

# Pre-departure Orientation

Make the most out of your exchange experience  
: Intercultural Transition

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# Today's talk

- What kind of psychological journey that you are likely to go through as a sojourner (i.e. exchange student)
  - W-Curve Model of Adjustment
- What kind of insights that we can gain from the W-curve Model? What are the implications for exchange students?

# Types of boundary-crossers

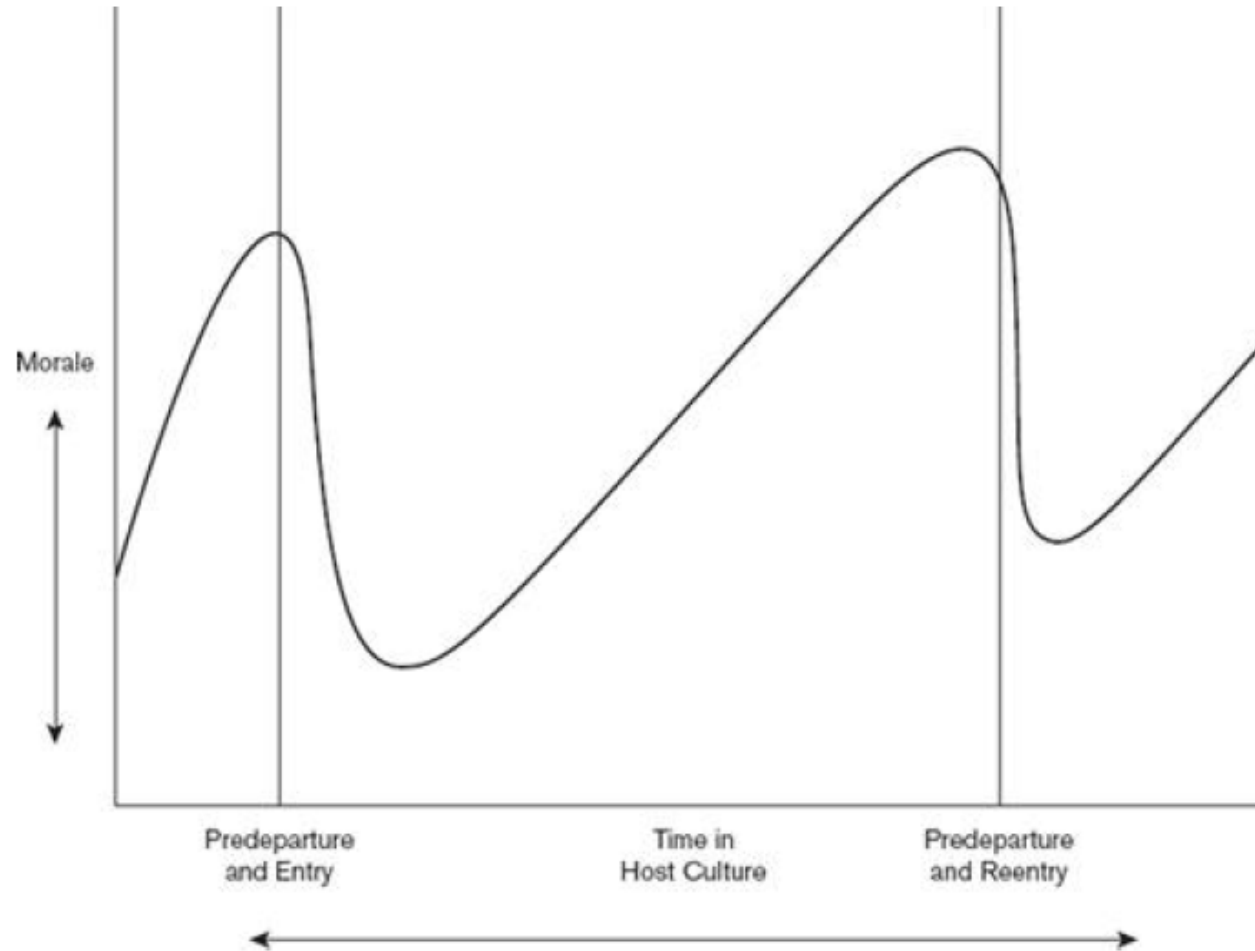
**Temporary** vs **Permanent**

# Temporary vs Permanent

- **Temporary**
  - **Tourists** as the most numerous group
  - **Expatriates**: engaged in employment abroad, may or may not be accompanied by family members
  - **Sojourners**: Individuals who are in the new environment temporarily for a specific purpose, but already have a plan to return home

