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Culture shock: negotiating feelings in the field

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Culture shock is the depression and anxiety experienced by many people when they travel or move to a new social and cultural setting. Although many anthropologist experience culture shock whilst in the field, this is a subject that is rarely discussed in the academic setting. This article explores the issue of culture shock and offers some thoughts on how to relieve it, drawing on the author's own experiences.

Introduction

Meaning comes from the use of shared symbols and depression is a loss of meaning (Atwood Gaines, personal communication). This depression is the essence of culture shock. Culture shock is the anxiety and emotional disturbance experienced by people when two sets of realities and conceptualisations meet. The term was first named by Kalervo Oberg in 1960 who described it as 'precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse' (1960:177). That is, if one defines and negotiates reality through the symbolic representations of life, then one must question this reality when faced with alternative representations. When the symbols used to describe and conceptualise the world are alien, this can lead to feelings of isolation or even a loss of identity. The security resulting from one's taken-for-grantedness disappears and one feels ill at ease. In a sense, culture shock is an illness resulting from the loss of meaning brought about when people from one symbolic reality find themselves immersed in another, typically through long-term travel.

Furnham and Bochner (1986) use the term 'sojourner' to denote a long-term, or non-tourist, traveler, defining sojourn as a temporary but unspecified amount of time spent in a new and foreign environment (ibid:112). Becoming a sojourner is a quintessential aspect of the anthropologist's life and thus anthropologists are 'at risk' of culture shock. However, this is not widely discussed nor even widely mentioned within anthropological discourse, despite the fact that culture shock can negatively affect not only the fieldwork experience, but also the production of ethnographic knowledge. I aim to open the

discussion by firstly defining the term and its theoretical basis. Secondly, I explicate the reasons for the neglect and denunciation of 'culture shock' within academic discourse. I then explore how the fieldwork experience is mediated through the illness of culture shock, using my own narrative of my time in rural western Kenya. Finally, I offer practical advice for preventing and negotiating culture shock.

Defining the term

Culture shock is not necessarily an acute illness. The 'shock' refers to the rapidity of the physical movement, but the emotions and feedback emotions may occur over a relatively long period of time. There are myriad symptoms and signs of culture shock, including general unease with new situations, irrational fears, difficulty with sleeping, anxiety and depression, homesickness, preoccupation with health, and feeling sick or nauseous. Simply stated, any sort of mental or physical distress experienced in a foreign location could be a symptom of culture shock. Oberg (1960) creates an exhaustive symptoms list, including excessive hand washing, excessive concern over water and food safety, fear of physical contact with 'natives', a feeling of helplessness and dependence on long-term residents of one's own nationality, anger over delays and otherwise minor frustrations, excessive fear of being robbed or injured, concern over minor pains and cuts and abrasions. Finally, he describes that

"...terrible longing to be back home, to be able to have a good cup of coffee and a piece of apple pie, to visit one's relative, and, in general, to talk to people who really make sense."
(*ibid:178*)

Culture shock is about being out of place in a certain place and time. Oberg distinguishes four stages of culture shock-honeymoon, crisis, recovery, adjustment-which, although useful, are somewhat artificial. Firstly, the progression of culture shock is not necessarily linear. One may experience multiple stages at one time or may 'revert' to an earlier stage during a time of crisis or other activity. Also, each individual reacts differently and some may not progress to the final stage before returning home. Nonetheless, I assert that Oberg's model-barring a number of things-is on the whole convincing.

The first stage is the honeymoon, which can last a few days or up to several months. At this stage, everything is new, exciting, and fascinating. The 'natives' are polite, gracious, and most welcoming. Another way of describing this stage is that of the tourist's experience. We took a weekend safari several weeks into our stay in Kenya and stopped at a lodge. It was full of tourists from Europe who had flown directly from Nairobi to the game park. They would have a few conversations with the Maasai employed by the lodge and would then return home and tell their friends over dinner how splendid Kenya is and how delightful and helpful the people are. As Oberg writes, *'[the tourist] may well write a book about his pleasant if superficial experience abroad'* (*ibid*).

