

Running Header: A CULTURE SHOCK

A Culture Shock: The Brazilian Experience

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Introduction

Culture shock is the personal disorientation a person may feel when experiencing an unfamiliar way of life due to immigration or a visit to a new country, a move between social environments, or simply travel to another type of life(1). This feeling of culture shock can also be interpreted by anxiety, which forms as a result of the loss of familiar signs, symbols, and social interaction. Culture shock for an individual can range from traveling to a new country to changing living locations to another state. Culture shock is categorized into four different phases, the honeymoon, frustration, adjustment and mastery.

The honeymoon stage consists of a short period where the old and new culture are seen in almost a romantic light, hence being called the honeymoon stage. When moving to a new location the individual will love the new food, pace of life, and the local's habits. The person becomes fascinated by the new culture.

Next, becomes the frustration stage. After a period of time the differences between the old and new culture shine to light and begin to create anxiety for the individual. At this point, the initial excitement is gone, and the person may experience unpleasant feelings, frustration and even anger towards events going on around them that are normal in that culture. These events may include language barriers, traffic hazards, food, and even social boundaries.

The third stage is the adjustment phase. After a certain period of time the individual becomes accustomed to the new culture and may develop daily routines. This stage is where things become normal and the person can expect the outcome of situations at the events occurring.

Lastly, the mastery stage includes individuals being able to participate fully and comfortably in the environment they are now in. Mastery does not mean fluent and full conversing with other people from a different country.

Luckily, do to our trip to Brasil being only about fourteen days we were in the honeymoon stage the entire time. The entire crew from our trip did not get the chance to experience any other stage of culture shock other than the honeymoon phase.

Manaus

Initial Arrival

The first stop of the Brasil trip landed us in the beautiful city of Manaus. The first thing I noticed when getting off the airplane was the lack of security, even being a group of Americans they seemed to just let us by. The initial culture shock I experienced was the change of currencies, realizing how expensive our dollar was compared to Brasil's country currency. The exchange rate ended up being one reais is about two and a half dollars. Even though items being purchased the entire trip ended up being about the same price as if I were to purchase them in the states, this was still a major excitement for me.

The second shock I experienced in Manaus was when the crew of students was first picked up and then dropped off at the hotel we were staying at. The taxi driver picked up all eleven of us, and gladly took all of our luggage and loaded them into the back of the cab and was extremely nice about everything. This initial hospitality threw me off completely because you don't experience something like that in the states.

When arriving at the hotel we had to fill out a piece of paper that explained why we were visiting the country, where we were coming from, how we got to our destination, and our plans for the rest of the trip. This is not common protocol when checking into any type of hotel in the states.

What was extremely interesting at the hotel we first checked into at Manaus, Hospital Adventista de Manaus, was that the key cards they gave us to get into the hotel rooms had to be placed into a holder on the side of the wall as soon as you walked into the room. The holder on the side of the wall allowed the rest of the room to get electricity, as long as the key card remained inside the holder. This included the lights for the entire room, as well as the air conditioner unit.

Another thing my roommate and I realized at the time while checking into the rooms at our hotel in Manaus was how the toilet flushed. The flusher handle on the toilet was on-top of the tower instead of the side which is what we are used to seeing. The flusher was a button that sat on top, and the button consisted of two different types of push downs. The 1st level of push down was for liquid waste only and the 2nd level of push down was for solid waste.

Adventure Throughout Manaus

After the initial culture shock of Brasil and the normal living standards I was excited to learn what else the country had in store. After quickly adjusting to the living patterns and sleeping arrangements, I knew there was one thing left in store for our crew of students, and that was the food. The hotel we first stayed at offered us complimentary breakfast, which I knew would be completely different from my mother's cooking in the morning. The breakfast at the hotel was set up in a buffet style, and of course offered scrambled eggs. What shocked me the most was that there were no pancakes or waffles, which I then realized that they lacked those items because it is only found in the United States. Another difference between breakfasts was the lack of meat that Brasil had to offer. Americans are used to having multiple choices for different types of meats, Brasil had the classic bacon but included another option that was labeled as "sausage" but can be directly related to a common hotdog found at a local baseball game. With the common breakfast I found there are no real juices that come with it, other than what the country has to offer which included local fruits.

Another huge shock that myself and the crew I was with experienced was when we ventured into down town Manaus, and realized that when traveling towards center city from the outskirts of town the architect completely changes. We noticed the buildings had an older and more rustic look to them. Our tour guide took us into the town square which we learned about how the stones in the town square were rubbles that were brought over from Europe and they were put into the same place left untouched. Most of the buildings still stand from Europe rocks, and inside these buildings families have come and gone as well. What really stood out to me was generations of families still staying and living for centuries in the same buildings their ancestors did. This is unheard of back in the States because most families tend to either move, or rebuild their houses from time to time.

During our time in Manaus we had the opportunity to take a boat trip on the Amazon River, and was allowed to dock on the side of the forest and walk around. What really amazed me was the fact that in Brasil they have market places in almost every town. There is no central food service or a warehouse vendor like we have in the states, for example Walmart, Costco, Foodtown etc. The country of Brasil only has these central market places where the locals go for all of their needs, which range from fresh produce to even cooking oil. In order to get to the

docks/bay area to get this boat trip we had to walk through this market and a number of different vendors to get towards the water front.