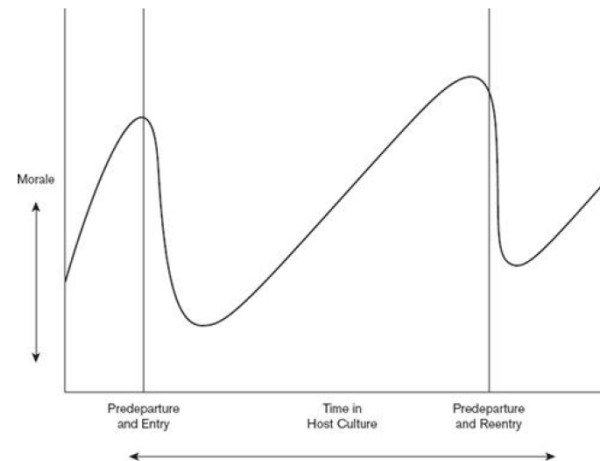
# Adjustment Model

## W-Curve Model



# W-curve adjustment model

- The honeymoon stage
- Hostility (“Culture Shock”) phase
- Humorous stage
- The ‘at home’ stage
- Reentry or Reverse culture shock stage
- Resocialisation stage



# W-curve adjustment model

- **The honeymoon stage**

- Looking forward to what lies ahead
- May overlook negative aspects of the host culture
- Tend to take delight in discovering new sights, smell and sounds.



# W-curve adjustment model

- **The honeymoon stage**

*“Waking up this morning, I could hardly believe I was in England. **It was all like a dream, a dream that came true finally** ... I looked around my bedroom and then viewed through the window: the air was still and quiet amidst birds’ chatter, everything was clear like a framed picture, with no sign of impurities or pollution which very often surround my living place back home. The colours of my room, the neighbouring houses, the trees and the sky, were plain, fresh and lively. **A sense of satisfaction ran through my heart.**”*

# W-curve adjustment model

- **The hostility (“culture shock”) stage**
  - Culture shock, crisis stage, or disintegration
  - May feel uncomfortable with the new environment, especially when they are a visible minority
  - Tend to be overwhelmed/frustrated by the psychological, cognitive and physical demands of the new culture

# W-curve adjustment model

- **The hostility stage**

- Bombarded by stimuli that are difficult to process
- Us vs Them discourse
- May also discover that their second language skills are not good enough; Difficulties in communication with host nationals
- Homesickness

# W-curve adjustment model

- **The hostility stage**

*“You feel that you are different from the people there – your skin color, your language, and your thoughts. Everyone likes to be with people who are like them. I felt isolated and a bit depressed because they were all familiar with each other and I knew nobody ... I had difficulties with communication and felt unwelcome by locals. That was far from my expectation before going on exchange. I was desperate to go home at that time.”*

# W-curve adjustment model

- **The hostility stage**

*“Sometimes the professor might look at you to force you to answer her questions, but when I had no idea what she was talking about I had to avoid having any eye contact with her. It was so embarrassing. Also, **it was so hard for me to fit in.** Students kept raising their hands! The most general arguments had been said and then I could not follow their flow so I had no choice but to stay quiet. Once the professor came to me and told me that I was too passive in class. She suggested that I ask more questions instead of answering them but it wasn't easy as I am a passive person and I just wasn't used to this fast pace.”*

# W-curve adjustment model

- **The humorous stage**

- Reorientation, re-integration, adjustment and recovery
- Understand cultural differences
- While comparison still made, their views are more balanced
- Able to interpret subtle linguistic and cultural cues
- Start to build up interpersonal connections with host nationals

# W-curve adjustment model

- **The humorous stage**

*“I had difficulty communicating with locals in the beginning but after many weeks had passed, I found that they were nice people. It’s just that they dared not to speak in English. **Also, by then I knew more about their culture and began to like this country. True, I did experience culture shock at the beginning but I learned to overcome it.**”*

# W-curve adjustment model

- **The ‘at home’ stage**
  - Adaptation or resolution
  - Demonstrate more understanding/appreciation of the host language and their new ways of life
  - Better able to communicate their ideas/feelings in ways that are context-appropriate



