

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL PROCESSES OF CULTURAL RETOOLING

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An essential challenge of cultural adaptation is to smoothly and swiftly incorporate new behaviors into one's cultural repertoire. I introduce the term "cultural retooling" to capture this process and provide a theory of its psychological dynamics. Using longitudinal data from 50 foreign-born master's degree students in the United States, I find that individuals use two core methods for addressing the internal conflict that they experience during cultural retooling (integrative and instrumental) and that the retooling process itself unfolds over three distinct phases (conflict, ambivalence, and authenticity). Moreover, I find that individuals vary in their trajectories across these phases (regressing, stagnating, or transforming) and that these trajectories are shaped by how internal conflict is addressed.

To function effectively in a multicultural global business environment, individuals and organizations must be capable of adapting smoothly and successfully across cultural boundaries. Whether on an expatriate assignment abroad or a short-term assignment in a foreign culture, individuals are increasingly finding themselves in foreign cultural situations where the norms for appropriate and acceptable behavior are different from those of their native culture. In many cases, these new norms also violate their culturally ingrained values and beliefs.

For example, a Japanese employee working in the United States for an American boss can struggle learning to give her boss constructive criticism as part of a required 360-degree performance review. Although appropriate in the US setting as an expected part of the performance review process, the content and style of behavior required to perform such a review may strongly conflict with the Japa-

nese employee's cultural values regarding high "power distance" and polite interactions with people of authority (Javidan & House, 2001). As a result, the employee may struggle internally—feeling shame and embarrassment, for example—when learning to perform the behavior, even if she knows the rules for proper conduct. Similarly, an Indian professional searching for employment in the United States may struggle learning to promote himself in informal, professional networking events, not because he is unaware of the cultural norms, but because these norms violate culturally ingrained Indian values regarding modesty and deference toward authority figures (Storti, 2007).

These examples highlight a difficult bind faced by countless foreign-born professionals learning to "retool" themselves to function effectively and appropriately in foreign cultural settings (Swidler, 1986: 277). Successful adaptation to the norms of a new culture helps avoid the negative repercussions of culturally inappropriate behavior and its associated stereotypes (Earley & Ang, 2003; Osland & Bird, 2000; Thomas & Ravlin, 1995). It also increases the likelihood of fitting in, winning the respect and admiration of foreign colleagues, and being an effective and persuasive collaborator on a cross-cultural team (Earley & Ang, 2003). However, the process of cultural retooling can also be "drastic and costly" (Swidler, 1986: 277). Individuals can experience intense internal conflicts when the norms for appropriate new behavior in a new culture conflict with their deeply ingrained values and beliefs from the native cultural setting (Earley & Peterson, 2004; Maertz, Hassan, & Magnusson,

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2009; Osland & Osland, 2006; Sanchez, Spector, & Cooper, 2000).

When individuals must act in a manner that is inconsistent with their values and beliefs (Elliot & Devine, 1994) or with core aspects of their identity (Baumeister, Shapiro, & Tice, 1985) and internal standards (Eisenberg, 2000)—as is often the case when interacting across cultures (Osland, 2000)—they can experience intense feelings of dissonance and distress (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). These feelings can interfere with their ability to successfully translate their knowledge of new cultural norms into appropriate behavior (Molinsky, 2007) and can lead to negative long-term outcomes of cultural adjustment, such as marginalization or alienation within a new cultural setting (Berry, 2003). Therefore, understanding how nonnative professionals manage the internal conflicts that they experience throughout the cultural retooling process in the short term, as they confront these conflicts in specific intercultural interactions, becomes a critical question for organizational theory and practice.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to build theory about how individuals experience—and manage the experience of—internal conflict throughout the process of learning to engage in new behaviors that are critical to successful performance in a new culture but that conflict with their own culturally ingrained values and beliefs. Despite the practical and theoretical importance of cultural retooling, the phenomenon has received surprisingly little attention in past research on cultural adaptation, which has focused nearly exclusively on characteristics of individuals rather than characteristics of the adaptation process. Research on cultural intelligence or cultural competence, for example, details individual characteristics critical for success in a foreign setting, without necessarily delving into processes of adaptation over time (Ang, Van Dyne, & Koh, 2005; Earley & Ang, 2003). Even work focused on adaptation itself, such as Berry's classic work on acculturation strategies (Berry, 1997, 2003), or the work on biculturalism of LaFromboise and her colleagues (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993), has examined adaptation through the prism of individual characteristics. This work, for example, classifies individuals in terms of the single, core strategy that they use for reconciling their native heritage with that of the new culture (Berry, 1997), or for reconciling dual-bicultural identities (LaFromboise et al., 1993). Little attention in this paradigm is focused on ex-

amining processes of adaptation, or how these processes might unfold over time.

The little work that has examined cultural adaptation from a process perspective has done so theoretically, rather than empirically. Moreover, this work has explored process from a general, macro point of view, looking at major stages in individuals' time abroad in foreign settings, such as the "arrival" (Sanchez et al., 2000) or "honeymoon" stage (Lysgaard, 1955; Oberg, 1960). This work has not taken the more micro perspective, examining the process by which an individual masters important new cultural behaviors over time, which is the focus of the present study.

In recent years, scholars have successfully adopted process-oriented theorizing for unpacking the complex dynamics and processes underlying a range of psychological and organizational phenomena, from innovation and change (Carlile, 2004), "naturalistic" decision making (Klein, 1999) and identity construction (Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006), to "sensemaking" (Maitlis, 2005) and the enactment of technological change in organizations (Barley, 1986; Orlikowski, 1996). Process theories are especially useful for understanding how and why individuals and organizations change and adapt over time (Hernes & Maitlis, 2010). They are also valuable for capturing the "messy" and "complex" world of practicing managers and for providing empirically grounded insights that resonate with their experiences (Rynes, 2007: 1048). Although it is clearly worthwhile to understand cultural adaptation from the perspective of individual characteristics, a process-oriented perspective also holds great potential for deepening understanding of the complex dynamics and challenges of adaptation as it unfolds over time. The purpose of the present study, therefore, is to build theory about how, in the immediate term, individuals learning new cultural behaviors for the purpose of functioning effectively and appropriately in a foreign culture manage internal conflicts throughout this retooling process.

To do so, I conducted a longitudinal study of 50 foreign-born MBA and MA students in the United States learning to incorporate new, professionally oriented behavior into their cultural repertoires that was not only unfamiliar but that also conflicted deeply with their culturally ingrained values and beliefs. I unearth two distinct approaches for managing internal conflict in these professional tasks: instrumental and integrative. Individuals adopting an *instrumental* approach achieve task

performance by forcing themselves to perform the offending behavior despite the internal conflict it generates. They are thus able to perform the behavior, but continue to feel inauthentic when doing so (cf. Grandey, 2003; Hochschild, 1983). In contrast, those who adopt an *integrative* approach achieve task performance precisely by finding a way to feel authentic performing this behavior that, at least initially, poses an intense conflict with their ingrained cultural values and beliefs.

I document the prevalence of these two approaches in the data, as well as specific techniques that individuals use to facilitate each approach. Furthermore, I detail how and why the use of each approach relates to changes in individuals' experiences of internal conflict over time, during the course of learning to perform the professional task. I discover three distinct phases of internal conflict in the data, including the deep conflict phase (during which individuals feel both awkward and illegitimate engaging in the new behavior), the ambivalence phase (during which they feel less awkward or illegitimate, but not fully comfortable), and the authenticity phase (during which they feel fully natural and legitimate). Moreover, I find that individuals have distinct trajectories in their experience of each of these phases. Some participants regress over time: they move from conflict to ambivalence, but then back to conflict. Others stagnate: their experience remains at the conflict phase throughout the study period. Finally, some individuals display trajectories of growth, either progressing to a state of "partial transformation" (from conflict to ambivalence), or to a state of "full transformation" (from conflict to authenticity). I illustrate and detail the prevalence of each of these phases and trajectories of internal conflict, as well as the relationship between the two core approaches for managing internal conflict (integrative and instrumental) and patterns in individuals' experiences over time.

EXISTING PERSPECTIVES ON CULTURAL ADAPTATION

Despite a growing interest in cultural adaptation in international management and cross-cultural psychology, researchers still know relatively little about processes of cultural adaptation. Rather than examining the process of cultural adaptation as it unfolds over time, particularly in the context of learning challenging new cultural behaviors, the vast majority of past work has focused on charac-

teristics of individuals, as opposed to dynamics and processes of adaptation.

Individual Characteristics in Cultural Adaptation

Two individual characteristics in particular stand out in past research: differences in cultural competence (Bird, Mendenhall, Stevens, & Oddou, 2010), or cultural intelligence (Earley & Ang, 2003), and differences in how individuals reconcile dual (LaFromboise et al., 1993) or even multiple (Chao & Moon, 2005; Roccas & Brewer, 2002) cultural affiliations. In the realm of cultural competence, extensive recent work has focused on detailing the different dimensions of cultural intelligence and relating this individual difference characteristic to meaningful adaptation outcomes (Ang et al., 2008; Thomas & Inkson, 2004). According to this work, cultural intelligence is a multidimensional construct, comprised of meta-cognitive abilities (e.g., awareness of being in a cross-cultural interaction), cognitive abilities (e.g., knowledge of norms in foreign cultural settings), motivational abilities (e.g., capacity to direct effort and attention toward intercultural learning), and behavioral abilities (e.g., capacity to successfully perform verbal and nonverbal behaviors characteristic of a foreign setting). Moreover, the cultural intelligence construct, like other measures of cultural competence in the literature (Bird et al., 2010; Chen & Starosta, 1996; Hammer, 1987), is seen to be widely applicable across situations. Unlike the perspective developed here, which focuses on adaptation processes in specific situations, past work on cultural competence has focused more broadly on classifying and documenting individuals' generalized level of competence applicable to all possible situations they encounter abroad.

Joining this work on cultural competence in its individual-level focus is research on individual-level strategies for reconciling dual or multiple cultural affiliations during the cultural adaptation process. Work by Berry and colleagues (Berry, 1997, 2003; Sam & Berry, 2010), for example, has detailed the range of strategies people adopt for reconciling the tension between affiliating with their native cultural heritage and affiliating with that of the new culture to which they are adapting. Those using an "assimilation" approach, for example, manage this tension by relinquishing their native cultural heritage in favor of the new heritage. Those who adopt a "separation" approach, in contrast, maintain their identification with the native cultural heritage,

even as they are adapting to the new cultural heritage.

Work on biculturalism has taken a similar approach, examining how individual differences, such as compatible or oppositional cultural identities (Benet-Martinez, Leu, Lee, & Morris, 2002) and integrative complexity (Tadmor & Tetlock, 2006; Tadmor, Tetlock, & Peng, 2009), affect how people experience themselves and multiple cultural perspectives in a foreign setting (Brannen & Thomas, 2010). In all cases, the focus of this style of work has been on identifying and documenting individual-level resources or strategies for handling cultural adaptation.

