

# International Journal of Transpersonal Studies

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Volume 34  
Iss. 1-2 (2015)

Article 3

1-1-2015

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### Recommended Citation

Root, S. W. (2015). Root, S. (2015). Mirror gazing for cultural bereavement: A mixed-methods study into the impact of a restricted sensory environment meditation process (psychomanteum) on culture shock in expatriates. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 34(1-2), 1–22.. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 34 (1). <http://dx.doi.org/10.24972/ijts.2015.34.1-2.1>



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# Mirror Gazing for Cultural Bereavement: A Mixed-Methods Study into the Impact of a Restricted Sensory Environment Meditation Process (Psychomanteum) on Culture Shock in Expatriates

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Thirteen expatriates experienced an individual 2-3 hour psychomanteum process, including pre- and post-meditation interviews based on cultural bereavement theory, mirror gazing in a restricted sensory chamber, art work, and follow-up surveys. Repeated measures of negative affect were administered at pretest, posttest, and follow-up periods. Correlational analyses revealed significant reductions in total culture shock and mood disturbance at follow up. Extraversion, home country, and importance of religion/spirituality were significant covariates in change on total culture shock scores at posttest. Qualitative analyses revealed four categories of effects: clarified emotional conflicts, letting go, shifted perspectives, and reviewed success factors. The psychomanteum process could be used with talk therapy techniques and support groups for expatriates to facilitate cultural adjustment and improve quality of life abroad.

**Keywords:** *Cross-cultural adjustment, cultural bereavement, culture shock, expatriate spouses, psychomanteum sensory deprivation*

The 20th century included the largest-ever migration of people from native to new lands (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005), and the trend toward globalization in business continues (Strubler, Park, & Agarwal, 2011). Organizations challenged to remain competitive in an expanding global economy (Takeuchi, Wang, & Marinova, 2005) increasingly use expatriates—expats—to form business relationships, acquire knowledge, establish a firm's international corporate presence (Black & Gregersen, 1999), transfer professional know-how, and control information-gathering functions (Sappinen, 1993).

Things do not always go as planned, and some expats return home prior to the end of their work assignments, with early return the standard definition for expat failure (Sappinen, 1993). The second major and maybe more destructive (Harzing, 1995) kind of failure is professional underperformance due to stress related to cultural adjustment (Sims & Schraeder, 2004).

The personal and professional costs of early return can be steep (Punnett, 1997), including delayed career progression, impaired self-esteem and confidence, disrupted familial relationships, and general unhappiness

(Forster, 1997; Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). Considering the measurable, direct costs of early return, the average firm spends \$80,000 on cultural training and other adjustment expenses, and each individual failure costs upwards of \$1 million (Shannonhouse, 1996). All together, expat failures cost American firms an estimated \$2 billion annually (Punnett, 1997).

A major factor in an expat's overseas success is how the expat responds to stress (Sims & Schraeder, 2004). Also important is the expat's spouse's response to stress (e.g., Lazarova, Westman, & Shaffer, 2010). Known as culture shock, psychological stress that culminates in feelings of confusion, strain, deprivation, rejection, loneliness, ineffectiveness, frustration, and anger is a potential hazard (Taft, 1977). The present research sought to determine the effects of a novel psychological treatment called the psychomanteum, originally introduced by psychiatrist Raymond Moody in 1992. Subsequent early research on the psychomanteum (Arcangel, 1997; Hastings, 2012a; Hastings et al., 2002; Roll, 2004)—a process of supportive conversations combined with mirror gazing in a restricted sensory environment or chamber—showed its possible efficacy

in reducing symptoms and manifestations of culture shock in affected expats.

### Culture Shock and Adjustment

Culture shock as a psychological response is often listed as the main obstacle (Muecke et al., 2011; Murdoch & Kaciak, 2011; Oberg, 1960) to cross-cultural adjustment (CCA; Caligiuri, Phillips, Lazarova, Tarique, & Bürgi, 2001). Factors affecting the severity of culture shock include cultural distance (Babiker, Cox, & Miller, 1980), job conditions, clearly defined job roles, language proficiency, prior cross-cultural experience, personality traits, and others (Muecke et al., 2011). Disturbed feelings and behavior, including anxiety, confusion, frustration, and anger, a sense of loss of control, physiological responses, withdrawal and a feeling of deprivation, and excessive use of drugs and alcohol are associated with unresolved culture shock (Sappinen, 1993).

The history of culture shock shows the concept playing a central role in discussions on CCA (Murdoch & Kaciak, 2011). Creator of the term, anthropologist Kalervo Oberg (1960), joined forces with Lysgaard (1955) and offered the first conceptual models describing how culture shock unfolds in the sojourner. Oberg (1960) described its symptoms as including “a feeling of helplessness ... and fits of anger over delays and other minor frustrations” (p. 177). Clinical psychologists in the 1980s began to use the term acculturative stressors to describe culture-shock symptoms (Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987), including behavioral reactions, physiological problems, and “negative psychological reactions” (Takeuchi et al., 2005, p. 927), such as anxiety, frustration, and anger. State of the art is Ward et al.’s (2001) three-component framework called the ABC model, which distinguishes between affect, behavior, and cognitions in culture shock, or between how people feel, behave, and think when they find themselves in unfamiliar cultural environments for extended periods. Cross-cultural training can target specific deficits, such as inappropriate behavior due to lack of culture-specific knowledge (Littrell, Salas, Hess, Paley, & Riedel, 2006), though its effects on culture shock are yet unknown.

### Cultural Bereavement and Grief in Culture Shock

Psychologists espousing stress and coping perspectives—such as Ward et al. (2001)—recognize negative psychological reactions as painful aspects of an adaptive process triggered during acculturation (see also Bhugra & Becker, 2005; Bochner, 2003). Culturally

aware clinicians help culture-shocked clients understand the meaning of their emotions and allow for unique and culturally determined manifestation of symptoms (Chiu, 2008; Eisenbruch, 1990).

Medical anthropologist Maurice Eisenbruch (1984) noticed that traditional or indigenous process-oriented taxonomies overlapped with Western models in their lists of symptoms associated with culture shock and strained migration. In 1992, Eisenbruch presented the concept of cultural bereavement and outlined its basic clinical features: “It is the experience of the uprooted person resulting from the *loss* [emphasis added] of social structures, cultural values, and self-identity” (p. 9). Clinical features included PTSD and depression-like symptoms. Also inspired by Adler’s (1975) comment that:

Culture shock ... [involves] ... primarily a set of emotional reactions to the loss of perceptual reinforcements from one’s own culture, to new cultural stimuli with little or no meaning, and to the misunderstanding of new and diverse experiences. (p. 13)

The frame in the current study was widened to include expats as susceptible to cultural bereavement.

Strained migration and painful bereavement share effects. Expats who travel alone, especially, lose important day-to-day interpersonal connections (Winkelmann, 1994). A sense of loss also arises when expats daydream about the relative peace and security of life at home. Expats who feel isolated and perceive others as uncaring experience alienation. Other well-established bereavement effects, including despair, anxiety, guilt, loneliness, and anger (Stroebe, Hansson, Stroebe, & Schut, 2001), are reported by expats (Winkelmann, 1994). Overlap also exists between Kübler-Ross’s five stages of grief (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005) and Oberg’s (1960) and Adler’s (1975) CCA models.

Allowing the possibility for recognizing cultural bereavement in struggling expats may also reduce the likelihood of wrongly labeling (Faber, 1930) them with a psychiatric disorder. Rather, “cultural bereavement may be [understood as] a normal, even constructive, existential response, rather than a psychiatric illness” (Eisenbruch, 1992, p. 9). Instead of resisting and perhaps medicating symptoms away, a healthy bereavement process is invited to unfold.

The present study thus incorporated the cultural bereavement perspective and took inspiration from

Eisenbruch's (1990) semi-structured interview and therapeutic methodology (Chiu, 2008). Acculturative-stress symptoms were understood as both reactions to difficulties in the environment and as manifestations of a functional grieving process.

