

Lonely and Hardworking:

International PhD Candidates' Cross-Cultural Adjustment at
the University of Oslo

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ABSTRACT¹

In recent years, the number of scholars that expatriate has increased, and with this also the number of scholars having to adjust to a new cultural environment. PhD candidates constitute an important part of this growth; yet, their cross-cultural experiences have not been studied accordingly. Hence, this study examines how international PhD candidates at the University of Oslo (UiO) characterize their experiences when adjusting to a new cultural environment. Furthermore, the study is also aimed at exploring how the candidates' accounts of their adjustment could provide a basis for investigating their psychological and socio-cultural adjustment. To do this, the study included ten semi-structured interviews and gave detailed descriptions of the candidates' adjustment experiences. A thematic analysis was conducted and resulted in the identification of four themes: one main adjustment arena, adjustment as extra work, adjustment as a lonely experience and the dual meaning of language proficiency. Emphasising subjective experiences, the thesis demonstrates that the candidates characterize their adjustment experience as lonely and demanding, as affected by language proficiency and as mainly taking place at the UiO. The thesis also argues that the candidates' accounts of their experiences indicate that their general psychological and socio-cultural adjustment is low. Drawing on culture learning and stress and coping theory, it is argued that this is because the candidates are not provided enough support or learning opportunities.

Keywords: PhD candidates, cross-cultural adjustment, social learning, stress and coping

¹ The thesis is written in English so that participants that do not speak Norwegian can read it.

INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly globalized world, more and more people need to learn how to live satisfactory in a new cultural environment (Arnett, 2002). Following such a transition from one culture to another – cross-cultural transitions – the individual will in some way or another experience what is called *cross-cultural adjustment*. However, there are many different reasons for people to move between different cultures; that could be in order to study, work, visit their family or escape a violent regime, or to do a PhD, which is the topic for this thesis.

The individuals who make cross-cultural transitions in order to work or study in a new environment are usually called sojourners or expatriates (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001). Emphasizing the limited amount of time after which they will return to their home country, both these terms are separated from more long-term transitions such as those of refugees or immigrants (Ward et al., 2001). “Sojourners” are generally used to refer to international students while “expatriate” refers to international business people (Ward et al., 2001). Throughout the thesis, sojourner or expatriate will be used interchangeably to refer to the PhD candidates, simply because PhD-candidates in Norway are treated both as employees and students at the same time.

While general migration is increasing, the academic profession has also experienced a substantial expansion of the degree to which academics such as professors, PhD-candidates and students, make these transitions (Welch, 1997; Dumont & Lemaitre, 2004; Richardson & McKenna, 2002). Consequently, the issue of cross-cultural adjustment in the academic profession has also increased steadily the last years. However, the amount of research on academic expatriation has remained sparse, and several scholars have emphasized the lack of research in the area (Welch, 1997; Richardson & McKenna, 2002; Selmer & Lauring, 2009). In light of this discrepancy between the impact of the social phenomena and the research undertaken in the field, Richardson’s concept of academic expatriates as an “unknown quantity” seems fairly precise (Richardson, 2001, p 125).

This study will therefore investigate more closely how a specific group of academic expatriates – PhD candidates at the UiO – describe their adjustment experiences. By interviewing ten candidates about their adjustment, and providing detailed accounts of their subjective experiences, the goal is to contribute to the knowledge base on PhD candidates in particular, and expatriates more generally. The purpose of the thesis is twofold. First, emphasizing the subjective nature of the phenomenon, the study asks: *How do international PhD candidates characterize their experiences when adjusting to a new cultural*

environment? Experience is here defined rather loosely in order to include different aspects related to the process. Consequently, experience relates to both the candidates' own understandings about what they have to adjust to, how they do it, *and* what reasons they give for this. Secondly, in an effort to integrate the candidates' experiences in the general theoretical framework the study also aims at exploring how the candidates' accounts of their adjustment experiences could be used as a basis for investigating their psychological and socio-cultural adjustment. Thus, the study also asks: *How well are the candidates adjusted psychologically and socio-culturally?* That is, how well they fit in to their new culture, and how satisfied they are with the sojourn. In order to conceptualize the candidates' experiences, the present study will draw on two theories: culture learning and stress and coping.

Studying these candidates' adjustment experiences, the study makes several important contributions. Firstly, as far as few studies specifically have addressed PhD-candidates' cross-cultural adjustment, this study contributes empirically by providing descriptions of a group that has received little interest in the general literature. Moreover, giving qualitative descriptions of the candidates' experiences makes important contributions to a field wherein most other studies have applied quantitative methods (e.g. Hofstede, 1980; Ward & Kennedy, 1993; Gong, 2003).

Besides that, the study makes both theoretical and applied contributions. Theoretically, the study adds to the general literature by drawing attention to how the sojourners themselves characterize their adjustment experiences. The study will argue that the candidates own perceptions can be included in descriptions of international PhD-candidates adjustment, and thus provide richer descriptions of how adjustment is experienced. By including the candidates' own descriptions of their experiences, this study will show that some of the concepts used in the quantitative studies are more nuanced than implied in earlier studies. Moreover, cross-cultural adjustment among academic expatriates is important to study because academic expatriation affects, and will continue to affect, the development of higher education in Norway. Competence is becoming global and Norway competes with other countries to attract experts (Seip, 2007; Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2009), making knowledge about this group important.

In the following sections, the theoretical framework will be presented, before turning to factors that earlier research has studied in relation to adjustment. Followed by this is a presentation of the methods and the four themes that were identified in the analysis, whereupon efforts will be made to integrate the candidates' experiences into a typology

depicting different adjustment types. Finally, the main findings are summarized, and some concluding remarks about these findings and the study in general are presented.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Acculturation

When groups from different cultural contexts come in contact with each other, this might lead to changes in the cultural patterns of one or more of the groups. The term used to refer to these changes is *acculturation* (Berry, 1997, p 6). Although an often-criticized framework (e.g. Pick, 1997; Rudmin, 2003; Chirkov, 2009), looking at the process of cultural transitions and adjustment through the lens of acculturation provides a broad base for exploring the topic. In the following sections, the acculturation framework will therefore be briefly discussed. Some of the theories presented will however be discussed more thoroughly in later sections.

The changes that result from acculturation may manifest themselves in the group as a whole, or in the individual. The latter case is often referred to as psychological acculturation (Graves, 1967; Berry, 1997). While acculturation at the group level leads to changes in the groups' social structure and culture, psychological acculturation refers to changes in the individual psychology and behavioural repertoire of the acculturating individual (Berry, 1997, 2005). As expatriates and sojourners most often represent individual meetings with new cultural contexts, the further discussion of concepts related to the acculturation process will be focused on individual experiences, i.e. psychological acculturation (for a discussion on the acculturation process at the group level see Berry, 1997, 2005).

The changes in external demands on the individual that follow a cross-cultural transition might result in experienced stress or they may reveal a lack of appropriate cultural skills (Ward et al., 2001). Because such skills deficits or levels of stress are unpleasant, the individual will find different ways to respond. These responses may be cognitive, behavioural or affective, both in relation to trying to manage the stress or to learn the lacking culture specific skills. The outcome of these responses, how the individual copes with the changes, is defined analytically as the individual's *adjustment*, sometimes also referred to as adaptation.

Within the general acculturation framework, different theories have focused on various aspects of cross-cultural adjustment. Some researchers (Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999; Ward et al., 2001) have systematically gone through the research literature too look for consistencies in the theoretical basis for studies on cross-cultural adjustment. Based on this review, the researchers argue that most of the literature can be

placed within three different theoretical traditions: stress and coping theory (SCT), culture learning theory (CLT) and social identification theories (SIT). The differences between the theoretical traditions are found in which aspects of adjustment they focus on, and which factors that are thought to affect these aspects. Even though the SIT has gained some popularity lately, it is the other two theories that have dominated the study of adjustment. Thus, the SIT will not be given more attention in this context. In the next sections I will therefore present the CLT, the SCT, and recent attempts at combining the two.

Culture Learning Theory

The CLT builds on principles from social learning theory in understanding culture contact and its effects on individuals' adjustment (Church, 1982; Searle & Ward, 1990). In social learning theory, people are thought to learn the behaviours of a society by observing how other people respond and behave in specific situations (Bandura, 1977). If an individual observes that another person's behaviour leads that other person to successfully accomplish specific tasks, the observing individual is likely to adopt these behaviours. These other people are therefore called *models* because their behaviour serves as an example of adjusted behavioural patterns in a specific context. By matching the model's behaviour, the individual learns the rules that govern social behaviour (Bandura, 1977). In the CLT, these principles are applied in a cross-cultural setting (Church, 1982; Ward et al., 2001). Upon entering a new cultural context, the individual's behaviour will differ from that of the host nationals and the host nationals or other more skilled sojourners serve as models for the cultural patterns in the specific cultural context. When the sojourner sees that a host national's behaviour lead that person to successfully operate in the culture, the sojourner will copy this behaviour.

The learning can take the form of mere observation or through being told how something is. Consequently, adjustment is primarily a learning process in which the sojourner learns the proper behaviours and norms of the new culture (Hammer, 1987; Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Gong, 2003). Theorists within the CLT see, and try to explain, individuals' cross-cultural adjustment as a process whereby the individual learns and becomes comfortable with the new behaviours (Black & Mendenhall, 1990). If there is a discrepancy between the sojourners behaviour and that of the host nationals, the person experiences stress and is not seen as well adjusted. A main premise in the CLT is therefore that a sojourner is more adjusted the better the fit between the person and the environment (Black & Gregersen, 1991). Hence, factors that reduce uncertainty regarding appropriate behaviour will facilitate adjustment, while factors that increase the uncertainty tend to lead to lower adjustment. The

better skilled the sojourner becomes in reducing the differences the better adjusted. Thus, another important issue is skills.

To be adjusted, the sojourner needs to possess the skills necessary for successful learning (Oberg, 1960; Furnham & Bochner, 1982). Furnham and Bochner (1982) have specifically addressed communication skills, both verbal and nonverbal. They see communication skills as important because being a skilled communicator makes it easier to participate in social encounters. Social encounters are thought to be an important arena for culture learning because these are situations in which the expatriate can observe, or more directly, ask others about local cultural patterns. Thus, if communication skills are lacking, this has consequences for culture learning by making social encounters problematic and by this reducing the amount of learning opportunities. Other factors that have been studied are language fluency, contact with host nationals and cultural distance (Ward et al., 2001; Searle & Ward, 1990). Whereas the two first factors are seen as affecting the social encounter directly, cultural distance determines how much learning the individual will have to do. The greater the difference between the cultural patterns of the home culture and the host culture, the more difficulty they will have in establishing relationships that facilitate cultural learning (Black & Gregersen, 1991; Ward et al., 2001).

Stress and Coping Theory

In the SCT, major life events - such as moving to another place or start a new job- are thought to include some degree of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The reason for why life events are seen as stressful is that they lead to changes in variables that are important to belonging and wellbeing. As an example, moving often entails changes because the context one comes from does not perfectly match that of the new one. As a result of the mismatch, individuals might experience stress.

So far, the SCT overlap with the CLT. There are, however, important differences. Whereas the CLT is interested in behaviour and the cultural norms that govern it, the SCT is interested in the person's psychology. Thus, in the CLT, mismatch between individual and environment is important because it forces people to change their behaviour to fit in. In the SCT on the other hand, differences between individual and environment are important because they are related to how much stress the individual experiences.

A major assumption in the SCT is that stress is the result of interplay between the individual, the specific situation and the available personal and social resources relevant to coping with possible stressors, such as a shifting environment (Lazarus, 1997; Morrison &

Bennett, 2006). When people move to a new environment, they make an appraisal of the situation. That is, the individual interprets the situation to find out if the situation is stressful or not, and if there are available coping resources. If a person feels that there is a stressor present, and that there are not enough available resources, the mismatch between stressors and coping resources makes the individual stressed (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Morrison & Bennett, 2006). Conversely, if the person's appraisals of the situation indicate that there is a stressor present, but that the individual has the necessary coping resources, the he or she will be better adjusted.