Processes of Cultural Adaptation

Although relatively rare, some work has addressed processes of adaptation themselves. However, this work comes with two important caveats: First, the work has focused on adaptation from a very general standpoint, characterizing broad, sweeping stages in a person's experience abroad, such as the honeymoon stage (Lysgaard, 1955; Oberg, 1960), as opposed to drilling down to the more specific and tractable moments that are my focus. Second, this work has been conceptual, rather than empirical. For example, one of the earliest ways of conceptualizing the cultural adaptation process is the U-curve approach, which theorizes about internal conflict, or "culture shock" (Lysgaard, 1955; Oberg, 1960), throughout three stages in a person's overall experience in a new culture: honeymoon, culture shock, and recovery. During the honeymoon stage, psychological conflict is quite low, as individuals emphasize positive features of the new culture. During the culture shock phase, conflict spikes; and then during the recovery phase, it lessens, as individuals become better adjusted to the new cultural setting. The approach is quite general in the sense that it does not distinguish between situations in capturing individuals' experiences; that is, within any given phase, individuals are hypothesized to have the exact same experience of conflict or comfort with little differentiation. The same assumption holds true for Sanchez et al.'s (2000) conceptual framework capturing processes of adjustment among expatriate executives. According to the framework, cultural adjustment unfolds in five phases: arrival, novice, transitional, mastery, and repatriation. Again, as with the U-curve approach, the operating assumption is that there is little situ-

ational variation in individuals' adaptation experiences during any one of the five adaptation phases.

In sum, previous work emphasizing individual characteristics offers great insight into predictors of successful adaptation over time and into the general ways people approach adaptation challenges; however, it offers little insight into the mechanisms and dynamics of adaptation as it unfolds over time, particularly in the context of learning challenging new cultural behaviors. Similarly, although work on general patterns and processes of adaptation over time offers insight into macro trends in a person's overall experience abroad, it does not account for the microprocesses underlying these more macrolevel dynamics. Thus, although the two lines of work reviewed above offer significant insight into certain aspects of cultural adaptation, they do not account for the cultural retooling phenomenon or for its psychological dynamics. Without an empirically grounded understanding of these processes, scholars lack insight into the mechanisms of cultural adaptation over time, and practitioners lack a road map for crafting interventions based on these insights that could increase the likelihood of successful adjustment outcomes.

Given these gaps in the literature and rising calls for work addressing processes of adaptation in specific situations (e.g., Maertz et al., 2009; Molinsky, 2007), I set out to address the following questions regarding the psychological dynamics and processes of cultural retooling: (a) How do individuals manage the internal conflict that they experience throughout the cultural retooling process? (b) In what ways, if any, does their experience of internal conflict change over time? And (c) how and why do different approaches for addressing internal conflict explain changes in individuals' experience of such conflict over time?

METHODS

Sample and Context

The study used a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) in the positivistic tradition to understand the psychological dynamics of the cultural retooling process. That is, people's accounts of cultural adaptation were treated as statements of fact about what they were feeling and doing, rather than as interpretive accounts of their experiences. Qualitative methods were well suited for examining this topic because it represents a nascent research domain in international management, one in

which little or no previous theory exists (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

In developing this study I carefully considered multiple ways to examine how people experience and manage internal conflicts when adapting behavior in foreign cultural interactions. The method had to achieve multiple purposes simultaneously. To capture this phenomenon in an externally valid manner, it was essential to study individuals' experiences in real situations, rather than in simulated situations. Furthermore, to capture the phenomenon of internal conflict itself, situations had to possess certain specific criteria: norms that diverged from an individual's native cultural norms; norms that also violated his or her native cultural values; and finally, norms within the context of situations that were meaningful to participants. I needed a context in which individuals would be motivated to learn and improve their skills, even in these most challenging intercultural situations.

Given this very specific and unusual set of requirements, I decided to follow Argyris's classic approach of creating a phenomenon in order to study it (Argyris, 1975). To do so, I developed a semester-long classroom project at an internationally focused business school in the United States in which I intensively studied the experience of 50 foreign-born MBA and MA students as they were learning to adapt their behavior in specific situations to accommodate the norms of the American workplace. The project enabled me to gather close-to-real-time data from a range of foreign-born individuals learning to adapt behavior in situations that posed an intense internal conflict with their existing values and beliefs.

The project required each foreign-born student participant to choose a situation in the United States that met the different criteria highlighted above. First, the situation had to have unfamiliar norms that differed substantially from the norms for acceptable behavior for the same situation in the participant's native cultural setting. For example, an Indian MBA student might choose the situation of promoting herself at a career fair with a potential employer, as the norms for interacting effectively in this situation in the United States require behavior that is far more assertive and openly self-confident than the behavior required in the Indian cultural context. Second, the new cultural norms had to present a significant cultural conflict with the participant's native cultural values. For example, behaving in an assertive, self-confident manner with a potential employer conflicts with Indian values

regarding appropriate levels of power distance (Hofstede, 1980; Javidan & House, 2001), communication directness/indirectness (Morris et al., 1998; Sully de Luque & Sommer, 2000), and assertiveness (Javidan & House, 2001). Of course, given natural variation in the extent to which individuals from a given culture adhere to their native cultural values (Brockner, 2003; Gibson, Maznevski, & Kirkman, 2009), participants themselves were asked to select a situation that for them was both personally and culturally discrepant.

Alongside these first two criteria, a third requirement was that the situation had to be personally and professionally meaningful to participants so that they would be motivated to behave effectively despite the internal distress that they experienced. Finally, as noted, the situation also had to be naturally occurring, rather than simulated. For example, participants learning to promote themselves at informal networking events or career fairs needed to find actual networking events or career fairs in the local metropolitan area at which to practice their new skills, rather than simulated versions of these same situations.

Women comprised 50 percent of the participants, who came from 24 different countries and had already spent an average of 1.5 years in the United States. All participants but one were foreign-born, and they each chose a situation that, for them, met the criteria described above. The single American-born participant had lived for several years in Japan and spoke fluent Japanese. His situation entailed interviewing for jobs in Japanese with Japanese companies in the local metropolitan area. Finally, 76 percent of the participants were MBA students, and 24 percent were pursuing an MA degree in a business-related field such as finance or advertising.

Data Source and Data Collection

Before attempting to adapt behavior in their chosen situation, participants were required to complete a thorough diagnosis of the new cultural norms. Aided by a team of three US-born research assistants, all foreign-born participants completed a lengthy exercise in which they learned to describe the appropriate content and style of appropriate behavior for their chosen situation in the United States, and how that content and style differed from the norms for appropriate behavior for the same situation in their native culture. The American-born student performed a similar pro-

cess with two Japanese professionals from the local area.

The data set in this study emerged from the behavioral portion of the project, which required participants to adapt, or “switch,” their behavior three times in eight weeks, at two- to three-week intervals. I labeled these episodes switch 1, switch 2, and switch 3. As soon as possible after having adapted behavior, participants completed a diary-style reflective exercise—the “switching experience sheet” (see Appendix A), which constituted my data source. Grounded in previous theorizing about the psychological challenges of cultural adaptation (Molinsky, 2007), this reflective exercise asked participants to detail their psychological experience and the ways in which they managed this experience. This close-to-real-time measure captured individuals’ “psychological states in context” (Beal & Weiss, 2003: 440). Because it occurred in the context of a classroom exercise, the assignment was graded; grading was based on the thoroughness and thoughtfulness of students’ self-reflections rather than on their actual performance. Naturally, such a method, occurring in the context of a graded classroom exercise, creates potential issues, which I address in the discussion section. However, such an approach also offers unique and unprecedented access into the “backstage” (Goffman, 1959) world of individuals as they attempt to adapt cultural behavior.

Data Analysis

The final data set included 150 episodes of cultural adaptation (50 participants, three switching events each). Data analysis occurred in three separate stages and focused on answering the research questions posed at the outset of the study.

The first stage of analysis focused on answering the first question, examining how individuals managed the internal conflict that they experienced. As an initial step, I read each of the 150 switching experience sheets multiple times, applying open, in vivo coding of the various ways participants appeared to be managing their internal conflict. During this process, I moved iteratively between the data, emerging constructs, and previous literature to refine insights and develop conceptual categories (Eisenhardt, 1989; Vaughan, 1992). I took a gestalt approach, examining the switching experience sheets as a whole for any possible evidence of strategies or approaches for managing internal con-

flict. I wrote memos and kept track of themes that emerged from the data.

During this analysis I was struck by the presence in the data of two very different modes of responding to internal conflict. Some participants treated value conflict as an acute threat to task performance and thus engaged in strategies designed to eliminate and reduce this threat. They actively suppressed the conflict and rationalized to themselves the pressing need to perform the behavior that task performance implied despite any conflict they experienced. Quite different in character was the second form of managing internal conflict. Rather than focusing on the pressing need to perform the task and the way in which internal conflict disrupted achieving this goal, individuals adopting this second approach focused instead on ways they could feel natural and legitimate engaging in the behavior.

It was at this point that I discovered sociolinguistics work by Gardner and Lambert (1972) on motivations for language learning, which provided terminology that I could borrow to capture the divergent approaches toward managing internal conflict that I was observing in my data. According to Gardner and Lambert, individuals with an *instrumental* approach to language learning focus on the achievement of an external goal, whereas individuals with an *integrative* approach are motivated by their own internal desire to immerse and involve themselves in the new language and culture.

Armed with this initial insight and the connection between what I was observing in my data and Lambert and Gardner’s (1972) classic formulation, I moved iteratively between the data and the literature to further clarify and distinguish these two approaches (Eisenhardt, 1989; Vaughan, 1992). During this process, I discovered two signature forms of each approach in the data. Individuals who adopted an instrumental approach used the specific techniques of *necessitizing* and *suppressing* to facilitate such an approach. They forced themselves to engage in unfamiliar behavior, despite the disruptive internal conflict that they experienced, and they also suppressed internal discomfort while acting their part externally, as has been documented in previous research in emotional labor (e.g., Grandey, 2003).

Individuals adopting the integrative approach, on the other hand, found ways to reverse their initial resistance to the new behavior and, in doing so, make uncomfortable and unnatural behavior feel quite natural and comfortable to engage in. A

first form of integration entailed people's *licensing* themselves to perform the new behavior by embracing their new culture's way of perceiving and interpreting the behavior and its legitimacy in that cultural setting. In doing so, individuals were able to experience a transformation in their perceptions of the appropriateness of the new behavior and in their subsequent psychological experience. A second form of integration entailed *personalizing*, or making slight but meaningful adjustments in performance of the behavior, to make it feel more natural and genuine.

To further substantiate the prevalence of these two approaches and their various forms in the data set, I had a trained research assistant code each of the 150 switching episodes for evidence of an integrative or instrumental approach, using the forms described above as indicators of each approach. The assistant observed and coded a total of 169 forms of each. To establish coding reliability, I independently coded a sample of 42 forms (approximately 25%) drawn from the data set to represent all coding categories (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Orlikowski & Yates, 1994). Percentage agreement was very high (98%).

