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Intercultural Awareness: A Training Handbook for Volunteers and Refugees (Version 1)



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Foreword

This Handbook was created thanks to Shirley Billage (Cascade Cultural Solutions), Gabriela Weglowska (SIETAR UK) and Dr Katharina Lefringhausen (Centre for Applied Linguistics, Warwick University) as part of a joint project with SIETAR UK and Grassroots, led by Ciaran O'Brien (Cultural Kinetics). It outlines the key concepts and activities used in an intercultural awareness training session delivered on 19th of May 2018 to volunteers who support refugees and asylum seekers in the Midlands, UK. This Handbook was funded by the Faculty of Social Sciences Research Development Fund 2018.

SIETAR UK

SIETAR UK is UK's leading Society for Intercultural Education, Training, and Research. Its main purpose is to build a strong network of intercultural practitioners in the UK with activities ranging from conferences, professional development and networking events, and job offers. As a not-for-profit organisation, SIETAR UK is solely run by a Board of volunteers who are experienced in and passionate about the intercultural field. For more information, please visit: <https://sietar.co.uk/>.

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Why we Wrote this Handbook

The main purpose of this handbook is to provide a range of practical activities that allow volunteers (UK nationals and refugees) as well as Refugees and Asylum Seekers (RAS) to:

1. Develop a deeper awareness of their own culture,
2. Identify the positive aspects of cultural adaptation,
3. Gain a better understanding of the key frameworks to engage with culture and cultural adaptation,
4. Enable other volunteers and refugees to achieve goals 1-3.

All activities are based on the assumption that individuals who come into consistent first-hand contact with members of another culture can experience changes in their values, behaviours and identity formation (theory of acculturation; Redfield, Linton & Herskovits, 1936).

In particular, we consider the acculturation of both RAS towards the UK culture, as well as UK nationals towards RAS' cultures (Lefringhausen & Marshall, 2016; see also Chapter 'A Brief Introduction to the Underlying Theories & Definitions' on page 5). Thus, this Handbook includes activities that assist both parties' integration towards each other.

A Brief Introduction to the Underlying Theories and Definitions

A Definition of Culture

According to Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009, p. 15), culture...

1. is manifested through different types of regularities, some of which are more explicit than others.
2. is associated with social groups, but no two individuals within a group share exactly the same cultural characteristics.
3. affects people's behaviour and interpretations of behaviour.
4. is acquired and/or constructed through interactions with others.

1. Culture is manifested through different types of regularities, some of which are more explicit than others.

You can think about these “regularities” in a form of 3Ps (Hall, 1976, Moran, 2001; Spencer-Oatey & Kádár, 2016 p. 9): Products, Practices and Perspectives.

Explicit Components of Culture: visible or directly observable

Products:

“These are the ‘concrete’ or ‘codified’ aspects of culture. They include physical objects such as buildings, clothes, furniture, equipment, and how they are arranged (e.g. interior design of a room). They also include less tangible aspects, such as the language code – the words, sounds, and grammar of a language.”

Practices:

“These are the regularities of behaviour that we display, such as driving on the left side of the road and shaking hands or bowing when we meet someone new. They include our common patterns of speaking – the ways in which we use the words, sounds, and grammar of our language, such as how we typically introduce people or engage in small talk. These practices reflect the rules, conventions, and norms of the social group in which we are interacting.”

Implicit Components of Culture: hidden and need to be inferred

Perspectives:

“These are the deep-seated and often unconscious attitudes, values and beliefs that we hold about life, such as respect for elders, the need for modesty, and the importance of independence and self-sufficiency.”

2. Culture is associated with social groups, but no two individuals within a group share exactly the same cultural characteristics.

We understand culture (e.g., in form of the 3Ps) as a group phenomenon - that is, culture can relate to people from the same nation state, from the same company or the same profession. For example, we argue that people from the same country share a culture. We also argue that people from the same company can share an organizational culture (e.g., how internal communication and hierarchy is handled). We can also observe that being part of a certain profession such as teaching brings with it cultural regularities that are different to being an engineer.

Yet, just because one is British does not imply that we all share the exact same cultural characteristics.

3. Culture affects people’s behaviour and interpretations of behaviour.

Whether it is the way we think, speak, perceive the world or react to others - culture provides a filter to our lives which shapes what we find important and what we think is expected of us in life. Thus, being interculturally competent is not a soft skill, but an ability that can broaden our filters and thus change how we live our lives and impact that of others.

4. Culture is acquired and/or constructed through interactions with others.

We learn culture. It can be through our parents whose behaviour we copy as children. It can be through the school which demonstrates how achievement is measured, how learning should be or how -content is presented to us (chronologically, holistically, analytically, etc.). All of this includes interactions with others and their ideas of what behaviours and values are considered to be the norm.

