

THE EXPERIENCES OF STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

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Table of Contents

Abstract	iv
List of Tables and Figures	v
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
Chapter 2 Literature Review	9
Historical Overview	9
Literature Specific to Thesis Subject	10
Critique of Literature	15
Chapter 3 Research Design	17
Methodology	17
Sample Population	17
Data Collection	18
Instrumentation	19
Data Analysis	23
Triangulation	24
Informed Consent	25
Ethical Considerations	26
Confidentiality	26
Chapter 4 The Student Exchange Experience	28
The Participants	28
The Experience	30
Questionnaire Responses	31
Interview Responses	45

Summary of the Experience	65
Chapter 5 Learning from the Exchange Experience	68
Transformative Learning	68
Cultural Learning	91
Learning About Other Cultures	91
Learning About Canada	104
Chapter 6 Implications and Conclusions	108
Appendices	116
A. Student Exchange Program Questionnaire	116
B. Interview Guide	119
C. Informed Consent for Questionnaire	121
D. Informed Consent for Interview	123
Literature Cited	125

Abstract

Each year universities send students abroad to participate in student exchange programs. There is very little research on what happens to these students as a result of their experiences, especially in a Canadian context. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of students who have participated in a student exchange program and what they learned through those experiences. Using a phenomenological approach, data was collected through questionnaires and interviews with returned exchange students. The exchange program provided a transformative learning experience for students, and also an opportunity to learn about other cultures as well as their own culture. This study provides insight into the student exchange experience in a Canadian context, an area where there is currently very little literature available. This study also presents some implications for practice and for further research.

List of Tables and Figures

Table 1 Interview Participants	30
Figure 1 Cultural Adjustment	31
Figure 2 Understanding of Host Culture	32
Figure 3 General Cultural Understanding	33
Figure 4 Communication	34
Figure 5 Awareness of Canadian Culture	35
Figure 6 Personal Change	36
Figure 7 Independence	37
Figure 8 Acceptance of Differences	38
Figure 9 Readjustment to Home	39
Figure 10 Reflection	40
Figure 11 Interest in World Events	41
Figure 12 Talking about Experience	42
Figure 13 Continuing Impact	43

CHAPTER 1

Introduction and Rationale

Introduction

University student exchange programs offer people the opportunity to live immersed in culture other than their own while continuing to work towards their degrees by taking courses at a foreign university. Student exchange programs are based on a legal agreement between two or more institutions to allow an exchange of students between them for the purpose of academic study. Most often there are supporting offices or staff members that help administer the exchange programs and assist in orienting the students to their new environments.

Having worked with the University of Manitoba's International Centre for Students (ICS) exchange program since 2004, I have noted a number of patterns emerging in regards to the characteristics of exchange programs, and from other university exchange programs based on discussions with other program administrators. Based on my personal knowledge and experience of coordinating the program and by examining the exchange databases, the majority of outbound participants in student exchange programs will have completed their first year of studies. They will generally study abroad for either one or two semesters which would be for a period of approximately three to twelve months. Most students participate in an exchange program during their undergraduate course of study. After an exchange is completed, students return to their home universities to complete their degree programs. Occasionally students complete their final semester of classes while abroad, but this represents a small proportion of students. Some students return directly into the following term of courses,

while others return at the start of or during their summer break and have a few months prior to beginning classes again.

There are a number of types of study abroad program models. Hoffa (1998) places these programs onto a continuum with integrated programs at one end and study centre programs at the other end. In integrated programs, “students will enrol directly in a foreign educational institution for the purpose of linguistic and cultural immersion” (p.31). In study centre programs, students participate in “programs operated by one or more U.S. universities and staffed at least in part by U.S. faculty offering U.S. standard course work and related services” (Hoffa, 1998, p.31). Sowa (2002) also offers a list of three models of study abroad programs which are total immersion, protective study and tour models, and calls all of them ‘exchange programs.’ “The total immersion model places U.S. students in a foreign university for the duration of at least one semester.... This model allows students to participate in academic courses and experience an in-depth study of the language and culture of the country in which they are residing” (Sowa, 2002, p.63). “The protective studies abroad model ties students to a U.S. program with resident advisors and instructors, and the study tour provides an overview of a topic or countries” (Sowa, 2002, p.64). The University of Manitoba International Centre for Students’ exchange program would be at the integrated end of Hoffa’s continuum and fits into Sowa’s definition of the total immersion model.

The University of Manitoba provides an orientation program for both inbound exchange students when they arrive and for outbound exchange students prior to their departure. Based on discussions with a variety of other university student exchange administrators in Canada, these orientations are the norm. The depth and breadth of this

orientation likely varies according to institution. Based on discussions with other exchange program administrators, some universities are also beginning to explore the possibility of providing re-entry and debriefing sessions for students who return from exchanges. One of the challenges in providing re-entry or debriefing programming is that there has not been significant research done in a Canadian context to explore the experiences of exchange program participants. Any re-entry or debriefing program that will successfully address the needs of returning exchange students needs to be based on something more than the assumption that services are needed in some form or another.

In promoting student exchange programs to students, staff, and parents, at the University of Manitoba, a list of benefits to students is often used. Some of the benefits used in promotions done by the ICS student exchange program office are that students may learn another language; they can learn their course material from a new perspective; that they will increase their employability after graduation; and they will grow personally, gain independence, and acquire valuable cross cultural skills. Although the assumptions about the benefits of student exchange programs may be correct, it is important to have a more solid foundation for the information given to students and others about the program. An exploration of the stories and experiences of exchange student participants would assist in providing a solid foundation which is built on the lived experiences of the students.

Rationale

The only study this researcher was able to find on the experiences of Canadian exchange program participants was a dissertation by Shougee (2000) published by the University of Toronto. There have been other studies on the experiences of students

completing degrees in foreign countries by Archwamety (1996), Christophi and Thompson (2007), Cox (2007), and Gaw (2000). There have also been a number of studies based on U.S. study abroad programs and not specifically on student exchange programs by Cohen and Shively (2007); Fuller (2007); Hansel (1988); Kitsantas (2004); Lewis and Niesenbaum (2005); Pool and Davis (2006); and Ruddock and Turner (2007). It may be possible to hypothesize about the experiences of exchange students in Canadian university programs based on the results of these other studies however, research based on Canadian programs is still needed.

There is a real need for student exchange program providers in Canada to be able to describe the experiences of students in their programs. Students and parents want to be as prepared as possible for the experience and a clearer understanding of that experience would provide peace of mind for many of them. There are many possible outcomes but very little research behind those assertions in Canadian contexts. As the focus on internationalization of universities grows, there will be a greater need to have a better understanding of student exchange program experiences. Research into exchange participation can help to define the position of exchange programs in university internationalization strategies.

According to information in their student database from 1997 to 2009, the ICS exchange program has consistently increased the number of students participating in exchanges each year. If this is any indication of a national trend in exchange participation, then providers will need to become more aware of the impact that studying abroad is having on their students. They need to be prepared to provide follow up programming if that is what is needed. Most practitioners would likely agree that some

follow up is needed, but in what form that might take and what issues need to be addressed are questions that are difficult to answer without further research.

According to Hoffa (1998) students learn about their own cultures as well as the culture they visit while on exchange. Other benefits to students also include an enriched education experience, a global outlook, language acquisition, career preparedness, personal growth, independent thinking, and increased self confidence (Hoffa, 1998). However, the influence of student exchanges may only be temporary because of the short-term nature of student exchange programs. The level of influence may also depend on the age of the participant, the length of time they are abroad, whether or not they participated with a friend or went alone. The perceived impacts may also change over the passage of time following the students' return from their sojourn abroad. Exploring the stories of returned exchange students may reveal what some of these influences are. Students returning to the University of Manitoba through ICS exchange programs are not intentionally given an opportunity for reflection following their experiences. Unless students make a deliberate effort to share their stories with exchange providers, there is no way to know the details or impact of their experience.

Purpose of the Study

This study explores the experiences and stories of University of Manitoba participants in student exchange programs, and looks at the lived experiences of exchange students who have returned. This study also examines the learning experiences of exchange program participants. The results of this study are useful for the development of both pre-departure and re-entry or debriefing programming. Results are also helpful to student exchange program professionals to better understand the needs of their returned

students, and to help prepare future student exchange program participants more effectively. The study is also useful for institutions who are exploring the value of further developing their student exchange programs.

There were some potential limitations to this study of returned student exchange participants. The first potential limitation was the willingness of students to provide responses to the questionnaires or participate in an interview. Each student may have had different motivations for studying abroad, and they came to the experience with a background of other experiences. This likely had a significant impact on what the benefits were to each student. Each destination that students went to would have had an impact on their experience as well. The experiences of a student immediately following their exchange period might also have influenced their perception of the entire experience. Some of those following experiences may include the ease in which courses were transferred back to their home institution, how they transitioned back into relationships at home, and more. There are many different variables that might have affected the lived experience of an exchange program participant that it is not possible in the scope of this study to account for each one. This study has not attempted to determine the impact of each potential variable, but rather uses a phenomenological approach to explore the experiences and stories of University of Manitoba participants in student exchange programs, look at the lived experiences of exchange students who have returned, and examines the learning experiences of exchange program participants.

Definition of Terms

There are a number of terms used in this study that could be used in a variety of ways. It is useful define some of the terminology early on in order be clear about the purpose and scope of this study.

Student exchange programs are academic programs in which students are enrolled in courses at a university abroad and integrated into that universities academic system for a minimum of three months and a maximum of one year.

Student exchange administrators are the university staff who are responsible for overseeing the administrative tasks associated with students' participation in the academic programs abroad.

Phenomenology is a method of study which looks at the “meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of a phenomenon for a person or group of people” (Patton, 2002, p. 482).

Culture includes the feelings, attitudes, opinions, and assumptions which members of a culture hold and also includes also the social norms, ways of behaving, and carrying out everyday activities.

Host culture is the culture of the country in which students live while participating in an exchange program abroad.

Adjustment is also adaptation. Students need to cope with the differences in the culture between their host country and Canada. There are a variety of ways that students might adjust ranging from accepting differences and changing to fit a new way of thinking and behaving, to rejecting those new ways.

Transformative learning theory tries to explain the way that transformations occur in adult learning (Mezirow, 1990). It has to do with being immersed in new experiences and

how those new experiences are assimilated and lead to change in those who have been immersed (Cranton, 2006).

Organization of the Thesis

This chapter begins with an introduction to the spectrum of student exchange programs in university settings and how the exchange program offered through the International Centre for Students at the University of Manitoba fits into that spectrum. It also outlines the need for research into student exchange programs and what this study will do to address that need.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the current literature that is relevant to the experience of living in foreign cultures. It also provides a review of literature that specifically addresses study abroad issues. Chapter 3 describes the methodology of this study and includes details on gathering and analysing data, and the means used to ensure quality and ethical standards were maintained in the research. Chapter 4 provides an overview of the participants in this study and describes the lived experience of a student exchange. Chapter 5 outlines the transformative and cultural learning experiences of participants in this study. Chapter 6 looks at a number of implications of the findings of this study and summarizes the conclusions.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Historical Overview

Most of the recent research around re-entry adjustment and experiences of international sojourns is based on populations other than participants of student exchange programs and very little research based on Canadians is available compared to the amount of research based on American sojourners. Also, much of the recent research that has been done is on international students who have completed degrees or studied on a long term basis in a foreign culture (Christofi & Thompson, 2007). Other research has looked at JET program participants from the USA who had worked in Japan as language instructors (Sussman, 2002) and returnees from international work assignments for their companies (Bossard & Peterson, 2005; Choi, 2003; J.Cox 2004; and Furuya, Stevens, Oddou, Bird & Mendenhall, 2007; Sussman, 2001). Research has also looked at students who had grown up internationally and were returning to their home country (USA) after a prolonged absence for the purpose of attending college or university (Gaw, 2000). Additional research examined American and Canadian expatriates in Taiwan who decided to stay abroad (Swagler & Jome, 2005) as well as international students returning home from North America (L.Cox, 2006). However, one fairly recent dissertation did focus specifically on Canadian exchange students who have sojourned abroad for a period of less than one year (Shougee, 2000).

There is some research done on short-term student abroad participation by other countries, such as the studies based in the United States by Cohen and Shively (2007), Lewis and Niesenbaum (2005) and several others, but only the one study that could be

found on Canadian participants was by Shougee (2000). This might be because there are significantly fewer Canadian universities than American universities. According to information available in the student exchange files at the International Centre for Students, the University of Manitoba first started exchanging students through that office in 1997, although some faculty specific programs may pre-date this. The relative newness of these programs may also be a reason for lack of research.

