

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Krista D. Hubbard for the degree of Honors Baccalaureate of Science in Business Administration presented on May 21, 2008. Title: The Norwegian Adventure.

Abstract approved: _____
Erik Larson

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to live in a foreign country? You perhaps will experience a roller coaster of emotions in what is termed “culture shock.” This thesis will investigate the theory of culture shock and explore cultural dimensions that affect it. These theories will be applied to and used to explain my own personal experience of living in Norway for five months. Culture shock can be experienced in a number of different ways and this thesis presents one persons’ reaction to living in a foreign country, and how I made sense of my life in Norway. Furthermore, I will express how this experience can be applied to future overseas work as an international business major.

Key Words: Culture Shock, Experiences, Norway, Differences, Learning.
Corresponding e-mail address: HubbardK@onid.orst.edu

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The Norwegian Adventure

by

Krista D. Hubbard

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APPROVED:

Mentor, Erik Larson

Committee Member, Madeleine Romero

Committee Member, Anita Helle

Dean, University Honors College

I understand the my project will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University, University Honors College. My signature below authorizes release of my project to any reader upon request.

Krista D. Hubbard, Author

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Introduction

In the first chapter, “Accepted,” I introduce my background as a person and my interest with international travels and cultures. I talk specifically about an international study abroad program that I get accepted into, and two theories that help me make sense of my experiences in Norway. The first theory I use is Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions to explain broad but fundamental differences between Norway and The United States. Secondly, I use Culture Shock theory to represent stages within culture shock, as well as why or when people might visit certain stages within the culture shock cycle.

The second chapter is named, “Flying to Norway,” because it is all about my first impressions and experiences I had in Norway. I mention where I am in the Culture shock cycle through these events and how I begin to adapt to the changes I am faced with.

“Learning the Differences,” is the third chapter where I discuss three main events that force me to adapt to this new culture and move through the culture shock cycle.

Lastly, my “Reflection” chapter ventures back to my original thoughts about studying abroad, and how my outlook on life has changed through these ideals. I also touch on how people react differently to culture shock, and what future exchange students can learn from my experiences. This chapter also enforces my continual desire to work for an international company, as well as what I learned while working in Norway.

Accepted!

“Congratulations! You have been accepted to the College of Business International program in Norway,” read my acceptance letter to the program. I immediately covered my mouth with my hands and couldn’t believe what I was reading! I was floored and speechless. It finally hit me; I was really going to be living abroad for five months! Once I gathered my composure I picked up the phone to tell my parents what I had gotten myself into. They were supportive and excited with my decision to take my studies abroad to Norway for a term.

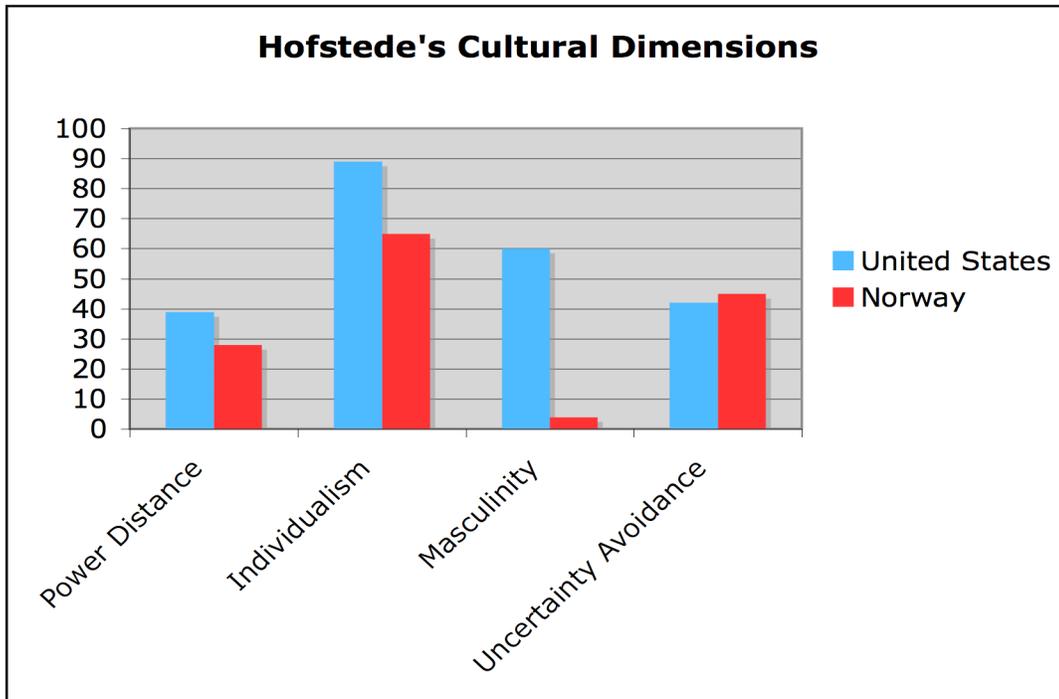
I will be telling my story of living in Norway for five months, and how I went through different stages of culture shock during my time abroad. By understanding a deeper meaning of culture shock, and the different levels there are, I can make better sense of my experiences and why I felt the ways I did. By using my experiences and thoughts while in Norway, I will explain this culture shock cycle and how it can apply to different people in different countries. However, it is important to understand that everyone experiences culture shock in many different ways, but this is my way of explaining the different levels of culture shock.