I next turned my sights towards the second research question, which addresses how, if at all, participants' experience of internal conflict changed over time. To do so, I again immersed myself in the data, but this time with a different orientating focus. Rather than examining how participants managed internal conflict, I focused this time on their psychological experience of the conflict itself and on whether this experience changed over the three switching periods. The longitudinal nature of the data provided a unique window into these temporal processes. As before, I engaged in *in vivo*, open coding, writing memos and keeping track of various themes that I observed as I immersed myself in participants' accounts of what they experienced across the three time periods.

Through this process, I was able to identify three conceptually and empirically distinct *phases* in participants' internal experience over time, which I came to refer to as (a) the deep conflict phase, (b) the ambivalence phase, and (c) the authenticity phase. These assessments were based on two signature indicators of internal conflict that emerged inductively from the data: (a) experienced illegitimacy: the extent to which a participant experienced him- or herself as inappropriate and unjustified engaging in the new behavior; and (b) experienced awkwardness: the extent to which the

participant experienced him or herself as unnatural and uncomfortable when enacting the new cultural norms implied by the new behavior. The deep conflict phase was marked by high levels of experienced illegitimacy and awkwardness; the ambivalence phase was marked by moderate levels of experienced illegitimacy and awkwardness; and the authenticity phase was marked by low levels of both psychological characteristics.

An additional research assistant coded each participant's three episodes according to this tripartite scheme. In making this assessment, the coder was trained to examine each episode as a whole, rather than overly fixating on any single piece of information on the switching experience sheet. Furthermore, the coder was trained to examine the two signature indicators of internal conflict detailed above. To establish coding reliability, I also classified a sample of 38 episodes (approximately 25 percent of the overall sample) according to the same criteria (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Orlikowski & Yates, 1994). Percentage agreement was very high (97%).

As a final step in understanding participants' experience of internal conflict over time, I examined their entire adaptation experience as a whole, and through this lens, discerned the notion of a "trajectory." By examining how participants' experience of internal conflict changed (or did not change) across the three switching time periods, I discovered four distinct trajectories in participants' experiences over time: regression, stagnation, partial transformation, and full transformation. Individuals who remained at the deep conflict phase in their internal experience over time, in all three episodes, "stagnated." Individuals who progressed to ambivalence but then regressed back to deep conflict were characterized as having "regressed." Finally, those who progressed from deep conflict to ambivalence achieved "partial transformation," and those who progressed all the way to the authenticity phase achieved "full transformation."

Having analyzed trajectories in participants' experience of internal conflict over time, as well as divergent approaches for managing this conflict, I took the additional step of relating these two lines of analysis by examining how participants' experience of internal conflict over time varied as a function of the different approaches they used to manage it (instrumental or integrative). Additionally, to supplement these qualitative assessments of internal conflict, I also conducted a quantitative analysis of the specific emotion terms participants used

when describing their experience of switching cultural behavior. This analysis of participants' emotions over time across their three episodes of cultural adaptation provided an additional way to capture changes over time in their experience of internal conflict. In particular, I focused on responses to the following open-ended question on the switching experience sheet designed to capture participants' emotional experiences: "I was feeling: (1) . . . (2) . . . (3) . . ." This question was designed to allow participants to input data about their feelings before, during, and after each switch. For example, a participant might indicate: "I was feeling (1) scared, (2) anxious; (3) uncomfortable." Because participants were asked to complete this three-item question three times—capturing their feelings before, during, and after switching—they could potentially generate nine total emotion terms per switch.

To analyze these free-response emotions data, I first created a comprehensive list of all emotion terms participants used in their descriptions. From this process, a list of 28 discrete emotional terms emerged, including 16 negative terms (such as "afraid," "angry," "anxious," and "awkward") and 12 positive terms (such as "comfortable," "confident," "delighted," and "energized"). To systematically examine the prevalence of these positive and negative emotion terms in the data set, I had two new coders code participants' free-response data on a dichotomous scale of "present" (1) or "absent" (0) for each of the 28 potential emotion terms. The total data set included a total of 1,458 discrete emotion terms for all 150 switching episodes. Coders coded each emotion term independently, and then after having calculated their percentage agreement, which was very high throughout the data set (96%), resolved any coding discrepancies by discussing each case and coming to an agreed-upon code.

I now turn to the findings that emerged from the data, which I lay out in three steps. I first describe how internal conflict itself was a function of two core elements: experienced illegitimacy and experienced awkwardness. Next, I detail three phases in participants' experience of internal conflict over time—deep conflict, ambivalence, and authenticity—and how individuals' trajectories across these different possible phases can be characterized in terms of regression, stagnation, partial transformation, and full transformation. I then connect these two lines of analysis to examine how and why patterns in participants' experiences of inter-

nal conflict over time relate to the management approach they adopt. I conclude with a discussion of the implications of my findings for theory and practice.

SOURCES, PHASES, AND TRAJECTORIES OF INTERNAL CONFLICT

Two Sources of Internal Conflict

Analyses revealed two distinct sources of internal conflict in the data. These were (1) value discrepancy: the fact that a new behavior was inconsistent with participants' culturally ingrained values from their native cultural setting; and (2) routine discrepancy: the fact that the behavior also diverged from participants' accustomed behavioral routines. Moreover, these two sources of internal conflict resulted in two distinct psychological states—experienced illegitimacy and experienced awkwardness—each reflecting a different side of participants' subjective experience and appraisal of internal conflict when adapting cultural behavior (Lazarus, 1991; Roseman, 1984).

Experienced illegitimacy captured the distressing experience for individuals of having to engage in behavior that felt inconsistent with their core values and beliefs. When individuals experienced themselves as illegitimate, they felt wrong behaving in a manner that was deeply in conflict with how they were raised, and in many cases, how their parents and relatives would expect them to behave. A Nigerian participant described the illegitimacy that she experienced when attempting to promote herself at career events in the United States. The confident, self-promotional style required at such US events ran counter to Nigerian cultural values emphasizing deference and modesty. As a result, the participant experienced strong feelings of illegitimacy when adapting her cultural behavior:

It felt like I was disappointing my parents and my heritage, by going so much against my upbringing and the accepted social and cultural norms in my society. (participant 28, switch 1)

A second illustration of experienced illegitimacy comes from a Vietnamese participant learning to adapt behavior when debating in an MBA classroom. She described how debating and arguing with people in public conflicts with Vietnamese cultural values emphasizing social harmony and saving face:

Vietnamese culture highly values social harmony and thus doesn't allow actions that can break it.

Arguing with other people in public, telling them you are right (and thus they are wrong) causes them to lose face. And causing people to lose face in public is a taboo in most Asian countries, especially in Vietnam. That's why I felt so bad speaking out in class and/or proving that I was right. I knew back then participating in the US is required to get good grades but somehow deep inside I felt like I was doing something very wrong. (participant 38, switch 1)

Finally, a Russian participant described the sense of illegitimacy she experienced when having to proactively ask her boss for assignments, behavior that conflicted with culturally ingrained values about politeness and deference when communicating with someone of greater authority and experience.

I still could not understand why do I have to go against my values and the things I was raised around. It seemed to me that I acted against myself and my personality and traditions. (participant 6, switch 1)

Whereas experienced illegitimacy captured the fact that individuals had to violate their ingrained system of values and beliefs to produce the new behavior, experienced awkwardness captured the fact that in doing so, they also had to diverge from their ingrained behavioral routines. A Ugandan participant described how awkward and unnatural it felt for him to have to initiate small talk with a stranger—as if he were “jumping outside of his skin”:

Having to get out of my “normal world” to initiate and carry out small talk with a total stranger makes me feel like a totally different human being—it felt like jumping out of my skin. And to that I guess the right word to how it felt would be “abnormal.” (participant 24, switch 1)

Throughout the data set, participants used terms such as “strange,” “foreign,” and “awkward” to describe this psychological state of having to engage in behavior that they simply were not used to performing:

I felt awkward by the fact that I had to give a detailed explanation for why I cannot make the appointment. In my culture, it's not as required to give an explanation/reasoning as in US. (participant 1, switch 1)

It felt very disconnected and foreign to participate in class. (participant 29, switch 1)

Making random small talk with a stranger felt strange. (participant 33, switch 1)

A Bulgarian participant reported how awkward and unnatural it was for him to make small talk with strangers, behavior that diverged significantly from his internalized Bulgarian script for social interaction:

It was uncomfortable, it did not feel natural and I was wondering if the person I was talking to saw that in me. I tried to behave like it was an ordinary behavior for me to have a cheerful small talk conversation. . . . However, I felt that I was acting throughout the entire conversation. . . . It just did not feel natural. (participant 12, switch 1)

Not surprisingly, many participants experienced both psychological states simultaneously—experiencing themselves as awkward because of the discrepancy between the new behavior and their ingrained cultural norms and as illegitimate because these norms also violated their culturally ingrained values and beliefs. For example, a Kenyan participant described feeling both illegitimate and awkward promoting herself at a career fair event in the United States:

It felt very uncomfortable and artificial to be expected to participate in an informal conversation with this senior person. Thoughts going through my head were, What the hell can I possibly have to say that this man who has much more experience than I do? The values that were instilled in me were to “speak when spoken to,” “children are to be seen and not heard.” (participant 13, switch 1)

Similarly, an Indian participant described experiencing himself as both awkward and illegitimate learning to make small talk at a career fair:

It was difficult to behave in a manner that conflicted with my values. It was also awkward. I did not feel myself doing the switch. I felt I was behaving like someone else. I also felt not being true to myself and it was as if I was cheating myself. (participant 36, switch 1)

Overall, these two psychological states of illegitimacy and awkwardness, which emerged from the two sources of internal conflict described above, resulted in an overall feeling of inauthenticity among participants, defined as “having to act in a manner that is inconsistent with one's values, needs and preferences” (Kernis & Goldman, 2006: 298). One participant described the experience of inauthenticity as having to “force myself to be a person different than the real me” (participant 33, switch 1). Another bemoaned the fact that “I was not myself” and “I knew it was not me” (par-

ticipant 2, switch 1). Finally, a third participant complained how switching behavior forced her to act “against myself and my personality,” which to her was tantamount to the “crashing of the world” (participant 6, switch 1).

Phases and Trajectories of Internal Conflict over Time

Individuals therefore experienced a strong sense of internal conflict and psychological discord from having to perform behaviors that conflicted with their cultural values and their accustomed manner of interaction. Yet these experiences did not persist for all recipients. In this next section, I detail the changes that occurred in participants’ experiences of internal conflict over time. In particular, I identify and illustrate three distinct phases in participants’ experiences: the deep conflict phase, marked by high levels of both experienced illegitimacy and experienced awkwardness; the ambivalence phase, marked by moderate levels of both; and the authenticity phase, marked by low levels of both characteristics. Table 1 provides exemplary statements from participants illustrating each phase.