Literature Specific to Thesis Topic

Much of the research found on students who have participated in some sort of sojourn abroad is focused on those who have completed degrees abroad such as studies by Archewamety (1996), Christolfi and Thompson (2007), Gaw (1999 & 2007) and Sussman (2000 & 2002). However, some of their findings might be relevant to the experiences of returned exchange students.

Most researchers found that returnees did not expect the experience of returning home to be as difficult as it was (Bossard & Peterson, 2005; Choi, 2003; Sussman, 2002; L.Cox 2006; Shougee, 2000). It is possible that the unexpectedness of the need to re-adjust to being home exacerbates the difficulty of the return experience for some students. Returning exchange participants may or may not experience the same degree of difficulty adjusting because they have not been away as long as many of the participants in the above mentioned research studies.

Many returnees felt out of place when they went back to their home countries (Christophi, 2007; Sussman, 2000; Shougee, 2000). Returnees had changed, the people back home had changed, and both groups needed to work to renew many of their relationships (Shougee, 2000). Often returnees found that those at home were not

interested in hearing about their experiences abroad and did not value the changes the returnees had undergone. When the experience of coming home did not live up to returnees expectations, the process of re-entry was much more difficult (Christophi, 2007; Sussman 2000). In some cases, the challenges of returning were so great that sojourners chose to leave their home countries again and move to the countries they had previously been visiting (Christophi, 2007). The changes in the sojourners and the people back home is likely to be less extreme for those who are going abroad for a shorter time period than participants in the above mentioned studies. Regardless of the amount of time spent abroad, changes do occur. A returnee as well as those who remain at home may expect there to be even fewer changes when the sojourn abroad is brief, so there may still be the challenge of adjusting to unanticipated differences for returned exchange students.

Researchers have also looked at some of the things that could potentially ease the difficulty of re-entry for those who are returning home. Returnees found that others were uninterested in hearing about their experiences abroad (Bossard & Peterson, 2005; Shougee 2000). Even though it was difficult to find willing listeners, returnees found that talking about their experiences was helpful in easing the adjustment to returning home (Christophi, 2007; Shougee 2000).

Many returnees felt that they had grown personally while abroad (Bossard & Peterson, 2005; Shougee, 2000). Bossard and Peterson (2005) discuss some of the changes that his population of returnees felt they had undergone such as personal growth, a broadened perspective, and improved communication. Shougee (2000) adds to the list a greater understanding of other cultures and other ways of doing daily life. Returned exchange students may experience changes in these areas as well.

Many students experience some shifts in their cultural identity or the level of identification they felt with their home cultures. Cultural identity was also found to be a factor influencing the level of re-entry distress experienced by returnees. When returnees felt a lower level of identification with their home cultures, they felt a higher level of distress upon their return (Sussman, 2001). The longer an individual spent abroad, the less identification they felt with their home culture (J.Cox, 2004). Sussman (2002) emphasized that it was not certain that low home culture identification led to greater re-entry distress or if it was the other way around.

According to Cox (2004) debriefing helped returnees strengthen their home culture identity but did not decrease the distress of returning home. However Sussman (2001) stated that a lack of preparation for the re-entry process increased repatriation distress and also lowered identification with the home culture. Most returnees don't receive any support from their employers upon re-entry (Bossard & Peterson, 2005; Choi, 2003).

Students go through a variety of emotions upon returning home that influence their ability to adjust. Some of the symptoms and challenges highlighted were boredom; lack of interest from others; difficulty in being able to explain the experience abroad; feeling homesick for the host country; lack of understanding from others; feeling alienated or out of place; an inability to apply the new knowledge and skills learned abroad; a sense of loss and grief; and feelings of depression and wanting to be alone (AustraLearn, 2007; Cadenhead-Hames, 2007; Ledwell, 2002; University of British Columbia, 2007; University of the Pacific, 2007). Having the opportunity to explore the

stories of those who have gone on exchanges may allow many of these challenges to be addressed more proactively.

All of the re-entry resources mentioned in this study discussed the process of adjustment for going abroad and then returning home (AustraLearn, 2007; Cadenhead-Hames, 2007; Ledwell, 2002; University of British Columbia, 2007; University of the Pacific, 2007). There is the initial high of being away, the low of not feeling like you fit in, and then moving back up to the high of being adjusted to the new culture. Then the cycle repeats upon returning home. There is the initial high of returning home to family and friends, the low of feeling homesick for and grieving the loss of the host culture, and back up to the balance of adjustment to being home again. Many of the challenges students face during these cycles can likely be traced in some way to the growing pains associated with the changes that come as a result of participation in an exchange program. Knowing the experiences and stories of the returned exchange students may allow for better understanding of these cycles.

The University of the Pacific (2007) hosts a website titled “What’s up with Culture?,” which is useful in helping students explore issues of cultural adjustment and change that may occur in them as a part of participating in a study abroad program. What is also useful in this web resource is a list of potential changes that a student may have undergone during their time abroad. Some examples of these are: “I am more knowledgeable about another culture and lifestyle;” “I am more flexible and able to adjust to changes in others;” “I have a greater sense of responsibility for other people;” and “I am sensitive to subtle features of my own culture that I had never seen before.”

These statements could provide a framework for students to begin to understand the ways in which they may have changed.

Messer and Wolter (2007) explore the value of exchange programs in terms of economic benefits by looking at starting salaries and the likelihood of participating students pursuing postgraduate study. In a small study of nursing students, Ruddock and Turner (2007) look at cultural sensitivity in those who have returned from international experiences. Curran (2007) explores the career value of participating in exchanges, and found that it is only an advantage when skills have been developed intentionally and returnees are able to articulate the knowledge and skills gained through the experience.

Applying an adult learning theory may provide a useful framework for examining the exchange experiences of students. According to Cranton (2006) adult learning is voluntary, they “choose to become involved in either informal or formal learning activities” (p. 2). Participation in a student exchange is voluntary as well. Transformative learning is especially relevant to the student exchange experience. Cranton (2006) writes that “transformative learning has to do with making meaning out of experiences and questioning assumptions based on prior experience” (p. 8). And experience is “something to get immersed in, valued as a means of defining a lifestyle rather than something whose value lies in its potential for knowledge” (Usher, Bryant, & Johnston, p. 109).

Transformative learning, according to Mezirow (1990) tries to explain the way that transformations occur in adult learning. The changes that may occur in students because of their participation in the student exchange program could be explained by this theory. In transformative learning, meanings refer to “the structure of assumptions within which new experience is assimilated and transformed by one’s past experience during the

process of interpretation” (Mezirow, 1990, p. 2). The way students make meaning out of their exchange experience could lead to transformative learning if they take the opportunity to critically reflect on their experience.

According to Mezirow (1990), to interpret, to critically reflect on an incident or experience is to make meaning of it. When this process changes how one thinks about something and consequently how they behave, then transformative learning has occurred.

Critique of Literature

There are so many different variables that have an impact on the experiences of a student exchange program and it would likely be impossible to determine without a doubt, exactly which ones are from the program and which outcomes are due to numerous other factors. Some variables could be in the participants past experiences, in their family interactions, in the destination, in the age of the participant, length of study, destination of study, personal characteristics and so on.

Much of the literature outlined here has a focus on re-entry and the challenges of returning home. There is no clear consensus on what causes distress upon re-entry since there are so many possible variables that could have an impact. Any examination of re-entry is lacking without an accompanying focus on sojourners experiences while they are abroad.

Some of the literature outlined in this chapter looks at what skills are gained and what changes occur in those who have participated in a sojourn abroad. Although this is very useful data, it is also important to explore the ways in which these skills are learned, and what it is about an experience abroad that leads to personal change.

This study is meant to explore the experiences and stories of University of Manitoba participants in student exchange programs, look at the lived experiences of exchange students who have returned, and examine the learning experiences of exchange program participants.

CHAPTER 3

Research Design

Methodology

This is an exploratory, qualitative study that helps to create a greater understanding of the phenomenon of student exchange experiences. It explores the experiences and stories of University of Manitoba participants in student exchange programs, looks at the lived experiences of exchange students who have returned, and examines the learning experiences of exchange program participants. Some of the areas of exploration in this study include participants' adjustment to the new culture, learning about the new culture, learning about Canadian culture, personal changes, and adjustment during their return home. The study used phenomenological methods and analysis in order to explore this topic. "Phenomenological analysis seeks to grasp and elucidate the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of a phenomenon for a person or group of people" (Patton, 2002, p. 482). A purposive sampling approach was used to select participants for this study.

Two methods of data collection were used; questionnaires and in depth interviews. Data from the questionnaires was combined to compare how students responded to each question. The data from the interview responses was then analysed by highlighting statements about the experience and grouping the statements into meaning units. Answers from the questionnaires were also compared to interview responses, and where available, compared to relevant literature findings.

Sample Population

A purposive sampling approach was necessary to ensure that all participants had experienced the same phenomenon (Creswell, 1998). Purposive sampling is aimed at selecting specific populations to study who are rich in information about the phenomenon to be studied (Patton, 2002). The population studied were all previous participants in the ICS student exchange program at the University of Manitoba. All potential subjects contacted had participated in the exchange program between the 2004/05 and 2007/08 academic years and had spent from three months up to one year abroad. Selected participants had returned from their exchange experience for a minimum of three months.

The purpose of selecting students who had participated during this time period was to target a population of students that were past the initial re-entry challenges and were at varying stages of reintegration back into their lives at home. The range also allowed for responses to be based on both longer and shorter times of reflection that the returnees would have had following their exchange experience.

Most students who went abroad through the ICS student exchange program would have participated on exchange for a period between a range of three months to one year. This time period accounts for the average duration that students spend abroad when participating in an exchange program through the University of Manitoba.

All of the selected students were provided with a questionnaire. All students were invited to participate in an interview. Interview populations were selected from students who indicated their willingness to participate in an interview.

Data Collection

The program coordinators for the ICS student exchange program at the University of Manitoba sent out an email request to all students who fit the criteria for this study. A

total of sixty students were contacted. Students were provided with a brief outline of the purpose of the study and asked if they were willing to participate in a study by responding to a questionnaire, and then later to participate in an interview if interested. Students were asked to indicate their willingness to participate by sending their contact information to the researcher by email. Twenty one students responded to the request for participation in the study. Creswell (1989) notes that there are a variety of ideal participant numbers that may be included in a phenomenological study. A range of interviewees could include from anywhere from one to several hundred individuals, but a reasonable number would include approximately ten participants in in-depth interviews.

Students who indicated their willingness to participate in the study were asked if they would prefer to receive their questionnaire by email or via regular mail. All twenty one students requested to receive the questionnaire by email. All twenty one students returned their questionnaires to the researcher by email as well. Questionnaire respondents were asked if they were willing to participate in an in depth interview at a later date if contacted by the researcher. Eight students indicated that they would be willing to participate in an interview with the researcher.

In depth interviews took place after the questionnaire results were received. Interview participants had all indicated their willingness to participate in an interview. A total of eight participants indicated their willingness to be interviewed, and all eight were interviewed for this study. "For a phenomenological study, the process of collecting information involves primarily in-depth interviews with as many as 10 individuals" (Creswell, 1989, p. 122).

Instrumentation

The first questions in the questionnaire (Appendix A) determined some of the basic information about the student's exchange such as where they went on exchange, how long they were abroad, when they went on exchange, and if they went alone or with other students. Some questions addressed their familiarity with the destination they went to on their exchange. These questions were meant to establish some of the context for the participants' exchange experiences.

Later questions asked students about various aspects of their exchange experience. The questionnaire asked students to rate their experiences in a variety of areas such as their adjustment to the new culture, learning about the new culture, learning about Canadian culture, personal changes, and adjustment to the return home. Students were also asked to provide their contact information with the questionnaire if they were willing to be interviewed at a later date. The questions in the questionnaire were based on some of the findings in research on individuals who have completed a sojourn abroad although not necessarily as exchange students. One purpose of the questionnaire was to provide an overview of what some of the experiences of the exchange participants were. Another purpose of the questionnaire was to provide a basis for the topics that were discussed in the interviews.

The themes from the questionnaire responses were further explored through in-depth interviews at a later date. Interview questions and topics were determined in part by the individual responses provided by each of the students in their questionnaires. An interview guide (Appendix B) was developed based on the questionnaire which was

administered during the initial part of the proposed study. The interviews were recorded and transcribed to aid analysis of the content of students' responses.

As in the questionnaire, the first questions in the interview determined some of the basic information about the student's exchange experience such as where they went, how long they were abroad, when they went, and if they went alone or with other students from the University of Manitoba. Some questions also addressed their familiarity with the destination they went to on their exchange. The answers to these questions ensured that the same background information is available for all interviewees regardless of whether they had completed a questionnaire or not.

