Culture shock has been defined as a feeling of disorientation or discomfort due to the lack of familiar cues in one’s environment (Martin and Nakayama, 2010). The purpose of this research study is to examine and understand the culture shock experiences and struggles of cultural adaptation encountered by migrants (sojourners, immigrants, and long-term refugees) who have attempted to adjust to U.S. American culture. Such knowledge can heighten the cultural intelligence of migrants, as well as members of the host culture, resulting in the increased effectiveness of intercultural interactions. Survey methodology was used to gather self-report data through interviews with 20 participants from 16 cultures. The sample—non-random, convenience, and purposive—includes: (1) international students and scholars studying at the UW-Eau Claire from Austria, Bolivia, China, Ethiopia, Kuwait, Malaysia, Moldova, Nepal, South Korea, Spain, Tunisia, and Ukraine and (2) community members that emigrated from other cultures (Kenya, Iran, Laos, and Portugal). The results reveal 10 different categories of culture shock experiences, which appear to be influenced and stimulated by, for example, direct challenges to the participants’ learned cultural values, etiquette, verbal and nonverbal communication behaviors. The results reveal a variety of culture shock experiences in rich description. Note: This research is part of a larger study, “Culture Talk,” conducted in 2008-2009 by UW-Eau Claire students J. Tierney, N. Severson, A. Moser, and P. Koch.

CATEGORIZATION OF DISORIENTATION OR DISCOMFORT DUE TO THE UNFAMILIARITY OF SURROUNDINGS & THE LACK OF FAMILIAR CUES

According to the results, culture shock is influenced and stimulated by a variety of factors. Participants experienced discomfort and/or disorientation due to direct challenges to their learned cultural values, verbal and non-verbal communication, etiquette, and identity.

70% Learned Cultural Values
- Chronemics (Time): Bolivia, Spain
  “To my culture, dinner and lunch are eaten at a much slower pace than in the States. Not only that, but once you are done, you hang out and chat for very long periods of time.” - S. Lucas—Bolivia
- Individualism/Collectivism: Ethiopia, Iran, Kenya, Laos, Spain
  “Africans in general tend to be very family and community oriented. So, I had an immediate sense of isolation in the U.S.” - M. Mubebe—Kenya
- Past/Present/Future Values: Moldova
  “[U.S. Americans] all the time think about future, and I think this is kind of a disadvantage because people don’t just stop for a moment and enjoy the present because the present will never come back.” - T. Mubebe—Moldova
- Power Distance: China, Laos
  “One of the biggest culture shocks I experienced was a child seeing how my white friends talked back to their parents. There seemed to be a lack of respect for the parents’ role as authority figures.” - S. Han—U.S. American-Hmong (Laos)
- Uncertainty Avoidance: Austria
  “[U.S. Americans] apparently have much more rules, stricter rules than we have in Austria.” - S. Schleicher—Austria

70% Verbal & Non-Verbal Communication
- Verbal: Kenya, China, Ethiopia, Laos, Nepal, Spain, Ukraine
  “In the Arab culture you tell someone that something is crazy ... but in the Arab culture that means I’m thinking ... And I offended many because they thought that I was calling them crazy.” - S. Al-Haer—Kenya
- Non-Verbal: Bolivia, Kuwait, Nepal, Portugal, Tunisia
  “Moving your index finger in a circular motion next to your head ... [in U.S. American culture] tells you that something is crazy ... but in the Arab culture that means ‘I’m thinking’... And I offended many because they thought that I was calling them crazy.” - S. Al-Haer—Kenya

15% Etiquette
- Social Communication: Kuwait, Malaysia, South Korea
  “For me it’s really, really rude to touch others’ food in their house. So I was waiting for my host mom to cook for me ... but she didn’t—because she already told me ‘help yourself’.” — C.H.—South Korea

10% Identity
- Ascription: Kenya, Laos
  “There are still those who cannot accept an Asian face or a non-white person as ‘American.’ This is by far the most challenging thing to adjust to. Unfortunately, I still have to deal with it every day.” - S. Han—U.S. American-Hmong (Laos)

6% Reliability/Validity
- Measurement Reliability: (1) Measurement error reduced as interviewers were trained and instrument was pilot tested; (2) reliability assessed through internal consistency
- Internally Validity: (1) Participants selected for research were valid members of population of interest; (2) each interview was conducted in the same type of environment (radio studio)
- Measurement Validity: (1) interview schedule is strong in face validity; (2) interview schedule is pilot tested
- External Validity: (1) Although sample is non-random, researchers were able to replicate previous findings for some questions; (2) study is strong in ecological validity as research (face-to-face interviews) mirrors real life conditions

LIMITATIONS
- Non-random sample (purposive and convenience)
- Conclusions based on self-report data

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Blugold Fellowship, UW-System Institute on Race and Ethnicity Grant, Faculty/Student Research Collaboration Grant, UW-Eau Claire Office of Research and Sponsored Programs Department of Communication and Journalism, Don Schleicher, Learning Technology Services, Center for International Education, UW-Eau Claire, Internships