Alternatives to the U-Curve Model

Ideas for training for cultural transitions without using the U-curve or stages of adjustment

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# Contents

1. About this Guide 3
2. Quick Review of the U-Curve Model 5
3. Guidelines for Using the U-Curve Model 6
4. Ten Reasons Not to Use the U-Curve Model 7
5. The Real Challenge in Finding a Replacement 10
6. Criteria for Replacing the U-Curve 11
7. The Tie-In to Adjustment Theory Today 13
8. From Old to New: 4 Key Components of Transition Training 15
9. Examples: Activities & Exercises for Each Component 20
10. A Sidenotes: Alternative Models & Analogies for the WHY 23
11. Stay Tuned… 25
12. Parting thoughts on transition and change… 26
13. About the Study 27
14. Additional References 29
About this Guide

This guide presents a summary of some of the thoughts, ideas, and exercises that have been presented and generated at sessions that include:


Contents stem from the research, ‘Berardo (2006). The U-curve of Adjustment: A study in the evolution and evaluation of a 50-year old model. Luton Business School: University of Bedfordshire, UK’—and, where indicated, valued contributions by interculturalists who attended these sessions.

- **Part One: The U-Curve Uncovered** provides the background, overview of the dangers, and guidelines for ethical use of the model
- **Part Two: Getting on Track** identifies some of the necessary criteria for replacing the U-curve and presents an alternative process for transition training
- **Part Three: The Search for Alternatives** lists exercises that can be used to cover each component of transition training
- **Part Four: Moving Collectively Forward** provides additional contact information, references, and background information on the study and this endeavor.

This document represents an iterative process of building a new toolkit of alternatives to the U-Curve and W-Curve models of emotional adjustment. This first edition will be replaced by periodic updates as they become available.
PART 1:
The U-Curve Uncovered

Recognizing the Dangers of the U-Curve Model
Quick Review of the U-Curve Model

The Definition - U-Curve Model of Emotional Adjustment - A model designed to describe the emotional adjustment process of cross-cultural sojourns over time. The 'U' shape suggests sojourner's emotional well-being begins positively, dips to a negative state, and eventually returns to positive levels of satisfaction. The model is often extended to a 'W' curve (two 'U's) to depict the second 'U' that individuals presumably go through upon their return to their home culture. The U-curve is illustrated in various forms, resembling the following:

Developed by: Sverre Lysgaard
Year: 1955
Theory Framework: Stress & Coping (see below)
Purpose: Describes shifts in well-being of sojourners over time
Common Practical Use: To provide a visual illustration of 'culture shock'

Brief History:
- Hypothesis put forward when adjustment theory was in its infancy
- Tested for 50+ yrs in empirical studies (with inconsistent support)
- Frequently used with 'culture shock' theory and 'stages of adjustment' (e.g. Oberg’s honeymoon, crisis, recovery, adjustment).
- Recognized to have played a central role in adjustment theory & research for decades; a commonly referenced model in academic and public texts
- Increasingly criticized at a conceptual level by academics and researchers for its simplicity, applicability to various sojourners, lack of empirical support, and one-pattern assumption. Dismissed by theorist Colleen Ward in late 90s due to its associated problems and criticisms.
- Ongoing use of model in cross-cultural training documented in 2000s (Berardo, 2006)
Guidelines for Using the U-Curve Model

The U-curve, in short, is both controversial and popular. To be ethically used in cross-cultural training and literature, it needs to be very carefully presented with full disclosure of its limitations and criticisms. Below are some of these qualifications that should be mentioned if using the U-curve. The left-hand column presents guidelines in academic language with references; the right-hand column translates these messages into language that may be more practical for trainers’ use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Necessary Qualification</th>
<th>In other words…</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The complexity of the adjustment process not shown in the model and the variety of patterns of adjustment that have been documented (e.g. Kealey, 1989);</td>
<td>Adjustment is actually much more complex than this model shows. This is in fact only one of many patterns of adjustment that can be experienced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The limited applicability of the model to all sojourners, especially intercultural transients (e.g. Onwumechili et al, 2003).</td>
<td>The model does not apply to everyone and may not apply to you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The specific variability in the initial period of euphoria (Ward &amp; Kennedy, 1996; Ward et al, 1998)</td>
<td>Moreover, you may not experience the initial positive period suggested by this model.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The limits of what the model does and does not cover, noting that it addresses psychological adjustment, but does not indicate levels of sociocultural adjustment and/or identity changes that may result from the culture contact (Ward et al, 2001).</td>
<td>Further, this model only describes emotional satisfaction levels over time. It does not indicate the degree to which individuals have learned to adapt (skills gained) to the culture or highlight any identity shifts that may be occurring at the same time. While there is a connection for many (e.g. learning ‘how’ to be effective in the culture helps people to feel more satisfied and improves their mood), this is not always the case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The general high degree of variability and the individuality of the adjustment process over time (Pedersen, 1995; Berry, 1997);</td>
<td>Many academics disagree with this model and have a number of criticisms of it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The need to reject the model entirely (Ward, 1998; Ward, 2003).</td>
<td>One of the most prominent researchers on the topic has completely dismissed it.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Ten Reasons Not to Use the U-Curve Model