### **Psychomanteum for Grief**

In 1992, psychiatrist Raymond Moody restaged an ancient psychosocial intervention involving a psychomanteum chamber, a small, low-lighted meditation room in which participants sit and gaze into a tilted mirror in order to relax their minds and become receptive to information (Hastings, 2012a). In ancient times, Greeks used something like a psychomanteum chamber to ease bereavement effects in surviving friends and relatives (Moody, 1993). In an underground cavern, participants gazed across the surface of a water-filled copper cauldron to mentally and emotionally contact a lost loved one. Some saw visions of the departed; others heard the departed's voice. Many of Moody's (1992) 25 volunteers reported the healing and "smoothing over" (p. 113) of relationships as a result of discussing their lost loved one and sitting in a darkened, private enclosure; 12 experienced visions of the deceased and did not cognitively question the validity of the unusual sensory perceptions or eidetic imagery seen in and around the mirror. Research on elements that comprise the process, including scrying—an ancient information-accessing technique involving gazing into a reflective surface (Besterman, 1924/2005)—sensory deprivation (Bood, Sundequist, Kjellgren, Nordstrom, & Norlander, 2007; van Dierendonck & te Nijenhuis, 2005), and meditation (Lane, Seskevich, & Pieper, 2007; Manocha, Black, Sarris, & Stough, 2011) helps to explain the effects found during subsequent psychomanteum research (e.g., Arcangel, 1997; Radin & Rebman, 1996) to Moody's (1992) initial exploration, but it was Roll (2004), Hastings et al. (2002), and Hastings (2012a) who directly investigated the psychomanteum's impact on psychological stress and painful emotions in the context of bereavement.

Roll (2004) led 57 participants through a process involving a psychomanteum chamber and structured day of activities, including conversations about the deceased and a relaxing nature walk. One or two family members at a time sought contact with a specific deceased loved one. Nine of 41 participants who submitted completed questionnaires had "strong reunion experiences" (Roll, 2004, p. 257), which seemed to correlate with post-

session verbal reports of reductions in grief. Engaging in supportive conversations and sitting in a psychomanteum chamber appeared to "assist the grieving process for many of the participants who had no strong experiences during the mirror session" (Roll, 2004, p. 257), although this was not statistically verified.

The first systematic study of the psychomanteum process on feelings of loneliness, sadness, guilt, and other bereavement effects came in 2002 when Hastings et al. took 27 volunteers through a three-stage, approximately 3-hour psychomanteum procedure. Hastings and company sought to develop an intervention that could be used in a more traditional counseling schedule. The process began with a short pre-session questionnaire completed from home or elsewhere, and continued with a single 2-3 hour session on a university campus. The session began with a semi-structured pre-meditation interview, which allowed participants time to recall memories of the deceased, discuss their emerging feelings, and consider how the loss impacted their lives. After the pre-interview, each participant was led into a darkened psychomanteum chamber to sit alone for up to 1 hour, followed by a post-interview about the experience. During the post-interview, participants explored their internal and external experiences in the chamber, whether they perceived "a sense of contact" (Hastings et al., 2002, p. 215) with a deceased loved one, and what meaning they ascribed to their perceptions. Results showed that most of the reported communication with or from the deceased took place subjectively, or in the minds of participants. Messages, including "personal advice, family matters, and instructions on practical affairs" (Hastings et al., 2002, p. 225), were described as meaningful, however, and related to the participants' needs. Regardless of degree of perceived contact, participants reported significant changes in affect from pre-interview to follow up on 12 of 21 bereavement effects, including significant reductions in feelings of sadness, grief, loss, guilt, and fear. Though only 13 of 27 participants reported a contact experience, "statistically significant reductions in bereavement responses were found over the entire group (from  $p = .05$  to  $.0008$ )" (Hastings et al., 2002, p. 212). Results suggested the psychomanteum's ability to bring "strong shifts in unresolved feelings" (Hastings et al., 2002, p. 225) or at least lessen the subjective intensity of unresolved grief.

A decade later, Hastings (2012a) published the study of a modified version of the 2002 procedure with

a sample of 100 participants. This time, virtually every volunteer reported significantly reduced bereavement effects at posttest. Ninety-two participants reported a global decrease in bereavement qualities ( $r = .58$ ,  $p < .001$ ), with significant reductions in ratings on 14 of 15 brief Likert items measuring bereavement effects ( $p < .001$ ). The greatest changes were in sadness and loss, followed by increases in peacefulness and reductions in anger and the need to communicate with the deceased. At 1-month follow up, 10 of 35 participants reported further increases in peace and calm. Perceived contact with a lost loved one was again not required for reduced bereavement effects, though other conditions seemed important, such as a strong need to resolve the distress, a prior desire to contact the deceased, and belief in the psychomanteum process.

### **Purpose of Present Study**

Whether or not sessions involve visual or auditory hallucinations or other anomalous experiences, the broader goal of the psychomanteum process is to facilitate a shift in unresolved relationships and reactions and bring change and resolution to unfinished emotional business (Hastings, 2012b). Formal research on the psychomanteum process is in its infancy, however, and research on interventions for grief is sparse (Neimeyer, 2012). Also given that no studies on psychological interventions for expats could be identified, predicted improvements in motivated participants were primarily based on the more extensive research on related techniques, such as sensory deprivation and meditation. Psychological preparation, skilled facilitation, relaxation, concentrative mirror-meditation, and restricted sensation were combined to bring improvements across a broad spectrum of negative moods and perceptions among expats impacted by the loss of familiar people, places, and things, or at least move them toward resolution.

### **Method**

Embedded into a qualitative research framework, a single-group, pretest-posttest design was used to assess negative affect before a single session of an adapted psychomanteum process, immediately after, and 1 month later using questionnaires with Likert scales. Correlational and qualitative approaches were combined to answer:

1. What are the effects of the psychomanteum process on negative affect, comprised of culture-shock composite scores and total mood disturbance scores?

2. Compared to post-intervention scores, what are the effects at 1-month follow up on total culture-shock and mood-disturbance scores, and are the differences significant?
3. Do scores on personality traits show correlations with changes in negative affect?
4. Do demographic scores on sex, home country, English language proficiency, relationship status, education, and importance of religion/spirituality show correlations with changes in negative affect?
5. Finally, are there significant differences between the pretest, posttest, and follow-up measurements of how comfortable the respondent feels living in the United States?

Quantitative data were analyzed with correlational methods to explain relationships among variables and assess the statistical impact of mirror meditation on mood disturbance and culture shock. Qualitative data were gathered during a post-meditation discussion stage and thematically analyzed for patterns of meaning.

### **Recruitment and Participants**

Employing self-selection, convenience, and network sampling approaches (Kazdin, 2003), the researcher flung his recruitment net far and wide in the San Francisco Bay Area of California. The most fruitful venue was a Silicon Valley support group for spouses of foreign technical workers, from which eight females volunteered. Two participants were recruited through internet-hosted activity groups for expats in the San Francisco Bay Area. Local churches, foreign language schools, and corporations employing expats were also contacted, though without success.

Interested parties were contacted via telephone and screened for interest, current level of affective distress, and other eligibility factors, such as: 18 years of age or older; raised outside the United States by non-American parents; sufficiently fluent in English to engage conversations and complete measures; in the United States on a work-related sojourn or the foreign spouse of such a person; and, capable of sitting still for 30 straight minutes. Thirteen (9 female, 4 male) study respondents met the final recruitment criteria. In the United States a minimum 3 months, eligible participants scored 8 or higher on the Culture Shock Questionnaire (CSQ; Mumford, 1998) and 14 or higher on the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10; Kessler et al., 2002). Participants also scored in or near the top 50th percentile on the Openness to Experience subscale

(Srivastava, John, Gosling, & Potter, 2003) of the Big Five Inventory (BFI; John & Srivastava, 1999). To control for sources of stress besides culture shock, participants who had experienced trauma within the prior year, including a psychiatric condition, hospitalization for a major illness or birth of a first child, sexual or physical abuse, or the death of a close loved one within the prior 6 months were screened-out with a short survey (e.g., Manocha et al., 2011). Respondents who drank more than three alcoholic beverages per day were also excluded, since excessive alcohol consumption may impair or delay recovery from emotional distress. Finally, respondents engaging in any other formal stress-management training program or insight-oriented counseling during the time of the screening or in the prior 12 weeks were ineligible—since the effects of other treatment programs may confound the effects of mirror meditation—though the final week of recruitment saw a set of respondents who had received personal psychotherapy in the prior weeks accepted into the sample.

