Taking the "culture" out of "culture shock"

A critical review of literature on cross-cultural adjustment in international relocation

Dr Frank Fitzpatrick

Abstract

Purpose
The experience of "culture shock" is an established concept within international management studies, engendering an industry of training designed to combat difficulties in relocation. This paper argues that the use of the concept is based on a flawed understanding of "culture" and proposes an alternative perspective to help organisations prepare their employees for overseas assignments.

Approach
The paper opts for a critical review of literature in order to examine models of culture shock through time and theories relating to success factors in cross-cultural adjustment. In so doing, the paper revisits the notion of culture shock from a social constructionist perspective within a dialectical framework.

Findings
The paper challenges the notion of culture as an essential, reified concept, arguing that culture shock is not about culture, but about the dynamics of context and how individuals deal with life changes to navigate the challenges that they face.

Research implications
Future research should focus on context-related, interactive behaviour, framed in discourse processes, rather than pre-determined a priori typologies based on cultural stereotypes. This would recognise the discursive nature of social interaction within a dialectical framework, where relational tension emerges as a result of disparity.

Practical implications
The paper contributes to an understanding of the complex range of factors influencing the success of relocation in order to guide international companies in their policies.

Originality/value
This paper proposes a paradigm shift in the treatment of culture shock towards a more discourse-based concept created through universal cultural and dialectical processes.

Keywords
Culture shock, Context, Cross-Cultural Adjustment, Intercultural Communication, International Management Studies.

Introduction

A major issue in international relocation is the rate and cost of repatriation as a result of expatriate "failure". Studies over time have quoted rates as considerable, ranging between 16% and 40%, while the cost has been put at between $250,000 to $1 million each year per failure (Tung, 1981; Shaffer et al, 1999; Yeaton and Hall, 2008), although data available is often difficult to corroborate (Kraimer et al, 2016). Figures from the UK are more modest at 8%, though some 15-20% of employees report considerable initial problems in coping with a new location (Forster, 1997). One of the main reasons given for failure is "culture shock", or the inability to adjust to a new cultural environment (Church, 1982; Ward et al, 2001; Kraimer et al, 2016), which, as a concept, has two components to it. First, the notion of "culture", seen here as "a whole and distinctive way of life" (Williams, 1981, p. 10) and, secondly, the process of "shock", seen here as a proactive process of coping with change in an unfamiliar cultural setting (Ward et al, 2001, p. 270). In many ways, although "culture shock" is an established and widely used concept across the multi-disciplinary field of international management studies, it is largely an unsatisfactory term. The large body of research into and commentary on such issues as expatriate selection and training, international adjustment of expatriates and spouses, and repatriation issues that have been generated within international management studies over recent decades (Kraimer et al, 2016), is largely grounded on a perspective that tends to reify behavioural processes. Using this as the basis for understanding and preparing for international relocation, whether through briefing or training, draws attention away from the real challenges and issues of intercultural adjustment. Thus, it is necessary to re-examine what "culture shock" is and what it might entail in order to be able to ensure that it is dealt with effectively. This article, however, rather than refining definitions and distinctions, seeks an underlying paradigmatic clarification of the term "culture shock" from a social constructionist perspective on

intercultural behaviour and thereby challenges the notion of "culture" as the cause of "shock" in international relocation.

Before embarking upon this, it is important to acknowledge that research into "culture shock" draws upon a broad range of almost interchangeable areas of study, including "Intercultural Communication" or "Cross-Cultural Communication" (Gudykunst, 2003; Jandt, 2007; Kotthoff and Spencer-Oatey, 2009; Piller 2011), "Cross-Cultural Transition" (Ward et al, 2001) and studies in "International Management" (Jack et al, 2008) or "Cross-Cultural Management" (Bjerregaard et al, 2009). These disciplines have become intertwined and converge upon each other, but for the purposes of this article the terms "cross-cultural adjustment" research and "international management studies" will be used.

Social constructionism and the nature of culture

A social constructionist approach to social behaviour rejects the idea that culture can be reduced to stereotyped classifications such as nationality or ethnicity, which tends to create a "billiard ball" image of nations of self-enclosed units clashing against each other (Wolf, 1982). Attributing broad brush labels to entire populations is fraught with problems and cross-cultural training that highlights typical national characteristics possibly does little more than re-inforce cultural stereotypes, while it does little to build an understanding of social behaviour. While there are differences in the way different groups of people live and interact socially in any given situation, daily life needs to be seen as a dynamic and negotiated process, rather than a static, essential quality related to pre-defined categories. An essentialist approach is fuelled by the assumption that culture is based on something self-contained and stable (Holliday et al, 2004), usually equated with a tangible category, such as nationality, or a more widely abstract notion based on ethnicity or race, as in "Arab culture" or "Asian

culture", or even ideology or religion, such as "Confucianism" or "Islamic culture" (Jandt, 2007). From this, a range of cultural typologies, based on common characteristics, are distilled, the most renowned of which are Hofstede's notions of individualistic versus collectivist cultures, the degree of masculinity versus femininity in culture and long term orientation versus short term orientation (Hofstede, 1991). Categorisation lends itself to programmes of culture-specific training, or training "for specific contexts" (Landis et al, 2004, p.5), which tends to dominate within the paradigm (Jack et al, 2008). This gives rise to stereotypical assumptions about how people from a given category are likely to behave in social interaction, assuming a uniformity and consistency of behaviour across large tracts of land and peoples, and giving scant regard to individual diversity, power relations and the influence of cross-cutting factors such as gender, age, socio-economic position, education, background, experience and so on.

This is in stark contrast to contemporary theory in cross-cultural communication research from a social constructionist perspective, where a multi-disciplinary approach, embracing insights from Sociolinguistics, Anthropology and Cultural Studies, rejects the notion of culture and identity as constant, *a priori* categories that de-contextualise and generalise about social behaviour (Piller, 2011). Social constructionist theory assumes that human beings rationalise and modify their experience of the social world and share understanding of reality through language (Berger and Luckman, 1966). Social experience and the cultural meaning attributed to it by individuals are an integral part of social interaction, which is influenced by the social, economic and political relationships in which they are framed. This perspective draws substantially on the sociolinguistic notion of "discourse", where language use permeates aspects of cultural reality, in that it focuses on the day to day construction of meaning in context through "underlying cultural processes" (Holliday, 2011, p. 135). It also

describes a particular perspective on the world or a way of "being in the world", defined by "membership of a particular social group or social network" (Gee, 1990, p. 142), where individuals share similar beliefs, reified in ideology and worldview, underpinned by informal power relations and guided by unspoken rules and conventions that govern behaviour and how people relate to and communicate with each other. In this sense, culture is seen as a complex and dynamic process, based in discourse construction, as individuals interact with each other to create shared understanding at all levels of social existence.

