



How Thai women experience life in Norway  
How stereotypes effect the adaptation process into  
Norwegian society

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## Abstract

This study aims to explore how Thai women experience life in Norway and how stereotypes affect them in their daily life. The area of fieldwork mostly took place in Stavanger, Norway during the autumn of 2018. The methods employed is qualitative research based on interviews and narratives of life stories. The participants in the study were 5 Thai women who moved to Norway 4 to 25 years ago, age from 25 to 55 years old.

Despite the globalization nowadays connected to my study, I am very interested in studying the effect of how it has an impact on people who are caught in the middle of the phenomena. In this case Thai women who migrate to Norway. Firstly, I began the study investigating if some of the cultural differences between the two cultures (Norwegian and Thai) are the reasons of some cultural misunderstanding that could lead to stereotypes or prejudice toward Thais. Furthermore, how the stereotype has an effect on the adaptation process into Norwegian society by focusing on the perspective of cultural dimensions, stereotype, intercultural communication, cross-cultural misunderstanding, and the adaptation process in to the new culture.

The study reveals that it is very challenging for many Thai women to start their life again in Norway where aspects of life work differently. They have to find out how the unfamiliar rules and unwritten rules work in their daily life with limited ability. Language is one of the most challenging problems in order to adapt into Norwegian society.

In term of family, Thai women experience life in Norway based on their natal family's expectations and obligations that influenced by the collectivist thinking on their goals in life.

In terms of friendship, Thai female friends are the source of sharing a certain lifestyle and enjoying social activities. The unusual relationship is questioning the sincerity of the quality of the relationship. Gossip and jealousy occur among friends as these women come from various socio-economic statuses. All my informants rarely have Norwegians friends apart from the Norwegians that are related to their partners.

In terms of lifestyle, my informants mentioned that their lifestyle has changed after moving to Norway. Their life has become quite lonely and not like what they expected it would be before

they moved to Norway. The language, the weather, the food, and getting to know Norwegians are very challenging situations during the adaptation process. Most of informants have become less socialized, lonelier, and some even suffered from depression.

The most challenging problem in term of the adapting process into Norwegian society are mostly based on misunderstanding and miscommunication between Thai women and Norwegians. It is clearly affecting the willingness to adapt themselves into Norwegian society.

There are many stereotypes being mentioned throughout the interviews. They were the stereotypes between Norwegians toward Thai women, Thai women towards other immigrants they met in language classes, Thai women toward Norwegians, and Thai women toward Thai women in Norway.

I have found that the stereotype that Norwegians have toward Thais is too complex to conclude in this study. It is too soon to confirm that Norwegians have such a stereotype toward Thais because some research needs to be done on the Norwegian's side of the story.

For the stereotype Thai women have toward other immigrants they meet in language class shows has shown the process of stereotype from the start until it has changed because a person has gained a new understanding

For the stereotype that Thai women have toward Norwegian is created because of the of the effect of being unable to properly communicate in both English and Norwegian of the Thais. It has created a misunderstanding for Thai women toward the Norwegians. Together with the language problem, a limited worldview led Thais to the feeling of being stereotyped when it could be just a misunderstanding of cultures and communication problems. This wrong assumption of being stereotyped is clearly affecting the adapting process to Norwegian society.

Lastly, the stereotype I have found during the interview was that Thai women have some stereotype toward other Thai women in Norway. This stereotype is created based on the socio-economic status of the women, sharing similar sub-culture, and class differences. I have found that the stereotype Thai women have toward Thai women in Norway, effected the friendship they had with each other.

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# Chapter One

## INTRODUCTION

### **Introduction and background**

In this research consist of a group of participants which are Thai women who lived in Norway between 4 to 15 years. It cannot be easy for Thai women, moving from Thailand where people think, feel and act differently than in Norway. Having been growing up in Thailand for more than twenty years, all these women carry with themselves patterns of thinking, feeling, and potential acting base on Thai's culture, values, and norms that were learned throughout a person's lifetime. (Hofstede et al., 2010, p.4) Shuales, also mentions in his book that we should see the culture as a factor that influence a certain behavior of the individual, Such as when a person thinks about the other like "he did that because of his culture" The focus should be on how the knowledge of culture that each individual has operated in their mind. It is to remind that culture does not influence only actions and choices, it can be seen in the ability of the individual to interpret behavior of other (Shuales, 2015, p.159).

When these women moved to a new host country like Norway, where everything work very differently, they experience challenging task in terms of adaptation and integration. These women are considered immigrants who aim to stay permanently and hopefully work in Norway. There are factors which influence the process of intercultural transformation process; environmental factor, predisposition and communication. This process of integrated immigrant is a mutual process, in order to be successfully integrated, it need both newcomer (Thai women) and the host (Norwegian) to work together. (Salo-lee, 2006, p.113). When the two very different cultures (Thai and Norwegian cultures) "meet", when people meet, cultural misunderstanding, misinterpreting each other is expected. Øyvind Dahl mentions that people always have their cultural frames of reference as an unconscious cultural filter when it comes to understanding other or things. Most people have experience situations where they have not managed to make themselves understood. Sometimes they even feel anxious that the other person has not understood them and sometime even feel that the other people might not want to understand them. Because of

the way people use their individual cultural frames of reference to interpret or trying to understand the other, the general key of interpretations such as stereotype or prejudices is being used. (Dahl, 2016, p.33).

“Stereotype are categories of people or groups of people who share same common features” (Dahl, 2016, p.49). When a certain characteristic of people or things are “put into the box”, it is often negative connotation, but when the world is too complex to master, a stereotype is needed. Normally, when a certain characteristic is repeated long enough to get to the level of authority it may not be true or only certain element of truth that is why stereotype may be helpful or harmful depend on how it being used. On the other hand, prejudice is rigid or could be called “Frozen stereotype”. While stereotypes could be a positive or a negative assumption about a group of people, prejudice is mostly a negative attitude toward group of people even if new information/ new insight is gained. (Dahl, 2016).

## **1.1 Choice of my Topic**

I decided to choose this topic because my keen interest in culture especially cultural differences/ diversities. Stigmatization, stereotype or categorization has been used as a tool to simplifies the understanding toward other. I think it is very fascinating to find out how its affect the process of gaining a new understand of other culture. Also, I want to understand the process of adapted new culture and the challenges during the process. The reason I tied to Thai is because Thailand is my country of origin. During the last ten years of my life, I have been living in many countries, so I have experienced the adapting process and gaining new understand of culture many times and it is not easy. I do not think that all my experiences were to be called a success one that is why when I have a chance to do a research in Global Studies, I saw it as a suitable opportunity to combine all my interests in to doing the fieldwork on Thai women in Norway.

## **1.2 Aim of study**

The aim of this study is to understand more about how it is like to be Thai in Norway, together with the effects of Thai women stereotypes toward Thais women in Norway and how it affects them in their daily life. It explores the difficulties of being Thai in Norway where the two cultures tend to be conflicting each other as well as how Thais women react to stereotypes toward



Norwegians and even the stereotype that Thais has toward Thais in Norway. I especially what to see how Thai women adapted Norwegian cultures and to see what the challenges during the process are.

### **1.3 Research Question**

To understand Thai women on how it is like to be Thai in Norway together with understand the adapting Norwegian culture, I have developed the following research questions:

1. How do Thai women experience life in Norway in term of family, friend, and lifestyle?
2. What are the challenges during the adaptation process into Norwegian society?
3. How do Thai women experience stereotype during the adaptation process into Norwegian society?

### **1.4 Significant of the study**

The growing of a divert Norwegian society require the need for more knowledge about its members of the society. When dealing with a multicultural community in Norway nowadays, it is important to understand each other as much as one can, in order to acquire a fully integrated society and moving forward the society in to the direction that will make a better community. By focusing on how it is like to be Thais in Norway and takes stereotype of Thai women into a consideration will help other in the society understand these women better. When look at the stereotype from the cognitive point of view mention by Ruth Illman, Stereotypes are necessary, and they are part of a complex system that assist the categorization capacity of people when they are encultured to new things. It makes the world understandable. Categorization is also help sorting out the amount of information in everyday life. (Illman, 2006, p.104). Mention in the article written by Pablo R. Cristoffanini, He says that Øyvind Dahl, a Scandinavian expert, affirm that “stereotype and simplified representation of other is necessary and in evitable because it is a product of the mental mechanism to be found in the process of stimuli.” (Cristoffanini, 2004, p.80). Further the knowledge about how Thai women adapted into Norwegian society will benefit both Thai women and the society to be aware of the cultural difference and the challenges that they might meet.

There are a few literatures about Thai women has been done in the European countries such as in England, Netherland and a neighboring country like Sweden, but rarely in Norway.

Most of the literature is about migration through power and agency, and attitude toward cross-cultural marriage as well as their sexuality. When reviewing the literature to this thesis I found out that literature about Thai women in Norway as part of the Norwegian society is very limited in comparison to another immigrant's country of origin such as Polish, Swedish or Filipino. There has also been a lot of focusing about integration into Norwegian society but so little is known about the immigrant's country of origin's culture in this case Thais culture.

## **1.5 Backgrounds**

For “a better opportunity”, many Thais women choose to live abroad. It cannot be denied that this is one of the main reasons why they choose this path. For the majority of Thai women, it is not easy to migrate oversea without falling into the trend of marry a foreigner both because the case of love and/or economic gain. According to Statistics Norway (SSB), the reason for migration to Norway are labor, refugee, education, and family. (Dzamarija, 2018). Based on the European union employment regulations, it is very difficult for citizens from countries such as Thailand to enter the European union with work contract because of low working skills, unlike countries such as the Philippines where maybe the Filipinos have a college degree and are fluent in English. (Suksonboon, 2009). Based on Norwegian regulations for Thai job seekers, the chances to obtain the right to gain a work contact in Norway is very limited. It is because of language barrier and Thai women's former often low education does not fit for the requirement of the work immigration regulation of Norway. (UDI,2018).

### **1.5.1 My Family is Everything to Me**

The most important unit in Thai social organization is family. Family means everything to Thais. Family values refer to the closeness of family ties, in detail it depends on parents' duties and responsibilities to the child, how much children should respect the elderly and how important family is in life. (Alesia & Giulino, 2010). In most societies, family is the strongest institution in the socio economy, but the relationship between family members varies across nationalities. Thailand is one of the countries where people have a strong connection to family ties. Most people in Thailand belong to an extended family member. A large kinship system that trace relatives from both father and mother. In the past, the principle of kinship is to provide basic duties for each

member of its kinship to the task in everyday life. Neighbours or people from the same village will think of themselves as relatives and kin even if they cannot be traced as one. Everybody knows everybody else's business is normal in Thai society. It is the reason why keeping the family's status and avoid losing face become one of the most important responsibilities to the family members. If the members of the family could not achieve the goal of this duty, it will bring embarrassments to the whole family. (Kuwinpant, 2002, p.5). Family life is a dynamic process in which its members are encouraged to learn by their family members. A traditional Thai family value concept such as loving the groups to which they belong, especially in a family level is deeply rooted in Thai society. It can be seen clearly when one of the family members receives an external threat of any kinds, the entire family mobilizes to confront the threatening outsider and deal with them as a matter of a family. The sense of loyalty to family members which causes all members to help any members to face an external threat whether it is right or wrong. Such a concept is very strong in Thai culture. (Jirapornkul, 2010, p.8).

The pressures of the family affect Thais women in many ways. Respect is one of them as it is an important value in Thai society particularly within family. Respect for seniority have been taught through family ties. The parents have been taught to follow willingness of the grandparents. Children must obey their parents, aunt and uncle, and any other memberships that are older than them in the family. People who have seniority are generally older and they have acquired significant experiences. Lower seniority persons should be aware of their status and should agree with their seniors. If lower seniority expresses their own opinions and argues with those who have superiority, it is considered disrespectful and improper. These disrespectful behaviors could also be seen after as a cause of family embarrassment. (Jirapornkul, 2010, p.6). Status acquisition is a family members' responsibility to maintain and to gain during their life time as it is the important to a family legacy. Status acquisition creates the pressure to Thais women as they will have to try to achieve an acceptable status to keep the family legacy. For example, the idea of working for a government bureaucracy is better than working with a private corporation. This idea is giving as a consequence of hierarchy concept. Most parents in Thailand, want their child to gain such a position as it is easier to acquire higher status, obtaining honor, power, and elevating one's position, gaining respect and allegiance from others. It is like parents' dream come true for every parent, if their children are to become government officers. (Jirapornkul,2010, p.6).

Another important value to many Thais families is to be extravagant when competing in society. It becomes a pressure to Thais women to achieve her goals in life. If an individual is achieving his or her goals in life, it is representing the success of whole family. Even on the lowest hierarchy level, Thai persons feel they are as good as others. Thus, everyone must prove to other people to accept or honor them, by doing extravagant things such as always dressing themselves up fashionably with brand- name material, buying a big house, and cars etc. A lot of money is spent on these items to show one is as good as others. Thai persons fear that someone may look down on them and their family. It is not acceptable to the average Thai person and family to allow it to happen, they would rather die (run away or quit) than to suffer loss of face and eye in society. It is more important than anything else and one would willingly go into debt to “keep face”. This “Keep face” concept is an important part of Thai society. (Jirapornkul, 2010, p.7).

Thai family values are also base on gratitude concept as a response to supporters or family. Thai people at every age level has this value. They should feel and express gratitude to their mother and father, teachers, and those who have supported or assisted them in any way. Thai society provides many ways to express gratitude such as a ceremony for showing respect to teachers. This is an opportunity to express gratitude toward whoever that guide them in life. The concept such as dowry is being practiced when Thais are getting married. This act repays the mother and father for raising their daughter. In Thais’ believe, this concept is to pay debt of mother’s milk to the parents of the bride. For a son, when he is entering the monkhood, the parents receive merit from their son, at the same time, the son is considered to be a good person because he has responded to their goodness. A gratitude concept is called “Bon- Khun” in Thai. The obligation to the family since sons and daughters is required to repay the moral debt to the parents in different ways.

For a son, before his marriage, ideally a son may repay his debt through ordination as a monk, regardless of the length of the period he may remain in the order. By being a monk, he creates and ritually transfers a store of merit to his parents. This does not imply that in practice a son no longer has an obligation to his parents after his ordination and that ordination is the only means to return the debt to his parents. His responsibility to his parents has to be maintained, but the pressure is relaxed. In other words, the parents will be delighted if their son gives them financial support and affection, but they do not expect too much of him.

The daughter’s position is quite different as she cannot return the debt to her parents through ordination. She can fulfil “Bon Khun” obligations to the parents by her contribution to the

physical, emotional and material well-being of the latter. Furthermore, the Thai family ideal defines the daughter as a main source of care of the elderly; the parents place higher expectations on their daughter than on their son. The daughter also feels deeply obligated as from very early in her life she has socialized to undertake this life-long care responsibility to her parents (Jirapornkul, 2010). Lastly, checking out other people business is normal in Thai society. The curiosity about the affairs of others is a way to measure a status and wellbeing of their own family. Thai people are naturally curious about the affairs of the others. When Thai people meet other people, normal questions ask would be something like “Where are you going?”, “Where have you been?” “How much did you pay for it?”, etc. This interest is the source of information to gossip about the affairs of others. Any stories about others’ affairs is interesting to any conversations especially stories like someone’s failure or misfortune seem to be of most interest because it can prove a well-being of their own (Jirapornkul, 2010, p.8).

### **1.5.2 Hidden Parts of a Land of Smile: Thai Cultures, Norms and Values.**

Apart from beautiful landscapes Thailand has to offer to the world, Thai cultures, norms, and values are also fascinated by people from other nations who have come to experience such a unique way of living. Thailand have not been colonized by any big nations have made Thai culture very unique and pure to its’ nation. The characteristics of Thai cultures, values and norms have been in focus for many experts. As a result of combined works of many scholars mention in the article written by Jirapornkul, Somsak in 2010, he explained the characteristics of Thai cultures, values and norms.

Thais respect and believe in Buddhism. Unfortunately, in the urban area of Thailand recently, people rarely go to the temple. It is more practical consider a rush life-style to make merit by giving foods, flowers, or so forth to monk in front of their house or public space such as market and receive merits. As a consequence of the Buddhism believes, many Thai ceremonies seems to be a part of its religion. Thai people love ceremonies as they are needed for honoring and learning. Apart from religion believe, Power acquisition is significant in Thai values and norms.

Thai people and Thai society respect and give value to a person who has power. As a result, power becomes a supreme goal for most of the people who want to be superior in the social hierarchy. Come with power, money is also another source of power supremely important. The

most desirable and important consideration of the Thai people is money. In the past, to gain respects and honor used to be more important value than money, but in a present time, the resulting materialism are emphasized and the most of it all is money (Jirapornkul, 2010). “Money brings everything that Thai could ever want as expected by society; power, position, social status, respect, etc. to those who hold it.

Money is considered honorable and it upgrades the social status of those who possess it. The value of a person is not measured by personal attributes or goodness, but by his money” (Jirapornkul, 2010, p.6). Offending someone particularly an elder is considered rude. Naturally, Thais do not like to disagree with anyone. As a result, Thai people respond to any requests by agreeableness manner such as smiling or saying “yes” to everything even though, they do not agree. By responding respectfully, is a way to relieve themselves from the immediate problem. Also, many Thais like to gamble even if, they do not like risk and lack of patience. Thais want to be rich as it is almost an obligatory to maintain their status and they family dignity in the society. Many people do not want to work hard and like to gamble in order to become wealthy despite having little probability of success.

The core such as taking risk in order to gain more career opportunity is not something Thai people like to do because it does not give immediately result. (Jirapornkul, 2010). Unlike many countries especially in the western world, organizing or planning is not something Thais are familiar with. Many Thais could be seen as lacking order and discipline when it come to the group’s matter but not when it comes to themselves as the individual. It is clear from the disorganized way of driving in general, they only do what is convenient for themselves and not for a safe community. They are enjoying an easy life where nobody wants to make efforts or do anything difficult. The approach to life in general, Thai people like to proceed every matter in the easiest and most convenient way possible. (Supadtra,1999, p.17).

A popular statement in Thai said, “Two tigers cannot live in the same cave.” has created another norm in Thai society. It is the concept of do not like to see others being better than themselves. Criticism or fault finding is believed to be a mechanism to weaken other in the society. This often leads to irrational attempts to discredit some person (Supadtra,1999, p. 19-20). Lastly, the concept such as forgive each other is a core value taught by Buddhism. It is a way to show mercy toward each other. This concept has been taught since a very young age. The forgiveness

concept has been passed through generation as the idea of “Mai pen rai” meaning “it does not matter” responses to situations involving conflicts (Jirapornkul, 2010).