Presenting the model ethically with all its caveats is an immediate—but only short-term solution—to the U-curve problem. In the long-run, the field needs to move beyond the U-curve to new approaches to addressing emotional adjustment. Why? Here are ten reasons for retiring the U-curve...

1. **Qualification needed.** To use the U-curve model in an ethical fashion, it must be heavily qualified with a number of caveats. This takes time and rarely reflects well on the model or the trainer who is presenting it.

2. **Dismissal by Academics.** Researchers like Colleen Ward, who has specialized in adjustment theory for decades and written with colleagues perhaps the most influential book on the topic (*The Psychology of Culture Shock*), dismissed the U-curve model in the 1990s due to its lack of empirical support and conceptual issues.

3. **Too simplistic.** The simplicity that makes the model easy to remember also limits its usefulness. The U-curve does not allow for multiple dips or down periods. It only gives the most ‘zoomed out’ view of the process of adjustment, where a ‘zoomed in’ view would be highly irregular, unsmooth, unpredictable—and not necessarily linear. While all models simplify the detail and complexity of the experiences they represent to some degree, the U-curve does so to an extreme degree.

4. **No ‘how’ / ‘why’.** The U-curve model does not explain how or why adjustment challenges happen; it only describes what happens at a macro level (basically, that you may experience a ‘dip’ in your level of satisfaction). Its depth and usefulness is therefore limited and its use runs the risk of learners walking away with too basic and superficial of an understanding of adjustment challenges.

5. **False One Pattern Assumption.** More fundamentally, the U-curve suggests there is only one-main pattern of adjustment. However, studies have documented various possible patterns of emotional adjustment over time (e.g. Kealey, 1989; Kleinberg and Hull, 1979; Selltiz et al, 1963). With research developments in the last 50 years, we also now know there are a large number of personal and situational variables that impact individuals’ adjustment, from personal characteristics like gender and age, to situational dynamics like cultural similarity with the host culture and personal qualities like flexibility and locus of control. To still expect everyone to fall into one same pattern does not recognize research to the contrary or the complexity of variables involved.

6. **Inexplicable Elasticity.** How the model manages to be so elastic to stretch and apparently fit equally well to a sojourn of 10 days as it does to a sojourn of 3 years has
never been explained. Though adjustment challenges may be experienced by the majority, it cannot be said that these challenges will fall for all different kinds of individuals into the same kind of predictable pattern no matter how long people spend abroad.

7 Poor Quality Photocopies. Descriptions and depictions of the model are often fraught with inaccuracy or are missing detail. Many explanations of the U-curve suggest the model is backed by clear empirical support (which it is not) and some illustrations confuse emotional adjustment, meaning levels of satisfaction and well-being, with other aspects of adjustment such as degree of adoption of host culture values, levels of productivity, or ability to interact effectively in the new culture (which the U-curve does not depict).

8 Danger to Participants: Unsubstantiated Predictability. Though trainers report using the model to help people recognize the normalcy of adjustment challenges, the use of the U-curve can backfire and have the exact opposite effect. When individual’s experiences do not fit into the clean, U-curve shape, they can feel abnormal. For example, some may start off their experience with anxiety instead of the initial euphoria suggested in the model—which ultimately add to their stress if individuals feel they are alone in experiencing anxiety from the outset of the experience.

9 Danger to Trainers. If trainees’ experiences do not fit with the U-curve, they may negatively reflect on the rest of the training, wonder what other content was inaccurate, and have a diminished overall opinion of the value of the training.

