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Reverse culture shock in students returning from overseas

Kevin F. Gaw *

University of Nevada, USA

Abstract

The reentry experiences of 66 overseas-experienced American college students were examined to determine if reverse culture shock influenced self-reported problem severity, willingness to see a counselor, and student support service usage. This survey study revealed significant findings that bear upon student services programming conducted by college student personnel workers. First, returnees experiencing a high level of reverse culture shock were more likely to report more personal adjustment and shyness problems/concerns than were returnees experiencing a low level of reverse culture shock. Second, willingness to see a counselor for personal problems/concerns was not necessarily related to one's level of reverse culture shock. Finally, a negative correlation was observed with regard to reverse culture shock and student support service usage; as reverse culture shock increased, service usage decreased. Programming implications are discussed.

Keywords: reverse culture shock; reentry culture shock; repatriation; expatriate; adjustment; cultural transition; college student adjustment

Introduction

Reverse culture shock is the process of readjusting, reacculturating, and reassimilating into one's own home culture after living in a different culture for a

E-mail address: keving@shuttle.cc.umr.edu (K.F. Gaw).

* University of Nevada, Reno, Counseling & Testing Center (080), 206 Thompson Student Services, Reno, NV 89557-0072, USA. Tel.: +1-775-784-4648; Fax: +1-775-327-2293.

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significant period of time. Sojourners experience reentry in different ways; some individuals may experience few, if any, effects of reentry, while others appear to have problems ranging from a few months to a year or longer (Adler, 1981; Carlisle-Frank, 1992). While the theoretical literature states no returnee is exempt from reverse culture shock (Adler, 1981; Church, 1982; Stelling, 1991; Zapf, 1991), there are limited data to support this hypothesis. Clinical evidence suggests that children and adolescents experience a greater severity of reverse culture shock than adults (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Stelling, 1991; Werkman, 1980), indicating a continuum of reaction to reentering the home culture. The empirical literature does not clearly indicate the severity of reverse culture shock as a problem nor to whom it is a problem.

Common problems reported in the literature, at least for some, include academic problems, cultural identity conflict, social withdrawal, depression, anxiety, and interpersonal difficulties (Kittredge, 1988; Martin, 1984, 1986; Raschio, 1987; Sahin, 1990; Zapf, 1991). Returnees have also been reported to experience alienation, disorientation, stress, value confusion, anger, hostility, compulsive fears, helplessness, disenchantment, and discrimination (Adler, 1981; Church, 1982; Hannigan, 1990; Locke & Feinsod, 1982; Raschio, 1987; Zapf, 1991).

It is not clear what academic and psycho-social problems college-aged returnees encounter upon reentry to their home country. Further, when problems are encountered, the degree to which they are experienced has yet to be systematically examined. The intention of this study was to document the severity of problems associated with reverse culture shock for overseas-experienced students attending an American university and returnee willingness to see a counselor with regard to problems identified. This study also examined the hypothesized relationship between reverse culture shock severity and student services usage.

The dependent-American returnee population

Twelfth graders graduating from international and American schools abroad usually return to their home country as they are normally not allowed to work in their host countries. Many of these graduates are United States citizens and therefore find their way to the United States after completing their secondary school education overseas. Of these returning graduates, some 95% matriculate to American colleges or universities (Johnston, 1986; Kaemmerlen & Heisler, 1991). Gerner, Perry, Moselle, and Archbold (1992) conservatively estimated 300,000 dependent American youth abroad in 1985. The 1988 figure estimated 2 million or more Americans living outside of the United States, of which approximately 675,000 were dependent youth (US Department of Commerce, 1990). Of this large group, approximately 37,721 reentered the United States as college-bound returnees (Gaw, 1994). Some of these students were born and had remained abroad, others had lived abroad for many years, and some were abroad for only a few years.

The diverse returnee population has been commonly organized into primary

wage-earner (i.e., parent) occupational/sponsorship subgroups, such as missionaries, non-governmental organization workers, federal government employees, educators, volunteers, business and military personnel, and international students (Gerner et al., 1992). The dependents of these overseas American workers/students make up between 23 and 34% of the student population at the international and American schools abroad (Gerner et al., 1992; Kaemmerlen & Heisler, 1991).

The overseas-experienced students comprise an extremely diversified population who grow up in highly mobile, multicultural and culturally fluid environments. The overseas-experienced American college student is a member of this internationally mobile population. These students, while abroad for different reasons, share the common experience of reentering the United States and many will encounter the readjustment process of reverse culture shock.

Theories of reverse culture shock

Reverse culture shock received scholarly attention as early as 1944 when Scheutz (1944) examined the difficulties of returning armed forces veterans. Austin and Jones (1987) identified earlier sources that indirectly addressed reentry issues, dating from as early as 1935. Culture shock itself first received critical attention in the late 1950's and early 1960's and for the most part was studied through qualitative research methods. Lysgaard (1955), Oberg (1960), and Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) were the first to describe culture shock and reverse culture shock qualitatively as intercultural adjustment.

Defining reverse culture shock begins with acknowledging reverse culture shock's "parent" construct, culture shock. Oberg's (1960) early definition was: "Culture shock is precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse" (p. 177). P. Adler's (1975) definition of culture shock is psychologically more descriptive and explanatory:

> Culture shock is primarily a set of emotional reactions to the loss of perceptual reinforcements from one's own culture, to new cultural stimuli which have little or no meaning, and to the misunderstanding of new and diverse experiences. It may encompass feelings of helplessness, irritability, and fears of being cheated, contaminated, injured or disregarded. (p. 13.)