With a median age of 30 years, participants ranged from 25-44 years old. Eight of 13 participants were female spouses of sojourning workers, whereas the rest were primary expats ( $N = 5$ , 1 female, 4 male). Most respondents belonged to the arbitrary conventional category of Western hemisphere countries ( $N = 8$ , 6 female, 2 male). Within these participants of European origin, five nationalities were represented (e.g., Italy, Portugal, Romania). Eastern hemisphere participants came from India, Iran, and Lebanon ( $N = 5$ , 3 female, 2 male). Participants had been in the U.S. from 6 months to over 7 years. Four participants (3 female, 1 male) were within the perhaps most-stressful first year of international assignment (Anderzen & Arnetz, 1999). For over half the sample, sojourning to the U.S. either was or would be the first prolonged stay (1 year or longer) in a country other than home, whereas the other participants reported extended sojourns to at least one other foreign country than the United States. Participants were well-educated and reported very good to excellent English-language proficiencies. Most of the sample ( $N = 9$ , 5 female, 4 male) held at least a master's degree, and more than half of the master's holders reported excellent English-language proficiencies. All but one participant were married at the time of the study, and of these, only one was not currently living with his foreign spouse in the United States. Most spouses of participants were working full-time outside of the home. Only 2 of 13

participants (1 female, 1 male) were sojourning with both spouse and children in tow.

Most participants ( $N = 8$ , 5 female, 3 male) ascribed no to a little importance to religious or spiritual practices. Of the three religions reported by participants, Christianity was the most common (5 female), followed by Hinduism, and Islam. Surprisingly, given the amount of pre-meditation culture stress and negative mood initially reported—including symptoms of anxiety and depression—most respondents ( $N = 9$ , 7 female, 2 male) described their physical health as good. One female participant dropped-out for unreported reasons at follow up.

#### Instrumentation

Screening measures were used to ensure a qualifying sample.

**Screening measures.** Used to identify eligible participants, telephone screening involved reading Mumford's (1998) self-report CSQ, the BFI Openness to Experience subscale (Srivastava et al., 2003), and the K10 (Kessler et al., 2002) to prospective participants for verbal response. The CSQ (Mumford, 1998) required 2-5 minutes to complete. It contains 12 Likert-scaled items assessing psychological strain, sense of loss, feelings of rejection, role confusion, anxiety from awareness of cultural differences, and feelings of impotence (Taft, 1977). A score of 8 or higher indicated a respondent's increasing felt strain, anxiety, homesickness, confusion, and powerlessness from residing in a foreign culture. Requiring 2-3 minutes to complete in normal populations, 10 items on the BFI (Srivastava et al., 2003) measured Openness, or a cognitive style for thinking in symbols and abstractions (McCrae & Costa, 1987). Last, well-suited for telephone screening, in less than 5 minutes the K10 (Kessler et al., 2002) provided a global measure of psychological distress over the previous 4-week period. Participants reported the amount of time they experienced particular clinical issues during the preceding weeks by choosing one of five possible responses (Andrews & Slade, 2001). Individuals in the current study scoring 14 or higher were experiencing a minimum of moderate nervous, negative affect, fatigue, and agitation distress. Respondents failing to report minimum scores on the CSQ, BFI, and K10 were thanked for their interest and referred to a local university counseling center.

**Affect measures.** Following screening, captured during pre, post, and follow-up periods, data from two separate instruments provided different but overlapping

perspectives on participants' subjective state of affect (e.g., Lane et al., 2007). Culture shock was measured with Zapf's (1993) Culture Shock Profile (CSP).

**Culture shock.** Requiring 4-8 minutes to complete in normal populations, the CSP assesses both negative culture-shock symptoms and positive culture-shock feelings ("recovery features"; Zapf, 1993, p. 699) experienced by individuals in cross-cultural situations. Across 33 items, respondents indicated the intensity of their experience of each feeling-descriptor with a 4-point Likert scale incorporating 0 (none), 1 (slight), 2 (moderate), and 3 (great) choices. Culture-shock symptom items included: "I feel a sense of loss," "I feel impatient/irritable," and "I feel challenged." Recovery items included: "I feel enthusiastic," "I feel purposeful/directed," and "I feel optimistic/hopeful." After recovery-item scores were reversed, item-scores were totaled. While no formal cut-offs yet exist, the CSP was administered at several time periods to provide intra-participant data theoretically indicating stages of culture shock (Muecke et al., 2011).

The CSP's (Zapf, 1993) content validity was established via consultation with social work faculty at the University of Toronto and through pilot-testing with three social workers. Internal reliability was determined with a sample of 85 sojourning social workers to the Yukon Territory in Northern Canada. Cronbach's alpha was good at 0.90, comparing well with other professionally designed, commercially available, and validated psychological assessments, including Juffer's (1985) Culture Shock Adaptation Inventory (Cronbach 0.92). Early reliability and validity scores suggested the CSP's (Zapf, 1993) use in "support[ing] workers through the second rejection stage of culture shock, and aid[ing] them to move to the effective functioning stage of cultural adaptation" (Muecke et al., 2011, p. 6).

**Mood states.** General negative affect and therapeutic change were assessed with the self-report Profile of Mood States, Brief (POMS-B; McNair, Lorr, & Droppleman, 1992). The POMS (McNair, Lorr, & Droppleman, 1981) is a commonly used measure of psychological distress. Slightly shorter than the Short Form (POMS-SF; McNair et al., 1992), the Brief version (POMS-B) is ideal for multi-instrument protocols. Requiring between 3-7 minutes to complete in normal populations, respondents ranked their agreement with single-word mood and feeling adjectives of themselves with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (not at all)

to 4 (extremely) that best described how they had been feeling during the prior week, including the current day. Results from 30 items fell into six mood subscales describing: tension-anxiety, depression, anger-hostility, vigor, fatigue, and confusion. High vigor scores reflected a good mood or emotion, and low scores in the other five subscales reflected a good mood or emotion. The total mood disturbance score was computed by adding the five negative subscale scores and subtracting the vigor score.

The six-dimensional factor structure of the POMS has been validated repeatedly (Norcross, Guadagnoli, & Prochaska, 2006). Based on validity studies and normative samples, Cronbach's alpha for the POMS-B is greater than 0.90 (McNair et al., 1992). Scores on the six mood scales are highly correlated and show alpha coefficients ranging from 0.88 to 0.71 in Americans (Yeun & Shin-Park, 2006) to 0.85 to 0.59 (Confusion subscale) in Koreans. Product moment correlations indicate a reasonable level of test-retest reliability (Lorr, McNair, Heuchert, & Droppleman, 2003). Content validity (Baker, Denniston, Zabora, Polland, & Dudley, 2002) and discriminant validity (McNair et al., 1992) are high.

**Personality measure.** Personality was assessed with the BFI (John & Srivastava, 1999) to determine whether personality factors moderated changes in negative affect during the psychomanteum process. Requiring 6-12 minutes to complete in normal populations, administered with the demographic questionnaire during the week before meditation, the BFI included 44 items to measure five dimensions of personality including: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to Experience. Items included: for Extraversion: "I see myself as someone who has an assertive personality"; for Agreeableness: "I see myself as someone who is helpful and unselfish with others"; for Neuroticism: "I see myself as someone who can be moody"; and so forth. Respondents used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to describe their personalities. In U.S. and Canadian samples, the BFI's Cronbach alpha has ranged from 0.75 to 0.90, with an average of about 0.80. Test-retest reliabilities ranged from 0.80 to 0.90, with an average of 0.85. The BFI has shown substantial convergent and divergent validity scores when compared to other Big Five assessments and peer ratings (Rammstedt & John, 2007).

## **Procedure**

The psychomanteum process for culture shock was initially pilot-tested with two nearly qualified volunteers (neither the male nor female respondent reported sufficiently elevated mood disturbance, and the male had originally sojourned to the United States for non-work reasons). After screening, 13 qualified respondents were e-mailed a consent form within the week before their meditation session, a map indicating the location of the session, and a link to a remote survey site hosted by SurveyMonkey (<http://www.surveymonkey.com>), where they completed a questionnaire containing demographic, personality, culture shock, and mood-disturbance items requiring 25-40 minutes to complete.

On the day of their psychomanteum session, participants traveled to Sofia University in Palo Alto, California, and individually underwent a three-stage process. The researcher met each participant in the client reception area of the University's Community Center for Health and Wholeness (CCHW). Stage 1 began when participants were escorted into a counseling room (which also held the mirror-meditation chamber) to engage in a 20-40 minute conversation with the researcher. In this conversation, participants were prompted to describe their thoughts and feelings in the context of challenges and conflicts associated with living in the United States as a foreign worker or foreign spouse of a foreign worker. The semi-structured interview, based on cultural bereavement theory (Eisenbruch, 1990) and Hastings's (2012a) bereavement interview, was designed to prime participants' deep thoughts and feelings regarding their U.S. acculturation experiences. Questions were formulated to help participants zero in on the focal point of their psychological stress, or the key ongoing experiences or perceptions causing or most closely associated with their culture shock.