Once I was accepted into this program I knew I would have to take a class at OSU before I went abroad in order to learn and understand what I will encounter while abroad. I learned about Norway and got all my paperwork ready to go. Once I finished that class there was no turning back, and the experience of going abroad was getting much more real, so I packed my bags and hoped for the best.

As I packed I began to look back upon my life and realize what kind of person I was, and why I have ended up in this position of going abroad. To start off my life, I

grew up in Salem/Keizer, Oregon with my parents and one older brother in a strong Christian family. I have always been taught to be an upstanding and moral person, and live life to my fullest potential, and fulfill my biggest dreams. My family and I have always been interested in traveling around the world and understanding different cultures. My family and I enjoy meeting new people and doing activities together such as golf or tennis. As for prior experience abroad, I had been to France when I was fifteen for a month on a school trip in high school, but at this point that is the extent of my traveling in Europe. I had a great experience in France, and it made me even more excited to see more of the world. All of these factors in my upbringing have paved the way of my life, and now I was going to follow that path to Norway for five months.

After I realized that I was ready to go to Norway physically, I started to realize that I might not be ready mentally. I had very little knowledge about the language, culture, weather, and the other exchange students that would be there. I immediately ran to my computer and went online and looked up anything and everything about Norway. I came across Hofstede's cultural dimensions of Norway, and I compared it against America as you can see below.



I learned that Hofstede's cultural dimensions are a relevant way to see noticeable differences in the Norwegian and American cultures. There are four factors that explain cultural differences as shown in the graphs above: Power Distance Index, Individualism, Masculinity, and Uncertainty Avoidance Index (Geert Hofstede Cultural Dimensions). All of these factors made me realize that there would be major differences in certain culture identities. As it can be seen, the most obvious difference is in the masculinity index. What this means is that Norway is much more "feminine" in their mannerisms, such as a more caring, modest, and egalitarian society. Where the United States is much more "masculine" meaning the population is generally more assertive and competitive.

The next most obvious difference in the cultural dimensions is the individualism index, which explains how the United States is more of an individualistic country where Norway is a more collectivist country (Geert Hofstede Cultural Dimensions).

Individualism is explained through the idea of looking out for themselves and their

family, where a collectivist country might group together to look out for the common good of larger groups of people (Geert Hofstede Cultural Dimensions).

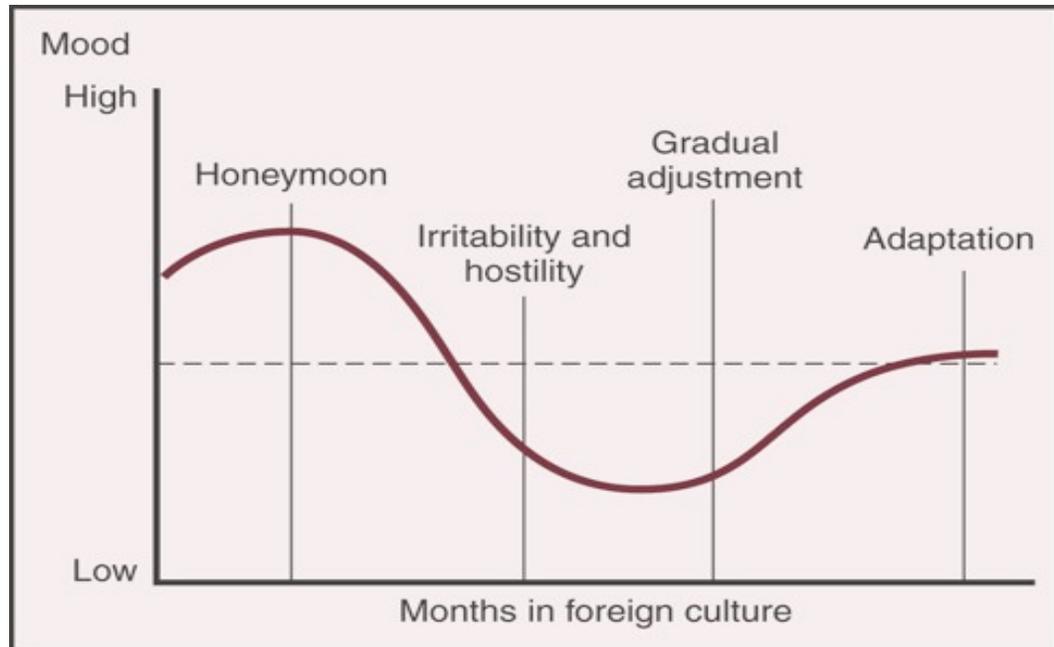
Power distance can be described as the extent to which less powerful members of organizations and institutions accept and expect that power is distributed unequally (Geert Hofstede Cultural Dimensions). In the above graph it can be seen that the United States is more tolerant of unequal power distribution, where Norway is much less tolerant of this.