Tourists generally return home before the honeymoon ends, whereas anthropologists, aid workers and others move beyond this to the second stage, in which one 'has seriously to cope with the real conditions of life' (ibid). Not only do simple tasks, such as purchasing food or washing up, become complete fiascos, but the 'natives' do not seem concerned at all. In fact, they may seem unsympathetic or indifferent (ibid). A very common coping mechanism is aggression and frustration—a rejection of the environment that is causing discomfort (ibid:177). According to Oberg, one takes '*refuge in the colony of [one's] countrymen and its cocktail circuit which often becomes the fountain-head of emotionally charged labels known as stereotypes*' (ibid:178). The individual vents his or her dissatisfaction towards the host country when amongst fellow ex-patriots. This social discussion of grievances lends itself towards the production of national and ethnic generalisations. The production of ethnographic knowledge at this point is hazardous. Oberg describes this second stage as a 'crisis in the disease.' It is at this point that one will either stay or leave (ibid:179).

If one stays, then the third stage starts as the visitor begins to learn the language and can negotiate daily life on his or her own. Difficulty still exists, but the visitor is able to handle it. The visitor even begins to help others who may be new to the situation. In the fourth stage, the visitor 'accepts the customs of the country as just another way of living' (ibid). Certainly, the visitor will not always understand what is occurring in social situations and may not notice nuances, but he or she has adjusted considerably. At this point, there are things that he or she will miss about the country when leaving. This is the stage at which ethnographic construction can most productively take place.

Adler (1975) expanded on this concept, opening it into more stages, as discussed in Furnham and Bochner (1986:130-31). Firstly, there is the initial contact, at which time the sojourner's role identity is intact, as he or she is insulated by own culture. Secondly, disintegration occurs as there is a growing awareness of differences. The subsequent phase—characterised by a rejection of new culture—is followed by a phase of reintegration. Then, as the sojourner becomes socially and linguistically capable of negotiating, a sense of autonomy develops. Finally, he or she reaches the independence stage, in which the individual is able to create meaning for situations, and differences are enjoyed and accepted. Again, these are somewhat arbitrary and simplistic categories, as sojourners do not necessarily go through all of them or in that particular order.

The clash of differing symbolic realities and notions of risk

Most research on culture shock originates within the psychological disciplines and focuses on how various groups, such as immigrants, students, charity workers, and anthropologists

adapt in new environments. Psychological literature (e.g. Furnham and Bochner 1986, Ward et al 2001) focuses heavily on 'differing cultural values', with the idea that 'bothersome' values, such as gender roles, conceptions of family, food, and immense poverty disturb many sojourners. For example, a female NGO worker may be particularly distressed at the way she is treated, or ignored, by the men in her region. Psychology approaches this experience by placing the crux of the problem in the individual's inability to create meaning and to negotiate through the new social environment. Socially incompetent individuals cannot express attitudes, feelings and emotions, nor can they adopt the proper proximal posture; they are generally unfamiliar with the rules of social behaviour (ibid:15). Furnham and Bochner use the term 'culture learning'; the goal of a sojourner is not to adjust per se, but to learn the salient characteristics of the new setting (ibid:14). The individual cannot produce meaning until he or she understands how to comport oneself in a socially acceptable way.

Although the psychological and anthropological cannot be entirely separated, I find the psychological explanation to be reductionist and overly focused on the individual. The processes and issues felt at the individual level, I would argue, are actually occurring at the social level, and therefore a more comprehensive explanation of culture shock is found within basic anthropological understandings. Geertz, for example, describes 'man' as '*an animal suspended in webs of significance that he himself has spun*' (Geertz 2000:5). This is based on a view of reality as a corporate construction, produced and embodied in public symbols and actions. Douglas writes that rituals, which are based on these shared symbols, 'create a unity in experience' (2002:3). Symbols, however, are not at all limited to specific ritual events, but are an essential part of the social process (Turner 2004:536). People create and transmit meaning through shared symbols; without these symbols, meaning is lost and depression, anxiety, and paranoia arrive. Within an anthropological framework of symbols and meaning, then, culture shock is not reducible to the level of individual psychologies, but rather is concerned with social facts, in the Durkheimian sense (e.g. Durkheim 1951). Specifically, culture shock occurs when one is placed into an environment with different symbols and with different notions of types of and acceptable levels of risk than what is 'normal' in one's own culture.

Depression, in the form of culture shock, occurs when the firm grounding in one's own symbolic world is lost. Since language and communication are based on a set of shared symbols, communicating with others is difficult. One begins to question the relevance of one's *Weltanschauung* (world view). Loss of identity occurs as one becomes integrated into the new society with its symbols and meanings. Overall, as the individual is unable to produce and share meaning, he or she is isolated from the community or society. Psychology treats meaning as an individual experience; anthropology recognises it as a shared and corporate entity.