Early models of culture shock

The concept of "culture shock" was developed by Oberg (1960) in relation to expatriate sojourners, which was characterised by an increased incidence of depression, related to "culture loss", and apprehension or anxiety, related to doubt over how to live in a new cultural milieu. The term "sojourner" refers to individuals who move between different destinations for a temporary period of time on the understanding that at the end of their "sojourn", they will either move to another location or return to their original society (Ward et al, 2001, p. 6). Drawing on the U-curve hypothesis (Lysgaard, 1955), four distinct phases were defined, within which levels of stress varied over time: "Honeymoon" (initial feelings of fascination with the new surroundings; crisis (anger, frustration and helplessness); recovery (culture learning); and, finally, adjustment to the new environment (Oberg, 1960). Focus on the final phase in Oberg's work, "adjustment", has engendered a great deal of studies within cross-cultural adjustment research and international management studies in order to seek to clarify what is necessary to overcome "culture shock" through a process of "adjustment".

Oberg's standard, four-stage approach for every person's experience was criticised as being too simplistic (Church, 1982), although acknowledgement that expatriates who accept international assignments in unfamiliar settings often experience anxiety is central to the cross-cultural adjustment literature (Hechanova et al, 2003). In order to develop this, Berry (2006) prefers to position adjustment within a psychological framework by using the term "acculturative stress" and his model proposes that individuals assume a strategic approach to their new circumstances, depending on the degree to which they wish to retain their original identity and resist identification with the new environment through a separation strategy, or embrace contact with the new context without losing original identity through an integration strategy. Total assimilation involves abandoning original cultural identity completely in order to adopt that of the new society, while marginalisation involves both abandonment of original identity without adoption of a new one and remaining on the margins of the host society. For Berry, greater stress is involved in marginalisation and separation, which leads to segregation from the host society. This model allows for positive as well as negative experiences (in contrast to the concept of "shock") and for an interactive approach, where the source of anxiety is not fixed in one challenging "culture", but in the process of experiencing a new cultural milieu (Berry, 2006). While this model focuses on longer term immigrant groups in transition, it does have some relevance to the adjustment of sojourner groups.

A multidimensional approach

In order to capture the complexity in adjustment, Black et al (1991) argue that cross-cultural adjustment should be seen as a multidimensional concept, rather than a unitary, linear phenomenon, as suggested by early models. Three dimensions are suggested: adjustment to the workplace, or work adjustment, adjustment to interacting with individuals in the foreign country, labelled interaction adjustment, and adjustment to the living conditions of the new

location, or general living adjustment. This theoretical framework introduces a situational element to adjustment, or domains, where individuals encounter different types of difficulties or challenges. Adjustment at work, for example, may entail adjustment to such areas as recruitment, performance management or leadership and so on, while, beyond the workplace, adjustment involves developing social networks and learning how to succeed in unfamiliar environments. This multi-dimensional model of adjustment, which has been corroborated in a number of studies (Black et al, 1991; McEvoy and Parker, 1995; Hechanova et al., 2003), goes beyond the place of work and brings into view the impact of relocation on the employee's spouse and family.

The ABC model of culture shock

Ward et al (2001) develop a model for "culture shock" by merging three main traditions in acculturation research. These are described as, firstly, the culture learning approach, which focuses on the behaviours and social skills involved in acquiring the linguistic and cultural norms to be able to thrive in a new cultural milieu, and which can be influenced by such factors as length of residence, previous experience abroad, and cross–cultural training. Secondly, the stress and coping approach presents cross-cultural transition as a psychological process of coping with the stress that can accompany substantial life changes, influenced by aspects of individual coping styles, personality, locus of control, tolerance of ambiguity and how individuals deal with homesickness or loneliness. Thirdly, social identity theories focus on cognitive elements related to theories of identity and traits that can be tested psychometrically in order to monitor adjustment. In contrast to culture learning, these elements emphasise traits rather than learning processes.

From this, they devise the "ABC model of Culture Shock", which distinguishes three components, relating to how people feel, behave and think when exposed to second-culture influences (Ward et al, 2001, p.274). The affective component resembles the original concept of "culture shock" as a "buzzing confusion" (Oberg, 1960), derived from earlier clinical approaches, which focused on extreme emotional reactions and the need to abandon the new location. The behavioural facet of the model is linked to the process of social skills acquisition particular to the new environment, relating to sociocultural and discourse norms that govern interaction and social behaviour. The final element of the model is cognitive and relates to how individuals conceptualise the social world through their worldview and belief systems, which will generate particular judgements and attitudes towards the new surroundings.

Through this model, cross–cultural transition can be seen on two levels. The psychological level, relating to feelings of satisfaction and well-being during adjustment, and the sociocultural level, linked to learning to live in the new way of life. Searle and Ward (1990) argue that, while the two elements of adjustment bear some interrelation, they are principally influenced by distinct kinds of variables. Psychological adjustment, for example, is dependent on personality factors, such as a tendency to extroversion and the desire to seek contact with other people in the initial stages, or a strong internal locus of control or an ability to cope with change. The challenges related to high levels of change indicates that psychological adjustment tends to vary over time and the most severe difficulties are encountered at the beginning of a sojourn (Ward and Kennedy, 1999). In contrast, sociocultural adjustment is much more subject to behavioural responses which affect the attainment of social skills extant within the new cultural environment, including, for example, learning a new language or adjusting to unfamiliar behavioural norms. In this sense, it can be contended that

sociocultural adjustment may improve as a result of the length of a sojourn and the amount of interface and interaction with the local population.

Recent approaches to adjustment

More recent approaches have embraced the complexity of adjustment and taken into account how individuals, partners and families experience the life changes and new roles associated with relocation.

Sociocultural domains

Later models of adjustment build on Black et al's (1991) work of sociocultural domains of adjustment, simplifying it into two domains, work and non-work, on the grounds that interaction occurs with host country nationals both within the general environment and at work and is, therefore, a redundant concept (Shaffer et al, 1999). This work has stressed the interactive nature of domains, recognising that individuals tend to operate across them – employees have a family life and a social life, for example, while spouses often have work-related roles in that they may accompany the expatriate employee to a variety of work functions and so on. In this sense, Haslberger and Brewster (2008), in their research on the expatriate family, argue that domains are not necessarily independent from one another. While the adjustment of families to a new environment can present challenges in itself, it can also have an influence on employee performance and assignment success as part of a spillover effect between the two domains, such as out of office social duties affecting time for family life, for example. Besides this, crossover may occur between individuals, "cutting across domains" (Haslberger and Brewster, 2008, p. 327) in which, for example, the stress experienced by a recently arrived employee in adjusting to their new work environment may impact on their partner's state of mind and adjustment to a new way of life. The key concern

here, for multinational organisations, is that domestic issues specifically related to relocation may put extra stress on expatriate employees themselves, who may also be trying to cope with learning a new language and learning to adapt to local working practices, as they see their family unhappy and struggling to adapt to their new life. Alternatively, issues at work may impact on the non-work domain, which may compound family problems and increase stress for the employee, particularly as the boundaries between life domains are perhaps more permeable for those involved in relocation than for those with comparable domestic assignments, because of the level of change experienced in all aspects of a family's life (Harvey, 1998).