When applying the SCT in cross-cultural settings, moving to a new cultural context is seen as a specific instance of a life change (Berry, 1997; Lazarus, 1997; Ward et al., 2001). Thus, the transition is thought to include some degree of stress, and it is often referred to as culture shock (Ward et al., 2001). Examples of life changes associated with the move from one cultural context to another might involve different ways of behaving, another language or other ways of addressing each other (Spradley & Phillips, 1972). This discrepancy between the old and the new context requires the person to make adjustments (Morrison & Bennett, 2006). As in the social learning theory, whether these are interpreted as precipitating stress depends on the perceived availability of coping resources (Ward et al., 2001). In the SCT it is the affective outcomes of the acculturation process that are of interest, and adjustment is foremost seen as experienced wellbeing and satisfaction (Ward & Kennedy, 1993, 1994; Ward et al., 2001).

As the cultural transition is seen as a specific instance of a life change, Lazarus (1997) emphasize that some stressors are connected to the life change experience itself, while others are specific to the cultural transition. Common to all life changes is that the appraisal of the change, personality and the available social support affect psychological health. Specific to cross-cultural adjustment, cultural distance, acculturation strategies and status are seen as important (Ward et al., 2001, for a discussion on acculturative strategies and adjustment, see Berry, 1997). Thus, cultural distance is recognized as an important factor in the SCT as well. As the other factors affect how well the person deals with the changes that have to be made, the greater the cultural distance, the more changes the individual will have to make (Searle & Ward, 1990; Berry, 1997).

Combining the Perspectives- Defining Dimensions of Adjustment

There has been a lot of criticism against the apparent lack of theoretical congruency and consensus concerning the concept "adjustment" (Church, 1982; Ward & Kennedy, 1994,

Aycan, 1997). There exists a rich variety of ways to define the term, and no clear-cut definition to agree upon. However, it is beyond the scope of this article to elaborate on all these varieties. For discussions on the topic, see Berry (1997, 2005), Rudmin (2003) or Ward et al. (2001). Below I will only briefly repeat some different ways of defining the concept before delineating what is meant by the term in this study.

As seen in the preceding sections, there is a semantic plethora with regard to different meanings of adjustment. On a general level, Berry (1997, 2005) has defined adjustment as the outcome of the responses an individual makes when trying to deal with cultural changes. Thus, adjustment is here seen as an outcome of acculturation, and a final state. Depending on the person's sufficient or insufficient coping with these changes, the person will be successfully or unsuccessfully adjusted.

The CLT and the SCT on the other hand have in common that they focus on different aspects of the adjustment. However, as described earlier, they differ in their emphasis on the responses the expatriates make. In the CLT, adjustment is seen as a fit between the persons' behaviours, and those of the host nationals. In the SCT on the other hand, being well adjusted is recognized as wellbeing and lower levels of depression. Together these theories focus on different aspects of adjustment and are thus more differentiated than acculturation theory.

Furthermore, the SCT and the CLT offer a more dynamic view of adjustment as they stress that it takes place over time. In the CLT, adjusting is about learning new behaviours, and in the SCT about dealing with the changes. Thus, adjustment is also seen as a result. While successful learning of the appropriate behaviour will lead to good fit, sufficient coping will lead to well being. Conversely, unsuccessful learning will lead to a poor fit, and insufficient coping strategies lead to reduced well being. Consequently, adjustment is here both seen as a process and a result. However, because it at any time is possible to measure a specific degree of fit between the person and the environment, and a degree of wellbeing, it is possible to talk about of a person's adjustment.

The distinction between seeing adjustment as related to behaviour on the one hand and individual psychology on the other has led Ward and her colleagues (Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Kennedy, 1994; Ward & Chang, 1997; Ward, Okura, Kennedy & Kojima, 1998; Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999) to argue that it is possible to identify two dimensions of adjustment, namely *psychological adjustment* and *socio-cultural adjustment*.

Psychological adjustment has its base in the stress and coping theory, in which adjustment is seen as the person's wellbeing and emotional satisfaction. In line with the SCT, the relationship between cross-cultural transitions and psychological adjustment is seen as

predicted by factors such as personality, the changes inherent in the transition and social support. As psychological adjustment is seen as related to mood levels, it is measured using the Psychological Adjustment Scale (Searle & Ward, 1990). This is a self-rating depression scale where people indicate degree of reported depression, and lower scores are associated with greater levels of depression.

Socio-cultural adjustment is on the other hand placed within the culture learning tradition. In this perspective, adjustment is related to the person's culture specific skills and ability to negotiate the host culture, that is, the ability to fit in. Socio-cultural adjustment, measured in terms of social difficulty, is connected to amount of contact with host nationals, the length of the sojourn, cultural identity and the perceived cultural distance between the home and host culture. Socio-cultural adjustment is measured using the Socio-cultural Adjustment Questionnaire. In this questionnaire respondents are asked to evaluate their experienced difficulties with everyday situations such as shopping, and aspects associated with living in a new culture, such as different types of food (Searle & Ward, 1990).

Summarized, the CLT and the SCT are similar with regard to their view of adjustment as an outcome of the acculturation process. However, both theories emphasize that adjustment is a dynamic phenomenon. Degrees of adjustment might change between different adjustment arenas such as work and general life (Black & Gregersen, 1991) and over time (e.g. Church, 1982). Moreover, when combining the two theories, adjustment is also seen as a multidimensional concept. Two dimensions of adjustment are recognized, and adjustment is both seen as a personal (how the individual experiences own adjustment) and a social or relational construct (the interplay between how the observers and the individuals themselves see their adjustment). Consequently, adjustment is a multidimensional and dynamic concept.

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH ADJUSTMENT

In the next sections I will present some of the factors that often are studied in relation to cross-cultural adjustment. As already mentioned, there are only a few studies on sojourning PhD-candidates or academic expatriates in general. There have, however, been many studies on students and workers. In the following I will therefore present research on the latter two groups. This is because PhD-candidates share similarities with both business expatriates and student sojourners, and is in line with other studies on the more general topic of academic expatriation (Richardson & McKenna, 2002; Selmer & Lauring, 2009).

A review of earlier research on sojourners and expatriates shows that four topics in particular have been the focus of empirical studies. These are social support, cultural distance, language and goals. It is worth noticing that *adjustment* in the following sections is used in different ways. On a general level, however, the term refers to how well the persons fit in and thrive in their new cultural environment.

Social Support

One of the most extensively studied factors related to cross-cultural adjustment is social support (Church, 1982; Black & Gregersen, 1991; Ong & Ward, 2005). In a review of the literature on social support and cross-cultural adjustment, Ong and Ward (2005) found that social support has two main functions: socio-emotional and instrumental support. Socio-emotional support includes aspects such as having someone to comfort you when you are sick and someone who listens to you. This kind of support may work as a buffer against feelings of loneliness and depression. Instrumental support on the other hand reduces the uncertainty associated with cultural transitions by helping the individual to deal with social norms and regulations. For instance, this could be a host national who explains and help the sojourner to understand the local culture and language. Both types of support, and their alleged effect on adjustment, are in line with other studies that see support as a buffer against social difficulty (Ward & Kennedy: 1994; Tanaka, Takai, Kohyama, Fujihara and Minama, 1997; Gong & Fan: 2006). By being a source of information and assistance, social support helps reduce uncertainty, and therefore also cross-cultural stress (Adelman, 1988).

Social support may come from different sources such as home nationals, host nationals and other expatriates (Church, 1982; Black & Gregersen, 1991; Ward et al., 2001). Studies have found that sojourners use these sources of support differently (Bochner, McLeod, & Lin, 1977; Black & Gregersen, 1991). Where it exists, home-nationals are used for companionship and emotional support. Host nationals are reported to support the sojourners with issues related to culture learning such as language, values and behavioural norms (Church, 1982).

Also, the intimacy of social relationships, both with home and host nationals, has been related to sojourners adjustment. The more intimate the relationships are, the less uncertainty the sojourner is thought to experience (Gudykunst & Hammer, 1988; Ward et al., 2001). This is in line with the works of Church (1982) who emphasizes that number, variety and depth of social encounters with host nationals are related to adjustment.

Cultural Distance

Cultural distance is often seen as the extent to which cultural aspects of the home country differ from the host country (Ward & Kennedy, 1993; Earley & Ang, 2003). Examples include factors such as language, religion and ideas about what is considered funny (Berry, 1997; Ward et al., 2001). The assumption is that greater distance between the home and host society leads to greater adjustment difficulties (Church, 1982; Redmond, 2000; Ward et al., 2001). This is because the amount of related life changes, and therefore also the amount of learning the sojourner will have to do, are thought to be greater as the mismatch between the home and host culture increases (Searle & Ward, 1990). One such change is related to differences in social skills, and it is often assumed that the greater the cultural distance, the more difficult it is for the expatriate to learn the new skills (Dunbar, 1994; Searle & Ward, 1990).

Although the effects of cultural dissimilarity on adjustment are the most frequently studied (Church 1982; Ward et al., 2001), a new line of research suggests that it might be as difficult to adjust to a *similar* culture (Selmer & Shiu, 1999; Selmer, 2007; Selmer & Luring, 2009). Selmer and Luring (2009) studied expatriate academics in the Netherlands and the Nordic countries and found that there might be a curvilinear relationship between cultural distance and adjustment. The authors suggest that those who either experience low or high cultural dissimilarity experience more adjustment difficulties than those who perceive the differences to be moderate. They hypothesize that this might be due to the expatriate's expectations. If the expatriates perceive the new cultural context as similar to their own, they may overlook possible cultural difference. Confirmation bias might lead the expatriates to ignore differences in order to confirm their hypothesis that there are no cultural differences. On the other hand, the authors also claim that attribution might explain such findings. Instead of attributing differences in adjustment to cultural differences they attribute them to other causes such as characteristics of themselves or host nationals.

Implied in the discussion above is the idea that cultural difference is measured in terms of *perceived* differences. Thus, the perception of distance between new and old culture is dependent on the particular candidate. This is in line with other scholars who have criticized the use of "culture" in a way that collapses the concept with a demarcated population or a specific ethnic group (Barth, 1969; Chiu & Hong, 2006). This way of seeing culture, as a type of "cultural syndromes" (Ward et al., 2001, p.10) may become a theoretical straitjacket forcing the individuals to be associated with characteristics that do not fit them.

Consequently, more studies now use individual accounts of perceived distance when studying cultural distance.

Language

A third factor that has been studied in relation to adjustment is communication, or more precisely, language (Gudykunst & Hammer 1988; Ward et al., 2001). A person that can communicate effectively will be better able to understand the foreign culture and learn the required behaviours. Being able to communicate is related to the person's effectiveness in social interactions, job performance as well as to general satisfaction (Hammer, 1987; Ward et al., 2001). This is because people encode and decode information from verbal and nonverbal communication according to their cultural background (Early and Ang, 2003). When people from differing cultural backgrounds interact, different patterns in communication might lead to misunderstandings and through this also affect the individual's adjustment.

Communication is a wide concept and includes behaviours such as gaze, bodily contact, gestures and forms of address (Ward et al., 2001). Nevertheless, due to its importance in social interaction, the most studied communication skill is oral language. For instance, researchers have studied the relation between language proficiency and psychological and socio-cultural adjustment (Ward et al., 2001). In these studies, oral language was seen in relation to successful socio-cultural and psychological adjustment due to its facilitative function in social interactions. Such interactions are seen as important primarily because they serve as arenas for culture learning and for establishing supportive relations. In another study on Asian college women in the United States, Constantine, Kindaichi, Okazaki, Gainor, & Baden (2005) also found a relation between language and support. The study looked at the women's experience with cultural adjustment and found that their level of proficiency in English affected their adjustment. The respondents reported that ability to effectively communicate with others affected how comfortable they were in social interactions with Americans. The less proficient they were, the more stressful they experienced adjustment.

Goals

Another factor that is often included in studies on cross-cultural adjustment is goals. Earlier studies have shown that individuals' goals can affect their behaviour (Locke & Latham, 1990). A person's goal produces specific behavioural inclinations, which again leads to a certain type of performance. This is because people first and foremost will take actions that are relevant to attaining their goals (Locke & Latham, 1990). Although less studied than the

other aspects, goals also play a central role in cross-cultural adjustment (Earley & Ang, 2003). Sojourners and expatriates have different goals when entering a new culture. These differences may be related to how the sojourner or expatriate approaches the new culture, and how much they learn from it. A person that wants to learn something from the new culture is likely to adjust easier. The cultural traveller must not only *know* the new culture, but also be willing to engage their new environment. By participating in the new surroundings they can learn more about the host culture.