Notions of risk are based upon the shared set of symbols that make up a 'cultural currency', and risk perception therefore can be understood to depend on shared culture, not

individual psychology (Douglas and Wildavsky 1982:xix). The problem of risk exists at two levels. Firstly, the 'unknown' (the 'unfamiliar' or the 'other') is seen as dangerous, and secondly, clashing conceptions of risk lead to conflict. British beef is a telling example. During the outbreaks of mad cow disease in the UK in the late 1990s, US citizens were advised not to eat beef whilst on holiday in the UK and even now, many US citizens refuse to do so. Yet as British beef became familiar and 'normal,' long-term residents began to consume it without concern. (See also Douglas and Calvez 1990, for a further discussion of 'the other' and risk.)

That is, as we begin to 'know' something it becomes less dangerous. Douglas and Wildavsky (1982:195) pose the question: if we cannot know the risks we face, how can we cope with unknown dangers? Knowledge seems to be the first step to acquiring certainty. However, knowledge is neither an obtainable nor static object, but is the changing product of social activity (ibid:192). Unfortunately for the sojourner, social activity and knowledge rely on shared symbols. The individual perception of risk is not individual in this case, but rather a learnt social process (ibid:6). That is, the public perceptions of risk and its acceptable levels are collective constructs. During my fieldwork I realized that there is a significant difference between what constitutes an acceptable risk amongst the Kisii and what constitutes an acceptable risk amongst Western Oxbridge students. I will return to this below.

In sum, risk is the joint product of knowledge about the future and consent about the desired outcome (ibid:5). In the culture shock experience, not only is knowledge scant, but the ability to produce and understand the symbolic and social basis of knowledge is minimal. One cannot even agree with one's neighbours on something so basic as the answer to the question: 'what is a risk?'

The role of the anthropology department

Culture shock is largely neglected within anthropology, even becoming anathema amongst anthropologists. For multiple reasons, researchers admitting to fear or depression during fieldwork may be ridiculed or dismissed as 'cowardly anthropologists'. I was once strongly encouraged to conduct fieldwork in a remote village rather than a larger town, so that I could be a 'courageous anthropologist'. Chiefly, I would argue that this is closely linked to a sense of academic bravado and competitive virility. I was given the idea that there is something inherent about studying anthropology that protects one against 'culture shock', and that anthropologists are 'naturally' better at negotiating unfamiliar situations than other sojourners. As such, anthropologists can feel a certain 'culture shock' within their own academic community, because their experiences of culture shock 'in the field' remain

unacknowledged, and they are feeling something that they believe they ought not feel. Culture shock has become a taboo topic within the anthropological community.

In reality, however, even respected anthropologists suffer from culture shock. Malinowski's diary (Malinowski 1967) is a good read for a number of reasons, but it is particularly interesting here because he often describes symptoms attributable to culture shock. He writes frequently of homesickness and depression, and of missing his mother. Malinowski was also preoccupied with his own health. This may not be completely a result of culture shock, but would certainly seem to be exacerbated by it. In one of his earlier entries from 1914, he discusses his insomnia, overtaxed heart, and nervousness. He is preoccupied with getting both enough exercise as well as quinine and arsenic, which he refers to as indispensable (ibid:13).

Before I move now to a discussion of my own experience of culture shock, I should mention that there may also be another reason for the neglect of culture shock within anthropology-one which is not at all malicious. As time passes, we tend to forget the negative aspects of our past experiences and highlight the good ones. Even now, I remember being upset and anxious in Kenya, but do not quite remember why. When I am having a difficult or stressful day, I find myself pining for our quiet house in Kenya. Even episodes that were terrifying at the time are transformed into hilarious anecdotes upon arrival home. Let me turn now to this experience, which I am already reworking in my memory.

Case study: experience and ethnographic knowledge production in western Kenya

The feelings that accompany culture shock can fundamentally impede fieldwork. Firstly, depression and anxiety affect one's ability to perform even the simplest tasks. Basic chores become insurmountable, let alone the effort of conducting interviews. This can also place a strain on personal relationships, especially those with informants. Secondly, it is quite common for frustration and anger to arise towards the society one is studying, thus affecting the way anthropological knowledge is produced. When the negative aspects of daily life are amplified through the emotions of culture shock, a feeling that one's own society is superior or more logical can easily manifest itself.