# Chapter Two

## METHODOLOGY

Firstly, I began the study investigating if some of the cultural differences between the two cultures (Norwegian and Thai) is a reason of some cultural misunderstanding that could lead to stereotypes or prejudice toward Thais, as well as the other way around. It will be interesting to see how the stereotyping of Thai women is created and how it affects Thai women mentally and physically. In an intercultural competence perspective, I would like to see how these stereotypes are affecting Thai women in Norway in terms of social practices in their daily life, at home, in the workplace, and community, especially regarding the integration process. In addition, examining what the Norwegian society expects from Thais in regard of being fully integrated into Norwegian society. I also expect to discuss the term integration and what that entails from the different perspectives of Norwegians and Thais. After I had done some of the fieldwork, my research questions and objectives went through continuous change due to the difficulties I came across. I had problems finding Norwegian informants and even if I did, I was not able to get all the information across. I felt that there was so much information I did not understand. At the end stage of my fieldwork and during the process of interview collection, I came across some new thoughts on how my research questions can be structured and questioned more precisely. I decided to interview only Thai women as my informants. I found out that many perspectives of the information I have gained from Thai women are very interesting and it could be enough for me to present the interesting finding. The research questions I developed after the fieldwork are as follows:

1. How do Thai women experience life in Norway in term of family, friends, and lifestyle?
2. What are the challenges during the adaptation process into Norwegian society?
3. How do Thai women experience stereotype during the adaptation process into Norwegian society?



## **Research interviewees**

My research was conducted by using a qualitative research method based on interviews and narratives of life stories. Initially the plan was to interview 15 Thai women in Stavanger, Norway to find out the information I need for my research. After I interviewed some of the informants, I found out that the information that I have was so rich. I decided to change the number of the informants to five Thai women in Stavanger, Norway. I visited all of my informants four to five times during the fieldwork. I also used social media as a source to follow their life and the activities online. My informants were Thai women who moved to Norway 4 to 25 years ago, age from 25 to 55 years old. The reason I chose this age group with a specific time being in Norway was because I would like to see how age and length of time being in Norway has influenced the adaptation process into Norwegian society.

## **Research Method**

In my methodology and data collection, I chose to use a qualitative approach and interpretative method based on interviews and narratives of life stories. James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubeium, mentioned that an interview is collaborative product narratives of a person's life and circumstances. These narratives can be cut short, used as information to answer the interview question, or as elaborate as oral life histories, but they are all enhanced by the interview process. (Holstein, Gubeium, 2016, p.68) Treating interviewing as a social enculturation in which information is actively from, my data draws primarily on in-depth and open-ended interviews on five Thai women. All interviews were conducted in Thai. I would like to give my background information to the project. I am a Thai student who moved to Norway. I have been living in Stavanger about two years. I am not socially active in Thai communities in Stavanger.

My first challenge was how to get to know my potential informants. I came across few Thais during my last two years in Norway, and two of them were my main gatekeepers. My first gatekeeper was a Thai restaurant owner in Stavanger and the other was a daughter of another Thai restaurant owner in town. With the help of my gatekeepers, I was introduced to various Thai communities in Stavanger. First, I was invited to many Thai temple ceremonies in Stavanger as my gatekeeper who owned a restaurant is participates very actively with the Thai temple. Also,

with the help of my other gatekeeper, I was invited to many Thai ceremonies/events hosted by Thais.

**Ethical challenge. I am an insider as well as outsider.**

During my field work, I came across some ethical challenges because I am Thai. I tried to be very careful and conscious about this fact during the interview at time. As I am Thai, I tried to interview people about my culture, but I felt that sometimes it was not very comfortable for both groups of informants. For Norwegians, when questions about Thai culture, even if the question was in general, I felt that they feel uncomfortable answering it. I felt like they were afraid that it was not the right answer even if the answer itself can't be right or wrong. Only sometimes, when the question shows Thais in a negative light, I felt like they were very careful in answering it. After I made some clarification that I won't feel bad about any answer, I felt like it was better in terms of the flow of the conversation.

I have had some ethical challenges concerning Thais during my field work when I started when I looked for informants. I got to know some of my informants through my gatekeepers. I was recommended by one of my gatekeepers to join a Traditional Thai event in Stavanger where I got to meet many Thais. Because I am Thai, I got a mixed feeling that I was very welcome, and many people were interested in participating in my field work. On the other hand, I also felt like I was very welcome because I am a newcomer and want to participate with the event. But when they got to know that I was also looking for some informant to participated in my field work, they were skeptical about my topic. The reason I thought so was that I did not get many informants as I initially I thought. Many people were interested but not many participated in the interview. As I mentioned before, I was very self-conscious when I interviewed my informants. Sometime when I interview the Thais, I felt like they had some difficulty in answering my questions, and I could see it from their gestures and the appearance of their face. I have never felt like they were lying to me, but they were answering it in a way that the answers they have given will not in a way affect their social status. I felt like they were avoiding some truth so that they will not feel like they are losing face. After I had chosen my target to continue the interviewing process further, I developed trust by visiting them often before I conducted the interview. During the process, I as a researcher felt like I was sometimes the insider because I am Thai, and I know the same unwritten rules the

same way as my informants do. I felt like I could understand my informants' gestures, emotions, and frustration without it being directly said. Moreover, I felt like I could gain richer information from my informants because they see me as falling into the same situation as a Thai woman in Norway and the fact that I share some common ethnic and social characteristics. My status as a Thai woman who lives abroad allows me to understand Thai culture and having Thai as my mother tongue would allow me relatively easy access to them, compared to the difficulties which might be faced by non-Thai researchers. Later, I realized that my assumption was not entirely correct. Even though I have gained their trust, they did not trust me enough and their status as an immigrant made them feel to some degree vulnerable. I felt like I was an outsider, so I decided that I had to visit them more often and participate with their daily activities. Such aspects of participant observation as sharing food with the women, shopping with them and participating in Thai festivals enabled me to conduct informal interviews and to acquire more specific data in day-to-day situations.

## Chapter Three

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Despite the globalization process connected to my research, many people are meeting in real time from across the world as a result of the fast development of worldwide transportation and communication networks. All these new technologies allow people to get to know each other or keep in touch with old friends from across the world. This is true in the case of my study about Norwegian and Thai interactions. It is not only that people are meeting and moving, they are bringing culture with them. In every society, communication is a very important tool to understand each other and to live together peacefully. It cannot be easy for Thai women, moving from Thailand where people think, feel, and act differently than in Norway. Having been growing up in Thailand for more than twenty years, all these women carry with themselves patterns of thinking, feeling, and potential acting based on their Thai culture, values, and norms that were learned throughout their lifetime. (Hofstede et al., 2010, p.4) When these women moved to a new host country like Norway, where everything works very differently, they experience challenging tasks in terms of adapting to a new culture. Not only do Thai women experience the differences but also Norwegians, who experience it the other way around. When the two very different cultures (Thai and Norwegian cultures) “meet,” and people meet across culture, cultural misunderstanding, and misinterpreting each other is expected. Øyvind Dahl mentions that people always have their cultural frames of reference as unconscious cultural filters when it comes to understanding others or things. Most people have experienced situations where they have not managed to make themselves understood. Sometimes they even feel anxious that the other person has not understood them and sometimes even feel that the other people might not want to understand them. Because of the way people use their individual cultural frames of reference to interpret or try to understand the other, the general key of interpretations such as stereotype or prejudices is being used (Dahl, 2016, p.33).

In the academic world, people see and give definitions of culture in a different way. Shaules Joseph explains that culture has a close relationship with cognition process of the brain. He mentions that a natural and easy way for human to recognize things such as face recognition,

reading emotions, or using language are highly involved cognitive processes which allow humans to learn to have the same or different common sense. (Shuales, 2015, p.4) He also stated in his book the research of Richard Nisbett, a well-known sociologist whom argued convincingly that there is a strong relationship between culture and cognition process for human beings. The information processes of the brain can identify the way cultural patterns shape one's experience of the world. Nisbett describes, an experiment with a shown picture of a cow, a chicken, and grass. His East Asian students tend to draw a connection between the cow and the grass based on contextual relationship (example: a cow eats grass) whereas his westerner student associated a cow with a chicken as they are a member of the same categories (example: animals) this experiment shows there is some influence of culture on the thought process of the individual (Shuales,2015, p.4) .

Hofstede explains culture as a mental program, or in other words, a software of mind. He likes to think that computers and people are programmed partially in the same way. The difference is that a human's reaction is not only based on mental programming but with a basic ability to adapt in new ways, whether creative, destructive or unexpected (Hofstede et al., 2010, p.5). The mental program's sources people can learn in an environment that one grew up in and in one's life experience. People tend to carry these patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting with them. Once a person has acquired these things, they will have to unlearn these patterns before being able to learn something different. The unlearning process is normally more difficult than learning it for the first time (Hofstede et al, 2010, p.5).

Dahl explains culture as an intercultural communication theme that is the way a group of people live and the cognitive frame of reference they refer to (Dahl, 2016, p.22). He explains that while culture can be understood in many other ways, he focuses on what he calls the descriptive concept of culture and the dynamic concept of culture. He said that theoretically these concepts are in conflict with each other but in a real world these two concepts are complementing each other. (Dahl, 2016, p.23) Agreeing with Dahl that culture is dynamic, Hofstede mentions further that culture is always a collective phenomenon consisting of the unwritten rules of social game (Hofstede et al., 2010, p.6).

What people would normally find out in a global living situation is that some of the unconscious patterns of perceiving and valuing could be clear to some people and totally invisible to others. It is because our cultural viewpoints are often built in, and at the same time, they

influence our perception and judgments (Shuales, 2015, p.4). Shuales explains the concept of culture in a way that agrees with the concept of cultural frame of reference mentioned by Dahl. It functions as a reference that people have, and it is used as a mechanism to interpret or judge a certain situation when first encountered (Dahl, 2016, p.39) Dahl uses four main criteria invented by Hofstede to make it possible to compare different cultural trends in different countries. Hofstede is the best-known researcher in the area of cross-cultural comparison. His research provides a statistical analysis data set that could be used to compare between key elements of cultural variation in countries. He was working for IBM to find out the attitude of employees around the world toward their workplace conditions. He mentions in his research a term called cultural dimensions. He believes that culture is a collective program of mind which will differ from one member of a human group to another. (Dahl, 2016, p.35)

Many researchers in the same area as Hofstede are skeptical about his criteria and the terms individualist and collectivist being used. It could easily be seen as constructed terms. There are some concerned that listing a country based on its country's characteristics will encourage a stereotypical way of thinking. David Matsumoto mentioned that cultural sets of value created by Hofstede could be used poorly to judge the actual behavior of each informant. The answers people give to the set of questionnaires may tell so little about their behavior, or it will only show the preference being seen on one area of their life. (Shuales,2015, p.158)

Even if Hofstede's research produces some negative comments from scholars in the same area of social science the research itself could explain or help people from a different cultural background to understand each other better. It could be difficult for some people to imagine how difficult it is to understand a new culture and how culture has an impact on one's own way of thinking. Many people don't realize this until they have to interact intensively with those who have a different way of perceiving information. For example, what if instead of sleeping in their own room separated from their parents and being encouraged to develop independence like in Norway, a child was raised in Thailand where they almost never alone (Shuales, 2015, p.8). Cultural dimensions of each culture could be best explained the difference behaviors of people who are from difference culture. There are four mains cultural dimensions, they are: Individualism vs. Collectivism, Power distance, Uncertainty avoidance, and Masculinity vs. femininity could perfectly describe how Thai and Norwegian cultures are different from each other. It explains the

“We” and “They” concept, in correspondence with the “in-group” and “out-group.” Every human being tends to function in a simple way that they need to categorize others into groups. It could be seen as close relationships, as in the family. The word in-laws being used to divide the side of the family, even though in some culture in-laws are considered a close family tie. (Hofstede et al, 2010, p.16)

Understanding similarities and differences in cross-cultural communication is necessary for each individual to communicate between culture. It is important to have a way of thinking about how cultures differ and how they are similar. Knowing that each culture is different is not enough in the intercultural community but knowing *why* there are differences between the way people communicate will help create the awareness when people are communicating across the cultures. Each culture has a unique way of communicating and there are systematic similarities and difference across cultures that can be explained and predicted theoretically by using dimensions of culture. (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003, p53)

### **Individualism versus Collectivism**

“the extent to which people are concerned about themselves and their immediate family—that is individual centered—as opposite to public centered, which implies strong loyalty to a dense social network” (Dahl, 2016, p.35).

The major dimension of cultural variability used to explain similarities and differences in cross-cultural communication is individualism and collectivism. A collectivist’s goals emphasize the social norm of in-group, rather than the individual’s pleasure. They prefer sharing in group beliefs, rather than unique individual beliefs. Value is given to cooperation within in group members, rather than maximizing individual outcomes (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003, p.57). These concepts have a strong connection with the family structure. For those who grow up in the collectivist society, the family that the child is growing up in consists of number of people living closely together, not just the parents. At the same time, this structure could be called an extended family. The child learns to think of themselves as a “we.” Breaking lifetime loyalty to one’s in-group is one of the worst things a person can do as it is a major source of one’s identity and the only secure protection one has all their life. Loyalty to the group is a core element to the collectivist family, that means all resources are shared within the group (Hofstede et al., 2010, p.91).

On the other hand, a minority of people in the world belong to a group where the focus of interests depends on the individual. This group could be called individualist as a child born into nuclear family where they only have the relationship with their parents and possibly other children, but other relatives are rarely seen. A child who is raised in this type of family will grow up thinking for themselves as a “I.” The rest of the decisions in their life will be based on individual characteristics and not for the sake of group interest. The child will be educated to stand on their feet and leave their parents’ home as soon as they are able to take care of themselves. The relationship to their parents will be reduced to a minimum, unlike the child from the collectivist group. (Hofstede et al., 2010, p.91)

In terms of social contact, both collectivist and individualist cultures influence their members in a different manner. A key feature to maintain harmony in the reality of each culture is different. In the collectivist society, confrontation is considered rude and undesirable. The word “No” is rarely used. If it is used, it normally has a different meaning than the actual word. This function is working in the same way as the word “yes.” It does not necessarily mean “yes” as an approval or acceptance. It could mean something along the line of “yes, I hear you.” In individualist society, people honor how one feels. Confrontation is a characteristic of a sincere and honest person. It is acceptable to not agree with one another. Having different opinions lead to a higher truth. It is normal in the society that adults should take a direct feedback constructively because they have been trained since they were young to always tell the truth (Hofstede et al., 2010, p.107).

The children who have grown up in the collectivist and individualist societies are very different in terms of the way they share their personal opinion. In the collectivist family, opinion is made by the group for the best of everyone in the group. Personal opinion is not considered as important as the group opinion. A child is taught that voicing opinion differently or voicing any opinion at all means that he/she has a bad characteristic of a child. On the other hand, in the individualist family, a child is encouraged to develop his/her personal opinion. Giving opinion to the group is a sign showing that the child will grow up not having a weak characteristic (Hofstede et al., 2010, p.109).

In every society, when a member fails to reach expectations or violates the rule of the society, there will be a consequence as a form of punishment. The sense of punishment in the collectivist society is shame. If one of the members of the group is violating the rule of the society,



the whole group will be affected by the action. Shame is social in nature and functions in the way that this shame will become known by others. When the actual action of violating the rules becomes known by others, then it becomes a source of shame even more than the actual violating action. Whereas, in the individualist social setting, punishment is in a form of guilt. If the member of this social group is violating the rule, the consequence goes to this person. Guilt is more a personal feeling to each individual. The person who did the action will feel the guilt, but the other members of the group will not necessarily feel it. If the action is recognized by the outsider, or even if it is not, it does not change or add to the guilt, unlike shame (Hofstede et al., 2010, p.109).

The other important concept to understand for collectivist culture is losing face. This concept is not relevant to the individualist society. The closest concept to losing face in an individualist society would be losing self-respect which is defined depending on point of view of the individual. In collectivist culture, losing the family's face is as severe as breaking loyalty to the group members. In the western world, the losing face concept is the same as being humiliated. The individual and the member of the family will experience losing face if himself or the one that is closely related to him fail to complete the expected requirement that is being put upon them by a social position he and his family related to (Hofstede et al., 2010, p.109). "Face" could be represented as honor or prestige to the individual and his family in the collectivist society. It shows that a person and his family have a proper relationship with the environment or the society that they live in, therefore, keeping face is everyone in the family's responsibility to try to maintain the good reputation of the family (Hofstede et al., p.110).

Individualism and collectivism are predominately in the communication process between people from different cultural backgrounds. The understanding of cultural similarities and differences is explained as low-context and high-context communication. Members of collectivist societies predominantly use high-context communication. In high-context communication, most messages are either in physical context or internalized by the person. People who were raised in a high context system expect more from others in terms of participation. When talking about something they have on their mind, the individual will expect their partner to know what is bothering him or her so that he or she does not have to be specific. The result is that he or she will talk around the point they actually wanted to communicate to their partner. In the individualistic culture low-context communication is being used. In the low-context communication, direct fashioning of communication is expected. People using low-context communication are expected

to communicate in ways that are consistent with their feelings, while in high-context communication, maintaining the harmony in their group is important and people may transmit messages that are inconsistent with their true feelings (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003, p53).

### **Power distance**

A Second cultural dimension mentioned by Dahl is power distance. He gives the definition of it as “Power distance indicates the extent to which members of a society accept that power in institution and organization is unequally distributed” (Dahl, 2016, p.35). Power distance is one of the cultural dimensions that help indicate differences between different cultures. In each society, power has been distributed unequally depending on how each culture is constructed. Therefore, members of each country have a different way of handling inequality. Inequality exists in every society. It could be seen in terms of physical and intelligence capacities, power, wealth, and status. Each category suits each individual in a different way, for example, a business person might have wealth and power, but not status (Hofstede et al., 2010, p.54). In a country such as Norway, it might be sufficient not to have a degree from higher education in order to get a decent occupation, but that might not be the case for many other countries, especially Thailand. In some countries, higher education can give one status in at least the middle class (Hofstede et al., 2010, p.64). Individuals from a high-power distance culture accept power as part of the society. It can be seen as when superiors consider their subordinates to be different than them and vice versa. People who belong in high power distance societies see power as a basic fact in the society and like to stress that in the reference to the power. Whereas, low distance power believe that the power should be used only when it is legitimate and prefer expert or legitimate power. Normally, power distance dimension is focused on the relationship between people with a different status for example, parents. In high power distance culture, parents value obedience in their children (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003, p77).

The concept of culture given by Hofstede indicates that culture functions as mental software helps clearly explain how power distance influences individual behavior. In a large power distance society, a child is expected to be obedient and respect toward their parents. The independent characteristic of an individual is not encouraged. A basic discipline such as respecting elders is demonstrated to a child since a very young age to the point that they acquire it themselves. Such a concept leads to how parents always have authority over a child as long as they are still

alive. Whole families are expected to live together like an extended family. It is normal that grandparents are included in a household. When the parents get old, the young are expected to take care of them financially and practically in return (Hofstede et al., 2010, p.67). For a small power-distance society, a child is treated as equals as soon as they are ready. The goal is to teach a child to take control of their life as soon as they can and encourage them to be independent in their own thought. The behaviors a child has toward others is based on a child's individual decision. As the society is less intense, the relationship a child has to their parent is more like a friendship. A quality that a child should have is to stand up on their own feet and be independent. Parents do not expect a child to support them but to have them in their life (Hofstede et al., 2010, p.68).