10 Poor Reflection on the IC field. Unlike other models that grow stronger with time, the U-curve has only become more porous and problematic. It came out of the infancy of adjustment theory—when data and theories were considered to be disjointed and lacking intricacy and depth. Moreover, its track record of 50+ years of unclear empirical testing reveals many of the methodological challenges faced by intercultural researchers over the years. Simply put, the U-curve reflects poorly on the field. It ignores the advancements and sophistication that has been achieved in adjustment theory since the model was developed. Continuing to use the model does a disservice to the depth and complexity of the work that we do and makes our collective approach ‘behind the times’ not leading edge.

“You can’t expect to meet the challenges of today with yesterday’s tools and expect to be in business tomorrow.” – Unknown
PART 2
Getting on Track
Replacing the U-Curve
The Real Challenge in Finding a Replacement

If we want to replace the U-curve, the question then becomes, what do we replace it with? The bad news is that no shape in the alphabet, be it a sideways-S, W, or Q for that matter, will suffice. The flaw of the U-curve is assuming that all people, no matter what their background, what culture they are going to, or for how long—will follow the same adjustment curve. We can still use other kinds of models to help illustrate various aspects of adjustment, but we need to move away from the temptation to map all people’s emotional reactions to adjustment over time on a single graph.

When crossing cultures, often the real challenge is not learning new ways of doing things, but ‘unlearning’ our old habits and customs. The same is true in using of the U-curve. The challenge is less about finding alternatives for the model and more about letting go of our dependence on the U-curve and our habit of automatically turning to it when talking about culture shock and adjustment.

Once you decide not to use the U-curve, you may discover a number of the existing, useful models, concepts, tools, and training activities that can serve a same purpose as the U-curve, if not improve on it. But only once we commit to not using the U-curve, will the doors to other possibilities truly open and the chances of developing a variety of alternatives develop. Collectively, as a field, we are only just beginning this process, and several iterations and evolutions will need to occur. Part three of this guide outlines one such round of brainstorming and development.
Criteria for Replacing the U-Curve

Any replacement for the U-curve needs to serve the same purpose and have similar strengths as the model—at a bare minimum. As documented in the 2006 study, trainers report the following objectives and strengths of the model:

Reasons for Using the U-Curve

- To establish the ‘normalness’ of adjustment challenges (while still appreciating the individuality of the process as well)
- To enable more realistic expectations of the adjustment process & transition
- To introduce the need for preparing for adjustment challenges and developing coping strategies

Reported Strengths of the model

- Easy to understand and identify with
- Provides a clear visual that’s easy to remember
- Gives participants a model and vocabulary to help them make sense of their and family members’ experiences

(Berardo, 2006)

Improving, Not Just Replacing the U-Curve

Ultimately, though, we should improve on the model, not just replace it. Here are four ways we might do so:

1. **Emphasize the ‘why’ of adjustment challenges, not just the ‘what.’** Focusing on the ‘why’ of adjustment challenges deepens people’s understanding of the adjustment process and facilitates a richer discussion of coping strategies.

2. **Avoid the ‘stage’ approach of emotional adjustment.** Stages of adjustment (saying most people start in a honeymoon, then go into disillusionment, hit a crisis, and then recover) tend to verbally describe the U-curve model and are often mapped directly onto it. The stage approach suggests everyone will experience similar emotions at the same time during a sojourn experience. Such predictability has not been substantiated and does not recognize the complex and variable response that individuals have to different kinds of sojourns. Moreover, the linearity of stages is problematic: individuals may go from crisis into recovery and then back into crisis and disillusionment, much more like an erratic pendulum swinging in and out of these different phases.
rather that sequentially progressing from one to another. Simply put, the stage approach mirrors the U-curve in its simplicity, applicability, and usefulness. A new approach to adjustment should move away from both the U-curve and ‘stages’ of adjustment.

1. **Hold with the complexity of adjustment and allow for non-universal reactions to being abroad.** People are complex, and so is the adjustment process. Instead of suggesting most people will have the same emotional reaction at the same time and proposing the same laundry list of coping strategies, a replacement model needs to honor the complexity of adjustment. This means helping people understand not just what adjustment challenges are, but why they happen, and engaging in discussions as to how adjustment challenges may or may not manifest themselves in each and every individual. Only then can we authentically help people to develop effective coping strategies given their situation, the cultures in question, and the individuals involved.