Other questions were on topics such as adjusting to the new culture, awareness of Canadian culture, the exchange experience in general, personal change, and the adjustment to returning home. The interviews included asking for students to share stories that related to those topics. The interview guide provided a list of possible questions to use in discussing these topics with the respondents. The interviews were conversational in style and followed the interview guide. The purpose of the interviews was to provide a more in-depth understanding of the exchange experience and to allow respondents to share stories and give detailed descriptions.

The use of both questionnaires and interviews as methods of data gathering provided a depth and breadth of responses that would be unavailable with only a singular method. The questionnaire provided a breadth of data and also provided a basis for some of the interview content. The interviews provided a depth of response that could not be obtained through the questionnaires.

The questions in the questionnaire and the questions in the interview guide corresponded closely to one another. Questions 7-10 in the questionnaire paralleled questions 7-9 in the interview guide on the subject of adjusting to the new culture. Question 11 in the questionnaire corresponded to question 10 in the interview guide in relation to awareness of Canadian culture. Questions 11-13 in the interview guide were unique to the interview process and were about the exchange experience in general. Questions 12-14 in the questionnaire paralleled questions 14-16 in the interview guide on the subject of personal change. Questions 15-19 in the questionnaire corresponded to questions 17-19 in the interview guide on adjusting to being back home.

Culture was an important aspect of this proposed study. There are many possible definitions of culture. Triandis (as cited in Pederson, 1988) writes of subjective culture as the “internalized feelings, attitudes, opinions, and assumptions members of a culture hold” (p. 4). For the purposes of this study, a broadened version of this definition of culture was used, one that also included also the social norms, ways of behaving, and carrying out everyday activities. The interview questions about culture were purposefully general. Students were asked about their first impressions of the country, what they learned about the culture of the country they visited, and what about Canadian culture they became more aware of since living in another country. Students were not required to limit their answers to fit within a limited definition of culture but were encouraged to share based on what they felt the term culture included.

Adjustment was another subject addressed in the questionnaires and interviews. For the purposes of this study adjustment was used interchangeably with adaptation. The assumption was that the student will have needed to cope with differences in the culture

between their host country and home country. There are a variety of ways that the student may have adjusted ranging from accepting differences and changing to fit a new way of thinking and behaving, to rejecting those new ways. Students may have felt at ease or at odds in the new culture. The nature of what comprises experience is a difficult concept to define. Subjects would have had the experience of studying in a foreign university. Their experience abroad would most likely have encompassed more than just the study aspect, and could include socializing outside of class with both local and other international students, working, traveling, and more. The exchange experience encompasses both the external and internal aspects of what the student encounters during their time on exchange.

Personal change was another subject explored in the proposed study. Personal change included attitude changes, cognitive changes, and behavioural changes. Participants were encouraged to talk about the changes that they felt were important to their own experiences of being on exchange. Change occurring in a participant's thinking processes and behaviours would indicate that transformative learning has occurred.

Some of the questions across each topic area related to awareness. Awareness of differences and similarities in culture offer the opportunity for critical thinking to occur. Simply asking many of these questions allowed students the opportunity to reflect more deeply on their experiences.

Data Analysis

In order to study the phenomenon of student exchanges as experienced by the students who participate in them, first the questionnaire responses and then the interview responses were analysed. Following Creswell's (1989) outline of phenomenological data

analysis, information provided in the responses was divided into statements. Statements were then divided into meaning units. These units provided an outline or the essence of what the phenomenon of the exchange experience meant for those who had participated. Interview participants were contacted by email in order to provide them with an opportunity to respond to the researcher's interpretation of their statements.

In phenomenology it is also important to acknowledge the personal experience of the researcher. Patton (2002) writes that in an effort to refrain from making judgements, "the researcher looks inside to become aware of personal bias, to eliminate personal involvement with the subject material, that is, eliminate, or at least gain clarity about, preconceptions" (p. 485). Any analysis done in this study must recognize my occupation as a student exchange program coordinator. I needed to both acknowledge and deliberately work to set aside any biases or prejudgement about what I think a student exchange experience ought to be like for participants. I also needed to acknowledge my hopes for what students would get out of their experiences abroad. My occupation as a student exchange program coordinator and prior interest in the experiences of exchange students was also beneficial in establishing rapport with interview participants.

The wording used in the questionnaire was deliberately neutral in order to avoid any bias based on my ideas about what the exchange program should be like. Interview questions were also deliberately neutral in order to avoid influencing the comments and stories which students shared in the face to face interviews.

Triangulation

In order to strengthen the study, triangulation was used. Triangulation is the use of combining more than one method or data (Patton, 2002). Methodological triangulation,

using both qualitative and quantitative methods of collecting data, was used in this study (Hussein, 2009). The questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data and the interviews were used to collect qualitative data. Data triangulation or the use of different data sources was also used in this study (Hussein, 2009). By comparing the literature to the findings in both the questionnaire and the interview data, data triangulation was also used.

Member checking was used in this study in order to ensure the integrity and accuracy of the data and interpretations of the researcher. Participants were given the results of the study by email. They were invited to provide comments and feedback on the data and analysis of the data. Only two participants responded and neither student felt that there were any inaccuracies in the data or the interpretations of the researcher.

Informed Consent

Students were initially contacted by email in which they received a letter outlining the proposed study.. All of those who indicated their interest in participating received a consent form (Appendix C) along with the questionnaire. There was a second consent form specifically for the interviews (Appendix D). The interviewer discussed the purpose of the study with each interviewee. The interviewees were then provided with the consent form prior to commencing the interview conversation. They were given time to read through the consent form, ask any questions they had, and then sign it if they were willing to continue. All interviewees signed the consent forms and completed their interviews.

All participants were aware that they were subjects in a study and all data collected for the study was gathered from the participants themselves. All participants of

both the questionnaire and the interviews were over the age of majority and were legally able to give their valid consent for participating in the study.

Ethical Considerations

Although the participants of the study had also participated in an exchange program through the University of Manitoba, they were no longer receiving services from the ICS exchange office. In the process of gaining consent, it was stressed that there was no obligation to participate and that participants could withdraw from the study at any time. Furthermore, during the process of data collection, the researcher was on leave from her position in the ICS exchange office and was not providing any services during that time period. Also, the initial email requesting participation in the study was sent by the acting exchange coordinator and responses were sent to the researcher in order to avoid pressuring potential participants.

There was no emotional stress experienced by participants as a result of this study that was greater than that experienced by the subjects in their daily lives. Participants were reminded that they could withdraw from the study at any point. The study did not involve any physical stress. There was also no deception involved and no threat to the personal safety of the subjects.

Confidentiality

Subjects were identified by name to the researcher. It was necessary for the researcher to be able to identify the subjects in order to contact them for the interviews as well as for any follow up or clarification needed during the data analysis process. The researcher coded the data in order to be able to identify who had provided that information. The identifying information was kept separately from the data gathered for

the study. In any dissemination of findings, information that might be used to identify the subject was removed in order to avoid compromising confidentiality. All identifying information will be destroyed one year after completion of the study. Subjects who participated in the study will not be recruited for future studies so it is not necessary to keep any identifying information.

The student exchange office staff may be able to determine the identity of participants based on their personal knowledge of the students in the program. This is not a problem since the exchange office staff are required to maintain the confidentiality of student files as well.

CHAPTER 4

The Student Exchange Experience

Chapter four will review who the participants of the study were, what their questionnaires revealed, and what the lived experiences of going on exchange was for them. The first section provides an overview of who the subjects of this study were for both the questionnaire and the interview processes. There were twenty-one participants in this study. All participants completed a questionnaire and eight of those respondents also participated in an interview. The second section of this chapter covers both the questionnaire results and the interview responses that relate to the lived experiences of exchange students.

Participants

Of the twenty-one questionnaire respondents, seventeen were female and four were male. According to the ICS exchange students database there are usually more females than males participating in student exchanges, so the ratio of males to females in this study is not atypical. It is also possible that because the researcher was female, that more females felt comfortable participating in the study.

Questionnaire respondents had participated in exchanges to ten different countries. Six participants had gone to Australia on exchange, three to Turkey, three to Japan, two to Mexico, two to Denmark, and one each to England, France, Germany, Iceland, and the United States. Based on the ICS exchange students database, Australia is the most frequented country destination so a higher ratio of respondents who had gone to Australia on exchange is consistent with those numbers.

Two of the questionnaire respondents were in their second year of studies, eleven respondents were in their third year, four respondents were in their fourth year and three were graduate students. Fourteen of the questionnaire respondents had other University of Manitoba students present at their exchange institution during their time abroad and seven were there on their own. Six respondents had visited their destination countries prior to their exchange, fourteen had not, and one student did not provide this information. Six respondents had lived abroad prior to their exchange, fourteen had not, and one student did not provide this information.

All interview participants completed questionnaires and had indicated that they were willing to participate in an interview. All questionnaire respondents who were willing to participate in interviews were contacted. There were seven female and one male interview participants. The ratio of one male to seven females is not consistent with the balance of males to females participating in an exchange. Generally there is a higher ratio of male students participating in the ICS student exchange program than is represented by the interview sample. All interview participants are shown in Table 1 with information relating to their gender, country destination, the duration of their exchange, and the length of time that had passed between completion of their exchange and their interviews.

Table 1.

Interview Participants

NAME	Gender	Country visited	Duration of exchange	Time from exchange to interview
Kerry	Female	Australia	4 months	1 year 5 months
Lisa	Female	Australia	4 months	2 years 5 months
Emma	Female	France	8 months	2years 6 months
Alice	Female	Japan	12 months	3 months
Ted	Male	Japan	12 months	2 years 2 months
Esther	Female	Turkey	5 months	1 year 5 months
Lynn	Female	Turkey	5 months	5 months
Susan	Female	United Kingdom	8 months	6 months

The Experience

This section provides an overview of the questionnaire responses and also looks at the interview responses that relate to the experience of being on exchange. The questionnaires were completed by twenty-one respondents. Participants rated their answers to questions based on whether they strongly agreed, agreed, were undecided, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with the statements provided. The interview responses

follow the questionnaire results and provide more details about the lived experience of being abroad on exchange.

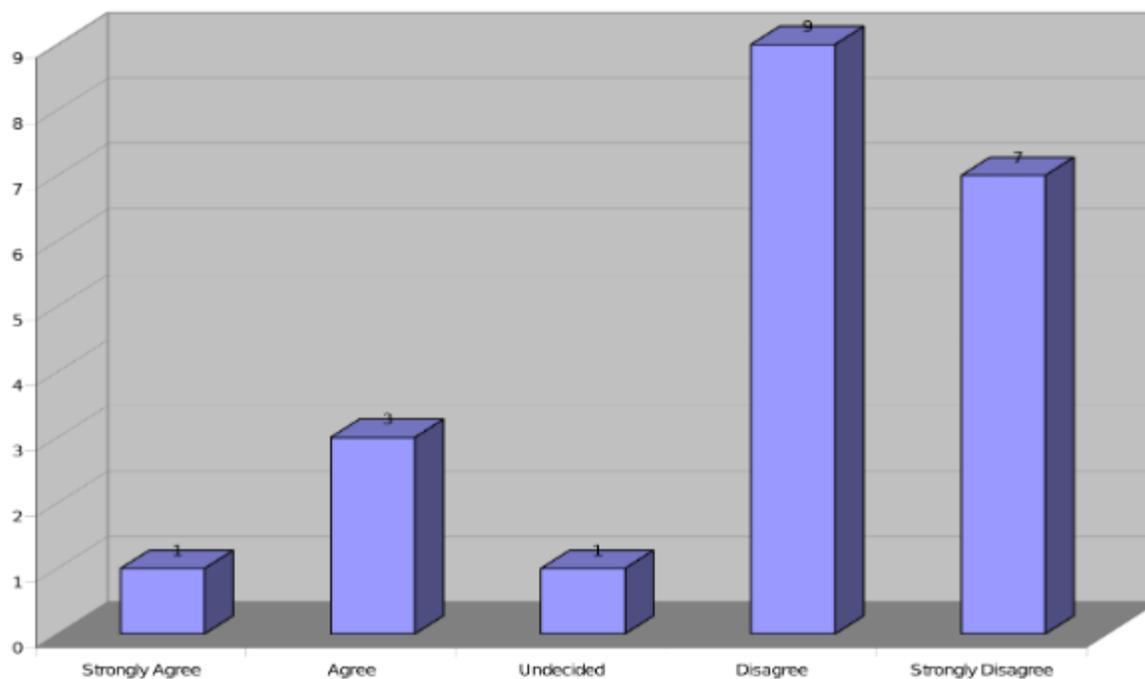
Questionnaire responses.