### **Uncertainty avoidance**

“Uncertainty avoidance indicates the extent to which members of a society feel threatened by the uncertain situations and therefore try to avoid them by determining fixed rules and not tolerating deviant ideas and behavior.” (Dahl, 2016, p.35)

According to Hofstede, uncertainty avoidance is an idea borrowed from sociology organization. This feeling refers to the feeling, among the other manifestations, that are expressed by an individual as stressful and nervous feelings. It is a form of a need to be able to predict the unknown. It is the ability to write down the unknown rules. (Hofstede et al., 2010, p.191). The uncertainty avoidance is a way of handling the uncertainties. Human beings are facing situations when we do not know what will happen in the future. The uncertainty is subject to experience and a feeling that could be shared with the other members of the society. It is acquired and learned throughout their experiences in life. It is also transferred and reinforced as a basic instruction such as through family. The uncertainty in the situation can't be avoided. Sometimes uncertain situations are created by an ambiguous situation. The ambiguity situation in everyday life is also creating anxiety in every society. Laws and regulations help people avoid a certain behavior. Religion helps humanity in a way that they could relate themselves to the creating force and what will happen in the future. With this it is easier for people to accept the uncertainties that maybe they can't defend themselves against. Some religions even offer further certainty of a life after death (Hofstede et al., 2010, p.188). In comparison, the culture with high uncertainty avoidance have a lower tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity than the culture with low uncertainty avoidance, which expresses itself in a high level of anxiety. In high uncertainty avoidance culture,

people tend to avoid conflict and competition but tend to display emotions. This leads to the fact that a member of low uncertainty avoidance culture has lower stress level and taking more risk than a member of high uncertainty avoidance culture (Gudykunst & Kim,2003, p.74).

Anxiety is a stage where a person is uneasy and worried about what may happen in the future. Having anxiety and being afraid are not the same thing, as fear is connected to an object to causes those fears to the individual. On the other hand, anxiety is not concerned with the object. (Hofstede et al., 2010, p.195) A child learns to differentiate basic distinctions at a very young age. The differentiation ability of a child varies from country to country. They learn to differentiate between what is dangerous and safe, or, what is clean or dirty at the early stage of their life. For a country with a strong uncertainty avoidance the belief exists that “what is different is dangerous,” and on the other hand, for the weak uncertainty avoidance country “what is different is curious” (Hofstede et al.,2010, p.201). A firm system of rules and social norms make a child from the strong uncertainty avoidance culture often feel qualities of sinfulness. They are often protected from experiencing unknown situation because people from the strong uncertainty avoidance country were taught that the world is unsafe place. A weak uncertainty avoidance country teaches to give a benefit of the doubt to unknown situations, people, and ideas (Hofstede et al., 2010, p.201).

### **Masculinity and Femininity**

“Masculinity and Femininity suggests the extent to which the dominant values in society are masculinity, i.e. categorized by the assertiveness and a preoccupation about material things and money and not about care, environment, and quality of life.” (Dahl, 2016, p.35) Cultural systems high in masculinity emphasize performance and ambition, whereas, the culture high in femininity values quality of life and service. In comparison, people from femininity cultures have less motivation for achievement, view work as less important in their life than people from a masculinity culture. In masculinity culture, women are assigned the role of being tender and taking care of the relationship. In contrast, in the femininity culture, both men and women engage in these cultures. In the masculinity culture, fathers are expected to deal with facts and mothers are expected to deal with children’s feelings. On the other hand, in the femininity culture parents deal with facts and feelings together (Gudykunst & Kim,2003, p.79).

Rojanpanich mentioned in her study the definition of masculinity as a gender role as given by Ford and Kotze, that masculinity is not only physical characteristics but is primarily characterized by

the levels of assertiveness or tenderness in a man. Masculine characteristics tends to be assertive, competitive and tough. Their work goals include high financial earnings, recognition, advancement, and challenge. Feminine characteristics focus on home, children, and people. Their work goals include good relations with supervisors, peers, and subordinates, good living and working conditions with sense of security. (Rojanpanich, 2010, p.53). For a femininity definition, that agrees with Hofstede's idea, feminine individuals are also more interpersonally oriented, benevolent, less interested in recognition than masculine individuals, and define achievement in terms of close human relationships rather than material success. (Rojanpanich, 2010, p.53). It is believed that the women in feminine countries have the same modest, caring values as men; whereas in masculine countries, women may be somewhat assertive and competitive, but not as much as the men. In these countries there is usually a gap between men's values and women's values. We see this in how everyday social norms for gender roles play out in acceptable activities for men and women.

### **Cross-Cultural Communication**

To understand the level of impact that culture has on the individual's way of thinking, or the way that one experiences the world differently from country to country, is very difficult. Many people do not know that such a difference exists until one experience it on their own. It is similar to communication. According to Gudykunst and Kim, "Cultural variability in people's backgrounds influences their communication behavior" (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003, p.22) When people interact with another from different cultures, they tend to view the other as a stranger. The term stranger is often used to refer to aliens, intruders, foreigners, outsiders, newcomers, and immigrants, as well as a person who is unknown and unfamiliar (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003, p.23). When the two very different cultures (Thai and Norwegian cultures) "meet," when people meet, cultural misunderstanding and misinterpreting of each other is expected. Øyvind Dahl mentions that people always have their cultural frames of reference and use it as an unconscious cultural filter when it comes to understanding others or things. Most people have experienced situations where they have not managed to make themselves understood. Sometimes they even feel anxious about whether the other person has understood them and sometimes even feel that the other people might not want to understand them. Because of the way people use their individual cultural frames

of reference to interpret or try to understand the other, the general key of interpretations such as stereotype or prejudices is being used. (Dahl, 2016, p.33)

Immediately, when people meet with something or someone unknown or unfamiliar, a brain starts to function in a way that it is trying to put subjects into categories to find meaning. In the book called *Communicating with Strangers* mentioned that people tend to stereotype strangers immediately upon meeting them (Gudykunst and Kim, 2003, p.127). Stereotypes have both negative and positive influences on the individual's ideas in the society where more than one group of people are living together. The negative effects of stereotypes could have an impact on the communication process which is one of the very first steps for people in the society to get to know each other. Stereotypes are harmful in the communication process as it can cause people to assume that the belief, they have is true when it may not be, and, if it continued, it will reinforce the belief. When stereotypes are used to interpret the individual's behavior from the perceptual screen of the stereotype, they impede communication (Fred, 2007, p79).

Shaules explains in his book about prejudice in cross-cultural communication that humans have an obvious capacity to prejudice toward those who they consider different. This kind of behavior that each individual has is a mechanism being used to assume a comparative norm to be able to interpret the behavior that one encounters using unnoticed cultural standards. They perceive the culture that are not relevant to the unconscious cultural norm. It is not easy to try to interpret behavior in a foreign environment. There are so many factors that influence the simplest actions and the simplest action reflects many unconscious assumption and choice.

Øyvind Dahl also explains a static cultural approach in the field of intercultural communication. He defined it as "Intercultural communication is a process that involves the exchange and interpretation of signs between people representing cultural communities that are so different that their ascription of meaning is affected" (Dahl, 2016, p.68). Cultural difference is considered important to the outcome of the communication process. At the same time, some negative effects might occur as one party might describe such a situation as intercultural communication when the other might not consider it the same way. For example, A Kurdish-Danish girl might think of herself as being Danish but is not perceived as Danish by other Danish girls (Dahl, 2016, p.69). Dahl mentions a model of communication process that shows a dynamic understanding of culture. In the model, it shows how complication might arise when sender and receiver interpret each other on the basis of their culture difference. It is what he called different

cultural frame of reference (Dahl, 2016, p.75). The process of intercultural communication begins with:

**The sender:** who sends the sign. The sender has to encode what he or she wants to transmit by using his or her cultural frame of reference. The sign could be used in many different forms such as facial expressions, gestures, and dress and behavior in both conscious and unconscious situation, with or without intention (Dahl, 2016, p.43).

**Encoding:** is the process when the sender create sign to make it possible to communicate. The sign will be put into a code system that allows the sign to be sent from sender to receiver (Dahl, 2016, p.43).

**The cultural filter of the sender and the receiver:** the cultural filter is influenced by the sender's upbringing and experience. The same process happens to the receiver's cultural filter. The cultural filter is developed during his or her life experience with his or her parents, friends, and the people he or she have met in their life. The sender is socialized into a specific environment and this socialization affects him or her consciously and unconsciously and it is the same process happening in the receiver experience. Since all people are different, the cultural filter that the sender and the receiver use is always different depending on his or her background experience and how he or she sees the world. (Dahl, 2016, p.76)

**A sign or a sequence of signs:** they are the items transmitted verbally or non-verbally with or without the intention. The sign is sent by the sender and received by the receiver. When the receiver receives the sign, the sign being received is called a message. The message is how the receiver attaches the meaning to the sign often influenced by the receiver's cultural filter (Dahl, 2016, p.44).

**Decoding:** is the internal activity in which the recipient ascribes meaning to the sign often influenced by the use of his or her cultural frame of reference. He or she gives it meaning based on his or her understanding or perspective (Dahl, 2016, p.44).

If we compare the intended meaning of the sender to the received message from the receiver, the same sign is interpreted with different cultural filters by the sender and the receiver. The communication can be summarized in four points:

1. The intended meaning is known only to the sender.
2. The sent message is encoded through the sender's cultural filter.
3. The received message is decoded through the receiver's cultural filter.
4. The receiver's meaning is not necessarily equal to the sender's meaning.

(Dahl, 2016, p.77)

## **Stereotype**

Apart from the individual cultural background that creates misunderstanding between culture, in my work, the psycho-cultural factors of stereotype are also an influential factor on the communication process between Norwegians and Thais. In the communication process between strangers, the stereotypes create the expectation for stranger's behavior, as to avoid the uncertainty. (Gudykunst and Kim, 2003, p.125) Ruth Illman mentions in his article that stereotype is necessary and inevitable as the communication process between people from a different culture is often a complex experience full of frustration, similarity, and differences. In the intercultural encounter, most of the time it involves a strong feeling of various kinds which affect the communication process in a different way. Therefore, the emotion of the individual is the most concerned (Illman, 2006, p.101). Illman believes that stereotype and symbol can be used to simplify the complex image often used in the intercultural communication. The symbol is being used as a mental model. The mental model of the individual is functioning as a cognitive and linguistic tool used in the intercultural communication (Illman, 2006, p.102).

On the other hand, Cristoffanini sees stereotyping used in the communication process as the representation of "the other" as different from us. The ultra-simplification of another is created by encountering people from the different parts of the worlds. The idea that the other is different from us is mostly referred to a racial, sexual, social, national, or ethnic perspective (Cristoffanini, 2004, p.79). Agreeing with stereotypes is the representation of the other, Dahl affirms that the selective and ultra-simplified representation of the other is a product of mental mechanism. It is necessary and inevitable (Cristoffanini, 2004, p.80). Walter Lippmann introduces the concept called stereotype as a "picture in our mind" in 1997. He believes that when people hear about the



other repeatedly several times, people tend to believe that they are correct. Stereotypical perception is very hard to change. Most of the time people observed what are programmed in their mind to see and often ignore what does not correspond to the stereotype they have (Dahl, 2016, p.50) Moreover, in the intercultural communication, people tend to evaluate the others based on their own cultural norms, as Illman explains as auto-stereotype. It is the way people define their own self-image based on the assumption that their culture is superior to the other people's culture. Once such an information becomes part of our world view, it is hard to change (Illman, 2006, p.103).

The assumption of the stereotype given by Dahl, stereotypes are often simple generalizations about groups of people who have some feature in common and are often acquired by first-hand observation. For that reason, stereotypes often have a negative connotation. Similar to other kinds of categorizations, stereotype can be useful and harmful depending on how they are used. Stereotype is helpful when it is being consciously held. This means that the stereotype is being used to a characteristic of the specific individual and not to the group that they belong to. The stereotype has to be used to describe what people from a certain group should be like and not to be used to evaluate the people as being good or bad. The stereotype should be used as it is accurate to the norm and should be a best guess about the group before acquiring information about specific people involved. Lastly, stereotype should be modified based on continuing observation and experience with the actual people and situations (Dahl, 2016, p.51). On the other hand, the stereotype could be harmful when they are unconsciously used, especially the subconscious stereotype because they are difficult to modify. When the stereotype is used normatively to evaluate the moral and intellectual standards of the group of people, it could be harmful to the communication process. If the stereotype is misleading, used without taking into account the individual differences and especially if it is not open to modification even when the people gain more knowledge, it could be harmful for the user (Dahl, 2016, p.51).

Illman explains that a cognitive perspective is influential when we talk about stereotypes. By using generalizing stereotypes, it is argued, we make the overwhelmingly complex world around us easier to manage (Illman, 2006, p.103). In other words, people tend to make stereotypes because it saves them time and effort to deal with every person individually; it makes our world easier and saves us from loads of different information that we might not need. In the context-bound interpretative perspective, it mostly emphasizes the need to reassess the question of why we need stereotypes. This way greater attention can be given to questions of meaning creation and

identity construction. Stereotypes offer a way to reach socially and ideologically defined goals as well as contribute to the maintenance of hierarchies and power relations (Illman, 2006, p.106).

Stereotype is not only a cognitive perspective but it is argued that it is actively constructed. It is also dependent on the individual interpretation that offers explanation and evaluation of a complex situation. Apart from being used to maintaining hierarchies and power relations, stereotype is a tool for defending the otherness of the other and maintaining symbolic order. According to the interpretative perspective, stereotype develops in communication between different persons in a different place and situation. This could explain that stereotypes are connected with the way people understand themselves as social beings, the interests they have, and the affiliations they share (Illman, 2006, p.106).

Dahl mentioned “frozen stereotype” which is closely related to prejudice. While stereotypes are positive and negative, prejudice or frozen stereotype is mostly negative attitudes toward a group of people. When we are “pre-judged,” we are hardly willing to change the perspective toward the particular social group, or representative from the group, even if we are exposed to the new information and gain new insight about the group. This concept of Frozen stereotypes hardly promotes communication and interpersonal understanding (Dahl, 2016, p.52). On the other hand, if we are trying to understand stereotypes as the symbols of everyday life, it will give us a clearer understanding of how stereotypes are constructed. Stereotypes are not stable, but dynamic. It can change over the time and it can add new meanings to already existing ones. The first understanding of symbols an individual receives from social context will guide them and later, from education as well as personal interpretation, the symbols reconstruct the meanings due to new experiences.

### **Adapting to A New Culture**

When people move to the new place and fully expect to remain in the new country, they are willing and eager to become a member of a new culture. There are many situations of people moving from countries to countries that involve cross-cultural adaptation; temporary sojourn, long-term settling, subcultural mobility, and cultural changes in the society. The differences between all these four types of moving is that the first two involve geographical mobility, the other two do not (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003, p.357). Adapting to the new culture does not mean that it is only the newcomer’s responsibility to engage with a host culture, it is important that both the host

country and the newcomer negotiate the meaning in order to understand each other. When people grow up, the process of socialization allows one to acquire all the factors and processes. It makes one human being fit to live in the company of the other. Socialization process allows the newcomer to understand a basic process of communicating, including decoding patterns and encoding training. This process called enculturation (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003, p.359). When people move to a new and unfamiliar place, over time, people learn how to live in and adapt to the norm and value of the new culture, this process is called resocialization or acculturation (Fred, 2007, p.135). This is when a stranger starts to notice similarities and differences of the new surroundings. The stranger starts to adapt some norms and values from the new host country and unlearn the old cultural patterns they brought with them. This process is called deculturalization (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003, p.359). Because of the dynamic interplay of acculturation and deculturalization, eventually the newcomer will undergo a cross-cultural adaptation process. Acculturation or cultural adaptation is an importation process unlike a temporary visitor, this means that the newcomer must find a new source of a livelihood and build a new life. According to acculturation there are two dimensions which are the value placed on maintaining one's original culture identity and the value given to maintaining relationship with other group with one's new culture. These dimensions of acculturation, including original cultural identity and relationship with other cultures could potentially lead to integration, assimilation, separation or segregation, and marginalization depending on how well people in the society are adapted (Fred, 2007, p.309).

### **Encountering to a difference culture**

It is normal that human beings unconsciously experience cultural imprinting in their personalities and behavior. People are programmed to think, feel, and behave in a way that those who function differently are considered strange, improper, irresponsible, or inferior. In saying this, human beings tend to have a tendency to be ethnocentric as a result of our way to connect and is inseparable to our culture (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003, p.376). Human beings often have a hidden control system which is hardly noticeable if things follow the hidden program. Unfortunately, enculturation with strangers provokes the whole system in an opposite way. It brings surprise (uncertainty) and stress (anxiety) (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003, p.377). The reaction of such a situation has been called culture shock.

“A culture shock is a form of personality maladjustment. It is a reaction to a temporary unsuccessful attempt to adjust to a new surrounding and people” (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003, p.376).

The common reactions to cultural shock are as follows:

1. “Cultural fatigue” manifested by irritability, insomnia, and other psychosomatic disorders.
2. A sense of loss arising from being uprooted from one’s familiar surrounds.
3. Rejection by the individual of members of a new environment.
4. A feeling of impotence from being unable to deal with competently with the environment unfamiliarity.

(Gudykunst & Kim, 2003, p.376)

Dahl explains culture shock as a sudden change in life circumstances. Not everyone experiences this phenomenon dramatically enough for it to be called a cultural crisis. As immigrants bring with them what Dahl called “cultural baggage.” Immigrants will base new information they acquire on their “cultural baggage,” which is as basic as how to tell what is right or wrong. Like other people, immigrants are accustomed to see their norm and value as natural and the right one. When immigrant move to the new host country, all the sudden, “the cultural map” they brought with them does not correspond with their “new terrain” (Dahl, 2016, p.206). Moreover, Dahl also mentions a different stage corresponding with a U-curved graph, or valley of uncertainty, of how immigrants experience this through the relocation process;

1. **Honeymoon stage.** This stage is when everything is new and exciting. The person has looked forward to the journey to experience something new and the breaking of old routines. The graph curved will be slightly upward.
2. **Shock stage** often follows the honeymoon stage. This happens when the person realizes the relocation process in their unfamiliar surroundings. The curve usually falls below the dotted line. Many people who face this stage want to go home because of all the negative experiences and the strange feelings that occurred during this phase. The language difference is often a problem at this stage. Knowing a few words is not enough to communicate anymore. The practical use of the language is pragmatically necessary, but it is difficult to learn as it requires participation in daily life, and it is time consuming. The feeling of not knowing the unwritten rules creates the strange

feeling and anxiety to the newcomer. All the negative stereotypes they have heard before are confirmed.