Lastly, uncertainty avoidance describes how society tolerates uncertainty and ambiguity (Geert Hofstede Cultural Dimensions). There is a small difference between the United States and Norway in this dimension. However, Norway is a bit more tolerant of uncertain situations, different opinions, and they don't always need to know the truth or answers to uncertain questions (Geert Hofstede Cultural Dimensions). The United States on the other hand would be more likely to have rules and laws to avoid uncertain situations.

I was excited and confused about how I would be encountering those cultural differences when I got to Norway. I began to wonder what a country would look like as a welfare society where its people genuinely care for wellbeing of others (Hooker, Geert Hofstede Cultural Dimensions). I imagined it would be more a more egalitarian type of a country through this analysis. Most of the other factors by Hofstede were not as noticeably different as the masculinity index, but I didn't dismiss any difference in the levels of all the other components of the cultural dimensions.

After looking at the differences in the cultural dimensions I knew I was in for a different way of life in many different respects. Understanding Hofstede's cultural

dimensions gives a better understanding of my view of Norway as an American. I didn't know it at the time, but I would come to experience different levels of culture shock when I experienced these dimensions first hand. In order to fully understand my reactions to events in Norway I will explain the culture shock cycle and its effects in each of the stages.



The cycle begins with the “honeymoon” stage, which is characterized by feelings of excitement and enthusiasm for a new culture. Differences are seen as interesting and fun where it is amusing to not understand or to be understood. However, this stage is often short lived before one enters into the second stage, “irritability and hostility.” This stage is characterized by feelings of frustration and confusion with new behaviors of a foreign land. One might become frustrated and lose his or her confidence in being able to communicate and work effectively in the different culture in the second stage. As time passes, one moves into the “gradual adjustment” stage where the sense of isolation is overcome by figuring out how to get things done in the new culture. In this stage, one

adopts a new perspective of what is possible and regains confidence in the country. In the last stage, one moves into the “adaptation” stage, which is where one fully adapts to this new culture and learns to adjust to the different norms. Life begins to become more enjoyable and exciting again in this stage. However, culture shock often can return at any time during a stay in a foreign country in any of the four stages (Larson).

When I was getting closer to going to Norway I had many pre-conceived ideas about the country before I got there. All I knew was that they invented the cheese cutter and the paper clip, they are very out-doorsy people, they have a more “feminine” way of life, and it is ranked as one of the safest countries on Earth. With that information in the back of my mind, I set off to fly to Norway and entered into the honeymoon stage of the culture shock cycle.

Flying to Norway

“Should we sleep on the plane?” Lauren asked. “Sure why not?” I replied. All six of us students from Oregon State University were on our way to Europe and were very excited. We all discussed how confused and excited we were about going away to Norway for school for five long months.

“Velkommen til Kristiansand” were the first words I heard when I finally arrived to Norway. It sounded like one big jumbled up word to my ears. I knew I was in for a ride when I couldn’t even pick out where a sentence ended or started in my new home country for the next five months of my life. I was so excited for a change in my life, even though I was unsure what I was really getting myself into.

When we first arrived to Norway we all stayed the night with Gretchen, a friend of our group leader, Andy. He had helped us back in America and had done the exchange a year prior to us. He met Gretchen previously in Norway, as they both worked for the local church. She was very nice and helpful. We all appreciated being able to leave our extra baggage to lighten our load while backpacking. I left behind a lot of things that I didn’t want to take, or that I didn’t want to get stolen while on this “pre” trip before school started. Once I began to settle down and get ready for bed I began to feel nauseated and couldn’t sleep very well. At first I thought it was just my nerves but then I realized it was probably also due to jetlag and not eating on a regular schedule. However, my body was over the sickness after a few days, which was a huge relief to get over that hurdle.

I was able to eat one meal while I was at the World Base with Gretchen called a “bread-meal.” This was the first Norwegian meal I had, which was interesting to say the

least. It consisted of brown cheese, one slice of salami, and a thin slice of bread. This is where I learned that Norwegian's diet was much different than mine in America. Norwegian's do not eat as much as we do, by far. Also, they do not put as much extra food with on top of things; they like it plain. Another thing that caught me by surprise was the brown cheese, which I thought tasted like goat cheese plus caramel mixed together. I did get a little concerned over the food that I would be eating for the next five months, but I was still in the honeymoon stage of being in Norway.

When I woke up the next morning I still felt so sick, jet lagged, and nervous. I was so tired from the 23-hour travel schedule we had, as well as the nine-hour time difference from home. Regardless of how I felt, I knew I had to go into town and get my Visa from the police station before I left on my next trip. Gretchen showed us how to take the bus into town where we would find the police station and shops to look in. Little did I know, this trip downtown would be considered my first crazy story of living abroad.