A Definition of Integration

The theory of acculturation has been formulated by Redfield et al. (1936) as a psychological process of bi-directional adaptation and learning due to sustained contact between members and/or groups of differing cultural backgrounds. Berry (1992, 1997) took this further, introducing the largely supported bidimensional acculturation model consisting of the extent to which an individual varies in the maintenance of their heritage culture and the adaptation towards a new culture.

In other words, acculturation does not have to be a zero sum trade-off between one's heritage culture and a host culture. **With regard to refugees, for example, this results in four possible acculturation orientations or strategies** (Berry, 1997; Bourhis, Moise, Perreault, & Senecal, 1997):

Is it considered to be important to maintain one's cultural heritage?			
Is it considered to be of valued to adopt to the larger society?	YES	INTEGRATION Adapting to the new culture (e.g., learn the language, behavioural norms, have friends with members of the new culture) and maintaining the heritage culture (e.g., staying in touch with relatives and friends from the heritage culture, speaking the language and engaging the culture's traditions.	ASSIMILATION Rejecting one's heritage culture and completely adapting to the new cultural ways (e.g., no contact to one's relatives and friends in the heritage culture, not speaking the native language but only the host culture's language).
	NO	SEPARATION Sticking to one's heritage culture only (e.g., not making any effort to make friends with locals, speaking only the native language)	MARGINALISATION Rejecting both – one's heritage and host culture. This often happens not by choice, but because the host country does not accept the newcomer as well as heritage cultural members may feel betrayed and reject the refugee/migrant too.*
		YES	NO

*Some research suggests that there is a form of 'constructive marginalization' (Bennett, 1993). People who operate under this form are those who strive under the circumstance of not belonging anywhere in specific and yet fitting into multiple cultural contexts. They are also referred to as global nomads and third culture kids.

Notably, integration for refugees therefore implies the maintenance of heritage culture aspects whilst adapting to the UK culture. Research over the last 30 years with participants from around the world supports the notion that **integration is the most beneficial orientation for migrants and refugees** - that is, integration ensures the lowest levels of mental distress as well as problems with daily life tasks (e.g., at work) in the new cultural environment.

Let's have a closer look at what we mean by integration.

Broadly speaking, a refugee can integrate i.e. maintain the heritage culture as well as adapt to the UK culture - across three levels to varying extent (Berry, Phinney, Sam & Vedder, 2006, Ryder, Aldan, & Paulhus, 2000): cultural identities, values, and contact-participation in each.

	Heritage Culture - Somali	Host Culture - UK
Identity	<p>"I belong to Somalia and its people."</p> <p>"I feel personally insulted when someone speaks ill about Somalis."</p>	<p>"I have a strong sense of belonging to the UK"</p> <p>"When I talk about the Brits, I usually say 'we' rather than 'they'."</p>
Values	<p>"I often behave in ways that are typical for Somalis (e.g., speaking the language or using Somali humour)."</p> <p>"I believe in the values of my Somali culture (e.g., respecting the needs of the family more than personal needs)."</p>	<p>"I hold typical British characteristics."</p> <p>"I do things the way British people do (e.g., speak English or use dark humour.)"</p>
Contact-participation	<p>"I have Somali friends".</p> <p>"I engage in a lot of social activities with other Somalis."</p>	<p>"I would marry someone who is British".</p> <p>"I work a lot with Brits and I enjoy it."</p>

A Change in Perspective: UK Nationals Integration Towards Refugees

Recently, Lefringhausen and Marshall (2016) re-evaluated the theory of acculturation by proposing that host country nationals (e.g., UK nationals) can integrate towards ethnic minorities (e.g., refugees) they interact with. This theory has been tested with data from the UK, China, India, Germany and the USA, supporting the notion that a) host country nationals can integrate (but also separate, assimilate, and marginalize) and b) those who endorse an integration orientation have higher levels of subjective well-being, less feelings of stress but instead higher levels of comfort in intercultural situations.

Haugen and Kunst (2017) replicated these findings with a Norwegian sample, showing that integrated Norwegians (i.e., those who maintain both their Norwegian culture and adopt immigrant cultures, e.g., language, friends, identity) experienced less feelings of identity threat and perceived ethnic discrimination in comparison to those who separated (i.e., those who maintained the Norwegian culture but made no efforts to adopt to immigrants' cultures).

Taking this into consideration, UK nationals' integration could look like this:

	Heritage Culture - UK	New Culture - Somali
Identity	"I feel personally insulted when someone speaks ill about Brits."	"When I talk about the refugees I work with, I usually say 'we' rather than 'they'."
Values	"I often behave in ways that are typical for Brits (e.g., speaking English or using British humour)."	"I sometimes do things the way I have seen refugees do (e.g., how to pronounce their names or cooking)"
Contact-participation	"I engage in a lot of social activities with other Brits."	"I work a lot with refugees and I enjoy it."