2. **Cater to various learning styles and needs.** The U-curve has been used as a one-size fits all approach to dealing with emotional adjustment. Every individual and situation is not a ‘nail’ requiring the hammer of the U-curve. Our best way forward will be a toolkit of alternatives that we can turn to at different times, depending on the needs of those we are working with. This toolkit should include alternative models, analogies, exercises, examples, etc. that all help people to understand the complexity of the adjustment process. Our task as a skilled trainer and educator is then to think through what tool in our toolkit will be most effective recognizing the needs and learning styles of those we are working with.

*All of these objectives, strengths and improvements can be considered as criteria against which we can measure the value of different kinds of alternatives.*
To lay out possible alternatives, we also need to look at how the U-curve fits into the greater overall framework of adjustment theory.

Three distinct frameworks for understanding adjustment have emerged since the U-curve was developed, which operate like lenses focusing on different aspects of adjustment. The **Stress and Coping** framework views adjustment as a stress invoking situation and focuses on the importance of stress management and creating constructive coping mechanisms. The **Culture Learning** framework emphasizes the role knowledge and skills play in adjustment and focuses on building these needed culture-specific elements, such as language fluency and social skills. Finally, the **Social Identification** framework looks at the relationship between culture change and identity and highlights how intergroup relations are impacted by perceptions, stereotypes and attributions.

These frameworks shape the focus, content, and approach taken in adjustment training. The table on the next pages highlights the relationship between these frameworks and training. The role of the U-curve, which is typically been considered part of the stress and coping framework, is indicated with an asterisk (*).
## From Theory to Practice: How the 3 Frameworks Shape Training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Stress and Coping</th>
<th>Culture Learning</th>
<th>Social Identification</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Significance of stress management skills and constructive coping mechanisms*</td>
<td>Importance of culture-specific knowledge, including language fluency and social skills</td>
<td>Perceptual processes underpinning intergroup relations, including stereotypes &amp; attributions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Content</td>
<td>Knowledge and skill-building around stress and coping, including:</td>
<td>Culture-specific knowledge and skills, including:</td>
<td>Cognitive components, including:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Stress &amp; coping process*</td>
<td>• Language</td>
<td>• Intercultural awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Symptoms of ‘culture shock’</td>
<td>• Factual Information</td>
<td>• Non-judgmental attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Stress management</td>
<td>• Customary practices</td>
<td>• Self-analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Social support identification</td>
<td>• Etiquette</td>
<td>• Prejudice and discrimination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Cognitive reframing</td>
<td>• Subtle aspects of interactions (i.e. nonverbal)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Components</td>
<td>• Knowledge*</td>
<td>• Knowledge</td>
<td>• Attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Skills</td>
<td>• Skills</td>
<td>• Awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Attitudes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Awareness*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Training Activities</td>
<td>• Information giving*</td>
<td>• Information giving</td>
<td>• Information giving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Assessment instruments</td>
<td>• Instruments</td>
<td>• Simulations (BaFá, BaFá)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Self-assessment exercises</td>
<td>• Simulations</td>
<td>• Culture assimilator</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Role Plays</td>
<td>• Intercultural dialogues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Culture assimilator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target training Objective</td>
<td>Psychological well-being and satisfaction*</td>
<td>Behavioral Change</td>
<td>Positive intercultural perceptions and relations</td>
</tr>
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</table>

As illustrated in the table above, the U-curve model has often been used to introduce the stress and coping process. After presenting the U-curve model, trainers may give detailed information of the symptoms of ‘culture shock’ and manifestations of stress in work and relationships. Then, the discussion often moves to coping strategies such as cognitive reframing and stress management techniques to help trainees prepare for their time abroad. This traditional process is depicted below.

The two main problems with this process are that 1) it does not go into the *why* of culture shock beyond the implicit assumption that the amount of change or new culture generally are causing the challenges; and 2) it does not *personalize* the process of culture shock and only provides generalized coping strategies that may or may not be effective, depending on the individual, what lies at the heart of the emotional adjustment challenges they are facing, and the cultures involved.

We still clearly want people to develop effective coping strategies. This is the primary goal of the stress and coping focus of transition training. However, the question arises: *Is this the most effective process to help people develop coping strategies?* I’d argue ‘no’ and suggest we consider not just an alternative model, but an alternative process to addressing emotional adjustment altogether that focuses more on personalizing the emotional adjustment process and exploring the ‘why’ of culture shock in more depth. This alternative is depicted on the following page.

