



Going International: A Practical Guide for Psychologists

Academics Going Abroad

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Introduction

The goal of this brochure is to provide an introductory guide for U.S. academics going outside the country for research and scholarship. It is written to fill the gap between general, country-level information typical of travel books or country websites, and specific details of the universities, cities or programs with which you may become involved.

One does not need to go far to learn about the latest international developments in psychology - information is available through websites, books, journals and social media. But no matter how much streaming video, listservs, and the internet may link psychologists across the planet, electronic connections offer just a taste of the multiple benefits one can experience through teaching, conducting research or serving as an advisor or consultant abroad.



In the next pages, you will find information about psychology in academic settings around the world. The goal is to suggest the kinds of questions you may need to explore to understand psychology and its local, historical, and cultural contexts in countries outside the United States.

Beginning with general commentary about higher education around the world, the guide progresses to more specific information about psychology in academic settings. This is followed by pragmatically-oriented discussion of issues and questions to help you prepare for your trip, to make the trip transitions smoother, to maximize what you might achieve on your trip, and to expand on and share your experiences when you return.

With this brochure, we seek to encourage you to become an aware, knowledgeable international colleague, and cultural ambassador for psychology.

Higher Education: A Topography



Across the globe, higher education varies in its organization, structure, nomenclature, curricula, and student populations. Degree names differ, and academic cultures, as extensions of the more general culture, vary as well from country to country. Moreover, higher education is changing as countries and regions meet the opportunities and challenges of the 21st century and embrace new modes of communication, scholarship, and teaching.

In this evolving landscape, more people of traditional college student age and beyond are enrolling in higher education institutions than ever before - often straining the capacity of existing schools, colleges and universities, and altering the demographics of student bodies.

The increase in student enrollment reflects a change in the economic and cultural diversity of students in higher education in many parts of the world. There is also greater international exchange, as more educational institutions welcome international students in a wide array of education programs, and as increasing numbers of universities develop branches outside their original national base. Many U.S. universities have campuses abroad that offer full degree programs, as do universities based in Australia, the UK, Canada and India.

Higher education institutions are also expanding their research and resources through consortia at local, national, regional and international levels. Through inter-university agreements, students and faculty

engage in cross-institutional research projects, study and teach at member institutions. Graduate students may receive joint degrees from institutions linked in higher-education consortia. The European Union, through a number of initiatives, including the path-breaking Bologna Process, has been a major catalyst for these developments – expanding student and faculty mobility, encouraging cross-national collaboration in higher education, research programs and projects, and facilitating recognition of academic credits and professional training across borders. In addition to increasing mobility, such developments also are attempting to increase harmonization of programs and degrees across borders. Similar processes are occurring in Latin America through Mercosur, and in Asia and Oceania through cross-national agreements and educational exchange.

The increasing diversity in educational offerings also has contributed to increased variability in the kinds of settings visiting scholars may encounter abroad, and in the student populations they may teach.

Psychology in Academia, Research and Practice

Introduction

The broad changes in higher education worldwide are also cumulatively having an impact on psychology everywhere. Although the study and practice of psychology varies across the globe, some more universal changes include:

- Shifts in the composition of student bodies and faculties;
- The incorporation of new specialties into traditional curricula; and
- Increasing use of new communication and information technologies.



In addition, the growth and development of psychology in most regions of the world has brought an increasing focus on a multicultural perspective,

including indigenous psychologies, local practices, culture, and history. This focus is bringing modifications to the psychology curriculum and to the breadth of our understanding of models of human behavior.

As international mobility has grown, psychology has become increasingly aware of its own diversity in both substance and structure. Many agree it may be a misnomer to speak of “global” psychology or of a single discipline of psychology around the world. Given different country and cultural perspectives in models of human behavior, theoretical orientation, educational systems, and scope of research and practice, it may be more appropriate to think of multiple psychologies and psychological perspectives that overlap in some dimensions but not in others.

What, then, is useful to know about psychology in a country that you will visit?

Psychology in Academia: An Overview

There are many models around the world for teaching psychology. Generally, psychology education within most countries is determined by the overall structure of higher education in that country. In this overview we focus on the undergraduate and graduate teaching of psychology.



There are several dimensions on which psychology education can vary from country to country, and region to region. These include how psychology fits within the higher education system, the nature and expectations of the student body, the dominant theoretical orientations guiding psychology substance, education and training, the ever-present cultural context, and the roles of psychologists within the particular country and culture.

Systems of Education

Disciplinary Identity

The disciplinary identity of psychology impacts its educational systems. In the U.S., psychology is defined as a science and as a

practice, with broad scope across clinical, medical, business, educational, legal and other settings. Although its classification as a natural science, social science, or a humanity, as well as its placement in science or humanities faculties varies from institution to institution, collectively psychology in the U.S. spans all areas and specialties.

In other countries, the scope of psychology may be less broad. It may be identified primarily as a practice, primarily as a science, or as an applied area, often in education, or organizational practices.

Psychology programs may be housed in a variety of different institutional settings. In some higher education environments, psychology is taught in a department structure; in others psychology courses are offered in autonomous colleges that are part of universities. In yet other settings, psychology instructors are part of a “faculty” that crosses disciplinary boundaries as part of a professional faculty. Thus, psychologists and psychology courses may be found not only in psychology, but also in sociology, philosophy, statistics, education or biology departments, or in business or medical schools.



The disciplinary identity of psychology may also affect its location and autonomy within a university. Psychology may reside in its own department, faculty or school, be part of some other faculty or school (e.g., arts, sciences, medicine), or department (e.g., philosophy, sociology); or be integrated into a multidisciplinary program (e.g., family studies; human factors; education).

By determining where psychology is located within the university structure, you will gain some idea of the colleagues with whom you will interact and the student populations you will teach. For example, psychology programs in an Education



What is the *Licenciatura*?