In the summer of 2005, I was volunteering for the Kenya Project Partnership, a UK-based charity that aims to create sustainable resource investment in rural Kenyan schools. Each summer 20 students from the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge work in pairs at

village schools in the highlands of western Kenya, which are predominantly populated by the Gusii, or Kisii. I was living and working with another charity worker, whose experiences are pivotal to mine. We lived in a village located approximately 11 kilometres from Kisii, the ninth largest town in Kenya. During the time I spent there I was also carrying out fieldwork for my MPhil thesis, entitled 'Malaria Amongst the Kisii: A Social Anthropological Perspective', which examines how therapy management is affected by political economic forces and social relations.

I shall use Oberg's (1960) phases to draw out some of the process that I went through. As discussed above, Oberg's model is simplistic, but offers a framework for structuring my narrative. However, it is useful to note that his four phases are not discrete, but overlapping. For the reader not fortunate enough to have worked in Africa, the matatu plays a large role in my narrative. A matatu is a minibus, usually a Nissan or Toyota, that is meant to carry 14 people, but typically carries 20 and possibly a goat. They drive at breakneck speeds, and despite their hilarious absurdity, the reality is that nearly 30,000 people die in Kenya each year as a result of vehicle accidents, and that matatus and buses are responsible for the majority of these (Odero et al. 2003:53, 55).

Neither I nor my co-woker had been outside the West before, so there was quite an adjustment to be made when we arrived in Kisii. At the time, I was not used to beggars on the street or dirt everywhere and open sewage drains. I was not used to the matatu touts shouting at me or to the vendors that would open the matatu windows and shove watches, calculators, or produce at me. Nonetheless, there was a bit of a honeymoon period, in that everything was new and exciting. Everyone was friendly and, after several months of preparation, it was exciting to actually be in Kenya. After spending the week in Kisii with the other charity workers in our organisation, we were sent out to our village, where we would spend the next two months. The first night alone was perhaps when we properly entered the 'crisis phase'. Night fell before we could make it to the village, so we spent the night in the Kisii Hotel, which was owned by the chairman of the board of governors of the school at which we would be working. After we had set up our mosquito nets, we talked about what our mothers would have done, had they been there, and we decided that they would have cried in fear at the dirt, uncleanness, and threat of disease.

There was a brief return to the honeymoon phase upon arriving to our homestead the next day. The house was lovely and everyone that we met was helpful and kind. Nonetheless, crisis soon abounded. Neither of us slept well the entire time we were in Kenya, but this week was particularly bad. My partner also became irrationally concerned that we would be robbed and murdered at night. It did not help that the dogs barked continuously in the nighttime, and that the aluminium roof made sharp and cracking noises as it stretched with the gradual cooling of the temperature during the night. We also lacked electricity and, coming from suburban USA and London, did not quite know what to make of the dark. Health anxiety was also an issue for both of us, as we became preoccupied with the thought of malaria. I would commonly walk into the sitting room and find my partner

taking his temperature. I would get anxious with any small cut or abrasion, finding that despite years of health education, the acronym AIDS would come into my mind. We both carried our alcohol soap everywhere.

We were homesick. I remember a horrible conversation by lamplight in which we listed every pub, restaurant, and bar that we had been to in Oxford. It is similar to an entry from Malinowski, who writes: *'In the evening talked with Aville about the southern coast of England from Ramsgate to Brighton. This got me... I was depressed'* (Malinowski 1967:28). When we went on a safari with the other charity workers less than a month into our stay, someone had brought along a copy of *Brideshead Revisited*, which is the quintessential Oxford novel. We found ourselves sitting in a Land Rover in the middle of the Maasai Mara, practically longing to be back in the Bodleian Library.