Role adjustment

Lazarova et al (2010) take this further and propose a model of adjustment based on a person's role, whether at work - work role adjustment - at home - family role adjustment - or in social life - cultural adjustment, all involving interaction in different domains. While expatriate managers may well need to adapt to a new working role in a new context, there is increasing focus on the role of the spouse, who is more likely to experience a more radical role change from the domestic context, particularly where they may have given up a career in order to relocate with their family, which can result in a loss of status and independence, leading, in turn, to feelings of being undervalued, possibly as a result of becoming a "trailing spouse" (Harvey, 1998). In such cases, essential social and support networks such as colleagues, family and friends from the home location will undoubtedly be lost in relocation, which may result in extended periods of time alone at home, in the absence of significant links to a community, particularly in the initial stages of an assignment (Lazarova et al, 2010). Self-esteem may be compromised and depression or a sense of isolation may ensue leading to a sensation of "feeling invisible" (De Verthelyi, 1995). This may engender resentment, creating

pressure on family relationships and adversely affecting performance at work for the employee (De Cieri et al, 1991). The impact of an "overnight identity transformation from a journalist with a promising television career to a single parent without dating privileges" (Pascoe, 2003, p. 103) is close to reality for many spouses, for example, and this can affect the nature of adjustment for all family members and the success of an overseas assignment (Harvey, 1998). All of this can impact the business performance of multinational companies, as the frequency of dual-career couples increases (Forster, 1997) and as individuals prefer not to jeopardise their own career prospects in favour of their partner's. This can also inhibit the occurrence of female executives in assignments overseas, as ingrained prejudices towards women in positions of authority, or with specific family circumstances, may require additional support systems (Caligiuri et al, 1999).

The family in adjustment

According to some studies, the provision of improved support systems and work opportunities for spouses is a way of addressing this issue, which would also involve better pre-departure briefings and language training in preparation for relocation (Harvey, 1998). Enhanced selection procedures that acknowledge the contribution of the spouse and include them posting decisions may also be advisable (Copeland and Norellc, 2002), while one study has created a Model of Spousal Adjustment, which indicates the benefits that previous experience overseas, the ability to learn a foreign language and cultural similarity bring to the adjustment process (Mohr and Klein, 2004). Such an approach takes into account the qualities that an expatriate spouse may exhibit in order to cope more effectively with relocation and the support that they can extend to the employee. For example, Caligiuri et al (1999) found that spouses who were positive towards relocating overseas adjusted more successfully to their new circumstances, while Mohr and Klein (2004) emphasised qualities

such as openness and motivation and the willingness to engage socially through friendship networks, which helped individuals obtain a sense of control.

Apart from spouses, other family members can also face particular challenges. Children, for example, may experience "identity dissonance" (Fukuda and Chu, 1994) as they adjust to a new curriculum at school or a new language and may lose key friendship networks at critical life stages as they relocate. A more recent study argues that making new friends and being accepted at school are of crucial importance to teenagers on relocation and that preparing them for what to expect from their new environment might avoid potential difficulties for parents already trying to cope with substantial life challenges (Weeks et al, 2010).

Overall, then, more recent approaches to "culture shock" and the adjustment process embrace a more complex framework, which takes into account different types and levels of adjustment based on individual and contextual factors in a quest to identify success factors in the process.

Success factors in overcoming "culture shock"

There is a wide range of research literature on expatriate adjustment dedicated to identifying success factors in adjusting to unfamiliar environments, whether they be individual or national characteristics or are associated with sociocultural adjustment processes, or whether they can be developed through experience and training.

Individual differences

Early studies were fairly speculative about the relationship between individual or national characteristics and work success abroad. Church (1982), for example, suggested that more mature expatriates may adjust more effectively to other cultures, while Black and Stephens

(1989) noted that early repatriation from overseas assignments was common amongst U.S. citizens. Previous experience in cross-cultural transition is generally thought to be related to successful adjustment in a number of ways, from, for example, the formulation of realistic expectations about a forthcoming relocation (Caligiuri et al, 2001), along with being able to deal with ambiguity (Searle and Ward, 1990) or showing initiative to create support through local networks rather than relying on the head office (Shaffer et al, 1999). In a study by Brewster (1991), expatriate managers claimed that previous cross-cultural experience enabled them to adjust more easily on subsequent postings. Likewise, Searle and Ward, (1990) reiterated previous research findings in that past international experience and maturity would facilitate adjustment, while Mendenhall and Oddou (1985) proposed that interpersonal skills were essential for interaction with the host population and suggested that there may be a correlation between interaction adjustment and gender. The correlation between adjustment and previous experience cross-cultural transition, however, according to Black et al (1991), is qualified by both the amount of similarity and the time gap between the previous and the current assignment.

Personal qualities

Parker and McEvoy (1993), too, in a comprehensive review of literature, refer to personal qualities and traits such as extroversion, openness, empathy, sincerity and tolerance to stress as potential factors in effective adjustment. In particular, they contend that extroversion is positively correlated with sociability, and, accordingly, a possible contributor to cultural adjustment. A study by Harrison et al (1996) found that the level of confidence that individuals have in their own capability to carry out certain tasks (self-efficacy) was positively correlated with successful adjustment, as they were more likely to experiment with new behaviours, such as speaking a foreign language, and deal with feedback. Likewise, they

found that   high self-monitors were able to adjust their behaviour to the needs of the requirements of a given situation, in contrast to low self-monitors, who were less able to adapt to new circumstances.

In another study, Aycan (1997) indicated that relationship skills linked to conflict resolution and flexibility, together with personality traits, such as agreeableness and extroversion, were related to successful overseas adjustment. Cultural flexibility enables an individual to remain non-judgemental about a new way of life and, thereby, reduces stress and enables learning through the willingness to adjust behaviour to the local context. Building on this, Huang et al (2005) investigated the relationship between the "Big Five personality traits" and adjustment, identified as extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience. The study found that three traits, extroversion (a tendency to be sociable and outgoing), agreeableness (a tendency to seek contact acceptance in new circumstances) and openness to experience (an interest in learning with reduced stereotyping and false expectations) positively correlated with adjustment. In a previous study, Ward et al (2001) argued that neuroticism (a tendency towards emotional instability) was linked to adjustment difficulties, while agreeableness, conscientiousness (a tendency towards hard work) and extroversion, did not strongly correlate with psychological adjustment.