The first seven questions of the questionnaire provide contextual information about the participants. This information is reviewed in the previous section on questionnaire participants. The questionnaire responses provided below are for questions 8-20 and also include the additional comments that some students added in the space at the end of the questionnaire sheet.

Figure 1.

Cultural Adjustment

8. I had a difficult time adjusting to the new culture in my exchange country.



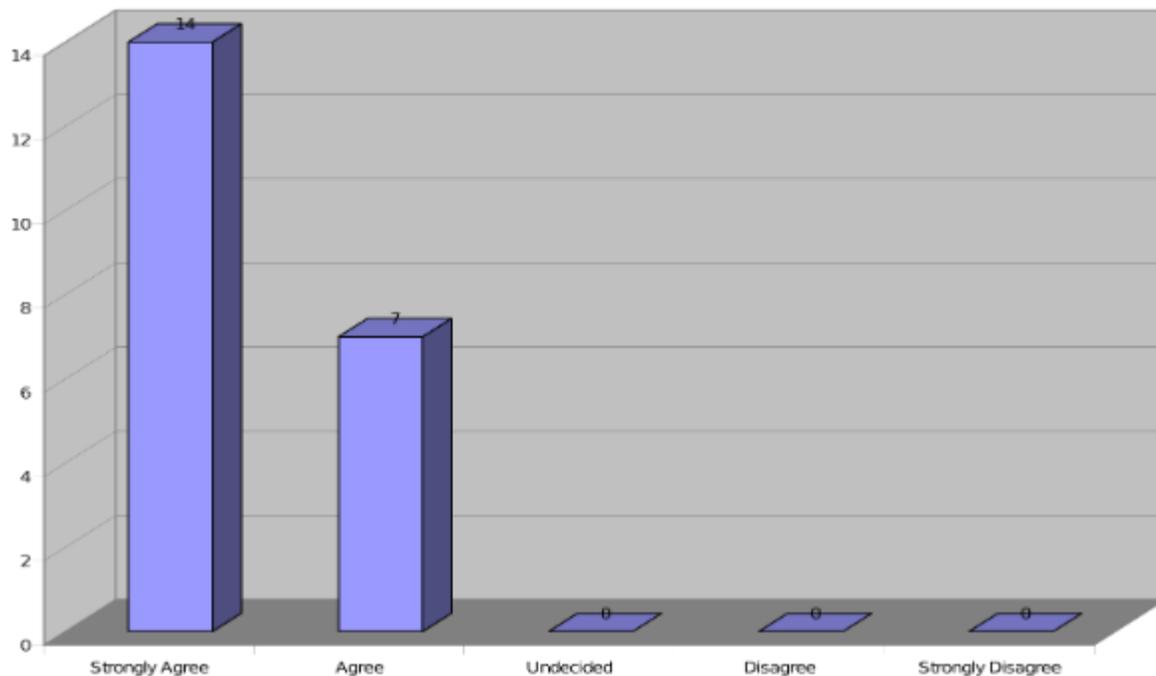
Most participants did not have a difficult time adjusting to the new culture in their exchange countries. The student who strongly agreed and two of the students who agreed

that they did have a difficult time adjusting were the three students who participated in the exchange to Turkey. It is possible that their difficulty in adjusting could be due to a large degree of cultural difference between Canada and Turkey, and also a lack of familiarity with the Turkish culture. The other student who also indicated that she had difficulty in adjusting to the new culture was the girl who participated in the exchange to England. In the interview, she mentioned that she had not been expecting there to be as many cultural differences as she encountered on exchange. It is likely that these unexpected differences contributed to the level of difficulty that she experienced in adjusting to the new culture.

Figure 2.

Understanding of Host Culture

9. I developed a greater understanding about the culture in my exchange country.

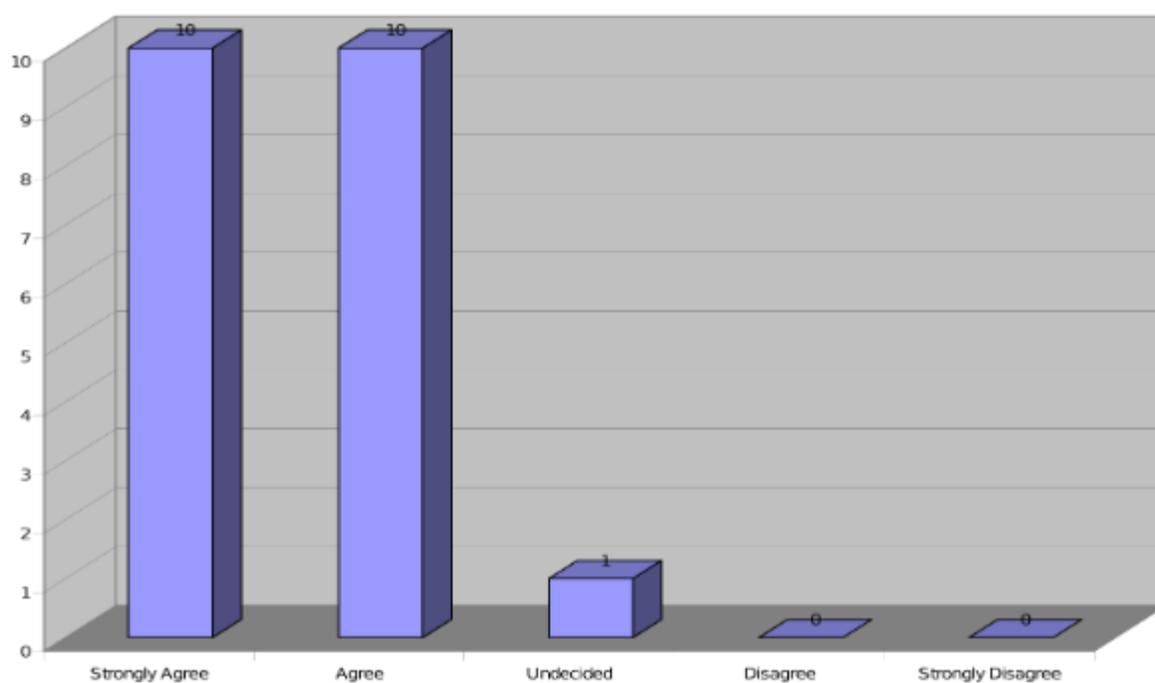


All survey respondents indicated that they developed a greater understanding about the culture in the exchange country. One of the students commented that he had experienced this in travelling to other countries and not just in his immersion experience in Mexico on exchange.

Figure 3.

General Cultural Understanding

10. I developed a greater understanding of other cultures in general.

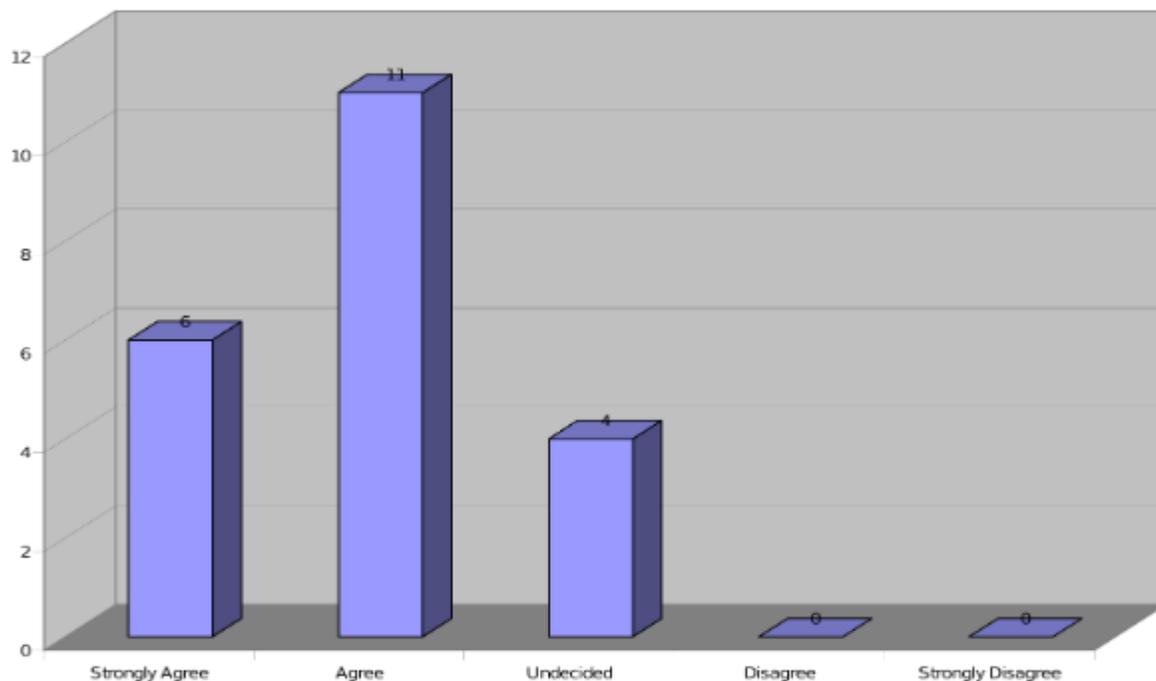


Most of the respondents indicated that they developed a greater understanding of other cultures in general as a result of their exchange experience. Only one respondent was undecided about whether or not she had developed more of an understanding. The lone undecided respondent had participated in the exchange to Turkey.

Figure 4

Communication

11. I am now better able to communicate with people from other cultures.

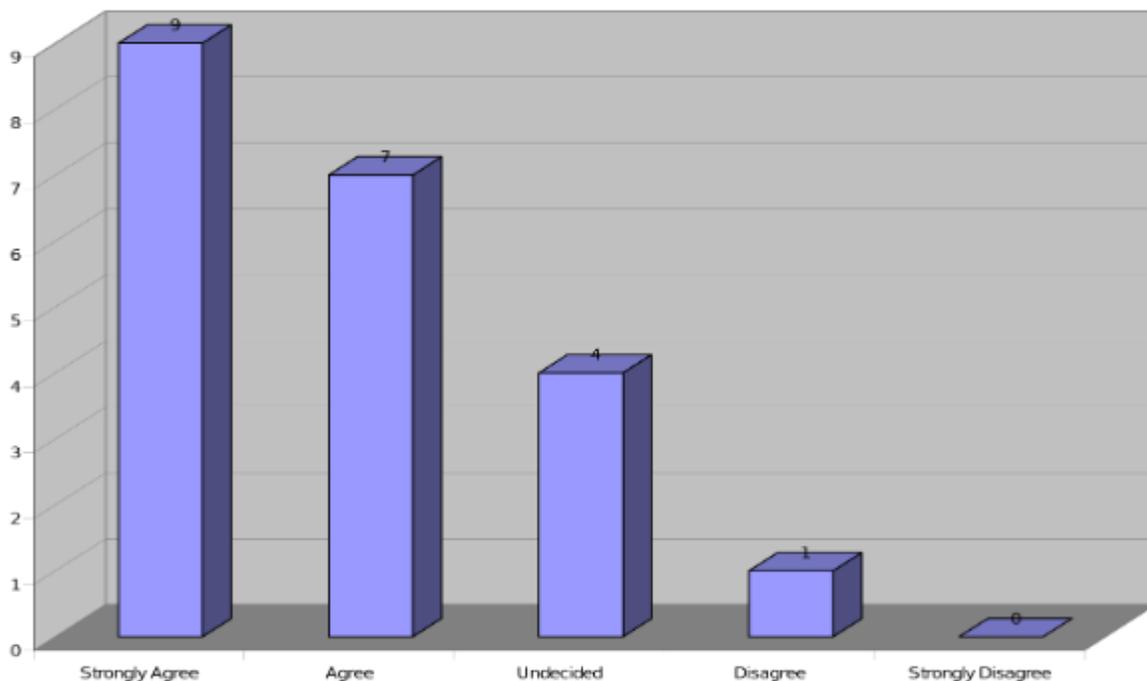


Most of the respondents stated that they were better able to communicate with people from other cultures since going on exchange. Four of the respondents were unsure as to whether or not this was the case for them. None of the respondents disagreed. Of the four respondents who were not sure if they were more able to communicate across cultures, two had participated in the exchange to Australia, one to Turkey and one to Mexico. The participant to Turkey had also indicated that she was not sure if she had learned about other cultures in general.