N. Adler's (1981) definition highlights the chaotic and fatiguing nature of culture shock when she defines the construct as, "... the frustration and confusion that result from being bombarded by unpredictable cues" (p. 343). The above definitions are representative of the many culture shock definitions in the literature (see Church, 1982; Zapf, 1991). Reverse culture shock is similar in definition to culture shock, but the adjustment process focuses on the difficulties of re-adapting and re-adjusting to one's own home culture after one has sojourned or lived in another cultural environment.

Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) applied the culture shock construct to

returning United States scholars. Their study, which combined interview and survey data of 5300 returning scholars, suggested that the reverse culture shock pattern of adjustment was similar to the U-curve of adjustment introduced by Lysgaard (1955) to describe initial culture shock adjustment; hence their introduction of the "W-curve" hypothesis.

Lysgaard interviewed 200 returned Norwegian Fulbright scholars to study their adjustment patterns in a host country. He found that the U-curve described initial culture shock adjustment over time. The sojourner experiences initial euphoria, then depression, and finally resolution. The pattern of culture shock was graphically represented as a U-shaped adjustment curve with well-being on the ordinate axis and time on the abscissa axis of a Cartesian graph. By extending the U-curve with a second U-curve, Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) theoretically accounted for reverse culture shock, the experience of returning to one's home culture. The cognitive dissonance experienced at reentry was perceived as the primary root to the syndrome of reverse culture shock, causing structural imbalance (cognitive schema disequilibrium).

According to Gullahorn and Gullahorn, the main difference between reverse culture shock and culture shock was the expectations of the sojourners. Sojourners often expected to return to an unchanged home as unchanged individuals, which was not the case. In other words, one can expect (and thus is more or less cognitively prepared for) the cultural differences when entering a new culture, thereby potentially minimizing the effects of culture shock (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Searle & Ward, 1990; Weissman & Furnham, 1987). There has also been an assumption that reentry expectations negatively influence reverse culture shock. In this case, the returnee expects no difficulties as he/she is returning home, expects friends and family to have not changed and to welcome them, and expects the home culture to have remained unchanged and welcoming. For returnees who have spent most of their lives abroad, the expectations are based on what they think home is supposed to be as communicated by others (i.e., parents, peers, media) (Stelling, 1991).

Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) noted that sojourners with more firmly established perceptions of themselves suffered less; hence, the faculty returnees in their sample fared better (i.e., reported less adjustment problems) than student returnees in their sample. They explained that students were more likely in a state of identity change before, during and after an overseas experience while faculty sojourners had more firmly set identities. Gullahorn and Gullahorn did not report empirical data to support these observations, however.

Kagitcibasi (1987) described the reentry experience as "deculturation," as the returnee is caught between the two cultures of host country and home country. Werkman (1980) summarized his findings as follows:

> The task of readapting to the United States after living overseas is, for many, the most difficult hurdle in the entire cycle of international life. People who have lived overseas emphatically report that it is far less stressful to leave the

United States and find a place in a new country than it is to experience the unexpected jolt of coming back home. (p. 233.)

Reverse culture shock research

Researchers agree the reverse culture shock experience can be problematic, though there is a spectrum of opinion as to the types and severity of problems experienced by returnees. Empirical studies have identified problem areas that appear to be associated with the reverse culture shock experience.

The body of literature addressing outcome variables is exemplified by Sahin (1990), who reported significant clinical levels of depression and anxiety among Turkish secondary school returnees as compared to a non-returnee comparison group. Of the 785 returnee students, 18% reported clinical levels of depression; only 11% of the non-returnee students ($n = 579$) reported levels of clinical depression. As for anxiety, 45% of the returnees reported "problem anxiety" (p. 174) while 28% of the non-returnees reported such levels of anxiety.

Sahin also noted that 34% regretted returning home while 9% regretted having left home. Rogers and Ward (1993), in their study of 20 returned secondary school students, reported positive significant correlations between experienced reentry difficulties and depression ($r = 0.37$) and anxiety ($r = 0.52$), supporting Sahin's findings.

Gama and Pedersen (1977) observed readjustment problems among 31 Brazilians who had returned from graduate study in the United States. Their study identified problematic value conflicts with social and interpersonal relationships as well as with professional roles. Martin (1986) observed significant changes in the perceived quality of relationships among friends and family of returnees. Seiter and Waddell (1989), using their Reentry Shock Scale (RSS) and a set of items that assessed relational satisfaction derived from Martin's (1984) theoretical work, found a significantly negative correlation ($r = -0.42$) between reverse culture shock and relationship satisfaction.

Nash (1976) compared a study abroad returnee group ($n = 41$) with a non-returnee control group ($n = 32$) and found that returnees expressed significantly higher levels of autonomy and "expansion and differentiation of self" (p. 200) than the control group. Stitsworth (1989) observed psychological changes among returnees when comparing returnees ($n = 154$) and non-returnees ($n = 112$) on the Communality, Flexibility and Achievement via Independence scales of the California Psychological Inventory (Gough, 1975). These studies suggest returnees possibly undergo identity changes resulting from their intercultural experiences aside from normal maturation change.

Descriptive survey studies have also identified problems thought to be associated with reverse culture shock. For example, Enloe (1986) surveyed 21 returned overseas-experienced Japanese families and identified reverse culture shock-related adjustment problems that the 40 children experienced. Problems

included school phobia, adjustment to home country social expectations (e.g., social rules, customs), fear of rejection, ridicule for being "foreign", and performance anxiety. Gleason (1973), after interviewing and surveying an undergraduate sample ($n = 157$), found that the common problems encountered by returned first-year college students were school finances, coursework difficulties, career decision confusion, personal identity confusion, and interpersonal relationships.