*My thanks to Stephanie Pollack, a trusted colleague and skilled experiential educator, who helped me think through these components in their initial conception and do some preliminary brainstorming around different activities with me. (Stephanie ultimately contributed the tied-hands exercise that will be written out in length in the next edition).*
About this Model

This model is nothing revolutionary, but it serves as a simple reminder of the need to pause both to reflect on the multitude of complex and individual variables that contribute to the why of culture shock and adjustment challenges and to personalize the discussion in order to develop truly effective coping strategies.

The four components in this model do not need to be addressed linearly or independently of one another. For example, one training activity may cover both the what and the why of emotional challenges of adjustment effectively. You may also decide to start with ‘the how’ component by having people reflect on how they have personally managed past transitions and changes before looking at the ‘what’ or ‘why’ of culture shock and transitions involving culture change. The point is not to progress linearly through each of these components, but rather to ensure that all have been covered completely and creatively during the course of a training program.

As with all training design decisions, where you start and how you choose to address each of these components should be dictated by your learners, their needs, and preferred learning styles. A detailed description of each component is provided on the next page.
Instead of simply showing the U-curve and describing the symp-
toms of culture shock, bring to life the experience of culture shock
in some way. This can be anything from a quick ‘jolt’ like activity
that draws out some of the associated feelings of culture shock to
poignant storytelling or examples of culture shock, depending on
what would be most appropriate for your learners. Culture shock
has become quite the buzz word, so it is important here to address any assumptions
people may have about adjustment. Some may have an inaccurate or incomplete un-
derstanding of what culture shock actually is and the variety of ways in which adjust-
ment challenges may manifest. By focusing on helping people experience the ‘what’ of
culture shock in this more experiential way, we can help learners develop a deeper
understanding of what emotional challenges they may face while abroad.

To say that culture shock and emotional adjustment challenges
occur because you are ‘in’ a new culture or going through exten-
sive change is giving only the icing on the cake and ignoring the
fact that the cake is multi-layered and made up of a number of dif-
ferent ingredients. To help people truly understand the emotional
adjustment process, you need to pause to explore the multitude of
variables as to ‘why’ culture shock occurs.

A non-exhaustive list of topics to cover might include the role that the following factors
play on our emotions: identity shifts, daily dilemmas, confusing interactions, role
changes, the letting go of old ways of doing things, the energy required to learn new
ways of doing things, the stress of the unfamiliar and the unknown, the drain of con-
stant self-monitoring, the coping with the fact that your normal behavior does not pro-
duce the normal predictable reactions, the not understanding of actions and behaviors
of others, the calling into question of values and worldviews, the leaving behind of fam-
ily and friends, the re-evaluation of some of the pillars upon which old relationships
were based, the dual excitement and anxiety of a new environment, the overwhelming
logistical process of moving house, the carrying of responsibility and weight for the sat-
sisfaction or well-being of those moving abroad around with you, the perception of being
judged and/or stereotyped, the exploration of new interests, and the building of new rel-
relationships—not to mention the management of the sheer emotional complexity of hav-
ing many of these processes happening simultaneously.

The list goes on and will vary depending on the type of sojourner and individual situa-
tion. The business executive may also face the stress of acclimatizing to a new work
environment and managing a dual allegiance to his home office and new office
whereas the student may be emotionally vested in managing relationships back home
with concerned parents. Another layer to consider is what elements of the specific cul-
ture may contribute to emotional adjustment challenges. In India, it may be the dispar-
ity between new economy wealth and poverty may be troubling for some, while in
Japan it may be managing the expectations and perceptions of being viewed as a for-
egnner in a more homogenous society.
It’s important not to overwhelm learners with all possible contributors to culture shock. At the same time, it is essential to provide more context, understanding, and depth as to why culture shock happens and engage in a discussion with learners as to what changes may be most relevant and have the most impact on them. Focusing on ‘why’ culture shock happens can help people make sense of their emotions and reactions, which will be essential to developing effective coping strategies.