Figure 5

Awareness of Canadian Culture

12. I increased my awareness of Canadian culture.

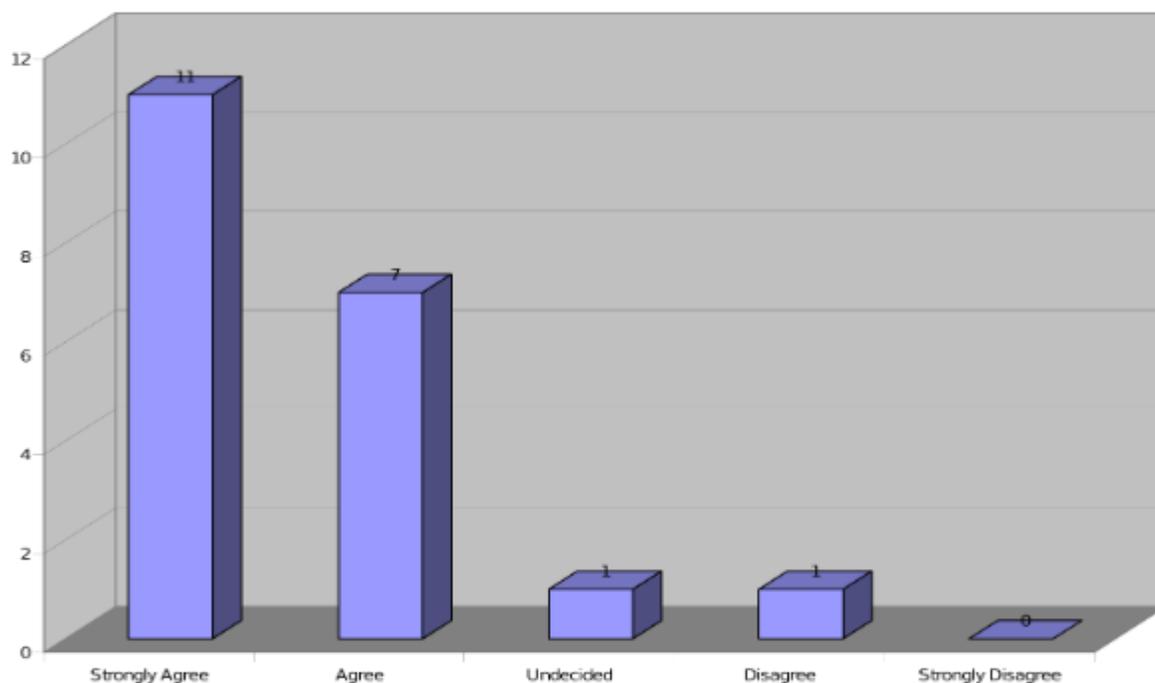


Although the majority of the students indicated positively that they had increased their awareness of Canadian culture, there were four students who were undecided and one that disagreed. The four students who were not sure had participated in exchanges to Denmark, Japan, and two to Australia. The one student who disagreed had participated in an exchange to Japan.

Figure 6

Personal Change

13. I experienced personal change while participating in an exchange.



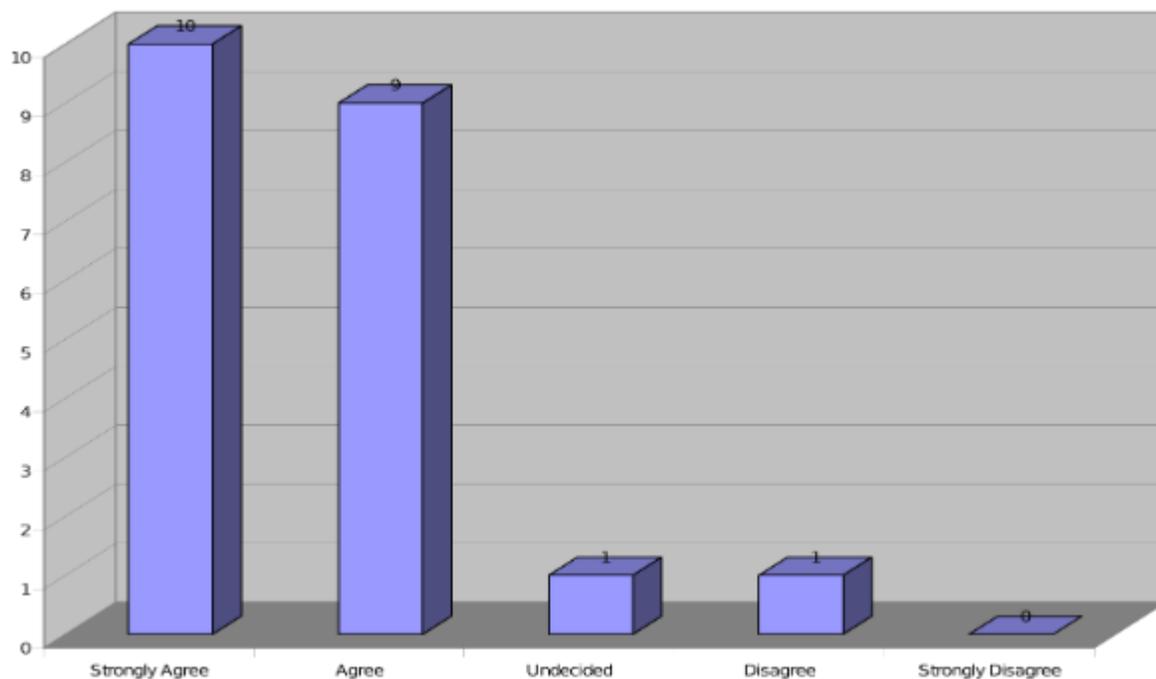
All respondents indicated that they experienced personal change while participating in an exchange. Two of the students said they were not sure if this was the case and one student appeared to disagree, however, for all three students, their other survey answers did indicate specific areas of personal change. The first student who was undecided also indicated becoming more independent, more able to accept differences, more interest in world events, and better communication in other questions. The second undecided student also indicated becoming more independent, being more able to accept differences, having more interest in world events, and gaining better communication skills. The student who said that he did not experience personal change indicated in a later question that he had increased his communication skills and had become more

independent since participating in the exchange. The student wrote in comments at the end of the questionnaire that he did not notice some of those changes until later.

Figure 7

Independence

14. I am more independent since participating in an exchange.

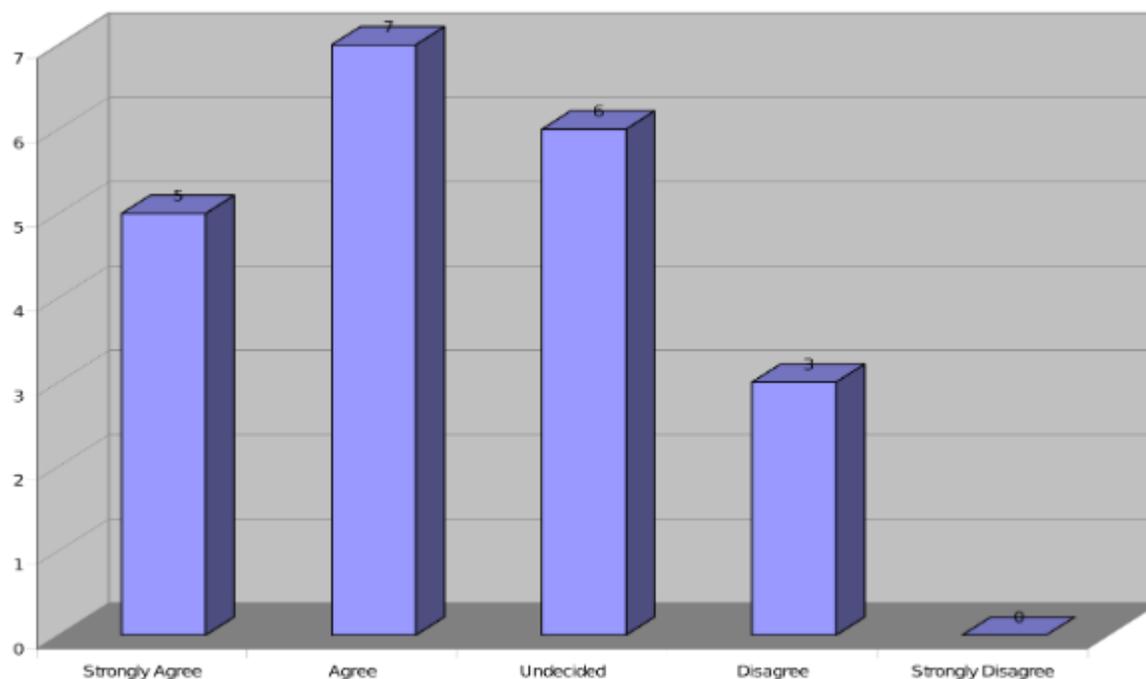


Most of the respondents said that they became more independent since their participation in the exchange program. Only one respondent indicated that they were unsure if this was the case, and only one student disagreed with the statement, adding that they were already independent prior to the exchange.

Figure 8

Acceptance of Differences

15. I am more able to accept differences in others than I was prior to my exchange.

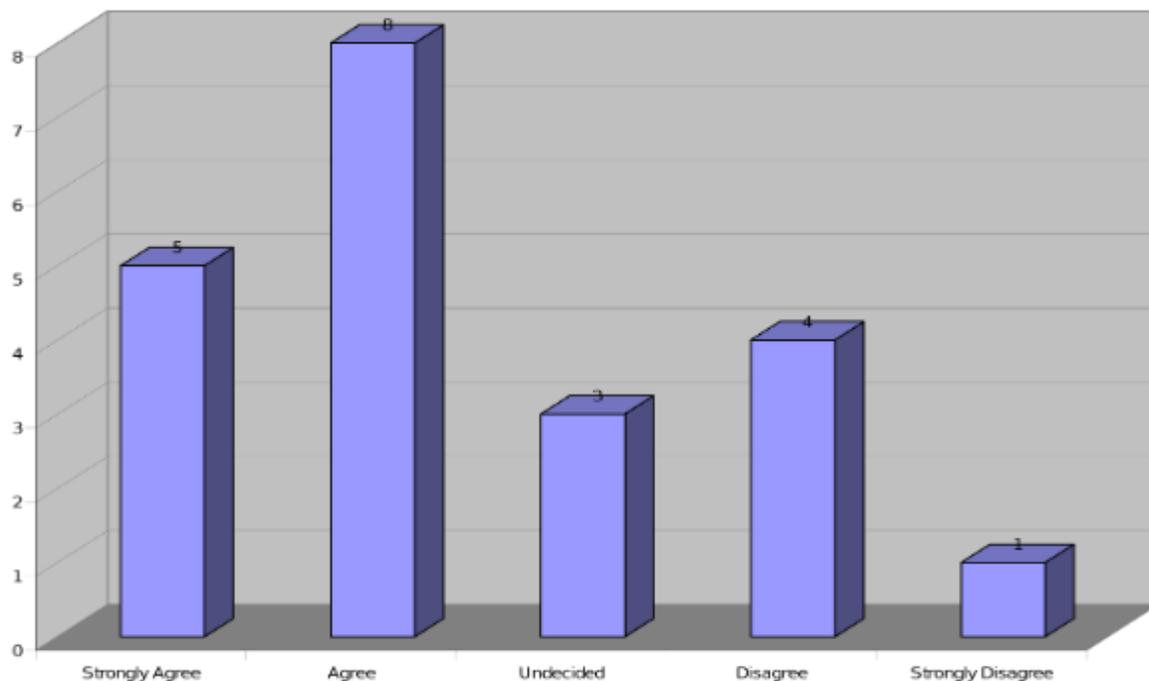


Most students did find that they were more able to accept differences in others after participating in the exchange than they did prior to the exchange; however there were a large number of students who were undecided in this regard. One of the students who did not feel more accepting of differences commented that she felt she was already very accepting prior to her exchange and that this was not something that changed significantly for her. This may or may not be the case for the other two students who did not feel more accepting after the exchange experience. It may also be the case for students who indicated that they were undecided.