As is evident in Table 2, which shows the percentage of participants in each phase over time, and as will be clear further ahead when I discuss trajectories in people’s experiences over time, not all individuals experienced each phase or experienced

TABLE 2
Percentage of Participants at Each Phase over Time

Phases	Switch 1	Switch 2	Switch 3
Deep conflict	100%	52%	22%
Ambivalence	0%	46%	64%
Authenticity	0%	2%	14%

phases in the order stated in the previous paragraph.

Phase I: Deep conflict. As Table 2 illustrates, each participant began his or her process at the deep conflict phase, during which levels of both experienced illegitimacy and experienced awkwardness were high. They felt illegitimate because the new behavior required in their situation conflicted so strongly with their native cultural values and awkward because the new behavior diverged so significantly from their accustomed manner of conduct in the situation.

As an illustrative example of the deep conflict phase, again consider the Nigerian participant learning to promote herself at informal networking events in the US. As was the case for many other foreign-born participants, expected behavior in this situation in the US diverged from Nigerian cultural values regarding modesty and deference, especially in the presence of an authority figure. As a result, the participant experienced a deep sense of internal

TABLE 1
Illustration of Phases of Internal Conflict

Phase	Illustration
Deep conflict	It was a very bad experience. I felt totally against my values and I was doing something I had thought was bragging and very indecent. . . . I felt this is very difficult and I thought I should not be continuing the conversation at one point. All I wanted was to leave the room. (Participant 8, switch 1) It felt very disconnected and foreign to participate in class. It was very uncomfortable as it conflicted with the values of my culture. In India, to have an opposing view from the professor is viewed as disrespecting the professor’s standing especially in front of the entire class. . . . I experienced very high and strong performance difficulty. It almost felt like I had lost my tongue and was unable to speak clearly. (Participant 31, switch 1)
Ambivalence	It felt a bit uncomfortable. I guess I am getting better at switching. . . . It felt slightly irritating but of no major concern. Nothing compared to my last experience. I definitely was on the “bridge” to someplace good! (Participant 4, switch 2) It felt strange and awkward. I felt torn between two cultures and values: My native values which saw what I was doing as boasting and frowned against it, and the American culture which saw it as essential towards networking and getting a job, and encouraged it. (Participant 28, switch 2)
Authenticity	I was a lot more comfortable and did not face any kind of conflicts. In fact, I found it a “fun” exercise! . . . This time was a natural conversation that I would have had with a person I would meet at a place I frequent. (Participant 32, switch 3) I felt no embarrassment, and this change in feeling was really good as I was becoming more and more confident and I discovered that communication is one thing, which is very important in any person’s life. Secondly, I was just behaving as if I am not doing a small talk, I have just met a person in a social circuit and I was behaving very casually. It’s a good change in me. (Participant 23, switch 3)

conflict engaging in the behavior as detailed in the quotation from the previous section. Moreover, these feelings interfered with her ability to produce the required behavior:

I found it difficult to approach the representative of the organization. When I got to him I was tongue-tied, I could not speak, I was embarrassed and sweating. I forgot about everything I was supposed to be talking about, all the research I did about the organization and all the pep talk I gave to myself. (participant 28, switch 1).

In the end, she felt humiliated by the experience, having failed to enact the new cultural norms:

I felt very much embarrassed, I felt like a fool. Here I was looking at the representative and I could not come up with anything to say. I imagined the representative will be laughing at me and calling me a fool. I felt like the ground should open up and swallow me, or maybe I should just become invisible. (participant 28, switch 1)

Although this particular participant progressed over time, reaching the ambivalence phase by her third attempt, her experience at switch 1 was one of deep discomfort.

In sum, during the deep conflict phase participants experienced themselves as both illegitimate and awkward: illegitimate because the new behavior demanded conflicted so strongly with their native cultural values, and awkward because the new behavior diverged so significantly from their accustomed manner of conduct in the situation.

In keeping with these descriptions of psychological distress and internal conflict, the emotions that individuals reported experiencing were also predominantly negative during this phase; Table 3 shows how emotion varied by phase.

The participant above, for example, reported feeling “scared, apprehensive, and jittery” before the switch, “embarrassed, stupid, and ashamed” during the switch, and then “relieved and unhappy” after the switch. A small percentage of participants, however, reported feeling positive emo-

tions, even at the conflict phase. For example, a Dutch participant learning to deliver public presentations in the United States reported feeling “enthusiastic” after the first switching attempt because she felt that it went better than she had expected. Nevertheless, she also reported feeling disingenuous and illegitimate when performing the new behavior because she was forced her to act in a far more outgoing and exaggerated way than would be common in her native culture. Overall, however, people’s experience in the deep conflict phase was predominantly negative: they experienced themselves as illegitimate and awkward, and these self-threatening psychological states translated into mostly negative emotion.

Phase II: Ambivalence. At some point, by the second or third switch, many participants reported a shift in their experience. Rather than feeling entirely uncomfortable engaging in the new behavior appropriate to their activity per US cultural norms, many individuals began to experience the behavior as less inappropriate and more natural to perform. For example, an Indian participant learning to promote himself at an informal networking event noted how “boasting” about himself in these situations in the United States was still not something he was entirely comfortable doing, but that his attitude toward the behavior changed. It was no longer, in his words, a “strong repulsive force”:

Well I still know deep inside me that boasting about me is not a part of my culture but with more and more of switching experiences I am kind of overcoming the strong repulsive force that used to be there earlier. . . . [However, I] was still having a feeling deep inside that this not part of me. (participant 21, switch 3)

I termed this phase “ambivalence” because individuals’ feelings and experiences had changed, but not entirely. I define ambivalence in this context as the experience of having simultaneously positive and negative experiences of the act of switching cultural behavior (Pratt & Doucet, 2000). Although, technically speaking, in the deep conflict phase, many participants had both positive and negative experiences, their overall experience was overwhelmingly negative. This, however, changed significantly in the ambivalence phase, where individuals experienced an intense set of both positive and negative reactions.

One Nigerian participant learning to participate in American-style MBA classroom debates described this in-between state as an internal “psy-

TABLE 3
Emotion Type by Phase

Type	Deep Conflict Phase	Ambivalence Phase	Authenticity Phase
Negative emotions	70%	36%	9%
Positive emotions	30%	64%	91%
Total	100%	100%	100%

chological battle.” On the one hand, the participant was still swayed by his native cultural interpretation; on the other hand, he had also begun to find a way of interpreting and experiencing the appropriateness of the behavior from a vantage point independent of this perspective:

I believe that I have been partly successful in winning the psychological battle within me that the cultural switch is an appropriate way of participating in class. However, I still experience relapse into my old norm as this is where I am still most comfortable. (participant 1, switch 3)

A second participant noted how she was “torn between the two cultures.” She said that the new American culture was “still not my culture,” and that instead, it was a “culture I ‘borrowed’ in the interim, and will have to give back whenever I am ready to go back to my culture” (participant 28, switch 3).

As illustrated by the patterns evident in Table 3, the emotions that individuals experienced at the ambivalence phase reflected a growing sense of comfort and legitimacy with their new cultural behavior. Overall, individuals were starting to feel more positive about engaging in the new behavior, as reflected in higher percentages of positive emotions and decreasing percentages of negative emotion. In particular, individuals at this phase were starting to feel happy and enthusiastic about engaging in the new behavior, proud of their ability to do so successfully, and relieved and relaxed as they no longer had to grapple internally with the same level of internal conflict as they did initially. It should be noted, however, that alongside these growing positive emotions was a persistent sense of anxiety that had clearly not been fully resolved from the deep conflict phase. Each of the above participants, for example, described themselves as feeling anxious about switching behavior—“apprehensive” in one case and “stressed” in the other. In sum, although perceptions and emotions were clearly changing at the ambivalence phase, they had not transformed completely.

Phase III: Authenticity. Finally, for a small set of participants, the authenticity phase represented a major milestone in their psychological experience. Despite the fact that the context within which they were attempting to adapt behavior was quite inhospitable to authenticity—that is, it literally forced them to act in conflict with their values and culturally ingrained norms—some participants were nevertheless able

to reach this stage of feeling fully legitimate and natural engaging in new behavior. They were able to experience their behavior as fully authentic—“in accord with (their) ‘values, preferences and needs as opposed to acting ‘falsely’ merely to please others” (Kernis & Goldman, 2006: 298).

Participants described authenticity with terms such as “remaining me,” “feeling myself,” “living and enjoying my experience,” and “second nature.” One participant who experienced such a transformation was the previously described Russian participant whose chosen situation required her to proactively ask her American boss for assignments. Early on, these behaviors were very disruptive for her to perform. However, by the end of the process, she had experienced a major transformation, feeling so legitimate and genuine that she no longer felt as if she were adapting her behavior:

There is no conflict of values. There is me acting in Russia and there is me acting in here. I am not doing anything wrong in both cases. . . . It is not a switch anymore, I feel myself. Ha! Surprising. (participant 6, switch 3)

Another illustrative example comes from an Indian participant learning to make American-style small talk with strangers. At switch 1 in his experience, the behavior felt “strange,” given the conflict between this new American ritual and his internalized Indian cultural background:

Making random small talk with a stranger felt strange. In my culture, it would be considered very awkward and both the parties involved would react negatively to this. (participant 33, switch 1)

By the third switch, however, his experience had changed considerably. It no longer felt illegitimate or awkward, and, instead, he felt like the behavior had become “second nature”:

I feel totally confident, and making small talk has become my second nature. I do it at will and at ease. (participant 33, switch 3)

An additional example comes from a Mexican participant learning to make small talk with authority figures in the United States, behavior that, from his more hierarchically oriented Mexican perspective, was uncomfortable to perform. At time 1, he reported feeling “nervous, anxious and scared” when attempting to make small talk with an American authority figure. He performed the behavior, but when doing so felt unnatural and inauthentic. By the third switch, however, his experience had changed considerably. What was initially awkward

and illegitimate now felt “competent, genuine and comfortable,” as if he were speaking in his “native language”:

I felt that was me who was talking, I did not think too much in my answers. For some moments it was like I was talking in my native language. . . . I felt good; it was not just an exercise, I was living and enjoying my experience. (participant 7, switch 3)

Not surprisingly, participants’ emotional experiences mirrored these psychological changes. As indicated in Table 3, individuals at this stage reported experiencing an overwhelming amount of positive emotion. Moreover, the anxiety that was prevalent at the ambivalence phase had substantially diminished by the authenticity phase, replaced “confidence” and “relaxation” and “happiness” as the most prominent emotions.

Trajectories of Internal Conflict over Time

Not all participants experienced each of these three phases, nor did they experience them in this particular order. As illustrated in individuals exhibited four distinct trajectories in their experience of internal conflict over time: (1) full transformation, which entailed moving from deep conflict, to ambivalence, and finally, to authenticity; (2) partial transformation, which entailed moving from deep conflict to ambivalence; (3) stagnation, which entailed staying at deep conflict across all three switching attempts; and (4) regression, which entailed moving from deep conflict to ambivalence, but then back again to deep conflict by the final switch.