How each of us reacts to the types of processes and changed detailed above may be very different. One person may withdraw and isolate herself; another may try to continually ‘busy’ himself so he doesn’t have to focus on some of the internal and external changes that are happening around him. Some gain weight, some lose it, some see no physical change what-so-ever. Rather than providing any kind of laundry list of possible reactions to culture change and transition, the ‘personalize the how’ component instead suggests focusing in on the individuals you are working with. Use their past experiences with life changes, big transitions and/or particularly stressful times to help them identify how challenges in being abroad might manifest themselves in this new culture. If possible and appropriate, use close family members and/or colleagues to help hold up a mirror to how stress manifests itself with this individual. At this junction, you should also explore the nuanced differences between the upcoming transition and ones in the past. This can be a good place to integrate culture-specific information about the culture to examine what specific elements of this particular culture this individual may react to. If the upcoming experience abroad is being driven by factors other than that individuals’ interest in going there (e.g. the executive is going because she thinks it will help her career, not because she wants to be abroad; or the individual who is moving for a working spouse), you may also need to spend more time here focusing on this individual’s motivation and attitude to the move and how change by circumstance rather than choice may impact an individuals’ emotional adjustment.

Once you’ve determined what elements of the transition to a new culture that individual may react to, and how this reaction may manifest itself, the task then becomes to identify effective coping strategies. These coping strategies should be: detailed, personalized and specific. For example, instead of just saying ‘build a support network’, have people map out who is in their social network, including both people from home and in the local culture, foreigners and individuals from the host country. Don’t stop there. Explore who might be the best individual to help an individual cope with different types of problems. Explore the advantages and challenges of seeking advice from someone back home who may not understand the context of have had a similar experience abroad to relate to. Engage in similar processes to give depth to any coping strategies you help people to develop, whether its identifying stress relieving activities, learning to cognitively reframe situations, or helping couples, families and/or groups of individuals learn to best support one another.
PART 3
The Search for Alternatives

Exercises and Ideas
Examples: Activities & Exercises for Each Component

The next pages list various activities and exercises for each component of training for transition. This version simply lists these activities; subsequent editions may contain write-ups of these activities. These activities are a combination of: 1) traditional exercises and activities pulled from training books and resources; 2) newly created exercises and activities developed specifically for use with this 4 component process; 3) exercises that other interculturalists have developed and/or are using and which they have passed along as a contribution to this toolkit building of alternatives. References will be included with the full write-up so activities can be appropriately cited if used.
4 Components Exercise Examples

- Working in Unfamiliar Surroundings (Brandt)
- Toe-to-toe standing exercise
- Noticing change exercise
- Non-dominant hand writing (Ting-Toomey)
- Tied-hands exercise
- A different route…
- Application / Date of Birth
- Card games (Markus)
- Paper Animals
- Assumption sort
- Watch switching
- Change in the Eyes of Others (Quotes)
- Barnga (Thiagi)
- Culture Transition Changes
- Stories and Vignettes
Understand The WHY

- The 4 R’s of Culture Change (Berardo)
- Analogies:
  - Rollercoaster, Merry-Go-Round (disorientation)
  - Changing of Seasons, the Remodel (for transition)
- Different Days, Different Ways (LaBrack)
- Story metaphor: Oh, the Places You’ll Go, Wizard of Oz
- Models
  - William Bridges’ Transition Model
  - Pierre Casse’s
  - Kim’s Stress-Adaptation-Growth Model
  - Jung’s Process of Individuation
- A Day in the Life of…
- Island Dance
- Hat’s reworn, torn and born (Berardo)

Personalize The HOW

- Worksheet: 5 fears, 5 excitements (LaBrack)
- Circles of identity (and how this will shift/change)
- What would you do? (Culture specific incident studies)
- Transition Reflection
- Change by Choice or Chance (Berardo)
- Visualizing Culture Shock
- You, Me & Transition Makes 3 (Berardo)
- Myself in Stress
- Rahe-Holmes list of stressors: Ranking and connect to past stressors

Apply The WHAT NOW

- Start. Stop. Continue strategies
- SMART Stress Management Action Planning
- Coping strategies sort and prioritize (on index cards)
- Continuities, connectors and comforts
- Support Network Mapping
- The Power of the Subconscious
A Sidenote: Using Alternative Models & Analogies to ‘Understand the WHY’

**Alternative Models**
Understanding the ‘Why’ of emotional adjustment challenges is a key step to developing appropriate coping strategies. Therefore, if you are going to use a visual model to help people understand culture shock and emotional adjustment challenges, it may be more useful to bring in a model to help explore the *why* of culture shock (the ‘Understand the Why’), instead of during the *what* (as has been traditionally done with the U-curve of adjustment). The reference section of this documents lists four different models that can be used for this purpose. As with any model, each has its own benefits.