3. **Reaction stage** is when the newcomer gradually adjusts and masters the clue of daily life. They have practiced the language and manage to adapt to the new world. This stage is when the newcomer begins to joke and laugh at themselves and their behavior indicates that they are on the way up from the bottom of the graph.

4. **Reorientation and adaptation stage** is when the graph rises up above the dotted line. This is when the newcomer realized that they will be just fine in the new surroundings. Slowly, the newcomer adapts to the cultural cues and language proficiency improves.

(Dahl, 2016, p.207-209)

When people are relocated in a foreign cultural environment, they are expected to experience a shift in feeling over time as Dahl mentioned in the U- curved graph or valley of uncertainty. Positive and negative feelings are plotted on the vertical axis, while time is plotted in a horizontal axis. The honeymoon stage is usually a short period in phase one on the entire experience called Euphoria. Phase two is a culture shock period and is when real life starts in a real environment. Phase 3 of a curve is called acculturation. This is when a newcomer learns to function under the new conditions, learns new value, find confidence in themselves, and becomes part of the new social network. The last phase is called stable stage. When someone is at this stage something could remain negative, or it may be as good as before, or some might be even better. If the individual feels like they are liking the situation even better that means they have “gone native” (Hofstede et al., 2010, p.385). The length of the adapting time goes accordingly to the length of staying time. For some individuals who plan to stay for a short time, they have experienced all these stages within the time they stayed. For some individuals who permanently migrate, they experience each phase longer than those who plan to stay shorter time (Hofstede et al, 2010, p.385).

# Chapter Four

## FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

In this chapter, I would like to present findings and analysis based on data I have collected from my informants' interviews. The findings and analysis are based on my interpretation of the conversations I had with all informants. The readers find brief biographies of the five informants' life stories in the appendix. There, the reader could follow closely my informants' background before they came to Norway. The biographies of the informants could lead to a better understand of the further discussion in this chapter.

### **Findings**

Thai women experience life in Norway in terms of family, friends, and lifestyle by using the Thai cultural imprint that they brought with them. My informants have encountered to Norwegian society which is unfamiliar for them. They are trying to understand the new environment by unconsciously using their initial Thai cultural background/ frame of reference as a starting point of understanding. Moreover, my informants live in the Norwegian society with obligations and expectations in their lives from Thailand. The obligations they mentioned are mainly based on the collectivist role of Thai culture. The expectation they have is to fulfill all the obligations and to have a better opportunity in their life. The most important obligation for all my informants is to fulfill family's expectation based on Thai culture.

### **Mirage in the desert**

#### **How Thai women experience life in Norway in term of family**

When discussing family with my informants, they were explaining that there are two families in their life. The natal family in Thailand which Thais women pay the most loyalty to and

a family in Norway which they have created with their partners. Interestingly, I did not hear any relations between the two families being mentioned by my informants. It was not because of the geographical obstacles between the two families but it seems to be that most of my informants gave me an idea that they are handling family issues in Thailand by themselves without their partner/husband's opinion or acknowledgement. The issue of sending remittance to their family in Thailand was discussed the most in the interview as one of the obligations and expectations that affect how my informants experience life in Norway in terms of family both before and after they come to Norway. Some of my informants informed that providing money to the family was the reason they wanted to marry a westerner and move abroad. It was simply by chance that they ended up in Norway. The opportunity to work for better pay abroad or be married to a rich western man would make their lives better. It is not only for improving the woman's life, but the hope to make their family proud and the opportunity to take care of their family is enough for them to decide to come to Norway.

All of my informants send a remittance back to Thailand. The amount that they send were different depending on the job situations and financial support from their partners. None of my informants mentioned that they are satisfied with their economic situations and hardly match all their financial expectations. The reason being is that it did not matter where in the world they were living, whether Thailand or Norway, the amounts of work in order to earn money is the same or even harder because of the language difference. When my informants were in Thailand, they mentioned the financial expectation they remit to their family was hard to reach compared to the payment they earned per month. Moving to Norway gave them hope of being able to meet their family's financial expectations but, the situation is not in their favor. Living in Norway gave the family the idea that the informants are successful, wealthy, and more comfortable in life than the family in Thailand. The fact that my informants are doing well in the eye of people in Thailand makes the financial expectation of the remittance go higher up accordingly. Most of my informants admitted that the financial expectation from the family they thought could be solved by moving to Norway could not be solved after all. It is the starting point that led to more complicated problems such as cultural misunderstanding between my informants and their partners, depression and stress from adjusting themselves to the Norwegian culture, and personality changes in the way that my informants are not satisfied with. One outstanding point I have come across after conducting the interviews was that my informants are very loyal to their natal family as they are influenced by

collectivist way of thinking. They are sacrificing their happiness in many ways in order to meet the family's expectations. Some of my informants have developed the strategies to cope with all the difficulties by looking up to only the positive side or learn how to live with all the difficulties. The longer they are in Norway the less anger they have toward the problems.

### **How Thais women experience life in Norway in term of friend and life styles**

All of my informants mentioned in the interview that they are happy with their life in Norway. Many of my informants explained the situation with phrases like “finally, a dream come true.” (Mona). To some of my informants, living their life in Norway made them feel like they are achieving one of their goals in life. For some others, living in Norway makes them feel secure and proud because they have made their family proud. This is surprising, according to the interviews discussed in the analysis chapter, it shows the contradiction to what many claimed to be happy with life in Norway. The way my informants talked about their life in Norway, together with the difficulties being mentioned by them concerning the adaptation process shows that some of my informants are having many difficulties adjusting themselves to the Norwegians culture. Cultural differences between Thais and Norwegians seems to be the most challenging issues. My informants are talking about their experiences concerning friends and their lifestyle in Norway mostly in a negative way. It shows the contradiction to the fact that they mentioned that they are happy with their life. In saying this, I presented this topic according to my interpretations to the interviews I have conducted.

In terms of friends, all of my informant rarely has Norwegian friends apart from some Norwegians that are related to their partners. Most of my informants are friends with other Thai women they met during language class and at Thai temples. The friendship that Thai women have with each other may be real friendship or it could be just to benefit each other when they are in an unfamiliar situation. It is quite difficult to see how friendships are formed when two parties do not have anything in common. Some of the friendships develop when the two parties accidentally met on the street or at a random Thai temple in Norway, later they become friends. For some friendships already mentioned, the only thing they might have in common is that these two are coming from the same country. The way my informants experience friendship between friends in Norway is an unusual relationship. The fact that they speak the same language and eat the same kind of food might be comforting enough for the two parties to become friends when they are far



away from home. Mentioned in the analysis chapter, gossip and jealousy happened many times among friends mentioned by the informants. This is the reason why the quality of the relationships is questioned: sharing the same country of origin and language is not a guarantee that Thai women will share the same interests and will become good friends.

According to the interviews mentioned in the analysis part, my informants mentioned that their lifestyles have changed after moving to Norway. In most of the interviews, my informants mentioned that their life has become quite lonely. They have to adapt their lifestyle according to their situations. Only one of my informants mentioned their experiences in a positive way. Most of them have become less socialized, lonely and even suffer from depression. The contradiction between what my informants mentioned, that they are happy with their life, and the realities given by them shows that they are facing so many challenges. This situation my informants are facing makes an interesting point to discuss. They believe and mentioned that their life is happy as a mechanism to keep them going in dealing with all the challenges in life that they are experiencing. The idea such as “I have reached a goal in my life. What comes after that is the consequences, I will take it. My life is good now.” (Nina). This shows that they have conquered all the situations. It has blinded the reality my informants are facing. Some of my informants realized that they are not happy in Norway but try to accept it and be happy. Whereas, the others do not even realize that they are not happy because of the feeling of achieving something important is greater the reality.

### **The Challenges of Thais women during the adapting process into Norwegian society.**

The challenges mentioned during the adapting process into Norwegian society was mostly based on misunderstanding and miscommunicating between Thai women and Norwegians. Discussion in the analysis shows how many situations in my informant life was understood in the wrong way. The reason being was during the communication process, the sender was trying to send a sign based on their cultural frame of reference but, the sign was received through the cultural frame of reference of the receiver. This is to confirm that the receiver’s meaning is not always equal to what the sender wants the message to be received. For my informants, some miscommunications created misunderstanding to many situations they encountered with Norwegians. Language plays an importance role in the misunderstanding situations between Thai women and Norwegians. The fact that my informants have a limited ability in communicating both

English and Norwegian makes it difficult for them to communicate the message through during the conversation. When my informants were asked questions that are sensitive to their feeling, most of my informant perceived it as having been stereotyped. Apart from being unable to communicate properly with the Norwegians, lacking experience in a multicultural encounter situation was also a reason for misunderstanding. In order to communicate more to create a new understanding, they took it personally and assumed that they were being stereotyped. Unable to understand the real problems my informant has toward misunderstanding leads to the problem of loneliness because they think that they were unwelcome by Norwegians. Some of my informants are giving up trying to be part of the Norwegian society by just being surrounded by Thais. This trend of the behavior is the most challenging problem adapting to Norwegian society.

### **The stereotypes Thais women have experienced**

After conducting the interview, findings toward how Thai women experience stereotypes in Norway was mentioned in various ways. There was the assumption that Thai women were being stereotype by Norwegian. Thai women also have a stereotype towards other immigrants they met during their language class, Thais toward Norwegians, and the stereotype Thai women have toward Thai women in Norway. In order to discuss the assumption that Thai women were being stereotyped by Norwegian is uncertain. It is difficult to differentiate the situation whether it was a stereotype or a misunderstanding of the situation. The experiences of my informants concerning stereotyping during the adaptation process into Norwegian society was unclear and did not confirm whether they were being stereotyped or it was just some curiosity of Norwegians toward the situation concerning Thai woman and cultures in general.

My informants mentioned many situations during the interviews that confirm the trends of being stereotyped as a bar girl or a prostitute, but it could be because of their own assumptions or their own interpretation of the situations. It is too soon to confirm that Norwegians have such a stereotype toward Thais because research needs to be done on the Norwegian's side of the story. Based on the interviews, the prostitute and bar girl phenomena could be as simple as lacking experience over the situations and previous knowledges of the individual. It is easy for my informants to assume that they are being stereotyped because the situations fit with their previous knowledge.

According to the analysis chapter, the assumption that Thai women have a stereotype toward other immigrants they met during the language class shows how pre-knowledge can affect the encounter between strangers. Moreover, the interview in the analysis chapter shows how gaining new knowledge could lead to a new understanding. It is confirmed that stereotype is dynamic, and it could be changed even though sometimes it is difficult to change.

Last, findings concerning stereotypes during the interviews I have found was that Thai women have stereotypes toward Thai women in Norway. As the Thai women in Norway originally come from different parts of Thailand and vary in socioeconomic status, there appears to be a tendency for the women to seek the company of those who share a similar sub-culture and seem to look down on other that are different. Class difference is also expressed in the stereotype between Thai women toward Thai women in Norway. The majority of Thai women in Norway have had little education and come from rural backgrounds. It also appears that some women had worked in sex-related jobs according to the informant's interviews. Thai women notice these differences in the socio-economic background of their female counterparts. As a result, the educated, middle-class women are likely to select women from the same class and with the same preferences as close friends. The women from a rural, lower class backgrounds do the same. However, if the well-educated women obviously differentiate themselves from the rural, less educated women, they may be disliked and become the target of gossip.

## **Analysis**

### **How do Thai women experience life in Norway in terms of family, friends, and lifestyle?**

Based on the information from the interviews, all my informants' experienced life in Norway in term of family, friends, and lifestyle by using the Thai cultural imprint they brought with them. My informants have enculturated to Norwegian society, which is new for them. They are trying to understand the new environment by unconsciously using their initial Thai cultural background or filter as a starting point of understanding. Moreover, while my informants live in Norwegian society, they still have obligations from their life from Thailand. The obligations they mentioned are mainly based on the collectivist role of Thai culture. The most important obligation

for all my informants is to fulfill their family's expectation based on Thai culture. They are mentioned as follows.

Influenced by collectivist society, Thai people have a very strong connection to family. Whereas Norway is considered a very individualist society according to Hofstede's studies. (Dahl, 2016, p.35) For Thai women, moving from Thailand (where people think, feel, and act differently than in Norway) makes the vast majority of my informants think that situations in Norway were strange, improper, and irresponsible. Having grown up in Thailand for more than twenty years, all these women carry with themselves patterns of thinking, feeling, and potential acting based on Thai culture, values, and norms that are learned throughout a person's lifetime (Hofstede et al., 2010, p.4).

In chapter two I discussed "We and They" concept, or what mentioned by Hofstede as "In-group and Out-group" concept. This concept is strong in a sense for all my informants. Human being tends to function in a simple way that they need to categorize others into group. It could be seen as close relation as in the family such as we have the word in-law to categorize your position in the family. (Hofstede et al.,2010, p.16) Many Thai informants seem to have a strong connection and loyalty to the family they were growing up with, even though they have created a new family in Norway. Some of the informants have a very interesting way of giving a definition to what is called "family." Some of the informants seem to mention two families in their life which are their family in Thailand and their family in Norway. What was quite outstanding was that the two families do not seem to be related or connected in any other way. When Tara was talking about the relationship of her two families, she demonstrated this idea:

"...When I have a job, I support my parents in Thailand. Sometimes, I supports them more than I could afford. I told my husband that my family especially my parents, they are my parents forever. I will love and supported them as much as I can. You are almost someone else even though I married and have kids with you. Someday, if we leave each other, you will be someone else and not my family anymore. If that happened, my parents are the most important persons to me. As well as your parents to you. You should think and do the same to your parents as I am to my parents. I told my husband that he should take his family seriously first. What my husband told me back was that I have to think about what I said. I always send money home and we are living on one income. I don't share any expense with him. I know that is not normal in Norway. My husband said that it was why we always have problems. Every time when we have a problem, I blamed it all on him. I

think that I married to him, so he has to take care of me. I based everything on what I think it was right. In Thailand, a husband needs to take care the family. My husband is taking care of me too, it is just not in the same way. I know that my husband is very patient with me...”

Tara sends remittance to her family in Thailand regularly. She mentioned that sometimes she sent the money back to Thailand more than she could afford. Whereas, she has never shared the expense amount with her husband in Norway. Tara tends to take the ideas and practices of her family in Norway for granted. Growing up in a very strong collectivist society, Tara committed to the idea of family as a “we” while someone else that is not a family member is a “They.” In her case unfortunately, her husband was not considered as important as her family in Thailand. It is not always simple for the partners in a cross-cultural marriage to recognize the differences in each other’s family values and to be aware of the meanings of the unsaid rules to which their partner holds onto. In Tara’s case, she thinks of her husband as a “they” or “out-group.” Her actions of sending remittance to her family in Thailand were not taken well by her husband. Immediately, Tara unconsciously did not include her husband as important as her natal family. Moreover, Tara mentioned the fact that her husband could be someone else and not family anymore if someday they decide not to be together. This way of thinking is very common in Thai culture to ensure the royalty to the family.

For those who grow up in the collectivist society like Thailand, a family that the child grows up in consists of number of people living closely together, not just the parents. It is called “extended family” and is where the child learns to think of themselves as a “we.” In the culture where everything is a “we,” if someone breaks a long-life loyalty to the group, it is considered the worst thing a person can do. The loyalty to the in-group is a major source of one’s identity and the only secure protection one has all their life (Hofstede et al, 2010, p.91). As mentioned by many informants, there are consequences they will have to face if they break their loyalty to their family. Nina mentioned these in the interview that as follows:

“...In Norway, I don’t have anyone. I felt like they are not my family. I can’t rely on anyone even my husband. It was not like in Thailand. It was not enough for the husband to just take care of me. I need to find job to earn some money so I could send home to my kids and my parents. It is my responsibility since my husband did not seems to care my family in Thailand the same way I care about them. If I don’t send money home, my family in Thailand will complain about it. I know my

mom and my sibling will not like that. I don't want to have a problem with them. My mom has five children. All of my relatives are living together with my mom or very close by. Since I am not at home, I am the one who seem to have the most responsibility to the family in term of sending them money. I can't not let them down. I do not want to let my family down. They are the only family I have. I can't rely on my Norwegian husband, I can't ask him for the money all the time. He helped me but it was not enough. He also has his responsibility to his previous married. He has a daughter from previous married. It is expensive in Norway..."

Nina's interview shows her way of expressing the concept of a family. The way she was explaining her family situation shows that there was not much relationship between her two families both in Thailand and Norway. As for Nina, clearly, she thinks of and is loyal to her family in Thailand. While living in Norway, she has forgotten that it is also important to support her family in Norway physically and emotionally. Her main focus in life while she is living in Norway was to fulfill the expectation of her natal family.

The concept of "in-group" and "out-group" is not the only main concern for my informants. Many have mentioned the "losing face" concept as something they really want to avoid. Such a concept creates an embarrassment to the family and could lead to dishonoring the loyalty to the family. The losing face concept has a strong influence on many Thai people. It becomes one of the obligations in life for my informants. Many of my informants explained their life in Norway in a way that showed it was not what they expected and wanted it to be. In many cases, if these women decided to go back to Thailand, it might be better for them. They will be happier. All six informants admitted that going back to Thailand is not an option. They mentioned that going back to Thailand will be seen as an unsuccessful individual who made a wrong decision. It will cause embarrassment to the whole family and not just herself. According to Lita's life, she has experienced this emotional struggle:

"... In Thailand, apart from work, I enjoy my city life kind of style. I enjoy going out shopping, go out for dinner, go for a trip for the week-end. My life in Norway in on a very opposite direction. I have all the time to myself because I could not work in the same kind of career I had before. I am a working woman. My priority is to work and support my family. I was a proud woman when I was in Thailand. I made my mom and my family proud in many ways. We were not a rich family at all compare to many families in my home town. After I worked for a few years, I brought a new house,

new car for my mom. In a small town in the south of Thailand, it was a big achievement. Everyone in my village came to congratulate my mom that she has a good daughter. I saw a big smile on my mom face. I still remember it until this day. At the time everyone in my village look up to our family. In Norway, what I could do was baby-siting. When I was in Thailand, I did not like cooking. I did not enjoy taking care of the baby nor I am not stay at home type of person. In Norway, my life changed, in the beginning when I was an au-pair, I had to make food for the kids in the morning, took care the kids before they go to school, cleaned the house, when the kids came back, I had to looking after them making sure they did their homework. I had to do everything that I have never done in Thailand. It was not easy, I had to admit that it was not about the job. It was about I had to do thing so that everyone in the house is satisfied. It was hard for me. I used to be a leader, made more money that I earned in Norway. I cried a lot; I had to be very patient. I told myself, I decided to move to Norway, so I can't not go back with nothing. I can't destroy what I had achieved before I move to Norway. I can't embarrass my mom. Everyone in my village will know about it. It will not look good for our family. I know that many other Thai women survive in Norway, so I will too. I tried to talk to the other women. I tried to understand the differences and I need be able to except them. I won't give up. I won't go back before I achieve something here. I admit that moving to Norway...had let my family down. I did not make enough money. I made less money than I made in Thailand. I could not afford to help my mom pay for the loans. Everyone in my village see me as a successful woman to move to Norway. I know they think that I was living a good life. It was not like that..."