In stage 2, participants sat by themselves for 30-40 minutes in a sensory-restricted meditation chamber. The chamber was a separate enclosure located in the southeast corner of a medium-sized, high-ceilinged rectangular room furnished with chairs, a couch, and standing floor lamps. The psychomanteum (meditation) chamber was a free-standing frame built of PVC piping, 8 feet long, 5 feet wide, and 7 feet tall. Covered with a thick, black theater curtain cloth, the chamber had a flap for entering, and included a comfortable, padded reclining chair at one end and a large acrylic mirror (24 by 36 inches) on an easel at the opposite end, titled up

to reflect the darkness of the chamber draping rather than the participant's face. Behind the chair was a 15-watt uncovered lamp. Next to the chair was a small table holding a box of tissues and dimmer switch for the light, which permitted participants to adjust the illumination in the chamber from semi-dark to complete darkness. Also next to the reclining chair was a white-noise generator to mask extraneous sounds.

The participant was instructed to focus gently on the adjustment issue that represented the source of greatest emotional pain. While gazing into the mirror, participants meditated on either the home-culture aspect or person(s) missed most, or the U.S. culture aspect found most painful or challenging. Participants were encouraged to maintain steady breathing and to relax and remain open to any inner and outer experiences that did or did not occur, without judgment. The researcher sat either just outside the meditation chamber in the main room or just outside of the main room—depending on the participant's preference—and was available to address concerns. After 30 minutes, the researcher checked to see if the participant "felt complete," or would like an additional 5 minutes. Participants were allowed up to two additional 5-minute periods. One female participant exited the chamber early at 25 minutes, in order to use the toilet.

Stage 3 began when participants left the psychomanteum booth to reflect on their in-chamber experiences. Spanning 20-40 minutes, a semi-structured interview commenced with the task to create a drawing representing what happened (e.g., inner and outer experiences) in the chamber. Participants then entertained questions from the researcher designed to trigger reflection on internal and seemingly external experiences. Items such as "What does the mirror-meditation experience mean to you?" and "Did you receive any useful information or insights that can be applied to your daily life in the United States?" invited participants to articulate, anchor, and integrate their experiences and insights into daily life. Following the post-meditation interview, participants were escorted into an adjoining counseling room and given a maximum 30 minutes to create a final drawing representing what the experience "had come to tell them" and to complete an online questionnaire (hosted by SurveyMonkey) accessed via a laptop in the room. Survey questions included reflection/integration, culture-shock, and mood-disturbance items.

At the completion of the post-meditation questionnaire period, participants were brought back into the main counseling room and thanked, given a list of aftercare recommendations to facilitate a smooth transition back into daily life (e.g., headings included: “Give yourself rest,” and “If the need arises, talk to a trusted someone”; Appendix Q in Root, 2014), asked about their preferred stress-coping strategies, and reminded about the final follow-up, self-administered computer questionnaire. Four weeks later, participants were e-mailed a link to the final questionnaire located on a remote survey site (<http://www.SurveyMonkey.com>). Requiring 20-40 minutes, the follow up contained a handful of opened-ended and semi-structured items assessing further experiences, additional insights, helpfulness of discussion and meditation, and the impact of the session on life areas, including work, friendships, love life, family life, and others. The follow up also contained the final measurements of culture shock and mood disturbance.

### Results

Standard scoring procedures were used on all self-administered, quantitative measures. Pre-meditation scores were used as baseline. A general purpose statistical software package (Stata, version 12 for Windows; College Station, Texas: StataCorp) was used to calculate means and other descriptives. Advanced statistical analyses, such as Wilcoxon signed rank tests, were performed with IBM SPSS Statistics (version 21 for Windows; Armonk, NY: IBM). Providing a conservative test of the psychomanteum’s effects, an intent-to-treat analytic approach included all participant data—both study completers and dropouts (Kazdin, 2003). The last observation carried forward (LOCF) method was used to estimate data for the one participant lost at follow up. Differences of  $p < 0.05$  were considered statistically significant. To reduce the number of statistical tests and control type I error, global (summary or total) scores on measures were used in answering research questions one, two, and five.

The first research question was addressed with a series of related-samples Wilcoxon signed rank tests. The Wilcoxon test was an appropriate nonparametric test for paired variables. No significant median differences were found when comparing pre versus post total CSP (culture shock; Mdn = 34 vs. 33; see Table 6 in Root, 2014). However, Table 1 here shows a significant difference was indicated between pre and follow-up total

CSP. These results indicated significantly higher scores in pretest culture shock versus follow-up culture shock (Mdn = 34 vs. 25,  $p < .01$ ).

The next two analyses focused on POMS (mood states). As before, the initial comparison was not found to achieve statistical significance (Mdn = 6 vs. 6), while significance was indicated when comparing pretest with follow-up total scores (Mdn = 6 vs. 1,  $p < .05$ ; Table 1). Here, significantly higher total mood disturbance scores were also indicated with respect to the pretest measurements as compared with follow-up scores.

Additionally, a series of tests were conducted on the individual CSP and POMS items. These tests specifically compared pretest with posttest scores on culture shock and mood disturbance items. Table 1 presents items that achieved significance. See Table S1 in Appendix S of Root (2014) for a complete summary of individual items.

Medians of CSP and POMS items are provided in Appendix T of Root (2014). First, with regard to the set of tests conducted on the individual cultural shock measures, no significance was found. With regard to the mood measures, however, Table 1 shows statistical significance was indicated with respect to items 4 and 27, liveliness ( $p = .030$ ,  $r = .60$ ), and full of pep ( $p = .014$ ,  $r = .68$ ). In both cases, significantly higher scores were found in the pretest measurements as compared with the posttest measurements.

Next, further analyses were conducted again focusing on each of the individual items relating to CSP and POMS. These analyses compared pretest with follow-up scores. First, with regard to CSP (culture shock), Table 1 shows that statistical significance was indicated with respect to items 2, 14, 21, 27, and 29, representing impatient/irritable ( $p = .011$ ,  $r = .70$ ), ready to cry ( $p = .035$ ,  $r = .59$ ), isolated/homesick ( $p = .046$ ,  $r = .55$ ), a sense of loss ( $p = .038$ ,  $r = .57$ ), and afraid/panic ( $p = .014$ ;  $r = .55$ ). On these culture shock items, significantly higher scores were found with regard to the pretest item scores as compared with the follow-up item scores. Next, analyses conducted on the individual POMS items only found statistical significance with respect to item 25, furious ( $p = .026$ ,  $r = .62$ ). Again, significantly higher average scores were found at pretest compared to follow up on this item. It is acknowledged that with 63 separate-item analyses—combined culture-shock and mood items—using  $p = .05$ , one is expected to find significance in three items

by chance alone and results may not reflect any serious finding. To improve credibility, these results require cross-validation.

Altogether, Table 1 indicates that the psychomanteum process did not have an immediate impact on total culture shock and mood disturbance. With such a small number of participants, however, the present study has low power and an effect would have to be very strong to achieve significance.

The second research question required testing whether the effects at 1-month follow up on total CSP and POMS scores were significantly different than posttest scores. Two additional related-samples Wilcoxon signed rank tests were conducted. Results are summarized in Appendix U (Table U1) of Root (2014). Statistical significance was not indicated in either case, indicating no significant differences in these two sets of measures. Limited resources prevented comparisons of the post to follow-up scores on individual items, although post to follow up comparisons of total scores proved non-significant. The present pretest to follow-up analyses will reflect longer term changes (e.g., Hastings et al., 2002).