Other studies have identified other personal characteristics associated with the way people adjust to a new environment. Cort and King, (1979), for example, identified external locus of control (the tendency for an individual to assign blame for personal life circumstances to factors beyond their control) and intolerance of ambiguity (the tendency for an individual to feel threatened by ambiguous situations) as key antecedents to hostility towards the new cultural environment, resulting in social withdrawal and over-identification with their cultural

origins. Subsequent studies have associated emotional disturbance with an external locus of control leading to depression and psychological issues (Ward et al, 2001). Likewise, Cross (1995), made a distinction relating to primary coping strategies, encompassing direct actions and behaviours aimed at changing undesirable aspects of the novel situation, and secondary strategies, which consist of adjusting expectations and attitudes to the environment. Related to this is Caligiuri et al's (2001) Theory of Met Expectations, which links successful adjustment to how close an individual's expectations are to the reality of the new location. In this sense, pre-departure training should be tailored to the realities of the future assignment in order to avoid individuals compensating inadequate information about the host country with "mental shortcuts" (Caligiuri et al, 2001, P.360) such as stereotyping or "exoticisation" (Holliday et al, 2004, p.159) of the life in the new environment prior to departure.

Overall, however, the panorama of possible factors that can influence an individual's sense of wellbeing and comfort in an unfamiliar environment is quite vast, and robust conclusions are few and far between. As Ward et al (2001) point out, "Despite extensive theorising…relatively few investigations have empirically documented the influence of personality traits on the psychological well-being of immigrants, refugees or sojourners" (Ward et al, 2001, p.83).

Intercultural competence

Over and above the role of possible personality or character traits in adjustment, some studies suggest the importance of developing a specific intercultural competence for intercultural communication. Gudykunst (2003), for example, proposes a psychological model of intercultural competence, which identifies the necessity for certain motivational conditions, such as reducing anxiety and enhancing security and inclusion for successful communication.

Knowledge of how to gather and interpret information and understand differences are also important, together with the ability to reduce ambiguity and uncertainty.

In another approach, Kealey (1996) underlines the need for personal soft skills for effective intercultural communication, including cross-cultural and adaptive skills that involve tolerance and flexibility and safeguard cultural sensitivity and engagement with the host culture. This involves developing partnership skills, which encourage openness and facilitate the creation of effective working relationships with people from different backgrounds. Likewise, Kim (2001) lists a number of competences that make up intercultural personhood, which focus on key areas such as behavioural flexibility, tolerance of others, empathy, sociability and so on. Bennett's (1993) model of intercultural sensitivity also encourages tolerance of difference through increased contact with cultural diversity and a genuine desire to develop rapport with people from different countries. Through this experience and exposure, individuals move from an ethnocentric worldview and enhance their intercultural competence by accepting cultural differences as valid as their own.

Intercultural communicative competence

Much of the literature from international management studies on intercultural competence, however, pays little attention to linguistic competence or the value of knowing a foreign language in cross cultural transition (Piller, 2011). Shaffer and Harrison (1998), for example, found that language fluency was an essential precursor to the adjustment of spouses on international relocation, as they were required to interact with host country nationals on a regular basis while taking care of their family and setting up home. This is consistent with the findings in the expatriate adjustment literature, in which language fluency is seen as a necessary tool for interaction with host nationals and a means of sociocultural adjustment

(Black and Gregersen, 1999). For this reason, Byram (1997) makes a specific distinction between intercultural competence and intercultural *communicative* competence, the latter of which entails the ability to interpret and use language to communicate effectively in a particular sociocultural context and the willingness to learn and adapt to unfamiliar social norms and behaviour, including knowledge of history, geography, political and societal institutions of the interlocutor's country. However, this goes beyond knowledge of a language in itself and embraces the importance of the particular ability of individuals to interact culturally as a result of pragmatic or sociolinguistic competence, involving the ability to see the relationship between linguistic signals and their contextual or situational meaning in discourse and the ability to construct and interpret a wide range of appropriate genre (Canale and Swain, 1980; Byram, 1997). However, while it is possible to teach about and raise awareness of pragmatics, a discipline that identifies the appropriate responses required in social situations, there are no formulae that will help an individual cope with all the possible communicative variations of the situations they are likely to engage in.

Sociocultural learning approaches

Over and above individual characteristics in adjustment, sociocultural learning approaches have brought into view the role of social interaction as an important element in adjustment to a new environment (Furnham and Bochner, 1982; Ward et al, 2001), maintaining that adjustment is a process of learning the basic rules and routines of behaviour in the new society in order to survive and function normally. Other research brings into view the importance of social networks and the connections that individuals make with other people and groups in the course of adjustment (Fitzpatrick, 2016). Denser networks are related to stable, cohesive communities with little external contact, while less dense or looser networks allow for more contact with the outside. Social networks can also differ in terms of the

strength of ties amongst small, cohesive social groups, relating to frequency of contact, degree of intimacy and exclusion of outgroup individuals, where weak ties act as bridges to other relationships, while strong ties tend to discourage interaction beyond the intimate circle and impede the chance of making wider connections (Krackhardt, 1992). Approaches to adjustment can also depend on whether individuals wish to preserve or transform their own identity (Berry, 2006) and, in a cross-cultural situation, differences between expatriate groups and the local society may motivate individuals to protect their identity through tight knit in-groups based on work relationships or national groupings (Tajfel, 1982). Such groups enjoy high levels of familiarity, trust, interaction and support and initial weak ties can quickly become strong friendships of small, well-defined, tight-knit and dense groups, which can deter the search for new bridging relationships and inhibit sociocultural contact and engagement with the host environment and population.

Social support

Much research points to the importance of social support in adjustment, defined in terms of the availability of helping relationships for people in need (Kraimer et al, 2016), and a good deal of evidence exists to suggest that difficulties may be eased with the right support framework provided by employers and host institutions. This can impact positively on both the psychological and sociocultural level and alleviate loneliness, stress and depression (Ong and Ward, 2005). These authors identify four functions of social support. Emotional support, through empathy and compassion; social companionship, through a sense of belonging to a group; tangible assistance, though concrete provision of material resources and services, including financial assistance; and informational support, through information on local life and the new environment, whether published or communicated in interaction. The authors conclude that, despite the importance of emotional support amongst sojourners, it is practical

support, together with local social networks, that are the most critical for psychological well-being (Ong and Ward, 2005).