Gong and Chang (2007) found that a person's goal level regarding academic and social interaction have a major impact on the person's academic and social adjustment. When the students in their study had high aspirations regarding the extent of social contact they would have with host nationals, these led to better interaction adjustment. Similarly, high goal level regarding academic performance was associated with better academic adjustment.

In sum, the above-mentioned factors, social support, cultural distance, language and goals, are often found to affect expatriates adjustment. In this study, the interest is to find out which factors the candidates themselves highlight as important when describing their adjustment. In the following sections, the methods used for investigating what these factors are will be presented.

METHODS AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Status of Knowledge

An issue to consider when doing research in general, and qualitative investigations in particular is to reflect on how knowledge is constructed. In the present study it is recognized that knowledge to some degree is constructed in the social setting of the interview, and not a mere mirror reflection of reality. Knowledge is seen as biased through characteristics of the situation in which it is produced, and this has implications for the information obtained through interviews (Kvale, 1996; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). The PhD-candidates' reflections about their adjustment is coloured by the interpersonal space between the respondent and the researcher. That is, the meaning the utterance is meant to communicate is produced in a dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee. Every meaning the respondent wishes to share with the researcher will have to be coded in language, and the interviewer will have to decode it again to grasp the intended meaning (Rommetveit, 1972). The utterance may therefore be seen as dialogically construed (Skjervheim, 2000; Rommetveit, 2008). Language

is not seen as a neutral container in which the meaning content lies ready for the researcher to collect, both the sender and the receiver is seen as working together to produce the meaning (Volosinov, cited in Rommetveit, 2008).

Argumentation for a Qualitative Method

The aim of this study is to get an in-depth understanding of how the international PhD-candidates at the UiO experience their adjustment. Put differently, a central objective is to gain what Geertz has called “thick descriptions” (1973), which is rich and detailed descriptions that acknowledge the depth of the candidates’ subjective experience. This in-depth understanding calls for the use of qualitative methods. More specifically, semi-structured interviews were judged to be the most appropriate method for data collection. Even though other qualitative methods might have given rich and detailed information about the candidate’s actions – what they say and do – they would not reveal what Kvale (1996, 21) calls the subject’s “everyday world”. With its openness and flexibility, the semi-structured interview serves this purpose well (Fog, 2004). Moreover, as most studies on sojourners and expatriates have employed quantitative methods, exploring the topic with qualitative methods might contribute to other understandings than those found in earlier studies.

When recognizing the subjective experiences of the participant, the social and cultural contexts the phenomena are situated in are made explicit (Valsiner, 1984; Flick, 2001). This has often been considered a core difference between qualitative and quantitative methods, namely the way they treat variability (Valsiner, 1984; Flick, 2001). Some theorists claim that quantitative methods have a tendency of seeing variation as “noise” (Valsiner, 1984, p. 454) and contexts as “fog” (Elster, 2007, p.455), and contrast these to qualitative methods that they describe as more interested in incorporating subjectivity in their analysis. Following such arguments, a qualitative approach fits the purpose of this study well as the analytical focus is how the adjustment is experienced and to look at the variation in the phenomenon.

Target Group and Respondents

The participants in this study are called *respondents*. The term is used to emphasize the role the participants played in the data collection process. The PhD candidates were used to gain knowledge about them and their experiences regarding adjustment. This is in contrast to *informants* who are used when you need your participants to give you information about a certain topic (Holter, 1996; Kruuse, 1998). The respondents were international PhD-candidates enrolled in a PhD-program at UiO. The UiO was chosen because, in the

Norwegian context, the tendency of increasing expatriation is particularly salient at the University of Oslo. Recent statistics show that nearly 25% of the PhD-candidates in Norway have a foreign citizenship (Nifustep, 2007b). Of these, approximately 37% were registered at the UiO (Nifustep, 2007a). Further, the study includes candidates from three faculties at the University of Oslo; the Faculty of Humanities (FH), The Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences (FMN) and The Faculty of Social Sciences (FS). This was due to two reasons: first, the three faculties represent the three biggest faculties at UiO, and also have a larger population of international PhD-candidates than the other faculties. Also, and more importantly, they represent different research traditions, something that contributed to the variability between participants.

Relevant respondents were defined as candidates who had been at the university from one year and up to half a year after handing in their doctoral thesis. The lower limit was set to ensure that the interviewees had a minimum of experiences to relate to when describing their situation. The upper limit was the result of wanting to reach as many PhD-students as possible, at the same time as ensuring that the transition experience was not too distant. Those who fell within the defined group were invited by e-mail to participate in the study. At the FS and the FMN, the Research Administration sent out the invitations. At the FH, invitations were sent out directly to the candidates. Those interested were asked to contact me.

The invitation (See appendix A) included a general introduction to the research topic as well as the aims of the study and reasons for conducting it. Those invited were presented with information about what their involvement would entail such as anticipated length of the interview and where it would be conducted. General information about measures taken to guarantee confidentiality and informed consent were also given. At the end, information about the people responsible for the project was provided, and they were told that the Norwegian Social Science Data Services approved the project.

The group finally interviewed consisted of 10 PhD-candidates. The youngest person was 27 and the oldest person was 38 years old ($M=28, 6$). Three respondents came from Eastern Europe, three from Western Europe and one each from southern and northern Europe. One participant came from Northern America and one from Oceania. The length of their stay ranged from 6 months to 4 and half a year. Four of the participants came from the FS, three participants from the FH, and three from the FMN.

The composition of the group was due to both practical and methodological concerns. Wanting to do in-depth interviews, the question of how many respondents were needed depended on how much material that realistically could be handled within the set time limit.

In the end, the issue of selecting interviewees was resolved by picking those who took contact in response to the invitation. This turned out to be sufficient. After eight interviews I had achieved what is often referred to as “theoretical saturation” (Flick, 2002, p 64-65), which meant that new interviews did not bring any new information with them. The last two interviews did indeed confirm this saturation.

Data Collection – Qualitative Interviews

Doing semi-structured interviews, the topics to be discussed were decided upon in advance, but the ordering of them varied between the different interviews (Kvale, 1996; Fog, 2004). Each interview started with an introduction to the general aims of the study and the information given in the invitation letter was repeated. After this, respondents were asked to sign a consent form (See Appendix B). The interview guide (See appendix C) consisted of three main parts. In the first part, general questions about age, time in Norway and other background information were asked for. The second and third parts were meant to get the participant to reflect on their own adjustment. In the second part, the main focus was on the candidates experiences related to adjusting to Oslo, while the third part was about adjusting to the UiO. Topics to be discussed were the same and included questions about: their reasons for coming to Oslo and the UiO, what they considered easy or difficult, how satisfied they were, how they experience social life, their goals regarding future career and what aspects of the culture they perceive to be different or the same. The third part also included a section on how they experienced adjusting to specific aspects related to their academic work. In the end of the interview the participants were asked if there was something else they would like to tell. This was to assure that aspects they thought important were not left out. However, although all respondents were introduced to, or introduced themselves, the main topics, the specific questions were not meant as fixed or obligatory, and in most interviews, the questions turned out to be redundant.

All the interviews were tape-recorded. Because body language sometimes is crucial for understanding the meaning of an utterance I also took notes. Sometimes this was done during the interview, at other times right after. Another preventive action taken to avoid direct misunderstandings was that I often summarized what they said during the interview and asked whether or not my interpretation was correct.

The interviews were conducted at the university area. The length of the interviews lasted from 1 hour to 2 hours and 15 minutes. The participants decided if they wanted to be interviewed in Norwegian or English.

Transcriptions

The material to be analyzed consisted of the transcriptions from the interviews and notes taken during, or just after, the interview. To ensure that the transcripts represented the written text, the interviews were transcribed verbatim and word-for-word. After the first reading, I checked the transcriptions against the tape-recorded material, and made changes if this was necessary. Furthermore, all interviews were transcribed following the first two days after the interview took place so that it was easier to remember the context in which the statements were made, such as irony and particular body language. These preventive measures were taken due to the controversies surrounding the issue of transcriptions. Many scholars argue that the transformation from oral to written text represents a (re-) construction rather than a direct copy (e.g. Kvale 1996; Fog 2004). Transcribing word-for-word, and as soon as possible after the interviews was therefore done in an effort to heighten the representativeness of the transcripts to the oral speech.

Importantly, as the international PhD-candidates at UiO constitute a relatively small group, precautions have been taken during transcription and final presentation to prevent that the respondents can be recognized. All information that could be used to identify a specific person was left out of the transcripts and the presentation.

Analysis

This study employed what is generally referred to as theme-centred (Thagaard, 2003) or category-based analysis (Holter, 1996). Braun and Clarke (2006) describe a specific theme-centred analysis they call thematic analysis. One of the advantages of this type of analysis is its theoretical freedom (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis can be either inductive or theory-driven. This analysis was driven both by theoretical interest and the nature of the data, consequently, the thesis reports a type of abductive analysis (Thagaard, 2003, Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2008, 2009). This means that the analysis recognizes the dialectical relationship between theoretical perspective and data analysis. Inspired by the ambition to see what qualitative research might add to the quantitative research literature on cross-cultural adjustment, the starting point is a theoretical one. At the same time, the focus is on the respondents' own experiences, and the study thus builds on principles from inductive research.

Moreover, the analysis took a semantic approach, that is, the themes were identified from the "explicit or surface meanings of the data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p 84). This is in

contrast to analyses at the latent level, where the researcher goes beyond what the respondents actually said in order to identify underlying ideologies or ideas that govern what people say.

For the analysis I started with reading through all the interviews to get an overview, whereupon I went back to each interview transcript and read them carefully. In this second reading a line-by-line coding was done ascribing each sentence in the interviews a code that described the main essence of it. In this study the initial codes were both inductive and deductive, which means that they originated both from my own theoretical understandings and from the respondent themselves (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Thus, I do not argue that the codes *emerged* exclusively from the data, a claim that would have been criticized by many scholars practicing thematic analysis (Holter, 1996; Fog, 2004; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In the guidelines for conducting thematic analysis made by Braun and Clarke (2006) all data are coded, and codes are gathered into more and more abstract codes until they represent a theme or a pattern. In this analysis, the coding of the material was based on the principles described by Braun and Clarke (2006). After the initial coding, codes were merged into larger units organizing those that were similar in meaning content. This merging of codes into larger units persisted until there remained only a few. However, the next step in the analysis - integrating codes into themes- proved to be more difficult as the authors do not specify how codes becomes themes, or what constitutes a “pattern”. In this study, a theme was defined as the smallest unit that in a meaningful way could express the codes that were included in it. For instance, a theme could represent an underlying concept that the included codes could be seen as an expression of, or it could give meaning to “similar” codes with divergent content by pointing directly to the inconsistency. At the end, four themes were formed, describing how the candidates characterize their adjustment.

Finally, a common critique of thematic analyses is that the overall picture is lost because codes are separated from their context, and it is suggested that thematic analyses sometimes could benefit from being combined with a more person-centred approach (e.g. Thagaard, 2003). Nevertheless, I argue that a pure thematic approach is the most appropriate method for analysis in the present study. The PhD-candidates at the UiO, particularly the international candidates, are a small group and a more person-centred approach could have compromised the anonymity of the participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the following sections I will present the results from the analysis. The presentation is divided in two main sections. Firstly, the four themes are presented: (1) one main adjustment arena, (2) adjustment as extra work, (3) adjustment as a lonely experience, and (4) the dual meaning of language proficiency. These themes describe different aspects of the candidates' experiences having to adjust to a new culture. The first describes the physical and social environment in which the candidates see the main parts of their adjustment to be taking place, in this case the University of Oslo. The following two themes reflect how they characterize, feel and view the adjustment. Finally, the fourth theme relates to the importance candidates place upon language proficiency. In the second part the four themes will be discussed. Each theme will be discussed with regard to what they mean – what it tells us about the candidates' experiences – and how the theoretical framework presented earlier might contribute to an understanding of these experiences. Followed by this is an attempt to combine the concept of psychological and socio-cultural adjustment in a typology depicting four different adjustment types. Besides integrating main points from the discussion, the typology provides a broad base for differentiating between the candidates in the study, and for further research.