Lita's interview clearly shows that her life experience in Norway was not like what she was expecting. According to Lita's life mentioned in the finding chapter, she has her expectations before she come to Norway, but the reality did not meet all those expectations. Lacking experience, Lita was only seeing things from one side of the story that her sisters were telling her about life in Norway. Lita decided to come to Norway with all those expectations. To her, the opportunity she was offering by her sisters to come to work in Norway was so tempting. She saw only the positive outcomes of the opportunity without having any thoughts about negative consequences.

When discussing in term of power distance as mention in chapter two. Power distance define as "the extent to which member of a society accept that power in institution and organization is unequally distributed." (Dahl, 2016, p.35) Thailand is one of the countries where power distance is large. Many life-stories of my informants are confirming that some of aspect being explained in a power distance is relevant, but it does not necessary applied to my informants' life in the same

way. The informants experienced the situations under the influence of power distance differently. Some aspects of it is strong in Thai culture such as human contact. My informants experienced and mentioned the amount of human contacts they used to have in Thailand. They are used to have a lot of contact with their family and friends when they were in Thailand. People always around each other. Everything is a group matter and not an individual decision. The most important thing is Thais respect the elder in the family in every way. During the interview, Lita said that her mom's opinions have always been in every decision she made in her life. Every time when she feels like she needs to make decisions, she will ask her mom first. Asking her mom's opinion makes her feel safe and she knows that it will be a good decision. As she said her mom's decision was one of the reasons she moved to Norway:

“... It took me one year to decide to move to Norway. I had a decent job that gave me what I need at the time. It felt like I was in a crossroad, I had to make a decision whether to stay in Thailand or accept my sister offer and move to Norway. I have worked so hard to earn enough to pay for everything, then I got sick. All the money I have made was to pay for my health issue. I did not see anything good thing in my life except to make my mom proud. I just want to be in peace with myself but that was not enough for me to make a decision. Without my mom opinion, I can't decide on my own. I never made any decisions in my life without asking my mom. I asked my mom's advice. She told me to move to Norway, at least I will not have to work so much. After talking to my mom, I felt safe to move to Norway. I felt like my decision got approved by my mom and that was a good sign. I know my mom always give the best advice. In Norway, I have my sisters. It was not like I will be alone. At least when I have problems, my sister will take care of me. I feel a bit lucky for that, so I decided to move...”

Apart from how family obligations in Thailand affect how Thai women experience life in Norway, Mona mentioned that the collectivist way of thinking is another challenge. She said that it has influenced her way of handling direct confrontation in a way that she tends to avoid them. She reacted to her husband's question in the way that created problems in their relationship. She did not think that it was a necessary problem to have, yet it could not be avoided. She thinks that her personality that has been influenced by Thai's culture. She informed in the interview:



“... My husband always misunderstood my intention. Many times, he accused me of lying. It did not make me feel good at all even though it was not a big deal. We always had an argument about the same issue, I don't think he understood me. One time we were buying too much frozen food than the space we have at home. We help each other cleaned up the freezer to find more space. I took a plastic bag to try to organized/ throw away some of the things that was not necessary to have in the freezer. It was things such as fish bone that we had as ingredients to make a stock and some other old fish that we did not know how long we have had them. It was all the fish that my husband fish them himself. I am not so sure that I will throw away all of them, I just took it out of the freezer. My husband asked me “Do you want to throw it away? My answer was “No.” My real thought was “I am not sure.” I answered “No” because I did not want to upset him of trying to throw away his fish when I think that it was more important to have the space for other thing than old fish that we did not know how long we have had it. My husband knew by my reaction that I will throw them away, but he could not understand why I did not say yes to the question he asked. I know this seem to be a small issue, but this kind of situation happened often in our family. I just could not think about other things to tell you...”

The above interviewed confirmed the intense social imprint that Thai women had before they moved to Norway has influenced their way of thinking. Even if they moved to Norway where confrontation is a good thing. It seems like unconsciously the collectivist concept has been deeply rooted in Thai women's way of thinking and that it cannot be avoided.

Characteristics of how to be a good Thai include respect and taking care of the parents when they are old, which is very important in Thai culture. Since a family is a first source of the mental programming, all these women have been taught such a concept at their early age. The concept of respecting and taking care of aged parents is very difficult to change in the minds of Thai women. Moreover, these concepts are supported by the influence of Buddhism ideology. My informants, regardless of their socioeconomic background, mentioned in their life story in the finding that they began to send their family in Thailand remittances every month. For some informants like Tara and Nina, they mentioned that it is obligatory for them to send money home. Tara mentioned in the interview:

“...I am Thai, I have been told to “Tob Tan Boon Khun” to my parents or people who have “Pha Kun” to me. I don't know how to explain it. It almost felt like a corruption in a way. These concepts will make you feel guilty if you do not reach the family's expectations. Sending money home is

one of them. My family have been helping me so I have to do everything I can to pay back otherwise I am a “Nea Ra Khun” person. Those concepts I mentioned do not exist in Norway. When I have a job, I send money to my parent in Thailand every month. Sometimes, I supported them more than what I could afforded. One day, I lose my job. I did not have money anymore to send home. My mom ring to complained about it. I know it was all my fault. I have never told my mom the situation. I don’t want make her worry about it...”

According to the interview, it seems like the remittances vary according to the amount of income Thai women earn in Norway together with the economic status of the family in Thailand. The rural women from lower-class families are more likely to remit a regular amount since they are in a better position to earn a high income than other family members in Thailand. Some of these women are also responsible for providing the financial support for their children from a previous relationship. This is mentioned by Nina:

“...In Norway, I don’t have anyone. I felt like they are not my family. I can’t rely on anyone even my husband. It was not like in Thailand. It was not enough for the husband to just take care of me. I need to find job to earn some money so I could send home to my kids and my parents. It is my responsibility since my husband did not seem to care [for] my family in Thailand the same way I care about them. If I don’t send money home, my family in Thailand will complain about it. I know my mom and my sibling will not like that. I don’t want to have a problem with them. My mom has five children. All of my relatives are living together with my mom or very close by. Since I am not at home, I am the one who seem to have the most responsibility to the family in term of sending them money. The amounts of money I send home to my mom is more than all my brothers and sisters. They expected for it to be like that. Sometimes, I don’t think it fair. If some month I did not send the money home, I got a lot of complain from them...”

After listening to one of the informants, who is an educated, middle-class woman, Dana provided smaller amounts of remittances or offer her parents irregular financial contributions:

“... I did not feel any pressure to send money to my mom. My parents worked for the government, they have their own pension they received every month from the government. In saying that, I send money to her every other two weeks just to make my mom proud of me and make me feel good as a good daughter...”

The Thai woman's obligation to her family ties between parents and child in Thai society are heavily characterized by the moral ideology of "Bon-Khun" relations. The children's gratitude to the parents' expectation, while parents press these "Bon-Khun" moral ideology on their children as one of the good characteristics of a child. Parents are giving birth to their children and caring for them in infancy and childhood. In return, children owe their parents not only gratitude and respect. The adult children are expected to offer finances, physical care and emotional support as the parents grow older. (Hofstede et al., 2010, p.68). If the children fail the obligations, it is feasible for the parents to complain to or to make a request of their children as explained by most of the informants.

Most Thai women move to Norway because of they are married to Norwegians and want to build a new family in Norway. Together with the aim of raising up their new family, my informants have carried with themselves their natal family's expectations and the influence of collectivist thinking on their goals in life. These women are very loyal to their natal family and willing to do whatever it takes to reach expectations set even though it means that they have to sacrifice their happiness in life in order to become a good daughter according to the good characteristic of a daughter in a collectivist society. Getting married to the westerner, moving to Norway, and later sending remittances to support their family in Thailand make my informants feel successful. They felt like they have kept their family status and at the same time are able to financially support their family. This success is what my informants later use as a strategy to cope with all the challenges they have to face during the adaptation process into Norwegian society.

In terms of friendship and life-style, all of my informants mentioned their Thai female friends as a source of sharing a life-style and enjoying social activities. All of my informants have a complicated feeling about the friendship between Thai friends. On the one hand, they expressed their need to have friends, who share the same understanding about the situation and mother tongue. Mentioned by Lita:

"... I was so lucky when I get to Norway; I have got friends very quickly. My sisters introduce me to all her friends. It was so nice in the beginning to have friends to speak Thai with. We meet often to eat together and having a small talk..."

The same information given by Mona:

“...I do not have to work on the weekend. I spent most of my free time in the city. I often meet with my Thai friends. I am going to the city to hang out with them. We are often making Thai food together. I really enjoy being company with the people from my country. It helps me a bit not to get too home sick. We eat, watch Thai series on YouTube together. It was the best time of the week...”

On the other hand, many of Thai women are skeptical about being friends with another Thai female they have encultured. Some informants recalled that after they had just arrived in Norway and met other Thai women, they would immediately talk with them. They asked to exchange telephone numbers since they wanted to keep contact and become friends. Later, when the women had made Thai friends, they discovered that some friends share only such joyful occasions as having Thai food or an outing together, but they cannot count on these friends in need. Gossip and jealousy sometimes occur among friends. After years of living in Norway, the women had found out that sharing the same country of origin and language is not a guarantee that other will share the same interests and will become a good friend. Thai women are also different from each other in term of socioeconomic backgrounds and have had different life experiences. Lita's share her experience:

“... If you asked me, I think having Thai friends in Norway has both positive and negative sides. I can talk about positive thing first. People know each other in Stavanger because Thais like to gossip when they are together. Information being shared among the group was not always true. Some people make up stories to make it more dramatic. Many people are like that. In saying this, many are very nice. Some people want to know you because of some benefit. If you do not care the fact that people could be very pretentious sometime. You will get along well with Thai women here in Stavanger. I was invited into the Thai communities by my sisters. After 5 years in Norway, I think not to be involved in a big Thai community is better. Having just a few Thai friends, it is enough, I think. “Lot of people, lot of problem.”

Lita thinks that it is important to have some Thais as close friends. She said that “Someday when you need help, the family is too far to be able to help you. we help each other as a family”. On the negative side, Thai people look down upon Thai people sometime. I think it is because of the

jealousy. When people are jealous, they will talk down about people as they do not want anyone to be better than them. For example, “my husband is better than yours,” “I got a better job than you,” “You work in a massage business you will never get far.” I think it happens a lot in Stavanger that Thais are looking down upon each other. Sometime, people are completing in their business. Thai Temples in Norway is another issue to discuss. we are blaming Norwegian to be difficult to included everyone. I think Thais are the same ways. If you came from a certain part of Thailand, you go to a certain temple, for example, Thai people from the North are not so welcome to get along with people from North-east. I mean we are all Thai, we still don’t want to unite. You see it was not only the problem concerning Norwegian. I don’t know much about the temple. I did not participate very often...”

As the Thai women in Norway originally come from different parts of Thailand and vary in socioeconomic status, there appears to be a tendency for the women to seek the company of those who share a similar subculture and come from the same region in Thailand. Apparently, the women from Isan (the North-east of Thailand) often spend time together. When they get together, they speak their own dialect and prepare Isan food. Class difference is also expressed in friendship. Thai women in Norway have had various backgrounds in education and come from other different backgrounds. The educated, middle-class women are likely to select women from the same class and with the same preferences as close friends. The women from a rural, lower class background do the same. However, if the well-educated women obviously differentiate themselves from the rural, less educated women, they may be disliked and become the target of gossip. The influence of different social backgrounds on the selection of friends is reflected. Dana, a well-educated Thai woman, came from an upper-middle class in Thailand. She talked about a friend she has in Norway:

“...In term of friendship, I am very friendly as a person. I can talk to anyone, unfortunately, not everyone I talked to is considered my close friend. It is not very often, but some time I am not very open. Especially in Norway, you find yourself in the situation where every Thai are friend with each other when they do not have anything in common except married to the Norwegian. I don’t want to be mean, but I think people allow to choose who they want to be friend with, for me I like to be friend with someone that talk and understand the same thing as me. I have a close friend that move to Norway almost the same time as me. She has quite similar background as me. We are friend until today. I get to know her because we went to the same meeting in Thailand. We met

quite often in Thailand to discuss and help each other because we were in the same situation. When we both moved to Norway we keep in contact. We are still good friend until today...”

As Tara mentioned her friendship level she had with friend, it could determine what kind of friend she had. She mentioned her definition of friend:

“...Talking back eight years ago, there was a member of an online website called “lady inter” that how I got to know my contact which later she is becoming my friend. But to give you a background information to my story, I have to mentioned that I met my husband online thought online dating site. I chatted with him for a long time until we got married and I moved to Norway. Along that process, I got to know a lot of Thai women on the web page, we shared experiences. Sometime people even meet up and hang out together, but I did not do that. Later, when Facebook came to the picture, we contacted through facebook instead. In Norway, I am friend with both Norwegian and Thai. My close friend in Norway is Thai. Other than her, I don’t call anyone friend. I mean people have difference definitions of friend. I am a kind of person that do not call everyone I know friend. A person I called friend has to be very close to me, we share information and support each other. Since I have been living in Norway for seven years, I only have two friends. I think it is enough for me...”

Close friends are also able to share both happiness and grief without feeling ashamed. This is related to the ideal of Thai friendship, which is based on both material and emotional support. The making of and keeping a friend among Thai women in Norway is a time-consuming process. The women are getting to know each other as acquaintances. At this stage they are greeting each other at occasional meetings at grocery shops or at Thai festivals. The relationship at this stage allows them to enjoy a social life with a person who shares the same country of origin and to exchange information about job opportunities. They do not keep in touch with each other at this stage, nor do they establish immediate friendship. What often happens at this stage is distrust, fear of gossip, and being taken advantage, as Mona mentioned from the above. After the women have occasionally talked to each other at this stage and feel that they probably can get along together, telephone numbers are exchanged. They make phone calls and communicate with each other about their life in general. Some women begin to accompany each other to a market and have outings to attend Thai festivals or to visit a Thai temple. If, after a few months of keeping contact, the women

find that the relationship at this stage seems to be a good one, they will remain in touch and begin to be friends.

In conclusion to the analysis of the experience of Thais women in Norway in term of friends. All my Informants experience friendship with another Thais women in an unusual way in Norway. They met and became friends because they have one issue in common which is, they are Thais women who lived in Norway. Sharing the same mother tongue and activities makes these women feel closer to home (Thailand) and it is enough when a person desperate for a companionship. Some relation was mentioned by Mona as “Apart from being Thais, sometimes I felt like we do not have anything in common. We came from a very difference environment. I don’t think we will be friend if it was in Thailand” Jealousy and gossiping was the issue among Thais women as they are coming from different socio-economic status, education, and social class background.

Moving on to life style, Having been growing up in Thailand, Tara felt like she was growing up not to be herself. Most of the decision in her life made by everyone else in the family but her. Every time when she was trying to share her thought or explaining her opinion toward a certain situation, the respond she get from her family was that she has a bad characteristic as a child. According to Hofstede, personal opinion is not considered as importance as the group opinion in the collectivist society. A child is being taught that voicing opinion differently or voicing any opinion at all means that he/she is having a bad characteristic of a good child. (Hofstede et al., 2010, p.109) She mentioned in the interview that:

“...Since I was young, I felt like I have been putting into a box or a frame of my family expectation. Everything I do, I have to follow the frame that my family have over me. I can’t share any of my opinion. I can’t say how I feel. It felt like I am not allowed to think for myself. It is expected by everyone around me that I followed what they say because I am younger than them. I cannot share or give any opinion with anyone except my friend. I do not have a freedom over my thought and decisions I made. I have been growing up to be a person my family wanted me to be but not a person I wanted to be. In saying that it was not so bad. It was just uncomfortable and that have something to say for the reason why I wanted to move away...”

As mentioned above, Tara was complaining about how she did not like the way she was in Thailand in term of her life style. Her experience was influenced by collectivist cultural dimension. She did

not like it, so she wanted to move away. In term of life style, my informants mentioned that their life-style have changed after moved to Norway. In most of the interviews, my informant mentioned that their-life has become quite lonely and what not like what they thought it would be before they move to Norway. They have to adapt their life-style according to their situations. The language, the weather, the food and getting to know Norwegian are very challenging during the adaptation process. Later on, in the adapting process, finding job is difficult let alone finding the job that they wanted to do and fit with their previous education did not seem possible for many cases. None of my informant mentioned their experiences in a positive way. Most of them have become less socialize, lonely and even suffered from depression. Tara was sharing her experience in term of life-style as:

“...In my opinion, I think my life have changed when I move to Norway. It is difficult for me to say how much it has changed, but I know it has changed. I don’t know how to explain but, surely it was not like I was expected. In Norway, I found all the comforts in life I was after, but I am not happier. I felt so lonely. I think I am depressed...”

Lita was talking about her life- life style in Norway as:

“...When I moved to Norway, what I was imagine that it will be give me more in term of comfort and better pay, it was not like what I though. I stated from zero, I could not speak the Norwegians language, difference culture, difference kind of weather. Everything is completely different. I cried almost every day because I want to go home because it was lonely. I don’t know who to talk to. My life is different from before, I have to be very patient to get through all this. Later, I realized that I have to adjust to the different, I try to live with it...”

### **Cross-cultural communication**

It cannot be easy for Thai women, moving from Thailand where people think, feel, and act differently than in Norway. Having grown up in Thailand for more than twenty years, all these women carry with them the patterns of thinking, feeling, and potential acting based on Thai’s culture, values, and norms that were learned throughout a person’s lifetime (Hofstede et al , 2010,



p.4). When these women moved to a new host country like Norway, where everything works very differently, they experience challenging tasks in terms of communicating with Norwegian who has completely cultural frame of reference. In saying this, it shows many times in the interview that a certain behavior or a message that Thai women wanted to get across was received differently by Norwegians. As Tara told a story in the interview:

“...My first year in Norway was horrible because of the language. Many things around me were so different. My mind went crazy. One day on the way to work, it was very windy and cold. Not only that I was very cold later, it was raining. I did not have an umbrella with me. I am not used to think that I have to prepare to the weather changed all the sudden. The way people have an umbrella, just in case its rain, I am not use to that. Then the worst thing happened. It stated to snow. Now I cannot handle it anymore, I felt lost. I sat down and cried out loud for a long time in the middle of the city. I could not understand myself why I am here in Norway. It was so hard for me, I did not have to do any of this before I moved to Norway. I notice one thing, nobody was really care or maybe do not even realized that I was sitting here crying like the end of the world. Nobody asked me anything, nobody seems to care. I was thinking, if it was in Thailand at least somebody will ask if I am ok. People kept walking, they did their own things. I felt like I did not exist where I was. It was just like that. Norwegians are cold like I have heard. I felt so lonely. After a long time, I realize it will not make anything better to just sat here and cried so I took the bus home. I could not go to work after that. I think I was so depressed...”