Psychologists in Latin America often hold the degree *licenciatura* or *licenciatura en psicología*—representing a four to six year course of study specifically in psychology. Through this degree program they will have studied the history of psychology, varied theoretical approaches, methodologies and research tools, and have been exposed to complementary subject matter (often including biology, sociology and philosophy). Many *licenciatura* holders have completed a practicum at an external training site; others will have completed a thesis. Most university faculty members in the region have been trained at the *licenciatura* level and have many years of applied experience in the practice of psychology, often in health settings. Those faculty members who have other graduate degrees will often have finished their graduate training in the United States or Europe and may have also completed internships in the United States or overseas. Only a small percentage of faculty members hold doctoral degrees.

Faculty are more likely to stress developmental and educational psychology content, whereas psychology departments within a Faculty of Arts or Sciences may provide a broader scope in subspecialties with a greater or smaller emphasis on quantitative or applied dimensions.

Course of Study

The sequence of study, degree names and curricula that defines psychology varies around the world. In some countries, the specialized study of psychology begins with first entry into an institution of higher education; in others such specialization follows a more general “liberal arts” structure with a focus on psychology following one or more years of general studies. As a byproduct of a different sequence and scope of study, students in many settings outside the United States often complete their first degrees in psychology with more knowledge and skills than provided by a U.S. undergraduate degree. At more advanced academic levels, both U.S. psychology students and their international counterparts engage in intensive immersion in their chosen sub-fields. This may involve original research, teaching, and/or supervised professional practice.

The scope of what is taught in psychology programs also varies, although more across degree level than program. Most undergraduate programs offer a broad foundation and overview that touches on the major



subfields of psychology, such as perception, cognition, developmental/family, social, clinical/counseling, assessment, and research methods. More specialized programs form the core of many graduate studies.

The names given to psychology programs and to the degrees awarded also vary, as do the time and sequence leading to a degree. The typical U.S. pattern of undergraduate (4 years) and graduate (masters – 2 years, doctoral – at least 2 additional years often including practica and an internship for those planning on clinical work or intensive research for those planning on a research-focused career) is longer than in many countries. For example, the undergraduate “bachelor” degree in many European countries is a three-year degree, and professional practice degree in many countries is a 4-to-6 year program. Names also can vary and sometimes lead to incorrect assumptions about degree level or timing – for example, the “baccalaureate” in some Spanish-speaking countries is a pre-college, high school degree, whereas in other countries it is the entry level to work professionally as a psychologist.

The sequence of training also varies. In some countries, students choose different courses of study for research/academic careers than for clinical or applied psychology careers, and qualifications in one area do not transfer to the other. In contrast to the U.S. and Canada, in many countries the standard entry level for practice is at the master’s or even bachelor’s level, with additional learning time spent in supervised practice. In some countries, clinical training takes place outside of the university, often in free-standing institutes especially established for this purpose. These institutes may award certificates or other degrees to their graduates.



Theoretical approaches to psychology

Theoretical approaches to the study of psychology also vary considerably around the globe. In some countries in Latin America (i.e., Argentina, Mexico, Brazil) and in Europe, psychoanalytical approaches to practice are

What is Liberation Psychology?

Liberation psychology is a perspective, first articulated in the 1980s, primarily in Latin America, that attempts to explicitly address the manner in which psychology is embedded in social, historical and cultural contexts.

The focus of liberation psychology is on articulating assumptions that might lead to the marginalization of groups, peoples or individuals, and on exploring the effects of power differentials, currently and historically.

Psychologists who engage in liberation psychology generally emphasize participation, action research, and the use of psychological knowledge for social change and social justice.

Liberation psychology has strong roots in a number of Latin American countries, as a consequence of significant social divides between the highly privileged few and the majority of the population. It is related to “critical psychology” and “engaged psychology” and emphasizes a culture of mutuality, respect, and self-reflection.

In the United States, multicultural psychology has addressed similar issues.

both taught and implemented; in others, the approach is predominantly behavioral or cognitive behavioral; in yet others there is a strong participatory and action research focus. Some programs focus on community-based approaches that may emphasize the role of elders, the family, and other religious or cultural traditions as integral and vital to healing or everyday life.

Programs may also focus on participatory action paradigms and social justice concerns that empower individuals and groups through their direct engagement in the activities designed to benefit their community or society.

In some academic settings, major divides may exist between adherents of diverse theoretical perspectives applied to teaching, research and practice. Such divisions may end up being personal and contentious. One may also note a gap between psychologists defining themselves as scientists, and those identifying themselves as practitioners.

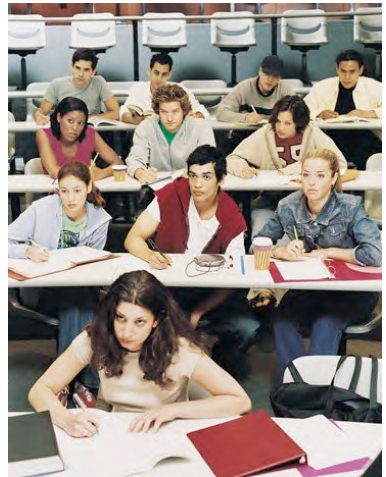


What is Indigenous Psychology?

Psychologists are increasingly exploring how to adapt western, psychological theories and practices to local traditions, including how traditional world-views, teachings, and healing approaches can be used as sources of psychological insight and perspectives. There are strong indigenous psychology movements in India, Africa, East Asia, and parts of Latin America.

Students in Psychology

Undergraduate psychology students are a diverse group worldwide. In some countries, such as the United States, specializing in psychology as a major is largely a matter of personal choice once one is enrolled in a university program. In other countries, entry into psychology programs is highly competitive as the number of students that may enter a program or university is limited by regulation. In some countries, students seeking to enter an undergraduate university psychology program are required to take a national exam in which their scores will determine their admission to a specific university program. In other settings, individual universities mount their own entrance exams. In still other university systems, admission to higher degree programs is predicated on passing a comprehensive exam at the close of secondary school – all those who pass the exam are then granted entrance to a university.