Figure 9

Adjustment to Home

16. I had a difficult time readjusting to being home.

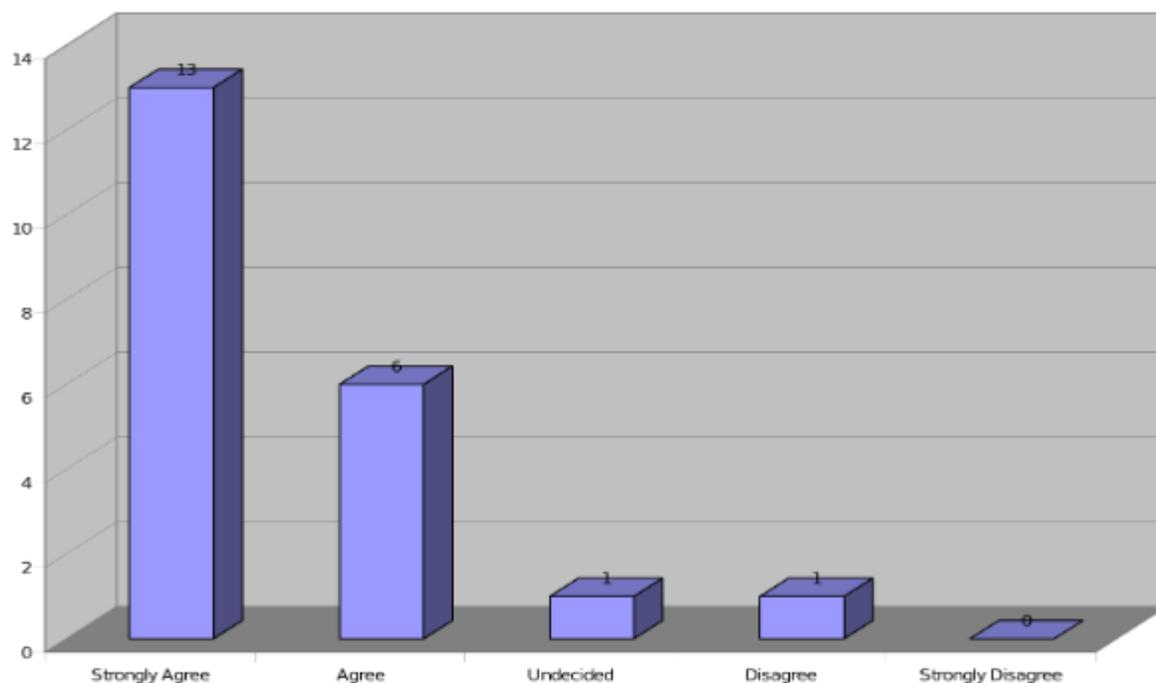


Although over half of the questionnaire respondents indicated that they did have a difficult time readjusting to being home, there were five students that disagreed. There could be a variety of reasons for this such as a stronger home culture identity, a readiness to return home, support and interest from people at home who assisted in the readjustment process, or other reasons.

Figure 10

Reflection

17. I have been able to reflect on my experience abroad.

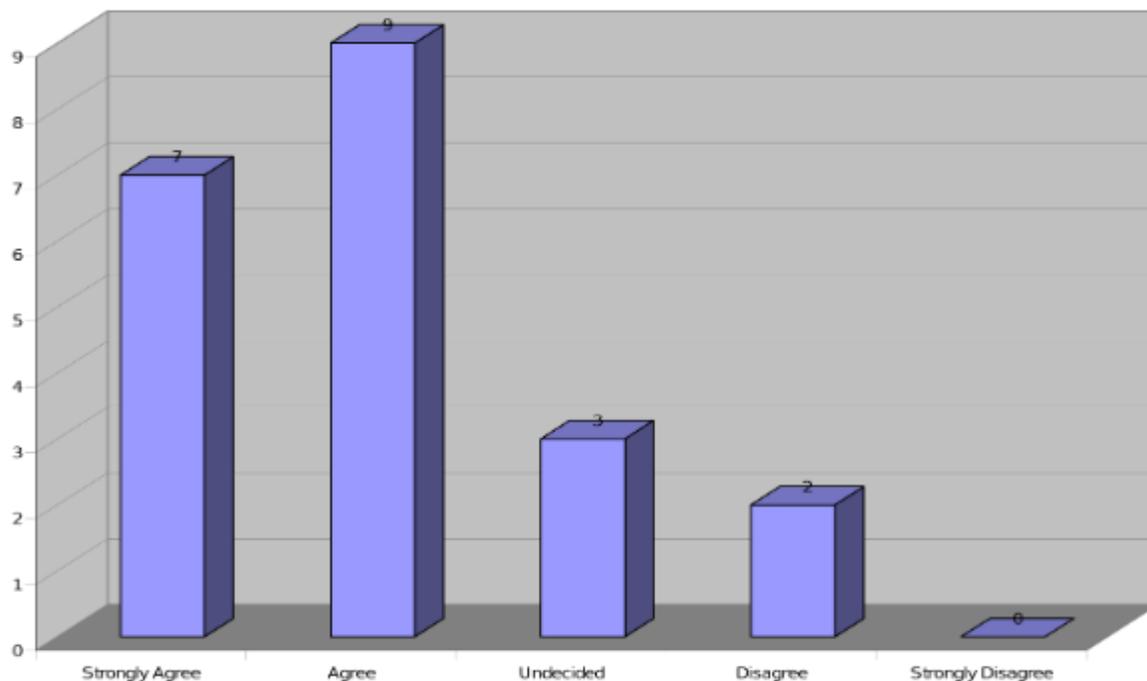


Most students felt that they had had the opportunity to reflect on their experience abroad. The student who felt they had not had the opportunity for reflection had participated in the exchange to Australia. Although the majority of students did indicate that they had been able to reflect, their responses do not show to what degree they had been able to reflect, nor if they were satisfied with the level of reflection that they had achieved. Responses also do not indicate the depth of reflection of students about their experiences abroad.

Figure 11

Interest in World Events

18. I am more interested in world events since studying abroad.

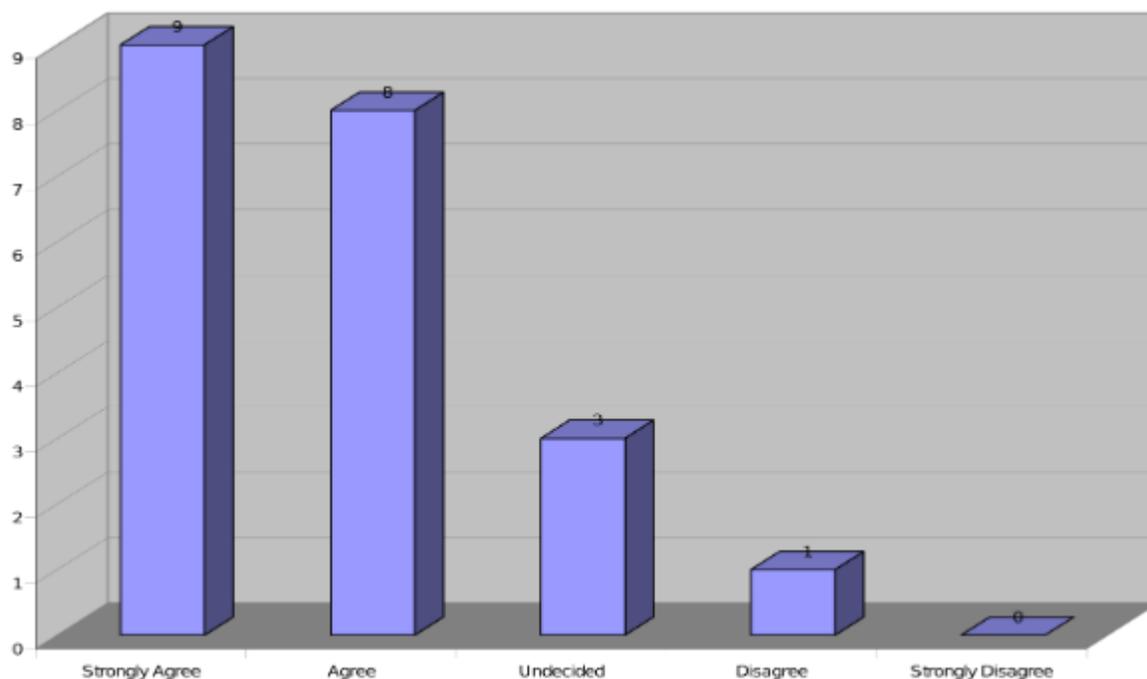


The majority of students indicated that their interest in world events increased since their time abroad. Of the three undecided students, two commented that their interest was already high prior to their exchange. One of the two who had gone on exchange to Germany added that her interest in German social and political issues had increased. The two students who disagreed had both participated in an exchange to Turkey. One of the students indicated that her interest had been high prior to the exchange and had contributed to her decision to participate in an exchange, but that her understanding of world events had increased.

Figure 12

Talking About the Experience

19. I have been able to talk about my experience with others.

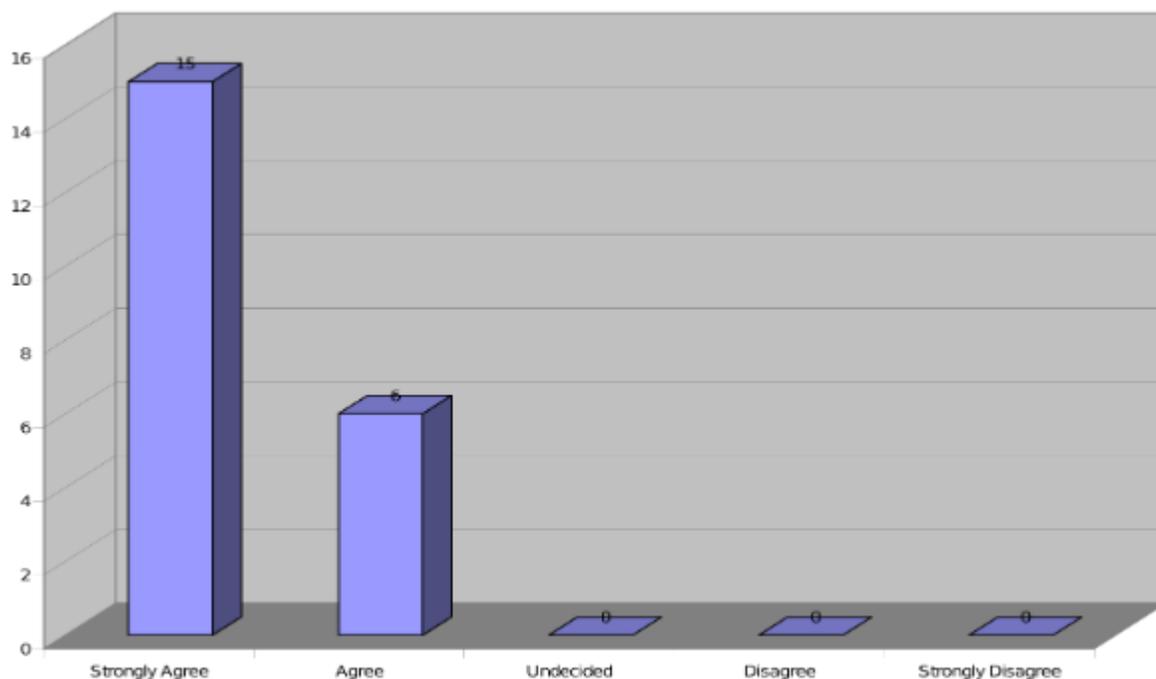


Although the majority of participants indicated that they had been able to talk with others about their exchange experience, there were three who were not sure and one that disagreed. One of the students who said that she had been able to talk about her experience also commented that not many people were willing to listen. One of the students who was undecided mentioned that he found that other people who had travelled were the most willing to listen, others weren't so interested. In later interviews, participants indicated that it was family, close friends, and other people who had traveled or gone on exchange who were their most willing listeners.

Figure 13

Continuing Impact

20. My time on exchange continues to have an impact on my life.



All of the students who participated in the questionnaire indicated that their time on exchange continued to have an impact on their lives. The interviews with students following the questionnaire provided an opportunity to explore some of those continuing impacts.

At the end of the questionnaire, space was provided for students to make any comments that they felt were relevant to the questions in the questionnaire. Most of those comments have been incorporated into the discussion following each of the relevant questions; however there were some additional comments that respondents made that did not correspond directly to any specific question. Some of those comments are provided below.

A couple of students commented on how their exchange experience has influenced them to want to travel more.

I have more desire to continue to see new cultures and this is now a large focus of my life to plan out the next adventure to a new culture.

I have gone back to Denmark several times and it is probably my favourite place on earth! It really gave me a sense of adventure and independence that has continued and I have done a lot of travelling since then.

A few students commented that it was helpful for them to know that there was support from the exchange office at the University of Manitoba.

It really helped to know that you would be there to help me out if I needed it even when I was away.

Another student commented on some of the things he learned about himself while he was abroad on exchange.

I discovered other things about myself as well, I am a pretty good cook, I have a talent for bringing people together, and the list goes on. Being on my own in a foreign country with no one I knew allowed me to be myself with no inhibitions and no preconceived notions. I was really able to explore what I wanted and what was important to me.

A number of students commented on how the exchange was a highlight for them and that they found the experience extremely valuable with ongoing benefits.

In a broad sense, it was certainly one of the most beneficial things that I've ever done.

The exchange has been the highlight of my life so far. I look back on it fondly and still talk to the friends I made.

Interview responses.