One Main Adjustment Arena

The most important adjustment arena, as reflected in all interviews except one, is the candidate's own department at the University. This means that most of the candidates' experiences with adjustment are related to the UiO, and not with other possible arenas such as civil society or more general in the city of Oslo. Since most experience their work and life at their department as *the* major challenge related to adjustment, it is understandable that their adjustment at their department affects their total adjustment experience. The candidates spend most of their time at the UiO or working with their thesis and they describe having difficulties separating between life in general and life doing a PhD:

I try to differentiate between life here in Norway and the work situation, you know, because it is difficult to do a PhD anyway. And here, because I am from abroad, and because I came here to do a PhD, much of my life in Norway is life as a PhD, you know. So it is really hard for me to differentiate between them.

The candidates report that how they adjust at work affects their total experience. Mostly, this is due to the fact that the majority of the candidates spend most of their time at the UiO, and that they do not have a social life outside. A candidate who came in conflict with another person at the department reflects on this: "This is the only place I got, and I really feel that I am

drowning in the situation". The candidate thus says that the experience could be likened to that of drowning, and highlights the hopeless feeling of not having a place to retreat to when things at work are difficult. When the candidates have no other social arenas to partake in, their experiences at the UiO might seem overwhelming.

Adjustment as Extra Work

Many of the candidates describe that adjusting to the UiO constantly requires extra effort. They feel that everything they do, both related to academic life and general living, takes more energy from them than Norwegians and other academic staff. The candidates struggle with issues more generally related to the cultural transition, and experience these as having a profound effect on different aspects of their lives. Analytically, it is possible to separate between two forms of extra-work: practical and emotional.

Practical. First of all, the respondents report that they are not provided enough information on pure practical matters. A central concern is therefore what they perceive to be a lack of information, and many think that their respective departments, or the UiO in general, could have been better at providing it. The lack is especially apparent in the early phase of their sojourn. Many are not prepared for all the differences that follows their transition, and upon arrival, many of these differences are encountered during a short period of time. Consequently, many report that they spend much time in the beginning trying to find out about crucial information having to do with entering Norway in general. For instance, as reported by this candidate wondering about health insurance:

For example, a very practical thing, it is, I wondered when I came here whether I had a health insurance, I did not know that, so I asked the secretariat (sic.) and she said that she thought so. That is not good enough, I want to know whether or not I am insured. They could not give me an answer, and I find that really strange.

Yet, another candidate was more concerned with practical issues such as getting a phone line, an Internet or a bank account – all of which are experienced as difficult:

Well, I think it was not very well prepared. Yeah, I had some difficulties, because there are a lot of things that you have to apply for when you enter Norway, so it is work permit and residence permit and you also have to apply for the eleven digit number, you have to apply for all these things, and then you also have to wait for getting some papers, and then you have to create bank account, but then you can not create it without this eleven digit number, so it is lot of things. But there is no like, for example, a book where you could read, ok, do this and do this.

In fact, it is not only a question of where to find the information; sometimes they do not even know what they should find. Thus, a concern for the candidates is not only where to find information, but what information they should be looking for:

Interviewer: Yeah, you think there is too little information.

Respondent: Yeah, a lack of information and maybe the information is there, but finding it is not easy. (...) In a sense it is a triple work. A double work would be if you know for instance that you need to find out about different conferences, and then the next step is to figure out, well, where do I get that information, and then going and getting that information. But I think there is again another step at it, when you do not even know that you have to be doing such things, you have to, you see, so just like what is common sense for somebody who is a professor or supervisor, is not common sense for just a starting PhD student.

The candidate here draws a distinction between double and triple work, which refers to the act of looking for necessary information and the feeling of not knowing what the necessary information is. That is, before the candidates can try to find the information they need, they have to find out that this actually is a kind of information that they want. A recurring example of this is the lack of information about what the mainstream research in a particular department is, and which journals that are considered important.

Some candidates attribute the lacking informational support to the fact that much of the basic information is commonsensical for Norwegians and other academic staff. However, being typical commonsense for Norwegians does not make it less unknown to the candidates. Hence, many think that Norwegians are not fully aware that issues they take for granted, could be somewhat problematic for the newcomers.

Another final aspect of not receiving enough information is that the candidates assume that different aspects of their new environment function in the same way as in their home country. A general tendency is that the candidates expect things such as holiday pay and taxes to be the same unless someone tells them explicitly that there are differences. As far as PhD-candidates are well educated this finding is perhaps somewhat surprising. That different countries have different tax systems etc. should be known to all of the participants. However, in some instances, this specific problem leads to misunderstandings such as paying too little taxes. Generally, the candidates see the Norwegian culture, and more particularly how things are done at the UiO, as similar to that of their own culture. Consequently, many assume that different aspects are the same, and they do not alter these assumptions until they lead to difficulties.

Emotional. Another central concern for the candidates relates to adjustment as extra emotional effort. Leaving their home country involves, at least for many candidates, a

dramatic reduction in their social support network. Hence, many candidates have to struggle with their adjustment difficulties on their own, sometimes ending up feeling homesick.

First of all, the greatest challenge with not having a social network is that they lack conversation partners with whom they can share, discuss and reflect upon important daily experiences. Especially, this lack of support is apparent in conflict situations. Of the ten persons interviewed, four were, or had been, in a major conflict with their supervisor or another employee at their department. For these candidates, not having anyone to support them contributed to making the situation even more stressful. One candidate described such a situation like this:

So I am alone here and that has been tough, I would never recommend doing this to anyone else. I have not had any support at all, my main support was far away, and I felt like I had less power from the beginning, the situation being as it was [conflict with supervisor]. I had even less power because I came from abroad and did not have any supportive factors here. Nobody at home [in Oslo] tells me what I can do and support me.

In this study, many of the respondents also underlined that a conflict situation at work takes so much energy that it affects other life areas as well. Since conflict situations are, according to many of the candidates, especially demanding emotionally, the lack of support makes difficult aspects of adjustment even more energy consuming.

However, many candidates say that it is not necessarily the actual amount of support they receive that matters, but rather the possibility of obtaining it:

Just to know that they are there, that they exist, that I can go to them and, you know, that they will always be there. That is what it is about, the actual situation may be quite similar, but the support network is totally missing. You know, you have no one to come back to if you are having a bad time, and that is sad. You cannot go home to your mom, even though you can call her and cry.

This specific candidate differentiates between what she calls the actual and the possible support situation. The actual situation in Oslo may be the same as in her home country, but at home she would know where to get support. Moreover, not having opportunities for social support seems to lead many candidates to miss their home, making homesickness another recurrent topic. Many do not have their relatives or friends near, and missing them makes daily activities seem more demanding. One candidate reports such feelings emphasizing that homesickness for instance makes daily routines more difficult:

You know that is something I felt for a long time, that they do not really understand that everything always is extra work for me. That it is, some periods I really struggle with being away from home, and being homesick, and feeling very sorry for myself and sad. And all this may actually affect my work, a lot. And this I felt sometimes, that people do not really think about that, that everything I do here compared to the others costs me ten times as much because to me it is a job just living here.

A final aspect that is related to the general topic of extra work is that there seems to be a difference between the candidates with regard to their motivations for coming to the UiO, and how they manage practical and emotional issues. Those who report that their reason for coming was an interest in the culture often characterize obstacles as challenges. This is in contrast to those whose primary goal is to do a PhD, for them, difficulties or differences are more often described as problematic.

Adjustment as a Lonely Experience

A third finding was that a considerable share of the candidates report that their adjustment has been a very lonely experience. In fact, out of the ten respondents, as many as seven reported that they were lonely. Many characterize their life situation as one in which they spend most of their time, both at home and at work, on their own. The following two candidates describe such a feeling: “So either I was alone, or I had like several weekends were I was completely alone, did not speak to anyone all day, that was really sad. Well, you know, it has been difficult”. And: “So the first two years, I was alone, sitting in my office. In the morning, when I was in bed I would think, what happens if I do not show up for work today? Nothing. These things, difficult things”.

When comparing the candidates that feel lonely with those that do not, there are two recurrent aspects that differentiate them. Firstly, the respondents that do not see adjustment as a lonely experience are persons who have other social arenas than the university. These other arenas might be having a hobby that includes being with other people, taking part in sports or having a family. Thus, those who have a larger social network outside their department seem to manage better than the candidates whose social network is limited to the department they are a part of.

A second aspect that seems to be connected to whether or not the candidates feel lonely is the degree to which the work environment is international. That is, departments that are described by the candidates as one in which the commonly used language is English and there are other international staff. Also, departments that are used to international people and provide what the candidates perceive to be proficient support are described as international. Candidates belonging to such departments report a higher degree of satisfaction with their

social life, they feel more included, and report fewer problems with information. Many also say that they get a lot of help in the beginning, such as how to get a residence permit:

I kind of asked my professor because he sees that people come and that they do not know what to do, and they should go and do this, and what you need to get the residents permit, and other things. Like, they are used to international students getting in trouble. (...) I always hear people say there is a good atmosphere. And it is true, because it is so international.

Illustrated by the candidate is the belief that adjustment is linked to the more general attitude of the department towards international PhD candidates. For those who lack information and social support, and do not feel included, it is more difficult to adjust. Often, this distinction parallels that between the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences on one hand, and the Faculties of the Humanities and the Social Sciences on the other. In general, the candidates interviewed from Mathematics and Natural Sciences report being better adjusted.

However, even though many of the candidates connect the fact that they have no friends to their loneliness, also some of the candidates that report having many friends feel lonely. These candidates distinguish between two types of friends: the first is described as people that they can be social with, while the other type is portrayed as someone they can confide in, and rely on. One candidate explicitly comments on this distinction: “Yeah [I feel that I have many friends], but then I make a definition, a difference between like friends-friends, and just people I know to do stuff together with. It is not that I have many friends-friends”. The candidate is content with his social life, but he recognizes that his friends in Norway are different from those in his home country. Although this candidate is the only one who explicitly describes this, other students also recognize the issue. Many say that they miss having people they know well around them, especially, the type of friends they have known for a long time:

And it is not so easy, even though I have lived here for four years, yes I have friends, yes I speak the language, and I have a boyfriend and we live together, and you can say that I am integrated. But you know, I am more alone than a person that was born and grew up here is, I do not have my oldest friends surrounding me.

Feelings of longing for their “old friends”, a concept that will be discussed more thoroughly later, could be seen as an expression of the distinction between different types of friends. Most of the respondents have friends of the type that was first described, and few seem to have intimate relationships. Hence, they report having people they can drink coffee with, eat lunch with and see throughout the day, but they lack the type of friends that they can relax with and just be “themselves” around.

Barriers for Social Contact. A pronounced tendency among the candidates when explaining why they do not have as many friends as they would like, is that they attribute this fact to the composition of their social environment. Many describe their work environment as consisting of established social groups. This is frequently described as a factor that makes it more difficult to approach people. The following candidate describes one such experience. She describes the feeling of not being included in a social setting at the UiO where people gathered after a lecture:

And I was just standing and looking at the students. No one would even look, I know that they knew that I was there. You know, some of them had been to seminars together, and, I mean, you know, no one would really look me in the eyes, or give a smile or something. I felt like, I can come and stand among you, but it is not so nice when you do not feel welcome. First at least you need eye contact. Then it is much easier to come and say hi. When they are involved, you know, in their own thing, when there is a group of people, that is very difficult.

The social environment is described as consisting of “closed circles”, and the candidates feel like they are outsiders that do not belong. The group is described as a barrier for contact, and for some, the result is that they do not try to talk to people unless they are invited to do so. This makes it hard for the candidates to contact others, even though they have the opportunity. The UiO, and the particular departments, arrange some social gatherings, and also obligatory courses that are part of the doctoral programmes, but as long as the international candidates do not feel that they can approach other people in such settings, they do not function as socializing arenas.

In addition to finding it hard to make friends when people know each other from before, some points to different life situations as a reason for why it is hard to make friends with Norwegians. In contrast to most of the international candidates, the Norwegians have a spouse, they have children and other obligations that make many of them inaccessible for activities with colleagues after work. The candidates differ from this in the respect that they often spend their evenings and weekends alone. Consequently, many report that the people they know are people that come from abroad or have been expatriates themselves:

That is something I found, that most Norwegian PhD students, not everyone but still, and also other academic staff, they do not know what it really means to move to another country. You do not know anyone, and I found out, when I first moved here, that it is the other international staff that invited me for dinners and introduced me, and helped me with the different practical things I had to do.

Other international staff are described as better at including the expatriate candidates, and the candidates think it is easier to make contact with them. As a result, most of the candidates

only know other internationals and do not interact with Norwegians beyond the normal day-to-day interaction at the department.

