Cross-Cultural Journal Magdalena

**Part A:**

The Finnish culture is very different from the Mexican one, people are really respectful, organized, follow rules and respect the law, although I also feel that people here are sometimes really lonely and in general don't seem to be as happy as Mexicans are, even the folklore is not as colorful as I'm used to (and finally, although not as related, the food is a lot tastier in México).

*I have added the link: The world happiest countries here. Actually Finland is not doing so badly, it’s the 7th ☺*

*http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/picturegalleries/10302485/The-worlds-happiest-countries.html?frame=2668662*

Finnish people have a huge respect for personal space, avoiding sitting next to other people on the subway, buses or bus stops, greeting each other with only a polite hand shake, and even when queueing, people stand so far apart from each other that sometimes it is difficult to recognize if there is a queue or not. Silence is also very important, people don't talk to each other on public places, and even in the working place people don't usually greet their co-workers when arriving, people just sit in their place and start working, and when crossing someone on the hallway people ignore each other or just share a polite nod and a smile. *All these observations seems very accurate to me.*

When eating, Finnish people usually talk, but they eat at such a fast pace that it is impossible for people who aren't used to eating at that speed to participate on the talk and finish their lunch at the same time as everyone else. And the moment everyone finishes eating (that usually means the moment I finish eating), everyone leaves. *Yes, we don’t waste time for staying longer than needed in a lunch restaurant. Talking is reserved to different occasions in free time. ☹*

The thing that impresses me the most is how everyone respects the rules: you don't need to show your student card to get a student discount at the cafeteria, if you have a monthly pass on the bus you don't need to show it to the driver, people leave their bikes on the street without any locks and everyone throws the trash in the trash can. As a result of this, the government and the institutions have a lot of trust on its citizens, with very few bus ticket-inspections and almost no cops on the streets. And it is the same situation the other way around: people are proud of their government and don't regret paying so many taxes because they know that they are being used for improving the country and the respect and admire their president.

I believe that this relation of trust between the people and the government is really difficult to achieve, and when it is missing, it turns the society against the government. Creating a lazy and irresponsible society and a selfish and corrupt government, each looking after their own interests without worrying about what is best for the country. *What do you think is a key aspect to achieve this kind of a trust?*

But when this trust relation is achieved, it becomes very important for the development of a country because it leads to cooperation and a sense of responsibility from both parts, which helps progress and prosperity. As it can clearly be seen here.

**Part B:**

Observation/Description

My Finnish flat mate:

She's older than me, her name is Christina and she lives on a town near Helsinki but works in Helsinki, so during weekdays she stay at our apartment and on the weekends she goes home (this is all I know about her).

Here are some things I have observed about her:

1. On the month we have lived together I have seen her twice and talked to her once (for less than a minute). *She has made a clear decision – I’m not communicating with my flat mates. I’m going to keep the distance for ever reason…*

2. When she arrives, she goes into her room and closes the door without saying hello. She won't come out until she hears that I have closed my door. *This way she minimizes the risk of being in touch with you. This is easier for her than trying to get to know you.*

3. She labels all the food she buys with her name. *This way she thinks you two can avoid confrontations. It’s her way to keep things clear.*

4. When she takes a bath she locks her bedroom door and takes the keys with her. *Maybe she has some previous bad experiences. She seems a little paranoid to me.*

Opinion/Analysis

I have been very respectful about her space, considering all the things we learned in class and trying to understand her, but some things still bother me.

From my cultural point of view, her behavior is very rude, meaning that she doesn't trust me at all, and although we live together, she doesn't seem to be interested in getting to know me.

In México, when you live with someone you try your best to get to know the other person, and most of the times you become really close. It's considered rude to close your bedroom door.

It’s very common to cook and eat together. We never label our food, since we all know what belongs to us, and we share a lot of things.

Perhaps her distance and silence is just a sign of respect for my time and space, although I find the food labeling a little weird. *I have heart that many roommates do this; it’s pretty common in Finland. Don’t take it personally – it’s just one way to keep things straight.*

But the thing that puzzles me the most, is the fact that she locks her room while taking a bath, because Finland is a really safe country, people don't even lock their bikes and they leave them outside all night long, so it doesn't make sense to lock a door inside your own apartment while you're in it. I cannot find a way to interpret that as a sign of respect as the other things, just as a sign of distrust*. I bet this girl’s parents have advised her to do so.” In a big city you never know what is waiting for you. You better be careful.” No matter who is staying with her, she would do the same. Life is long – hopefully she opens up to the world a little more. If you have a chance, tell her that it’s not necessary label the food and lock the door. You won’t eat her food and go to her room. You are not labeling your food and locking the door, since you trust her. Maybe she will understand and change her behavior.*

*Think your observations were very accurate and this analysis helped me to understand better how this kind of Finnish behavior might look in the eyes of a visitor. Maybe a Finnish room mate takes this kind of a behavior for granted but for a foreign person it might seem very odd.*

*Hope you have a wonderful time in Finland!*

*Aija*