Kidder (1992) interviewed 45 overseas-experienced Japanese university students and found the "dilemma for returnees is whether to maintain or trim the new aspects of themselves, the parts they picked up under ... any other flag" (p. 384). Kidder found returnees struggling with changes resulting from their overseas experiences, such as physical changes (hair style and color changes, pierced ears, and clothing styles), behavioral changes (walking and posture style changes, non-verbal behavior changes), interpersonal communication style changes, language competence and accent changes, and career value changes.

Stelling's (1991) survey of 134 returnees found that the returnee may very well experience a non-home country ethnic and/or cultural identification. Kittredge (1988) interviewed American returnees (unreported sample size) and noted across interviews that returnees most often felt out of place upon return to the United States because they held different self-identities than prescribed by American mainstream norms. For example, one returnee reported that his being African-American overseas was never a personal issue as he identified as an American, but upon return to the United States, he had to reckon with "the significance of being black" (p. 40). Another found herself able to only socialize with "outcasts" because her experience was not shared by non-returnee Americans. This particular European-American returnee identified with Indian and "third culture" values and experienced value conflicts with non-returnee Americans — hence her experience of alienation. (Briefly, a "third culture" person is an individual who has been raised in a cultural milieu that is characterized as a composite of guest cultures and the host culture.) Stevenson-Moessner (1986) described the "cultural dissolution" (p. 315) of one European-American raised in non-white Africa who, upon reentry to the United States, experienced a profound erosion of personal identity with the loss of his African role models and social support network.

Werkman (1980) clinically observed that returning adolescents give up significant parts of their lives upon reentry, experiencing problematic separation and loss without clearly defined support structures. These returnees, according to Werkman, report discomfort and dissatisfaction with their lives, are nostalgic for lost lifestyles, and exhibit lower self-concepts than do their non-returnee counterparts.

Hypotheses

Reverse culture shock research suggests that reverse culture shock is problematic for some returning sojourners. However, the literature is not consistent in reporting the spectrum and severity of problems and the needs of

returnees (Martin, 1984, 1986; Moore, Jones, & Austin, 1987; Raschio, 1987; Sahin, 1990; Stitsworth, 1989; Sussman, 1986; Uehara, 1986; Westwood, Lawrence, & Paul, 1986; Zapf, 1991). The purpose of this study was to document, using a modified Personal Problems Inventory (PPI) (Cash, Begley, McCown, & Weise, 1975) and the Reverse Shock Scale (RSS) (Seitar & Waddell, 1989), the adjustment of returned overseas-experienced American college students by examining their perceived reverse culture shock, problems they reported, their willingness to seek help, and the services they used. The research hypotheses were as follows:

1. High RSS index scorers would express greater severity of concerns on the PPI factors than would low RSS index scorers.

   It was expected that returnees with a high level of reverse culture shock would also express greater problem severity than returnees with a low level of reverse culture shock. Therefore, individuals encountering reverse culture shock would express needs (problem areas) that were specific to their reverse culture shock experience. Some of these needs would be psychological, social, academic, and personal, as assessed by the PPI.
2. High RSS scorers would be less willing to see a counselor than would low RSS scorers.

   The question addressed was whether there was a significant difference between high and low RSS index scorers when their willingness to see a counselor was examined. Previous reverse culture shock research has not addressed the questions of what degree returnees were willing to seek assistance with the problems they were encountering and if the two groups differed in their willingness to seek counseling.
3. There is a negative relationship between RSS scores and service usage.

   Finally, it was expected that as returnee RSS scores increased, student support service usage would decline. This research question was developed with regard to the belief that a lower level of reverse culture shock would not inhibit student service usage while a higher level of reverse culture shock would inhibit student service usage.

Method

Design

The investigation was based on a cross-cohort, descriptive survey. The study examined the problems of overseas-experienced returnees and their willingness to seek assistance for those problems using the revised Personal Problems Inventory (PPI) (Cash et al., 1975; Gim, Atkinson, & Whiteley, 1990). Demographic data were incorporated to explore the relationship between reverse culture shock, personal problems, and student service usage.

Subjects

The subjects were 66 overseas-experienced American students attending a large West Coast university. The university's 1992–1993 undergraduate enrollment was 16,277 students (Office of Budget and Planning, 1993), of which, 75 (0.46% of the undergraduate population) fit the population under study (S. Agronov, personal communication, February, 1993).

All undergraduate students at the West Coast university who met the following inclusion criteria at the time of the study were asked to participate in the investigation: (1) United States citizenship; and (2) completion of high school education outside the United States.

The sample population was identified using two descriptors, school code (an administrative coding) and visa status, on the university's mainframe computer database. By intersecting these two fields, and selecting only the non-visa holding students who had graduated from a "foreign school" (which included host national, American, international, missionary and Department of Defense schools), a list of 75 potential participants meeting the inclusion criteria was generated. Permanent resident aliens (a.k.a., "green card holders") were not included in the search.

Procedures

Reentry survey packets were mailed to the 75 potential students who met the inclusion criteria. The packets included a pre-stamped return envelope as a means to increase response. Of the 75 mailed packets, 66 were returned after follow-up methods were employed. The return rate was 88%. Of the nine non-participating returnees, four were contacted to learn of their decisions not to participate: one was recovering from a serious injury, one declined to participate, and two were studying abroad at the time of the investigation. The latter two were sent the reentry survey twice, but did not respond. The other five non-participating students could not be contacted.