Despite the widespread interest in pursuing psychology degrees, many of those who concentrate in the area as undergraduates do not go on to either work in the field or pursue advanced study in it. Students often view the study of psychology as good preparation for a career in fields such as human resources, marketing, public administration, or law. Psychology students, particularly in developing countries, may be unsuccessful in finding employment as psychologists, especially when the primary employer in the country is the public sector.

Students taking graduate study in psychology are generally intending to pursue psychology as a career. Across countries, graduate student populations vary in terms of their background in psychology (in many countries admission to graduate programs requires an undergraduate psychology degree), research and practicum experience, and the extent to which graduate studies are carried out as a full-time pursuit. In many countries, graduate studies must be combined with full- or part-time work to fulfill economic obligations.

Students in Africa

One of six African students in higher education is studying outside his or her home country. South Africa has become an important source of higher education for African students and the former colonial powers – France, Portugal and the United Kingdom – continue as significant educational destinations.

Increasingly, however, African students are seeking lower cost and high quality opportunities in India. In addition, they are taking advantage of branch campuses in Africa opened by universities based outside the continent.

Demographics

Although there are many country differences, making broad generalizations difficult, most psychologists in academic institutions and in practice in public or private settings are located in urban areas – often in a country's largest cities. A country's capital city may well be home to the majority of its psychologists. While a number of countries are working to encourage migration of psychologists – along with an array of other professionals – to rural areas, this has been largely unsuccessful.

Funding for Psychology in Academia

Countries vary in the salaries earned by academic psychologists. In some, academic positions are fully funded, and grant funds for research do not supply additional salary (generally in Europe). In others, academic positions are 9-month appointments and faculty supplement their salaries with private practice and grant funding for research projects (e.g., U.S., Mexico, Brazil). In yet others, primarily developing countries, academic salaries are low and many faculty members carry multiple positions simultaneously.

Making the Most of Your Stay: Before You Decide to Go and Once You Are There

Given the variety of ways that psychology is understood, taught, and practiced in countries around the world, it is useful to acquire some data about the cultural context in general, and about the specific psychology community in the country or countries that you may visit. The aim of this section is to help you be aware of the differences between the *way things are done* in the culture of your new professional setting and customary patterns from your home setting. The questions below are intended to encourage gathering relevant data, and reflective responses in the changed environment.

Learning about the Cultural Context

General strategies: try to find information from multiple sources and in multiple modes (e.g., books, websites, people); try to find information from more than English-language sources.

- Search out travel books on the specific countries to which you are going. Select and read one or two that talk about history, customs and mores, culture, education, and higher education.
- Ask individuals from the country for their recommendations for getting information on the country.
- Seek books or articles by cross-cultural researchers who have done work in the country/region.
- Utilize web resources. The State Department and World Bank have valuable “country pages” that list a wealth of information. Wikipedia can provide a quick historical overview.
- Use online databases to connect with other individuals who have done work in that country.



- Find local communities where you can learn about the countries to which you are going: See if you can find a university colleague from the country(s) to which you are going and arrange to meet. This could be a faculty member or student. If there is an international student group on campus, explore meeting with them and attending functions or films about the country.
- Read the newspapers of the country—most countries have English language newspapers that will give you a view of the current issues.
- When you arrive, ask your local Department Chair or other colleague if they can suggest someone to be your “culture coach” to show you around, talk about customs and values, and answer your questions when they arise.

Quick Tips - Checklist on what to know about your host country:

- **Sociopolitical structure:** political leaders and parties; type of government; year and circumstance of independence; recent or current conflicts and the U.S. role; current sociopolitical atmosphere
- **Economic conditions:** level of infrastructure and development; environmental concerns
- **Major religions / spiritual beliefs** and impact on host country
- **Cultural values, norms, and customs**
- **Social class and family structure**
- **Cultural diversity:** major ethnic and cultural groups; immigrant and refugee populations; other minority groups; intercultural relations; ethnic conflicts
- **Social justice or human rights:** concerns; legal issues
- **Traditional systems** of psychology, mental health and healing
- **The United States' role** in economics, politics, and culture
- **Greetings to use** on arrival and type of gifts that are appropriate for host colleagues and contacts
- **Appropriate dress** and cultural norms relevant to your anticipated professional and personal contexts



- Listen, observe, and absorb your new context with the knowledge that it may take awhile to understand the new cultural context, local issues, nuances, relationships and structures.

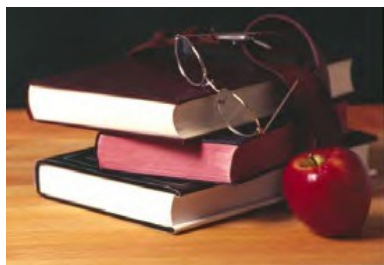
Learning About the Higher Education Setting

The following questions suggest the kinds of information that may be useful to you.

Systems

Determine the structure of the higher education systems within the country:

- Are universities primarily public or private?
- Is there an accreditation of quality assurance system in place?
- What percent of the population enters post-secondary education?
- What is the cost of higher education to the student or the student's family?
- What degrees are offered in the country?
- What is the dominant educational model (typical U.S. liberal arts model; tutorial model; early specialization model; professional training model)?
- Determine the place and structure of psychology within the university you will be visiting.
- Where is psychology's disciplinary identity (natural science, social science, humanities)?
- Where is psychology housed within the university structure (in its own department, faculty or institute)?
- What degrees are offered? Be sure to ask about the years of study and scope of each degree.



- What areas of psychology are covered within psychology?
- Are there special areas of excellence in psychology at the university you will be visiting?

People

Find out something about the student body

- Are there both undergraduate and graduate programs?
- How competitive is entrance to the university?
- What background in psychology will your students have?
- What is the age range / mix of urban and rural / ethnic and cultural background?
- What is the language of instruction?
- What English language skills do students typically have?