Table 4 also presents demographic trends in each

of these trajectories. Particularly noteworthy in this table is the fact that a person’s age or status as an MBA or MA student did not appear to be related to his/her trajectory. Moreover, across all trajectories but one, a person’s time spent in the US and language fluency were relatively consistent. The lone exception was the full transformation group, in which the percentage of native-English-speaking males with a small amount of time spent in the US was high. Digging deeper into the data reveals that most of these individuals were from India and likely benefited from that fact that they did not struggle with English as they were attempting to master the new cultural behaviors. I revisit these patterns in the discussion section.

FACILITATING PSYCHOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION: THE ROLE OF INTEGRATIVE AND INSTRUMENTAL APPROACHES

Having examined how individuals experienced internal conflict over time, I now focus on how participants addressed the internal conflict that they experienced. Borrowing terminology from classic sociolinguistics research on divergent approaches for learning a foreign language (Gardner & Lambert, 1972), I use the terms “instrumental” and “integrative” to describe two distinct approaches for managing internal conflict that emerge from the data.

Integrative Approach

Participants who adopted an integrative approach were deeply motivated to resolve internal

TABLE 4
Trajectories of Internal Conflict over Time with Demographic Variance

Variable	Full Transformation (14%)	Partial Transformation (64%)	Stagnation (18%)	Regression (4%)
Representative pattern	Deep conflict Ambivalence Authenticity	Deep conflict Deep conflict (or Ambivalence) Ambivalence	Deep conflict Deep conflict Deep conflict	Deep conflict Ambivalence Deep conflict
Percentage with MBA/MA	100% MBA	71% MBA	78% MBA	100% MBA
Average age	26	27	28	27
Percentage of native/nonnative English speakers	71% native 29% nonnative	38% native 62% nonnative	33% native 67% nonnative	0% native 100% nonnative
Gender distribution	71% male 29% female	43% male 57% female	44% male 56% female	50% male 50% female
Average time in US	8 months	20 months	21 months	21 months

conflict. One participant described her passion to “kill the conflict inside” (participant 6, switch 1). Another mentioned that she “just couldn’t take that guilty feeling any more” and that she “told [herself] that it just had to stop. I had to stop feeling that way” (participant 38, switch 1). Finally, yet another participant described his passion to “bring the change in me so that eventually there wouldn’t be value conflict any more” (participant 2, switch 2). As illustrated in Table 5, participants used two specific techniques to achieve integration: self-licensing and personalizing.

Self-licensing. Self-licensing addressed the first side of internal conflict detailed earlier: value discrepancy, the side of internal conflict resulting from a conflict between how one had to behave in the new cultural setting and deeply held values and beliefs. Through self-licensing, individuals were able to legitimize value-conflicting behavior and authorize themselves to perform it. They were able to transform their experience of engaging in the behavior from one of illegitimacy to one of legitimacy. In doing so, self-licensing served as a psychological mechanism for facilitating a more authentic adaptation experience.

Self-licensing entailed a two-step process: embracing the new culture’s way of perceiving and interpreting the behavior, and accepting its legitimacy in that cultural setting. As an illustrative example, consider the case of a Nigerian participant

who was grappling with internal conflict about participating in an American-style MBA classroom discussion. Initially, she felt illegitimate performing the behavior because it felt in conflict with her culturally ingrained values and beliefs:

It did not really feel too good trying to talk in class when I have not been in such situations the way it is here. First of all, calling my professor by his or her first name to ask a question or make a contribution felt rude to me. It did not feel right at all. (participant 3, switch 1)

By time 2, she had started to appreciate the cultural differences entailed in the situation and that norms for classroom participation in the United States were indeed quite different from the norms for the same situation in Nigeria. However, she was still unable to fully internalize this knowledge so that it was less of a piece of information, or stylized fact, and more of an explanation that could help her rationalize the differences and develop a personal comfort level engaging in the new behavior:

I still could not manage properly what I have learnt so far about participating in class and actually put it to use. Deep down, I think the ingrained form of learning is still a factor in preventing me from going all out to fit into this style of learning. (participant 3, switch 2)

By switch 3, however, she was finally able to internalize this new perspective in a way that en-

TABLE 5
Description and Illustration of Integrative Approach

Technique	Description	Illustrative Quotations
Self-licensing	Adopt and embrace new cultural perspective for interpreting behavior	<p>I remembered that I am in a different culture, and used my knowledge . . . to reassure myself that I was not doing anything wrong—in Armenia it would be embarrassing to behave so, but I kept reminding myself that I am not speaking to an Armenian and he won’t perceive my confrontation the same way. (Participant 37, switch 1)</p> <p>I always remind myself that I am in the States right now but not China. It is totally fine if I perform like an American guy. (Participant 50, switch 1)</p> <p>[I told] myself that this is a different culture, and it’s OK to do this. It won’t be considered “taboo.” (Participant 33, switch 1)</p>
Personalizing	Make slight behavioral adjustments to make new behavior feel more personally and culturally congruent	<p>I think that small talk at the beginning of the switching helped me to manage my emotions. After that small conversation I felt more relaxed and I was more opened and I felt like it is my environment. (Participant 6, switch 2)</p> <p>I bring up my own cultural behavior and mix it with the behavior I had to [perform]. (Participant 12, switch 3)</p> <p>I tried to make more connections to some of my experiences. Hence, I could feel more like myself while I was talking. (Participant 40, switch 2)</p>

abled her to authorize herself to engage in the new cultural behavior:

I realize now that this is how one behaves when you find yourself in this situation and in this country, so I have accepted it and learnt to separate it from the way people behave in my culture in this context. (participant 3, switch 3)

Consequently, she started to feel more legitimate engaging in the behavior. As a result, she also began to experience more positive emotions. For example, by switch 3, she described herself feeling “good and right” about adapting behavior. She also described herself as feeling “happy” and relaxed.”

As another illustration of the power of self-licensing to transform participants’ psychological experiences of cultural adaptation, consider the case of another participant from Nigeria learning to promote herself at career fairs. Initially, she felt highly illegitimate engaging in the behavior because of its strong conflict with her culturally ingrained values concerning modesty and deference in communications with superiors. She reported at time 1 feeling quite “boastful” when discussing her achievements because “[she] kept saying ‘I’ not ‘we.’” She reported feeling “definitely like a liar” and that she felt “nervous,” “unsure of herself,” and “fearful”:

I felt it should not have been a difficult task for me to switch after all what was so special about projecting myself positively even if it meant saying “I” instead of “we”? But it *was* difficult. I came out of the ordeal feeling angry, frustrated, and disappointed in myself. I felt like a child being scolded for not doing my assignments on time. It was humiliating. (participant 4, switch 1)

By switch 2, she reported initial indications of a self-licensing approach, telling herself that she was “acting the appropriate way in the American culture”; that she “had to fit in to survive” and that “while in Rome, do as the Romans do.” The technique at this point helped somewhat. She reported “being on the bridge to someplace good,” but also having to still do work to “keep my conscience at bay.” She was, in her words, “barely guilty” at this point for violating her own cultural standards. By switch 3, she felt quite legitimate and justified engaging in the behavior. She reported that it was “good to feel comfortable” and that it “*almost* felt like second nature” (participant 4, switch 3). Moreover, she reported feeling “proud” and excited to try out her approach with additional employers.

Personalizing. Whereas self-licensing worked on reversing the psychological experience of illegitimacy, personalizing addressed the experience of awkwardness that resulted from behavior diverging so significantly from a natural and comfortable behavioral routine. By making small but personally meaningful adjustments in their performance of the behavior itself, individuals were able to feel more genuine and natural engaging in it. In doing so, personalizing facilitated a more authentic adaptation experience.

For example, the Russian participant described earlier, who struggled being proactive with her American boss, personalized her behavior by preceding her discussion about potential projects with small talk. Initially, she reported feeling “uncomfortable” and “nervous” acting “against [her] personality and traditions” (participant 6, switch 1). Part of her solution for addressing the discomfort that she felt was to integrate a piece of what was natural and comfortable to her into how she performed the new behavior.

Although small talk was not necessarily part of the cultural code for approaching her boss about potential projects, it was certainly within the zone of what would be considered acceptable or appropriate in the situation, and, most importantly, happened to make her feel far more comfortable than launching into a discussion about projects without this more personal preamble. Thus, starting the communication with small talk was a way for her to feel more natural engaging in the behavior. Without small talk, it felt quite foreign and unfamiliar, but with small talk, she started to feel more “at home” and natural:

Starting the switching experience with the small talk help me feel like I am at home and allowed me to express myself, which was very important for me. . . . I applied my skills from my native culture and my usual behavior and it helped me to manage the situation that was unusual for me. (participant 6, switch 2)

By time 3, she reported feeling “self-confident, happy, and relaxed” and also quite authentic engaging in the new behavior: “It is not switch anymore, I feel myself.”

Another participant, a Bulgarian whose cultural adaptation situation was actually making small talk itself, personalized his performance of the American small talk ritual by infusing it with humor and with topics with which he was familiar. Initially, he described the experience of making small talk

with a stranger as being “uncomfortable,” “not natural,” and as if he were “acting throughout the entire conversation” (participant 12, switch 1). Personalizing the interaction by injecting humor made him feel more natural engaging in the behavior:

I tried to tell a joke and talk about topics that I felt comfortable with. I used that as a tool that would make me feel more relaxed and easy-going which hopefully will smooth the conversation. (participant 12, switch 1)

At a later point, he described personalizing as “mixing” his own cultural behavior with the behavior that he had to perform:

I bring up my own cultural behavior and mix it with the behavior I had to [perform]. (participant 12, switch 3)

By the end, he felt “eager to try new topics,” that small talk was “easier to perform,” and that it felt “not [like] an experiment but as a normal conversation.”