The adjustment process, then, has an important social dimension. The loss of enduring support networks from the home country and the challenges posed in developing new ones can be especially stressful for families, particularly accompanying spouses, due to competing family responsibilities, relative social isolation and possible role changes relating to their social or work status or family role (Copeland and Norellc, 2002). For this reason, there is increasing emphasis on the role of the employer to provide institutional support resources to enable adjustment, perhaps more so than the provision of cross-cultural training (Hechanova et al, 2003). This support, however, increasingly relates to elements outside the place of work and to the challenges faced by spouses and families in adjusting to a new way of life, which, in turn, can have a profound influence on success at work and overall adjustment.

A social constructionist approach to "culture shock"

The notion that there are identifiable success factors in cross-cultural adjustment has given rise to a vast industry of cross-cultural training within the paradigm of international management studies. However, the "billiard ball" view of culture (Wolf, 1982), which dominates the paradigm, neglects to explore the nature of interaction and the impact that power differences have on relations amongst different social groups (Jack et al, 2008). The process of discursive formation provides us with ways of regulating and negotiating meaning in our construction of social reality. There are observable practices, such as the way people dress and go about their daily lives, and more subtle norms of behaviour, such as the way people speak or how they persuade and coerce and so on, all of which sojourners and migrants have to make sense of and negotiate. In addition, the role of ideology and discourse

influences the perception of actual life from different perspectives or worldviews. This includes the framework of authority and the exercise of power that govern a particular social and economic order, both from the wider institutional organisation of society and from the informal responses on a micro level to the way individuals and groups resolve everyday issues at the discourse level (Holliday, 2011). In this sense, consensus and control are ever bound up in language and discourse in which ideas and beliefs are temporarily stabilised with meanings dominated by political and social forces. This dominant discourse permeates all levels of social interaction and culture formation and acts as an ideological reference point for social practices and the interpretation of the social world. This process of understanding and interpreting "reality", then, has historical and contextual origins, and we can assume that the perception of knowledge and truth in any given society will be influenced principally by the dominant discourse or view of the world held by the group that has the ascendancy and the means and power to enforce it. As Berger and Luckman point out, "He who has the bigger stick has the better chance of imposing his definitions of reality" (Berger and Luckman, 1966, p.127). This adds a further dimension to the social constructionist approach, however, bringing into focus the influence of power relations and conflicting agendas, which influence the purely constructive process and negotiation of meaning. In this sense, a dialectical approach (Martin, 2015) becomes apposite when examining cross-cultural situations, as it acknowledges the relational tensions that larger sociocultural constructs can yield.

Treating differences between groups as essentially "cultural", then, serves to obscure evident material differences, which are a recognised constituent of global inequality and the reification of culture overlooks a good deal of the cultural complexity of everyday social interaction (Piller, 2011). Without knowledge of the background to daily activity, we cannot understand the meaning of behaviour and it is only through active knowledge of given

situations that we can understand the "context of culture" (Kramsch, 1998, p.26). In this sense, an understanding of context is essential for understanding behaviour and how individuals and groups construct an interpretation of their surroundings through interaction. It is, thus, only by exploring the setting of social behaviour that we can understand the purpose of it and, thereby, interpret the meaning of it. For this reason, studies emerging from the tradition of "critical management studies", which challenge some of the fundamental assumptions of studies in the field of international management, call for a move away from cultural determinism towards a perspective of seeing culture in context through richer accounts of the social, economic and political forces that encompass interaction in multicultural settings (Bjerregaard et al, 2009).

So, too, with the notion of "culture shock", seen here as a dynamic, discourse-based concept, created through universal cultural processes and influenced by contextual factors, which pervade sociocultural behaviour, rather than a set of immutable qualities or characteristics of a given group of people based on national or cultural stereotypes. For this reason, from a social constructionist perspective, "culture shock" is as much about how individuals deal with the changes in their lives in a particular location, whether at work, at school or in the social environment as they construct and negotiate aspects of context as part of a developing narrative of the activities they engage in, subject to discourse and power relationships that surround social action in that location. A social constructionist approach to "culture shock", then, seeks to identify the possible causes of acculturative stress from within a given context and, thereby highlight the resources and strategies that can influence adjustment as a response.

Taking the "culture" out of "culture shock"

Consequently, "culture shock" is not really about "culture" at all, but more about "context", which is an ever-changing concept influenced by the participants within a particular social setting. Context can be seen as the frame that surrounds social interaction (Goffman, 1974), embracing a physical environment, relating to the local climate or infrastructure, for example, but also a social or behavioural environment (Duranti and Goodwin, 1992), containing sociocultural practices, products and processes, governed by and embodied in conventions, institutions and rules of behaviour, socially constructed through an historical, dialectical process. An example given by Duranti and Goodwin (1992) is the division of space in urban areas, where there is a distinction between public and private space, and also a social dimension that regulates movement through the physical landscape. There are, for instance, specific physical areas for pedestrians and areas for vehicles, which are accompanied by historical conventions as to how to navigate the space where these areas overlap, some based in socially constructed conventional wisdom or behavioural norms, such as knowledge and norms about crossing the road, others embodied in rules and laws, such as how to navigate traffic lights and follow traffic regulations. This socially constructed framework enables successful navigation of the designated areas safely and without incurring disapproval or prosecution from law enforcement (Duranti and Goodwin, 1992).

All of this emerges from a historical dialectical process, which relates to shared values or beliefs, rights and privileges, invoked by people, negotiated over time and embodied within discourse and ideological norms, creating common ground and governing the various groups, communities and institutions that exist within the social landscape. Any social environment, however, is also influenced and modified by larger macro-forces as part of the

extrasituational context (Duranti and Goodwin, 1992), which extends beyond the immediate setting to the wider geo-political background and which impacts on the particular political, social and economic order that frames everyday life, sustained by an official worldview or ideology embedded and intertwined within social and institutional processes. The consequences of forces that create poverty, scarcity, conflict, control, vulnerability and so on, based in wider frameworks of economics, religion, radical politics and so on, may be experienced by individuals as a source of stress in the adjustment process.

Context, however, is not a reified, immutable locality. Temporal and social settings are not fixed, but created and negotiated through social interaction and influenced by what participants bring to them. It is through language that "participants attend to, construct, and manipulate aspects of context as a constitutive feature of the activities they are engaged in" (Duranti and Goodwin, 1992, p. 9). Thus, context is a complex of factors influencing the immediate or "proximate" setting – physical, behavioural, extrasituational - but, there is also a "distal context" (Day, 2008, p. 989), or remote elements, such as participants' background or social position, and the roles that they play and bring to bear in the construction of reality. In this sense, within any given social situation participants have the capacity to re-shape the context, not just to organise their experience of it or to navigate their way through it. Context, then, becomes "collaboratively defined through a process of interaction" (Duranti and Goodwin, 1992, p.18), a fluid and dynamic space constructed and moulded throughout history.