Find out something about your colleagues

- Understand the departmental and academic hierarchy in the country and in your institution.
- Explore your colleagues' academic and professional training and experience by reading their CV's and some of their published work.
- Explore activities of your colleagues in service areas, consultation, and advocacy.
- Find out if it is possible to make a living wage from psychology. (How many positions do your colleagues hold? What is their typical work load?)



Find out something about potential collaborators

- Identify colleagues or faculty in other departments with whom you share common interests.
- Contact multiple collaborators expressing your interests and benefits to the collaborator / community.
- Consider connecting with community agencies or other organizations.
- Cultivate relationships with multiple partners / collaborators in case one or more do not work out.
- Solicit feedback and be open to research ideas and perspectives from host country colleagues.

Psychology

Find out about the substance of psychology in the country you will visit:

- What is the history of psychology in the country?
- Is there a dominant theoretical orientation or is psychology eclectic?
- What is the role of local history, knowledge and beliefs in the teaching of psychology?
- Find out the demographics of Psychology:
 - ◇ How “large” is psychology in the country, in terms of numbers of psychologists, numbers of departments, and numbers of students?
 - ◇ What is its level of urbanization, feminization, cultural heterogeneity?
- What are the economic realities faced by psychologists?
- How are psychologists funded for teaching, research and practice?
- What are the local psychology organizations?
- What sources provide country and regional levels of financial support for research and other scholarly activities?



Pragmatic Tips for Professional Activities

Many psychologists include planned research, consultation or other professional activities in their travel abroad. In anticipating and conducting these activities, it is important to become knowledgeable about local expectations, customs, and regulations.

Local settings

Explore the library resources available at your overseas host institution. You may wish to bring material with you to supplement the university or research institution offerings and consider leaving these resources behind when you depart. Make sure that you understand how to access your home library's electronic resources from a remote computer.



Teaching: Learn local expectations

- Read the university's admissions brochures and materials.
- Read the university's course descriptions; ask colleagues for copies of their syllabi from past courses.
- Read and discuss the university's grading system and policies.
- Classroom cultures vary tremendously across countries. Determine the pedagogical norms for instructor and student behavior in and out of the classroom.
- Is the professor-student relationship formal (only use formal terms of address) informal, or a matter of personal choice?



- Are students permitted to raise their hand, ask questions, and answer questions?
- What is the typical classroom format? Lecture- or discussion-based?
- Is note-taking permitted?
- Ask to see typical text books and reading assignments.

Research: Plan well ahead and be a collaborating partner

Conducting research abroad requires consideration of regulatory, scientific, and contextual issues. Current guidelines encourage researchers to take a partnering, collaborative, learning approach and to avoid the perception of “helicopter” research where a researcher comes to a country to collect data and then leaves without a sustained contribution to local colleagues or to the local community.



Before you begin

- In general, colleagues in psychology will be strongly encouraged to involve you in their work and to collaborate with you. Thus, consider involving local colleagues as integral partners to the research project.
- Consult with U.S. and international colleagues about whether there are any particularly sensitive research areas in the country to which you are going. If so, consult and problem solve this contextually sensitive issue with your collaborator(s), host, or department chair.
- Explore the IRB approval process for research in the country to which you are going. Most project will require joint approval from U.S. IRBs and from local approval bodies. In many countries, there are no IRBs or IRB equivalents, and it is necessary to establish procedures that you will use to ensure approval. In some countries, approval is provided at the governmental level.



Engage local research collaborators, and judge from them what might be contextually problematic. Find out whether you need special authorizations or clearances.

- Be knowledgeable about local ethical standards and regulations for research, including definitions of vulnerable populations and sensitive or taboo research areas.



- Be aware that scientific responsibility may be defined differently than you are used to. This may be in terms of use of materials (e.g., copying materials may be regarded as honoring, not plagiarizing); informed consent (e.g., there may be an expectation that consent can be given for others in cultures with a hierarchical social decision structure), data ownership, and the like.
- Early on, discuss with your research partners your and their expectations concerning financial and time commitments to the project. Other important topics are data “ownership”, authorship and follow-up, including conference presentations and student support. It is also important to assess how such discussions may be received in your collaborators’ cultural context.
- Have a plan for how you will share your research data / results with colleagues and the community as a way of giving back to the country from which you are collecting data.
- If your research is dependent on the support of student researchers and assistants, confirm before you leave that such support will be available. In many institutions, such help may not be easy to find as many students may already have commitments to existing jobs, to their families and often to both.



On the ground

- You will need to work closely with local colleagues, as well as with undergraduate or graduate assistants to ensure that lines of responsibility are clear.
- Be prepared to devote the requisite time to explain aspects of questionnaire design and analysis or protocols for recording experimental findings so that they are thoroughly understood.
- Perform “dry runs” or pilot tests with your team prior to going into the field or conducting crucial experiments to ensure that procedures are understood and that any sources of possible confusion are addressed.

Consultation and Service

Often psychologists going abroad for teaching and academic exchange also engage in consultation with governments, businesses or other organizations. This section covers this type of consultation. It does not cover individual psychotherapy (which is generally to be avoided when going abroad unless you are fluent in the language and are legally recognized as a psychologist in the country in which you practice).



Consulting Abroad

All of the guidelines that apply to consultation in the United States apply internationally (please see the resource list for links to U.S.-based guidelines).

There are some additional challenges that are important to consider in an international context. These primarily concern identifying and clarifying mutual expectations.

- Make sure that any contractual arrangement is explicit regarding expectations, time commitment, and whether you will have translation services (consecutive translator or simultaneous translator).

- Clarify details of payment - when you will be paid, in what currency, and how you will be paid. Many international banking systems are based on bank-to-bank transfer, and checks are not possible.
- Clarify what expenses will be covered, by whom, and when; Clarify the procedures for prepayment or reimbursement.
- Explore whether there are informal expectations about your activities—obligatory dinners, social events, or provisions of materials or resources.