Respondents were asked to complete and return the mailed survey immediately; the survey packet contained a cover letter explaining the study, a consent form, and the reentry survey. A second reentry survey packet was mailed to individuals who had not completed and returned the original packet. Postcards and telephone contact were used as final procedures to obtain completed surveys.

Sample characteristics

Participants ranged in age from 18 to 25 years; the average age was 20 (S.D. = 1.62). Most of the participants were 21 years of age or younger (85%). Thirty-two males and 34 females participated.

Respondents represented all undergraduate class levels. Freshmen represented 23% of the sample (n = 15); sophomores represented 26% of the sample (n = 17).

Juniors had the smallest representation of 15% of the sample ($n = 10$). Seniors were the largest subgroup, representing 36% of the sample ($n = 24$).

Ethnicity, home country, and country of attachment were assessed on the reentry survey. A large proportion of the sample were European-American ($n = 41$); 8 Asian-Americans participated, 4 Hispanics participated, and 13 "other" self-identified ethnicities participated. Some respondents identified their ethnicities as biracial. Other ethnicities reported were: Arab ($n = 2$), Middle Eastern ($n = 1$), American-Egyptian ($n = 1$), American-Brazilian ($n = 1$), American-Japanese ($n = 1$), American-Korean ($n = 1$), American-Filipino ($n = 1$), American-Greek ($n = 1$), Filipino-Spanish ($n = 1$), Indian-Puerto Rican ($n = 1$), Chinese ($n = 1$), and Jewish ($n = 1$).

The RSS survey assessed the number of schools attended overseas and the type of school last attended. The largest subgroup of the respondents attended only one overseas school ($n = 30$). Sixteen attended two overseas schools, while nine participants attended three schools and nine attended four schools. One participant attended six schools and one attended seven overseas schools. The average stay overseas was slightly over 10 years with a range of 18.5 years (from half a year to 19 years).

Type of overseas school attended was initially assessed by having respondents list their overseas schools by name on the reentry survey. The most recent school attended was then referenced in the *ISS Directory of Overseas Schools* (Kaemmerlen & Heisler, 1991) to code the school type. If the school was not listed in this directory, the *Secondary School/Junior College Code List* (Educational Testing Service, 1990) was used. Thirteen respondents attended international schools; 24 attended American schools; five attended missionary schools; 10 attended US Department of Defense or State Department schools; and 14 attended host country schools.

Instruments

This investigation employed the reentry survey, an instrument containing two previously published scales and a demographic questionnaire. The reentry survey was reviewed by five American study abroad students (who did not fit the investigation's inclusion criteria) and was revised based upon their recommendations with regard to item clarity and usefulness.

The demographic component of the reentry survey assessed age, sex, class standing, ethnicity, number of years lived abroad (outside the United States), and schools attended abroad. Two items assessed the respondents' home and country identification, and one item identified what services respondents had used to address problems they experienced while a university student.

The RSS (Seiter & Waddell, 1989), the second component to the reentry survey, assessed the participants' degree of reverse culture shock. The RSS is a sixteen item, 7-point Likert-type scale developed from previous culture shock and reverse culture shock research (e.g., Austin, 1986; Church, 1982; Koester, 1984; Martin, 1984; Sussman, 1986; Uehara, 1986). Seiter and Waddell (1989) utilized the RSS

to study the relationships between intercultural reentry, locus of control, and interpersonal communication. The reported internal-consistency alpha coefficient was 0.83. The 7-point scale ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree); the mid-point value is 4 (neither agree nor disagree). The RSS is scored by totaling the item scores and then dividing by 16, producing an index score ranging from 1 to 7. An index score of 7 indicates the subject is experiencing extreme reverse culture shock and an index score of 1 suggests the subject is experiencing no reverse culture shock. Seiter and Waddell (1989) reported an RSS index score mean of 4.4 (M = 4.3; S.D. = 0.96) for their sample of 54 returned study abroad college students. Average stay abroad for their sample was 1 year. The mean RSS index score for the present sample was 4.84; the median was 4.88; the standard deviation was 0.82. The average stay abroad for the present sample was about 10 years.

The second scale on the reentry survey is an adapted form of the PPI (Cash et al., 1975; Gim et al., 1990) which provided a parsimonious approach to assessing the needs of college students. The PPI addresses problems pertinent to the general college student population and has been used in studies (e.g., Gim et al., 1990; Lewis & Walsh, 1978, 1980; Ponce & Atkinson, 1989) to assess college student concerns. The PPI also provides an index of ''willingness to see the counselor'' for each concern. Ponce and Atkinson (1989) and Gim et al. (1990) have successively revised the PPI to account for issues presented by American racial/ethnic minority students attending American colleges. The revised Gim et al. (1990) version of the PPI consisted of 24 problems for both subscales (personal problems and willingness to see a counselor). Gim et al. (1990) found that the PPI assessed three factors (relationship concerns, academic or career concerns, and health or substance abuse concerns) and five additional items that did not load on any of the three factors (concerns of conflicts with parents, financial concerns, insomnia, roommate problems, and ethnic identity confusion). For this study, one item from the 24 was removed (''being a minority member''); this deletion was recommended by four of the five instrument reviewers. To assess cultural identity conflict (thus tapping into a similar construct of the deleted item), home identification and ethnicity was assessed on the demographic portion of the survey. Therefore, the form of the PPI used for this investigation had 23 items. Gaw (1993) recently assessed the test–retest reliability of this modified form of the PPI, which produced one-week reliability coefficients of 0.85 and 0.89 for the problems and willingness scales, respectively. (College-aged students at a separate academic institution from the present study participated in the test–retest study. These students were voluntary participants who were enrolled in an undergraduate psychology course. Participants completing both administrations were given course credit. A course examination followed the initial administration, serving as a distracter to directly interfere with participant memory of the initial administration.)