While walking around downtown I was soaking up as much culture and knowledge about the city as I could with two other girls from OSU. We were chatting about our new home and minding our own business when soon we were stopped at a street corner because of a stoplight. While waiting for the light to change a Norwegian woman came up to us and said, "I hear you are speaking English. Are you from England?" We replied, "We are from the United States, and we are here on exchange." She looked up at us and batted her eyes and smiled so big her teeth almost fell out, and then blurted out that her brother lives in New Jersey! This sparked up an interesting conversation about the United States while we were waiting for the light to change. I was so excited to meet my first Norwegian, and she even spoke perfect English! As the

conversation continued it got weirder and weirder. She told us about how she has no family anymore, and she is so sad with her life so she asked to walk with us because she was scared. We began to realize that this woman was crazy and she had some serious problems in her life so we tried to walk fast to get rid of her, but she kept following us. She finally grabbed my arm and desperately said, "Please don't leave me, I tried to kill myself last night!" As she said that she simultaneously pulled up her sleeve to show me her bloody arm that was full of fresh cuts. I soon realized that the other two girls that were with me had bolted and left me with her, so I told the woman I couldn't help her and I had to get back to my friends. I left in a hurry trying to find the other girls I was with while I was hoping to never meet another Norwegian as long as I could live! I was so frightened and unsure about living in this new city if there were crazy people like that walking around everywhere. This event effectively put me in the second stage of the culture shock cycle, having had a short-lived honeymoon period.

I had been warned time and time again I would go through some real life changing and crazy experiences while abroad, which already was becoming evident with my first few days in Europe. My cousin Scott gave me some of the best advice for the trip before I left. He said, "Krista, you are going to get stressed out whether it be with the people you are traveling with or the different cultures you will experience, but all you need to do is take a deep breath and look around at where you are!"

I could not have heard a more perfect way to deal with my stress while I was abroad. I knew I would use that advice a number of times while in Europe. Already I have used this advice with my experience with the crazy lady to realize that new cultures can't be determined by one experience you have. I was in a strange state of culture shock

with not wanting to meet any more Norwegians at the beginning of the trip. However, as time would pass I knew I would meet many more Norwegians and I would begin to understand their ways of thinking and not see them as scary people as I get more comfortable. This is a perfect example of how you will always have crazy experiences while abroad, and they are generally at the beginning of the trip. This is why so many people don't truly understand a culture if they leave early from a country and only remember the scary stories they have been through. As time has gone on, I have gone through some more scary times, but they are not as scary or different once I began to understand the Norwegian culture. I just had to take a minute and breathe deeply and take a look around and realize where I am and why things are happening the way that they are. By doing this deep breath and reminding myself that I should be enjoying myself, it helped pull me out of the irritability and hostility stage of the culture shock cycle. I wanted to go back to that honeymoon stage where I was in love with the differences of the country, but by having that attitude I began to move myself into the gradual adjustment stage. I realized that I would be in the gradual adjustment stage for the bulk of my trip by going through all of these smaller different experiences.

After all of the new action we had been having with our new home, the six of us went on that backpacking trip for fifteen days before we started school in Norway. We visited Paris, Rome, Venice, Vienna, and Prague, in that order. Each city we went to was beautiful in its own way, and I learned a lot from each place. After visiting these cities, I even began to appreciate Norway as I was immersed in culture shock and unpleasant experiences. For example in Paris, the people there were not appreciative of Americans in general, and almost seemed hostile to us as Americans. I experienced a few angry French

clerks in souvenir shops that would slam my change on the counter after I purchased something, and they would not say a word to me while I was in the store. Also, in Rome it was very hot, and as an Oregonian that didn't mix very well. I was excited to go to the colder "great white north" of Norway to get to cooler weather. After many different experiences on this trip it was good for me to get used to the idea of being in a foreign land, and that I was not going to always feel comfortable or understand people when they speak to me. This experience helped me understand Norway a little better by understanding my feelings about being in a foreign country, and Norway was seeming to be a friendlier, smaller, and cooler town to be located in rather than all of these other cities.

When we all got back to Norway we stayed one more night at the World Base (where we had left our extra baggage). I had finally figured out that this was a place where missionaries stay for the church just outside of Kristiansand (where the school is located). Once we got there we all exchanged pictures from the backpacking trip and had about 3,000 pictures all together! We all were excited to have our computers and clean clothes when we got back to the things we left at the World Base. Surprisingly we were all very excited to be back in Norway and we were ready to settle down and start school.

The next day we moved into the dorms at Hogskolen I Agder (HiA) in Kristiansand, Norway where I would be attending school for the next four and a half months. When I first walked into my dorm room I was so excited to see it! Finally a place where I can unpack for more than three days and I can finally make a bed and know I will be staying there! Going on the backpacking trip really made me appreciate Kristiansand and the people here. They are all much more relaxed and nicer to Americans than any

other place that we went to in Europe. I also like how Kristiansand is a small city. I can walk from one side of the city to the other side in about thirty minutes, and my dorm is about a ten-minute walk to the university. My roommate was a very sweet girl from Spain named Ester. She was a very beautiful girl with long dark curly hair and a little shorter than I am. She is pretty good at English and is a very calm, clean, and collected. She is eighteen years old and lives with her parents and her twenty-five year old brother.