Heritage Culture Awareness (Enculturation)

When we interact with members of another culture it makes us realize that we actually have something like our own “culture”. For volunteers and refugees alike, this can imply starting to reflect on and learning more about one’s own culture. This may result in a more in-depth enculturation towards your own culture.

Enculturation is a process all humans go through when growing up in any culture. It is “the socialization process wherein individuals learn about and retain their traditional or indigenous cultural norms, values, behaviors, attitudes, or worldviews (Herskovits, 1948). Thus, whereas psychological acculturation describes individual changes resulting from socialization to dominant cultural norms, psychological enculturation describes individual changes resulting from (re)socialization to indigenous cultural norms (i.e., identity, values, behaviors, attitudes, or worldviews; B. S. K. Kim & Abreu, 2001)” (as cited in Alamilla, Kim, Walker, & Slsson, 2017, p. 39).

In particular, as a volunteer you need to engage with and inquire about the UK culture (e.g., the 3Ps) to be able to show refugees a route towards it as well as to enable your personal route towards integration.

Similarly, refugees need to have the chance to stay involved with their heritage culture to achieve integration.

How to Use this Handbook

This handbook can be used as both a guide for volunteers to make sense of their personal acculturation journey towards refugees and as an exercise book which volunteers can use during their interactions with refugees to support them towards integration - that is, refugees maintenance of their heritage culture as well as the adaptation towards the UK.

You can use activities included in this handbook in one-to-one interactions as well as in a training session with a group. The activities are ordered in a logical progression, yet feel free to pick and choose the ones you feel are most suitable for a given purpose and situation.

For volunteers who meet regularly with the same refugees for a period of time, we recommend taking your time with these activities. For example, you could engage in one activity per meeting and use the reflective questions during your next encounter.

Activity 1 – Describing Culture

Objective: Raise learners' awareness of the complexity of culture and develop a shared understanding of the concept of culture.

What is culture? Is it an easy or difficult question?

In this activity, we encourage you to discuss the concept of culture with the refugee(s) or volunteers you will be working with. You can make it fun by proposing a group competition (i.e. by dividing learners into two groups if you are working with groups), or a one-on-one race (just you and your learner).

Instructions to facilitate this activity:

- Tell the learner(s) that they have 2 minutes to come up with 10 single keywords to describe culture (time them for 2 minutes).
- After 2 minutes ask them to reduce their lists to only 3 keywords that represent the concept of culture (time them for 1 minute).
- Then say that the winner is the group/person whose 3 keywords were the closest to the following definition:

“The way we do things around here”

(Marvin Bower of McKinsey & Company, as cited in Deal & Kennedy, 1982)

Most likely, no one's words will match the above definition. However, you may notice that some learners come up with words such as: food, clothes, art, whereas others may come up with words such as: behaviour, beliefs, values, practices.

Key takeaways

This is a fun activity to illustrate that culture is a fascinating, complex phenomenon that is made of numerous components (i.e. food, customs, behaviours, values – see 'Definition of Culture' and 3Ps on page 6) and that it can mean different things to different people.

Culture should not be thought about as just arts, food or clothes. There is so much more to it, although invisible. In order to truly get to know someone, we need to make an effort to get to know their values and beliefs, what is important to them, what makes them comfortable and what does not. Only then will we be able to build cultural bridges.

Activity 2 – Identifying your Cultural Backpack

Objective: Increase learners' cultural self-awareness, identify various levers and layers of their individual cultures and explore how they have been formed.

Imagine that your identity is held in an invisible backpack that you carry with you.

What would you have in it?

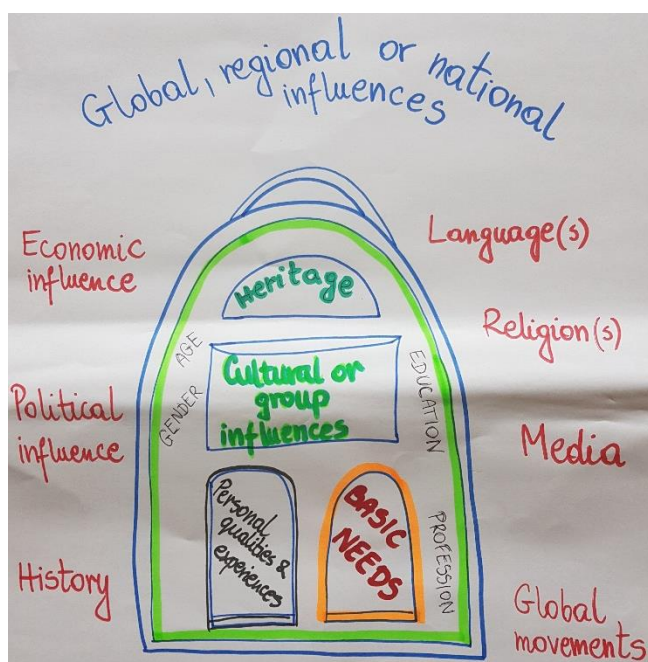
"All of us carry an invisible backpack of our culture, experiences, beliefs, values and morals. Whenever we encounter another person, our backpack is present with us and influences how we interact with that person." (McIntosh, 1988)

Our backpacks grow and change with us. They also have different pockets containing our various roles and identities such as sibling, parent, friend or manager.