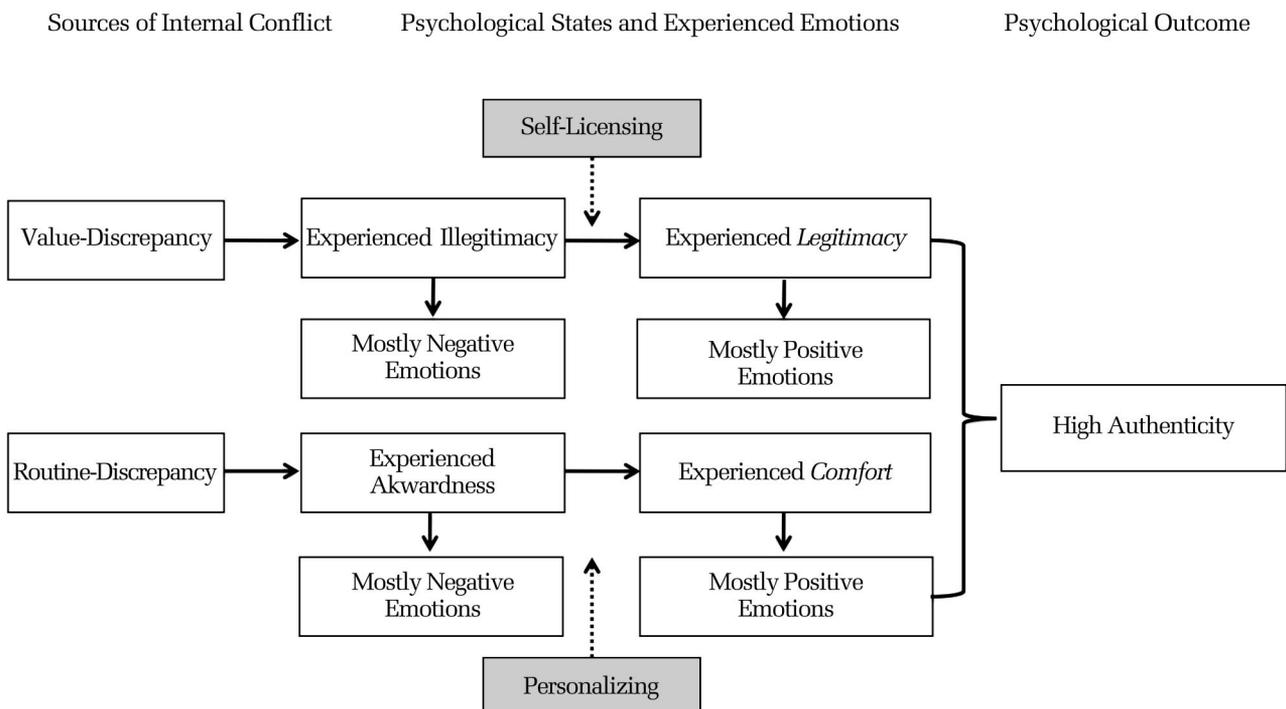
Thus, by making slight but personally meaningful adjustments in the way in which they performed the required behavior—in the words of one participant, “adjust(ing) the American style so that

it fits me” (participant 44, Switch 3)—participants crafted a more genuine experience for themselves as they engaged in behavior that at first felt unnatural and inauthentic to perform.

Figure 1 summarizes the logic of the integrative approach. As is illustrated, the integrative approach shapes participants’ overall experience of authenticity by directly transforming the two key psychological states of experienced illegitimacy and awkwardness.

Through self-licensing, participants come to perceive behavior that was initially value-discrepant as being legitimate rather than as illegitimate to perform. Through personalizing, participants come to experience behavior that was initially routine-discrepant as comfortable rather than as awkward to perform. Moreover, as participants’ psychological perceptions and experiences change through personalizing and self-licensing, so too do their emotions, as evidenced by changes shown in the figure from mostly negative to mostly positive emotion, as well as by changes in their feelings of authenticity as they perform the new cultural behavior.

FIGURE 1
How an Integrative Approach Transforms Psychological States and Experienced Emotions



Instrumental Approach

As illustrated in Table 6, participants using an instrumental approach were motivated by different concerns than were those who adopted an integrative approach. Whereas integrative participants were committed to finding ways of addressing and ultimately resolving the underlying source of the conflict that they experienced, participants who adopted an instrumental perspective were motivated by the immediate concern of getting the task done. Their focus was on controlling emotions and their detrimental effect on performance in the very short term as opposed to resolving the underlying conflict generating the disruptive emotions in the first place.

Necessitizing. One such instrumental strategy was *necessitizing*, which entailed convincing oneself of the critical importance of switching cultural behavior and then using this sense of urgency as a tool for forcing oneself to fight through psychological discomfort. One participant, a Nigerian learning to participate actively in American-style MBA classroom discussions who described her experience as “frustrating and challenging,” adopted an instrumental approach because she “could not manage the feeling very well.” As a result, she reported “just [telling] myself it was something I needed to do” (participant 3, switch 1). A Chinese participant learning to make American-style small talk in an interview context reported using a similar strategy, forcing herself to perform the unpleasant behavior despite the discomfort she was experiencing: “I told myself that I had to go through with it. I forced myself to begin” (participant 17,

switch 2). Finally, an Indian participant attempting to make small talk at a professional networking event described how he pushed himself to perform this very unpleasant behavior because it represented a challenge that he had to overcome. The behavior was particularly unpleasant from an Indian cultural perspective because it forced him to feel as if he were boasting, thereby violating Indian cultural norms regarding modesty and deference (Storti, 2007).

It was a very bad experience. I felt totally against my values and I was doing something I had thought was bragging and very indecent. I had to project my accomplishments and not be modest. I felt this is very difficult and I thought I should not be continuing the conversation at one point. All I wanted was to leave the room. (participant 8, switch 1)

Necessitizing was his method of choice for coping with the discomfort:

I was trying to think that this was a necessity and switching here represents a challenge that I have to overcome. (participant 8, switch 1)

Yet, despite his efforts at rationalizing the behavior, his negative experience persisted: he felt incapable of performing the behavior effectively and of managing his internal discomfort:

It was difficult to be acting against my own values, I was feeling ashamed of myself but I had to do this and I did know the appropriate code to act in this situation. However I was feeling so tired of this whole switching after a few minutes and was feeling embarrassed about acting in a way that I was not. . . . I think I failed in my objective to project myself as a

TABLE 6
Description and Illustration of Instrumental Approach

Technique	Description	Illustrative Quotation
Necessitizing	Emphasize necessity of performing behavior in order to fight through internal discomfort	I have come here for a reason, and if going against my values is a part of it, then I will have to do it. (Participant 21, switch 1) I could not manage the feeling very well, I just told myself it was something I needed to do. (Participant 3, switch 1) Kept pushing myself that I have to do it. (Participant 21, switch 1)
Suppressing	Actively ignore and suppress internal conflicts, while acting the part externally	Suppressed my discomfort and acted like I was as cool as that cucumber. (Participant 25, switch 2) In order to manage with this situation, I thought that I was an actress and I had a script that was given to me; and I had to play this role well, no matter [whether] it fits with my values or not. (Participant 40, switch 1) I let myself believe that it wasn't me, that all of this was an act or a game. I suppose that I detached myself from the situation. (Participant 16, switch 2)

strong candidate to potential employers. Moreover I was feeling that I didn't meet my objective and it was a little hopeless to me. (participant 8, switch 1)

Thus, unlike self-licensing, necessitizing did not truly address the value-discrepancy source of internal conflict; rather, it merely helped participants fight through the resulting discomfort.

Suppressing. Alongside necessitizing, a second prominent instrumental technique was suppressing. Suppressing entailed a combination of forcibly silencing inner discomfort about behaving contrary to one's values and beliefs while simultaneously "acting the part" externally in order to conform (Grandey, 2003). An illustrative example comes from an American participant, fluent in Japanese and with several years experience living in Japan, attempting to interview in Japanese with Japanese firms. Despite his knowledge of the Japanese cultural rules, the participant felt very uncomfortable interviewing according to a Japanese cultural style, which required far more formal and submissive behavior than he was used to in the United States. His solution for coping with this discomfort: suppressing his internal discomfort and acting the part:

I let myself believe that it wasn't me, that all of this was an act or a game. I suppose that I detached myself from the situation. . . . I reminded myself that it wasn't the real me sitting there, that it was still an act. (participant 16, switch 2)

Other participants described suppression as "mentally pushing my conscience away" (participant 4, switch 2), "ignor[ing] negative thoughts" (participant 20, switch 3), and "pretend[ing] that it wasn't really me there, so that I could not be hurt by what happened" (participant 16, switch 1). A Nigerian participant described how she "got out of herself" to play the role that she was required to play when attempting to self-promote at an informal networking event:

I primed myself up. Telling myself that "this is not me," that it is just something I have to do to fit into the new culture I am now in. I saw it like playing a role in a drama. I "got out of myself" to play the uncomfortable role, after which I got back into myself and went on with my normal life. (participant 28, switch 2)

In sum, the instrumental approach focused on managing the surface-level manifestations of internal conflict as opposed to its root causes. That is, rather than reversing a person's negative experiences of awkwardness associated with routine dis-

crepancy, the suppressing tactic merely helped individuals cope with its immediate negative emotional effects. Consequently, participants primarily relying on this approach were able to perform the offending behavior, but not alter the fundamental cultural conflict that they experienced, or the corresponding psychological states that resulted from this conflict.

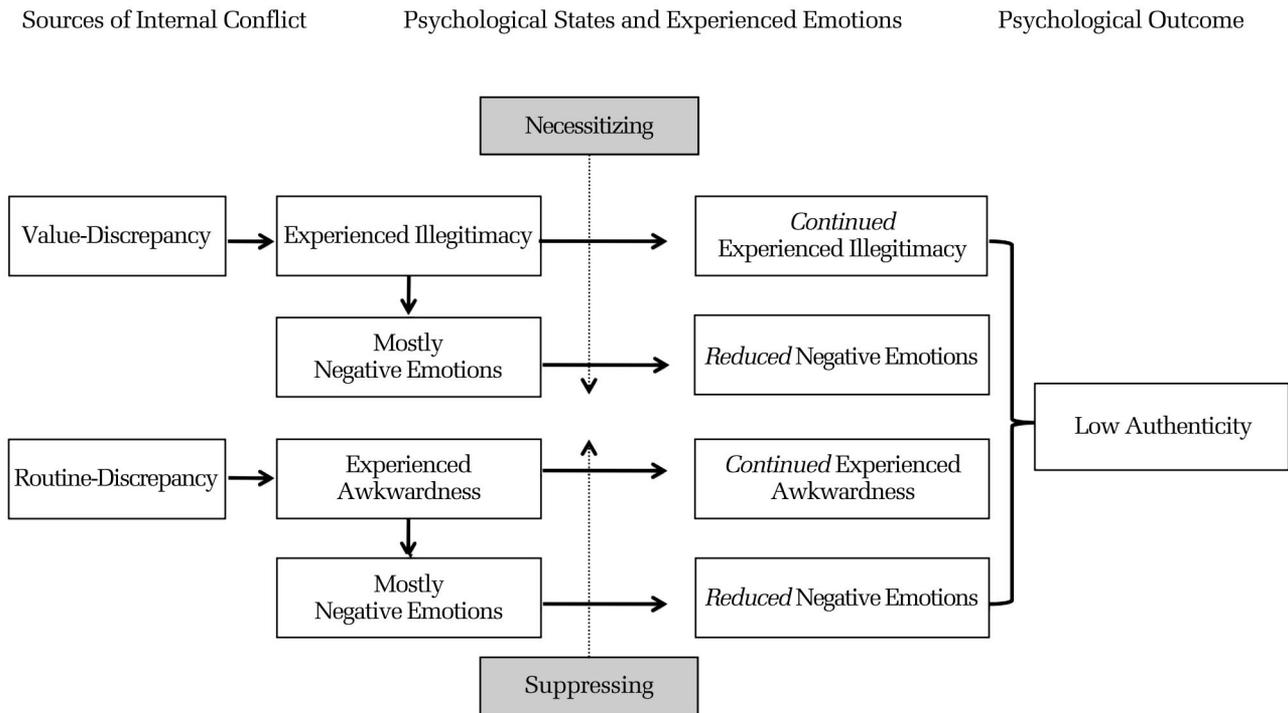
Figure 2 illustrates the logic of the instrumental approach. Whereas the integrative approach addressed internal conflict at its root by reversing participants' core psychological states, the instrumental approach functioned as a trouble-shooting mechanism: suppressing negative emotion without altering a participant's underlying psychological experience.