As from Tara’s behavior, she sat down and cried in the middle of the city showing that she wanted attention. According to Dahl’s cultural filter model, Tara sent a message to all the people that walk by her that she was upset. The non-verbal sign was used in this situation. It was the crying action. The receivers in this situation were random Norwegians who walked passed and received information that some Thai woman was crying on the side of the street. Receiving information with Norwegian cultural filter, everyone tried not to pay attention to the act of crying. In the individualist society everyone expected to look after themselves and privacy is respected (Hofstede et al, 2010, p.108). Tara’s situation confirms that she sent the sign but not the meaning. The intended meaning is only known by Tara in the way she encoded message through her cultural filter. The message was being decoded by a Norwegian cultural filter. The situation clearly shows that the receiver’s meaning is not necessarily equal to the sender meaning (Dahl, 2016, p.77).

Tara wanted some recognition of her act of crying. Something terrible happened to her. All she needed was someone to stop by and ask if she was all right. As she mentioned in the interview, her experience during those first years was horrible and lonely. The reason she broke down was that she could not handle all the stress anymore. Tara was using her Thai cultural frame of reference based on her Thai values and norms. The fact that Thais are often curious about the affairs of others is mentioned by Supadtra in Jirapornkul's work. "Thai people are naturally curious about the affairs of the others. When Thai people meet other people, they ask the questions "Where are you going?" "Where have you been?" "How much did you pay for it?" etc. This interest is coupled with the activity of gossiping about the affairs of others. Stories about another's failure or misfortune are of most interest although any story about others' affairs is interesting" (Jirapornkul, 2010 p.8). Tara was thinking that her action would be interesting to Norwegians as she needed someone to grieve with about her pain and disappointment. She chose to cry in public where nobody knows who she was, as she wanted to keep face. Keeping face as a concept is so important in the collectivist society like Thailand. Thai people love "face and eyes" in society. This is an important part of Thai society. The Thai person will not allow anyone to look down on them. They would rather die (or run away or quit) than to suffer loss of face and eye in society. They think it is more important than anything else and one would willingly go into debt to "keep face" (Jirapornkul, 2010 p.7). Tara reached the point where she just broke down after she had an encounter with the situation that was not like what she was expected day after day. Her life in Norway at the beginning was so difficult for her. She felt like she was disappointed with her decision to move to Norway when the situation was not like what she was expecting. She knew other Thai women at work, but she did not really trust them as a friend. She was afraid that she would be looked down on. According to Jirapornkul, Thais do not like to see others being better than themselves. In Thai society, Thai people do not like to see or admit anyone is better or as good as themselves. Criticism or fault finding is engaged upon by the people in an attempt to weaken them. This often leads to irrational attempts to discredit some person (Jirapornkul, 2010 p.7). All of the reasons above explain the reason Tara chose to cry in public instead of discussing the problems with someone she knew.

People can easily misunderstand the message that is being sent in the cross-cultural communication situation. This miscommunication could lead to misunderstanding each other

especially if the two parties are having a different cultural frame of reference. Lita shared her experience during the interview about the situation she had encountered at the restaurant:

“... I am not a prostitute. I did not feel good when I know that people see me that way. I don't think it fair. It affects many Thai people in Norway. I can't help but felt look down upon everywhere I go. It is unfortunate that just some Thai women chosen the wrong choice, together with the [way the] media portray Thailand as a sex tourism industry. It is not fair to think that every Thai woman sell sex. People are not critical enough when they watch TV about Thailand. Some of those people have not been to Thailand but have this fixed thought about Thai people. I do not think it fair, but it happens. I know that not every Norwegian [is] like that, but they always have negative more than positive thoughts anyway. Especially with Norwegian women, I always felt that they have negative thought toward me. I went in to a restaurant one day. It was around 8 o'clock at night. I went in a restaurant with a couple of girlfriends. We were going to have dinner and the plan was to go out for some drink later. We were all dress up like short dresses. The types that all the young girls in Thailand is all wearing now. I missed the way we dressed in Thailand. We could dress up the way we want without [being] worried that it was going to be too cold. My friends and I decided to dress up the way we want to. We went into the restaurant. There were so many people. They were look at us from head to toe. I can't not help but thinking that they were look down upon us. I did not know all these people so I can't think of them differently than just think according to the way they look at me. It was not like they were appreciating my presence at that moment. This is not just happened one time, it happens to me before and quite often. I am quite sure ... that they are not happy that I have a place to be in a Norwegian society. It has a lot of effect on me. I tried to prove myself. I know it needs time. I can't tell everyone to think in a certain way. It like a situation where you have to let it be, but time will help...”

From Lita's experience, she was really upset with the way she thinks about how she was perceived by Norwegians. Her explanation toward her experience was explained in a way that she felt look down upon. Unfortunately, the situation could be a miscommunication between different cultures and the effect of the stereotype. Surprisingly, the negative effect of stereotype caused Lita to think that she was being stereotyped without it being confirmed that she was judged based on one. Mentioned by Dina, one of the informants, she has never experienced any effect of the prostitute stereotype of Thai women in Norway:

“... I have never experienced any stereotype that meant to be like Thai women with a westerner is a prostitute. I have never experienced it nether in Norway, nor in Thailand. I am quite lucky that I have never experience it, but I have heard about it. I think if you behave in a proper manner, speak in a proper manner, it helps with the situation. If you can communicate well, it will give the image of you as a person with your own personality. People tend to not assume anything about you. Dressing properly according to the situation, is another thing I think it matter if you want to avoid being stereotype. I don't think I was effect by all these stereotype people have toward Thai people. I think it just the way how you see it. For me, it is normal [because] not only Thai people who are facing all these stereotypes. The fact that it is an individual way of thinking. People decide what they want to do in life. I know myself and what I want that is enough for me. I do not mind discussing about the situation in public. I have been discussing the issue many times with my friend and I did not feel offended.”

Given more information by Lita in the second interview about in dept situation on that day. She mentioned about the dress that they were wearing

“...The dress was like a mini dress. I think it is normal to wear; I saw it was so trendy in Thailand. My friend and I bought it from online shipping since I think, it looks nicer and fit us better than to go shipping in Norway. We are shopping online a lot since I think it is cheaper than to go shopping in Norway. Not only that we can choose to buy what we [are] comfortable with, but we can choose the style that we like. Most of the time, I know that these dresses are not covered enough since it was so cold in Norway, but I still want to wear it sometime...”

According to the cultural differences in the communication process between Thais and Norwegians, the sign being sent from Lita's cultural filter was received by the receiver through Norwegian's cultural filter. The act of sending and receiving messages through a different filter made the message that Lita wanted to send to be received differently. The sign was the dresses Lita and her friends wore that day. Form her explanation, the message that she wanted to send was she is young and trendy women. The message received by the Norwegian cultural filter turned out to be on the opposite of what Lita wanted. It could be perceived as something unusual, so it attracted a lot of attention from people in the restaurant. The fact that Lita mentioned that the people in the restaurant do not know her and her friend shows that there were not any intentions between the two parties apart from the sign being perceived differently than the original message

by Lita and her friends. Moreover, instead of being aware of the situation, Lita assumed that it was the stereotype Norwegians has toward Thai women. She assumed that the reason that everyone in the restaurant looked at her and her friend was because the stereotype Norwegians have toward Thai women. The situation shows that Lita was using her stereotype toward Norwegians that westerners always think a Thai woman is a prostitute. Because of the way she assumed the situation, it has clearly affected her confidence and her emotional well-being in Norway. This situation shows how cultural differences could create misunderstanding between culture.

## **Stereotype**

In the finding, I mentioned that Thai women experience stereotypes in Norway in various ways. There was the assumption that Thai women were being stereotype by Norwegian. Thai women also have a stereotype towards other immigrants they met during their language class, Thais toward Norwegians, and the stereotype Thai women have toward Thai women in Norway. To discuss the stereotype, I would like to introduce Tara's experience at the language class;

“...For example. I had to attend Norwegian course with refugees and other Thai women who married... a Norwegian man as the obligation [for her] permit to stay in Norway. I have been told by many Thai women who have been in Norway before me that refugees are very lazy. They have a lot of children and did not want to work. They only want to take advantage of Norwegian welfare system. After I [listened] to what I [had] been told, I hate refugees for no reason. I hate them, I did not like when they sit next to me. I did not like them without them doing anything to me. One day, what changed my life and my thought was an old man from Syria. He sat next to me and told me about his life. I still remember it well. He was 65 years old at a time from Syria, but he is not originally for there. He is Turkish. He came to Norway with his family. He told me that he must leave his home because of the war. First, he and his family fled to Germany, but it did not work out. That is way he is in Norway now. He told me all the difficulties he and his family have been through. When he was in Syria, the war was going on all the time. He told me how he and his family have to survive during the war. He told me his life before war and how the war has ruined everything in his life. He told me he would rather live in Syria than in Norway. He said, “I want to die in my homeland at my house. But I have hope for my children I did not want them to die or suffer from the war. My children are too young to die. Also, they are too young to leave Syria without the parents so that why I am here.”

Tara mentioned her thought future that;

“...I listen to him for half-an-hour. I cried when he told me stories. He did not speak well in both English and Norwegian. I did not understand many things from what he said but I can feel his sincerity and his [suffering]. I took that as an advice, I might not like everything about Norway, about my husband, about my life. At the end of the day, I have a home to go back to. Many people can't go home. I felt bad for them. I realized that even Norwegian people want to help them. Why can't I give them a chance? I changed the way I thought about refugee. I do not think that having a friend who are refugees or Muslims is not a bad thing anymore...”

From Tara's experience, she explained that she is not used to being in contact with refugees. The only source of information about refugees that she could draw from was from the story being told by the other Thai women. She used it as her frame of reference. She assumed that every refugee will be like what she has been told. She did not want to sit next to the refugees, neither did she like to talk to them. At this point, her stereotypes were frozen. After she listened to an old Syrian man who told her his stories, Tara gains new information. She has a better understanding about refugees and her thought toward refugees changed. She gained new knowledge and new experiences. She even become friends with many refugees later.

Stereotype could become harmful in many ways. Nina experienced shows one of the situations when stereotype becoming harmful when stereotypes being used without considering individual difference;

“... I have been living in Norway for a long time. I know a lot of Thai women in Stavanger. Many people know me because of my business. Sometimes I get to know people from the Thai temple. Owning a Thai restaurant, I cannot deny but to get to know a lot [of] Thais as they are my costumers and friends. As you know, many of Thai women are working in the massage business and I know many of Thai women in that line of work. I can't deny that all massage businesses in Stavanger [do] not have a hidden agenda. I know that some are offering sexual contact and some of those women are my friends. Thai communities are not so big, so I guess it is normal for a person like me who lives here a long time to know many Thais from a difference background. I have a group of Thai friends that I hang out together and most of them are working in a massage business here in Stavanger. When I hang out with them, people assumed that I am also involved in sexual

business. One time, I had a Thai friend of mine come to visit me and had an overnight stay at my house. She works at the massage place. She is known by Thai women that she has a hidden agenda other than masseur. I did not care about what she does because we are friend until that day. She told her husband that she would stay overnight at my place. She was at my house then she left for many hours. She came back and stayed over at my place. Later, I found out that she was lying to her husband that she could not pick up the phone because I did not like it. Her husband was not happy. He complained to me when he found out about his wife. He did not like me and [told] everyone that I was doing the same hidden business as his wife. This is when he found out about his wife's hidden business. They broke up after that situation. It was a really hard situation I was in at the time..."

Nina's experience shows how stereotype is a process of categorization. It is easy to group people when they represent the unknown or the uncertain. The way her friend's husband told everyone that Nina had the same hidden business as his wife showed that stereotype can be difficult to change. Sometime stereotype is directly connected to emotion, even though it has been proven wrong, but people still want to believe in it. During the interview, Nina mentioned her thoughts about the situation. She thinks that people she knows are always skeptical about who she is and what she does. According to the situation, her friend's husband knows that Nina works in the food industry, yet, she has lot of friends working in the massage business. The fact that massage business in Norway can be an unclear business whether it provides a massage therapy, or it is the place where people make money from offering sexual encounters. Many of my informants have confirmed that there are both kinds of massage places in Norway. There are places where they offer a real massage therapy and places where they are having a hidden business. It did not surprise Nina that other people might have a negative perspective or belief about people working in the massage business. Nina is a social person, like many Thai people in Norway. She goes to Thai Temples to make merit and to socialize with other Thai women. This is the place where she makes friends with people from a different background.

It is not only Nina that talked about her experience of stereotype being used toward her, but also all of my informants have been affected by it. Mona mentioned her experience during the time she was an au pair:

“...Stereotype affected me many ways living in Norway as a Thai women. It felt hurtful but it does not stop me from living my life. Every time when I am being stereotyped, it felt like ‘you did that to me because you think I am Thai’ those kinds of feelings. It [was] not often that I was directly involved in the situation only that one time. With other Norwegians I know, I have never felt that they have bad intention toward me. What stereotype affects me the most is that I always have bad conscious toward people around me. If something negative happened to me I would assume that it was all about stereotype, even though, it might not be because of the stereotype. Sometime when the situation was not like what I was expected, it feels like “Ok, it was like that because I am Thai.” When I was an au pair, my host family was having a party with her friends. She invited me to the party as well. She wanted me to see and be part [of the] Norwegian setting so that I could learn to get to know Norwegians. When I was there, I don’t think that many of my host family friend was really nice to me. They asked me like “I know that lot of Thai are prostitute” they hit me with a question like that. I was very angry. At the time my English was not very good neither my Norwegian. I did not remember exactly what I was saying back to her. I only remembered that I was so angry. I left the party and went home. I remembered calling my mom and told her the situation crying of anger and upset. It did not help me in anyway apart from making my mom worry about me. I did not think that my response to the situation was helping me to be any less angry toward the situation. I felt like I was look down upon. Situation like this happened to me often but sometimes it was not to obvious then I just let it go. As all these people was not so important in my life.”

In this situation, it is important to remember that “stereotype is modified, based on continuing observation and experience with the actual people and situation.” (Dahl, 2016, p.51)

Based on the interview with Mona, she had told that “I always have bad conscious toward people around me. If something negative happened to me, I would assume that it was all about stereotype, even though, it might not be because of the stereotype.” This is how she explained her behavior after she has experienced and been told about stereotypes toward Thai women many times. According to Dahl mentioned in chapter two, Mona’s experience shows how Mona has a “frozen stereotype.” She was not aware that every situation has to be modified based on actual people and situations. Moreover, Mona’s background information explains how she lacked experiences living in other countries apart from Thailand. Her worldview is limited to her experiences as well as her ability to communicate with other people. After she was asked the unexpected question by a Norwegians friend of her boss, she chose to run away with her anger.



Mona is unable to communicate and does not fully understand the nature of English, and she assumed that the question was rude. If she was able to have a conversation with her boss's friend the situation might have turned out differently by gaining new information. The language played an important role in this situation.

Apart from the stereotypes being mentioned I also found out that Thai women have stereotypes toward Thai women in Norway. Mentioned by Lita:

“...Sometime Thai people look down upon Thai people, I think it is because of the jealousy. When people are jealous, they will talk people down as they did not want anyone to be better than them. For example, “my husband is better than yours,” “I got a better job than you,” “You work in a massage business you will never get far,” stuff like that you know. I think it happens a lot in Stavanger that Thais are looked down upon each other because of the massage business. They are trying to complete each other as far as I know. Another thing is Thai temple, we are blaming Norwegian to be difficult to include everyone. I think Thais are the same ways. If you came from a certain part of Thailand, you go to a certain temple. Thai people from the North are not so welcome to get along with people from North-east. I mean we are Thais, but we still don't want to unite. I can see that it was not only the problem concerning Norwegian. I don't know much about the temple. I did not participate very often...”

According to Lita's interview, she has experienced that Thai women in Norway are jealous about each other. According to Jirapornkul, Thais “Do not like to see others being better than themselves. As a statement said, ‘Two tigers cannot live in the same cave’ (Jirapornkul, 2010, p.7). In Thai society, Thai people do not like to see or admit anyone is better or as good as themselves. Criticism or fault finding is engaged upon by the people in an attempt to weaken them. This often leads to irrational attempts to discredit some person” (Jirapornkul, 2010, p.7). In Norway, massage business is one of the most place that Thais woman can find themselves a work. It is one of the most competitive business between Thai communities to complete each other but at the same time can be taken in a wrong way. Those who work in the business have to face with the criticism of being a former bar-girl or prostitute. The Thai Temple in Norway is also an example to see how stereotypes affect Thai women in Norway. There are many Thai temples in Stavanger. Thai women go to a certain temple depending on who their friends are and what part of Thailand they are coming from. Once you go to one temple, it is difficult to go to another without being gossiped

about by the other women. As Thai women in Norway originally come from different parts of Thailand and vary in their socioeconomic status, there appears to be a tendency for the women to seek the company of those who share a similar sub-culture and for these women to look down on others that are different. Class difference is also expressed in the stereotype between Thai women toward Thai women in Norway. The majority of Thai women in Norway have had little education and come from rural backgrounds. It also appears that some women have worked in sex-related jobs according to the informant's interviews. Thai women notice these differences in the socioeconomic background of their female friends. As a result, the educated, middle-class women are likely to select women from the same class and with the same preferences as close friends. The women from a rural, lower class backgrounds do the same. However, if the well-educated women obviously differentiate themselves from the rural, less educated women, they may be disliked and become the target of gossip.

### **Adapting to a new culture**

All of my informants have been going through different stages in the U-curved graph during the discussion in the chapter two about the stage each individual is in when they are experience a relocation process. Most of my informants mentioned the shock stage that was the most difficult time in their experience. Lita shares her experience as:

“...I did not have a lot of Norwegian friend. I cannot talk to them. My friends are mostly au-pairs and Thais. I get to know more people when I attend a Norwegian course, but it was just people I know. I don't know if I could call them friend. I am not confident in speaking Norwegian. I can understand but I did not want to speak the language. My experience learning how to speak Norwegian made me feel embarrassed. Once, I had a Norwegian boyfriend who was not so patient with me. He was a bad teacher as when I tried and made a mistake or when I can't not pronounce, he laughed at me. I knew many Thais who have a good relationship with [their] husband. They are learning Norwegian together. It helps a lot that way but for me it was not like that. I felt so embarrassed when I speak Norwegian, so I did not have any confidence in speaking it, so I stop learning...”