# W-curve adjustment model

- **The ‘at home’ stage**
  - Develop more culturally appropriate problem-solving and conflict-mediation techniques
  - **Biculturalism**
    - proficient and comfortable with both’ one’s original culture and the culture of the host nation
    - Incorporate both languages/cultures into their sense of who they are

# W-curve adjustment model

- **The ‘at home’ stage**

*“Midway through the semester, my life took a turn. By then, I’d made more friends, including some English mates, and had even begun to dream in English! I realized I’d developed a sense of belonging to Bloomsbury, my neighborhood. From the Indian restaurant to the corner shop to my residence hall, social bonds began to form. **Overcoming adversities with positivity allowed me to see more and discover more, and with the positive energy this generates, others could feel this ...Studying abroad is not easy. It is a test of the strength of your character but if you champion it and open yourself up, it can change your life completely.**”*

# W-curve adjustment model

- **The ‘at home’ stage**

*“When you go to a multicultural, multilingual country to study, you have the chance to get to know people with different nationalities who speak many languages... **You can learn to think from different angles. After spending a year abroad, I’ve become much more open-minded. I embrace other cultures and languages, and no longer see the world from a single angle.**”*

# W-curve adjustment model

- **The reentry or reverse culture shock stage**
  - The process of returning home after living abroad
  - The process of readjusting and reassimilating into one's own home culture after living abroad for a significant period of time
  - Do not easily fit back into their home environment

# W-curve adjustment model

- **The reentry or reverse culture shock stage**
  - Can be more severe and painful than the initial cultural shock
  - Those who fully integrated into the host culture may find it more challenging to readjust to their home culture
  - May find their family and friends are not interested in their stories abroad

# W-curve adjustment model

- **The reentry or reverse culture shock stage**
  - May miss their second/foreign language interactions
  - Us and Them (Reverse)
  - Identity confusion

# W-curve adjustment model

- **The reentry or reverse culture shock stage**

*“My adjustment on reentry has been more difficult than what I experienced abroad. I’m still not fully readjusted now. The whole living schedule and sleeping times have changed. Before going on exchange I was able to sleep very little and do a lot of things during the day but now I find this living style is very tiring. I wish I was living the comfortable Norwegian lifestyle but if I do, I won’t have enough time to get everything done! I don’t know how to cope with that. I’m still working on this...still adjusting to being back.”*

# W-curve adjustment model

- **The resocialisation stage**
  - Reintegration, the independent stage
  - Begin to feel more at home and are able to communicate effectively and appropriately with their family, friends and colleagues
  - Start to readjust to the home country and reintegrate into the local ways of life



# W-curve adjustment model

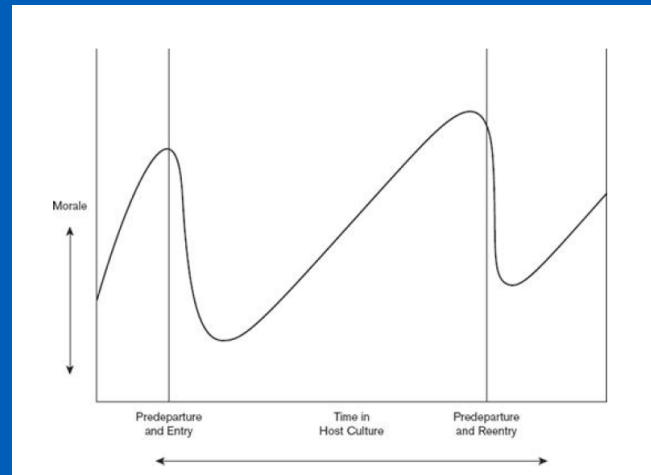
- **The resocialisation stage**
  - Are able to identify and appreciate multiple perspectives
  - May make an effort to diversify their social networks to include both local and international friends