**Table 1.**

Significant Findings From Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Tests (N = 13)

Measures	T	SE	z	p	r
Pre vs. Follow-up CSP	7.500	14.278	2.661	.008**	.74
Pre vs. Follow-up POMS	12.000	14.292	2.344	.019*	.65
<i>CSP Individual Items, Pre to Post</i>					
None.					
<i>POMS Individual Items, Pre to Post</i>					
Item 4: Liveliness	3.000	6.928	2.165	.030*	.60
Item 27: Full of pep	.000	5.690	2.460	.014*	.68
<i>CSP Individual Items, Pre to Follow up</i>					
Item 2: Impatient/irritable	.000	5.534	-2.530	.011*	-.70
Item 14: Ready to cry	4.000	6.633	-2.111	.035*	-.59
Item 21: Isolated/homesick	2.500	5.766	-1.994	.046*	-.55
Item 27: A sense of loss	.000	3.623	-2.070	.038*	-.57
Item 29: Afraid/panic	.000	4.287	-2.449	.014*	-.68
<i>POMS Individual Items, Pre to Follow up</i>					
Item 25: Furious	.000	4.704	-2.232	.026*	-.62)

\* p < .05. \*\* p < .01.

*Note.* Negative z values will produce negative correlational effect sizes (r), though r values are reported as positive in the narrative.

The third research question was whether scores on personality traits would show correlations with changes in negative affect. Initially, histograms were conducted along with measures of skewness and kurtosis, in order to determine the normality of these measures. As some non-normality was indicated, Spearman's rho, which measures the linear relationship between two variables, was conducted along with Pearson's r. The full results of these analyses are presented in Tables 7 and 8 of Root (2014). Only a single correlation was found to achieve significance, which resulted from the Spearman's correlation conducted on the difference between pretest and posttest CSP (culture shock) scores and Extraversion. This was found to be statistically significant and strong ( $\rho = -.638$ ,  $r = -.481$ ), indicating that positive changes from pretest to posttest culture shock were associated with significantly lower Extraversion. Correlations between total CSP and POMS scores and the other Big Five personality factors of Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness were nonsignificant.

The fourth research question was whether demographic scores would show correlations with

changes in negative affect. Initially, similar diagnostics as were conducted previously were conducted here, in order to determine the normality of these measures. These items were judged to approximate a normal distribution; therefore, parametric tests were run in many cases. First focusing upon respondent sex, a series of independent-samples t-tests were conducted. The results of these analyses are summarized in Appendix U (Table U2) of Root (2014). As shown, Levene's tests, testing the assumption of equal variances, were found to achieve significance in the final case, indicating the violation of this assumption. However, in all four cases, the independent-samples t-test was not found to achieve statistical significance, indicating no significant difference in these measures on the basis of respondent sex. Additionally, a MANOVA was conducted on these data which incorporated respondent sex. This analysis also failed to find sex as a significant predictor of these measures,  $F(1, 11) = .001, p = .970$ .

Following this, analyses were focused upon the respondents' home country. Table 9 in Root (2014) summarizes the full results of the one-way ANOVAs

conducted between each of these four measures and home country. Statistical significance was only indicated with respect to the change in CSP scores between the pretest and posttest measurements. Here listed in Table 2, this result indicates significant differences in total culture shock, on the basis of home country ( $F = 5.682, p = .037$ ).

Additionally, post-hoc analyses were conducted after removing cases that had a sample size of one, which was required in order for the post-hoc analysis to be conducted. Specifically, utilizing Tukey's HSD, these analyses compared India, Italy, and Portugal. It was found that Portugal ( $N = 3$  participants, 2 female, 1 male) had a significantly higher change in total culture shock compared to both Italy (2 female) and India ( $N = 3$ , 2 female, 1 male). A general linear model was also conducted, which found home country to approach significance at the .05 alpha level,  $F(7, 5) = 4.621, p = .056$ .

Independent-samples t-tests were also conducted on the change between pretest and follow-up CSP and POMS scores on the basis of region (Eastern vs. Western countries; Table U3 in Appendix U of Root [2014]).

**Table 2.**

Summary of Significant Findings at  $p < .05$  ( $N = 13$ )

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**Pretest to Posttest**

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Home country correlated with reductions in total culture shock

Reductions in *liveliness* and *full of pep*

Lower importance of religion/spirituality correlated with higher reductions in total culture shock

Increase in overall comfort living in U.S. (measured by single item)

Lower Extraversion correlated with higher reductions in total culture shock

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**Pretest to Follow up**

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Reductions in total culture shock and total mood disturbance

Reductions in *impatient/irritable, ready to cry, isolated/homesick, a sense of loss, afraid/panic, and furious*

Higher importance of religion/spirituality correlated with higher reductions in total culture shock

Increase in overall comfort living in U.S. (measured by single item)

A significant difference was not found in either case. Following this, current length of stay in the United States was considered. Table U4 in Appendix U of Root (2014) summarizes the Spearman's correlations conducted between this measure and the four measures that focused upon changes in scores. None of these correlations was found to achieve statistical significance.

The next set of analyses focused upon English language proficiency. Table U5 in Appendix U of Root (2014) presents the results of independent-samples t-tests conducted with this measure. As indicated, significant differences in these measures on the basis of English language proficiency were not found in any case. Additionally, the effect of English language proficiency did not achieve statistical significance in the MANOVA conducted,  $F(1, 11) = .001, p = .973$ .

Next, relationship status was focused upon, which was dichotomized as single or married. A series of independent-samples t-tests were conducted with the results of these analyses. Summarized in Appendix U (Table U6) of Root (2014), statistical significance was not found in any case. Additionally, the effect of relationship status did not achieve significance in the MANOVA conducted,  $F(1, 11) = .917, p = .359$ .

The next set of analyses focused upon education, with Table U7 in Appendix U of Root (2014) summarizing the results of the one-way ANOVAs conducted with this measure. Significant differences in the changes in negative affect were not indicated on the basis of education. A significant finding was also not indicated in the MANOVA conducted,  $F(2, 10) = 1.527, p = .264$ .

Next, the importance of religion/spirituality was focused upon. Table 10 in Root (2014) summarizes the results of the Spearman's correlations conducted between this measure and the measures of change in negative affect (see Table 2 here). Statistical significance was found in the changes in CSP (culture shock) between pretest and posttest as well as between posttest and follow up. First, with regard to the change between pretest and posttest CSP, this correlation was found to be strong and negative ( $\rho = -.577, p = .039$ ). A more positive change between pretest and posttest culture shock was associated with a significantly reduced importance of religion/spirituality. Next, the correlations conducted between the change in scores between posttest measurements and follow-up CSP and the importance of religion/spirituality was found to be positive and strong ( $\rho = .682, p = .010$ ). This result indicates that a greater change in total culture

shock between posttest and follow up was associated with a significantly increased importance of religion/spirituality.

The final research question was whether significant differences existed between the pretest, posttest, and follow-up measurements of how comfortable the respondent feels living in the United States. A series of related-samples Wilcoxon signed rank tests were conducted, and the full results are summarized in Table 11 of Root (2014). Statistical significance was found when comparing the pretest and posttest measurements of comfort (Mdn = 4 vs. 2,  $p = .020$ ), as well as when comparing pretest with follow-up measurements of comfort (Mdn = 4 vs. 2,  $p = .022$ ). Table 2 here shows that average measures on comfort were found to be significantly more uncomfortable in the pretest measurements as compared with both the posttest and follow-up measurements.

In summary form, Table 2 presents the significant personality, demographic, and comfort comparison results. Again, neither sex, current length of stay in the United States, English language proficiency, relationship status, nor education level significantly correlated with or predicted (linear) changes in either pretest to posttest, posttest to follow up, or pretest to follow-up CSP and POMS summary scores.

### Qualitative Results

No formal analyses were conducted on the pre-meditation interviews. Post-meditation interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and thematically analyzed consistent with Braun and Clarke (2006). Post-meditation reports included first-hand descriptions of experiences inside the psychomanteum chamber and subsequent reflection on thoughts and feelings. Of particular interest were new insights, shifted perspectives, and physical and emotional reactions suggesting improved CCA. The 1-month follow-up questionnaire gathered additional subjective data—reflections and insights, subsequent experiences, changes in belief or attitude, and perceived helpfulness of the psychomanteum process are presented in Root (2014).

**Presenting problems.** The semi-structured pre-meditation interview helped participants identify the major sources of adjustment stress in their lives and then select one of the topics to focus on (the presenting problem) during their meditation, in order to bring insight or resolution around either what or whom they most missed from their home country or the greatest source of adjustment stress, challenge, or pain in the

United States. Most participants were able to narrow their concerns down to a single issue-focus. Five participants (4 female, 1 male) sought insight, understanding, or resolution around negative feelings pertaining to a particular situation (psychological). Four participants (3 female, 1 male) chose a relational focus, seeking insight or resolution around either a past or present relationship. Finally, 4 participants (2 female, 2 male) meditated on logistical problems, attempting to address negative affect and gain insight into carrying out a particular task more effectively.

