

CULTURE SHOCK

It's 115 students from around the globe sitting here in this room. 60% of you are international. We count 33 nations represented in this room. And those... kind of mix of cultures creates this very exhilarating, fascinating environment, but also very very challenging for all of you. And I'm going to discuss about the personal, social and academic aspects of being an international student here, starting with the personal. So I came from Israel two and a half years ago to start this dual degree in journalism and business. And back home I was a journalist and senior editor at the second largest newspaper and when I came here, sitting in your seats, just like in a different building, I remember that I was just like in the state of mind which is called shock. Now, I was in a total and complete shock. I was sitting right here and I knew my name, I knew where I lived, I knew what I had to do today and tomorrow, but everything was like kind of foggy. I was like walking on a cloud I couldn't see, it didn't feel like my life. Now in retrospect I realise that this is called culture shock. And while culture shock is experienced differently by different kinds of people, some things are still common, like sadness and loneliness and frustration and anxiety and I had trouble concentrating at the beginning and if that's not enough I was also feeling left out and misunderstood and eventually I started to really hate Americans. For a good couple of months I really hated Americans. And when that... during that month, you know I was like I couldn't deal with American students I couldn't deal with them so I was seeking the company of Israeli students because they were the ones I could relate to. They were the ones I could understand and eventually I developed like this extreme home-sickness. I really, really wanted to go back home, to mummy. It felt like then, this entire experience was a mistake. Now, I wasn't alone. 38% of the international students who are now on their second year say that they encountered symptoms of culture shock. Now, we asked this question after a year of school, so, in my opinion, this figure is, at least, double because people tend to **undermine** their difficulties as time goes by. Especially people with big egos like us, right? So I'm sure there are like some international students sitting here in the crowd that, you know, they didn't attend international orientation saying 'culture shock? Me? No way! I just arrived on Sunday and I'm just completely in love with everything!' And that might be true, maybe because those people are in phase 1 of culture shock, which is called 'the honeymoon'. I came to the US and during the first weeks I was in love with everything that I'd seen, everything. I mean students take a look at that: the view from the Empire State Building, pretty nice, ah? Impressive! Or, or, or Central Park, love is in the air, you know? Or, or my favourite place then: Brooklyn bridge, kind of a nice bridge, ah? So that was, that was, the honeymoon. I came to the US, you know, I worked 4 years on my application. There was nothing more than that I wanted then than to come here and sit down here at Columbia Business School. And when I was like... It was like when I was seeing all the skyscrapers and walking like in central park and everything and the city is beautiful, I felt that I had made it; I'm in the centre of the world. It was a great feeling. But every good thing must come to an end and when the honeymoon is over, starts phase 2, which is the 'what am I doing here?' phase. And during that phase me and Miss America kind of had a big fight and when I was walking down the street I wasn't in love any more. I was actually feeling like this guy, this Israeli **Borat**, everything became so hard. The hardest part for me was that I couldn't speak. I didn't have the vocabulary. I you know, like in Israel, when I was a journalist, I was making a living out of words and coming here I lost my biggest skill: the ability to express myself the way I wanted. And if you cannot express yourself the way you want you cannot sound smart, you cannot sound intelligent, you cannot sound funny, you cannot sound anything. But that's... that was kind of the big

Comentario [i1]: Weaken.

Comentario [i2]: a fictional character created and portrayed by [Sacha Baron Cohen](#). He is the protagonist of the movie [Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan](#). Borat's humour derives from his mocking of society through outrageous sociocultural viewpoints, his violation of social taboos and his use of vulgar language and behavior.

thing; there were lots of little things that were kind of annoying. For example: the subway, you know? What is uptown? What is downtown? How do you read the subway map? So many, so many times I found myself in the wrong station, sometimes in the wrong borough. More than once. Down things like grocery shopping, you know, I couldn't find the food I like and when I finally did it tasted really, really bad. Measurements, I mean, who invented the inches, right? And how heavy is one pound? and 30°F, is it really hot or really cold? Right?; coins: I mean, what is the **dime**, what is the **nickel**, what is the penny? And how come that, that the dime is smaller than the nickel? and how come they don't have numbers on them? Right? It's the only country in the world with no numbers on the coins! But what bothered me above everything, beyond comparison, was (laughing)... the Americans, the Americans not the president. I found, I found the Americans to be so positive all the time. Always happy, even if they had no reason to be, you know? I felt as if they're kind of plastic, that I could not communicate with them because I would get no real answer from them. For example if you go to the second year students here at Columbia, and you would ask them how was your summer **internship**, seriously, do it, everybody would tell you I had an amazing internship even if they really hated it. And so many times people said to me 'Hey Dan, let's have lunch some time!', and I would never hear again. Ever! Which eventually led me to the conclusion that all Americans are fake. And when I thought that all Americans are **fake** there was like kind of this halo effect. I was also sure that they were distant and insincere and hypocritical and superficial because they are fake. And if they are superficial and distant and insincere and hypocritical they're probably artificial and over (laughing)... and insensitive and naïve and loud. Bad taste in clothing, which is true! Now, you are laughing now but for me that period of time was really, really bad. I really, really wanted to go back home. This entire experience felt like a mistake. One of the strongest memories that I have from that period of time is that ... I... lying in my bed just before going to sleep and suddenly I feel the bed kind of shaking and then kind of floats in the air and leaves the room through the open window and then flies east, crossing the ocean, crossing the Mediterranean and lands in my old apartment in Tel Aviv, now that was a sweet dream. Now around that time you can see there's little groups forming here at Columbia like the Mexicans with the Mexicans, the French with the French, the Dutch with the Dutch ...

Comentario [i3]: A coin of the United States or Canada worth ten cents.

Comentario [i4]: A U.S. coin worth five cents, made of a nickel and copper alloy.

Comentario [i5]: A period of supervised practical training that a university student or recent graduate has to do.

Comentario [i6]: Having a false or misleading appearance; fraudulent.

If you want to see the rest go to :

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H82IFq0HbTQ&NR=1>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C7iznNFGzIg&feature=related>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=powo_XwMTZs&feature=related

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VbTKaZLLALo&feature=related>

It's quite good!