Instructions to facilitate this activity:

- Draw your own backpack on a piece of paper and show it to the learner(s), see an example below.
- Ask the learner(s) to use half of a A4 paper to draw their own "cultural backpack" model.
- They do not have to share it as it can be quite personal, but when they finish ask them about their key learning points.

Example for a Cultural Backpack



Key takeaways

Culture is a group phenomenon which influences each of us. It is fluid which means it moves and changes. We are shaped and reshaped by our interactions with each other. Culture is expressed both consciously and unconsciously; some elements of our cultures are explicit, others are implicit (link to 3Ps). Each of us has many roles and these are important factors affecting our identity.

You may not be aware that something you do is cultural until you are in a situation where things are done differently. You cannot know the person until you get to know them (do not assume, do not judge!).

Activity 3 – Exploring Stereotypes and Generalisation

Objective: Understand the role and the impact of stereotypes and generalisations in cross-cultural interactions.

We all have stereotypes – and these can be good or bad. They are often based on a few encounters with a different culture or members of a cultural group which then gets generalised to the whole cultural group. This activity will show that we all have preconceived ideas of what a country is like, and these ideas will impact on how we view people who originate from those countries.

Where in the world?

Instructions to facilitate this activity:

- Select some pictures from around the world that perhaps do not show a ‘typical’ image of that country.
- Ask the group to guess which country each picture is from.
- They can write down the answers individually at first, and then come back as a group to share answers.

#1 _____



#2 _____



#3 _____



Source: <https://www.pexels.com/>

Answers:

#1 India

#2 England

#3 Canada

Reflective Questions

Volunteer:

- When you travel to a different country, what stereotypes might the people you encounter have of UK/British citizens?
- Is there any truth to the stereotypes that people hold about the UK and British citizens?

Refugee/Asylum seeker:

- What were your thoughts about UK/British people before you arrived?
- Did/do you share these expectations with other asylum seekers/refugees who came to Europe? (watch: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_7YBLfFFvc)

Both:

- Where do you think these stereotypes have come from?
- How do they influence us?

Key takeaways

We often have a quite narrow view of a particular place, but there is often a greater diversity to a country than we are aware of. This impacts the experience of people who live there/come from there and so we put people into a small box within our understanding and create stereotypes.

We may have seen images on the news of country X showing people living in poverty. We then make a judgement that all people in country X are poor. Therefore, when we meet people from country X we are making assumptions about them and their background.

In other words, stereotypes can influence or even hinder refugees' interaction with volunteers and other UK citizens. They can also influence how volunteers' approach and judge their interactions with refugees, and thus it can influence their likeliness to continue their support as a volunteer.

How to handle one's stereotypes (both volunteers and refugees)

D.I.E Model (Bennett, Bennett, & Stillings, 1977).

- **D: describe.** Describe the situation in concrete, observable terms. What do you see (hear, etc.)?
- **I: interpret.** Try to find at least three different interpretations of the interaction or occurrence. What helps explain what you see?
- **E: evaluate.** Evaluate what you observed or experienced. Consider how you might have felt if you were a member of the other culture and held their values and beliefs. How do you feel about what you see?

D.A.E Model (Nam & Condon, 2010)

- **Describe:** What is going on? (General agreement)
- **Analyse:** Why is it happening? (Alternative explanations possible)
- **Evaluate:** How do I feel about it? (No one else has to agree)