Among the eight students who were interviewed about their exchange experiences, there are many similarities but also a few differences in the natures of their experiences. Some of those differences could be attributed to the fact that they visited different countries.

Looking at a number of areas such as whom students spent time with, their expectations of the experience, the exchange environment, the activities they participated in, and what their return was like, this part of section two will highlight the similarities and differences of those experiences. It will also explore why some of those similarities and differences may exist, and further examine the implications of the exchange experiences of students.

Examination of the exchange experience can be divided into two major parts. The first part is the experience of students while abroad. The second part is the return experience of students.

Experience of students while abroad.

There are countless aspects to the student exchange experience. In this study, some of the things looked at were who students spend their time with, what clubs and activities they got involved in, what their expectations were and what was unexpected about their host culture, their experience in another language environment, and the importance of things like socializing, adventure and travel.

Who students spent time with.

Exchange students tended to spend more of their time with other exchange students and with international students during their time abroad. All of the students interviewed said that they were living with other international students or were in programs with other international students. A few students did spend some time with local students from the country they were studying in but this required more of an effort on their part.

Emma did end up making friends with a French student who had been to Winnipeg on exchange. He introduced her to his group of friends. Emma also met local families through a church that she attended while in France.

Ted spent very little time outside of classes and class trips with other exchange students and did not mention building any significant relationships with local students. Alice also spent the majority of her time with other international students since she lived in a guesthouse with a large group of them. The program that the two Japan exchange students participated in was geared specifically towards international exchange students for learning about Japan's language and culture. However Alice also made a significant effort to make Japanese friends and spend time with them. So in spite of living with only other international students and having classes with mostly international students, she felt that she spent about equal time with Japanese people as she did with other international students.

Susan also was able to make friends with local British students through a club that she and the other Canadian student joined. She made an intentional effort to spend time socializing with more of the British students than the American students who were also there on exchange even though it would have been easier to only spend time with the other exchange students.

The two students that went to Australia both lived in International House, a residence for international and exchange students. Australian students lived in other residences. This separation made it difficult for these exchange students to make friends with locals. One of the students did make friends with a few Australians from her class whom she spent some time with in addition to the other exchange students.

Of the two students that went to Turkey on exchange, one lived off campus and spent her time during the days with Turkish students and her evenings and weekends with her roommates and other international students. The other student who went to Turkey on exchange spent the majority of her time with the other international students whom she lived with in the women's residence.

Overall, most exchange students spent a significant part of their time with other international and exchange students while abroad. Although exchanges are often billed as an immersion experience into another culture, this seems to indicate that the immersion is into a truly diverse multicultural environment rather than full immersion into the culture of the country that the students were studying in.

There are a few reasons why it may be difficult for exchange students to gain entry into local culture relationships. Most local students already have established friend and family groups that they are busy with. Exchange students are only around for a short while and do not always have the time it requires to break into those established groups. In the case of Emma, it was easier to get into a group of locals because she had met a student who had already had an exchange experience of their own to Winnipeg. That shared experience was significant enough to initiate a relationship. Building connections with local students required significant effort on the part of the exchange students.

Getting Involved.

Some exchange students got involved in clubs and planned activities to varying degrees. Students who went to Japan didn't really get involved in clubs, but there were class activities and field trips to participate in. The students who went to Turkey also both mentioned the Global Club but neither seemed to be very committed members of the club.

The students who went to Australia and the United Kingdom seemed to get the most involved in University clubs and activities. One possible reason might be because there weren't the same language barriers between them and the local students as there were between the students and locals in Japan, France, and Turkey.

All students made some attempt at getting involved in some way even though not all of them were successful or carried through to the same degree. Exchange students desire to get involved more likely because they have a limited time to experience as much as possible and want to make the most of this opportunity.

There are some potential reasons for the difficulty of some students to get more involved in university groups and clubs. In the case of the Japanese exchanges in this study, students arrived partway through their school year when most clubs have already been established and friendship groups have become more solidified. Based on the comments by the exchange students to Turkey, the Global Club which was specifically for exchange students may not have consistent membership needed to maintain activities and organizational levels.

Expectations.

When asked about their first impressions of the country they had traveled to, some exchange students mentioned their expectations of the country and how it was different than what they were expecting. Other students mentioned some of the things that were different from home that made a particular impression on them. One student felt that they were prepared for any of the differences and were not surprised; this student had visited Japan before and had experienced the culture during a short trip. Any differences came through later on as the student became more familiar with the culture.

Students went on exchange with a variety of different expectations of their destinations. Some were not prepared for how people would look or behave.

Ted: It's weird when you grow up in Canada and you're used to seeing multiculturalism. You look around and everyone's different and it doesn't really faze you. But it sort of fazes me when you look around and nobodies different, everyone's kind of the same skin colour and hair colour and I'm not. So being the minority was a weird thing to get used to.

Lynn: Being female there and being foreign is quite something, I would get a lot of attention... But I would have all these girls in school coming over and being like, what is it like to be so blond, so pretty. I was just really like; I'm a shy kind of person, so I was really taken aback by it. It made me very uncomfortable.

Other students had expectations of what the culture would be like.

Ted: The most striking thing was just how different it was from what I was expecting. I don't know if it was expecting or hoping. The exposure that I had had to Japan was through manga and anime, and those kind of nerdy things,

video games. So you had this impression that these things are more common place in Japan than they are in Canada. But it was a quick realization that it is as much as subculture there as it is here.

Lynn: Something that I found most interesting about their culture, and maybe it's just my perspective going in, but I expected more culture; more like a clear cut culture because our multicultural dynamic in Canada. I was going there, and part of the reason I chose to go there was that I wanted to experience a place that was old and had all the history, and I kind of was surprised that they themselves were really searching for their own identity.

For some exchange students, it was the physical environment that was unexpected.

Ted: I remember thinking that it was very green. You hear about the concrete jungle and urban sprawl but there was a lot of green when we were traveling through.

Susan: I wasn't expecting it to be so close together because Winnipeg is so spread out. Everything was in a one mile radius of where I was.

Lynn: I was very overwhelmed with the sheer amount of people. Compared to Winnipeg, Istanbul is absolutely gigantic.

Esther: It was a lot colder than I thought it would be. There are so many people. And I was in Istanbul and it was such a big city. I couldn't imagine how such a big city could exist.

Kerry: When I left here it was -49 and when I got there it was +34. So that was a bit of a challenge.

It may be that the differences between cultures and also students' expectations have an impact on what their adjustment to the new culture will be like. The students that indicated in their surveys that they experienced some difficulty adjusting to the new culture were also the same students that had the most to say about the differences in their host country from their home country. They also found those differences the most unexpected. It may also be that students who have the most difficulty in adjusting to a new culture are those who notice the differences most keenly. There could be a number of factors contributing to the challenge of adjusting to a new culture, and the level of differences between home culture and host culture is not necessarily the determining factor.

Adventure and travel.

The exchange experience is characterised by adventure. Much of that adventure included travel for exchange students. All of the students interviewed did some travel before or after, and during their exchange terms. They were able to find other exchange students to go traveling with during and after their exchanges. Some of the students also had friends or family or both who came out to travel with them as well. For the students traveling after their time on exchange, they were able to visit the home countries of the other exchange students they had befriended while abroad. This often added new destinations to their originally planned itineraries.

Emma: We biked the length of Strasbourg down to Freiberg. A couple hundred kilometres. We did this on these crazy bikes in our regular backpacks and like toques and two pairs of pants and put the jackets on and the gloves... But we just, we wanted to do everything.

Susan: We went to Spain and France on several different occasions. Different places in France. We went all of Switzerland, plus Scotland and Wales. Lots and lots of traveling. Plus all over England. I told them where I've been and here and here and there and they were like oh, you've seen more of England than I have.

Lynn: Traveling was pretty much a highlight, the trips we would take, I went all around Turkey. On weekends I would grab a friend or someone who was just like me and we could grab a train and go to Ephesus or go to an art gallery.

Kerry: I did a great deal of travel. A large part of it was during the term, so I didn't travel too much before I got there. I backpacked for a few days in neighbouring cities.

Alice: We climbed Mount Fuji. It was really hard. It was not an easy thing to do. We didn't start at the bottom, we started at the highest point we could drive to, and we spent the night at the top, and saw the sunrise over the clouds at like four in the morning. I don't know if I would do it again.

Some of the students made comments on how they did things or accomplished things they never expected to be able to do.

Susan: I did things last year that I never ever thought I could. I climbed a mountain.

Lisa: I would say getting a tattoo is something that I never thought I would want to do, but it was totally scary and foreign.

Students also talked about how adventure characterized their exchange experience.

Lisa: I think just going out more and being more adventurous. I think that at home you just get in a rut of staying home and watching a movie. I'm really boring, I'm the one who goes to bed at ten every night. But there you just have more places to explore when you're going out.

Kerry: One day I decided to go to New Zealand, and you could say who wants to go to New Zealand, and everyone else was there for the same sort of adventurous reasons that you were so that was really nice.

Alice: It's the kind of thing you don't really expect to happen even if you try, it's one of those only in Japan would that really work. Here I would never even try.

The short term nature of exchange and the knowledge that this may be the only opportunity to explore the new country is likely what contributes to students desire to seek out adventures. Their willingness to try new things, since everything is new, could also be attributed to the short term nature of the exchange. Students were no longer confined to routines of home and felt a sense of freedom in being away from the familiar. However, some students commented that these characteristics were less common among their American counterparts. These students felt that their openness to new things and willingness to try new things was a part of being Canadian.

Being social.

Social time was also a common characteristic of the exchange. For the students who were interviewed, their time in conversations and hanging out with their new friends was significant to them as a part of their exchange experiences. Conversations were also part of the cultural learning experience for students.

Emma: I think the most was just being able to walk down town to the café or to a bar and have a drink with my friends.

Lynn: We go out almost every night and go to a pub, and hang out with the other people.

Ted: I really enjoyed myself was when I was hanging out with Carlos and part of it was making observations about Japanese culture and Japanese students that were in our classes; talking about that kind of stuff. We learned a lot about each other's cultures. We learned a lot about Japanese culture through our observations and then talking about them.

Esther: There were often times where we would go for chai. We would go for tea with other international students and we would talk about all of the things that were frustrating us. And we found out that we were being frustrated by the same things, and that was therapeutic.

The students who went on exchange were far away from their usual support network of family and friends. They had to build new relationships to become that support network.

Lisa: The international students were willing to latch onto each other and do stuff together and make that little family.

Susan felt that the time going out was unique to her exchange experience and that when spending time with friends at home they usually ended up watching movies rather than doing something active or even spending time in conversation with one another.

In making new friends and being in a new culture there were so many new things to discuss and discover. Students had the common experience of the exchange that they

could talk about; they could discuss cultural differences, as well as having the conversations you have when getting to know new people. There were so many things to talk about while on exchange and no shortage of people who were in the same situation who wanted to also talk about those things. The social time may also serve as a venue for students to debrief with others who are in a similar situation.

Functioning in a foreign environment.

Most of the students that participated in this study went to countries where the first language spoken was not English; Australia and Britain were the two exceptions among the interview respondents. All of the students interviewed, except the two who went to Australia, commented on how they felt about having to function in a foreign language environment. Students felt as though they weren't able to be themselves, they felt frustration, and they felt inferior. Not being able to speak fluently in the foreign language made it difficult to build relationships with the people in the countries they visited.

Emma: It took me about a year to be able to make jokes again and feel like I could be myself. And sometimes it feels like oh my god, I'll never get this, I'll always feel like such a loser. I'm always going to sound like an eleven year old speaking.

Ted: Language was a huge difficulty right off the bat. There are those social niceties that people say so often that they kind of mumble, and you can't really pick them up until you've been listening for a long time. It always felt that I would try to build these relationships and I would hit a snag with my language, and I couldn't express what I wanted to express, and then I would get embarrassed and less likely to try the language thing.

Susan: The most challenging I think was the language barrier because you wouldn't expect England and Canada to have that different of a language. They would say words and you would be like, what does that mean? Or you'd say something and they would start laughing at you because that word is not a word they use, or they'd use in a different context there. So that was a little bit hard.

Esther: I couldn't express myself I couldn't ask questions, and I felt, it made me feel dumb.

Alice: Sometimes no matter what you do, there's always going to be a point where you can't express that one thing and it does get frustrating. There's not a way to say what you want to say. Even though you just yell it out in English you'll feel better; but nobody will understand.

Students participating in an exchange are in their host country for only a short period of time, generally from approximately four months to one year. They do not have a long time to learn a new language with all of its nuances. It was difficult for students to gain enough fluency to really feel competent.

One student went back to the country of her exchange to live and work. She commented that it took her quite awhile to feel comfortable in the language, especially at an interpersonal communication level. She found that she was able to read and write comfortably much sooner.