In addition to these general points, you should explore country-specific issues, such as regulations concerning payments (and tax liabilities), currency exchange, scope of consultation, and regulations concerning any instruments you may use.

Being a Learning Partner: Developing a Culturally Competent and International Attitude

A culturally competent professional is one who is actively in the process of becoming aware of his or her own assumptions about human behavior, values, biases, preconceived notions, personal limitations and so forth. Second, a culturally competent professional is one who actively attempts to understand the world view of culturally diverse populations. Third, a culturally competent professional is one who is in the process of actively developing and practicing culturally appropriate, relevant and sensitive... skills in working with his or her culturally different students and colleagues. Thus, cultural competence is active, developmental and ongoing." (adapted from Sue and Sue, 1990)

One of the challenges in entering a new society and culture is learning “rules” and expectations that are implicit and nuanced. In this section we raise some issues to encourage you to think about being a culturally sensitive learning partner in your professional activities.

Be Collaborative: An attitude of continual learning and collaboration in developing your research and academic goals is an important first step to collaboration. Seek input early on.

Be Humble: Remember that your familiar ways of acting and knowing are the norm in your own culture. There may be different and even better ways of acting and knowing that are adapted to your host culture.

Be a Learner: Respect the experience, learning and intelligence of your host society. Learn their cultural values, norms, and customs, and most importantly, how these affect their behavior, especially their

interactions with you. Ask to learn local cultural perspectives and procedures before providing your own perspectives or typical behaviors.

Language Matters: One of the most salient differences between cultures is language. Unless you have the good fortune to be going to a host country whose language is one in which you are fluent, you are likely to find yourself in situations where understanding or expression is dampened. Although many travelers will tell you that “everyone speaks English” or that you do not need to know the local language, how you handle your language skills is important. Even a poor language learner can take a few help steps:

- Learn words of greeting, simple commands, and “thank you” in the local language. Use these whenever you can.
- Do not assume that expressive language in English means the speaker is fluent in comprehension, and adjust your tempo and vocabulary to be as clear as possible.
- Understand that there will be situations where your colleagues may speak their language, even knowing you do not understand. This is most likely due to their belief that they do not speak English fluently, rather than any intended rudeness on their part.
- Be curious about the local language and ask your hosts to explain it to you and to engage you in simple word exchange.

Know your own values and priorities: Reflect on your own cultural background, family customs, and values as a way of becoming aware of cultural differences. If you have strong opinions about local mores, norms or values, consider whether they can be accommodated in your location or context.



Pragmatic Tips: Getting Along in Your Work and Country Setting

In this section we address some of the many areas to think about in a new work and country setting.

Time & Work Tempos

The work tempo that you have maintained at home, often with precise adherence to appointment times, responding (nearly) instantaneously or at most within a few hours to an e-mail, or meeting a deadline “no matter what” for submission of a research report, may not be the norm outside the United States. Before you go, learn

as much as you can about local habits and expectations regarding adherence to time and deadlines. Be aware that different countries view time (and what we call punctuality) differently. Keep in mind that even with the best intentions on the part of your colleagues, there are likely to be unanticipated delays as you become accustomed to new systems of communication, telecommunications, electricity and everyday life.



In some countries there may be infrastructure challenges with electricity blackouts, Internet service disruptions, or local transportation shortages. Be aware that it may be necessary to revise your timetable for accomplishment of your work agenda overseas to allow for the different cultural context, delays, and miscommunications that are likely to occur.

Communication Style

Whether communicating in a new language or in English, understanding and adapting to the host country’s communication style will be a significant factor in adjustment and effectiveness in the host country. Communication patterns are heavily influenced by culture.

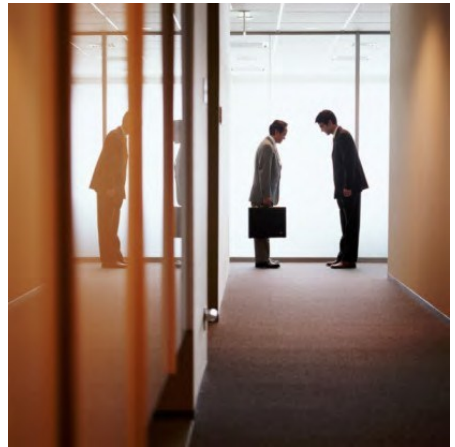
Communications styles vary based on:

- Explicitness;
- Quantity (e.g. how much is said);
- Quality (e.g. truthfulness);
- Respect and saving face;
- Linearity (e.g. staying with a topic);
- Power or status differences (e.g. based on age, gender, position, national origin, and the like).



Indirect Communication: An Example

One of the most salient differences facing U.S. psychologists are implicit, indirect and high context communications styles that are common across Africa, Asia, South and Central America, and some countries in Eastern Europe. Compared to explicit, direct communication, in which the words said convey the meaning exactly, implicit communication involves conveying meaning through the sequence and implications of the words, through more subtle nuances, or through the way the message is communicated. This may include feedback provided in the form of a story or parable, non-verbal behaviors, or messages sent through a third person. U.S. psychologists should learn the major patterns of communication in their host country setting, the typical patterns within the academic community and, if applicable, should be alert to indirect communication messages that they may be receiving or inadvertently sending. In addition to awareness of the differences in explicitness, host norms for other aspects of communication involve expressiveness, use/meaning of gestures, silence and pause times, amount of overlap or interrupting in conversations, rate and prosody of speech, and titles/greetings.



Formality

The level of formality in the classroom and in interactions among colleagues may be different from you experience in U.S. colleges and universities, or in international settings.

Many cultures view the relationship between teacher and student, or among colleagues, as a highly formal one in which each participant is treated with a certain distance, and formal terms of address are employed. Students may be uncomfortable asking questions in a lecture hall, or expressing disagreement with an approach or an assumption made by their professor.



While you may wish to encourage students to ask questions, students may find greater ease in raising questions or expressing alternate viewpoints in small-group discussions, or in dialogues with you outside the classroom.