A huge cultural difference between what I am normally used to in the States and how people are in Brasil, is how there is a mini town that operates on the bay front. Boats are constantly in and out all times of the day, and people are there trying to barter and exchange items and it is a normal way of life.

Lastly, to finish off the Manaus trip we took a long river tour of the Amazon and got to visit some of the villages that were stationed on the sides of the Amazon itself. There are whole towns that are fully functional and completely operate daily lives with houses on floats on the side of the river banks. When taking a boat past these villages, our guide pointed out which buildings were which, a school, a church, local market etc. These people have adopted and taken in this river life as their own.

Rio De Janeiro

Initial Arrival

After leaving Manaus our next destination was Rio De Janeiro, where we stayed at the Copacabana Hotel. As soon as the crew touched down in Rio I noticed that there were no police men on foot or in cars anywhere patrolling on the roads. There was only security inside government buildings, or privately employed buildings. Privately employed as in hotels, or banks. Instead, the only police we ended up seeing was a caravan of about 1-3 armored vehicles that did an hour drive up and down the multiple roads of the city of Rio. Comparing the police force in Brasil to the police force back home, they are more heavily armed. In the United States, police officers carry around a pistol at most, some patrolmen on the streets only have pepper spray or a night stick. The police force in Brasil carried around a minimum of a light assault rifle, because the country is operating as a military government.

Adventure Throughout Rio

Another thing I noticed in Rio that was extremely different than any other cities in the States that I have visited, was there were no chain restaurants. They did however have the few McDonalds that were randomly located on the streets, but nothing like convenient store chains.

Every little shop seemed to be privately owned. On the corner of the streets they had these opened walled Deli's, with a bar and a couple of bar stools that, in passing, you can pop in for a bite to eat and then head out on your way.

The major public transportation within Rio is the elaborate Subway system they have installed. It is way bigger than that of New York City, and it almost runs as a small town under the street. There is no major bus system above ground, so it was interesting to see the lack of taxi drivers on the surface of the streets. There are no motorcycle laws in Rio, or all of Brasil for that matter so there is a lot of activity, and passing of cars on people in motorcycles. These motorcyclists are allowed to weave in and out of traffic and even at a red light, pass cars to get to the front of the line.

There was a small time in between our travels and dinner that the crew was able to take a trip to the beach and relax for a little bit. While enjoying leisure time laying down in the sand, there were multiple vendors that came up to us to try to sell us things. Many people had large backpacks on and they made their way from group to group trying to sell drinks, crafts, blankets and towels that they have made. This was a huge surprise to me because I never experienced something like this, it was almost like we were being waited on just sitting down at the beach.

Curitiba

Initial Arrival

When we first arrived in Curitiba, it was set up way differently than Manaus and Rio. The city of Curitiba was more of a residential, suburban like town, completely different if compared to Manaus and Rio which would be like Philadelphia and New York City. Every restaurant that we went to while staying in Curitiba was set up either like a serve yourself buffet style, or the waiter/waitress came over with plates of food being passed around, it wasn't sit down and order.

Adventure Throughout Curitiba

The next day after arriving into Curitiba we took a bus tour, which took us around the town and we were offered four different stops to get on and off and look around. Curitiba has an elaborate bus system that is set up multiple buses for different routes. The buses are color coded for which responsibility it has. The reason for this bus system is lack of traffic congestion in and

out of the city. This was extremely new to all of us because we have never seen anything like this before, and after research we discovered that the bus system is almost 500 times cheaper than a subway system set up. All because of the mayor Jamie Lerner integrating this bus system, it moves about 70% of the population per day. Which is far more effective than any transportation we have in the United States.

What really amazed me about Curitiba was the entire park system they have set in place as well. There are about five parks all tied together, which surrounds the entire system, and is about, approximately, three hour round-trip. Each lake has been made into a park, and the park has three different lanes. One lane for bicycles, another lane for running, and another lane for leisurely walking. This astounded me because most people in the United States don't even visit parks, and Curitiba has this fantastic system set up, and has become a part of many people's daily lives. Another thing I noticed inside these parks is that there are steel equipment that are used for working out, almost like an adult playground. Lastly, what I noticed with the parks is that there are these huge Capybara animals which, according to our bus guide, is used as shepherds to keep the birds/geese away from the lakes.

Conclusion

Arriving home from Brasil made me realize how fortunate we are to live in the country we live in. How different everything was compared to what I was normally used to, led my adventure to myself acting differently. From the moment we touched down in Brasil until the moment we left everything was different. Comparing from when we ordered food at a restaurant, to how the bathrooms were set up, to public transportation, even social norms. The culture shock experiences that were discussed were normal of that among the group we were with. Everyone experienced the same shock, and in other cases different situations from what we are normally used to.

Works Cited

Macionis, John, and Linda Gerber. "Chapter 3 - Culture." *Sociology*. 7th edition ed. Toronto, ON: Pearson Canada Inc., 2010. 54. Print. (1)