Thus, as illustrated in Figure 2, participants using an instrumental approach experienced the behavior as illegitimate and awkward both before and after switching. What changed was the intensity of the emotions that they experienced: with instrumental techniques, these emotions were reduced in intensity. Because the instrumental approach did not directly address participants' underlying experience of the behavior, they still felt inauthentic engaging in the behavior.

The relationship between the use of a primarily instrumental approach and persistent feelings of inauthenticity over time is underscored by the patterns depicted in Table 7.

As the data suggest, there appears to be a strong relationship between the approach that individuals take to managing the conflict they experience and their experience of inauthenticity over time. In particular, participants who address internal conflict with at least one instrumental technique are more likely to regress or stagnate over time compared to participants who use at least one integrative technique. Moreover, integrative techniques appear to be particularly important for achieving a deep sense of authenticity, as 100 percent of individuals who fully transformed used at least one integrative technique. However, as is also clear from the table, those who achieved full or partial transformation did not rely entirely on an integrative approach. Although their approach was primarily integrative, these individuals also at times decided to selectively use instrumental approaches to temporarily quell negative emotion, even as they were simultaneously addressing the underlying causes of these emotions through integrative techniques.

FIGURE 2
How an Instrumental Approach Transforms Experienced Emotions,
but Not Experienced Psychological States



DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In her original work, Swidler alluded to the cultural retooling process as “drastic and costly” (1986: 277). However, she did not elaborate the process of retooling—what it entails, why it is so costly, and how and why certain individuals are able to successfully retool. The results here provide insight into the ways in which individuals can successfully navigate this bind and how integrative approaches in particular enable individuals to fundamentally recalibrate and reorient their experience of previously intolerable behavior. In doing so, the study makes a series of important contributions to research on authenticity, ambivalence, and cultural adaptation in organizational settings.

TABLE 7
Percentage of Participants in Each Trajectory Adopting
at Least One Technique from Each Approach

Trajectory	Instrumental	Integrative
Full transformation	29%	100%
Partial transformation	78%	84%
Stagnation	89%	44%
Regression	100%	0%

First and foremost, the present study provides novel, empirical evidence that people can learn to feel authentic when engaging in behavior that, at least initially, deeply conflicts with their culturally ingrained values and routines. Little previous work in the area of cultural adaptation has focused on authenticity, or on the challenges of crafting a sense of authenticity during the cultural adaptation process. Instead, the main focus has been on inauthenticity and its consequences—namely, the acculturative stress (Berry, 1997), psychological toll (Molinsky, 2007), and negative arousal (Maertz et al., 2009) people experience in foreign cultural settings and how such a negative experience can interfere with successful functioning abroad. Little previous research has considered the possibility that people can not only tolerate the psychological challenges of intercultural interaction but also actually find a way to feel truly themselves when interacting across cultures, able to act in accordance with their values, preferences, and needs, even in situations that, at least initially, require highly unfamiliar and value-incongruent behavior.

In this regard, previous cultural adaptation literature has followed the lead of psychological re-

search in portraying the challenge of cultural adaptation as one of “curing” or “minimizing” the “ill” of acculturative stress (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) as opposed to nurturing and developing the “positive”—which in the present case would be an authentic experience of cultural adaptation. The present article not only underscores the fact that intercultural interactions can be an opportunity for growth and flourishing (as opposed to merely being sources of stress and strain), but also provides a conceptual road map for how these positive outcomes can be achieved. In doing so, I offer a useful counterpoint to the predominant focus on the “negative” in previous cultural adaptation research and also provide an original theoretical framework for guiding future research in this important area. This is a critical contribution to the literature because so little previous empirical research has examined the psychological mechanisms associated with achieving a sense of authenticity when adapting behavior across cultures. In fact, little work in general, even outside of the cross-cultural domain, has examined how people can achieve a sense of authenticity when engaging in otherwise inauthentic behavior (Roberts, Cha, Hewlin, & Settles, 2009).

Moreover, in addition to showing that people *can* feel authentic when adapting behavior across cultures, the present study also explains *how* such authenticity can be achieved.

Critical to this contribution is how internal conflict has been differentiated here as either conflict arising from value discrepancy or conflict arising from routine discrepancy. This distinction is important because each source suggests a very different way of managing conflict. People manage value-discrepant behavior through self-licensing: embracing a new culture’s way of perceiving and interpreting the behavior and accepting its legitimacy in that cultural setting. In contrast, people manage routine-discrepant behavior through personalization: making small but meaningful adjustments in their performance of the behavior itself. Although past work has suggested a connection between internal conflict and inauthenticity, it has not articulated how individuals can achieve authenticity through the way in which they manage internal conflict. By unpacking the notion of internal conflict and demonstrating how each part is related to authenticity, the present study contributes novel insight to the authenticity literature.

Finally, an additional contribution to the authenticity literature is the link made in the present

study between ambivalence and authenticity, two topics of growing concern to organizational scholars that have not previously been examined in tandem. The present study offers two key insights into these processes. The first is original empirical evidence suggesting that grappling with ambivalence is an important part of the process of developing authenticity in the first place. In recent years, organizational scholars have become increasingly interested in understanding ambivalence in organizational settings, examining the antecedents (Pratt & Doucet, 2000; Wang & Pratt, 2008; Weigert & Franks, 1989) and consequences of ambivalence (Fong, 2006; Pratt & Dirks, 2006; Pratt & Doucet, 2000), and, to a lesser extent, the ways people can successfully cope with ambivalence (Pratt & Doucet, 2000). Missing from this research, however, has been a detailed understanding of the processes through which individuals can move from the unsettling experience of ambivalence to the more gratifying and fulfilling experience of authenticity. The longitudinal nature of the present study provides a unique glimpse into these processes of developing authenticity over time. It was notable that not a single participant “leapt” from the deep conflict phase to full authenticity without experiencing ambivalence. Rather, ambivalence was a necessary part of the cultural adaptation process, and the way it was handled, it turns out, was essential in determining whether individuals achieved an authentic result.

The second key insight linking ambivalence and authenticity is that the way in which an individual copes with the effects of ambivalence matters a great deal in determining whether authenticity can be achieved. Prior research suggests that coping with ambivalent feelings is challenging and that people tend to do so in a way that resolves the ambivalence in favor of one side or the other, or that separates or detaches themselves from the ambivalent feelings in the first place (Pratt & Doucet, 2000). For example, individuals can amplify their positive affiliation with one side of the ambivalence (Katz, 1981; Weigert & Franks, 1989) or “move against” the target of their ambivalence in an angry or aggressive manner (Pratt & Doucet, 2000: 216), achieving a similarly fractured result. Individuals also often avoid and suppress ambivalent feelings, sometimes even splitting their ambivalence so that different people or objects come to embody different sides of the ambivalent feelings (Pratt & Doucet, 2000). In other words, rarely are

the two sides of ambivalence integrated in any coherent manner.

The present study contributes to this line of work by offering novel evidence of a different way of coping with ambivalence that incorporates integration rather than separation. In doing so, the results contribute to a small but growing line of work emphasizing the positive qualities of ambivalence that have the potential to broaden thinking and create new lines of action (Plambeck & Weber, 2009; Pratt & Pradies, 2011). In the present study, for example, individuals who engaged in integrative techniques found ways of creating a compromise between the two cultural traditions, rather than accentuating or eliminating one side in favor of the other. Through personalizing, individuals were able to make small but meaningful adjustments that created a behavioral blend that was appropriate in the new setting and simultaneously comfortable and natural to perform. Through self-licensing, individuals achieved a similar compromise effect, affirming the viability of different cultural logics in different cultural settings. In short, those who managed ambivalence through an integrative approach found a way to creatively combine elements of the two cultures and, in doing so, achieve an authentic result.

Finally, in addition to its contributions to research on authenticity and ambivalence, the present study also makes a series of theoretical contributions to research on cultural adaptation itself. To begin with, it offers unique insight into the ways in which people can shape the way in which they experience the cultural adaptation process. Extensive work on culture and on socialization has focused on the power of contexts to shape people, detailing how cultures and organizations influence how people think, feel, act, and even experience emotion (Hofstede, 1980; Javidan & House, 2001). What has received comparatively less attention are the ways in which individuals can actively shape and craft their own psychological experiences of adaptation.

In developing novel theoretical insights into these processes, the current study provides unique insight into the role of individual agency in the cultural adaptation process, a theme relatively absent from the cultural adaptation literature but gaining theoretical traction in other domains of socialization research (Ibarra, 1999; Pratt et al., 2006; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). The present study identifies two core approaches that individuals use for managing the internal conflict that they experience. It also provides novel theoretical insight into

how and why two approaches impact people's experience of internal conflict over time. Moreover, by examining this process longitudinally, the study offers a unique perspective into the cyclical how individuals shape their own trajectories of adaptation over time.

Additionally, in articulating how people can shape their experiences of cultural adaptation, the present study also provides novel insight into the variability in people's adaptation experiences abroad—a notion that departs from previous theoretical thinking about how people's experiences are homogeneous, rather than heterogeneous, during the adaptation process. Past work theorizing about culture shock taking the U-curve approach (Lysgaard, 1955; Oberg, 1960), for example, suggests that at the honeymoon stage of adaptation, everyone experiences high levels of internal conflict in all situations they encounter in a new culture. Similarly, at the recovery stage, internal conflict is essentially absent. The present study provides novel empirical evidence questioning these core assumptions, suggesting that heterogeneity rather than homogeneity is the hallmark of the cultural adaptation process and that people follow very different trajectories in their experience of cultural adaptation over time.

Moreover, in addition to highlighting this notion of heterogeneity, the present study also helps explain it. By providing a grounded, emergent theory of the microprocesses of cultural retooling, the present study offers unique theoretical insight into the origins of these diverse, heterogeneous patterns. It explains how an integrative approach to managing internal conflict results in an enhanced state of legitimacy and comfort over time when engaging in new cultural behavior. The study also explains how a primarily instrumental approach results in a very different experience of adaptation, with individuals continuing to experience themselves as illegitimate and awkward producing new behavior, never quite able to establish an underlying sense of authenticity.