A final aspect related to the issue of making friends is that many report that the feeling of having to expose themselves contributes to their feeling that it is difficult to take contact. Because they feel that other people do not need friends to the same extent as they do, the candidates feel that they are in a vulnerable position:

It is hard to get to know people. You have to expose yourself, a lot (...). Well, this is probably also because they do not need me, not like I need them. They already have a social life, if they live with their boyfriend and have their friends around them, they are not dependent on me.

Many think that they have to be more outgoing than they are used to, making some of them feel that they are exposing themselves. This issue is particularly related to the candidates who describe themselves as introvert. These candidates more often report that they feel vulnerable and insecure, and that this is a reason for why they stop trying to contact people. For one respondent this is particularly salient:

I am a bit introverted. When I am with people it is ok, but to walk over to some people, that is, it is really hard to just walk over to a group of people and start talking. So then I end up sitting alone. So after a while, I stopped going, it is my own fault.' (...) In a way I felt even worse afterwards. It underlined my loneliness.

On the contrary, those who describe themselves as extroverts or outgoing do not experience these difficulties. They are not so concerned about having to expose themselves or being vulnerable.

My Story is Unique. A curious finding from the study is that several candidates describe their experiences as unique. Many believe that their negative experiences are exceptional and that others have a more positive view of the adjustment: "You know, yeah, that this is my experience. And I know that the story I told you, it is not a typical story, and I hope that you will not hear much of that. I think it was very unlucky one". There are three recurrent explanations the candidates give for why their adjustment has turned out the way it did. First, some describe what they perceive to be a unique situation as coincidental, and they attribute their situation to unlucky circumstances:

So it is hard, everybody has something else to do, but that is the way it will be everywhere. People come and they will have to try to blend in, they [host nationals] cannot change their lives just because a foreign PhD candidate is bored. I am just unlucky. There are a lot of things that are just a bit unlucky.

Others attribute it to specific characteristics of themselves or the environment they work in, looking for distinctive characteristics of themselves or their situation. One way is to use their

own personality characteristics to explain why they find it difficult to make friends. As seen earlier, this could be a description of themselves as introverts, or of their hobbies or interests as special. Another common way for the candidates is to explain their experiences by looking for features that are specific to their situation. Often, those that work on their own projects report that they think it would have been easier if they were part of a bigger group. On the other hand, those that are part of bigger research groups explain their difficulties as a result of their group being dispersed, that their specific work group is particularly difficult to get in, or that their colleagues are busy with other tasks.

Having other people to talk to makes the sojourner realize that their experiences might not be that unique. Of the few candidates that have an overall positive view of their experiences, most emphasize the importance of having people to share their thoughts and experiences with:

I think that you experience different relationships with the other [same nationality as hers] because you are sharing an experience, and you sometimes get frustrated because you get homesick or because you do not understand the way things are done, and these people can kind of reflect on that, because they have shared experiences.

The Dual Meaning of Knowing Norwegian

The respondents describe being proficient in the Norwegian language in two contrasting ways. Many respondents see language proficiency as important to their adjustment and give this issue much space in the interviews. A general tendency is that proficiency in Norwegian represents an advantage when seen in relation to accessing information and social life. Surprisingly, on the subject of social support, knowing Norwegian might in some instances represent a disadvantage.

Access to Social Life and Information. One of the main advantages of being proficient in Norwegian is that it gives the candidates access to social life. In every social setting it is definitely easier to participate in discussions, conversations and small-talks if one master the language sufficiently. In other words, being a skilled communicator in Norwegian during lunchtime at work and other settings where most people are Norwegian makes these interactions run more smoothly. As one candidate reported: When you do not speak the language, you feel kind of socially handicapped. You cannot react quickly to what people say, you can not make a joke, and, you know, you are kind of lost.

Furthermore, the candidates find it particularly difficult to participate in *informal* settings. Communication in social settings is experienced in another way than in face-to-face

settings. For instance, a commonly reported difficulty was that of participating in discussions when several persons are talking at the same time:

Interviewer: How is it in lunchtime?

Respondent: Oh, I mean, they are all friendly and nice, and they talk to me. But when they start speaking Norwegian I tend to get lost. Because a conversation in a kind of social setting, I think is the most difficult. So I can, hum, speak on, you know, with one person, and it can be fine for 15 minutes. But once it's kind of a social setting, I tend to get lost. I think that's normal.

Thus, the candidates find it difficult, and sometimes try to avoid, situations that include such communication before they learn Norwegian. The candidates therefore consider language proficiency as a key factor when it comes to integration (with Norwegians) and participation in academic and informal social activities.

A second aspect that is related to language is availability of information. The candidates report that much of the information that is important to them is in Norwegian. Hence, the candidates believe that Norwegian is important to their adjustment, because information that is considered crucial to their adjustment is inaccessible to them until they get more proficient in Norwegian. This candidate illustrates that information in Norwegian is seen as problematic:

I think as far as information goes for these things, it is definitely a lack of information, especially in English. I mean, the simplest thing, I do not know, it is all in Norwegian (...). They should make it easily accessible, and it is not.

Again, there is a difference between candidates in international environments, and those in other departments. In the departments that are described as international, English is the commonly used language, thus, the candidates do not need to be fluent in Norwegian.

The Interplay Between Language Proficiency and Social Support. Although the candidates see Norwegian as important for accessing social life, the relationship between language proficiency and support is not always experienced as that straightforward. Rather than contributing to better adjustment, the candidates say that knowing Norwegian sometimes lead their colleagues and other people to believe that they are more adjusted than they actually are. Hence, some candidates think that there is a gap between the self- perceived adjustment and how well adjusted others perceive them to be. Many attribute at least a part of this disparity to their proficiency in Norwegian: “They started to get used to me and did not continue to offer me the extra support (...). So that is a bit hopeless. Even though I do not look different, and even though I speak Norwegian, I am alone”. Many candidates think the care they receive in the beginning is related to the fact that they do not speak Norwegian. When they get more proficient, many feel that their colleagues stop thinking of them as different and as someone who needs extra

attention. The candidates therefore believe that there is a relation between how well they speak Norwegian and how much support they receive. A typical answer from the candidates is therefore that the effect of knowing Norwegian is contextually contingent.

This potential disadvantage of language proficiency is thus something the candidates attribute to others perceptions of how much support they need. The candidates feel that people in their adjustment environment –that is, scientific colleagues and the administration – view international candidates who have learned to speak Norwegian as capable of “figuring out things on their own”. Moreover, the candidates express a concern regarding how to address the issue. If they integrate well, the others forget that they are new and need support. On the other hand, asking for support would underline the fact that they are different:

So, you know, they just take me for granted and do not think that they have to help me in any way. But at the same time, I do not want to call attention to it because it is great if they do not think that way, it is nice if they do not think about me as someone who comes from outside. (...) but that also means that they stop doing the extra effort. So in a way it is an endless circle of misunderstandings. Like, if you do not try to show them that you need help they will not help you, and if you show them that you need help you show them that you are more foreign than they think, and this might strengthen the distance again. I feel that it is very difficult to find a way that will make this easier.

The candidates therefore describe the situation as difficult to solve. Speaking Norwegian is positive because that means that they are learning the culture, and that they more easily can interact with Norwegians. At the same time, this might lead the others to believe that they manage on their own. To put it differently, pointing out the differences might lead to extra support, while at the same time put them in the unwanted position of being an outsider.

Again, this specific issue is not that prominent for the PhD-candidates sojourning in departments where most employees come from abroad and people mostly speak English. As discussed earlier in relation to loneliness, this is because it is considered easier to integrate into such environments: Also, like people that are not so outgoing, they get in touch with everyone. We eat lunch together, and then there is always somebody who does not speak Norwegian anyway, so then the official language is anyway English”. Thus, the issue of balancing between the positions of insider versus outsider is not that relevant.

Cross-Cultural Adjustment As Characterized by the Candidates

In the following, the four themes will be discussed. Specifically, the discussion addresses four issues, of which three are related to the specific themes, and the fourth is related to a more general view of the themes. In relation to the specific themes, the discussion centres on three questions. How could the themes contribute to our understanding of the candidates’

experience? If relevant, how could these experiences be interpreted in connection to the SCT and the CLT? And also, how could the qualitative method applied in this study contribute to our understanding of the candidates' situation? The fourth question looks at the total of the candidates reported experiences and asks, what does these accounts tell about the candidates psychological and socio-cultural adjustment? These are the questions that will be investigated in the remaining part of the chapter. Where other theories than the SCT and the CLT provide a useful perspective on their experiences, these are also included in the discussion.

Adjustment as Mainly Taking Place at the UiO. Perhaps surprisingly, the candidates reported that most of their adjustment efforts take place at the UiO. The candidates department at the UiO is portrayed as playing a main role in their adjustment, leaving the influence of other arenas in the background. For many, this means that their department is regarded as both a main socializing and culture-learning arena. However, although the respective departments are seen as important both in relation to information and support, the latter is given the most emphasis. Those who are content with their level of support and have good relations with their colleagues more often report that their overall satisfaction with the sojourn is good. On the other hand, many candidates describe a work situation in which they are on their own. These candidates are more likely to say that their general experience with adjusting to Norway is negative, whether or not they also report having good social relations outside of their department. This suggests that being isolated, and thus unable to partake in positive social experiences at their departments, has a profound influence on the candidates' total adjustment.

In this way, the finding reveals a possible weakness with earlier quantitative studies. Generally, quantitative studies on cross-cultural adjustment have often focused on different adjustment arenas and how they are related to each other (e.g. Black & Gregersen, 1991; Gong, 2003). The studies have investigated how expatriates adjust to different arenas (e.g. work, general and academic), and how they are related to each other. However, the present study shows that when the candidates can focus on the aspects that they find important, some arenas are seen as more critical to their adjustment than others.

This is a point to consider when developing questionnaires for measuring the sojourners experiences. Presented with questions about the different arenas, it is likely that respondents would answer all the questions. Doing it this way, the researcher might miss the fact that many candidates see some dimensions as more critical than others, and important nuances might be overlooked. Focusing on the candidates' own reflections, variations in the importance of different arenas are easier to see. Findings from the present study clearly show

that the candidates department were the most critical to their overall experience. Accordingly, most of the reported experiences are related to experiences with adjusting to the UiO.

Adjustment as Something That Takes a Lot of Energy. Another finding that characterizes the candidates' experiences is that they describe adjustment as a type of *extra* work. A reason for calling it extra work is that many of the activities that other employees at the UiO would do without seeming effort is added an extra cost for the candidates. Practical activities such as getting a bank account, knowing how to prepare a lecture or finding out how the PhD degree is structured at the UiO are commonly mentioned as examples of such extra activities. This experienced lack of information is something that many candidates find time and energy consuming, and they think that it affects their total experience by making it more demanding. In other words, this means that each activity the candidates do is more energy consuming for them than for someone who is familiar with the way things are organized.

One way of seeing the candidates' experiences with adjustment as extra work is to see it in relation to socio-cultural adjustment and learning opportunities. In the CLT, adjustment is seen as a learning process whereby the sojourner learns the new set of behavioural patterns. Learning these reduces the mismatch between the individual and the new culture, and thus also the stress that is associated with such disparities. However, to be able to this, the sojourner needs to have enough learning opportunities. In this study it is argued that the candidates' reports of adjustment as extra work could be interpreted as an expression of stress related to lack of learning opportunities. The candidates report that they do not get sufficient information and that it is difficult to integrate into social life. This lack of information and social support means that they have fewer opportunities to learn the culture because they have no one to show or tell them about the appropriate behaviour. A possible reason for why the candidates see their adjustment as demanding is thus to see it as connected to lacking possibilities for learning how to fit in to their department.

Another concept that could be used to describe the candidates' experiences is *preparedness*. For many of the candidates, the Norwegian and UiO-culture were not perceived as being radically different compared to their old culture, and the same candidates also seem to have been less prepared for differences than the others. The differences between being prepared for cultural differences and not, which resembles that of Selmer and Luring (2009) between expectations of cultural similarity and cultural dissimilarity, seems to have an impact on how the candidates adjust. The candidates that did not believe that there were any cultural differences seem to be more prone to experience them as difficult, simply because they are not prepared for them. Or, to put it differently, if you are not expecting practical work

facing a new cultural environment, it might make the cross-cultural adjustment more problematic.