Indeed, like Oberg's 'cocktail circuit', meeting up with other charity workers on the weekends became a coping mechanism as our frustrations and anger with Kisii increased. This is one of the least constructive periods for the production of ethnographic knowledge. Malinowski's diary presents a clear example of how personal feelings affect the production of ethnographic knowledge. In the introduction, Firth writes that *'few, perhaps those as highly strung as Malinowski, have cursed the people they were studying as heartily as he did'* (Malinowski 1967:xiv). In the rural Kenyan context, delays and otherwise minor setbacks are a part of daily life. It rains nearly every afternoon and most roads are un-tarmacked; at times it is impossible to get anywhere. In our frustrated phase, the Kisii also seemed to be late for everything and nothing was ever on time. We would arrange to meet our head teacher in town at 9a.m. and she would arrive around noon, completely unapologetic. Furthermore, she was consistently amused at our frustrations with time, which exacerbated the problems. This is probably the point at which I started saying things like, 'there's a reason why we colonised them'. Clearly, I did not mean this, but culture shock mediated ethnographic interpretations.

Certainly, interpersonal relationships greatly affect the production of ethnographic knowledge and it is difficult, if not impossible and futile, to separate out the affects of interpersonal relationships and ethnographic knowledge. For instance, when the girls at our school would laugh, we were convinced that they were laughing at us. This, compounded with my own personal shyness, initially kept me from making friends. Oberg (1960:179-180) also writes that the 'natives' are perceptive. They will sense the frustration and aggressive attitude that one feels towards them and react accordingly. They may also act in a hostile manner or they may try to avoid contact with the visitor. Neither case is conducive to participant observation. That is, as frustration and anger increase, the quality of the relationships with would-be informants suffers. Similarly, the inability to understand the 'fieldwork subjects' further adds to the creation of negative stereotypes. However, this is not primarily frustration and anger at the individuals concerned, but rather is a manifestation of the sojourner's inability to create meaning and negotiate the unfamiliar symbolic world.

Finally, the overall contributor to our dis-ease was our own relationship. My co-worker and I did not initially get on well. It was not that we actively disliked each other, but just that we were two people working with each other, rather than friends. Our culture shock was mediated through our relationship and our relationship was mediated through our culture shock. That is, the anxiety and depression from culture shock was preventing us from acting 'like ourselves', thus hindering the relationship. I spent hours fretting over what could be done and I felt inadequate as a charity worker; the one person I did not get on with was the one person I wanted to have as a friend.

According to Oberg, it is during the second phase that the individual will either stay or leave. Although we never fully left behind our frustrations and anxieties, we did stay and begin to adapt, or in Oberg's terminology, to 'recover'. We spent more time with the children at our school and with villagers. We got to know people better. We could negotiate daily life. I began to feel comfortable walking in Kisii and even riding matatus on my own. This is the point at which we began to feel comfortable taking risks as if we were Kisii. Instead of getting angry at the matatu, one makes jokes about it. Similarly, when I found that one of my friends from USA would be arriving to work for a similar NGO, I felt comfortable offering advice. Furthermore, the relationship between my co-worker and I began to improve as we got used to each other, and we gradually became quite good friends. I cannot exaggerate the extent to which this improved not only the fieldwork experience, but also the will to work on my dissertation.

However, that Oberg's stages are not linear was proven by our last week in Kisii. Although we had gotten used to negotiating life, there were several events that 'sent' us back to previous stages. One afternoon as we were traveling from Kisii to the village, our matatu driver suddenly stopped, did a three-point turn, and sped along the dirt path, apparently-as we would later find out-fleeing from a police checkpoint. We felt completely out of control as we banged on the window, frantically trying to get the driver to stop. That afternoon, we were talking to one of our neighbours who commented, *'those poor matatu drivers, it's so hard for them with all those police checkpoints.'* We had definitely not yet developed a Kisii understanding of risk. The next day we were walking along in Kisii when a seemingly intoxicated man who was walking past us grabbed my arm in a strong grip. I was furious until I looked down at my arm and realised he had drawn blood with his fingernail. I was quite disturbed and the following morning as we were walking through town I was shaking and terrified; I found myself looking at every man as if he were going to grab me.

If we never fully left the second stage, then, we certainly never fully adjusted into the fourth and final stage. Still, in many ways we did 'accept Kisii customs as just another way to live', and there are things about Kisii that I continue to miss. On our last morning in Kisii, we ate breakfast in the Kisii Hotel, which was a fitting end. Remembering our terrified first night there, I realised I had grown to quite like the Hotel. Instead of seeing it as unclean and dangerous, I thought of it as a safe place. As our coach pulled away from the vendors selling all sorts of goods, I thought that even though Kisii is 'dirty' and 'dangerous' by

Western standards, it had become somewhat 'normal' to me.