**The Power of Analogies**
Analogies and other visual metaphors also serve as useful tools to begin discussing and exploring *why* individuals face emotional adjustment challenges. In choosing an analogy or metaphor for use with different groups, it is useful to think through who your audience is and what kind of metaphor or analogy will likely resonate with them most.

The number of metaphors you might use is almost limitless. Think creatively about a metaphor or analogy that might be useful to you in your work. There are some ‘classics’ as well: seasons, remodeling and the journey metaphor are drawn from the work of William Bridges who frames transition as an opportunity for personal development; the roller coaster and merry-go-round are more metaphors used more specifically for the experience of culture shock and can be highly effective with students and youths, respectively.
PART 4
Moving Collectively Forward

‘A Penny for your Thoughts’
Stay Tuned…

This toolkit is in ongoing development. Please stay tuned for further developments.

If you know of any training exercises for individuals and/or groups that would help to draw out the 4 components of transition training, please send them to Kate Berardo at: kate@culturosity.com. Please include the following information in your submission:

**Training Activity Submission**

- Your Name:
- Name of the Activity:
- Learning Objective:
- Best suited audience(s):
- Time:
- Group Size:
- Synopsis of process, or key steps:
- Any Trainer Tricks or Recommendations:
Parting thoughts on transition and change…

“Change your opinions, keep to your principles; change your leaves, keep intact your roots.” - Victor Hugo

“Life, it seems, is nothing if not a series of initiations, transitions, and incorporations.” - Alan Dundes

“Only in growth, reform, and change (paradoxically enough) is true security to be found.” - Anne Morrow Lindbergh

“Not in his goals but in his transitions man is great.” - Ralph Waldo Emerson

“Disenchantment, whether it is a minor disappointment or a major shock, is the signal that things are moving into transition in our lives.” - William Bridges

“To exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself” Henri Bergson, French philosopher

“It’s not so much that we’re afraid of change or so in love with the old ways, but it’s that place in between that we fear. . . It’s like being in between trapezes. It’s Linus when his blanket is in the dryer. There's nothing to hold on to.” - Marilyn Ferguson

“The interval between the decay of the old and the formation and the establishment of the new, constitutes a period of transition which must always necessarily be one of uncertainty, confusion, error, and wild and fierce fanaticism.” - John C. Calhoun

“Innumerable confusions and a feeling of despair invariably emerge in periods of great technological and cultural transition.” - Marshall McLuhan

“Nothing endures but change.” - Heraclitus (540 BC - 480 BC)

“Change your thoughts and you change your world.” - Norman Vincent Peale

“Any transition serious enough to alter your definition of self will require not just small adjustments in your way of living and thinking but a full-on metamorphosis.” - Martha Beck

“There is nothing like returning to a place that remains unchanged to find the ways in which you yourself have altered.” - Nelson Mandela in 'A Long Walk to Freedom'
About the Study

Below is additional background information on the study that forms the background to this document: Berardo (2006). The U-curve of Adjustment: A study in the evolution and evaluation of a 50-year old model. Luton Business School: University of Bedfordshire, UK. (Full version available in the Intercultural Communication Institute Library)

Abstract The U-curve of adjustment has been a long-standing but rarely supported model designed to explain the psychological adjustment of sojourners over time. The model has been criticised for its lack of empirical backing, simplistic nature, and limited application—but it has remained popular in both research and practice. As the U-curve’s popularity in practical contexts has not been systematically examined, a qualitative study was designed to explore representations of the model in documents and relocation training programmes. Findings revealed that the U-curve continues to be used extensively and is often presented with little or no indication of its controversial nature. There was indication both that the U-curve has become separated from its background with its popularity and that it is typically packaged with both ‘culture shock’ and stages of adjustment. These findings, along with the perceived value and importance of the model that relocation trainers reported in this study, are suggested to contribute to the ongoing use of the model. The ethical implications of this trend are discussed and guidelines for presenting the U-curve are proposed. Alternative approaches to addressing emotional adjustment are then considered and the case is made for the need to retire the U-curve model.