Overseas-experienced American returnees participating in the investigation were asked to make two ratings for each of the 23 problems. They first rated the level of severity of each problem on a 4-point scale (1 = not a problem to 4 = major

problem). The average rating across all problems for each respondent generated a PPI problem severity index score. The respondents then rated their willingness to see a counselor for each problem, also on a 4-point scale (1 = not willing to 4 = willing). The average rating across all problems for each respondent generated a PPI "willingness" index score. In a test–retest study of the modified 23 item PPI, Gaw (1993) reported an overall problem severity mean of 1.52 for the first administration and 1.43 for the second administration. Gaw also reported 1.57 and 1.54 as average "willingness" index scores for the initial and second administrations, respectively.

Results

This study assessed the degree of reverse culture shock experienced by a sample of overseas-experienced American college students. The study then examined the relationships between reverse culture shock and the reported problems/concerns of these returnees, their willingness to seek counselor assistance for their problems/concerns, and returnee use of student services.

Table 1
Factor loadings for the personal problems subscale on the PPI

PPI item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Alienated, not belonging	.816[a]	.203	.007	−.157
Loneliness, isolation	.814[a]	.102	.246	.114
Making friends	.629[a]	.226	.169	.384
Inferiority feelings	.640[a]	.056	.196	.398
Adjustment to college	.595	−.096	.599[a]	.044
Depression	.588[a]	.249	.512	.078
General anxiety	.570[a]	.339	.178	.152
Sexual functioning	.168	.841[a]	.130	−.092
Sexual relationships	.278	.606[a]	.142	−.119
Academic performance	.239	.021	.675[a]	.244
Conflicts with parents	.105	.130	.669[a]	−.169
Test anxiety	.039	.268	.662[a]	.252
Trouble studying	.284	.331	.558[a]	.283
Personal/ethnic identity	.405	.112	.531[a]	.139
Shyness	.362	−.112	.019	.679[a]
Speech anxiety	−.022	−.023	.138	.625[a]
Dating problems	.321	.334	.201	.393
Alcohol problems	−.045	.203	.091	.191
Financial concerns	.135	.107	.477	.148
Career choice	.464	.030	.108	.084
Insomnia	.038	.270	.045	.037
Roommates	.262	.054	.150	−.018

[a] These items loaded onto the factor identified by the column heading.

Personal problems/concerns

The first hypothesis was that respondents with high RSS index scores would express a significantly greater severity of concerns on the PPI than would respondents with low RSS Index scores. This hypothesis was tested using a one-way MANOVA design following the use of exploratory factor analysis, which generated the dependent variables for the MANOVA.

Because the PPI has 23 items, exploratory factor analysis with a varimax rotation was used to identify an underlying structure. A four-factor solution was selected; 49.26% of the total variance was explained with this solution. Using 0.50 as the loading criteria, the four factors were labeled as personal adjustment (Factor 1), intimacy concerns (Factor 2), college adjustment (Factor 3), and shyness concerns (Factor 4). The personal adjustment factor accounted for 19.09% of the total variance; the intimacy concerns factor accounted for 8.34% of the total variance; the college adjustment factor explained 14.01% of the total variance; and the shyness concerns factor explained 7.82% of the total variance. Results of the factor analysis are presented in Table 1.

Two items (adjustment to college and depression) loaded on two factors (personal adjustment and college adjustment). The first item, adjustment to college, loaded 0.595 on the personal adjustment factor and 0.599 on the college adjustment factor. Due to its slightly higher value on the third factor, the adjustment to college item was placed on that factor; this also made sense given the nature of the factor and the item of interest. The second item, depression, loaded 0.588 on the personal adjustment factor and 0.512 on the college adjustment factor. Because of its higher loading on the first factor, it was placed on that factor; additionally, the item's meaning addresses the factor's domain. Six items did not load over 0.499 on any of the factors and were subsequently dropped from the factor analysis procedure. One item, drug addiction, was dropped from the factor analysis completely because all respondents answered "Not a Problem" to the item.

High and low levels of reverse culture shock were determined by index score on the RSS, using the median score as the threshold of determination. Individuals with index scores equal to or above the threshold were placed in the high reverse culture shock group; individuals with an index score below the threshold value were assigned to the low group. An independent samples t test revealed that the Low and High RSS means differed significantly on the RSS ($t = -12.59$, $df = 64$, $P < 0.000$). PPI items significantly contributing to each factor were summed and then divided by the number of items significantly contributing to the factor to create a severity score for the factor. Using the two levels of RSS index scores as the independent variable and the factors as the dependent variables, a one-way MANOVA was performed. This analysis resulted in a significant Wilks' lambda value: $\Lambda = 0.801$, $F(4,60) = 3.733$, $P < 0.001$.

Subsequent univariate ANOVA was performed for each dependent variable and resulted in significant F values for two of the four dependent variables: personal

adjustment, F (1,63) = 11.348, $P < 0.001$, and shyness concerns, F (1,63) = 4.449, $P < 0.039$. The two nonsignificant factors were intimacy concerns, F (1,63) = 0.029, $P < 0.866$, and college adjustment, (F (1,63) = 2.464, $P < 0.121$). Results show that students experiencing high reverse culture shock were more likely to report personal adjustment problems and shyness concerns than would those experiencing low reverse culture shock.

