a doctoral psychology



program. The knowledge gained from this research may be presented to others through published works and/or presentations and will be a resource for future scholarly work in this area.

The only potential risk is your identification however; confidentiality will be maintained, as self-selected pseudonyms will be used in the interview. The interview process requires audio-taping of the interview and preparation of a transcript of the interview (this is where the tape of the interview is listened to and typed). The audio-tapes will be retained in a secure location at an office located at Room 439 Claxton Complex, University of Tennessee, Knoxville until June 15<sup>th</sup> 2002. After the transcripts are completed, the tapes will be erased. The transcripts will be retained in a locked file cabinet for three years at the University of Tennessee in Room 439 Claxton Complex. It is your prerogative to review your audio-tapes upon request at a mutually agreed upon time and place, between the interview and when the tapes are erased. After that point, if you so request, a copy of the transcript of your interview can be provided to you until the end of the three year period, after which all records will be destroyed. Every precaution will be made to insure confidentiality of records. This informed consent statement will also be kept in the aforementioned locked filing cabinet in Room 439 Claxton Complex, with the transcripts for three years and then destroyed.

I have read the above statement and agree to participate in the research. In addition, I am aware that:

1. My name and audio-tapes will remain confidential and the tapes will be erased after transcripts of them are prepared.
2. I am entitled to have any further inquiries answered regarding the procedures.
3. Participation is voluntary and I may withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time and for any reason without penalty. For further information about this study or your role in it, contact:

Victoria Christofi  
The University of Tennessee  
Room 102 Claxton Addition  
Knoxville, TN 37996  
(865) 974-5131

4. No royalties are due the participant for any subsequent publication.
5. The primary researcher and other researchers who are graduate students or faculty at the University of Tennessee will review the transcripts for significance.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX C  
INFORMED CONSENT IN GREEK

## APPENDIX C

### ΕΙΔΟΠΟΙΗΜΕΝΗ ΣΥΓΚΑΤΑΘΕΣΗ

**ΤΙΤΛΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΜΕΛΕΤΗΣ. Η εμπειρία των Κυπρίων που επέστρεψαν στην πατρίδα τους μετά από μακράν παραμονή στο εξωτερικό.**

Αυτή η έρευνα σκοπό έχει να ερευνήσει τις εμπειρίες του πληθυσμού που άφησαν την πατρίδα που γεννήθηκαν και μεγάλωσαν και τώρα επέστρεψαν. Η απουσία τους μπορεί να οφείλεται σε λόγους ακαδημαϊκούς (να σπουδάσουν στο εξωτερικό) ή σε άλλους λόγους (διαμένοντας σε άλλη χώρα και δουλεύοντας εκεί για ένα χρονικό διάστημα). Η παραμονή τους στο εξωτερικό πρέπει να είναι τουλάχιστο για τρία χρόνια.

Είναι δική σας εκλογή να τερματίσετε την συμμετοχή σας οποιαδήποτε ώρα χωρίς ποινή ή προκατάληψη σε σας.

Η έρευνα περιέχει δύο μέρη.

- 1). Εξήγησης της μελέτης, και κερδίζοντας από την ειδοποιημένη συγκατάθεση σας, και
- 2). Μία συζήτηση των εμπειριών σας από τον επαναπατρισμό σας.

Η ώρα της συνέντευξης προβλέπεται να πάρει περίπου μίαν ώρα, ωστόσο μπορείτε να πάρετε όση ώρα θέλετε, μέχρι δύο ώρες.

Οι ερωτήσεις της συνέντευξης θα είναι ανεπίσημες και συνδιαλέξιμες. Οι συνεντεύξεις θα προγραμματισθούν σε αμοιβαίο κατάλληλο χώρο και ώρα για σας, και αυτόν που θα πάρει την συνέντευξη. Η συμμετοχή σας σε αυτή την μελέτη δεν θα επιφέρει οτιδήποτε κινδύνους ή δυσφορίες. Το ερωτηματολόγιο βασιζόμενο σε αυτή την

έρευνα , θα ετοιμασθεί σαν μέρος των απαιτήσεων του προγράμματος για το διδακτορικό δίπλωμα στη ψυχολογία. Οι γνώσεις που θα παρθούν από αυτή την έρευνα, μπορούν να παρουσιαστούν σε άλλους, δια μέσου δημοσιευμένων εργασιών η παρουσιάσεων και θα είναι βοήθημα για μελλοντική σχολική εργασία σ' αυτό το τομέα.