Activity 4 – Understanding Stress and Cultural Adaptation

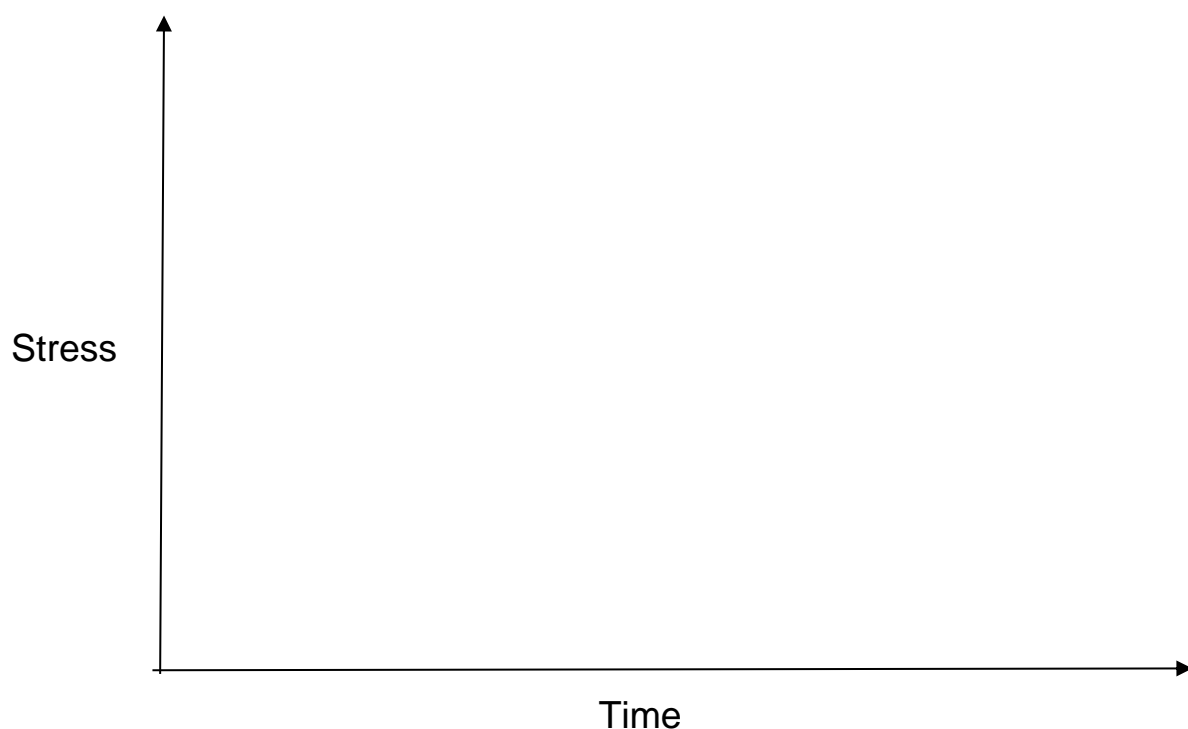
Objective: Identify what type of stress and coping phases of stress we experience when we consistently interact with members of different cultures.

Understanding stress associated with cultural adaptation helps to understand how we react towards and feel about intercultural interactions. It allows us to explore what causes openness toward or rejection of cultural adaptation, which may not always be easily observable.

Part 1

Draw a line that represents your stress curve since:

- entering the UK (for refugees)
- interacting with refugees as a volunteer (for volunteers)