Illustrating the psychological presenting problem, Caterina was a 29-year-old Portuguese woman with a master's degree who sought to reconnect with lost feelings of independence during meditation. With a dependent visa, Caterina arrived stateside in the spring of 2010—her first prolonged sojourn outside Portugal—to both join her business-sojourning Portuguese husband and engage a PhD program at a local prestigious university. With some post-arrival cross-cultural training (CCT) and an “excellent” grasp of English, Caterina eventually quit her school program because of a “crazy” supervisor and competitive research colleague. Going back to Portugal was not an option, however, due to poor prospects back home. Caterina reported her greatest adjustment challenge as finding and maintaining Bay Area friends and being jobless in an American market where she struggled to understand the “rules of the game.” She most missed support from family and friends back home and the “flexible” Portuguese lifestyle where one could telephone someone “at the drop of a hat.” Caterina felt disconnected from whom she used to be and thus focused her meditation on reconnecting with memories of times she felt “more independent.” With no reported religious or spiritual practices, despite CCA stress Caterina indicated “good” physical health in the prior 6 months and feeling overall “comfortable” in the United States, with plans to stay at least another 15 months.

Another participant, Saeed, was a 43-year-old Iranian veterinarian who entered meditation with a relational focus. Saeed had found work-visa sponsorship at an American multinational hospital chain after completing specialized medical training in Canada for 2 years where he, his wife, and young son had first sojourned before coming to the States. In their second year in the United States already, with plans to stay at least another 15 months, Saeed and family were adjusting “good,” though

his wife was unemployed and actively searching for work. Saeed reported his religion as Islam and ascribed “a little” importance to its role in his life. His physical health was “good” in the prior 6 months, and his orientation to being in the United States at the time of the pre-meditation questionnaire was “comfortable.” Without predeparture or post-departure CCT, Saeed reported a “very good” grasp of English. Nevertheless, one of his greatest adjustment concerns was his foreign accent. He wished for improved communication and mutual understanding with colleagues and clients at the hospital. A specific source of pain was the memory of when he and his young son had to leave Iran for Canada and say goodbye to his father—his son’s grandfather—at the airport. He wished he could have better explained to his son the reasons for leaving. Saeed focused his meditation on reprocessing the memory of this good-bye scene at the airport.

Thirty-one-year-old Romanian project manager Nadia chose to focus her meditation on a logistical problem. Nadia had come to the United States with her husband over a year before meditation. Her Christian religious affiliation held “a little” importance and her physical health was “excellent” in the prior 6 months, though she felt “uncomfortable” living in the United States. Personally, the choice to sojourn to the United States felt “forced” and “more like a loss,” since the decision was made based on financial factors and which of the partners could make more money—in this case, Nadia’s husband. The sojourn to the States was Nadia’s first prolonged stay outside Romania. Nadia soon discovered that she “hated” being a housewife, and missed her friends, colleagues, and social lifestyle back in Romania. Her main concern, however, was that despite “very good” English skills and a bachelor’s degree in business, on a non-immigrant dependent visa Nadia could not legally work in the States. She therefore focused her meditation on brainstorming ideas and strategies for how to otherwise put her work skills to best use in the United States.

**Main effects.** Given the sample’s ethnic diversity and wide variety of pre-meditation adjustment issues, meditation experiences and subsequent effects varied considerably. Still, participants engaged presenting problems and emerged from the psychomanteum chamber with reports suggesting having either predominantly clarified emotional conflicts, let go of concerns, shifted perspectives, or reviewed success factors.

**Clarified emotional conflicts.** Four participants (3 female, 1 male) seemed to predominantly achieve

some emotional clarity around presenting problems and related issues. A process of analyzing relationships and problems led to reports indicating emotional shifts and expanded perspectives.

For instance, entering with a relational focus, 31-year-old Italian Vitalia revisited early memories. Focusing on a strained relationship with her mother in Italy, Vitalia had, prior to meditation, understood why mother was “always working” and why she had to live with her grandparents as a child: “[Mother] didn’t do anything else than take care of the family and nothing for herself, actually, and I’m totally the opposite. I feel selfish compared to her.” After meditation, however, taking an expanded perspective, Vitalia reported: “It’s not like I care less for the family. I really care about the family, it’s just that I need to do something for myself, too.” Recalling a recent visit to Italy when she attempted to console her mother after a fight with her father, Vitalia reported: “I felt like, ‘How can I help her? What can I do?’ But that disappeared.” Segmenting her chamber experience into phases, Vitalia further implied that emotional conflicts somehow became clarified:

At the beginning I was crying, well not really crying; I felt a need to cry. And then suddenly when the second phase started I felt like, “Okay. I’m fine now. I’m done with crying for nothing.” And I still feel in that place right now, like, I feel lighter here [chest], like something is gone. Something heavy is gone, here, and the stomach. And, I feel like, some big problem is solved . . . Like when you have a test, or something, in school, something that is really worrying you for long time, and finally you’re done with it; you don’t have to worry about it anymore. That’s why I feel more relaxed in my shoulders.

Vitalia wondered: “Maybe that was the beginning of the problems I had with cultures, and maybe . . . this is all coming from there.”

**Letting go of concerns.** Three participants (2 female, 1 male) seemed to ultimately let go of their presenting problems and concerns during meditation in the psychomanteum chamber. Reports suggesting altered states of consciousness (see Root, 2014) were common in this group.

Concluding her post-meditation interview in a state of surrender “out[side] of space,” 33-year-old Lebanese engineer Lena initially entered the chamber with a relational issue focus and vigorously examined the

“superficiality” of Americans by comparing cultures and juggling perspectives. Two prior international sojourns and a “traumatic” 2-year romance with an American man had given her much to consider. For example, she recognized that in Lebanese culture, “if you want to be accepted, you have to be like everybody else.” Her American boyfriend had often “pointed out” cultural differences, including that doing all the cooking and cleaning when friends came to dinner was the “Lebanese way.” Entertaining mixed feelings about U.S. culture, Lena noticed Americans shying from philosophical discussions: “Every time I tried to do that [talk philosophy], it was like . . . they would be scared of the subject or . . . they felt it was kind of too sad.” Around that time, Lena considered: “I’m too sad for this culture.”

I started having all these thoughts that actually I’m . . . not happy, as happy as all the Americans. And I had a lot of problems with the concept of happiness. So every time I met an American person after that, I would try to really show that I’m [a] happy person, as if, they will find out that actually I’m sad.

After meditation, Lena reported: “And now to think of it, I’m not sad or happy.” In the chamber, Lena could not

remember all the bad things.... It’s funny because you asked me to remember all the situations that I felt that [superficiality]. And the opposite was actually happening. I was only remembering the good things . . . [for example,] how smart the [American] people that I met [are] .... And I was like “Why are only the opposite people [coming to mind] . . . ?” I was really forcing myself to remember the first encounters, because I thought about this a while back . . . [Does] it come from culture-like guilt, “Oh. I spoke badly about some people [laughs]” or is it because the mind works that way, in opposites? . . . It’s like, actually . . . they [Americans] don’t all behave this way. You have all these other examples.

Slowing to put her meditation experience in context, Lena realized she had always been “looking to be like everybody else,” that she could not “let go of anything,” that she wanted “to be in control of everything.” Near interview close, however, Lena concluded: “I don’t need to be like everybody else. I was thinking of this constant need of not being weird. . . [I can be] proudly weird [instead]!”

**Shifted perspectives.** Without achieving obvious resolution, three participants (2 female, 1 male)

with a psychological issue focus shifted perspectives on their presenting problems by reviewing memories and reflecting on feelings. One example was 29-year-old Indian spouse Saanvi.

In the pre-meditation interview and psychomanteum chamber, Saanvi conjured memories of feeling “worthy” and compared values, relationships, and cultures. In “flashes of memory,” Saanvi recalled “school times to college times to home to the wedding of a friend.” Primarily focused on memories of others appreciating her contributions and accomplishments back in India, she also remembered “random people” in the States smiling and saying “How’s your day?” Afterwards Saanvi observed: “I think I take myself too seriously … [believing] … that, ‘Okay, I have to make a difference.’”