Lita's experience shows that language plays an important part of the adaptation process into the Norwegian society. Apart from language school, family is the main source and support for Thai women to learn the Norwegian language. Lita has low self-esteem in speaking Norwegian because of her bad experience being laughed at by her boyfriend. As the result of that, she did not want to learn Norwegian. Later, the issue about unable to communicate the affect her life in a bigger picture. Lita mentioned later:

“...I did not like to be in a setting where I have to be involved with a lot of Norwegians. For example, if I go to a party or a dinner when Norwegians are a majority, I don't think I am very comfortable. I can't be myself in the situation like that. I don't like to try to present myself different but, in the situation that I have to, I did not feel very comfortable. One hour in that situation felt like one year to me. I felt like I was not a part of the event. I can be present, but I can't be comfortable. To be honest, I did not like to join such an event...”

Unable to communicate, Lita could not be herself if she has to participate in a social meeting. She could not be herself and could not get to know the other. It created the uncomfortable situation to her. This demonstrates that language plays an important part in gaining new information and being part of the surrounding society.

Apart from the language difference, family in Norway is also an important factor to the adapting process of Thai women. Moving from Thailand to Norway, the husband and his family become the first contact Thai women have. The experience of getting to know family-in-law is another factor, according to Tara's experience.

“...My first impression when I came to Norway to visit my husband was not very well. I think his family did not like me. Language was my first problem; my husband family can't speak English. I can't not understand Norwegian so we could not really communicate. I was afraid of doing things wrong when I met his family and friend. My husband warned me that his mom can be hard to deal with. At the beginning, we rarely talked. I was not really myself. My husband and I lived in the same house with her. We stayed at her basement apartment when I first moved to Norway. I rarely saw her even though we were living in the same house. I was only in our apartment. Sometimes, I saw that my husband's mother came down to our apartment to look at what I was doing. She was wondering what I was doing during the day, maybe. I was very quiet and rarely made any noise. I

wanted to be polite. My mom always teaches me that a proper woman supposed to do thing softly and quietly. I cleaned the apartment from time to time, but it was not very noisy like when Norwegians do. Later, she told my husband that everyone in the family are a bit worried of the fact that he is going to get married to the Thai women. His mom said I look so young. My husband said, he knows me. It will take time for his family to get to know me the same way he does so, he told me not to be angry with his family. I listened to what my husband said with all these questions like was it because I am young, so I was not welcome to the family, or was that the reason why I fit into many stereotypes of young girl [wanting] to get money stuff. There were so many questions at the time...”

Tara’s experience shows how adapting to the new culture requires both efforts of a newcomer and the host to engage to the host culture. It is important that both the host country and the newcomer to negotiate the meaning in order to understand each other. Tara’s experience is the opposite of that: Tara and her husband’s mother could not communicate so they did not have an opportunity to get to know each other. For Tara, her first experience getting to know Norwegians was not a good one, and she uses it as her background information as a confirmation to the next encounter. Tara mentioned her life in Norway that she always has the feeling that she did not like it. Many situations she has encountered leave her with a negative thought toward the situations:

“...Later, my life was getting a bit excited. I went to school. I started to work. I was in a mix feeling. I like going to school but then I hate that I have to be with Muslims. (Now, I don’t hate anymore) I hate them before because I have been told with a wrong information. I never have any experience with Muslims so the only thing I can think of was to relate to just what I have been told...”

She like a new stage in her life where she attends the Norwegian class, but she did not like that she has to join the class with people from other nationality. There was always something she did not like and to blame:

“...I always have a problem of not wanting to speak Norwegian when I attend the class. I always answered back to the teacher in English. I did not understand myself why I did that. My teacher was very patient with me. I felt like I did not need to speak Norwegian as I can speak English with everyone in Stavanger. With all the difficulties of learning the language and the hate of being in Norwegian classes. I decided that my best option is to go to work. At work, I am

surrounded by Thai. We speak the same language and we eat the same food. I just decided that this is where I have to be...”

Influenced by human nature especially by her Thai cultural background, Tara decided to take an easy way out. She chose to give up what she thinks it was difficult for her and she did not like it. She did not want to see learning to be part of the Norwegian society was an important step in her life in Norway. According to Jirapornkul’s article, “Thai like it easy. Thai people do not like to organize or plan. They like an easy life; nobody wants to make efforts or do anything difficult. The approach to their daily life, in general Thai people like to proceed in the easiest and most convenient way. For example, queuing up for doing anything is full of confusion, as this would be inconvenient for Thai people” (Jirapornkul, 2010, p.7).

Tara shared more of her experience:

“... During the day, I work with Thai people and I was happy. At the end of the day, I am back to be with Norwegian again. At the time, my husband has told his mom that I have a problem understanding Norwegian. His mom wanted to help me practicing Norwegian by asking me to visit her for a coffee and I had to read a Norwegian newspaper to her so I could practice Norwegian. I was in a lot of pressure. “Why do they have to treat me like a kid?” I did not see the good point out of it. I felt so down at a time...”

According to Dahl, Tara experienced a curved graph of how immigrant experience through the relocation process. At this point, she is at a shock stage. This happened when the person realized the relocation process in their unfamiliar surroundings. Many people who are facing this stage see every situation as a negative experience. The language difference is often a problem at this stage (Dahl, 2016, p.207). Tara shared her feeling and the challenge towards her experience during the adapting process as:

“...First year was really bad for me. I had a lot of questions, “Why Norway is like this? Why people are like this? Why the society around me is like this? Why people said that Norway is the happiest country in the world to live but why I am not happy?” I felt like I am alone in the world. After that first years, my Norwegian was getting better. I got to know people from different nationalities and learn to get to know a different way of thinking. “Why other people are happy?” I started to go out

with other people, in saying that, they were Thai people. I still did not like to hang out with Norwegian. Once, I was invited to a Norwegian dinner party. I could not make sense of what they were talking about. I did not have any interests in the topic they were discussing. I felt like I was there, but nobody recognized my presence. I felt like I did not exist. Later, I decided it is better for me to hang out with Thai. I spent most of my time with Thai women...”

Mona mentioned in the interview that “moving to Norway is like my dream come true.” She told during the interview that she is happy with her life in Norway, yet here is the experience she shares:

“...Life in Norway is different than in Thailand. I stay at home from morning to evening. My job responsibility was to take care of the house. The house has to be always clean. I clean until afternoon until the kids come home. Then, I have to look after them. I did not have to entertain the kids; I just have to be there with them. I have to be at the house until after dinner because I have to clean after dinner then my job is done. I did not have to work on the weekend, so I spend that time in the city. I often meet with my Thai friend; we hang out and making Thai food. My life is changing. I missed home. I called my mom every day because I felt so lonely. The fact that it is not my house and being au-pair, I have to be with the host family all the time. I did not feel like I have a lot of privacy. I had my own room but at my age many people have their own house. Being [an] au pair was so different than what I always wanted to do. I have never thought that when I graduated from a bachelor’s degree, my job would be washing toilet...”

From the experience Mona shared during the interview, this shows that she was not satisfied with her choice of work she chose apart from it allowed her to move to Norway. Later she mentioned her social contacts in Norway. She mentioned that it was difficult to get to know Norwegians.

“...Most of my friends in Norway are Thai. I do not have Norwegian friends, only people related to my husband and my au-pair host family. I think it is enough for me, I enjoyed being around Thais anyway. It feels like home. I am comfortable where I am. I don’t think you could be friend with Norwegian very easily. Norwegians are friend with each other since they were young. It is difficult for the outsider to be friend with them...”

From the interview, it did not show much effort from both Norwegians and Thai to get to know each other. It is a major challenge in order for Thai women to adapt to Norwegian society.

Apart from the weather, food is also a big problem for many Thai women. For the interview mentioned by Mona:

“...Last summer, I went to stay with my husband’s parents because I could work like a summer job there. I had to live with them for 2 months. My husband was not always there with me because he is working in Stavanger. I had a lot of problem with food. I did not like to eat Norwegian food, and everyone had to eat at the same time. I really want to eat Thai food, but I know they did not like it. I felt like sometimes they could just eat dinner without me. I don’t know if it was Norwegian things that family have to eat dinner together, but my husband is not like that. I think my husband used to work and live in Asia, so he used to a variety kind of food. Sometimes it is ok not to eat together. I don’t think my husband’s family are used to live with someone that is not Norwegian, so they did not know what to do when it comes to that. I think they are trying to show me that I am also important in the family, so they always wait for me for dinner...”

Not only Mona, but all my informants mentioned that food is also the problem. All of my informants mention that they like to eat Thai food more than any other kind of food. Many of my informant mentions that they would try to cook Thai food every day and buying all the imported ingredients was very expensive. In some families, they could not effort to cook Thai food all the time and that was the problem.

Mona shares her feelings and the challenge toward her experience during the adapting process as:

“...When I met my husband, we talked to each other in English. I did not think that I will be in Norway forever, so I did not want to try to speak Norwegian because I don’t think it was necessary. I started to learn Norwegian when I married my husband. The first two years, everything was new and scary. I was so scared even taking a bus because I did not want to get on to the wrong bus. I think my life is difficult. Language is difficult. Ways of living between Norwegian and Thai is different. For example, Thai people eat all the time but Norwegian eat a big meal and do not eat [between] the meal. If you have husband who understand your way of living so it will not be problem. It took me 2 years to adapt. I feel like Norway is my home just because I live in Norway now. I felt like Thailand is a place to go visit. I think husband is a main person to help me adjust and make me feel that Norway is home. I think husband has 50% influence on my adapting process. The rest is had to be yourself who wanted to.”

According to the interviews being discussed in this chapter, it shows the contradiction to what many informants claimed to be happy with their life in Norway. The way my informants talked about their life in Norway, together with the difficulties mentioned concerning the adaptation process, shows that some of my informants are having difficulties adjusting themselves. Cultural differences between Thais and Norwegians seem to be the most challenging issues. My informants are talking about their experiences concerning friends and their lifestyle in Norway mostly in a negative way. It shows the contradiction to the fact that they mentioned that they are happy with their life. I personally think that my informants did not have an intention to lie about their feeling. I think my informants think that they are happy because they have reached their goal in life. For my informants, they are happy with their life in Norway because they can support their family in Thailand and people in Thailand are looking up to them as a role model but not really happy with their life in Norway in general. In saying this, I presented this topic according to my interpretations to the interviews I have conducted.

Lastly, I would like to analyze the age differences and the amount of time the informant has been in Norway. I found out, based on the interviews, that Thai women who have come to Norway at a young age have the potential to adjust into Norwegian society. My informants at all age groups have suffered during the process of adapting themselves to the Norwegian society because of the cultural differences. My informants have experienced the feelings of frustration, anger, upset, and being unaccepted by Norwegian society, while at the same time they feel happy because they felt like they have achieved their goal of moving to Norway. The feeling of achieving something in life is so powerful that all these women looked over all the negative experiences they have encountered. I have found that the time spent in Norway by my informants has helped some of my informants to develop strategies to cope with all the anger and frustration. For the informants who have lived in Norway less than ten years, I felt some anger and disappointment toward some situations they described during the interviewed. They said that they are happy with their life in Norway but at the same time their life stories have contradicted the fact. For the informants who have lived in Norway for 10 years, they have found some sort of strategies to cope with their feelings. I felt that they have less anger and are less upset with the situations. They have also contradicted stories to their feeling. They mentioned that they are happy with their life in Norway,



but the story told held the opposite meaning. I have analyzed this based on my interpretation of the interviews.

## Chapter Five

### CONCLUSION

After conducting the research, I will conclude with a short summary:

First of all, I would like to mention that it is very challenging for many Thai women to start their life again in Norway where aspects of life work differently. They have to find out how the unfamiliar rules and unwritten rules work in their daily life. It is an enormous task for many Thai women to learn all these rules in the society with limited abilities. Language is one of the most challenging problems in order to adapt into Norwegian society. Most Thai women move to Norway because they are married to Norwegians and want to build a new family in Norway. Together with the aim of raising up their new family, my informants have carried with themselves their natal family's expectations and the influence of collectivist thinking on their goals in life. These women are very loyal to their natal family and willing to do whatever it takes to reach expectations set even though it means that they have to sacrifice their happiness in life in order to become a good daughter according to the good characteristic of a daughter in a collectivist society. Getting married to the westerner, moving to Norway, and later sending remittances to support their family in Thailand make my informants feel successful. They felt like they have kept their family status and at the same time are able to financially support their family. This success is what my informants later use as a strategy to cope with all the challenges they have to face during the adaptation process into Norwegian society.

When Thai women move to Norway, her husband and husband's family become the first social contact and support to all these women. Some of my informants who have had bad experiences with getting to know their husband's family admit that it has a negative effect to their process of adaptation. If the first social contact in Norway is a successful one, the women tend to be positive and willing to adapt to a new environment. On the other hand, if they did not receive a positive response from the husband's family, they seem to have more problems later in the process. The problems with getting to know the husband's family start with the language problem. When there is a lack of real communication between the two parties, it is difficult for them to get to know

each other and the process of gaining new information about each other did not continue. The two parties will be left with the information they know about each other from before they met. They will continue learning about each other by guessing based on their previous information.

Family, especially the husband, is the most important source for my informants to learn the Norwegian language and way of living. Some of my informants shared their experiences during the interview and said that the best motivation to learn the Norwegian language and culture is mostly because of their partners. My informants mentioned that they learn faster if the husband is patient and tries to speak Norwegian to them. In one of my informant's experiences, she admits that she felt embarrassed to try to speak Norwegian to her partner as a result of being laughed at. She admitted that it had a negative effect on the process of learning a new language and culture. Some of my informants felt excluded.

In terms of friendship, my informants mentioned that they are mostly friends with other Thai women in Norway. My informants explained the pattern of how they get to know each other through language school, Thai temples, Thai shops, and Thai restaurants. They asked to exchange telephone numbers since they wanted to keep in contact and become friends. In some cases, my informants mentioned that they know other Thai women before they moved to Norway as a friend or family member. Thai female friends are the source of sharing a certain lifestyle and enjoying social activities in a foreign land where it is difficult to find comfort in terms of companionship with the local culture. Further, most Thai women do not have family members living in Norway apart from their husband, so friendships are another crucial relationship in the women's daily lives. Later in the process of adapting to Norwegian society, my informants mentioned that sharing the same country of origin and language is not a guarantee that they will share the same interests and will become good friends. In saying so, many of these Thai women remain in the relationship anyway as they like the comfort of sharing the same difficulties. The unusual relationship that Thai women have made them question the sincerity of the quality of the relationship. My informants mentioned that they cannot count on these friends in times of need. Gossip and jealousy sometimes occur among friends as these women come from various socio-economic statuses. Moreover, it appears to be a tendency for Thai women to seek the company of those who share a similar sub-culture and come from the same region in Thailand. All of my informants rarely have Norwegian friends apart from the Norwegians that are related to their partners. According to the interview being conducted, there was no interest to get to know Norwegians, which is evidence by Thai

women only doing so when they have to in a situation. Some of my informants mentioned that it is difficult to be friends with Norwegians as it seems like Norwegians have their own friendship pattern which is developed at their young age.

In terms of lifestyle, my informants mentioned that their lifestyle has changed after moving to Norway. In most of the interviews, my informants mentioned that their life has become quite lonely and not like what they expected it would be before they moved to Norway. They have to adapt their lifestyle according to their new situations. The language, the weather, the food, and getting to know Norwegians are very challenging situations during the adaptation process. Later on, in the adapting process, finding a job is difficult, let alone finding the job that they wanted to do and that fits with their previous education, which did not seem possible for many cases. None of my informants mentioned their experiences in a positive way. Most of them have become less socialized, lonelier, and some even suffered from depression.

The second question I was looking to find answers to in my research is based on this question: “What are the challenges during the adaptation process into Norwegian society.” I have concluded that the most challenging problem Thai women face during the adapting process into Norwegian society are mostly based on misunderstanding and miscommunication between Thai women and Norwegians. Many situations in my informants’ life situations was perceived in the wrong way. Many situations mentioned in the analysis chapter show that there was so little communication between Thai women and Norwegians. The main problem is because of the language barrier. It led to the problem of having a different understanding about each other. Based on my informants’ interviews, unfortunately, my informants were using their previous background information about Norwegians to assume the situation instead of seeing it as an individual situation. There was no new information gained during the encounter to create mutual understanding about each other. This fault process that Thai women have experienced leads to negative thinking about Norwegian society. It is clearly affecting the willingness to adapt themselves into Norwegian society.

The last research question was “How do Thai women experience stereotypes during the adaptation process into Norwegian society?” and the result I found was there are many stereotypes being mentioned throughout the interviews. They were the stereotypes between Norwegians toward Thai women, Thai women towards other immigrants they met in language classes, Thai women toward Norwegians, and Thai women toward Thai women in Norway. I have found that

the stereotype that Norwegians have toward Thais is too complex to conclude in this study. The experiences of my informants were unclear and did not confirm whether they were being stereotyped by Norwegians or whether it was just some curiosity of Norwegians toward the situation concerning Thai woman and cultures in general. My informants mentioned many situations during the interviews that confirmed the trends of being stereotyped as a bar girl or a prostitute, but it could be because of their own assumptions, feelings, or their own interpretation of the situations. It is too soon to confirm that Norwegians have such a stereotype toward Thais because research needs to be done on the Norwegian's side of the story.

The experience about the stereotype Thai women have toward other immigrants they meet in language class is mentioned in the analysis chapter. It shows the process of stereotype from the start until it has changed because a person has gained a new understanding. It confirms that stereotyping is a dynamic process. It can change when the situation allows the communicators to communicate and share new information about each other and then a new understanding is gained. From Tara's experiences, the stereotype toward immigrants also shows that she had "a frozen stereotype" toward an immigrant that is why she did not like to participate in classes and until she came to a new understanding and those stereotypes changed.

The effect of being unable to properly communicate in both English and Norwegian has created a misunderstanding to Thai women about the Norwegians. My informants have created their assumptions based on their feelings of many situations mentioned in the interviews as they are being stereotyped by Norwegians. My informants have limited abilities in communicating and a worldview led them to the feeling of being stereotyped when it could be just a misunderstanding of cultures and communication problems. This wrong assumption of being stereotyped is clearly affecting the adapting process to Norwegian society.

Lastly, the stereotype I have found during the interview was that Thai women have some stereotype toward other Thai women in Norway. This stereotype is created based on the socio-economic status of the women, sharing similar sub-culture, and class differences. I have found that the stereotype Thai women have toward Thai women in Norway, effected the friendship they had with each other. This stereotype could be one of the reasons why many of my informants mentioned that the relationship they have with their Thai friends is sometimes a "fake relationship," even though they know it is fake, they still need it to comfort their feelings of lacking

companionship. It is one of the strategies to cope with all the challenges concerning the adapting process into Norwegian society.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Request for participation in research project

Appendix 2 – Guideline questions for Thai

Appendix 3 – Life's stories of informants

### **Request for participation in research project**

**Cultural misunderstanding and Stereotyping between Norwegians and Thai's women in Norway and how these cultural misunderstanding and stereotyping affects the integration process into Norwegian society regarding social practices in their daily life.**

**Name:** Kittikanya Limpriwatana **Contact information:** 48385482 / [Milkky22@hotmail.com](mailto:Milkky22@hotmail.com)

**Study program:** Master of Global Studies, (MGS), VID specialized University, Stavanger.

**Background and purpose:** When people meet with something or someone unknown or unfamiliar, a brain starts to function in a way that it is trying to put subject into categories to find meaning, this could lead to stereotype. It makes me wonder and would like to investigate what it is like to be Thai in Norway. What are the differences in Norwegian and Thai culture related to values and norms. I would also like to see if there are some cultural misunderstanding that could lead to stereotyping toward the Thais, how stereotyping of Thai women is created and how it affects Thai women mentally and physically. Moreover, I would like to see how these stereotypes are affecting Thai women in Norway in terms of social practices in their daily life.