My first day spent in the dorms was very full of new information and ideas. There are about 200 exchange students attending HiA, and about 8,000 students total. Agder has been running since 2001 as a college but as of August 15th 2007 it will be considered a university, which all the students and locals are very proud of. The prime minister will be giving a talk for the school on August 13th to recognize the schools success in the past seven years and becoming a university. Almost everyone here speaks English fluently in Norway, which has been a blessing for me. This made shopping downtown for things for the dorm much easier because almost everyone spoke English.

I began to realize that everything in Norway is extremely expensive, which has been shocking to me. I knew it was an expensive country, but not this expensive! For example, a can of soda is about \$4.50 USD, a meal at McDonald's runs around \$15.00 USD, and a gallon of gas is about \$11.00 USD. Norway has recently been named the most expensive country to live in and they have no national debt or need for public borrowing (Collinson). Now-a-days Norway has a huge tax surplus, with a 60% tax rate (Collinson, Hooker). The unemployment rate is now at an all time low of 2.4%, which helps to make the prices of goods and services in Norway not look so expensive when so many people are earning a healthy living wage (CIA - The World Factbook – Norway).

Norway also has an extremely high fertility rate, which is a sure sign of economic security in the country by being able to afford these children even while Norway has one of the highest levels of female participation in the workforce (Collinson). All of these factors put together increase the economic stability of the country and effectively make it an expensive country.

Also, most places do not take credit cards, so it is very difficult to make sure I always have enough Norwegian Kroner on me to buy whatever I needed. A lot of these experiences I was getting were nothing like what I thought I would encounter with my previous knowledge and research on the country. I was glad that I was being put to the test on how to survive in a new country, and I was realizing that researching a country is nothing like living in it. All of these experiences continually kept me in the gradual adjustment stage of the culture shock cycle because I was always expecting something strange or different now that I had been through so many smaller experiences.

The ESN buddies who were assigned from the school to help the exchange students, tried so hard to make everyone feel comfortable in their new environments in Norway. They made all of the exchange students' dinner and we learned fun facts about the country and had a fun time. Some of the interesting facts I already knew were that Norway is the home of the cheese cutter and the paper clip. Some of the newer facts I learned was that they are famous for brown cheese, and they pride themselves on being an expensive country. Lastly, the students made it known that Norwegians are infamous for the alcohol intake, because they really know how to party! I did discover that the Norwegians did drink pretty heavily that night, but I think this comment was said in a joking manner because as I stayed in Norway longer I realized that Norwegians don't

party much more than what I thought was normal as an American. However, I observed that Norwegians do seem to drink more when it is darker during the day due to the tilt of the Earth because there is not much else to do when it is dark. As I have stated, Norwegians are very out-doorsy people, and if it is dark all day, their main entertainment is gone because there is not much to do in such a small city, so they turn to drinking.

It was such a wonderful experience to get to know so many different people from all around the world, and hear about how their home countries are different from mine. Everyone got along wonderfully had formed very tight bonds very early on in this term of school! I felt so blessed to be a part of this group of exchange students living in Norway and to be able to not only learn about the Norwegian culture.

It can be understood that at first I was not so sure if I liked Norway for many different reasons. But, I could tell as time went on I was beginning to feel more and more comfortable living in my new home. I began to expect difficulties and make more friends, which I think was the greatest factor in feeling comfortable in Norway. I began to learn some of the language, and I never ran into any other scary people that wanted to kill themselves. All of those factors combined made me realize that I can't judge how I feel about a country (or anything for that matter) over a few short days. Culture shock was evident for me, but once I got past that feeling of irritability and hostility, it was a whole new experience. The interesting part about getting to the adaptation stage of living in a new culture was the fact that I didn't realize when I had got to that stage, it just sort-of happened. I just realized that I had adapted to a new "normal" way of living after about 3 months without even realizing how comfortable I was getting.

Learning The Differences

Living in a foreign country always comes with experiences that foreigners think are unnatural to the way of life. I am living proof of this statement because as I stayed and learned more about Norway over the course of five months, and I did experience what I thought were odd things. Now I will focus on these three experiences to demonstrate the thought behind different cultures and the way of normalcy and apply these experiences to culture shock theory:

- How students prepare for school, and how professors teach.
- Talking to Norwegians about their home country.
- Relationships between people of the same and different cultures.

As I continued my journey through living in a new country and going to school, I began to notice some strange differences between what I thought school should be like, and how it was conducted in Norway. Some of the blatant differences between school in Norway and school at Oregon State were smaller class sizes and a sixteen-week semester. However, there were also differences that I found that were not so blatant such as group projects in every class, and one or two big projects in each class rather than smaller assignments throughout the term.