Ο μόνος πιθανός κίνδυνος είναι η εξακρίβωση της ταυτότητα σας, ωστόσο η εμπιστευτικότητα θα παραμείνει αφού θα χρησιμοποιηθούν ψευδώνυμα για την συνέντευξη.

Η πορεία της συνέντευξης απαιτεί μαγνητοσκόπηση της συνέντευξης και προετοιμασία αντιγραφής της (είναι σε αυτή την περίπτωση που η μαγνητοσκόπηση ακούγεται και γράφεται) Οι μαγνητοσκοπήσεις θα παραμείνουν σε ασφαλές μέρος στην διεύθυνση Λάρνακα Κύπρος, μέχρι την 9η Ιανουαρίου, και μετά στη διεύθυνση: University of Tennessee, Knoxville, U.S.A. Μετά που θα τελειώσει η αντιγραφή, οι ταινίες θα διαγραφούν. Μετά από αυτή την διαδικασία, αν θέλετε μπορείτε να πάρετε αντίγραφο της συνέντευξη σας, σε περίοδο τριών χρόνων, μετά από αυτή την περίοδο όλες οι σημειώσεις θα καταστραφούν. Όλες οι προφυλάξεις θα παρθούν για να εξασφαλιστεί η εμπιστευτικότητα των σημειώσεων. Αυτή η ειδοποιημένη συγκατάθεση θα παραμείνει κλειστή σε κλειδωμένο αρχείο στο University of Tennessee in room University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN 37996 για τρία χρόνια και μετά θα καταστραφεί.

Έχω διαβάσει την πιο πάνω δήλωση και συμφωνώ να συμμετέχω σε αυτή την έρευνα. Επιπρόσθετα είμαι πληροφορημένος/η ότι

1. Το όνομά μου και η μαγνητοσκόπηση θα παραμείνουν εμπιστευτικά και οι ταινίες θα διαγραφούν μετά που θα ετοιμαστούν οι αντιγραφές.

2. Έχω το δικαίωμα οποιεσδήποτε απορίες μου να απαντηθούν.
3. Η συμμετοχή είναι εθελοντική και μπορώ να αποσύρω την συγκατάθεση μου και να διακόψω την συμμετοχή μου οποιαδήποτε ώρα και για οποιοδήποτε λόγο χωρίς ποινή. Για περισσότερες πληροφορίες για αυτή την μελέτη η τον ρόλο σας σε αυτή, επικοινωνήστε :

**Victoria Christofi**

**The University of Tennessee**

**Room 102 Claxton Addition**

**Knoxville, TN 37996**

(865) 974-5131

4. Δεν θα υπάρξουν δικαιώματα στον συμμετέχοντα από επακόλουθες εκδόσεις.
5. Οι αντιγραφές θα μελετηθούν από τον ερευνητή και άλλους ερευνητές δια το νόημα.

Υπογραφή.....

Ημερομηνία.....

Όνομα .....

APPENDIX D  
RESEARCH GROUP MEMBERS PLEDGE

## APPENDIX D

### Research Group Members Pledge

A Phenomenological Investigation. Returning Home and Leaving Again: A Sojourner's Experience

As a member of this project's research team, I understand that I will be reading transcripts of confidential interviews. The information in these transcripts has been revealed by research subjects who participated in this project in good faith that their interviews would remain strictly confidential. I understand that I have a responsibility to honor this confidentiality agreement. I hereby agree not to share any information in these transcripts with anyone except the primary researcher of this project, Victoria Christofi (609-8974); the research advisor, Dr. Charles Thompson (974-4178); or other members of this research team. Any violation of this agreement would constitute a serious breach of ethical standards and I pledge not to do so.