Negotiation of the illness

Let me turn now to a brief discussion of how first-time fieldworkers might negotiate the experiences of culture shock. The root of culture shock is the loss of meaning that originates in the inability to share symbols, i.e. to communicate and produce meaning. There are ways in which one can prevent and deal with the experience in a practical way, through both passive and active learning. Passive learning is a starting point. The most obvious first step is to do the background reading on the community. It is also helpful to talk with people who have been 'out there' before to pick up on nuances not found in the literature.

Although background research is expected of all respectable anthropologists, we still experience culture shock in the field. It is here that we can begin the active learning. I use Furnham and Bochner's (1986) notion of 'culture learning' as a starting point: the best coping method is to learn behaviours appropriate to given situations. Oberg's (1960) first suggestion is to learn the language and meet one's neighbours through religious or community activities. This might seem sophomoric to anthropologists, but the reality is that when overcome with irrational fears and anxieties, it is hard to leave the house. The trick is to allow adjustment time. It is not necessary to conduct interviews on the first day. One should spend time making one's house and village 'familiar'. For me, our house became a 'safe place'. We made it feel homely and I enjoyed being there. Similarly, once we realised that everyone for at least a 5 kilometre radius knew our names, we were much less scared. Village life was wonderful after making friends and developing a sense of belonging. Furthermore, when we started doing sports with the children, not only did we sleep better, but we had also made more friends.

The way in which one structures the day is also important. Oberg writes:

"Although I am not certain, I think culture shock affects wives more than husbands. The husband has his professional duties to occupy him and his activities may not differ too much from what he has been accustomed to." (1960:181)

Barring criticism of his clearly 1950s beliefs, the point is that having something to do does make a difference. With regards to the balance between academic and charity or activist work, the role of an anthropologist is largely debatable (see Scheper-Hughes 1995). Nonetheless, in my case I found that having an actual job to do helped. I recognised that I was in Kenya to work at a school and to help students living in extreme poverty. For me, having a purpose outside anthropology was beneficial. It was also useful to keep two diaries, one for fieldwork notes and one for personal emotions. A personal diary is an excellent method of channeling the negative emotions and stereotypes that are produced.

The only danger is that of not being careful and letting your personal journal slip out into the public domain, as in the case of Malinowski's infamous diary.

Finally, taking a holiday is key to well being. In the latter stages of culture shock, as one begins to understand and negotiate the new symbolic environment, the new meanings start to take over. One's 'native' meanings can become confused with the new meanings, producing an identity crisis of sorts. Taking a holiday re-grounds one in one's 'native' symbolic world. Similarly, having a fieldwork partner is an asset, although not possible for everyone.

Conclusions

Culture shock is not about individual psychologies, but about the creation and dissemination of meaning. The unknown is 'risky', because the symbols used in creating risk are different. Anthropology itself is an antidote in that the purpose of fieldwork is to understand how meaning is produced and shared within a society. However, the first hurdle in reaching this aim is adjusting to the new environment enough to actually function to conduct fieldwork. This includes not only dealing with fear and anxiety, but also the frustration and anger that can so easily impact on ethnographic knowledge. The second hurdle is that once new meanings become known, the anthropologist can lose sight of his or her 'native' meanings, leading to an identity crisis.

In referring to culture shock as 'anthropology's taboo', I am not using the term lightly. A taboo is meant to protect the local consensus on how the world is organised by reducing uncertainty and social disorder (Douglas 2002:xi). By this definition, however, I suggest that keeping culture shock as a 'taboo' is actually harmful in that it weakens anthropology.

So what should the anthropology department do? Anthropology postgraduates are not children and do not need someone to hold their hand whilst in the field. Furthermore, the trials and tribulations of fieldwork can be enjoyable and are a true rite of passage. Rather, I think that the role of the academic institution is twofold. Firstly, academic institutions must facilitate some sort of effective mentorship in which students become aware that coursework does not necessarily prepare them for culture shock. Secondly, it ought to be made clear to budding anthropologists that it is alright-indeed normal-to experience culture shock. I am not less of an anthropologist because I didn't perform to the best of my capability in the field. I am not inadequate; rather, I just got my symbols and meanings a bit betwixt, and only wish that more people would have warned me. Arguably, anthropology's strongest asset is its methodology. Therefore, if we are able to open up discussion on culture shock, as well as emotions in the field, it will strengthen both our methodological practices as well as our discipline.

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