As school progressed into the later part of the semester I realized how hard these adjustments were for me to make. I was really trying to keep myself in the “gradual adjustment” stage of the culture shock cycle as I began to fear for myself when these big projects were coming due. It was so strange that students didn’t even know what homework was. Studying is all the students knew because there were no small homework

assignments throughout the term, just the big projects or tests at the end of the term. Additionally, we were all enrolled in Norwegian Masters level classes as undergraduates. So this factor could have played a role in the amount of studies, projects, and tests. Furthermore, this different style of learning in contrast to Oregon State University has taught me more about verbal skills because classes were mainly discussions about our readings, and presentations that the students gave. Education in America tends to be more lecture oriented in larger size classes, which means there is not much student involvement.

Visiting with Norwegian people was by far one of my favorite things to do while living abroad once I got over the fear of the crazy lady I had encountered on my first day in town. When I spoke with Norwegians I asked as many questions that I could think of and had as many discussions as possible. One of my first long conversations with a Norwegian was the first night of classes. It is tradition to go out to the student pub on campus to get the year started off right, so of course I went! When I got there I met so many people and recognized a lot of the other international students. Linda Ramfjord Kjeilen was the first Norwegian that I sparked up a conversation with, and only after a few minutes of chatting I had already noticed some differences of culture.

One of my first questions was if she was Norwegian and she responded with “yeah.” However, this was no ordinary “yeah.” I had experienced my first Norwegian “yeah,” which sounds like someone saying the word “yeah” very quickly as they are breathing in. At first I brushed off the strange sounding “yeah” and continued the conversation about school and our teachers until she did it again later in the conversation. This time I knew it must not have been a mistake. I figured out that every time a

Norwegian agrees with you they respond in this way. I was so excited to be learning language differences as well as culture differences.

As I chatted with more Norwegians I came to realize that they are very proud of their country and wish to keep themselves independent and afloat as a country without much help from others, as they have successfully done. As I talked to another Norwegian about safety of the country I became more flattered and excited to be living in Norway. When children grow up in Norway there is no such thing as a curfew because the people don't think twice about letting their child run around outside until 11:00PM and getting kidnapped. That just doesn't happen in Norway often at all. I came to learn that out of the some four million people in Norway, about three thousand are in jail. This statistic shocked me to realize how little crime there is!

A personal experience of seeing this feeling of safety in the country is when I was walking to school I saw a man asleep on a bench waiting for a bus with two huge bags full of belongings just sitting on the sidewalk next to him. It was refreshing to think that there is so much trust and care in this country between individuals that you can leave your bags on the street while you take a nap. After learning all about Norway and the Norwegian people I was in a mixed state of culture shock in between the honeymoon and gradual adjustment stages. It was fun and exciting to learn all of this information about Norway and their culture, which would keep me in the short-lived honeymoon stage. However, some of this information was rather unbelievable or shocking, which put me in the gradual adjustment stage.

Relationships between people of the same and different cultures were interesting to observe while in Norway. For example, one person I became friends with is woman

from Germany named Susi. She had a birthday party early on in the term with many of the exchange students in her dorm room. The party started at 9pm and went until about 2am the next day. When I walked into the party I went up to Susi and gave her a hug and told her happy birthday. She looked at me funny and was silent for a minute. Naturally, I was confused and wondered if I had done anything wrong so I said, "Are you okay?" She replied, "Yeah everything is fine Krista." We both brushed off the awkward silence and began to mingle with other people. I went to another German girl who was also named Susi and asked why Susi might have given me that awkward silence? She knew exactly why Susi had given me a strange response. In the German culture, you do not wish anyone a happy birthday until it is officially his or her birthday because it is extremely bad luck for the year to come if someone does that to you. I was floored, my heart sank into my stomach and I began to feel so badly for Susi. I had no intention of wishing bad luck upon her by telling her happy birthday before midnight. I apologized to Susi after I had figured out what the problem was and she understood why I didn't know their culture's way of celebrating birthdays. This experience put me back into the irritability and hostility stage of culture shock for a short lived night, but I was soon back into the gradual adjustment stage as soon as Susi and I were back on good terms.

Being an exchange student was a wonderful blessing to be able to understand more than the Norwegian culture, as expressed in the previous paragraph. When I came to realize that I had an opportunity to understand multiple cultures with all of the different exchange students attending HiA, I took this opportunity very seriously. I made as many friends as I could from all different countries, and learned all about many

differences in multiple cultures, which was exciting and wonderful for my knowledge and understanding of cultures.

One of my favorite parts about learning what countries people came from was trying to guess before they told you. It was hard for me to do at first, but as time went on I got better at the guessing game. Furthermore, when people would guess what country I was from almost every time people would guess from Norway because I am extremely white and blonde. I thought this was so fun and exciting to be able to look like I belong in Norway, when in all actuality I was from the United States. These experiences with different cultures put me back into either the honeymoon stage or the irritability and hostility stage of culture shock to have that realization that things can be so different in so many different countries.

Reflection

As I reflect on my experience in Norway and what I have learned, I was curious to remember what my original goals and thoughts were about going abroad for five months. I had to apply to the Oregon State University College of Business in order to be accepted into the program. The application process was to submit an essay, cover letter, resume, and attend one interview. During Winter term of 2007, I had to choose an option for my Business Degree, so I began talking to other business majors about what they were doing with their major and why they were doing that option. I finally made up my mind on the international business option after hearing about so many wonderful experiences of going abroad from my fellow classmates and friends.