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Research Team Member

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Date

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Research Team Member

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Date



APPENDIX E

TRANSLATOR'S PLEDGE OF CONFIDENTIALITY

**APPENDIX E**

**Translator’s Pledge of Confidentiality**

A Phenomenological Investigation. Returning Home and Leaving Again: A Sojourner’s Experience

As a bilingual consultant, I understand that I will be reading transcripts of confidential interviews. The information in these transcripts has been revealed by research subjects who participated in this project in good faith that their interviews would remain strictly confidential. I understand that I have a responsibility to honor this confidentiality agreement. I hereby agree not to share any information in these transcriptions with anyone except the primary researcher of this project, Victoria Christofi (609-8974); the research advisor, Dr. Charles L. Thompson (974-4178); or other bilingual consultants. Any violation of this agreement would constitute a serious breach of ethical standards and I pledge not to do so.

Bilingual Consultant

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Bilingual Consultant

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX F  
PARTICIPANT PROFILES

## APPENDIX F

### Participant Profiles

#### Study 1

##### Harriet

Harriet is a 27-year-old female. Harriet lived in Cyprus until she was 19 years old and then she went to Australia for four years. At the time of the interview Harriet had been living in Cyprus for four years.

##### Penny

Penny is a 27-year-old female. Penny lived in Cyprus until she was 20 years old and then she went to America. Eight years later, Penny returns to Cyprus. At the time of the interview Penny had been living in Cyprus for one year.

##### Madeline

Madeline is a 50-year-old female. Madeline lived in Cyprus until she was 25 years old and then went to Zimbabwe for 10 years. At the time of the interview Madeline had been living in Cyprus for 15 years.

##### Mary

Mary is a 29-year-old female. She was raised in Cyprus and then went to Greece for four years. At the time of the interview Mary had been living in Cyprus for six years.

Ellen

Ellen is a 27-year-old female. She was raised in Cyprus and then went to America for four years. At the time of the interview Ellen had been living in Cyprus for five years.

Jasmine

Penelope is a 26-year-old female. She was raised in Cyprus and then went to England for five years. At the time of the interview Penelope had been living in Cyprus for three years.

Fred

Fred is a 26-year-old male. He was raised in Cyprus and then went to America for six years. At the time of the interview Fred had been living in Cyprus for a year.

Lenny

Lenny is a 28-year-old male. He was raised in Cyprus and then went to America for seven years. At the time of the interview Lenny had lived in Cyprus for a year.

**Study 2**

Susan

Susan is a 33 year old female. She was raised in Cyprus, went to America for her studies. Six years later Susan left America to go back to Cyprus. Two years later Susan returned to America.

### Olga

Olga is a 26 year old female. She was raised in Russia, went to America to study. Four years later Olga returned to Russia for 8 months after which she returned to America.

### Natasha

Natasha is a 32 year old female. She was raised in Russia, went to America to study for 3 years and then returned to Russia. One year later Natasha returned to America.

### Larry

Larry is a 33 year old male. He was raised in Cyprus, went to America to study for 6 years and then returned to Cyprus. Four years later, Larry returned to America.

### Francis

Francis is a 30 year old female. She was raised in Cyprus, went to England for 3 years and then returned to Cyprus. Three years later she went back to England.

### Heidi

Heidi is a 24 year old female. She was raised in Germany, went to America for 3 years and then returned to Germany. One year later Heidi returned to America.

### Clarence

Clarence is a 45 year old male. He was raised in Cyprus, went to America for 4 years and then returned to Cyprus. Five years later he went back to America.

### Troy

Troy is a 38 year old male. He was raised in Liberia, went to America for 5 years and then returned to Liberia. Three years later he went back to America.

APPENDIX G  
SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT



## APPENDIX G

### Sample Transcript

I: Now that you are back in America after going home, what are some specific experiences that stand out to you?

P: From being back home?

I: Uh ha.