# W-curve adjustment model

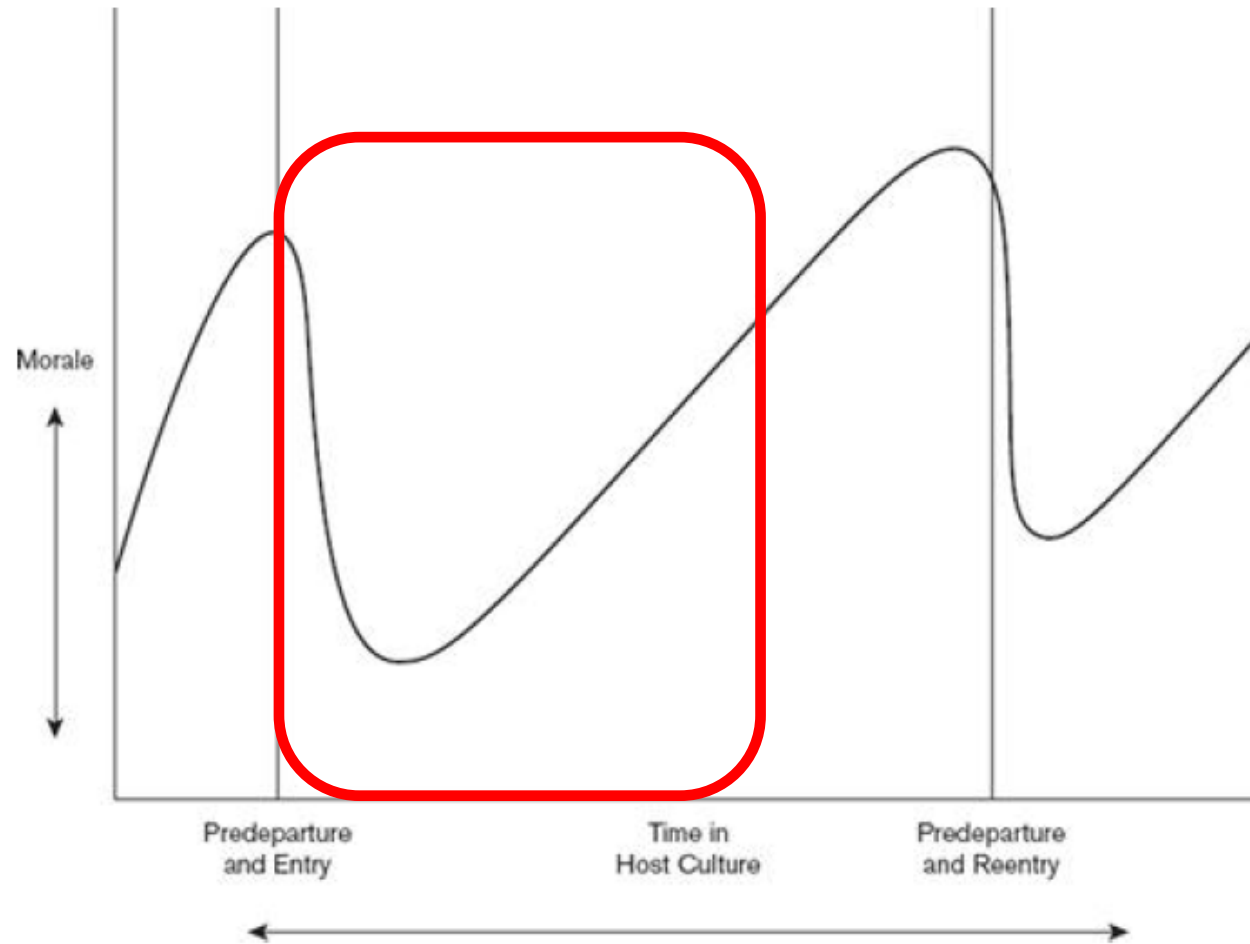
- **The resocialisation stage**

“It took me some effort to get used to the local lifestyle again as I’d become accustomed to the way of living in Korea. *When I came back home I had to readjust to many things. I had such a wonderful and splendid life in Korea but when I came back, I felt...umm...It was just...so different!* **I have had to accept it and adapt. You have to try your best to adjust since there’s no choice for you! And gradually you feel like you fit in.** Now, I am in a better place in my head. I’m doing more things with my friends and I’m happy. I’m also keeping in touch with my friends in Seoul through Facebook.”

# What kind of insights can we gain from the adjustment models?



## Coping Mechanism?!



# Coping Mechanisms?!

- **Social support**
  - Mentoring relationships
  - Development of friendships
  - Involvement in extracurricular activities
  - Use of campus services/programmes

**Have a good exchange! 😊**