Research Questions
General Question: How is the U-curve model currently being used, presented, and perceived in literature and cross-cultural training? Subsumed by 3 research questions:
• How is the U-curve being presented in literature on cross-cultural adjustment?
• With what frequency and in what fashion is the U-curve being presented as part of the content of relocation training programs?
• How is the U-curve model perceived by intercultural trainers who use it?

Research Design & Methodology
Study Time Frame: January - September 2006
Research Design: Primarily qualitative approach, using triangulated research methods (questionnaires, interviews, and document reviews).
Questionnaire
• Participants: 84 intercultural trainers who deliver relocation training programmes to expatriating business people and their spouses/partners. Participants resided in 21 countries, were nationals of 26 countries, and delivered relocation training programmes for a wide range of cultures. 68% were female, 32% were male. 41.8% had more than 9 years’ experience providing relocation training. 21.5% were less experienced, having delivered training for 1-3 years.
• Process: Questionnaire invitation sent to SIETAR Europe and UK member databases and was posted on the Intercultural Insight discussion group. These groups served as the pri-
mary clusters for sampling, with the invitation also being forwarded by these members to other intercultural trainers

- **Instrument:** 19-item self-administered online questionnaire measuring frequency of use of U-curve, assessment of the U-curve model, alternative approaches, and perceived value & accuracy of the model.

**Interviews**

- **Participants:** 18 participants (>1/5 of the original 84 participants). 11 females, 7 males. These respondents resided in 9 countries, were nationals of 11 countries (some holding dual nationality). The majority (12 of 18) had over 9 years experience delivering intercultural training. All had used the model in relocation training programs.
- **Process:** Semi-structured phone interviews with volunteers from questionnaire portion of research. Interviews followed-up on questionnaire responses, and further explored trainers’ background knowledge, evaluation, and presentation of the model.

**Document Review**

- **Documents:** 30 documents, published 1996-2006 inclusive that made direct mention of the U-curve model. 21 of were published books, 9 were web-based resources. 15 were academic sources, 15 were public domain sources. Sources came from intercultural communication, international business and management, international study and work, education, tourism, and international student counseling.
- **Process:** Sources identified through catalogue searches, text-searching services, and internet search engines. Documents were analyzed for the way in which the U-curve was presented and the degree to which the model was qualified when it was presented.

**Analysis:** Quantitative analysis calculated using SurveyMonkey tabulation software. With qualitative analysis (field notes from interviews, open-ended questions on questionnaire) were tabulated using EZ-Text software for Semi-structured Qualitative Databases (‘EZ-Text’, 1998), and using a process of identifying and testing tentative patterns in responses through coding. Coded text was analyzed using Analysis Software for Word-based Records (‘AnSWR’, 2004)
Additional References

Models Mentioned

1. **William Bridges’ Model of Transition**

2. **Kim’s Stress-Adaptation-Growth Model**

3. **Casse’s The Culture Shock Process Model**

4. **C.G. Jung’s Process of Individuation**
   - (Also featured in Casse, P. (1980). *Training for the cross cultural mind*).

Additional References


Kate Berardo is a consultant who specializes in global leadership, communication, and transitions. Her work enables individuals and teams to be more effective in international settings and has been the focus of media worldwide, including CNN’s Business Traveller and the Dubai daily Gulf News. She has experience training and presenting in a dozen countries and working with over 35 different nationalities.

Kate’s recent projects have included designing a year-long global skills development program and leading a multi-country, multi-site strategic intervention to facilitate virtual team effectiveness. Having lived in five countries and travelled to thirty more, she brings a deep understanding of the intricacies of working across boundaries and barriers.

Kate holds a distinguished Masters from the University of Bedfordshire, UK, and is a summa cum laude graduate of Northwestern University in the US. She is the co-author of Putting Diversity to Work and founder of Culturosity.com. Kate is certified in the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® and as an Argonaut™ master facilitator and administrator. She has contributed to the development of DIVERSOPHY® training games, the ArgonautOnline™ e-learning tool, and the Cultural Detective™ training packages. She currently heads the Awards Committee for SIETAR Europa, and has presented at SIETAR congresses in the U.S., Germany and the UK.

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Culturosity [kul·tú·rus·i·ty] * NOUN - 1: A desire to learn about and interact with people from different cultures. 2: An essential mindset in a global world. 3: Today’s competitive advantage.