P: Eh, I guess one of the main things that really stands out for me is how much...to be a little general about it first I guess... one of the first things is how much the place had changed and then how much I had changed and the changes were not very compatible. I used to go home for vacations and it was fun to go home and see my old friends and all that stuff and hanging out. But once you go to live there as a day in day out kind of stuff, how much people had changed and how...and on the other hand how some of the things stayed the same. I guess on the surface things seemed to have progressed a little bit as far as you know, society and people's attitudes. On the other hand a lot of things stayed the same like the way women are treated.

I: Is that there?

P: Yeah. And I guess because I've lived here for so long before I went back and gone to college and developed my own ideas about how things should be (laugh)...not about how things should be but I do have very strong sense of self I guess and of being a woman and what it means. And going back there I think what I felt a lot of was angry. That I realized

that women were still objectified and treated as less than human sometimes. Some of the other things that stood out I guess the family thing...I remember growing up in my childhood and feeling very...lets say the extended family it's nice to grow up with grandparents and aunts and uncles and all that stuff which still exists to some extent today in Cyprus but it changed a lot. Obviously, you know, women are working which is wonderful but it seemed to me that, yes they are working but they are still expected to do all the stuff they did before they were working. So the way that this was solved, it wasn't really solved, it's just that everybody has a maid (laugh) and that really struck me as really surprising. That every single family has a maid. And it's the whole social thing of how you treat, first of all these people that are in your house and a lot of people treat them like dirt, but also it's just the whole idea of kids not being raised not by families but by maids. A lot of my old friends, their kids are being raised by their maid. And that was their solution to this whole: what do we do, we are both working now? A student at the school I was teaching back in Cyprus threw a piece of paper on the floor. He did it on purpose and I made him pick it up. I asked him if he would do this at his own house and his response was "no because my maid would pick it up." So it's like the whole set of values is changing and I don't know what these kids are gonna be like when they grow up. I mean one of the reasons that I wanted to go back America was because I thought it was a better place for a family, you know. And to me in my eyes it really wasn't.

I: Mmm, yeah it sounds like it was different to what you thought it was gonna be.

P: Oh yeah. (laugh). Quite different from what I thought it was going to be.

I: You mentioned that you were angry. Did you want to say some more about that?

P: Yeah, I do remember spending a lot of time feeling upset and angry. And it was just the way...I mean we talk in this country about how women are still sometimes treated unfairly in the workplace but there it's just so blatant. Um, it's not just in the workplace, it's everywhere. I just didn't like the way men were treating me because I was a woman or talking to me sometimes. It was sort of...I don't even know how to describe it...it was talking down or um...just...like acting like I'm too dumb to understand some things, you know (laugh). Yeah, I guess talking down. That was one of the reasons why I was angry a lot. Another reason had to do with religion as well and being Greek and back in Cyprus when applying to jobs they ask you for your religion which is you know, illegal here. And you know, people pray in schools, you know, schools go to church to take the kids to take communion. The whole no separation of church and state really bugged me.

I: Wow. Yeah it sounds very different to the way it is here.

P: Oh absolutely. And I didn't even think of these things you know, when I moved back home it didn't occur to me that these things would

bother me, or it didn't even occur to me that these things would exist I guess, it didn't occur to me at all. I just had this notion that...I don't know what I was thinking (laugh both P and I). But these things never occurred to me at all when we moved back. And when you've been away from a place for a place for a very long time you get this idealized view of things and you see things...you know, all the good stuff about it. And then when you go there and you realize oh there stuff I forgot about, or stuff I didn't realize before I left. Like there's stuff that didn't bother me before I left but it bothers me now that I've away.

I:       Okay, so before you left it was just kinda there it was happening but it didn't really stand out to you but since you've been away and seen some other ways of things working when you went back it was kinda in your face.

P:       Yeah, exactly! Like I know it's always been there and it didn't occur to me that there could be another way of doing things. And if you haven't experienced anything else, then you can't really compare it to anything. You know, you don't really question it, you know. But I definitely questioned a lot of stuff when I was there. I remember being a kid and church being a big part of our lives definitely, people went to church and took communion and schools took you to church you know, at Christmas and Easter. But when I went back, maybe it was just me, but it seemed like everybody had rediscovered religious fervor (laugh). It was sort of like...you know when it's a small place everybody follows

everybody else. And you see that a lot in Cyprus, like if one person does one thing then everybody does it. And it seems like a matter of keeping up with the Jones's. And even that I think was part of it.