Table 2 provides the response percentages of the sample across the PPI personal problems subscale; items were sorted by respondents' "Not a Problem" endorsements. Most items revealed a range of endorsement in terms of severity, from "Not a Problem" to "Severe Problem". Loneliness–isolation was considered by approximately 30% of the sample to be either a significant or a severe problem. Over 22% of the sample rated college adjustment, depression, career choice, feeling alienated, and trouble studying as either significant or severe problems. Financial concerns, general anxiety, academic performance, and shyness were considered significant or severe problems by over 15% of the sample. Drug addiction was the only item that was "Not a Problem" for the entire sample.

Table 2
Personal problems subscale responses (sorted by "Not a Problem" percentages)

PPI item	Not a problem	Mild problem	Significant problem	Severe problem
Adjustment to college	31.8	40.9	19.7	7.6
Loneliness — isolation	33.3	36.4	21.2	9.1
Depression[a]	34.9	40.9	13.6	9.1
Career choice	36.4	37.9	21.2	4.6
Alienated	36.4	39.4	13.6	10.6
Shyness	47.0	36.4	7.6	9.1
General anxiety	48.5	36.4	15.2	0
Academic performance	48.5	36.4	10.6	4.6
Financial concerns	48.5	31.8	13.6	6.1
Trouble studying	50.0	27.3	13.6	9.1
Test anxiety	56.1	24.2	13.6	6.1
Making friends	56.1	33.3	7.6	3.0
Roommates	60.6	24.2	9.1	6.1
Dating problems	62.1	22.7	10.6	4.6
Inferiority feelings	63.6	22.7	7.6	6.1
Personal/ethnic identity	65.2	18.2	10.6	6.1
Speech anxiety	72.7	22.7	0	4.6
Conflicts with parents	74.2	19.7	4.6	1.5
Insomnia	74.2	21.2	4.6	0
Sexual relationships	75.8	16.7	6.1	1.5
Alcohol problems	84.9	10.6	3.0	1.5
Sexual functioning[a]	87.9	6.1	3.0	1.5
Drug addiction	100	0	0	0

[a] One respondent did not answer this item.

Willingness to see a counselor

The second hypothesis was that students who scored high on the RSS would be less willing to see a counselor than students scoring low on the RSS. This hypothesis was tested using a one-way MANOVA after identifying the underlying structure of the PPI that assessed returnee willingness to see a counselor.

Using exploratory factor analysis and varimax rotation, a three factor solution was selected that explained 62.83% of the total variance. The factor loading criterion was set at 0.50. The three factors were labeled as psychological withdrawal (factor 1), health and social concerns (factor 2), and college stability concerns (factor 3). The psychological withdrawal factor explained 49.76% of the total variance; the health and social concerns factor accounted for 7.85% of the total variance; the college stability concerns factor explained 5.22% of the total variance. Results of the factor analysis are presented in Table 3.

One item (making friends) loaded equally on the psychological withdrawal factor and the health and social concerns factor and was therefore retained on both factors. Additionally, the item appeared to fit within the constructs of both

Table 3
Factor loadings for the willingness to see a counselor subscale on the PPI

PPI item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Depression	.837[a]	.175	.298
Loneliness — isolation	.822[a]	.265	.252
Inferiority feelings	.735[a]	.180	.342
Alienated, not belonging	.722[a]	.328	.319
General anxiety	.666[a]	.247	.251
Adjustment to college	.582[a]	.258	.404
Shyness	.559[a]	.486	.030
Making friends	.553[a]	.553[a]	.238
Sexual relationships	.299	.838[a]	.148
Alcohol problems	.276	.826[a]	.203
Insomnia	.180	.792[a]	.220
Drug addiction	.106	.680[a]	.454
Sexual functioning	.295	.606[a]	.050
Roommates	.444	.583[a]	.414
Dating problems	.239	.564[a]	.412
Personal/ethnic identity	.495	.509[a]	.193
Academic performance	.416	.036	.763[a]
Trouble studying	.379	.158	.700[a]
Test Anxiety	.391	.224	.678[a]
Financial concerns	.107	.339	.577[a]
Career choice	.224	.208	.495
Speech anxiety	.056	.449	.421
Conflicts with parents	.464	.491	.283

[a] These items loaded onto the factor identified by the column heading.

psychological withdrawal and social concerns. Three items did not load above 0.499 and were therefore removed from the factors.

The same RSS index median threshold used previously was used to dichotomize the sample into high and low RSS groups. PPI items significantly contributing to each factor were summed and then divided by the number of items significantly contributing to the factor to create a factor score. A one-way MANOVA was conducted with the three identified factors of the PPI willingness subscale serving as the dependent variables. This omnibus analysis yielded a non-significant Wilks' lambda value: $\Lambda = 0.913$, $F(3,655) = 1.756$, $P < 0.166$. Because an overall non-significant result was obtained, subsequent analysis of variance procedures were not employed.