Besides seeing adjustment as something that requires effort with regard to practical issues, it is also described as emotionally demanding. The candidates say that they feel homesick and lonely, and that they do not get the social support they need. Because this type of emotional extra work is described by many as a main reason for their dissatisfaction with the sojourn, it could be seen as an expression of poor psychological adjustment. Accordingly, the SCT could also provide a way of understanding the candidates' perceptions of extra work.

Earlier it was described that the SCT assumes that differences between a sojourners old and new culture lead to stress. As seen in the previous discussion, the CLT would see this in relation to learning opportunities. In the SCT on the other hand, the successful or unsuccessful adjustment to the new culture is dependent upon the availability of sufficient coping resources. Bearing in mind that many candidates report that they have less support than they need one could argue that the candidates' feeling that adjustment is difficult and demanding could be associated with a lack of coping resources.

That adjustment is considered as demanding is something also Richardson and McKenna (2002) found in their study of academic expatriates. However, there seems to be a difference between that study and the present in how the candidates appraise the changes associated with the transition. Whereas the participants in the Richardson and McKenna study often saw them as *challenges*, the PhD candidates more often describe the differences - and the efforts they have to expend because of them- as *problems*. A possible interpretation of this divergence is to see it as connected to different goals. Earlier it was described how different goals can influence how well a person adjusts (Gong, 2003, Gong & Fan, 2006). In the Richardson and McKenna study, many of the participants wanted to explore new cultures. In contrast, several of the participants in the present study saw the PhD degree as the primary goal. It could be that this difference is the reason for why they appraise differences differently. Seeing the PhD degree as the primary goal could lead the candidates to see cultural differences as obstacles instead of being a goal in itself.

Regardless of whether adjustment is viewed as problematic or challenging, this study argues that it is more useful to label the experiences associated with cross-cultural transitions *culture work* rather than the more customary way of viewing it as *culture shock*. In the general theoretical framework such as the one adopted in this study, cross-cultural transitions and adjustment are often seen as inherently stressful (e.g. Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Black & Gregersen, 1991; Ward et al., 2001). The latter view of culture differences as something that

shocks the individual might give associations to adjustment as an inescapable and negative event. In opposition to this view, the present study suggests that an alternative and probably more productive way of describing it is culture work. This is because the candidates, although describing differences as problematic, nevertheless seem to offer a more positive view of it than the one implied by the term shock. The new concept of cultural work is more rooted within the candidates *own* understandings of their adjustment experience, as well as it gives a more active role to those involved in situations where different cultures meet.

Adjustment as a Lonely Project. One of the interesting findings in this study – which is also in line with earlier studies (Richardson & McKenna, 2002, Ong & Ward, 2005) – is how almost all PhD-candidates characterize their own adjustment process as lonely. Given what we know about loneliness, it is hardly surprising that the lonely ones report more depressive feelings – and that they therefore are more dissatisfied with their sojourn. Moreover, if we see depression and low levels of wellbeing as a possible indication of *psychological adjustment*, the results thus suggests that many PhD-candidates are not psychologically well adjusted.

However, not all of the participants expressed loneliness. For instance, those belonging to the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences (MNS) seem to report less loneliness than the candidates at the Faculties of Humanities and the Social Sciences. A possible way of understanding this reported difference between the departments is to see it in relation to how they function as arenas for psychological adjustment. Based on what the candidates reported, it seems that departments with other international staff are more experienced with expatriation and because of this they are also better at providing social support. As far as the MNS does have the highest share of international PhD-candidates (S Hellesøy, 2009) and the fact that Natural Science is more internationally oriented, make it quite plausible that this environment in fact is more *international*. Moreover, it also seems like such environments are better at providing necessary practical information, such as lecture schedules, possible language courses and information about general living in Norway. Although most Norwegians at the University speak English, it seems that the candidates sojourning in English-speaking milieus are provided with more opportunities for learning how things are done both socially and practically. From a CLT perspective it could therefore be argued that candidates at the MNS are offered more learning opportunities.

It is a widespread view that doing a PhD involves isolation, lack of collegial support and so forth. Thus, a central question to be asked is whether this situation of feeling lonely is particular to the international candidates or more generally associated with writing a PhD? Although the findings on the prevalence of loneliness among international PhD candidates

could seem particularly pertinent to their specific situation of being in a new country, some studies do challenge this view. For example, a recent study of 942 PhD candidates in Norway – in which 90% had a Norwegian citizenship – found that 62% said that being a PhD candidate is a lonely work (Thune and Olsen 2009). In another small scale survey focusing directly on PhD candidates at the Faculty of Social Sciences at the UiO, results also showed that the candidates felt lonely and that they lacked social support (Aasland, 2010). Hence, feelings of loneliness and lack of a social network are not at all exclusively related to the international candidates; instead it seems to be more tied to the process of writing a doctoral dissertation.

Another interesting finding was that the quality and type of (new) friendships matters more than the number of friends in relation to loneliness. For instance, some of the candidates were lonely and felt lack of support while at the same time laying stress upon their large social network. This seemingly paradoxical idea could make sense if we consider the quality rather than mere quantity of friendship(s). Some quantitative studies have used the number of friends (e.g. Gong & Chang, 2007), or respondents self reported adjustment to interacting and speaking with host nationals (e.g. Black & Stephens, 1989), to measure how well the candidates are adjusted socially. Other studies have on the other hand emphasized the different roles different friendships have for expatriates adjustment; thus, distinguishing between friends from the new country and the home country (Black & Gregersen, 1991), and between friends who function as informational support and socio-emotional support (Ong & Ward, 2005). However, findings from this study suggest a slightly different, or perhaps complementary, approach to the relationship between friendships and loneliness. A distinction between friends that the candidates refer to as “old friends” or “friends-friends” and what we could call “new professional friends” seem more meaningful in trying to describe the candidate’s own experiences. The latter distinction parallels with a distinction by Fisher et al. (1985) between relationships that are described as confiding and those that are not. The distinction is important considering that many scholars see confident relationships as a key coping resource (Church, 1982; Gudykunst & Hammer, 1988). According to the SCT, confiding relationships help to ameliorate depressive feelings by being a coping resource. Hence, this study argues that many candidates have troubles with psychological adjustment simply because they do not have any confiding or intimate friendships.

Maslow’s work on human needs provides another way of understanding why many candidates feel lonely. Particularly, his works are interesting when trying to understand why also those who report having friends say that they are lonely. In his hierarchy over human

needs, Maslow places need to belong in the middle, arguing that this need is fundamental when physiological and safety needs are met (Larsen & Buss, 2008). When individuals' experiences change in their belongingness status - real, imagined or potential - this will lead to an emotional response (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). If the change involves that the need is not satisfied, this will lead to feelings of loneliness. One way of seeing the candidates' loneliness is therefore to see it as a result of an unfulfilled need to belong. Thus, this could also help us understand why candidates who say that they have friends also feel lonely: it might be that their friendships are not intimate enough.

A possible consequence of the loneliness many candidates experience is the finding that many believe that their experiences are unique. Several of the candidates think that their poor adjustment is related to their person, their situation or unlucky circumstances. Being alone leaves the candidates with few or no opportunities to share their experiences with other expatriates and they might therefore fail to recognize that their situation could be a result of the cultural transition, and that others experience it in the same way as they do.

Another way of interpreting their feelings that their situation is unique is to see it in connection to cultural similarity. Selmer and Lauring (2009) use attribution theory (i.e. the study of which causal inferences people draw to explain behaviour) to explain why people who think that their home and host culture are the same sometimes fail to see that their difficulties could be the result of cultural differences. The respondents in this study report that they perceive their old culture and the one they meet at the UiO to be similar. Moreover, when accounting for their experiences, they explain them with reference to their personality or characteristics specific to their situation (i.e. small work-group, type of research area, etc.). In the words of attribution theory, the candidates attribute the state of affairs to personal or situational characteristics, but overlook the influence cultural differences might have.

When accounting for other people's behaviour by referring to their inner disposition while one's own behaviour is explained by situational factors, people make what Ross has called the fundamental attribution error (1977, cited in Plous, 1993). The candidates in this study do both, they look to their own person or to the specific situation they are in. However, they all seem to overlook the possibility that culture might affect their experiences. One could therefore say that it seems like the candidates make what we could call a *cultural attribution error*, underestimating the value of cultural differences, and overestimating the influence of personal and situational factors. As seen, many candidates try to explain their experiences as a result of their personality or their work situation. Looking for explanations in these areas, it might be that they overlook the possibility of seeing it as related to the new national and

academic culture or the more general nature of cultural transitions. Because they do not have anyone to talk to, their assumptions are never contradicted, and they conclude that their situation is unique.

In this way, the concept of cultural similarity and attribution theory is able to provide a way of understanding that the candidates see their experiences as unique. Yet, the perspective is a new one in looking at expatriates adjustment experiences, and is most likely enabled by the qualitative approach. The open method invites the candidates to bring in their own understandings and their life world. In this manner, inviting the candidates to share their own understandings has fostered a new way of seeing how international candidates at the UiO experience adjustment. Not only are the candidates lonely, many also believe that they are the only ones who are, thus thinking that their situation is exceptional - and perhaps because of that – particularly heavy to bear.

Adjustment as Affected by Proficiency in Norwegian. A final aspect that characterizes the candidates' view of their adjustment experience is the importance they ascribe proficiency in Norwegian. Possibly intuitive, many candidates think that language proficiency is connected to a positive adjustment experience. For many, this is related to the fact that proficiency in Norwegian makes it easier to find out practical information as well as to participate in social settings. From this it is possible to see that the candidates separate between two positive functions of language proficiency: access to social life and information. The two coincide with the distinction between socio-emotional and informational support (Ong & Ward, 2005), which both are seen as important to adjustment. One could therefore say that the candidates' idea that there is a relation between their language proficiency and adjustment is in line with what theories on the subject would suggest. In the SCT, being proficient in a common language is thought to make it easier to access social life and information, which are considered possible coping resources. On the other hand, the CLT sees proficiency as important because it makes social interaction with host nationals easier.

Perhaps more noteworthy is the finding that many candidates see their adjustment as related to the amount of support they receive. The candidates think that the sum of support they get decrease as they get more proficient in Norwegian. Seeing such statements in relation to the above discussion – connecting language proficiency to positive adjustment - this finding could seem strange. That it both contributes to better *and* worse adjustment calls for clarification. However, the statements could be an expression of a relationship between language proficiency and adjustment that deviates from the type of linear relationship described earlier. Many candidates emphasize how important host nationals' perceptions of

their need for support are for their adjustment. The candidates say that the more proficient they got, the less support they were offered, and thus, many believe that high proficiency might lead Norwegians to offer less support. One could therefore argue that the candidates have to learn *enough* Norwegian. They need to learn a sufficient amount of Norwegian in order to be able to access social life and information. However, findings from this study suggest that although these benefits might continue to increase with enhanced proficiency, other benefits such as support from host nationals might decrease.

Although this is a rare perspective, the finding is not new, and other studies have found similar tendencies (Richardson & McKenna, 2002; Ward et al., 2001). Though addressed in a different way, Richardson and McKenna's study (2002) of expatriate British academics suggests that the amount of support the expatriates receive decreases the smaller the *hosts* perceived the differences between the cultures to be. Some of their respondents reported that a general belief was that expatriates from culturally distant places needed more support than those from more similar cultures, and as a consequence, those from distant places received more support than the latter. Accordingly, Richardson and McKenna include host nationals' perceptions when trying to understand why language proficiency sometimes represents a disadvantage. Hence, the present study includes the concept of host nationals' perceptions. However, contrary to the above mentioned study that emphasize the importance of perceptions regarding cultural differences, this study see such perceptions more directly in relation to social support.

A viable way of interpreting the reported relation between language proficiency and adjustment is thus to see it in relation to host nationals' and others' perceptions of the candidates need for support. When the candidates learn Norwegian, their colleagues could see them as more adjusted than they are because they seem to "fit in". However, the candidates report that although they might look adjusted, this is not necessarily the case. On the basis of this, the finding suggests that there might be a discrepancy between what the candidates themselves and the hosts perceive to be sufficient support. This possible discrepancy is important to highlight because it is the hosts that determine how much support the candidates receive.