I: What was that like for you?

P: It was annoying (laugh). It was really annoying. And you know I found myself saying things or doing things that I knew would be more I guess socially acceptable there and then I would really get mad at myself. But I guess for the most part, the people that I was friends with were people who thought more like I did. I ended up not reconnecting as much, or as much as I thought with old friends like I thought I would. We actually ended up connecting more with new friends. Mostly people who were either not 100% ETHNIC or had lived abroad and felt the same way I did or were like mixed couples...you know just have a different perspective of the world. So I did see some of my old friends but I thought it was gonna be like "oh, welcome back, this is great, let's get reconnected and reacquainted and all that." But sometimes you get reacquainted with people and you realized that you've changed and they've changed (laugh) or you've changed and they've stayed the same so it was a lot like that.

I: Yeah. So it sounds like it was a bit of the struggle at the beginning to find people that had similar thinking that you did and you thought initially that you could just hang out with your old crew but it turned out that you felt more comfortable with people that had been abroad also and that you could relate more with them.

P: Yeah, definitely, you are absolutely right. I went to my 10<sup>th</sup> high school reunion was there, it was right after we got back. And it was really weird a lot of the people...it was nice to go just to see everybody, but a lot of the people that were there...they were very very nostalgic about high school years and the good old days and all this other stuff. And to me it was just um, I mean it was nice to go and I enjoyed it, I enjoyed seeing all these people. And some of the people I had completely forgotten about you know (laugh) and some it was nice to see because I liked them a lot or whatever. But I didn't feel that way. I didn't feel that "oh my God, I want to relive my high school years." (laugh). But a lot of people did feel that way. It was like the good old days, the times of our lives. And I'm thinking if these people are thinking these were the times of your life and if you peaked in high school then you know, God, I feel sorry for you. (laugh both P and I). So, yeah it was hard for both me and my husband to find people that we were comfortable with and people that you didn't have to do the fake small talk with and just feel comfortable with. So it was definitely a struggle especially at the beginning.

I: Yeah. How was it different in the beginning to later on?

P: Um, well, okay. Well, as soon as you got there, you are in a daze for a while. Okay, it's just everything seems like...because you go through all this turmoil before you leave the country with all the packing and taking care of stuff and quitting your job and saying goodbye to people so it's kind of crazy. And then you get on a plane and you're exhausted and

then you get there and then it's sort of the same thing in reverse. You say hello to everybody, and everybody's excited and family and trying to get settled, and reacquainted and reorganized and this and that and the other. And then sort of reality sinks in. And that's when I got this sort of sinking feeling in my stomach (laugh). We got there in July and in September he came one day and I said "I want to go ho...I wanna leave." And he says "What?" (laugh). And I said "I need to leave." Oh, I had this almost panicky feeling at the pit of my stomach. Like someone was grabbing my gut, you know that sort of feeling. And it sort of started right around September and it was there the whole time like this lump in my throat or this panicky feeling. And just...this feeling like deep down that I'd made a mistake and Oh my God what do I do now? Because it's kind of a big deal you know. We had quit a lot of stuff to get there. And my husband, I was responsible for bringing him over with me and he gave up a lot to be there because he's not from Cyprus he didn't have to do that. He did it for me and here I am thinking Holy crap this is a mistake, Oh my God! (laugh). And then there's my parents who you know, are excited that I'm there and they're happy that I'm there and of course it's so hard to say to them: "um, you know I don't really like it here." (laugh). So it was a sinking feeling, a panicky feeling, sort of a lump in my throat. And it started a couple of months after we got there. And then I can't say that that feeling ever completely went away, but you sort of get into a routine, you know, you get a job and then you get into some sort of routine, daily thing. And that

in a way is comforting sometimes because you get immersed into certain things that you are doing. Like I said it didn't really go away, it was there but it was more like I kind of got used to it being there. It didn't go away but I was so used to it I didn't really notice it as much. Um, and that's pretty much how the first year went you know. And the second year we spent planning to come back.