You will need to be attentive to expected cultural patterns of interaction between professors and students – particularly when these interactions are across gender. Relationships between male and female faculty, in some cultures, may reflect traditional gender roles. It may require tact and diplomacy to foster more equitable relations, or to interact within the local cultural norms.

Be attuned to expectations regarding what is appropriate to wear for different occasions, including academic and social settings. In many countries, social interactions assume a higher level of formality in social behavior and dress than in the United States, and informality may be interpreted as intrusive or “bad manners”.



Hierarchies and Academic Histories

Academic hierarchies in some countries may be highly rigid and formalized – with full professors expecting a certain level of deference

from colleagues lower on the academic totem poll. Academic administrators, such as chairs of departments or deans, may be accustomed to levels of formality unfamiliar to you.



Across the globe, psychology departments have been the locus of intensive philosophical, methodological, and personal divisions, with resentment among colleagues lingering after many years. Do not assume this is a thing of the past —there are many contemporary philosophical, methodological, and personal

wars. Learn what you can about any polarizations in the school, faculty and institution you will be visiting, and try not to be drawn into these long-simmering battles; if you do, you will most likely not make a difference.

As a visiting member of the faculty or a guest researcher, you may be interested in attending a meeting of the academic unit to which you are attached. Consult with your colleagues and the appropriate administrative official to see if your presence would be acceptable. Similarly, if you are interested in participating in a committee or task force in your new department, learn if this would be welcome, if there are any political issues involved, and what responsibilities you realistically should expect to assume should you be invited to participate. Should you wish to give a seminar or host an informal “brown bag” on your research interests, check in advance with close colleagues to see how this will be received and the best way to make a proposal.

Holidays and Special Days

In the United States, holidays like Thanksgiving, Labor Day and the Fourth of July are important markers on our annual calendar. Religious observances highlight other days of the year for many. In your host country, other commemorations will take precedence. Learn when a



national day of independence falls, the date of the New Year's festivals, religious holidays and the commemoration of days unique to a country. The birthdays of national royal figures, such as the king or queen, are often national celebratory days, as are youth days or days commemorating the country's war veterans. The Earth Calendar will alert you to important dates in the national calendars of countries throughout the world (www.earthcalendar.net). Elections in many countries also evoke special activities. Ask your colleagues to know what to expect on special days, such as fireworks, gunfire, or other celebratory activities, and whether there are specific activities of respect that you should do.

Learn from your colleagues and the university calendar when holiday breaks occur. In many countries, "summer holidays" (which occur from July-August in the northern hemisphere and between December and March in the southern hemisphere) may last a month or more, and there may be regular weeks off throughout the year. You may wish to schedule your own "down time" during the same period.

Professional Associations

From the time of Alexis de Tocqueville forward, observers of the United States have commented on the vibrancy of this country's associations. Other parts of the world have also experienced their own flowering of civil society, many with a large number of non-governmental organizations. Of particular interest to you will be a country's psychology organizations. The country you visit may have a national psychological society (or more), as well as a number of more specialized organizations focusing on a particular area of psychological study or practice. Some cities or states may also have a more local psychological society.



Consult with a trusted colleague on whether you would be welcome at a local or national meeting or congress and if so, which one(s). You may wish to present a report on work-in-progress, serve on a panel, or lead a roundtable discussion. Before you leave the United States, learn

what important meetings of psychological associations will be taking place during your time in your host country. Contact the meeting organizers, should you be interested in giving a presentation or learning more details about the event. In many countries, many in the audience will understand presentations in English. For those unfamiliar with an American accent, Power Point outlines can facilitate understanding. In addition, you may wish to ask a colleague to serve as a translator for you, present a summary of your remarks, or assist you in preparing your talk in the country's most commonly spoken language. You may find contact information from the web-resources listed at the end of this brochure.

Consider visiting the national psychology association in the country you will be visiting, or psychology departments in local universities. This can be a valuable source of information about psychology in the country, and about professional meetings, initiatives and activities. It can provide an entrée to exchange with local colleagues. Some adventurous psychologists may even ask in a local psychology department if there are colleagues who would be interested in sharing dinner or other activities.

You can find the addresses and contact information for national psychology associations in countries around the world on the APA Office of International Affairs website (www.apa.org/international). International Affairs staff can also facilitate contact with national associations.

The U.S. Embassy

The U.S. Embassy in your host country can be a valuable resource in a number of areas. Embassy staff often maintain lists of recommended health providers. However, do not expect the U.S. Embassy to provide information on housing, schools, or other issues you will face in settling in. The local American Overseas Research Center is another resource, if there is one in the country (www.caorc.org).

It is wise to register with the U.S. Embassy in your host country within a few days of your arrival, preferably when you have an established address and a telephone number where you



can be reached. (This can be done before you leave the United States). This process will be useful should there be any national emergency in-country while you are there; in such situations, the embassy can offer assistance to U.S. citizens. Registering with the embassy is also helpful in the event of a personal emergency for which you might require various forms of aid.

The U.S. Embassy often sponsors educational and cultural programs; you might find participating in such an event to be a most enjoyable experience. Embassy public or cultural affairs officers might also like to have *you* give a lecture or serve on a panel at an event they are organizing. They may even want to send you to other cities in the country or region to share your expertise. So, do introduce yourself to embassy staff and let them know of your professional areas of interest.

Embassies can also notarize documents and assist with absentee ballots.

Health and Well-being

Wherever you are going, check with the Centers for Disease Control (Travelers' Health at www.cdc.gov) and the World Health Organization (International travel and health at www.who.org) regarding health conditions in your host country. Note any special immunizations you will need. Do this a few months in advance of your departure, as some immunizations must be given as a series, and some medications, such as those preventing malaria, must be started well in advance of your journey.