Achievement both fueled Saanvi’s self-worth and satisfied interpersonal needs: “My father spent a lot of money on my education and I would want to make him comfortable; be able to buy stuff and bring [the family things].” Not the type of person able to “manage things by thinking positive,” like her husband, Saanvi recognized: “If I was working or studying, or something of that sort, I would be feeling less like this.” Worry over joblessness and guilt from spending money on herself were draining confidence, though after meditation Saanvi articulated the goal to make the most of her skills in the United States, whether through taking extensions courses at local colleges or joining a singing group: “If I could find that, in some way, then I think I would be more at peace here.” Saanvi concluded with the recognition that feeling isolated in the States had less to do with the country itself and more to do with being jobless; after all, Saanvi enjoyed America’s clean air and “health conscious” populace: “I am quite a bit of a nature lover, and there are so many trees, lovely big houses, and I like that.”

**Reviewed success factors.** For three participants (2 female, 1 male), meditating in the psychomanteum chamber seemed to predominantly trigger a process of reviewing factors or strategies and techniques for improved CCA. Entering the chamber with a logistical issue focus, 31-year-old Romanian Nadia weighed past decisions, reframed perspectives, and recalled personal habits and qualities useful for adjustment. After meditation, Nadia considered whether she had left loose ends in Romania:

I did everything [laughs]! I said goodbye. I exchanged emails with bosses, colleagues, and so on. So no, it was completely resolved, because it

was, let’s say, not a choice [to sojourn], even though I made this choice as well. It was more like a forced one, so that’s why it felt more like a loss. Yeah, my husband is very, let’s say, pragmatic? … “This is your salary. This is mine. This is what I can get.” So, when we have to choose, he always chooses based on real factors. The emotional ones are not involved in taking a decision.

Nadia recalled research she had done soon after arriving stateside: “I went through all the grief stages since I came here, and now I think I’m in the last one, so I accept it.” Leaving her job in Romania felt like losing a loved one. Nadia initially denied her joblessness: “I think it happened in the beginning: I was ‘No. This cannot be. I will find a job here [U.S.]. This cannot be.’” Though once inside the chamber, Nadia reflected on strengths:

I am passionate; I try to understand “Why?” and “What?” and “What is the benefit?” That I’m, let’s say, intrigued and trying to … be good in everything I do. And, that I’m smart; I’m learning fast. Yeah. Things like this.

Also reviewing her ideal job setting, Nadia reported: “It would be something agile, so moving fast; very dynamic. This would be perfect for me, because I am the same. And I like new challenges, new things all the time.” After meditation, Nadia could not decide whether she felt stressed: “I don’t know. Maybe because I’m trying not to think of what I don’t have, but more on what I want to achieve.”

### **Additional Effects and Results**

Additional cognitive, affective, and somatic effects were reported by all participants (full report in Root, 2014). For example, cognitive effects were reflected in participants’ retrospective reflections, new insights or deeper understanding, and altered states of consciousness. Only two (female) participants reported vivid visions of phenomena in the mirror, which seemed to bring relief to the presenting problem. Italian spouse Vitalia saw an “eye … checking on me in a good way, to keep me calm, saying ‘It’s OK,’” and 32-year old Indian spouse Ananya witnessed shape-shifting animals and a beckoning Hindu God, which she described as “attractive” and “calming.” Overall, affective effects included positive, neutral, and negative feeling states. Most participants suggested their negative emotions were leveled, smoothed out, or relieved.

Photographs of participant drawings and additional post and follow-up qualitative data and ratings are presented in Root (2014). Three participants provided qualitative reports suggesting a temporary increase in culture shock and negative mood at posttest, as reversed in positive follow-up results 1 month later.

### Discussion

The study's low turnout may relate to the fact that psychological service utilization in migrant groups is low, even when distress levels appear high compared to host populations (Selkirk, Quayle, & Rothwell, 2014). Also, expat stress can be moderated by the perception of favorable living conditions (e.g., in California; Shaffer & Harrison, 2001) and the perceived importance of the expat's work (Silbiger & Pines, 2014). Fieldwork during the present study found many Bay Area expats not only satisfied but proud of their work in Silicon Valley and surrounding areas.

Marriage may also buffer physical and psychological stress (Holt-Lunstad, Birmingham, & Jones, 2008) and specifically help to predict expat CCA (Deen, 2011). Most of the sample were spouses of expats, identified by Takeuchi (2010) as "primary stakeholders" (p. 1041) in the success of working expats and "the missing link" (Malek, Jaguli, & Palil, 2013, p. 224) in fostering better social integration between working expats and host-country locals.

Three spouses in the current study, however, felt especially limited in their choice to sojourn and another struggled being alone while the husband worked long hours. The spouses as a whole felt challenged to adapt to joblessness, in addition to their adjustment concerns. Fortunately, the Bay Area expat spouse support group gave spouses a reason to "get out" (Bikos et al., 2007, p. 44) and seemed to provide both internal support systems (e.g., intimate relationships, network of friends) and a sense of institutional support (Schlossberg, 1981) to its members. The size, breadth, and depth of the spouse's social network matters in adjustment (Shaffer & Harrison, 2001), and support received from local rather than long-distance relationships may lead to better outcomes (Copeland & Norrell, 2002).

Comprised of eight different nationalities, the study's small sample was fragmented along cultural lines, making evidence-based cultural-comparisons impossible. The degree of personal choice to initiate the international sojourn in the first place also fragmented the sample. Four participants were self-initiated expatriates (SIEs; Cerdin &

Selmer, 2014), somewhat different from the organizational expatriate (OE; Whitman & Isakovic, 2012) who is sent abroad to serve traditional business functions. Identifying SIEs as an emerging source of competitive advantage for international firms, Cerdin, Diné, and Brewster (2014) used qualitative research to argue that the success of qualified immigrants depends on their motivation to integrate into the host country, which initially depends on the motivation to move internationally. Earlier research on a mixed group of OEs found decision autonomy associated with increased levels of adjustment (Takeuchi, Shay, & Li, 2008). In international students, self-determined motivation benefitted adjustment, whereas avoiding home led to reduced adaptation (Chirkov, Vansteenkiste, Tao, & Lynch, 2007). In SIE academics, the affective reason to expatriate called refuge (life change/escape) negatively influenced job adjustment and self-rated time to proficiency (Selmer & Lauring, 2013). Contrary to popular perception, self-initiated sojourns may thus lead to career capital stagnation (Rodriguez & Scurry, 2014). Most of the jobless but otherwise skilled expat spouses struggled on a daily basis to find avenues for meaningful self-expression and productivity.

Quantitative results suggest that a psychomanteum process can have a statistically significant, positive impact on culture shock and mood disturbance, independent of sex, length of stay in the United States, English language proficiency, and education. However, in reference to these demographics it bears repeating that lack of statistical significance with such a small number of participants does not mean lack of an effect.

Decreased mood disturbance on the POMS specifically suggests therapeutic improvement due to the psychomanteum process, though follow-up time is needed for the intervention's impact to reach levels of statistical significance. This finding could indicate delayed treatment effects, common in psychotherapy (Strupp, 2013; Troeung, Egan, & Gasson, 2014). With cognitive behavioral therapy, for example, sessions are thought to initiate a process that "unfolds" after and between sessions (Rachman, 1999, p. 294).

With lower power, results by follow up somewhat parallel Hastings et al. (2002) and Hastings (2012a). Studies share reductions in items pertaining to sadness, loss, anger, fear, and loneliness. Moreover, the process used in the present study relieved negative effects from four of the top six central symptom-categories of culture shock, including: anxiety, tension or strain, and

irritability, anger or hostility; depression; loss, deprivation, or alienation; and loneliness and homesickness. Results both support a fledgling body of evidence for the efficacy of psychomanteum processes for traditional bereavement and lay the foundation of future interventions for grief symptomatology in culture-loss related bereavement.

Extraversion's mediation of improvements in CCA in this study may relate to Ward, Leong, and Low's (2004) finding that psychological adaptation in sojourning students to Singapore and Australia correlated with high Extraversion. Host-culture norms partly determine acceptance of extraverted behavior (Ward et al., 2004), however, and introverts will find acceptance and success in some cultural milieus that extraverts will not, and vice versa (Fulmer et al., 2010).