This engenders an alternative perspective on the understanding and treatment of "culture shock". Haslberger and Brewster (2008), for example, adopting a perspective from stress theory, describe acculturative stress as a product of a balancing process between the new and

unfamiliar demands placed on individuals experiencing a new cultural environment and their capability of applying adjustive resources, or coping behaviors in order to deal with change through a "cognitive adjustment process" (Haslberger and Brewster, 2008, p. 328) with affective and behavioural consequences. New demands originate from different sources. They can be proximal elements from within the new environment, or they can be distal elements, remote and not immediately demonstrable within the more tangible proximate context. These include what individuals bring to the new situation in terms of their changing circumstances and new lifestyle and how they deal with these changes in their lives as a result of re-location, whether at work, at school or in the social environment, as they actively reshape their daily lives (Fitzpatrick, 2016). Adjustment to elements within the proximate context will largely be a sociocultural process, as sojourners establish a new way of life amongst the socio-political and economic constellation of influences on everyday norms and behavioural practices that are discursively negotiated through universal intercultural processes. On the other hand, distal elements, such as an individual's background, language, education, role in society, and so on, as well as the personal and professional life changes as a result of the experience of relocation, will engender affective and cognitive responses to change. The potential anxiety involved in relocation will largely require a process of psychological adjustment, as individuals search to be psychologically "at ease" with their new way of life (Aycan, 1997). Again, this will vary according to each individual and, while relocation may create anxiety for at least a short period of time, for many it can also create a sense of opportunity for personal or professional growth.

Such an approach complements research literature on the adjustive process related to the factors that help overcome "culture shock", as outlined earlier. These may be individual qualities, including skills, traits or behaviours that enable an individual to adjust to an

unfamiliar environment, such as experience, language skills, personality, wealth and so on, summarised in Ward et al (2001), or programmes that provide help and social support by employers, schools, host sponsors or voluntary groups, considered crucial for better adjustment (Ong and Ward, 2005). Beyond this, sojourners will increasingly create informal ties through a range of social networks, either with other sojourners and the local population that will address their social and living needs and facilitate a deeper and more sustained sociocultural adaptation as time goes on (Fitzpatrick, 2016). In this sense, the "shock" in "culture shock" refers to the increased levels of psychological stress and the process of sociocultural learning that results from the increased level of demands and lifestyle changes in a new and unfamiliar environment. Reactions and responses to this are essentially individual and can vary as the environment becomes more familiar. The "culture" in "culture shock" refers to the way of life in a particular location and the physical, behavioural and extra-situational dimensions of the context. Overcoming "culture shock" will involve adjusting to both the new context and the changes in lifestyle that result from re-location. The way and the degree to which this happens is essentially navigated by each individual.

"Culture shock" and the adjustive process, then, it is proposed, can only be understood in relation to a particular context or sociocultural environment. This is an ethnological problematic, characterised by "a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another" (Geertz, 1973, p.10), requiring interpretation of what happens in an everyday context. In this, it is necessary to move away from the idea of "culture" as a tangible, objective concept that causes a "shock" and seek to understand how individuals navigate both the particular micro-cultural products and practices of day to day encounters together with the macro socio-political structures and dialectical processes that have evolved through time in a particular setting or context. Likewise, adjustment is not

a journey towards a new "culture", but more a process of constructing a new life amongst novel and unfamiliar elements that impinge upon a particular context.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is important for international management studies to move away from linear models of "culture shock" and typologies of "culture" and to treat these concepts from a "non-essentialist", constructionist perspective. The international management paradigm has built an industry of training and commentary on flawed notions of "culture" and "culture shock", which has engendered an inadequate understanding of the process of adjustment to new environments. Stereotyping and large scale generalising about the characteristics of dubiously defined cultural groups based on nationality or ethnicity, with little heed to individual differences, agency, the dialectics of power or macro-social discursive factors can ignore the challenges that emerge on psychological and sociocultural levels, in interaction and in different domains, as individuals adjust to new roles with new expectations and demands. It is critical for studies to incorporate a profound understanding of the role that language and discourse play in shaping social behaviour and sustaining the architecture of power relations through indexicality in the social construction of context. In this sense, "culture" must not be taken as a given or a constant state, but rather as a dynamic, social process. Successful adjustment, then, will depend on a wide variety of individual and sociocultural factors that are mutable and negotiable in context, rather than static and pre-defined by nationality or any other essential category. In this sense, what is probably more important is how the anxiety associated with culture shock can be minimised and how individuals can be helped to become effective and to feel at ease in their new environment. For shorter sojourns, and particularly at the beginning, the salience of resources for psychological adjustment are paramount, with an emphasis on social support and social

networking within the sojourner environment, while issues of role adjustment amongst families and spouses are also prominent. As sojourners overcome the challenges of early psychological unease produced by change, unfamiliarity and individual circumstances, they become more involved in local life through a gradual process of sociocultural adjustment and adaptation "over time" (Ward et al, 2001, p.229). The role of cross-cultural research is to seek to correctly understand what facilitates this process and to properly inform international management theory and practice in order to minimise risk in sending employees and their families overseas.

Directions for future research

Future research on "culture shock" should focus on adjustive challenges and behaviour in specific contexts and should seek to identify the factors which impede or enhance adjustment, whether on a macro-social, geo-political or dialectical level, or on a micro-social discourse or psychological level. This would respond to the increasing call for research into social behaviour to take place in context in order to create richer and thicker accounts of actual situations (Holliday, 2011; Bjerregaard et al, 2009; Piller 2011) and draw out the specific behavioural, discursive and extra-situational factors that confront individuals entering new cultural environments and the resources and strategies that they use to adjust to them. This brings into view the particular value of qualitative approaches to research, such as ethnography and participant observation conducted over time, which bring the researcher close up to and intertwined with the proximate sociocultural context and interaction within it. Other research should focus on distal elements of what individuals bring to the context in terms of their role, their status, their life changes and the psychological challenges that these can create. This could bring more coherence to the diverse field of research that distinguishes between specific types of migrant groups ("sojourners", "expatriates", "refugees", "economic

migrants", "asylum seekers") and the reason for their mobility, whether self-initiated or imposed, short-term, long-term or permanent, and so on.

Taking the "culture" out of "culture shock", then, can draw research and theory away from simplistic and essentialised notions of "culture" based on largely "imagined communities" (Anderson, 1991, p.6), that ascribe standard characteristics to large groups. This would recognise the psychological, sociocultural and discursive nature of social interaction within a dialectical framework, where "relational tension" emerges as a result of difference and dispute (Martin, 2015, p.7), thereby capturing the complexity of global mobility.