I went into the College of Business's advising office to talk to an advisor about my decision and I found out that the applications for going abroad had already passed. My heart sank into my chest and I thought to myself, well I guess this just wasn't meant to be. However, I kept pursuing my dream of going abroad and asked my advisor if there was anyway that I could still get my international business option. She replied, "Well wait a minute here (as she looked into her computer screen), I think there is still a spot left open if you want to go to Norway in the Fall, but you would have to get me the application by tomorrow." I was floored! My jaw fell open and I replied, "No problem at all, I will do whatever it takes to get to Norway, thank you so much for this opportunity!"

When I got home I began filling out the application and came up with this cover letter:

I am very interested in obtaining the opportunity to study abroad in Kristiansand, Norway. I would be honored to represent Oregon State University

and contribute to the university's outstanding reputation for international exchanges. This program's positive and enriching reputation appeals to me very greatly. I would be most pleased to be considered for the opportunity to participate in such a program.

Going to Norway would contribute to my educational, career and personal goals by experiencing international business firsthand. I intend to pursue an international career when I finish my education at Oregon State University. It will be beneficial to have studied abroad when I begin my international career. This opportunity would allow me to personally experience a different nationality and culture. Personally, going abroad would make me a better person. I would be humbled by how different I am from the rest of the world, and I would have to let down my guard and learn different ways of living and personality styles. Educationally, I would learn a great deal while I am in Norway, I would be attending classes, and experiencing a new culture while earning the option of international business. This program would expand my education to a whole new level that I could not get if I were to stay in Oregon.

I'm a committed supporter of this program and would love to experience this once in a lifetime opportunity. I have a very strong work ethic, and would work my hardest in Norway if chosen. This would be a perfect opportunity for me to learn more about myself, and other cultures.

After reading this cover letter now that I am finished with my study abroad experience, I realize that I did have the right attitude and mind-set for this adventure.

However, I didn't realize that I would be learning about more than one culture in Norway. Along with the cover letter, I also looked back on the essay that I wrote on an experience that would qualify me for this international business option in Norway. I wrote the following essay:

I walked into my first class of freshman year in high school and I was stunned! My teacher had his room all decorated with beautiful pictures of France and wonderful authentic food. He welcomed me in the door and said, "come and tell me about yourself." I was speechless. We began talking, and I told him I was really interested in the French language and culture so I signed up for his class. He assured me that if I was so interested I needed to get out of America and go discover France, "a high school language class can't give you anything near what the country can give you." Mr. Steiner soon after that became my favorite teacher in high school. I really took his words to heart. So, I learned the language from his class, and then went to study abroad my sophomore year.

Everything he had told me was true, discovering the real thing was much better than just learning the language. When I first stepped out of the airplane and into Paris my breath was taken away. It was so much better than I imagined! Our group went to see the Eiffel Tower right away, and all I could think is, "my dream of seeing this wonderful place had finally come true!"

As the days were passing, I really was learning to adapt to the culture I was in. I was not fluent in speaking French so it was nice to have my host family with me when we were in public. I learned that the French will not respect you unless you try to speak their language. That was a scary thought for me to be in a

place where I didn't speak fluently enough to be understood by the natives. I had to use what I had, and adapt to my surroundings.

This trip really made me grow personally, and I learned a lot about myself. I realized how much I rely on communication as a human. I also became more independent because I had to really trust myself and my instincts about this new culture I had put myself in. I had to see that I was the minority, and I had to learn their language and learn their ways to show respect for them. I became a more humble and understanding person towards others from this experience. This experience went to show how I should live for the moments that take my breath away, and I would do it again in a second.

Reflecting on this essay also made me realize how much I had learned and taken for granted with my time in Norway. I was experiencing a lot of things that some people will never get to experience or get to see. I became so comfortable in my surroundings after a few months and before I knew it I had become fully adapted, and everything was no longer new to me. I had normalized many things over my time in Europe that I never thought would get normalized like the following: hearing different languages and not even thinking twice about it, having no cell phone or car, respecting everyone around me, and living on a tighter budget than I have ever experienced due to the high prices of Norway.

After experiencing this new life of living abroad it was clear to me that I had gone through the culture shock cycle with many different experiences in Norway. Once I returned to America, the culture shock cycle was one of the most important theories of

knowledge that helped me to understand why I felt and acted certain ways in different situations. I knew that the feelings and experiences I was going through were normal, and it was nice to know that I am not the only one who has felt all of these different feelings while abroad.