From pretest to posttest, the greater change reported by Portuguese than Indian or Italian participants may be due to relatively higher initial levels of affective distress. Portugal ranks especially low on individualism, according to Hofstede and Hofstede's (2005) dimensions of national cultures, while the United States tops the list. Two of three Portuguese participants also had relatively high motivation to experience meditation and knew how to articulate feelings from prior counseling sessions. Hastings (2012a) noted that a strong need to resolve distress and a willingness to discuss feelings were required for a successful outcome in psychomanteum sessions.

Religious or spiritual practices engaged by participants during the 4 weeks following meditation may have helped to further reduce total culture shock and mood disturbance, though no study yet has measured the impact of these variables on culture shock. Interpretation is also muddled by the non-specificity of the single survey item used in this study: "How important is religion/spirituality to you?" Religious issues can be a major trigger of culture shock in expats, suggesting the wide variety of religious/spiritual definitions and practices in the world (Rajasekar & Renand, 2013).

Lack of consensus on terms impacts research on the relationship between religiosity/spirituality and psychological adjustment (Hackney & Sanders, 2003). In Ivitan, Chan, Gardner, and Prashar (2013), high spirituality was associated with high scores on measures of self-actualization, meaning in life, and personal growth initiative, whereas levels of religious involvement had no effect. Cultural factors also appear to play a significant role in how individuals maintain psychological well-being and predict the efficacy of

religious/spiritual practices on certain groups (Chai, Krägeloh, Shepherd, & Billington, 2012). Culture may also mediate the positive effects of religious/spiritual beliefs on bereavement (Becker et al., 2007) and, by extension, culture-shock related grief.

Main qualitative effects generally mirrored quantitative reductions, suggesting improved intra- and interpersonal functioning (e.g., feeling less likely to cry and less impatient or irritable with others) and predicting improvements in logistical success. Most participants in the sample were undergoing significant change in life roles (Super, 1980), especially spouses who had left career-defining jobs (Bikos et al., 2007) to join their husbands in California. Reductions in impatient/irritable may reflect improved outlooks on adjustment success in the Bay Area, though overall, no pattern emerged with respect to main effects in this group. Results indicate a variety of possible outcomes that expat spouses might experience during and after the psychomanteum process for culture shock.

Reports from the two longest-sojourning SIEs in the sample indicated a main effect of letting go. Qualitative reports from the working expats altogether suggested they were facing career adaptability issues (Super & Knasel, 1981), such as having to balance contextual factors whilst seeking to become "more like the person that she or he wants to be" (Savickas, 1997, p. 253). The psychomanteum process helped to bring related issues to light.

#### **Elaborations and Contradictions of the Literature**

The present study focused on remedying general adjustment, or "psychological comfort related to the host cultural environment (e.g., weather, food, and living conditions)" (Takeuchi, 2010, p. 1042). Antecedents of general adjustment stress for participants in the present study included intrapersonal, interpersonal, and extrapersonal variables. In particular, as with working expats, expat spouses in this study struggled to balance intrapersonal with extrapersonal stressors in facing career adaptability issues (e.g., Bikos et al., 2007), although the process of connecting with lost feelings during the psychomanteum process may lead to enhanced identity development in the long term (Erichsen, 2011). Agreeing with Hechanova, Beehr, and Christiansen (2003) and perhaps explaining relatively low initial levels of culture shock in participants was the cultural distance factor: Expats were familiar with American culture before arrival, whereas personality

did not emerge as a significant mediator of intervention-facilitated adjustment, contrary to the literature (Bhatti, Battour, Ismail, & Sundram, 2014).

Present findings agree with the ABC model of cultural shock (Bochner, 2003), which broadened research on culture adjustment to consider external sources of adjustment stress, such as the relational and logistical problems reported by participants in the present study. Participants were in a dynamic process of change, agreeing with the fundamental tenet of ABC theory that culture shock indicates positive development.

Results also largely cohered with earlier psychomanteum research (e.g., Hastings, 2012a; Moody, 1992). The psychomanteum for culture shock helped many participants enter a relaxed, if not altered state from which to address issues. Psychological priming also appeared effective, especially with participants who clarified emotional conflicts and let go of adjustment-interfering issues and concerns. Overall, results agreed with Roll (2004) and Hastings (2012a) that obvious contact with desired subjects during meditation was not required for significant shifts in affect. The idea of making beneficial contact during psychomanteum meditation can now extend to thoughts and feelings (e.g., Tajiri, 2008), not just to individuals or memories of individuals.

Finally, results agree or elaborate on the theory of cultural bereavement (Eisenbruch, 1992). Expat participants appeared to benefit from addressing adjustment concerns through the lens of loss. Some appeared resigned to their changing selves—having let go of what once worked with some closure—whereas others sought to recover and reintegrate lost aspects.

### **Delimitations, Limitations, and Future Research**

The study was delimited to data from self-report questionnaires that were not triangulated with objective data, such as physiological stress indices or with reports of third-party observers. Future research could confirm that culture shock does indeed trigger grief symptomatology by assessing typical somatic symptoms of grief, such as fatigue, sleep problems, musculoskeletal pain, and headaches. The study was also delimited to the demographics of San Francisco Bay Area expats, where many are employed by high-tech companies rather than other businesses.

Results are limited by a handful of factors, including the lack of a non-treatment control group. Demand characteristics of the study and the passage of time may have played a serious role in changes reported.

### **Mirror Gazing for Cultural Bereavement**

The role of the mirror in the psychomanteum chamber also requires further research. In 2007, Slakey discovered that participants who gazed at a reflective surface during a psychomanteum process provided more descriptive elaborations of and attached more significant meaning to their visual experiences than individuals who gazed at a nonreflective surface. In the current research, however, it cannot be determined whether the combination of supportive conversations, meditating quietly for 30 minutes, and drawing pictures was enough to bring about the observed changes.

Experimenter characteristics could have created expectancy or acquiescent effects in participants and impacted results. Also limiting is the self-selected nature of the study sample. Findings may apply only to individuals ready and willing to explore and seek relief from culture shock and mood disturbance. Moreover, participants may have differed from the general population on measures of social desirability, tender-mindedness, and belief in the paranormal, among others. Cumulative past experience with meditation, counseling, and healing arts, could also confound results.

Finally, the study's small sample size clearly limits results. The sample fails Green and Salkind's (2005) requirement of 15 participants per data cell for a trustable  $p$  value. The group was fragmented along demographic lines, making statistically meaningful convergence of data impossible. Before a cross-validation study obtains similar quantitative results, claims to the efficacy of the psychomanteum process for culture shock should be made with caution.

Findings represent the experience of a very small cross-section of Bay Area expats and results cannot be generalized to other locations and times (Meltzoff, 1998). Future studies also in less exotic locales could use lower cut-off scores during screening with the CSQ and K10. Results suggest that participants with relatively low initial culture shock and clinical distress may still benefit from the intervention.

The present author acknowledges his own self-identification as a bicultural expatriate. To help counteract potential biases and minimize distortion throughout the course of the study, the author used personal spiritual practices (meditation, projective dream work, hatha yoga, creative expression) and incorporated transpersonal research skills (e.g., quieting, intention, mindfulness, discernment; Anderson & Braud, 2011), whenever possible.

## Conclusion

Limited findings suggest an effective intervention approach for expats and expat spouses. The major underlying, salient stressor in this study's subsample of expat spouses was the inability to legally work in America, which was considered unfair and illogical. Pending cross-validation, the psychomanteum process could be used in conjunction with talk therapy techniques (psychotherapy, coaching) and support groups for expats to facilitate cultural adjustment and improve quality of life abroad. Psychomanteum sessions could be spaced at regular intervals and combined with compatible techniques. Increasing globalization demands continued research into the complex problems of expatriation and interventions for culture shock.

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### Note

1. This article is adapted from Root, S. W. (2014). *Mirror gazing and culture shock: The positive impact of a restricted sensory environment meditation process on negative affect in self-initiated business sojourners and expatriate spouses* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Sofia University, Palo Alto, CA.

Special thanks to Dr. Glenn Hartelius of the California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco, for his help in manuscript preparation.

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Samuel enjoys traveling, reading, singing, hatha yoga, and spending time with wife Amanda.

### About the Journal

The *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies* is a peer-reviewed academic journal in print since 1981. It is sponsored by the California Institute of Integral Studies, published by Floraglades Foundation, and serves as the official publication of the International Transpersonal Association. The journal is available online at [www.transpersonalstudies.org](http://www.transpersonalstudies.org), and in print through [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com) (search for IJTS).