References

Adelman, M.B. (1988), "Cross-cultural adjustment: A Theoretical Perspective on Social Support", *International Journal of Intercultural Relations,* Vol. 12 No. 3, pp.183-204.

Anderson, B. (1991), *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism*, Verso, London.

Aycan Z. (1997), **"**Expatriate adjustment as a multifaceted phenomenon: individual and organizational level predictors", *The International Journal of Human Resource Management,* Vol. 8 No. 4, pp. 434-456.

Bennett, M.J. (1993), "Towards ethnorelativism: a developmental model of intercultural sensitivity", in Paige, M. (Ed.), *Education for the Intercultural Experience*, Intercultural Press, Yarmouth, pp. 21-72.

Berger, P. and Luckman, T. (1966), *The Social Construction of Reality*, Penguin, London.

Berry, J.W. (2006), "Stress perspectives on Acculturation", in Sam, D.L. and Berry, J.W. (Eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Acculturation Psychology*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 43-57.

Bjerregaard, T., Lauring, J. and Klitmøller, A. (2009), "A critical analysis of intercultural communication research in cross-cultural management", *Critical Perspectives on International Business,* Vol. 5 No. 3, pp. 207-228.

Black, J.S. and Gregersen, H.B. (1990), "Expectations, satisfaction and intention to leave of American expatriate managers in Japan", *International Journal of Intercultural Relations,* Vol. 14 No. 4, pp. 485-506.

Black, J.S. and Gregersen, H.B. (1999), "The right way to manage expats", *Harvard Business Review,* March-April, pp. 61-62.

Black, J.S. and Mendenhall, M. E. (1990), "Cross-cultural Training Effectiveness: A Review and Theoretical Framework", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 15 No. 1, pp. 113-36.

Black, J.S. and Stephens, G.K. (1989), "The influence of the spouse on American expatriate adjustment and intent to stay in Pacific Rim overseas assignments", *Journal of Management,* Vol. 15 No.4, pp. 529-544.

Black, J.S., Mendenhall, M. and Oddou, G. (1991), "Toward a comprehensive model of international adjustment: and integration of multiple theoretical perspectives", *Academy of Management Review,* Vol. 16 No. 2, pp. 291-317.

Brewster, C. (1991), *The Management of Expatriates*, Kogan Page, London.

Byram, M. (1997), *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence,* Multilingual Matters Ltd., Clevedon.

Caligiuri, P., Joshi, A. and Lazarova, M. (1999), "Factors influencing the adjustment of women on global assignments", *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 10 No. 2, pp. 163-179.

Caligiuri, P., Phillips, J., Lazarova, M., Tarique, I. and Burgi, P. (2001), "The theory of met expectations applied to expatriate adjustment: the role of cross-cultural training", *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 12, No. 3, pp. 357-372.

Canale, M. and Swain, M. (1980), **"**Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing", *Applied Linguistics,* Vol. 1 No. 1, pp. 1-47.

Church, A.T. (1982), "Sojourner adjustment", *Psychological Bulletin,* Vol. 91 No. 3, pp. 540-572.

Copeland, A.P. and Norellc, S.K. (2002), "Spousal adjustment on international assignments: the role of social support", *International Journal of Intercultural Relations,* Vol. 26 No.3, pp. 255–272.

Cort, D. and King M. (1979), "Some correlates of culture shock amongst American tourists in Africa", *International Journal of Intercultural Relations,* Vol. 3 No.2, pp. 211-225.

Cross, S. (1995), "Self-construals, coping and stress in cross-cultural adaptation", *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology,* Vol. 26 No. 6, pp. 673-697.

Day, D. (2008), "In a bigger, messo, context", *Journal of Pragmatics,* Vol. 40 No. 5, pp. 979–996.

De Cieri, H., Dowling, P.J. and Taylor, K.F. (1991), "The psychological impact of expatriate relocation on partners", *The International Journal of Human Resource Management,* Vol. 2 No. 3, pp. 377-414.

De Verthelyi, R. F. (1995), "International students" spouses: Invisible sojourners in the culture shock literature", *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, Vol. 19 No. 3, pp. 387-411.

Duranti, A. and Goodwin, C. (1992), *Rethinking Context*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Fitzpatrick, F. (2016), *Voices from Cuba: Redefining culture shock,* Lambert Academic Publishing, Saarbrucken.

Forster, N. (1997), "The persistent myth of high expatriate failure rates: a reappraisal", *The International Journal of Human Resource Management,* Vol. 8 No. 4, pp. 414-433.

Fukuda, K. J., and Chu, P. (1994), "Wrestling with expatriate family problems. Japanese experiences in East Asia", *International Studies of Management and Organizations*, Vol. 24 No. 3, pp. 36-47.

Furnham, A. and Bochner, S. (1982), "Social difficulty in a foreign culture: An empirical analysis of culture shock" in Bochner, S. (Ed.), *Cultures in contact: Studies in cross-cultural interaction,* Pergamon Press, Oxford, pp. 161-198.

Geertz, C. (1973), *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Perseus Books Group, New York.

Goffman, E. (1974), *Frame Analysis*, Harper, New York.

Granovetter, M.S. (1973), "The Strength of Weak Ties", *American Journal of Sociology,* Vol. 78 No. 6, pp. 1360-1380.

Gudykunst, W.B. (2003) *Cross Cultural and Intercultural Communication*, Sage, London.

Harrison, J.K., Chadwick, M. and Scales, M. (1996), "The relationship between cross-cultural adjustment and the personality variables of self-efficacy and self-monitoring", *International Journal of Intercultural Relations,* Vol. 20 No. 2, pp. 167-188.

Harvey, M. G. (1998), "Dual-career couples during international relocation: The trailing spouse", *The International Journal of Human Resource Management,* Vol. 9 No. 2, pp.309-331.

Haslberger A. and Brewster C. (2008), The expatriate family: an international perspective", *Journal of Managerial Psychology,* Vol. 23 No. 3, pp. 324-346.

Hechanova, R., Beehr, T.A. and Christiansen, N.D. (2003), "Antecedents and Consequences of Employees' Adjustment to Overseas Assignment: a Meta-analytical Review", *Applied Psychology,* Vol. 52 No, 2, pp. 213-236.

Hofstede, G. (1991), *Cultures and Organisations: Software of the mind*, McGraw-Hill, New York.

Holliday, A., Hyde, M. and Kullman, J. (2004), *Intercultural Communication*, Routledge, London.

Holliday, A. (2011), *Intercultural Communication and Ideology*, Sage, London.

Huang, T.J., Chi, S.C. and Lawler, J.J. (2005), "The relationship between expatriates' personality traits and their adjustment to international assignments", *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol, 16 No.9, pp. 1656–1670.