With its focus on macro patterns of adaptation, past research has provided little insight into these critical processes, leaving researchers without a theoretical lens or conceptual language for describing how and why cultural retooling unfolds as it does. By providing insight into these micro patterns and processes, the present study provides missing insight into these critical adaptation patterns and offers a conceptual platform upon which future research can be built.

Limitations and Future Research

Of course, as is the case with any work, the present study has limitations that suggest directions for future research. One limitation resides in the unique context and method of data collection that I used to develop the insights detailed here. In particular, a potential bias concerns social desirability pressure that participants may have felt knowing that, as their professor, I would be grading their reflection exercises. Students may have felt pressure to construct a certain identity—such as that of someone who achieves full transformation in their experience of cultural adaptation. Of course, the particular method used in the present study is not alone in its potential susceptibility to self-presentation bias. Prior research has suggested, for example, that interviews are also prone to such biases (Greenberg, 1990; Paulhus, 1984), as are experiments (Gordon, Slade, & Schmitt, 1986), survey methods (Bruyn, 1966), and participant observation (Becker, 1958).

In the present case, to mitigate against potential bias, I explicitly told students that they would be graded based on the thoroughness and thoughtfulness of their responses, rather than on whether or not they felt comfortable adapting behavior and that their grade on the assignment only constituted 20 percent of their overall course grade. Moreover, patterns of results from the study suggest that participants, at least as a collective group, did not necessarily feel compelled to construct an identity of full and complete comfort with the new psychological behaviors, as a relatively equal number of participants stagnated compared to achieving full transformation in their experience. The majority of participants ended up somewhere in the middle, feeling more legitimate or natural than before, but not completely comfortable along either dimension.

Additional limitations come from the nature of the data and data collection procedures used in the present study. For example, it is possible that some of the questions on the reflective exercise primed individuals to construct their experience in certain ways, for example in terms of embarrassment or performance difficulty. Although these dimensions were taken directly from previous research, it is possible that a more open-ended set of questions might have resulted in some different participant responses. Moreover, the data itself were collected from a single source—the participants themselves—rather than from multiple sources. The purpose of the study was to investigate individuals'

psychological experiences of the cultural retooling process, and from this perspective, collecting data about individuals' experiences in the manner I did was a sensible way to understand their psychological states in context (Beal & Weiss, 2003: 440). Nevertheless, additional methods of data collection, such as retrospective interviews or observations, might have also added theoretical richness to the story and offered alternative insights or opportunities to triangulate with multiple methods.

With respect to the sample itself, an additional limitation concerns the concentration of native English-speaking Indian males in the full transformation condition. Looking at these percentages alone, one might wonder about the role that language fluency played in accounting for the findings. However, before drawing conclusions from these percentages, one should consider a few additional points. First, although several individuals in the full transformation group were native speakers of English, nearly a third of this group was nonnative, suggesting that language fluency was not necessarily a prerequisite for achieving authenticity. Moreover, of the individuals who achieved partial transformation—which itself represents meaningful progression beyond internal conflict and toward authenticity—a large percentage were not native English speakers (62%). It is quite possible that with a longer time frame, many individuals in this group would have progressed to full transformation, fundamentally altering the demographic makeup of the full transformation group. Additionally, it is important to note that not all native-English-speaking Indian participants achieved full transformation. Several did, but several others did not. Also, in the data set as a whole, there were native-English-speaking participants in the stagnation group as well as in the partial and full transformation groups, suggesting that language fluency levels were distributed throughout the sample. Thus, although it seems reasonable to conclude that poor language fluency likely exacerbates the challenges of cultural retooling, future research is clearly needed to tease apart the differential effects of culture and language.

Practical Implications

Alongside its contributions to theory, this study also offers several important practical considerations for training employees to become more effective in their roles as leaders and managers in globally oriented organizations. In particular, the

results of the study suggest a useful blueprint for organizations to follow when developing training to address the psychological challenges people face in learning to function effectively in situations that conflict with their cultural values and accustomed behavioral routines.

First and foremost, it is critical for organizations to help employees diagnose the source of the challenges that they experience in such situations. Does the situation, for example, require an employee to act in a manner that is in conflict with his or her culturally ingrained values and beliefs and therefore feels illegitimate to perform? If so, it is important to help individuals understand what exactly about the new behavior feels illegitimate. Is it the content of the new behavior? The style? And if it is the style, what particular aspects of the style? Moreover, if the behavior feels awkward to perform, employees might also be encouraged to understand what in particular about the behavior feels awkward. Do all aspects of the behavior feel equally awkward, for example, or are there aspects that actually feel quite natural to perform. Understanding the source of the conflict at a relatively specific level is a critical first step in helping employees develop ways of managing that conflict.

The second critical stage after diagnosis is to work on helping employees develop their own personalized way of managing the psychological challenges that they will likely face because of the value- and routine-divergent nature of a situationally required behavior. Organizations can help employees understand why the new behavior is indeed legitimate in their new cultural setting, even though that behavior may feel illegitimate from the perspective of the employee's intact system of culturally ingrained values and beliefs. Attention should be paid not only to helping employees see the new behavior as legitimate, but also to helping them find a way to authorize themselves to engage in the behavior. It is one thing to view the behavior as legitimate in theory, but another thing entirely to actually feel legitimate engaging in behavior that is culturally inconsistent. Thus, helping employees personalize their own experience of self-licensing should be a key focus for organizations interested in training their employees to succeed in these challenging intercultural interactions.

Moreover, employers should also help employees learn to personalize their behavior in a way that makes it feel more genuine and natural to perform, while also remaining within the zone of appropriateness for behavior in their new culture. Through

both integrative techniques, individuals can be taught to stretch beyond their own personal comfort zone until it is increasingly closer to what would be considered appropriate and acceptable in the new cultural setting. Moreover, in addition to helping employees develop and customize their own integrative approach, organizations should also train employees to deploy instrumental techniques as well to help suppress negative emotion that could potentially interfere with the adaptation process.

Organizations should also take great care to help individuals practice and rehearse this new approach, ideally in situations with dynamics as close to the real situation as possible, so that individuals will be exposed to the psychological challenges that they will ultimately face in performance situations. In this way, organizations can provide employees with a realistic preview of the different dimensions of psychological challenge that they will likely face: experienced illegitimacy, stemming from the fact that a new behavior conflicts with ingrained cultural values, and experienced awkwardness, stemming from the fact that the behavior also diverges quite significantly from accustomed routines. Such realistic exposure will enable individuals to anticipate the likely nature and intensity of these psychological challenges and start to develop a means of coping with them. It will also enable employees to deeply integrate the new changes that they have made to their perceptions and actions so that they become automatic when faced with adaptation challenges in a real situation.

Of course, organizations are not the only settings in which individuals are trained to function effectively in foreign cultural situations. Business schools can also play a critical role in providing students with the knowledge and capability to function effectively in foreign cultural situations. Typically business schools expose students to foreign cultures through short-term immersion programs, or simply through their being part of multicultural teams and a multicultural classroom. Certainly, these opportunities are important for exposing individuals to cultures and to cultural differences.

However, mere exposure is only a first step toward developing the types of globally fluent leaders that are critical for managing and leading in tomorrow's workplace. The results of the present study suggest that in addition to exposing individuals to new and challenging circumstances, it is critical for business schools to help students de-

velop and customize their own cultural toolkits. With robust toolkits forged from varied and challenging international immersive encounters, the MBA students of tomorrow will be well equipped to handle the challenges of a culturally and psychologically challenging global workplace.

Conclusion

To function effectively across cultural boundaries, individuals need to be capable of adapting their cultural behavior. Yet doing so comes with a cost, especially when the behaviors one needs to perform to act appropriately and effectively in a new setting conflict with one's native cultural values and beliefs. Past research has articulated this dilemma but has not provided systematic insight into how it can be resolved. I have proposed an inductive framework for understanding how individuals manage the intense internal conflicts that they experience when attempting to function effectively in foreign cultural situations with culturally discrepant norms and how different ways of managing internal conflicts result in different psychological outcomes. Over the next decade, the number of individuals and organizations attempting to function effectively across cultural boundaries will likely not diminish. The framework and insights developed in this study can serve as a guide for subsequent research and practice in this critical area.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire Text

The format and wording of the materials participants received are reproduced here.

DESCRIBE YOUR SWITCHING EXPERIENCE

(1) VALUE CONFLICT

When switching cultural behavior, people can sometimes experience the behaviors necessary for switching to be in conflict with their cultural values. Please describe in your own words how it felt to have to behave in a manner that conflicted with your values:

Was there anything specific that you did to manage how this value conflict felt so that it did not interfere with your ability to switch?

If you experienced little, if any value conflict, please describe in your own words what this felt like—To change behavior without feeling any conflict with your values:

(2) DIFFICULTY WITH PERFORMANCE

When switching, people sometimes feel that they have not mastered the necessary knowledge of the new cultural norms to switch appropriately and effectively. They also may feel that they are incapable of transferring this knowledge of the norms into effective behavior in an actual code-switching situation. What was your experience in this situation?

Did you experience any performance difficulty when switching in this situation? Either about your lack of knowledge about the rules for acting appropriately in the United States (or, if you yourself are North American, in your target foreign culture), or about your skill at transferring what you know into effective behavior? Or both?

Please describe in your own words how it felt to experience performance difficulty in this situation:

Was there anything specific that you did to manage how the performance difficulty felt so that it did not interfere with your ability to switch?

If you experienced little, if any performance anxiety, please describe in your own words what this felt like—to change behavior without feeling any performance difficulty:

(3) EMBARRASSMENT

In addition to your own private feelings about switching, you may have experienced feelings related to how others in the situation, such as the native person you interacted with, perceived and evaluated you. Were you embarrassed about how others in the situation evaluated you while attempting a switch in cultural behavior?

Please describe in your own words how it felt to experience embarrassment in this situation:

Was there anything specific that you did to manage how the embarrassment felt so that it did not interfere with your ability to switch?

If you experienced little, if any embarrassment, please describe in your own words what this felt like—To change behavior without feeling any embarrassment:

YOUR SWITCHING EXPERIENCE: MOMENT BY MOMENT

Another way to capture your switching experience is to describe what you were thinking and feeling:

(1) Immediately before switching

(2) During the switch

(3) Immediately after switching

IMMEDIATELY BEFORE SWITCHING

I was thinking:

1.

2.

3.

I was feeling:

1.

2.

3.

I coped with/managed these feelings in the following ways (be as specific as possible):

1.

2.

3.

DURING SWITCHING (as I was switching)

I was thinking:

1.

2.

3.

I was feeling:

1.

2.

3.

I coped with/managed these feelings in the following ways (be as specific as possible):

1.

2.

3.

IMMEDIATELY AFTER SWITCHING

I was thinking:

1.

- 2.
- 3.

I was feeling:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

I coped with/managed these feelings in the following ways (be as specific as possible):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



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