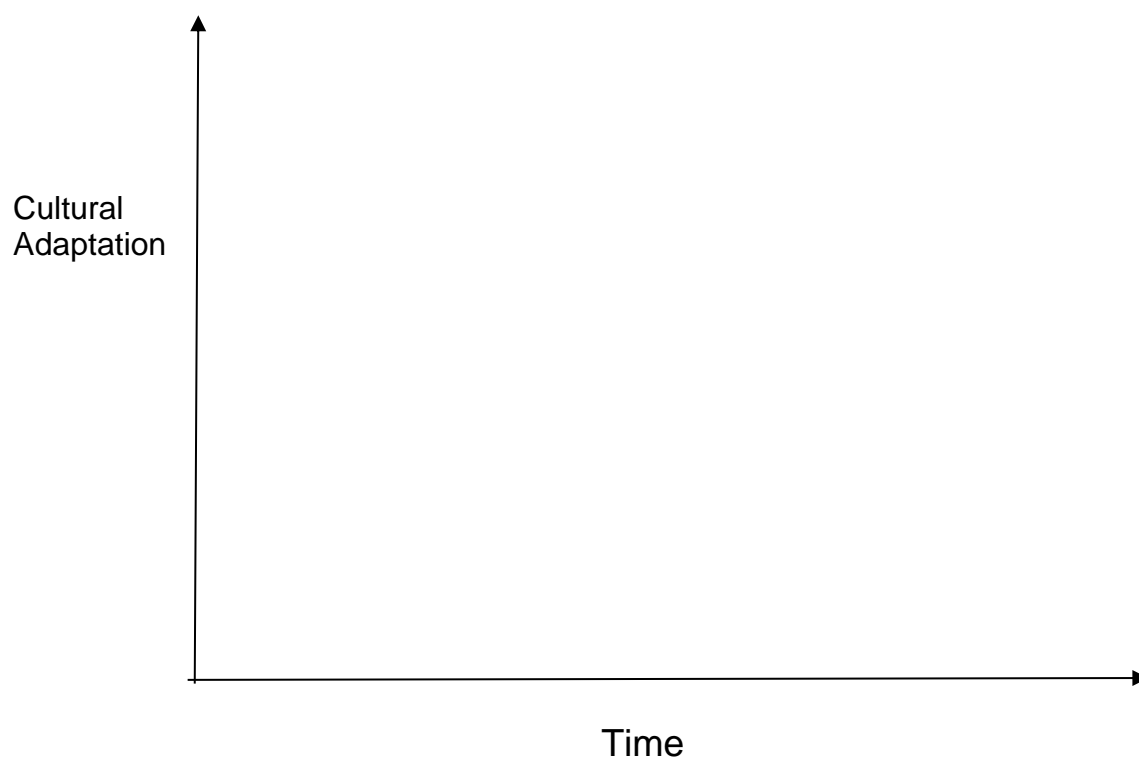


Think about: What caused the highs/lows of the curve?

Part 2

Now draw a line that represents your willingness/efforts to adapt to (see Chapter 'A Definition of Integration'):

- the UK culture (for refugees)
- refugees' culture (for volunteers)

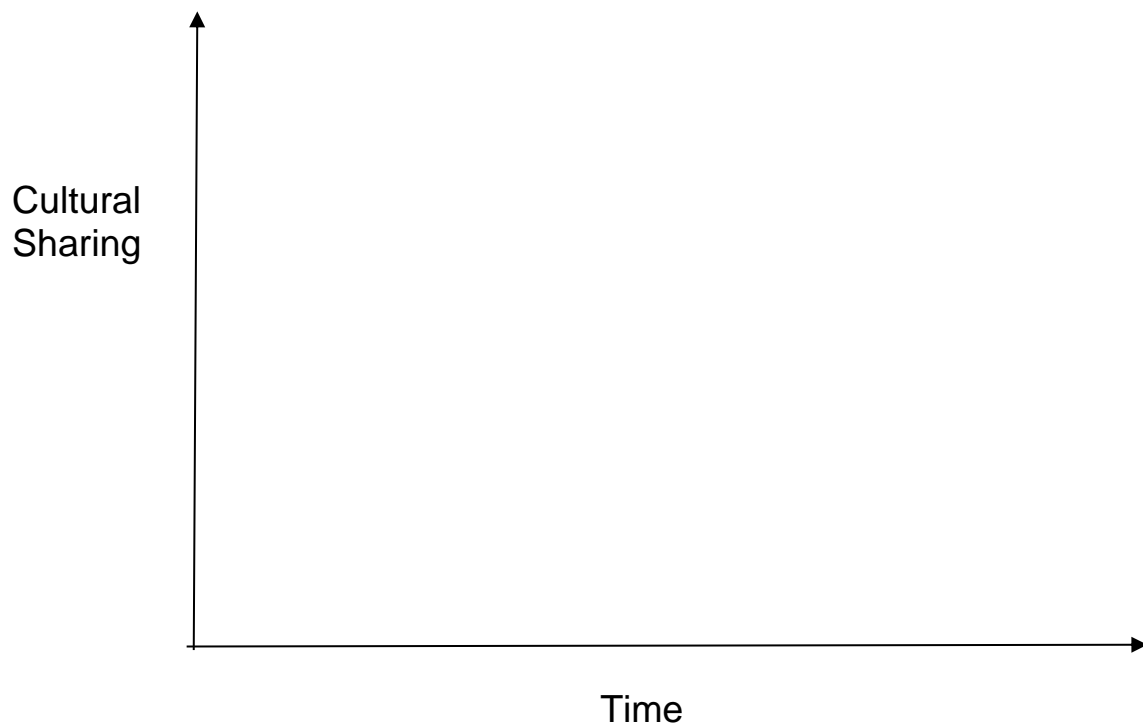


Think about: What caused the highs/lows of the curve?

Part 3

Lastly, draw a line that represents your willingness/efforts to share your culture with (see Chapter 'A Definition of Integration'):

- UK nationals (for refugees)
- refugees (for volunteers)



Think about: What caused the highs/lows of the curve?

Part 4

What is in your power that has helped/could help to reduce the stress, and enhance cultural adaptation and sharing? (see also 'Action Plan' activity on page 27)

1.

2.

3.

Key takeaways

Refugees can undergo stages of stress/frustration or openness and curiosity with regard to adapting to their new surroundings (Kuo, 2014). Be aware in what stage they are to support them accordingly. Importantly, volunteers can experience stress levels too.

Stress levels further relate to one's abilities to adapt to a new culture. For example, Demes and Geeraert (2015) found five distinct patterns of change in stress experienced by sojourners over the course of their stay abroad: a reverse J-curve, inverse U-curve, mild stress, minor relief, and resilience pattern. This variability of experienced stress links not only to the level of individuals' cultural adaptation, but also to their personality, level of empathy, and coping strategies.