The study is a part of my master's Thesis in Master of Global Studies, (MGS), VID specialized University, Stavanger. Persons requested to participate in the project have been selected because of their Thai heritage, or Norwegians who have been in contact with Thais as a background. I have chosen these groups because of my interest in the cultural differences, the effect of a group categorizing and stereotyping, and the integration process.

**What does the participation in the study imply?** If you would like to participate in this study, I need you to set aside some time for this in October and/or November. The study will consist of an interviewing process. If the informant gives their consent about it, I would like to use a sound recorder. If a sound recorder is not used, I will take notes during interviews and conversations.

Participant can, on request, get to see the interview guide. Information given by the informant will be kept confidential.

**what happens with the information about you?** All personal information will be treated confidential. Only the researcher who conduct the research and the informant, which is conducting the study, will have access to personal information, sound recordings and other collected data. If some interviews are conducted in Norwegian, it might be necessary to involve an interpreter – in that case the participant will be informed. The sound recordings will be transcribed and de-identified soon after the interviews. The sound recordings will then be deleted. Personal information will be kept separately from other collected data, so that the participant cannot be identified.

Names and other information that can make other people identify the participant will not be presented in the publication.

The project is planned to end May 2019, but the data collection is planned to end in November 2018. Collected data will be deleted when the project has ended.

**Voluntary participation** Participant is voluntary, and the participant can withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reason. If you withdraw from the study, all information about you will be deleted.

If you want to participate or have any questions to the study, contact: Kittikanya Limpriwatana  
**Contact information:** 48385482 / [Milkky22@hotmail.com](mailto:Milkky22@hotmail.com) The study is reported to the Data Protection Official for research, Norwegian Science Data Service.

**Confirmation to participate in the study**

I have received information about the study, and I am willing to participate

-----  
(Signed by participant, date)

*The participants are free to decide to participate in some interview and not participate in other  
I agree to answer an interviewing question*

-----  
(Signed by project manager, Kittikanya Limpriwatana, date)

## Appendix 2 – Guideline questions for Thai

### **Guideline questions for Thai**

#### Background Information

- What is your name?
- How old are you?
- What is your religious belief?
- How long have you been in Norway?
- What is the reason for you to move to Norway?
- Were you happy when you lived in Thailand?
- How was your normal daily life in Thailand? How did your day look like in Thailand? What was your favorite activity?
- How is your normal daily life in Norway? How does your day look like in Norway? What is your favorite activity?
  - Do you feel the difference and how do you manage?
- Do you have friends in Norway? Are they mostly Thais or Norwegians?
- How did you become friend with Norwegian?
- If you have to give a score 1 to 10, how well do you speak English?
- If you have to give a score 1 to 10, how well do you speak Norwegian?

#### Cultural differences

- Do you think that living your life outside Thailand is out of your comfort zone? Why?
- Have you ever thought about living abroad before you moved away from Thailand?
  - How do you think about it?
  - What do you think is your biggest motivation of living in Norway?
  - Where would you prefer to live if you could choose between Norway and Thailand? why?
- What do you think are some typical Thai values and norms?
- What do you like about Thai culture?
- What do you like about Norwegian culture?

- In your opinion, what are the similarities and differences between Thai and Norwegian culture?
- What is important in your life?
- Tell me about what do you think is the most difficult encounter you have experienced in Norway?
- Have you experienced any situation you think was about cultural misunderstandings in regard to the interaction with the Norwegians?
- Do you feel like you have to explain yourself in regard to your reaction or behavior because you think the other have misinterpreted your action?
- Have you ever felt like mistreated by Norwegian? Can you share your experience? Do you feel like you have to explain your reactions?
- On the scale 1 to 10, how comfortable are you when it comes to the interaction with the Norwegians? Why would you pick that score? Can you share your experience?
  - According to the former question, if you feel less comfortable, what are the factors that make you feel how you feel?
- Can you share your experiences of being part of the Norwegian family and how is it to be part of the Norwegian family? Do you think it is different than your experiences in Thailand? Can you share your feelings?

### Stereotype

- Can you share some good and bad experiences of when you encounter with the Norwegian? How did you feel about it?
  - When, Where, How, how do you feel, see potential follow up question.
- As you can see, there are many Thais who live abroad, what do you think are the reason why Thai women choose to live outside Thailand?
- Imagine if you overheard someone you know in Norway who is talking about you and about bad reputation of Thai women, how would you feel? How would you react to the situation? Have you ever experienced it in real life?
  - If it happens to you, would you stop trying to fit into Norwegian society? Would you have some trouble of wanting to be part of the society?

- Have you ever because of some bad reputations about Thai women, felt that you are becoming paranoid and wanting to isolate yourself?

### Integration

- In your opinion, do you think it is important to fit into the Norwegian society? Why?
  - Do you think you would rather be Thai and continue living your life with the same values and attitudes as in Thailand?
- Do you feel included at home, at work, at your community? How? What are your thoughts toward relationships?
- What language do you speak at home, at work, with Norwegian friends?
- What holidays and celebrations are most important for you?
- Do you consider Norway your home? Why?
- How often do you contact people back in Thailand? And how do you contact them?
- Do you identify yourself as Norwegian? What does that mean for you personally?
- Imagine if you have experienced a bad encounter with the Norwegian, how would you think it will affect you? How would that make you feel? What would you think will be the consequences of this encounter?
- Have you ever experienced being in a Norwegian setting when people are giving you extra attention because you were hanging out with Norwegian?

## Appendix 3 – Life's stories of informants

Before presenting my five informants' life stories. I would like to mention that names of the informants have been changed to keep their identity confidential. My informants are Thai women who moved to Norway at least 4 years ago, age from 25 to 55. The reader will be able to get to know the characteristics of each one of the informants, as well as, to get to know the informants' life before they moved to Norway together with some of their expectations and obligations.

### **The story of Tara's life**

Tara is a Thai woman in her mid-thirties who moved to Norway 6 years ago. She came from a middle-class family. She believes she has got what she wants in her life. She likes to think that she is not really a proper Thai woman because she did not really listen to her mother. When she was young, her focus was not about school. Despite saying that, she graduated with the minimum requirement of education in Thailand. She likes her freedom to be able to do what she wants, when she wants to do it. She had a baby boy at her twenties. Because she had a baby when she was young, she did not really realize the responsibility that comes with it. She thinks she was lucky that her mother was helping her take care of her own child, so that she could continue with her life. All these times, she felt like she has been put in o a box or a frame. Everything she does has to follow the frame people have over herself. She cannot share any of her opinions, especially if those people are older than her. She was expected to respect them instead, by not saying her thoughts at all. She thinks that it was expected by everyone around her that she followed this culture because she was younger. She cannot share or give any opinions with anyone except her friend. She thinks that she does not have a freedom over her thought and that she is not allowed to think differently.

Tara was an office worker and worked at the Big C supermarket when she was living in Thailand. It was her last place of employment before she moved to Norway. She admitted that she was not quite stable with her work experience because she changed jobs very often. She never worked at the same work place for more than 3 years because she got bored very easy. She likes to explore new things, so the fact that she changed jobs often did not bother her. She had a lot of



friends and she was so comfortable in her social setting because she believed that she knew all the unwritten laws of her society. She was very confident in her position.

Tara's everyday life in Thailand consisted of her working every day during the week days. After work, she usually hung out with her friends, had some drinks, then went home. She liked the social life and she liked to listen to music. She always enjoyed seeing all the light at night. Tara said that her favorite activities in Thailand were hanging out with friends at local pubs and restaurants or at a friend's house. Apart from the good part of her life in Thailand, she thinks that her most difficult task was to try to have control over her own economy. She earned less than what she had to be responsible for. She was a single mom. Her son lived with her mother. Tara had to support them with a monthly allowance plus she paid for her accommodation where she worked. Her expenses did not end there: she also had to pay for her car's loan. Moreover, all the other expenses that come with her everyday life and her lifestyle. She mentioned that clearly, that she did not earn enough.

As most people in Thailand, Tara was used to the idea people have about getting married to a foreigner husband. People believe that having a foreigner husband will make life better, so did Tara. She started by being a member on the internet online website where she was friends with a lot of Thai women who were trying to do the same thing. As time passed, she had been talking to a lot of western men from a different country as well as she had learned many tips and tricks from other Thai women.

### **The story of Lita's life**

Lita, a young Thai woman at her early twenties, moved to Norway four years ago. Inspired by her three half-sisters who moved to Norway when Lita was young, she followed them to her dream. One of her sisters invited her four years ago to come to work in Norway as an au pair and stay with her sister's family. Lita took the opportunity. She applied for a visa and came to Norway. Lita mentioned that she always thought about moving from Thailand because of the inspiration by her sister. Her sister had told her about life in Norway as well as invited her for a visit when she was young. Her sister said to her that whenever Lita wanted, she could come for a visit. Her sister always gives her this dream of visiting somewhere she had never been. Lita always kept the thought to herself thinking one day if she has a change, she will take it. Lita believes what motivated her most to move to Norway was a chance to have a better life. Lita thought that if she

lived in Norway, she would get to have a better quality of life than in Thailand. She mentioned what she saw from both her sisters and what her sister had told her. Lita expressed that many people wanted to have the same opportunity as her. She thought that she will have sisters to take care of her and give her that chance to move. Many people do not have the same chance as her, so she thought she might as well take it. That was her thought at the time. She thought if she didn't go, she will never know what is for her in Norway, so she decided to try her luck.

It is hard for Lita to say if she was happy when she was in Thailand. She mentioned that it was okay, but it was nothing exciting, nothing special. She said that her hometown is in Trang and she moved to Bangkok to study and work. She did both things at the same time when she earned her bachelor's degree. Lita lived with her mom since she was young. Her mom and her dad were separated. She knows that her mom had a difficult time raising her as a single mom. The only thing her mom could give her was an education. She took all the chances she could get. She worked hard in Thailand. Her first job after finishing university was at the stock market. Later she changed her job to work at a bank. Her last job she worked in Thailand before she moved to Norway was as a sale manager for properties in Bangkok. She believes that she was a hard worker. She worked six days a week from 8.30 to 4.30 in the evening with the possibility to work over time because if her customer makes any appointment later than that time, she would have to stay. The only day off she had was also random. It could be any day in a week depending on the agreement people made at her work place. It was too much work for her that she developed a health problem. "One day her sisters gave her the idea of going to work Norway as work as an au -pair". She finally made the decision to move. She mentioned how hard she had to work—so hard until her body couldn't handle it. It was all just about money. She was not enjoying anything else that came with it. The only thing she could think of in a positive way was that she had good co-workers and a lot of friends. With her job position back in Thailand, she was very happy with what she earned. She could afford to buy a house for her mother, and she could afford to buy her own car and lived in Bangkok.

It took Lita one year to decide to move to Norway because she would have a decent job that gave her what she needed. She said it felt like she was at a crossroad. She had to decide. She asked herself if she wanted a life in Thailand where she had to work so hard to earn enough to pay for everything. Then, she got sick and all the money she had made was used to pay for her health. She felt like she gained nothing. She said that she just wanted to be at peace with herself. She

thought that she made a lot of money, but at the same time, she was also under a lot of stress. She talked to her mother and her mother asked her to move to Norway. Her mom thought that she would work less and maybe earn more in Norway. She believed that the fact that Lita had her sisters in Norway, so she would not feel alone. She thought that if she had any problem, she would have sisters to take care of her. Lita admitted that she felt a bit lucky for that reason. She made the decision to move. It took her a long time to decide. Lita had a boyfriend and they had been together for 7 years. They had planned to get married. Lita told him that she would be away for 2 years and no longer. When that time is over and she comes back, they will get married. It did not happen like they planned. After 3 months in Norway, they broke up. It was about a lot of things: time difference being one, but also the long-distance relation was so complicated for them. They did not talk as much, so they broke up in the end.

### **The story of Nina's life**

Nina came to Norway in 2005, and now she is forty-five years old. She met her ex-husband in Thailand nineteen years ago while he was traveling, she married him, and they moved to Norway. She divorced her husband after she moved to Norway after 3 years of being married. Here is her life story;

She came from a lower middle-class family, but she was happy in Thailand. She said that even though life was not what she expected, but she can still be with her family, especially her children and her mother. She graduated from high school and had to start working. She knows that in Thailand it is considered quite a low education to just finish a high school level, but people have different chances in life. She thought it would be better for her family if she got to work as soon as possible. She explained that in Thailand, she had to work in a different province than her home town, so she was not always at home. She got to see her mother and her children every weekend. She worked at a computer factory in the central area of Thailand for ten years. Then later, she resigned and started her own business as a salesperson. She had to go to all street markets around her province or the nearby province to sell household appliances. She thought it worked very well for her at the time, but the problem was she did not have a lot of money to store all the goods. She had a lot of expense per month, and she did not earn enough to pay for them. Apart from herself, she has to be responsible for her two children and her families. Her Thai husband died when her children were two years old.

She mentioned that she had some thoughts of Norway before she moved. It turned out that her dream was exactly what her reality turned out to be in Norway. Before she moved, she admitted that her only thought was to come to Norway to work, to try to get a better job. She needed to earn more to support her family in Thailand. For her it was not about a romantic situation. She can't say that she loved her ex-husband at any time before they decided to get married. It is more about it is what she had to do to be able to come to Norway. Her ex-husband was suffering with some sort of psychological issue. She knew at the time that maybe her ex-husband married her because he needed someone to take care of him. It was not all about love but mutually beneficial. So, she said that her life was exactly like what she thought or, a bit worse. Her thought was to marry a foreigner so that she could go work somewhere else. That is maybe the reason why she always thought that no matter what happened she would have to stay. She wanted to work so she could take care of the family., She often asked herself if it was the right thing to do. She cried a lot, but she always pushed through all the time.

### **The story of Dana's life**

Dana, a young successful Thai woman seemed to have all she wanted in life. Ten years ago, she moved to Norway. She is thirty-nine years old now. Her life in Norway appears to be exactly what she had planned. She has permanent job at the kindergarten near where she lives. She told a little bit about her life in Thailand before she moved to Norway and that in Thailand, she was very happy. She had a job that she loved to do and a lovely group of people she worked with. She worked in an education area. A company that she worked for was making all type of children's learning materials for the government. It was a really nice place for her to work. She said that the working environment that she had was all that she wanted. She had never been married to anyone before she met her Norwegian husband. She came from a good family background. She was educated and had a good status in Thailand.

She met her husband ten years ago. He is ten years older than her and they moved to Norway. She explained that when she moved to Norway, her life did not change much except she was now married. For her, she explained that her life changed in a way that she had a family of her own now. All the activities she does now have changed from when she was in Thailand because she was single then. She is now married and has a step-daughter who lives in the same house as them. The step-daughter moved out two years ago. Dana felt like she had to look after her step-

daughter as well. She has to be involved with her step-daughter's life. "We did many activities together. I drove her from place to place as well as participating with her school activities". Dana admitted that her life has changed in that sense, apart from that, she says her life did not really change much. She is not a very outgoing person to start with. She also does not enjoy drinking. She does not go out at night. She likes to be home. She mentioned that her husband has quite the same personality, so her life has not changed much in that sense. The only thing is that she thought was different was that she has more people in her life and she has to adjusted to fit into her new life.

She shared her thoughts before she moved to Norway that she did not think that living her life in Norway was going to be out of her comfort zone. She likes it here in Norway. Before she met her husband, there were a lot of westerners that wanted to date her, but she did not focus on where she wanted to live, and never thought about Norway. She said she did not know much about Norway. She only knows that it is cold in Norway. She was not sure herself that she would want to move abroad but at the time she got to know a lot of foreigners. They were from many difference countries. She did not know who she wanted to be with, or if she would she get married or if she would move. It was like an uncertain situation. When it actually happened, it was quite sudden. It was like she knew that she might be moving but she did not know when and where. She said that it was like she knew it most likely that she will move so when it happened, she did not feel scared.

### **The story of Mona's life**

Mona finally had her dream completed. She moved to Norway four years ago to work as an au pair. After her job contract was finished, she found the love of her life and settled down in Norway for good.

She wanted more than anything to spend her life abroad. She had that dream since She was a young student. She always had her eye open to find the way to move away from Thailand. She came from a normal Thai family. Her parents were government officials with an average income. It was too much for her family to send her to study aboard, so she did a lot of research on how to be an au pair in America to complete her dream. The information she found was quite impossible for her as for many reasons. But she did not want to give up her dream. She wanted to go. She like westerners. She thought studying abroad would make her life better. As any other young person's dream, she wanted new experiences. She wanted to travel.

She thinks her life in Thailand was as normal as it could be. She came from a good family background. Her family was not rich, but they were not poor either. She graduated with a bachelor's degree and worked for a telephone company like a normal young woman in Thailand. At the time the only problem that she had was that she had a terrible partner. She always wanted to break up with him because of the abusive relationship. She mentioned that if she still lived in Thailand, she wouldn't be able to get away. She was always looking for a chance to move away from the bad relationship she had. In Thailand, after she graduated from the university, she got a job right way, so she went to work every day. She only had one day off during the week which is not on the weekend, so her life was quite busy, and she was tired. When she had a day off, her favorite activity was to sleep. She thinks that is quite normal if you work in Thailand. People work a lot with so little holiday. If a person works in the office in Thailand, it was really difficult to get a day off. She explains that it felt like there was no right to take a day off. People who she worked with, especially the boss, would make one feel guilty about it.

Her thought was that she might get a better job and could earn more money in Norway. If she stayed in Thailand, her life will be like a straight line. She took a chance of moving abroad. She said that she did not see any changes in her future or potential opportunities if she stayed in Thailand. She felt like if she moved, things could get better, or things could be worse. She chose to take the risk and she thought at the time it was worth it. She mentioned that her English was not very good. She did not like it because she felt the pressure from her father when she was young to be very good at English. "Before my friend contacted me to work in Norway, I started to practice my English by chatting online with westerners."

She told the story of how she got to work as an au pair in Norway after it did not seem possible to go to America that a friend whom she met during the time at the University asked her if she wanted to be an au pair in Norway. Her friend was an au pair before her, and she knew someone who wanted to have an au pair. Her friend asked her, and she decided to come to Norway. She did not have any problem with the visa so after that she came to Norway with the help of her friend.