Learn whether your current health insurance covers medical treatment while you are outside the United States and, if not, explore coverage alternatives and consider purchasing a supplementary policy. Explore with knowledgeable administrators in your host institution overseas if you would be eligible for insurance coverage through the institution or a related organization. Also consider buying medical evacuation insurance (MEDEX is an internationally recognized provider), should the need arise for emergency medical attention during your time abroad. You should have repatriation of remains insurance as well.

Your in-country colleagues, as well as the U.S. Embassy in your host country, will be good sources for recommendations for doctors, dentists and other health professionals you and your family may want to consult. Carry supplies of prescription medicines that may be hard to obtain in certain countries, as well as copies of medication and eyeglass prescriptions.

Acculturative Stress: What is it, and how can you prepare?

All persons adjusting to a new culture and country should understand and be aware of the psychosocial challenges associated with cross-cultural adjustment. Acculturative stress is the normal and expected stress associated with adjusting to a new cultural environment. Symptoms can range from mild to severe and, if not identified and managed, may negatively impact the international experience.



Given the “cognitive overload” that accompanies the intense demand for learning and adjusting to new communication and cultural norms, psychologists (and accompanying family members) can expect a certain amount of acculturative stress. Symptoms may include anxiety, fear, loneliness, homesickness, irritability, depression, substance abuse, confusion, frustration, anger, misperceived discrimination, and identity or values confusion. A persistent lack or loss of appetite and sleep, low stamina and energy levels, and other stress-related physical complaints may be common, as is a worsening of pre-existing psychological concerns.



The degree of acculturative stress can be expected to vary over time in the country, depending on individual circumstances, the host environment, coping, and sociocultural learning. Although research suggests a more individually varied pattern of adjustment, developmental models of adjustment may be helpful as a heuristic to

understand some of the processes involved in psychological adjustment. A typical sequence might be:

- Excitement: elation at being in a new country
- Confrontation: old ways of operating do not work and new ones have not yet been mastered; marked by frustration, confusion, anger or withdrawal; the most difficult stage
- Adjustment / Transition: learning rules, increased confidence
- Adaptation: comfortable and effective in the new culture

Psychologists may benefit from paying attention to their own levels of acculturative stress and also mapping their own progression or cycling through the different phases of adjustment.

Managing acculturative stress is similar to managing stress at home. In general, maintain a reflective, approach-oriented, problem-focused coping approach to attempt to resolve the stressful events. Various forms of social support can be very helpful. When stress due to cultural adjustment is high, seek connections and support from familiar others and family at home. Support from familiar cultural groups, in particular, is often helpful.

Avoid the tendency to withdraw or blame others or the culture. Identify your frustrations and seek to understand the values behind them.

Acculturative stress is in part related to lacking sufficient information about the new cultural context, and not being able to navigate effectively in that environment. People entering a new culture often find it helpful to learn more about their environment by engaging in cultural experiences, especially those that aren't too overwhelming (such as a lunch with a colleague rather than a visit to an outdoor meat market). Enlisting a “cultural broker”, that is a colleague or friend from the host country who is willing to discuss cultural differences, may also be helpful.

As with other psychological problems, seek help if symptoms are severe or cause significant and unacceptable interruptions in daily life. In addition, maintain a healthy diet, find ways to exercise and get plenty of rest.

Matters Legal and Regulatory

While most of us will never refer to the U.S. Criminal Code or our state constitution, it may be useful for you to do some pre-departure investigation of the laws of your host country.

Check with the country's embassy or consulate on specific regulations focusing on customs duties and import taxes on objects you may want to accompany you, such as equipment and materials used for research purposes, or books. Some information may be available on the embassy website; administrators at your host institution may also be helpful in this search.

In your professional context:

- Learn the regulations concerning transmission of sensitive information (in the U.S., ITAR information and some health information); learn data protection regulations and whether this might apply to your research. Make a plan for off-site backup of your electronic data.
- Learn from colleagues the expectations about compensation for professional activities in which you might be engaged—Do research participants expect to be paid? Do school officials or others who give permission for research expect to be compensated? Is this compensation in the form of publicly visible fees or less direct compensation? What, if anything, do you need to report, and to whom? Understand that the definitions of fees, facilitation, compensation, gifts and payoffs are not always clear.



While you may be approached by acquaintances and even colleagues offering to exchange your foreign currency outside bank or official exchange channels, do not follow their lead. You may be violating national laws and risking potential financial or other penalties. Should you have any questions regarding the implementation of the laws of your host country, check with the legal adviser at the U.S. Embassy. If there is none, embassy staff should be able to advise you where to go for authoritative counsel.

Security and safety – check the state department travel advisories before you go and during your stay. Ask local colleagues about personal and property safety and any precautions they would like you to know.

Thinking About How to Go / Where to Go

Some of you reading this publication have already made your plans for a research/teaching sojourn outside the United States and are soon to go. Others may be wondering how to begin the adventure leading to an overseas stay.

Finding Opportunities

There are many ways to explore opportunities for international exchange. Contact people whose work you read in the literature; engage with colleagues at conferences; attend international meetings; reach out to departments in universities in other countries.



There are also formal routes. An important resource supporting scholarly exchanges for long and shorter terms is the Fulbright Scholar Program, sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and implemented by the Council for International Exchange of Scholars – a division of the Institute of International Education. The CIES website (www.cies.org) will give you a detailed overview of the varied international exchange opportunities available for American and non-U.S. academics and professionals. In addition to the traditional Fulbright opportunities for American scholars to teach and conduct research abroad, new Fulbright opportunities have been developed such as the short-term Fulbright Specialists Program under which grantees collaborate with professional counterparts abroad on curriculum and faculty development, institutional planning and a variety of other activities.



A little known component of the Fulbright Program is its Occasional Lecturer Program through which a Fulbright Visiting Scholar from overseas is supported in lecturing at a U.S. college or

university. To build on your academic or research experience abroad, you may wish to invite a Visiting Scholar from the country or region in which you have worked to lecture at your institution. You can develop further contacts with other Visiting Scholars in psychology through scanning the Visiting Scholar Directory published by CIES (available on-line) which lists grantee contact information in the United States. Through the regular Fulbright Program, your institution can also host a Scholar-in-Residence from overseas who can enhance the international dimension of your departmental and university life by teaching undergraduate courses in his/her academic specialty for one semester or one year.