Part 5

As stated above, adjusting to new cultural environments relates to different stress levels. They can be severe or mild – depending on personality, level of empathy, coping strategies and the degree of cultural adaptation to the host culture (Demes & Geeraert, 2015).

Extreme stress is when someone experiences feelings of anxiety, frustration and confusion. It comes from being cut off from familiar cultural cues and patterns and being placed in an ambiguous situation. These underlying feelings are sometimes hard to recognize as they may be expressed in the form of aggressive or even absurd behaviours and physical reactions.

Volunteer:

- What feelings, behaviours and physical reactions have you experienced yourself when working with refugees/asylum seekers?
- What feelings, behaviours and physical reactions have you seen expressed by the refugees/asylum seekers you are working with?
- How does this impact your work?

Refugee/Asylum seeker:

- What feelings, behaviours and physical reactions are you experiencing right now?
- What helps you to handle these feelings?

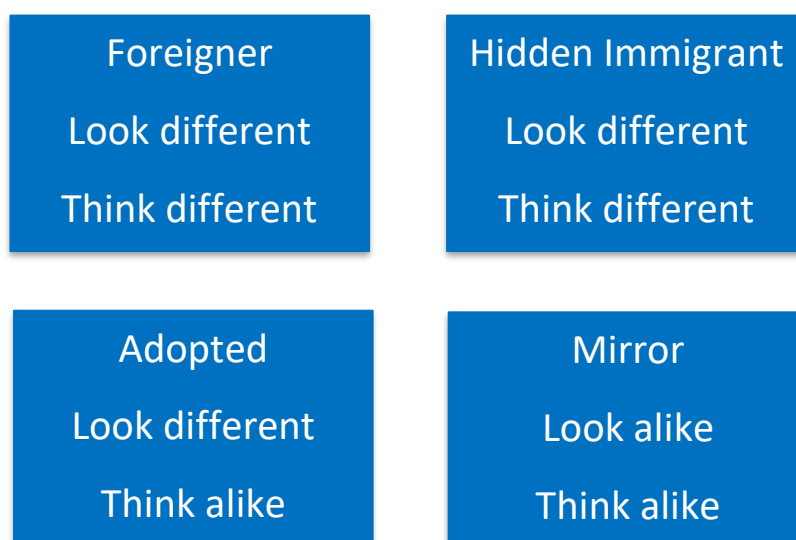
Feelings	Behaviours	Physical Reactions
Restlessness, boredom Isolation, loneliness Disorientation, confusion Depression Defensiveness Exaggerated dependence Frustration with locals Irritability Reduced self-confidence Overwhelming feeling	Inability to make decisions Loss of sense of humour Aggressiveness Withdrawal Overindulgence: food or alcohol Stereotyping of locals Marital stress & conflict Compulsive cleanliness; excessive messiness Going native	Physical ailments Loss of appetite, sleeplessness Lack of energy, excessive sleeping Unexplainable weeping Lack of physical motivation

Activity 5 – My Journey

Objective: Identify your own cultural identity journey to better understand potential changes you have been through.

Part 1

Look at the following model and consider your own cultural identity. Which box best describes you in relation to the culture that you live in?



(Pollock & Van Reke, 2009, p. 55)

Many people live in the '**Mirror**' box. They grow up in a world where they **look like** the people around them and where they **think like** the people around them, because they have been shaped by the culture of their community.

Look alike: To 'look alike' may include skin colour but it can be much wider than this and include the way you dress, style your hair, what you think is fashionable, etc.. Do you feel that you visually 'fit in' to the community where you live?

Think alike: To 'think alike' may include sharing the same views, beliefs and set of values with the community where you live.