I: Okay, so the second year is when you decided that you wanted to come back. And some of the things that pushed you to come back were some of the things that you were talking about?

P: Yeah, definitely.

I: How you were treated as a woman how unfairly you were treated. Some of the values that kind of conflicted with your own such as church and state being so close together (P: Right) and extended family not being like it used to be (P: Right) with the children now raised by (P: maids) maids.

P: And I mean, granted not everybody was like that, but I didn't like where the whole society was heading to me. It just seemed like things were just not right (laugh) or at least not right for me. I can't make a judgement like that, but at least not right for me. I felt claustrophobic. That's the best way to describe it. I felt closed in like "Oh my God, I have to get out."

I: Sounds like a pretty intense experience.



P: It was. It was. One more thing I forgot to tell you. When we first got there in my first year, I lost...when I get stressed out, I lose weight, and I lost a lot a weight. And I was really really stressed out and I lost a lot of weight and my hair started falling out (laugh.). That's how stressed out I was.

I: Wow. That's pretty stressed out!

P: Yeah, my hair was just like falling out. It was a very intense experience it really was. And I think the second year was better because I knew I was leaving and I had this finite time to reconnect with some of the positive things that I could find.

I: Could you tell about some of those?

P: Yeah, I did reconnect with my culture in general which I liked. When I left I was 19 years old and when you're 19 you're not really appreciative of a lot of things I think. And when I mean culture I mean I read up on things and I explored the island, drove around a lot and looked at stuff. I had a different appreciation of where I came from and who I was. And there were people that I got to be close with and there were people that aren't, that are different. There were things happening that were pretty interesting, pretty decent, pretty exciting for a small place like that. And I guess I just looked at who I was and where I came from and thought, well that's kind of cool. I still don't want to live here but I was able to appreciate a lot of the beauty that is there that I didn't appreciate before because I felt trapped in it. But if you know you're feeling...it's

sort of like the same feeling of going to Cyprus for a vacation and you are able to enjoy it and there's not strings attached (laugh). So...and you know what, there is...what I did like about it a lot was that I was able to reconnect with my own extended family. My own cousins, uncles, and aunts which I don't have here. That's one of the things that I actually do miss is having an extended family and I was able to appreciate the connections...reconnecting with these people that I had sort of lost touch with. Um, and uh, seeing them again and looking at their kids and everybody's grandkids and all that stuff so that was really nice to do. So with my own family. So I don't know how it would be...like I'm sure that if I had lived there, you know, it tends to be routine, it's not a big deal so I don't think I would appreciate it in the same way. So I did appreciate it more because I knew I was leaving.

I: Yeah, it sounds like in the second year you were freed up to enjoy some of the things that you went back to reconnect with. (P: Yeah) with your family, with the beauty of the Cyprus, and some other people in the culture too. But the first year sounds like a bleak contrast to that.

P: Oh yeah. Yeah, everything seemed, in the first year everything seemed small and dusty (laugh). Like I just couldn't see past that in a sense, you know. And then in the second year it was like Oh, okay, check this out it's kinda cool, you know, it's nice going to different places. And it was very different, they were two different years. I still had that feeling, I have to say. In the second year I still had that knot in my stomach it just

that I didn't notice it as much and I didn't realized that it had still been there until I got back here. And then it was all gone. I felt like the weight had been lifted as soon as I got here. I just set foot at the airport I'm like "Haaaa."

I: The knot had gone away.

P: Yeah, the knot was the feeling that I just had to get out, it's the feeling that you are locked in somewhere and you are just trying to get out. And then you begin to appreciate some things about the place but you still need to get out (laugh). And I guess again, the reason why I was able to appreciate some of the things that I did is because I knew I was leaving so. I guess that's the paradox. (laugh).

I: Yeah. So now that you are back in the U.S. after being home, what are some experiences that stood out to you?

