Deborah Kim Soc 001 Homework 2: Culture Shock

[Dik5303@psu.edu](mailto:Dik5303@psu.edu)

I remember stepping off the plane when we first arrived at Beijing, China and I had no idea what to expect. However, by the grueling stench and inconsiderate stares and mannerisms of the residents who roamed around the airport I knew it was not going to be the most laid back and relaxed experience. It all initiated when we met our tour guide and headed out to the city area to explore what life was like, get something to eat for lunch, and see how different their lifestyle was compared to ours back at home in the Philadelphia area. The specific environment that I was in where I have never experienced such an immense and difficult culture shock was in a rather popular daily food street market located in the center of Beijing. Having never been to China before I had no clue that I was going to witness such a diverse type of food variety.

Our tour guide showed us around the different types of food we could choose from to grab for lunch and I can easily say that none of the options handed to me were even close to coming near my mouth. The chills of disgust pierced through my spine as he offered me 5 little black, hard-shelled scorpions fried on a single stick. He explained to me how delicious they were but there was no way I could have built the courage to try it out. Nausea clouded in my head and I just knew that I was not going to eat lunch that day. The next option handed to me was a grilled lizard, burnt to a crisp and laying flat and stiff on the displayed plate. I gagged and never felt so out of place before in my life. I felt lost and looked around to see how everyone else was reacting to these food options. To my surprise, I was the only one eyeing down the pieces of food in abhorrence and everyone else around me munched on the unusual food as if it was delicious candy.

I remember taking a deep breath and telling myself that there had to be *something* that I could eat for lunch that day. The next option that my tour guide offered me was the final straw and I completely lost my appetite. He pointed to a vender with fried bats. I was completely sickened and truly wondered how these people could eat such nasty foods. Then, I looked around and realized that it is their way of eating and that is what they consider their staple foods. No matter how many times I tried telling myself that this was an apparent variety of food that was edible, I just could not get over the culture shock. I did not try any of the exotic foods that were located all over Beijing and my stubborn mindset did not change. I did not change any of my behaviors because I was immaturely stubborn and was already highly irritated by the unpleasant stenches and humid, sticky atmosphere. Another factor that led me to not change my behavior to try to adjust better in Beijing was the fact that I simply could not get myself to fit in any of the situations my family and I were put in at the different locations our tour guide took us too. I was already from the start so frustrated with the uncomfortable, dirty streets and venders that I did not walk into the rest of each situation with an open mind. Each location we explored had the same foods and I merely did not have the nerve to try any of them.

Now looking back on this trip to Beijing when I was in the ninth grade, I strongly regret not trying such exotic foods that scattered among the diverse city. Now that I am way more open-minded compared to when I was a freshman in high school, if I ever went back I most definitely would have grown the audacity to try such eccentric foods. It is truly amazing to see the lifestyles and cultures of other societies and be able to say you have physically and mentally explored a whole new lifestyle. Because of my stubborn behavior, I unfortunately did not partake in the amazing opportunity to try the different foods at Beijing that would not be seen in our daily food street markets here in Pennsylvania.

After experiencing Beijing’s lifestyle, I believe that the best way I could define “culture shock” is the feeling of being lost and perplexed in an environment and/or situation that one is not accustomed to. Culture shock is when an individual is put in a place that they have not personally experienced so they feel as if that new culture has an unusual way of living and assume that theirs is the correct way to live, when in fact everyone has their own unique perspective on different aspects of life.

As of the second activity, I immersed myself in an environment that I would never find myself to be in on a Friday night. The culture that I partook in was my brother’s fraternity party this past late Friday night. My brother always asks me to come out and see what it is like but I always say no because I value other activities for the weekends rather than putting myself into a position that I know I would not be comfortable with. However, I took the chance and finally agreed to come and see what it is like. Not to my surprise, I hated the experience. I felt so out of place because immature drunks surrounded me and I did not have any desire to try and mingle with kids that had no respect for themselves or their safety. This culture differs from my own because I simply am not a partier and do not look forward to getting wasted over the weekends. I am more of a reserved individual and I would rather make choices that give me a much greater chance of not getting hurt or in trouble for drinking illegally. This subculture does not relate to my own because the wild, crazy atmosphere of screams and confusion is not a place I feel comfortable in.

I believe that going to my brother’s fraternity party on Friday night was a good candidate to induce culture shock because after hearing so many crazy stories, I knew that partaking in such a crazy location that I normally would never go to would have given me the best culture shock experience. I also kept in mind that my brother was going to look out for me that night to make sure nothing bad would have happened which made me more willing to go and see what it is like. Moreover, I chose to experience a fraternity party because after hearing so many bizarre stories, I figured this would be the best time for me to go and actually see if these parties are what people say they are like. In the end, culture shock can be experienced anywhere whether it’d be in a different country such as Beijing or even my brother’s fraternity house which is right downtown State College. Walking into situations with an open mind definitely helps avoid unexpected culture shock. With this in mind, I now go into different settings telling myself that there are always going to be lifestyles and behaviors way beyond my comfort zone, but I have to remember that my way of living will not always be the same as others.