A possible interpretation of the seemingly paradoxical relation between language proficiency and adjustment is thus to see it as potentially curvilinear. The findings imply that increasing proficiency in the local language helps the candidates to access support in terms of finding information and getting social support. Conversely, as their proficiency in Norwegian gets better, the positive effects of knowing Norwegian will start to decrease after a certain

peak. When taking into account hosts' perceptions of the candidate's need for support, this makes sense. That is, when the candidates do not speak Norwegian, the hosts are more likely to offer support. When, on the other hand, the candidates get more proficient, the hosts stop to think of the candidates as someone in need of extra support, and their willingness to offer support diminishes. It is thus suggested that there are more nuances to the relation between language and adjustment than implied by some quantitative studies.

Psychological and Socio-Cultural Adjustment

The four reported themes give a multifaceted view of how the candidates characterize their adjustment to the University of Oslo. These descriptions could be used to propose some possible suggestions regarding the candidates' psychological and socio-cultural adjustment. Socio-cultural adjustment was earlier described as a person's ability to "fit in" to their new cultural environment. Findings from the present study suggest that many of the candidates are not well adjusted socio-culturally. Many say that they find it hard to participate in social settings and that they have difficulties functioning effectively at the UiO. In the CLT this makes sense in terms of lacking learning opportunities. Lacking a social life and access to information, the candidates are not provided enough situations from which they can learn how to function effectively at the UiO, neither academically nor socially. On the other hand, psychological adjustment was described as a person's wellbeing and emotional satisfaction. Many of the candidates say that they are not satisfied with the sojourn, and that they feel depressed, thus indicating that their psychological adjustment is low. In the SCT, the importance of coping resources to adjustment is emphasized. One of the main types of coping resources in the SCT is support, which is something many of the candidates report that they lack.

When looking at the candidates' total adjustment, it seems that the degree of psychological and socio-cultural adjustment do not always parallel each other. Put differently, sometimes candidates might experience that they are well adjusted on one dimension, but not on the other. Based on this, a table combining psychological and socio-cultural adjustment was developed (See table 1). Showing two levels of each dimension of adjustment, four types of adjustment occur. In the following, a typology over these types adjustment is presented.

Table 1: Four types of adjustment

	Good socio-cultural adjustment (+)	Poor socio-cultural adjustment (-)
Good psychological adjustment (+)	The well adjusted	The outsider
Poor psychological adjustment (-)	The lonely	The unadjusted

In the following sections, the different types of adjustment will be presented. Each type will be described in relation to culture learning opportunities and social support, and be based on patterns in the candidates reported experiences with adjustment. However, before describing the different types it is important to say that an obvious objection against the typology is that it might compromise some of the flexibility that earlier was stressed as an important advantage of the qualitative method by restricting the variability in the candidates experiences. However, a schematic presentation also serves as a useful way of summarizing large amounts of data. Thus, this study argues that as long as one bears in mind that a typology always presents a simplified version of reality, it might be a useful tool for describing patterns in the data. In relation to the present study, it is particularly important to recognize that the candidates' report of their psychological or socio-cultural adjustment are not conclusive to their sojourn, or exhaustive in terms of their total experience.

The Well Adjusted. The well-adjusted candidate is someone who is content with the level of received support and the amount of learning opportunities. Although it is not the most prevalent among the candidates in this study, there are some who fit this category. Characteristic to their situation is that they report having many friends and say that they are satisfied with their sojourn. These candidates also report fewer problems in terms of mastering the Norwegian culture in general, and the academic culture at the UiO in particular. The candidates in this category often resemble those in other studies (Richardson & McKenna, 2002) in that they tend to see differences as challenges.

The Outsider. This adjustment type is the only type that is not identified in the data, and is thus a purely theoretical category. The category would include those who are content with the level of support they receive and who are satisfied with their sojourn. However, those who would fall within the category nevertheless lack learning opportunities and do not master the culture. The content outsider seems an exceptional case, yet there are some instances that

can be fitted into it. For instance, persons who are very task oriented and see the sojourn as purely transitional. These sojourners might be content with the possibility of for instance doing a PhD, and do not see social life and culture as important to their well being.

The Lonely. The third type of adjustment describes someone who has a sufficient amount of learning opportunities, but an unsatisfactory level of social support. A typical example from this study is a candidate who has few or no friends, and often, this would be a candidate that reports feeling homesick. Nevertheless, on the subject of socio-cultural adjustment, this type of candidate seems to have few troubles fitting in to their new environment. This type is therefore particularly interesting because they are candidates that will appear to be well adjusted for someone observing them. Socio-cultural adjustment is a more relational concept and the other part of the relation – in this case the host nationals – will know if a person do not fit in. However, poor psychological adjustment could pass unnoticed. An example from this study that illustrates this is the reported relation between language proficiency and support. The candidates said that knowing the language made them seem like someone who fitted in, and they received less support than they wanted. Consequently, there was a discrepancy between how adjusted they appear to be, and how adjusted they really felt.

The Unadjusted. Finally, the fourth type is a candidate who is not provided enough learning opportunities and who are unsatisfied with the provided level of support. In the present study, this would be a candidate who resembles the lonely in having few or no friends, and possibly feeling homesick. However, the candidates who experience this type of adjustment also suffer from not being able to master the culture. Thus, they struggle to fit in, and they do not find any friends. Two of the candidates that reported having had, or being in, a major conflict with someone at their department fit this category. However, two of them do not, thus suggesting that being in a conflict not automatically places someone in the category of unadjusted.

Advantages of a Schematic Presentation. As described earlier, an advantage of presenting data in a typology is the possibility to summarize large amounts of data. In the present study, most of the candidates can be placed within the two latter adjustment types – the lonely or the unadjusted. Many report being lonely, and they say that this affects their total adjustment negatively. However, the candidates who experience the sojourn as stressful seem to differ in the degree to which they integrate into the Norwegian national or academic culture. Whereas some seem to figure out practical aspects rapidly, others struggle more, making their overall adjustment a more stressful experience.

Another advantage of the typology is that it makes visible the importance of including different perspectives when deciding whether a candidate is adjusted. In this study, the aim was to study adjustment as experienced by the candidates themselves. Thus, asking the candidates about their view of their adjustment – without including the hosts’ perceptions – satisfied the need of the study. However, if their *actual* adjustment is to be studied, the typology shows that more perspectives than the personal need to be included. Psychological and socio-cultural adjustment together provide a coherent view of a candidates adjustment, *if* both candidates’ and hosts’ perspectives are included.

As seen earlier, socio cultural adjustment is clearly a relational concept, while psychological adjustment is more personal. Nevertheless, as long as psychological adjustment in some instances is connected to socio-cultural adjustment, both adjustment concepts might be seen as relational. A person cannot be wholly adjusted in a new cultural environment even if the he or she thinks so, if other people in that environment do not see the person as such. Likewise, even though people in the environment would see a person as adjusted, this would not be the case if the person does not feel psychologically adjusted. This possible discrepancy is particularly salient with the lonely adjustment type. This type was described as a candidate who probably would look adjusted for someone observing from the outside. However, asking the candidate more directly, this person could report not feeling adjusted. Thus, the typology shows the necessity of both asking the specific person, and those in the persons near environment, to conclude if the person is adjusted. Such arguments are in line with Bateson’s (1979, cited in Hui, Cashman & Deacon, 2008) claim that two descriptions are better than one. In order to wholly grasp how a person is adjusted, both psychological and socio-cultural adjustment should be studied, and this includes having to study both the hosts and the sojourners descriptions of a person’s adjustment.

SUMMARY AND GENERAL DISCUSSION

Summary of Main Findings

Due to a gap in the literature between the increasing phenomenon of academic expatriation and the research undertaken in the area, this study was aimed at reducing some of the uncertainty surrounding the topic. In an effort to do this, the thesis has provided detailed descriptions of how a group of international PhD candidates at the UiO describe their adjustment experiences. Emphasising subjective experiences, the thesis argues that the

candidates' adjustment experiences are characterized by being lonely and difficult. In addition, the thesis has also demonstrated that the candidates believe that their experiences are affected by their language proficiency and that it mainly takes place at the UiO.

Nearly all candidates characterize their department at the UiO as their main arena for adjustment. Hence, the positive or negative experiences they have at their department affect their total experience. In this study, struggling with issues related to adjusting to a new culture besides doing the PhD makes many describe their experience as difficult and demanding. Also, loneliness is a feeling that characterizes their total adjustment, making it stand out as a very lonely experience. Although some emphasize that there are courses and more informal gatherings that could have helped against this loneliness, the candidates find it difficult to find friends in such settings because people tend to know each other from before. A possible effect of being cut off from social activities is that many characterize their adjustment experiences as unique. Finally, characteristic to the candidates' experiences is the feeling that language plays an important role for their adjustment, both in positive and negative terms. Whether or not it is described as an advantage in terms of adjustment depends on the context.

Furthermore, the thesis also argues that the candidates descriptions of this experience could be used to propose some suggestions regarding that the candidates' socio-cultural and psychological adjustment. Considering that many find it difficult to do their work, and do not feel that they function effectively on the social level, their socio-cultural adjustment seems low. On the other hand, many also report feeling depressed, and that the sojourn has been a negative experience. This would, according to the SCT, indicate that their psychological adjustment is poor. Drawing on the SCT and the CLT it is argued that this could be due to a lack of sufficient support and learning opportunities. The candidates do not get the support they need in order to cope with the stresses they experience and their emotional wellbeing is impaired. Also, many candidates do not have enough opportunities to learn the new culture, something they need in order to be able to fit in. When important cultural skills are lacking, the candidates have difficulties trying to function effectively at the UiO. When these two dimensions of adjustment are combined, four different types could be identified. Based on the candidates' accounts, most candidates fit in the lonely or unadjusted type. While most struggle with psychological adjustment, they differ in their degree of socio-cultural adjustment.

Qualitatively Founded Contributions. Apart from describing how the candidates experience adjusting to their new cultural environment, a central part of the analysis included efforts to see what the qualitative approach might contribute to a field wherein much of the earlier literature has been characterized by quantitative studies. Although not qualifying as what Elster would call “hard obscurantism” (Elster, 2010), (i.e. meaningless research hidden behind fancy numbers) the present study argues that using predefined categories and surveys to study cross-cultural adjustment might contribute to some perspectives being overlooked. In the following I will present some of the new perspectives offered by the present study.

One example is the candidates’ distinction between different types of friends. The distinction is noteworthy because it suggests that using number of friends as a measure of adjustment might be problematic. The finding implies that the type of a friendship is more important than how many friends you have, or that you see many people. When using number of friends as a measure of adjustment, it is difficult to know whether the respondents include all the people they have got to know or if they only report those that are close. In this way, the findings show that not taking into account what a friend means to the sojourners when determining whether someone is socially adjusted is at best speculative. In other cases it might provide partial results. Thus, a possible implication is that there are nuances to the concepts used in studying cross-cultural adjustment, such as the meaning of “friend”.

Another finding that contributes to a more nuanced view is that the candidates experience one adjustment arena to be more important than others. Without necessarily going against earlier studies, this finding nevertheless points to a possible weakness in earlier studies that have employed surveys to measure expatriates adjustment (e.g. Black & Gregersen, 1990, 1991; Gong, 2003). In these studies, expatriates adjustment has been measured related to different aspects of the expatriates’ new environment, such as social, academic or work adjustment. Although theoretically distinguishable, the different distinctions might give a simplified view of the process.

Finally, the present study has highlighted the importance of including not only the candidates’ perceptions, but also those of other people in their environment. While other theorists have included perceptions in the form of prejudice and differences in status (e.g. Berry, 1997; Ward et al., 2001), this study has shown that another type are the thoughts the candidates colleagues have about the candidates need for extra support. Adjustment is a process that takes place in an interpersonal space, and findings from this study suggest that hosts’ perceptions are important to the candidates’ adjustment.

Generalization

The issue of generalization is certainly controversial in qualitative methodology (Fog, 204; Kvale, 1996). Beyond doubt, generalizing is associated with quantitative studies seeking to apply the results from a sample to a population (Kvale, 1996). As the assumption of representativeness is not fulfilled in qualitative studies, this type of generalization is not possible. Moreover, they are not always wanted. Instead, other types of generalization such as case-to-case transfer and analytic generalization are proposed (Firestone, 1993; Mason, 2002).