P: Being back here well. It really felt good to be back (long laugh). It really did, it really felt good. And um, I just...I felt really liberated. And one of the first things that stood out is...you know, I was applying for a job and there was nothing like the system of Cyprus puts where you have to know someone important to get a job. It was nice to get a job on my own merits. And getting a job and again seeing the whole process of going through the process...it was a horrible experience of trying to get a job in Cyprus. It was such a fiasco. It really was! And being interviewed here and getting the job and I was so excited because I was going to be doing what I really what which is something that I didn't get to do in Cyprus.

There's a lot of stuff. Like I said, the church and state thing didn't exist, applying for a job it didn't matter one way or the other what you were, nobody asked you. I remember being asked, after I got the job and I was just thrilled that I got the job...my boss called and asked if I wanted to take additional responsibilities and I said "sure" it's my first year, I wanted to make a good impression, plus I wanted to do it. And my boss says "you're not going to be paid much for it, it's not a lot of money but it's still something." And I remember saying "You mean I get paid to do this?" (laugh). It was really cool. I was nervous but I was excited about it. Also, it was nice to have distances to travel. It was nice to have options. To go to different states. I love plays, I love movies, I love the theatre and that's something that I really missed back in America. Going to the movies was a pain back in Cyprus, it was such a pain. You know, there weren't any really good films showing, it was just the big Hollywood blockbusters. And you get the newspapers to see what time the movie is playing and you go there and you find out Oh, they decided they weren't going to show it today, you know that kind of thing (laugh). It was nice because a huge Cineplex had opened here and I wanted to watch a different movie every day and sit with a big tub of popcorn. I loved just going to the mall and just shopping and having the different choices and not everybody has to dress the same. I can go to one store or the other and look the way I want. Like I said, distances, travelling distances, not the same stuff over and over. The museums and the different culture, you

know, you can see anything from a Shakespearean play to a ballet to anything. And friends. I really missed our old friends. Just like the same old people who I had left behind who are open minded and fun to be with. And also to hang out with my brother. One of the sad things that happened is that a couple that were our friends got divorced so that changed things a little bit. The social dynamics changed there. I missed my brother too so I got to spend more time with him. You know, the greenery, the seasons...when I went to Cyprus I thought I was going to love the fact that it doesn't snow and it doesn't really get that cold. And yet I missed the snow, I missed the four seasons. I missed the fall with all the colors and the spring with all the flowers and even the winter with the snow days (laugh). So it was nice to have that here. I really enjoy it. I guess that's it.

I: Wow, it sounds like when you came back you noticed a lot of things. You noticed that you missed...first of all it felt good when you were back (P:Yeah) and then you felt liberated, you felt relief when you got a job with your own merits. You enjoyed the distances over here and how you could go to the movies and the mall and look however you want and kind of be an individual (P:Yeah). And you missed your friends and your brother and you also mentioned that a couple that you knew had divorced so you noticed that there were changes that happened while you were gone so I'm wondering if there are any other changes that had happened while you were away that you want to talk about.

P: Let's see. Well, besides...like I said with this one group of friends that we were close with, the friendship dissolved a little bit because of the two couples splitting up. The one couple split up first and then the other. Even though we still stayed friends with them, it still made things kind of awkward. At the same time because we had new jobs, even though we reconnected with our old friends which is very important and we are still very close with them, we also made a new circle of friends. Like I met some people through my job that I had a lot in common with and my husband did too. And that along with our old friends made a nice circle of friends in general. Made some really good...buying our house was really exciting. It was kind of stressful because it's a mortgage and you are signing your life away (laugh). And a lot of things happened at the same time, I got my job, we bought a house, we bought cars. Everything was new. It was very exciting. And we bought a house. And then after we bought our house it seemed like, okay, now I have this house, now what? (laugh). It's a little overwhelming after that. Because we knew there was things that we needed to do. We didn't know anything about yard work. We bought the house in an area that we really liked. We looked at school systems and all this other stuff. Our commute isn't too long, it's a good area, so now what? We have to learn how to plant things and stuff, and fix things, and change things because the house wasn't brand new, it needs works. So the house started taking a lot of our attention which it hadn't done before because we had lived in apartments, rented you know. And

