

Types of Migrant Groups

To understand cultural transitions we must simultaneously consider both the individual migrant groups and the contexts in which they travel.

The term **migrant** refers to an individual who leaves the primary cultural contexts in which he/she was raised and moves to a new cultural context for an extended period of time.

Migration may be **long term or short term and voluntary or involuntary.**

We can identify four types of migrant groups – based on length and degree of voluntariness.

There are two groups of **voluntary travelers: sojourners and immigrants.**

Sojourners are those travelers who move to new cultural contexts for a limited period of time and for a specific purpose. They are often people who have freedom and the means to travel. Another type of voluntary traveler is the immigrant.

There are two types of migrants who move **involuntary**: **long-term refugees and short-term refugees**. There are cases of domestic refugees who are forced for short or indefinite time to move within a country.

Culture Shock

Culture shock is a relatively short-term feeling of disorientation, of discomfort due to the unfamiliarity of surroundings. Kalvero Oberg, the anthropologist who coined the term culture shock, suggests that it is like a disease, complete with symptoms (excessive washing of hands, irritability and so on). Culture shock occurs to almost all migrants who cross cultural boundaries, whether they have done so voluntary or not.

Migrant-Host Relationships

There are four ways in which migrants may relate to their new cultures.

Assimilation: the individual wants to maintain relationships with other groups in the new culture.

Separation: the individual willingly wants to retain original culture and avoid interaction with other groups.

Integration: the individual wants to maintain original culture and also daily interactions with other groups.

Marginalization: the individual expresses little interest in maintaining cultural ties with either the dominant culture or the migrant culture.

Cultural Adaptation

Cultural adaptation is the long-term process of adjusting and finally feeling comfortable in a new environment. The most common theory is the **U-Curve theory of adaptation.**

This theory is based on research conducted by a Norwegian sociologist **Sverre Lysgaard** who interviewed Norwegian students studying in the United States.

The U-Curve Model:

1. Anticipation or excitement period;
2. Culture shock;
3. Adaptation.