Table 4 provides the response percentages of the sample across the PPI willingness to see a counselor subscale items; items were sorted by respondents' "Not willing" endorsements. A "no response" column reports the percentage of respondents not answering the identified item. The distribution of endorsements for this subscale revealed a trend among the item responses: there was always at least 50% of the sample not willing or probably not willing to see a counselor for any given concern/problem on the PPI. Over 80% of the sample were not willing or probably not willing to see a counselor for problems concerning alcohol, drug

Table 4
Willingness to see a counselor subscale responses (sorted by "Not Willing" percentages)

PPI item	Not willing	Prob. not willing	Prob. willing	Willing	No response
Career choice	40.91	9.09	24.24	18.18	7.58
Depression	42.42	22.73	16.67	10.61	7.58
Trouble studying	50.00	13.64	19.70	6.06	10.61
Loneliness — isolation	53.03	12.12	21.21	9.09	4.55
Academic performance	53.03	9.09	18.18	13.64	6.06
Adjustment to college	54.55	12.12	19.70	6.06	7.58
Test anxiety	57.58	15.15	16.67	6.06	4.55
Alienated	57.58	15.15	19.70	3.03	4.55
Inferiority feelings	57.58	10.61	21.21	4.55	6.06
Financial concerns	59.09	4.55	21.21	12.12	3.03
Personal/ethnic identity	60.61	13.64	10.61	6.06	9.09
General anxiety	62.12	10.61	18.18	1.52	7.58
Making friends	63.64	13.64	12.12	3.03	7.58
Conflicts with parents	65.15	10.61	12.12	4.55	7.58
Speech anxiety	65.15	9.09	12.12	3.03	10.61
Insomnia	66.67	10.61	10.61	3.03	9.09
Shyness	68.18	15.15	10.61	3.03	3.03
Roommates	68.18	13.64	12.12	3.03	3.03
Sexual relationships	69.70	9.09	9.09	3.03	9.09
Dating problems	71.21	9.09	10.61	3.03	6.06
Drug addiction	72.73	9.09	7.58	3.03	7.58
Alcohol problems	77.27	7.58	7.58	3.03	4.55
Sexual functioning	77.27	4.55	9.09	1.52	7.58

addiction, shyness, roommates, sexual functioning, or dating problems. In terms of willingness to see a counselor for specific problems, some 42% of the sample reported they were either probably willing or willing to seek help for career concerns. Slightly over 31% of the sample reported they were probably willing or willing to see a counselor for financial and academic performance concerns.

Student service usage

Respondents identified which student support services they had used while enrolled at the university, summarized in Table 5. Over two-thirds of the sample used services at the student health center. Slightly over half of the returnees used services at the university's career and counseling center. Nearly half the respondents utilized academic advisors. Just over a quarter of the sample had used the financial aid office. Five respondents reported no use of any of the campus services, of which three were in the high RSS group and two in the low RSS group.

In terms of the number of services used, the mean usage was approximately 3 (2.94) and ranged from no reported usage to 7 services. The Pearson product–moment correlation between reverse culture shock (RSS index) and total service usage was significant ($r = -0.287$, $P < 0.02$). This correlation indicated that as RSS index scores increased, returnee service usage decreased.

Table 5 also presents student service usage data sorted by the two levels reverse culture shock (high and low). Both groups reported similar usage with regard to seeking help at the student health service, use of the campus religious center, and "other" services. However, an apparent wide difference in usage was observed with regard to use of financial aid services and tutorial services; more low *RSS* returnees used these services than high RSS returnees. Moderate differences were observed with regard to use of peer advising, counseling/career services, and

Table 5
Overall percentage and frequencies of students indicating use of a student support service

Student service	Overall percentage	High RSS use	Low RSS use
Health service	77.27	26	25
Career/counseling	53.03	15	20
Academic advisor	48.48	13	19
Financial aid office	27.27	3	15
Tutorial services	24.24	5	13
Academic peer advisor	22.73	5	10
Other services	12.12	3	3
Activities office	10.91	2	5
Religious center	6.06	2	2
Women's services	6.06	4	0
International students office	1.52	0	1
Campus ombudsperson	1.52	1	0

academic advising; again, more low RSS returnees reported use of these services. High RSS returnees reported use of women's services while low RSS returnees did not use the service at all.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to assess the relationships between reverse culture shock and personal problems/concerns experienced at college, willingness to see a counselor with regard to the expressed concerns, and types of services used by overseas-experienced college students. Respondent demographics, reverse culture shock, personal problem severity, willingness to see a counselor for problems, and student services usage were assessed with the reentry survey, a self-report instrument that was mailed to potential respondents.

It was predicted that sampled returnees with higher RSS index scores would express a significantly greater severity of problems/concerns on the PPI than would returnees with low RSS index scores. It was found that the two levels of reverse culture shock were significantly different with regard to their RSS index means. The severity of personal problems reported by overseas-experienced college students was assessed using a modified form of the PPI (Cash et al., 1975; Gim et al., 1990). Factor analysis produced a four factor solution for the personal problems subscale. The factors were: personal adjustment, intimacy concerns, college adjustment, and shyness concerns. This solution was unlike other studies using the PPI in which other factor structures were identified (Gim et al., 1990; Johnson & Holland, 1986; Ponce & Atkinson, 1989); however, personal, college, academic, and interpersonal concerns were represented in all the of the above studies, including the present study. Gim et al. (1990) found that less acculturated Asian-Americans reported a greater severity of concerns than did highly acculturated Asian-Americans. A similar result was found in this present study. Returnees who experience higher levels of reverse culture shock were more likely to report more personal adjustment problems and shyness concerns than returnees who experienced low levels of reverse culture shock. This finding supports the Gim et al. (1990) conclusion that cultural conflict is related to reported problem severity.