On the other hand, it is important to note that not everyone will adapt to a new country when immersed into a new culture. Culture shock can have both a psychological and physical effect on any human being, which may lead to a downward spiral of other escape routes from the country such as: alcoholism, drugs, or leaving the country without a second shot at understanding the culture in the physical range. On the psychological range one may literally go insane until they return to what they know as normal. It is good to be able to deal with culture shock in your own way, but finding that outlet of frustration can be hard (Larson). For me, taking deep breaths and talking about my frustrations with other Americans helped me to continue to move along the culture shock cycle to achieve full adaptation in Norway. I am thankful to say that I was able to adapt to my surroundings and not turn to these alternatives to deal with culture shock, which is a major blessing to me. However, it can also be argued that these experiences I have explained could be considered hiccups of culture shock, and I bounced around in my culture shock cycle, but really stayed in the gradual adjustment stage for the bulk of my time there. I did adapt to my surroundings in Norway, but I was still in awe of living in Norway at the same time because while I was living there I knew that this was not a permanent move and it was a safe, English speaking country as compared to other countries that I could have gone to.

As an international business major, this experience has heightened my interest in working for an international company. While abroad, I had the unique experience of working for a Norwegian owned golf technology company to fulfill some of the requirements for my major. This gave invaluable insight into what it might look like to be working with a foreign company; in particular a country that is more “feminine” than the United States. To explain this further I will first give some background information about the owner and the company. Next, I will use some of my experiences as a tool for comparison for differences in working with masculine or feminine countries.

The owner of Gobex, Paul Berg, was interested in moving his technological golf scoring company to the United States based upon how many golf courses there are in comparison to Norway; our team of four students was to assess his plan. One of the first things I noticed about Paul when I met him was that he was not as aggressive as I thought he was going to be as the owner and inventor of this product. For example, when I first met him he shook my hand and could not look at me square in the eye, and he just didn't sound confident when he spoke. However, the more we worked together, we began to understand each other better, and became more comfortable around each other.

The assignment given to the team of students was to see if this product would do well in America, and where to take it in America. When we first began to research this topic for Paul, he was pretty quiet and let us approach this assignment however we pleased. We gained his trust and respect when he could see that we worked diligently and found good information for him. He then felt comfortable with us doing more in depth research by getting a hold of certain country clubs in the U.S. for more information.

Once this happened he began to think very highly of our group, and we felt very secure working with him as well.

I was concerned about the viability of Paul's expansion into the American market, not because of his product, but because of his business approaches and philosophy. My previous research on Hofstede's cultural dimensions helped explain his behaviors, as well as the potential pitfalls of an international expansion into the United States. Norway is defined by Hofstede as a more "feminine" nation on the basis of "working in order to live," as well as putting family and a private life above one's career (Rich, 1). In contrast, working within a more "masculine" nation holds the opposite ideals of "living in order to work," as well as striving for high salaries by putting private lives on hold (Rich, 1). I did experience this phenomenon while in Norway because Paul was very respectful of our time, and didn't work unless it was time to work. Decisions were almost always made as a group, even though Paul was the leader and always had the final vote. In my experience working abroad, rushing around and working frantically was not what Norwegians were interested in, it was more about taking enough time to do a job correctly, and enjoy the work we were doing. This cultural divide could prove fatal in the American market for Paul because he possesses a lack of aggression and masculine traits, which are so important for survival in the American market.

Although this difference taught me a lot about where I should think about putting my priorities when I find my career, it also emphasized the potential problems in business with cultural differences. It still was very powerful to realize that life and work can be successful in many different countries with different priorities around how their nation operates. I became more attracted to the way of life of the Norwegians; in particular the

career paths and priorities. However, I still enjoy my home as an American, but I do plan to have these priorities impact my life as an American even within the confines of the American culture.

This research could also be used to assist future exchange students like myself by helping them to understand this culture shock cycle and how it can affect one's physical and psychological self while in a foreign country. Explaining my experiences can help to prepare students for unusual circumstances they will encounter and learn from my reactions to these situations. This thesis can prepare these exchange students for the changes they will have on their outlook in life. These changes cannot be explained or predicted, but I can guarantee that changes will be made if one lives abroad for an extended amount of time.

When I got back to America I did realize changes in my outlook on life. I realized that I had just gone through an amazing experience that can never be replaced, and all I could do was smile. I was so excited with my life, and I realized what a lucky person I was to be able to experience the things I did and to be so blessed with a wonderful family. It was amazing to come back to America and have things be turned upside down again because all I could hear was English! Everyone was speaking English, I had a car and a phone again, I could eat old foods that I had been missing, and my family and friends were back. It was so strange to be back to what I thought was normal before I had left for Norway, and it took a few weeks to get used to having everything back to "normal" again because I had been removed from it for so long. This strange sensation of coming back to America I was experiencing is often referred to as reverse culture shock,

which deals with the adjustments of moving back home after an extended amount of time in another country (Larson).

Generally, when one is immersed into a different country it forces them to adapt to their surroundings and understand there is not worldwide definition of normal. This experience abroad broadened my understanding of differences around the world and how to adapt to those changes. I believe it is necessary for every human on the planet to understand and respect this sense of difference in cultures because it helps the world to be a more peaceful place. I am ecstatic with my decision of having an international career because it is the most interesting and humbling jobs on Earth to deal with different nations around the globe.

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