Other opportunities exist at some universities, such as developing their own faculty exchange programs, and through Faculty Exchange programs coordinated by independent exchange programs (search for “international faculty exchange programs” on the web).

Returning Home

Preparing to Return

Take time to prepare for leaving your international location. Savor experiences, take photos of familiar locations, collect contact information, make plans in advance for final / wrap up meetings with colleagues. Find out about expectations for going away, such as goodbye parties or ‘send offs’, gifts, speeches, or other activities. Assess your expectations for returning home.

Managing Re-Entry Stress

It is often said that culture shock is the expected confrontation with the unfamiliar, while re-entry shock is the unexpected confrontation with the familiar.

More aptly named re-entry stress, the experiences are ubiquitous to readjustment and the symptoms and processes are akin to those of acculturative stress. Feeling like a stranger in one’s own country, adjusting to changes that occurred while absent, and fitting back into fast-paced routines of daily life can be surprisingly difficult and thus re-entry stress can be more severe than the initial cultural adjustment. Initial excitement felt on arrival easily turns to frustrations with the “home” culture, relations and way of life, and a certain homesickness for the host country’s ways or a desire to return. Gradual adaptation and ongoing cycling through the stages of re- entry follow a “U” shape pattern reflecting overall mood changes as individuals adapt over time.



Strategies for managing re- entry stress include reflection and action. It is important to take time to reflect on the experience. This can be done through journaling, writing, or simply thinking about the experiences with more perspective and distance.

Reflection and Action - Suggestions for topics

Reflection

- Memorable moments: What was your funniest moment? Most confusing? Embarrassing? Difficult? Happiest? Saddest?
- Taking stock of goals that were accomplished and those that were not (Were they realistic?)
- List the most important things you learned.
- Were there things learned or accomplished that were unexpected?
- What were the high and low points?
- What were some major cultural differences and how did you handle them?
- What mistakes did you make?
- List specific challenges and barriers you faced?
- What lessons did you learn?
- Did the experience enhance or create new ways of thinking or doing



Action

- Attend international conferences and congresses in subjects and areas of the world of interest to you, including smaller, regional meetings or national annual conventions.
- Write about your experiences (e.g., for your local or national psychological association or professional society newsletters).
- Incorporate material or perspectives from your international experiences into your teaching.
- Work with your institution to support the participation of international colleagues at events sponsored by your department, university or research center.

- Develop and maintain contacts with international students, including students from the areas of the world you visited.
- Continue the collaborations you have begun abroad—through publishing, research projects, student exchange and correspondence.
- Reach out to others from “your” country—through APA Divisions (such as Division 52, International Psychology), and within your university community.
- Become a mentor to an international junior colleague or student (e.g. Division 52's Mentoring Committee).
- Consider research and/or outreach activities with immigrant communities in the U.S. from your host country.
- Host a visiting scholar from the host country, such as through the Fulbright Occasional Lecturer Fund.
- Link with others - Send your information to the ROMEO database.
- Consider developing a study abroad course or other academic exchanges with those in the host country.

Make plans to return again!

Resources

Please see www.apa.org/international
(and click link to resources) for an updated list

Psychology in other countries

- APA Directories of National Psychology Associations around the world: www.apa.org/international/directories (includes links to contact information and names of senior officials)
- Psychology Resources Around the World: www.iupsys.net/index.php/praw (a compendium of information on psychology in every country around the world, including country overview articles, links to data and publication archives, information on institutions, organizations and structures of psychology and more)

Handbooks with country-specific articles

- Gerstein, L. H., Heppner, P., Aegisdóttir, S., Leung, S-M. A., Norsworthy, K. (Eds) (2009). *International Handbook of Cross- Cultural Counseling*. Thousand Oaks, Ca.: Sage Publishing.
- Jimerson, S. R., Oakland, T. D. & Farrell, P. T. (2007). *The Handbook of International School Psychology*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Kitayama, S., Cohen, D., Markus, H., Triandis, H., Levine, R. (Eds.). (2010). *Handbook Of Cultural Psychology*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Pawlik, K., & Rosenzweig, M. R. (Eds.). (2000). *International Handbook of Psychology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Press.
- Reyes, G. & Jacobs, G. (2006). *Handbook of International Disaster Psychology*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Sexton, V. S., & Hogan, D. (Eds.). (1992). *International Psychology: Views from around the World*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Stevens, M. J. & Wedding, D. (2004). *Handbook of International Psychology*. New York: Brunner-Routledge.

Contact information for finding international programs

- Fulbright Programs: <http://fulbright.state.gov>
- Peace Corps: www.peacecorps.gov
- Forum on Education Abroad: www.forumea.org
- Center for Global Initiatives: www.centerforglobalinitiatives.org
- Health Volunteers Overseas: www.hvousa.org
- Salus World: www.salusworld.org
- Psychology Beyond Borders: www.psychologybeyondborders.com/
- NGOAbroad: www.ngoabroad.com

Travel Information

- Eco-Friendly Travel: www.sustainabletravelinternational.org
- State Department Warnings and Information: <http://travel.state.gov>
- Travel Documents: www.traveldocs.com
- Customs Information: www.visahq.com/customs
- Lonely Planet Guides: www.lonelyplanet.com/us
- Airline Toll-Free Numbers: www.tollfreeairline.com
- World Weather: <http://worldweather.wmo.int>
- Currency Converter: www.xe.com/ucc
- International Traveler Health: www.who.int/ith/en
- Travel Rules & Regulations:
www.ehow.com/topic_1344_travel-rules-regulations.html#0
- FDA Travel Advisories:
<http://dis.ors.od.nih.gov/fda/fdatrvladvisories.html>



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