Part 2

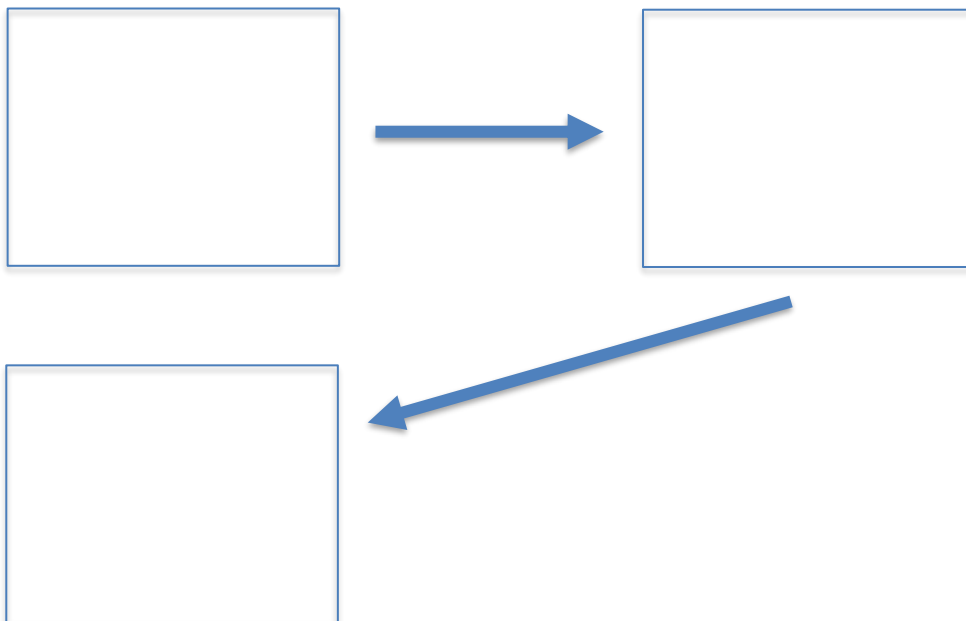
For those that have experienced interacting with people of a different culture, whether that is in their own country or a host country, they may go on a journey through some of these identities.

Thus, use these boxes to describe your cultural identity journey below:

- As a volunteer working with asylum seekers/refugees from before you picked up your voluntary work to now.
- As an asylum seeker/refugee from before fleeing to the UK to now.

Note:

- You can create a new box too, e.g., **Integrated** – look alike/look different, think alike and think different.
- Your journey can be simple (one box only) or may be quite complex as you can travel in and out of each stage multiple times (you can draw additional boxes below).



Reflective Questions:

- Is your profile similar to others? What were their experiences?
- What have you learnt from your journey?

For a refugee, such a journey may look like this:

Mirror	Foreigner	Adopted
Look alike	Look different	Look different
Think alike	Think different	Think alike

Let us imagine person A living in the country where they were born and raised. They are familiar with their own community and culture and feel that they 'fit in'. They have a shared understanding with others in their community.

Due to circumstances beyond their control, person A needs to flee from their country. As they travel, they realise that they not only look different to the people around them, but they also do not have that common understanding. As they begin to settle in a host culture they struggle with cultural differences. They don't understand the rules of this new place or even how to carry out activities that they were very competent at in their home culture. Even the sense of humour is different, and they often feel like an 'outsider'.

However, after some time in their host country, person A realises that although they are living in a multicultural city, the way they choose to dress according to their home culture will always make them look a little different from the mainstream culture in their host country, but they are changing in the way that they think. They now think more like people from their host country and less like people from their home country as they have adapted to living in this new culture.



Of course, not all asylum seekers and refugees look different to those around them. They may look the same as everyone else, but still feel alien in an unfamiliar culture. These people would be hidden immigrants, and they may have a harder time in some ways, as those around them will expect them to understand the culture they are in and behave in the same way as people from the host culture. Fewer allowances will be made for them whilst they are making cultural adaptations.

Key takeaways

Understanding the emotional journey of cultural adjustment, which may involve searching for new identity, can help volunteers to be more effective in how they support refugees.

Focusing on the implicit differences, as well as the thoughts and feeling of refugees allow volunteers to truly get to know the different individuals they work with and identify the best solution for the refugees to move forward with their lives in the new country.

Activity 6 – Action Plan

Objective: Create an achievable action plan to drive your personal change.

Action	How (Action and strategy)	Who (Who else will be involved?)	When (Expected completion date)	Measurables (How will you know)	Resources (What do you need?)	✓ Completed

Source: www.cascade.solutions

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Further Resources

Working Supportively with Refugees: Principles, Skills and Perspectives

- Learn how the principles of psychological well-being, communication and interpretation can benefit your work with refugees
- A free online course by the University of Glasgow

<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/cultural-mediation>

The 3R Tool

- Develop evaluation sensitivity in intercultural encounters
- Spencer-Oatey, H. & Davidson, A. (2014). The 3R Tool: Developing Evaluation Sensitivity in Intercultural Encounters. Available at GlobalPAD Open House.

https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/globalpad/openhouse/interculturalskills/globalpad_3r_v2.pdf

The DISCo Steps Stretch Tool

- Develop behavioural flexibility in intercultural encounters
- Spencer-Oatey, H. & Davidson, A. (2014). The 3R Tool: Developing Evaluation Sensitivity in Intercultural Encounters. Available at GlobalPAD Open House.

https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/globalpad/openhouse/interculturalskills/globalpad_stretch.pdf

See also: <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/globalpad/openhouse/interculturalskills/>

For more free tools and activities, have a look at SIETAR Europa's website:

<https://www.sietareu.org/resources/free-tools-and-materials>