Jack, A.J., Cala, M.B., Nkomo, S.M. and Peltonen, T (2008), "Critique and International Management: An uneasy relationship?", *Academy of Management Review,* Vol. 33, No. 4, pp. 870–884.

Jandt, F.E. (2007), *An Introduction to Intercultural Communication*, Sage, London.

Kealey, D.J. (1996), "The challenge of international personnel selection" in Landis, D. and Bhagat, R.S. (Eds.), *Handbook of Intercultural Training, 2ⁿᵈ Edition,* Sage, Thousand Oaks, pp. 81-105.

Kealey D.J. and Protheroe, D.R. (1996), "The effectiveness of cross-cultural training for expatriates: an assessment of the literature on the issue", *International Journal of Intercultural Relations,* Vol. 20 No. 2, pp. 141-165.

Kim, Y.Y. (2001), *Becoming Intercultural: An Integrative theory of Communication and Cross-Cultural Adaptation,* Sage, Thousand Oaks.

Kolthoff, H. and Spencer-Oatey, H. (2009), *Handbook of Intercultural Communication,* Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin.

Krackhardt, D. (1992), "The Strength of Strong Ties: The Importance of Philos in Organizations", in Nohria, N. and Eccles, R. (Eds.), *Networks and Organizations: Structure, Form and Action*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston, MA, pp. 216-239.

Kraimer, M. L., Wayne, S. J. and Jaworski, R.A. (2001), "Sources of support and expatriate performance: the mediating role of expatriate adjustment", Personnel *Psychology*, Vol. 54 No. 1, pp. 71-99.

Kraimer, M., Bolino, M. and Mead, M. (2016), "Themes in Expatriate and Repatriate Research over Four Decades: What Do We Know and What Do We Still Need to Learn?", *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior,* Vol. 3, pp. 83–109.

Landis, D., Bennett, J.M. and Bennett M.J. (2004), *Handbook of Intercultural Training*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks.

Lazarova, M., Westman, M. and Shaffer M.A. (2010), "Elucidating the positive side of the work-family interface on international assignments: a model of expatriate work and family performance", *Academy of Management Review,* Vol. 35 No. 1, pp. 93–117.

Lysgaard, S. (1955), "Adjustment in a foreign society: Norwegian Fulbright grantees visiting the United States", *International Social Science Bulletin*, Vol. 7, pp. 45-51.

Mendenhall, M. and Oddou, G. (1985), "The dimensions of expatriate acculturation", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 10 No. 1, pp. 39-47.

Milroy, J. and Milroy, L. (1978), "Belfast: change and variation in an urban vernacular", in Trudgill, P. (Ed.), *Sociolinguistic patterns in British English*, Edward Arnold, London, pp. 19–36.

Mohr, A.T. and Klein, S. (2004), "Exploring the adjustment of American expatriate spouses in Germany", *International Journal of Human Resource Management,* Vol. 15 No.7, pp. 1189-1206.

Lauring, J. and Jan Selmer, J. (2009), "Expatriate compound living: an ethnographic field study", *The International Journal of Human Resource Management,* Vol. 20 No. 7, pp. 1451–67.

Martin, J.N. (2015), "Revisiting intercultural communication competence: Where to go from here", *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, Vol. 48, pp. 6-8.

Oberg, K. (1960), "Culture shock: Adjustment to new cultural environments", *Practical Anthropology,* Vol. 7 No. 4, pp. 177-182.

Ong, A.S.J. and Ward, C. (2005), "The Construction and Validation of a Social Support Measure for Sojourners", *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, Vol. 36 No. 6, pp. 637-661.

Parker, B. and McEvoy, G.M. (1993), "Initial examination of a model of intercultural adjustment", *International Journal of Intercultural Relations,* Vol. 17 No. 3, pp. 355-519.

Pascoe, R. (2003), *A Movable Marriage*, Expatriate Press, North Vancouver, BC.

Piller, I. (2011), *Intercultural Communication: a Critical Introduction*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh.

Prechtl, E. and Lund, A.D. (2009), "Intercultural competence and assessment: perspectives from the INCA project", in Kotthoff, H. and Spencer-Oatey, H. (Eds.), *Handbook of Intercultural Communication*, Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin, pp. 467-490.

Ruben B.D. and Kealey D.J. (1979), "Behavioral assessment of communication competency and the prediction of cross-cultural adaptation", *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, Vol. 3 No. 1, pp. 15-47.

Searle, W. and Ward, C. (1990), "The prediction of psychological and sociocultural adjustment during cross-cultural transitions", *International Journal of Intercultural Relations,* Vol. 14 No. 4, pp. 449-464.

Shaffer, M. A., and Harrison, D. A. (1998), "Expatriates psychological withdrawal from international assignments: Work, non-work, and family influences", *Personnel Psychology,* Vol. 51 No.1, pp. 87–118.

Shaffer, M. A., Harrison, D. A. and Gilley, K. M. (1999), "Dimensions, determinants and differences in the expatriate adjustment process", *Journal of International Business Studies,* Vol. 30 No. 3, p 557-581.

Tajfel H. (1982), *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Thornton, R. (1988), "Culture: a contemporary definition", in Boonzaeir, E. and Sharp, J. (Eds.), *Keywords*, David Phillip, Cape Town.

Triandis, H. C. (1995), *Individualism and Collectivism*, Westview Press, Boulder.

Tung, R. L. (1981), "Selection and training of personnel for overseas assignments", *Columbia Journal of World Business*, Vol. 16 No.1, pp. 68-78.

Ward, C. and Kennedy, A. (1994), "Acculturation strategies, psychological adjustment and sociocultural competence during cross-cultural transitions", *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, Vol. 18 No. 3, pp. 329-343.

Ward, C. and Kennedy, A. (1999), "The measurement of sociocultural adjustment", *International Journal of Intercultural Relations,* Vol. 23 No. 4, pp. 659-677.

Ward, C., Bochner, S. and Furnham, A. (2001), *The Psychology of Culture Shock*, Routledge, London.

Ward, C. and Rana-Deuba, A. (1999), "Home and host culture influences on sojourner adjustment", *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, Vol. 24 No. 3, pp. 291-306.

Weeks, K. P., Weeks, M. and Willis-Muller, K. (2010), "The adjustment of expatriate teenagers", *Personnel Review,* Vol. 39 No. 1, pp. 24-43.

Williams, R. (1981), *Culture*, Fontana, London.

Wolf, E. (1982), *Europe and the People without History,* University of California Press, California.

Yeaton, K. and Hall, N. (2008), "Expatriates: Reducing failure rates", *Journal of Corporate Accounting and Finance,* Vol. 19 No. 3, pp. 75-8.