The problems/concerns that loaded on the personal adjustment factor were alienated — not belonging; loneliness — isolation; making friends; inferiority feelings; depression; and general anxiety. These items have been represented in previous reverse culture shock research (Seiter & Waddell, 1989; Uehara, 1986). Two items loaded on the shyness concerns factor, shyness and speech anxiety. This suggested that returnees experiencing a higher degree of reverse culture shock were affected interpersonally more than returnees who encountered low levels of reverse culture shock, a finding supported in the literature (Martin, 1986; Seiter & Waddell, 1989; Uehara, 1986).

It was predicted that higher scoring RSS index returnees would be less willing to see a counselor than low scoring RSS index returnees. Willingness was

measured with the willingness to see a counselor subscale of the PPI. Factor analysis produced a three factor solution: psychological withdrawal; health and social concerns; and college stability concerns. Willingness to see a counselor for the PPI problems/concerns did not appear to be related to reverse culture shock severity. That is, returnees reporting a higher level of reverse culture shock were as likely as returnees reporting lower levels of reverse culture shock to see a counselor for the personal problems/concerns assessed.

One other study assessed willingness to see a counselor with the PPI (Gim et al., 1990). The Gim et al. study used three factors and residual items to compare two levels of acculturated Asian-American groups of students. Their results indicated that highly acculturated Asian-Americans were less willing to seek assistance than less acculturated students. They hypothesized that less acculturated students experience greater cultural conflict, and once recognizing they have a problem, are more willing to overcome the stigma of seeking counseling. Returnees experiencing a higher degree of reverse culture shock might also be considered as less acculturated (hence their reverse culture shock experience) than returnees with low levels of reverse culture shock. This present study, however, did not support Gim et al.'s finding that acculturation level differentiates willingness to see a counselor.

Returnees experiencing higher levels of reverse culture shock were less likely to use student support services than were returnees experiencing low levels of reverse culture shock. A significant negative correlation was observed between returnee reverse culture shock and total student support service usage. Overseas-experienced returnees encountering low levels of reverse culture shock were more likely to use student support services than returnees experiencing higher levels of reverse culture shock. The two most frequently used services by both levels of returnees were health services and the career/counseling service. High RSS returnees reported they did not use as often the services that low RSS returnees used, such as financial aid services, tutorial services, and advising. Without such support, students may indeed experience a heightened degree of adjustment problems.

The willingness to see a counselor subscale data of the PPI revealed that reverse culture shock did not appear to be related to returnee willingness to see a counselor. However, the support services utilization data revealed that returnees did indeed use student services. What this apparent discrepancy between "willingness" and actual use suggested was that reverse culture shock was not related to what returnees said they would do (willingness to see a counselor), but rather was related to what returnees actually did (services used). That is, the returnees with higher levels of reverse culture shock used fewer services than did returnees with low levels of reverse culture shock. This suggests that their reverse culture shock experience may have been a serious inhibitor in their reaching out for professional help. This possibility has been shown in other studies in which students experiencing psychological and/or academic distress often prefer to seek help from a close friend or family member rather than a professional counselor (Knapp & Karabenick, 1988; Leong & Sedlacek, 1986; Rust & Davie, 1961;

Tinsley, de St Aubin, & Brown, 1982). It is possible returnees experiencing higher levels of reverse culture shock avoid professional assistance for their problems/concerns because their level of distress may bias their help-seeking judgment. That is, some returnees may perceive (or experience) college professionals as interculturally-*in*experienced — the returnee may not believe professionals understand and/or validate the reverse culture shock experience and the identity of the sojourner/returnee; seeking professional help could therefore be a challenging process for the high RSS returnee. The low RSS returnees may have been open to and found professional assistance that actually mediated their reverse culture shock experience.

Because there are several limitations to this study, the results must be considered and applied carefully. The sample size for this study was small ($n = 66$), was limited to one campus, and used college students. Additionally, the sample was made up of involuntary sojourners — they had accompanied their parent(s) abroad. Had these same returnees gone abroad by themselves (e.g., as exchange students), results may have been different. Also, due to the university's higher admission standards for overseas applicants than for in-country applicants, the sample may function better (have less problems or cope better) than a sample drawn from a larger pool of returnees across several campuses that had differing admission standards. Finally, this study used self-report, a method which is subject to respondent distortion — an issue that is influenced by the passage of time, recall inaccuracies, or deliberate masking.

The overseas-experienced American college student may indeed experience reverse culture shock. If so, this student is likely to experience depression, alienation, isolation, loneliness, general anxiety, speech anxiety, friendship difficulties, shyness concerns, and feelings of inferiority. This student may also experience academic problems, such as trouble studying, academic performance concerns, concerns about a career match, and adjustment to the college environment. Additionally, willing or not, this same student may not seek help through available student support services if his/her reverse culture shock experience is significantly distressful. This puts the student at risk academically and developmentally. If college counseling centers provided both client focused and student development/learning focused programming for the returnee population, returnees might manage their reentry experience differently (and in many cases, more successfully). Programming could include psychoeducational outreach modules (e.g., college adjustment, cultural orientation), support and discussion groups, social functions, as well as opportunities for returnees to become involved on the increasingly internationalized campus. Involvement could include participation in campus education programs, student clubs, peer mentoring, or work with administrators with regard to the internationalized campus. Like the racial/ethnic minority on campus, the returnee often feels out of place and ignored on a majority campus because of his/her non-majority life experiences. College counseling centers can approach the returnee from this perspective and develop intervention strategies that are sensitive to the returnee experience and support the returnee's personal and professional development.

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