In a conceptual u-turn, avoiding the concepts developed within more positivistic research traditions, Thagaard (2003) has proposed that we rather talk about *transferability* than generalization. Transferability resemble that of analytic generalization and relates to questions concerning whether the findings in a specific study may be used to say something other people in a similar situation. In this study it is argued that the findings are transferable and interesting for others than the PhD-candidates. Even though the accounts of the interviewees might not represent the general, it says something about how the process of adjustment might be experienced. Particularly, the concepts developed in the present study could be useful in further investigations.

Limitations

Although the final group that was interviewed consisted of a quite heterogeneous group, the problem of self-selection makes it hard to specify the representativeness of the participants. The candidates were recruited by e-mail, and those who wanted to participate were asked to contact me. By recruiting this way, it is difficult to say if the interviewees share certain specific characteristics that separate them from other international PhD candidates at UiO. They could, for instance, distinguish themselves in terms of their reasons for participating, such as feeling lonely and wanting someone to talk to. On the other hand, it could be that those who are above average satisfied wanted to share their successful adjustment experiences. Both these motives could make this study's participants somewhat atypical to the total group of international PhD candidates at the UiO. However, it is important to note that other studies also find that many PhD-candidates are lonely.

Moreover, the discussion of differences between candidates at the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences and those at the other is based on a small number of participants, making this a second limitation of the study. Although there are some clear differences between the candidates, the discussion is based on the experience from three out

of ten participants. In order to find out if the differences that were found in this study could be a more general phenomenon it is necessary to do larger N studies.

Further studies

Further studies could benefit from looking more closely into what role the Norwegian culture plays in relation to the candidates' adjustment. Are there specific characteristics of the Norwegian society that shapes the experiences of the candidates? And also, compared to PhD students in other countries, do the experiences of international PhD candidates sojourning in Norway differ from those of international candidates in other countries? In the present study it is difficult to know whether the findings are related to the cultural transition in general, the Norwegian culture, or the academic culture at the UiO.

Also, the presented typology that integrates the two dimensions of adjustment – psychological and socio-cultural- could provide an interesting starting point for future studies. Although the typology at this point is a very basic one, it nevertheless offers a first attempt at giving a schematic view of different types of adjustment.

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Appendix A: Research Information Letter

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY "INTERNATIONAL PhD-CANDIDATES' CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT TO THE UNIVERSITY OF OSLO"

12.10.2009

Dear PhD-student

In the recent years we have seen a considerable increase in the number of international students taking their degree in another country than their home country. This is also the case for PhD- candidates, and the amount of international PhD-candidates located at the University of Oslo is now substantial. Still, knowledge about this particular group, how they experience the transition and how they adjust, is sparse. For my master thesis I, Sarah Caroline Bergström, will therefore be conducting research on the cultural adjustment among international students taking their PhD-degree at the UiO. I am interested in how international PhD-candidates coming to Norway experience the transition from their own culture to the Norwegian culture. My main focus will be on how PhD-students adjust to the academic culture at UiO and the general national culture. The central aspect will be the PhD- candidates own experiences with this transition. To explore this I need to get in contact with candidates who themselves have experienced such a transition. I am therefore inviting you to participate in this research project.

What will involvement entail?

If you agree to participate, an interview will be arranged. The interview will last about 60 minutes and it will be recorded. The interviews will be conducted at the UiO campus in October and November 2009. I am flexible regarding the time, and place, of the interview. The language used will be English or Norwegian, depending on what you prefer.

Confidentiality and informed consent

The information from the interviews will be kept under secure conditions and treated as confidential. The transcriptions will be kept on a pc secured with username and password, and the tape-recorded material will be erased when the thesis is finished. During the project period there will also be used codes to link the transcriptions to the particular interviewee. Both my supervisor, and I will read the transcripts but I am the only one who will have access to the codes and through this the identity of the interviewee. Information that others might use to identify you will be kept out of the report. Although, some participants may come to recognize their own statements. The project ends in May 2010, and then all identifying information will be deleted.

In order to participate you will have to sign a consent form, but you will have the right to withdraw the consent at any time before the thesis is printed. You may also ask for the information collected from your interview to be deleted. Also, your identity or participation in this study will not be revealed in any way, and your relationship to me or the university will not be affected by you withdrawing from the study.

Who runs the project?

The research project is being undertaken as a part of the requirements for a master's degree at the University of Oslo, and I am under the supervision of professor in psychology, Astri Heen Wold.

Contributions from the study

This project will contribute information about PhD-candidates and how they experience adjusting to a new cultural setting. The findings will be based on how the candidates themselves see this process. This is important information because it might contribute to a better understanding of the situation PhD-candidates are in when adjusting to a new country, and thus also be a resource when considering how to best support this group. Also – I want to add – we know from experience that many persons find it quite interesting to talk and reflect upon their own situation with someone else.

Participation in the study

If you would like to participate in the study, or if you have any questions about the research, please contact me at 91 76 33 66, or at sarahcb@student.sv.uio.no.

The project is supported by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services.

Yours faithfully,

Sarah Caroline Bergstrøm

Master student, Culture-and community psychology

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Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

I have received information and I am willing to take part in the study "International PhD-students cultural adjustment in Oslo". I understand that my confidentiality will be respected and that I can withdraw this consent at any time.

Date

Your signature

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Commentary on the interview guide:

The questions in this guide represent main issues to be explored. Preferably, each participant will go through the same set of topics, although the order in which these topics are introduced may vary according to the particular interviewee.

1. Introduction

In this part of the interview I introduce the participant to the topic to be investigated, and to the interview situation. A main purpose is also to have the participant sign the consent form.

a. This is me (my name, that I am a master student etc.)

b. About the project

In this research project I am interested in your experiences with adjusting to your life here at the university, and your life outside of it. I want to know how you experience the transition from your last culture to the Norwegian general and academic culture. I am interested in your views and feelings about differences and similarities, what you consider to be easy or difficult with adjusting and also if you have any thoughts regarding what could have made the transition easier.

c. About the interview

There are no right or wrong answers. What I want is for you to share your thoughts and opinions with me, it is your experience that I am interested in. You decide what information you want to give me. If you have any questions during the interview, feel free to ask me.

The interviews will be taped and I may take some notes. This is to ensure that I will not forget anything. I am the only person who will have access to these, and no one will be able to read your interview except from my supervisor and me. The interview will take approximately 1 hour.

d. Consent form

In order to participate I need you to sign a consent form. You should be aware that although you give your consent now, you may withdraw it at any point in the research process.

2. Demographics

Here I wish to get an overview over the person, to know the person's background.

- a. Age
- b. Country
- c. Department
- d. How far have you come in your degree?
- e. What is the total length of your stay?
- f. Where did you get your last university degree? Home country or other?
- g. Proficiency in oral/written English/Norwegian
- h. Language courses

In this second part, the main part, of the interview my aim is to get information about the participants' cross-cultural adjustment. I ask questions about their life at UiO, and outside, in order to get an overview of their experiences with adjusting to the different cultures. In this main part I want to ask questions about how satisfied they are, how adjusted they feel, whether or not they see themselves as competent enough to enact different activities, what their goals are and whether they feel they are accomplishing these or not.

3. Adjustment to Oslo

With these questions I want the participant to reflect on the process of adjusting to a life in Oslo. How satisfied they are, what they consider to be easy and what they think are more difficult aspects.

a. *General adjustment (culture)*

- Why did you decide to go to Norway? Economy, academic interest, friends or girlfriend/boyfriend? Are they interested in the cultural differences, or are they a necessary part of the sojourn?
- How do you live? Do you live alone, with someone you know, a friend or maybe a girl/boyfriend?
- How do you experience adjusting to the Norwegian national culture? What is easy/difficult?
- What do you experience as dissimilar aspects between your last national culture and the Norwegian national culture? What do you think is similar?
- Are there aspects of the Norwegian national culture you find particularly difficult to adjust to? Why is that do you think? Are there aspects you don't understand? Can you tell me more about that?
- Are you interested in Norwegians and the Norwegian culture? Would you say that you have understood the Norwegian culture? How well adjusted are you to being associated with Norwegians?
- What have you learned about yourself since you came to Oslo? What have you learned about your own culture?

b. *Satisfaction*

- How satisfied are you with living in Oslo?
- How adjusted do you feel that you are? What do you mean with being well adjusted? What is it to be poorly or good adjusted?
- How satisfied are you, overall, with being in Norway? Do you ever miss home? Can you tell me more about that? What is it that you miss?

c. *Social interaction*

- How satisfied are you with social relations in Norway? How well adjusted are you to interact with Norwegians in non-academic situations/activities? How well adjusted are you to talking to Norwegians? How well adjusted are you to social gatherings in Norway?
- How would you describe your contact with Norwegians? How many Norwegian friends do you have? How many international friends do you have? What is your experience with interpersonal relationships in Norway? Can you tell me more about that?
- How confident are you in performing social activities or tasks? How confident are you in performing academic activities or tasks? Why do you think you feel this way?

d. *Goals*

- Do you plan on staying in Norway after you have finished your degree, or go back to your home country/another country?
- Do you feel that you are accomplishing the goals you set out to reach when sojourning in Norway? Do you know why?

4. Adjustment to the University of Oslo

Here I want the participant to reflect on the process of adjusting to life at UiO. How satisfied they are what they consider to be easy and what they think are more difficult aspects.

a. *Satisfaction*

- How satisfied are you with working in Norway?
- How adjusted do you feel that you are? What do you mean with being well adjusted? What is it to be poorly or good adjusted?
- Has your stay so far at UiO involved more, less or the same amount of stress than you had anticipated? Can you think of any reasons why?

b. *General adjustment (culture)*

- Why did you choose to go to UiO? Have you been in other countries before, other than your home country?
- How well adjusted are you to the academic culture at UiO? How well adjusted are you academically? Would you say that you have understood the Norwegian academic culture?
- What do you perceive to be the differences between the Norwegian academic culture and your own academic culture? What do you experience as difficult/easy aspects of adjusting to the Norwegian academic culture?

- What do you experience as dissimilar/similar aspects between your last academic culture and the Norwegian national culture? Can you tell me more about this?
- Are there aspects of the Norwegian academic culture that you find it particularly difficult to adjust to? Why is that do you think? Are there aspects you don't understand?

c. Work adjustment

- How well adjusted are you to working at UiO? How satisfied are you with the daily routines at UiO?
- How well adjusted are you to the academic level at UiO? Are there things you don't understand?
- How confident are you in performing academic activities? Why do you think you feel this way?

d. Social interaction

- How satisfied are you with social relations at UiO? How well adjusted are you to interact with Norwegians in academic situations/activities? How well adjusted are you to talking to Norwegian academic staff?
- How would you describe your contact with Norwegian academics? How many friends do you have? How many international friends do you have?
- How confident are you in performing social activities or tasks? Why do you think you feel this way?

e. Goals

- What are your goals towards your academic work? Do you feel that these are goals you can reach? Why/why not?
- Do you plan on staying at UiO when you have finished your degree?
- What are your goals regarding social interaction at UiO?

5. Is there something else you would like to tell me?

The objective here is to find out if there are some aspects the participants think I have left out or they wish to add something to things they have said earlier.

6. Concluding remarks

Thank the participant for the interview.

Ask how they experienced the interview.

Ask if I may contact them again if something comes up.

Appendix D: Approval From the Norwegian Social Sciences Data Service

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES



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Vår dato: 28.08.2009

Vår ref: 22424 / 2 / MAB

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

TILRÅDING AV BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 18.08.2009. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

22424	<i>Utenlandske PhD-studenters kulturelle tilpassing i Norge</i>
Behandlingsansvarlig	<i>Universitetet i Oslo, ved institusjonens øverste leder</i>
Daglig ansvarlig	<i>Astri Heen Wold</i>
Student	<i>Sarah Caroline Bergstrøm</i>

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet, og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger vil være regulert av § 7-27 i personopplysningsforskriften. Personvernombudet tilrår at prosjektet gjennomføres.

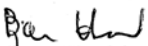
Personvernombudets tilråding forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, vedlagte prosjektvurdering - kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven/-helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/forsk_stud/skjema.html. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, <http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/prosjektoversikt.jsp>.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 05.05.2010, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen


Bjørn Henrichsen


Marte Bertelsen

Kontaktperson: Marte Bertelsen tlf: 55 58 29 53

Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

Kopi: Sarah Caroline Bergstrøm, Ruseløkkveien 60, oppg. N, 0251 OSLO

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