it's excited to see that you can do new things, change things. Sometimes it's a pain in the ass because you feel like all the money we make goes into the house, or all the time I have is like...what are you doing this weekend...like before we would have said let's do this, let's do that...and it's like I have to strip some wallpaper. We have really good neighbors which is great on both sides. We became really good friends with the people that live on the one side of the side because they are close to our age. We'd never owned a piece of property before and it puts things in perspective and makes you feel like you are more grown up. You know, I always miss my mum and dad. And that was a very hard decision to leave them. At times I know it does get to me a little bit or it did get to me coming back here. My mum and dad getting old and being alone. My husband and I were talking about bringing them here. A lot of it is cultural too, how it is with families in Cyprus. I guess here people...it's not as big a deal for some people to put their parents in a home and go visit them every Sunday. But for us it's culturally different. Anyway so there was a lot of guilt there, I felt it off and on. So all kinds of crazy stuff! (laugh).

I: Sounds like a tough decision.

P: And I knew it would be tough but I knew I had to do it because then I would have been miserable. Another piece of the guilt is that I felt really good being here and I knew that they felt very bad that I had left. So I feel great and then I'm like, Oh, maybe I shouldn't.

I: So that guilt kinda brings you down a little bit.

P: Yeah. Yeah, I think guilt is important to our culture. (laugh).

I: So is there anything else that you can think about after being at home and returning, any more experiences that stand out to you?

P: Well, now that I'm pregnant and knowing that I'm going to have a child I do wish that my kid would have what I had when I was growing up. To have that safety net of extended family around. My kid isn't gonna have that. I know my kid is going to spend some time in Cyprus with my parents, my mum and dad are going to visit him but it's not the same. He's not going to have the same thing I did growing up. it's going to be different for him. And that makes me a little sad because, you know I'm gonna have to go back to work and there's going to have to be some kind of day care and I kind of wish that it didn't have to be that way...that I could somehow make it different. I wish that my mum was closer. I don't wish that I was there, I still don't but I do wish that she was closer (laugh). I wish I could just pick up the phone and say "mum, I need help." Or "can you advise me on this" and I still do, I send emails and talk on the phone but it's not the same. Uh, yes, I wish mum and dad were a little closer to me. I think about what kind of parent I'm gonna be and how I grew up and all this other stuff that just kinda makes you introspective about things.

I: Kind of wondering if your child is going to have any of the same experiences that you did?

P: Yeah, exactly. And my kid is American, I'm American through marriage but my kid will be born here. But I don't want him to not be



connected with where I'm from. I think it's nice to have rich cultural roots. So I'm also kind of ambivalent about with this religious thing because unless you are in college, the way to reconnect with other people of my ethnicity is to go to church. That's it. It's the only way to have a Greek circle of friends. And we are going to raise our son bilingual but I'm not sure whether I should do this whole...try this socializing thing so he can have kids to play with that are from the same ethnicity. I'm not sure what to do about that. Because I don't want to go to church. I don't practice religion so I don't know what I'm going to do about it yet.

I: Yeah. It sounds like you are facing some tough questions as to how much of the culture you are going to share with the little guy.

P: Yeah, yeah exactly. I'm not sure, I'm just not sure. I guess I'll just play it by ear. (laugh). It's hard to say right now so. I guess that's it.

I: I really appreciate it.

## VITA

Victoria Christofi was born in Famagusta, Cyprus, on June 11, 1973. Because of the Turkish Invasion, in August 1974, Victoria moved to London, England where she spent the next 10 years. In 1985, Victoria then moved to Larnaca, Cyprus where she began and completed her high school education at The American Academy, Larnaca in 1991.

Victoria came to the United States in 1992 and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Arts and Sciences double majoring in Psychology and Sociology from The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio in 1995. In 1996, she went to Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, where she graduated in 1998 with a Master in Education majoring in Counseling Psychology.

Victoria is currently at The University of Tennessee where she will receive the Doctor of Philosophy degree in 2003, with a major in Psychology and an emphasis in Counseling Psychology. She is presently a psychology intern at the Student Counseling Services Center of The University of Tennessee and plans to continue working in a university counseling center setting in the future.