The experience after returning home.

According to Storti (1997) it is important to look at what "home" is in order to understand the coming home experience. He includes three elements of home in his

definition which includes familiar places, familiar people, and familiar routines and interaction patterns. It is the familiar that contributes to the feeling of being home again. Storti (1997) compares coming home to the experience of going to a foreign country. Exchange students in this study were not away for longer than one year prior to returning home and so most of these familiar elements would not have changed significantly. However, any changes would have an impact on their sense of belonging when they returned.

“Whatever the norms, you adjust to them, and in the process you gradually make a home out of the foreign country. From the perspective of your new norms, home is now strange, and you react in much the same way you did when you got to Brazil or Taiwan” (Storti, 1997, p. 25). Moving to a new culture among new people required students to adjust to that new culture, make new friends, and learn new things. Returning home required students to readjust back to their home cultures, renew old friendships, and assimilate the things they learned while on exchange into their lives and routines back at home.

Most researchers found that returnees did not expect the experience of returning home to be as difficult as it was (Bossard & Peterson, 2005; Choi, 2003; Sussman, 2002; L.Cox 2006; Shougee, 2000). Thirteen out of twenty-one questionnaire respondents agreed that they had a difficult time adjusting to being home again after their exchange. Only one student commented that he felt somewhat prepared for having to adjust to being back home because of his conversations with a friend in the exchange program who had been through the return adjustment previously. However, this student still faced some difficulty in adjusting to being home even though he thought he knew what to expect.

Readjusting to life at home.

Many of the exchange students who participated in an interview had lived at home with their parents prior to going on exchange. One major piece of readjustment to coming home was going from living in relative independence, to moving back in with their parents. They missed the freedom, independence, and flexibility that had been part of their lives abroad.

Some of the symptoms and challenges highlighted in a number of studies were boredom; lack of interest from others; difficulty in being able to explain the experience abroad; feeling homesick for the host country; lack of understanding from others; feeling alienated or out of place; an inability to apply the new knowledge and skills learned abroad; a sense of loss and grief; and feelings of depression and wanting to be alone (AustraLearn, 2007; Cadenhead-Hames, 2007; Ledwell, 2002; University of British Columbia, 2007; University of the Pacific, 2007). Many of these findings are consistent with what participants shared about their experiences.

Loss of independence.

Students had gotten used to coming and going without having to check in with parents. They ate when they wanted, had friends over without needing to ask permission, and some had their own space while away. “Probably the greatest frustration for returning exchange students is the sudden reappearance of their parents in their lives, not the actual individuals, but in their roles as father and mother”(Storti 1997, p. 141).

Ted: The first time that I went and was just hanging out with friends, and it happened that I stayed overnight at someone’s house. And I came back and

my parents were; what's the deal. And I was; what do you mean what's the deal?

Susan: The hardest part was coming back to living with my parents; and coming back to not being able to eat when I want; not being able to buy the food that I want; and having to tell my parents when I'm going out; and having to always check in with them; and not being able to invite people over whenever I want.

Lisa: Coming back and being back at home with my family felt stifling right at the beginning, because I was so used to doing my own thing, and making my own plans, and not having to bother telling people that I'm going to be out this weekend, or I can't do a family function that day because I'm doing this.

Alice: I had gained this independence by living on my own and now I was living with my parents again; sharing a bathroom with my sister again.

According to Storti (1997) it is not possible “to pick up where you left off with loved ones and friends nor take any of your relationships for granted... You will all have to come to know each other again” (p. 20). Students had changed while being away and had to relearn how to live with their families again.

Return to car culture.

Many students were on exchange in places that had a walking culture rather than a car culture. Coming back to Canada was an adjustment because they had to get used to driving everywhere and having to schedule for a lengthy commute.

Emma: So when I came home it was like I didn't walk anywhere anymore. I was always stuck in my car.

Susan: The other really big thing for me; in Plymouth I lived within a five minute walk of everywhere in the entire city. And now I live an hour drive from the university. It's so different now, I have to arrange with my sister to take the car out. And going to the university; I have to plan to be here for x amount of hours because it takes so long to get here. Whereas there I could go to the gym, come home in five minutes. I was working on a research project there and if I had a half hour break I could go home, take a twenty-five minute nap and then go back. So now its way different, it's definitely taking adjusting. I commuted every year for the past however many years, but now as soon as I've come back it's like; oh now I have to drive all the way here again, and that's after not driving for a whole year. It's hard to come back to.

Loss of routines.

Exchange students had developed a particular pace of life and their own routines while abroad. Returning home meant losing some of those routines that they had grown to value.

Emma: I felt like I began to appreciate mealtimes and slowing down for that, making more routines in my life and that wasn't there anymore. I just really missed my life.

Lynn: It was more of the routine that I miss, that I remember. That it's not that I didn't want to come back, but it was hard to say goodbye to all the

friends that I had made and life there. It took a long time to get a life established there. There were a lot of things that had to come together before I felt comfortable, before I got used to the city.

Lisa: I think losing the daily routine of seeing people and interacting with friends that were now a zillion miles away, and also just being back at the house where I live with my sister and parents.

Alice: There were things that I carried around all the time in Japan that I didn't need to carry in Canada, so it was really weird. I don't need this handkerchief for the washrooms because we have paper towels; or I don't need this cell phone even though I love this amazing Japanese cell phone; I can't use it in Canada anymore.

According to Storti (1997) routines are disrupted when going overseas. Students develop new routines while abroad, but their return home is another disruption to those routines. Until students are able to develop new routines again at home, they will not be able to feel settled (Storti, 1997). The findings of this study are consistent with what Storti (1997) has to say. The interview participants missed the new routines they had developed while abroad. Their sense of homecoming was connected with a return to the routine of school, which will be further explored in the section on returning to normal life.

Missing life abroad.

Students missed the routines that they had developed abroad, they missed the friends they had made, and they missed the places they had learned to enjoy. A part of returning home is grieving for what has been lost. "Perhaps what returnees miss most

about being abroad is the sense of adventure and excitement, the stimulation of being surrounded by everything that is new and different” (Storti 1997, p. 37).

Shougee (2000) also discusses the re-entry process as a mourning process. “During adaptation abroad, the participants emotionally and psychologically expected to return home. In contrast, during re-entry they had no specific plans to go back to the host country. Hence, they mourned the end of their study abroad journey” (p. 213). Some of the things Shougee’s (2000) study highlights as things to mourn are the physical and natural landscape as well as the meaningful relationships that are difficult to maintain over a long distance. This is consistent with many things the participants in this study discussed. They felt let down upon their return.

Emma: I just really missed my life.

Lynn: Coming back and feeling kind of, not depressed, but definitely let down and; like it was hard.

Kerry: There was definitely a moment where I saw my boyfriend who I hadn’t seen for eight months and that was not dramatic, actually it was anticlimactic.

Talking about the experience.

Most students had a strong desire to talk about their experiences when they returned. It was difficult for them to find willing listeners, and most of their friends that were willing to listen were mainly interested in the adventure stories. Students felt frustrated that they were not able to share as much as they felt they needed to. Shougee (2000) found that parents played a key role by listening to students’ exchange experience stories. “Story telling was crucial during re-entry because it was the most meaningful

avenue for the returnees to communicate to parents and others about how they had changed” (Shougee, 2000, p. 221).

Returnees found that others were uninterested in hearing about their experiences abroad (Bossard & Peterson, 2005; Shougee 2000). Yet talking about their experiences was helpful for the returnees (Christophi, 2007; Shougee 2000). Although most questionnaire respondents indicated that they had been able to talk about their experiences abroad, interviewees commented that this did not happen to the degree or depth that they wanted or needed. Many found that their family members were their best listeners.

Alice: My dad was always really happy about it and interested in hearing about it. He’s the one that will sit down and pay attention to the videos that I took and look at the picture for a bit.

Esther: One of the biggest challenges when I came back, you want to talk about it, you want to tell people about it and about these great people that you know, and no one knows how to ask. And I think it’s like that debriefing that you desire when you return that you don’t want to forget. And I think that was one of the biggest challenges.

Lynn: After awhile nobody wants to hear all the stories.

Ted was expecting more interest from people and was disappointed that there wasn’t more interest. Susan found that her family was most receptive to hearing about her experiences. Other people often seemed to feel that she was bragging.

“One of the most common complaints of returnees is how little interest the people back home show in their experiences, including close relatives and friends”

(Storti, 1997, p.30). “In the end, returnees must accept that those who have not had an overseas experience can never understand in quite the same way as those who have” (Storti, 1997, p. 33). Most students, by the time they were interviewed, had come to accept that not everyone would be interested in their experiences. They felt a special bond with others who had travelled or lived abroad because those were the people outside of family members, who were most interested in hearing their stories and who were most understanding of their experiences.

Returning to normal life.

All of the students interviewed spoke about the inevitable return to routine, or the return to normal that they eventually experienced when they came home. This was always spoken of regretfully, as though they hoped to come home and live differently, and hold onto their experiences for a longer period of time. Returning to a routine and returning to the school environment were common elements that marked the end of the exchange experience for students.

Emma: I had to apply for a student loan for my next year of school and it was like; yeah it's real, I'm home.

Ted: And things go back to normal in a couple of weeks, and before I knew it I was back in classes, and it was like I never left. So that was kind of difficult.

Susan: In the first week of school I was like; okay, I'm back to the grindstone, driving to school, getting back into classes again, back into Winnipeg.

Lisa: Being back at the house where I live with my sister and parents. At the very first you're excited because you can see everybody. But then you see everybody; and you talk about your experience for an hour and show your

pictures; and then after that it's like everything is back to normal; and you're like; it's like I was never gone.

For other students it was the return to driving everywhere rather than walking places that marked their sense of homecoming.

Alice: But getting in my car and driving around to different places I'd been to before, and feeling like I had never left. That was a sad moment. Like it was all a big dream.

Other students found that the move back in with their parents signalled the end of the exchange. Not that they were unhappy to be home, but the experience of moving home made them feel the loss of their independence more significantly.

Ted: But it happens that when I move back in with my parents, and you move back into this static lifestyle where you aren't pushing yourself as much, and you're not changing as much.

Students also expressed a desire to hold onto the changes that they had undergone through their experience abroad. One of the students who went to Japan expressed it very well.

Ted: Because I felt that over the year in Japan I had gone through a lot of changes, and these were good changes, and these were things I wanted to keep going, and use to build on; to change myself for the better more when I got back here.

Summary of the experience.

There were a number of elements of the exchange experience that were shared among the questionnaire respondents in this study. Most participants did not feel they had

a difficult time adjusting to the culture of their exchange countries. They developed a greater understanding about the culture in the exchange country. Students also developed a greater understanding of other cultures in general, as a result of their exchange experience. Students were better able to communicate with people from other cultures. Students increased their awareness of Canadian culture. Students experienced personal change while participating in an exchange. They became more independent. They were more able to accept differences in others after participating in the exchange than they were prior to the exchange

Many students had a difficult time readjusting to being home. Most students felt that they had had the opportunity to reflect on their experience abroad. The majority of students indicated that their interest in world events increased. The majority of participants indicated that they had been able to talk with others about their exchange experience, and all of the students who participated in the questionnaire indicated that their time on exchange continued to have an impact on their lives.

Based on the interviews with students, there were also a number of elements of the exchange experience that participants shared. Exchange students tended to spend more of their time with other exchange students and international students while abroad, than with local students. All students made some attempt at getting involved in some way even though not all of them were successful or carried through to the same degree. When asked about their first impressions of the country they had traveled to, some exchange students mentioned their expectations of the country and how it was different from what they were expecting.

The exchange experience for these participants was characterised by adventure. Much of that adventure included travel. Social time was also something that was very important to the students while on exchange. Students also felt frustration at times when it came to their language abilities and to functioning in a foreign language environment.

On returning home, one major piece of readjustment was going from living in relative independence to moving back in with their parents. Students had changed while being away and had to relearn how to live with their families again. For many students another adjustment was getting used to driving everywhere and having to schedule for a lengthy commute. Participants had developed their own new routines while abroad and returning home meant losing some of the routines that they had grown to value.

Most interview participants commented that they had a strong desire to talk about their experiences when they returned. It was difficult for them to find willing listeners, and most of their friends and family that were willing to listen were mainly interested in the adventure stories. All of the students interviewed, spoke about the inevitable return to routine or the return to normal that they eventually experienced when they came home.

CHAPTER 5

Learning from the Experience

This chapter provides an overview and discussion of the learning experiences of students participating in the exchange program. During the interviews students were asked questions that were designed to provide them with an opportunity to talk about what was meaningful about their experience and what they learned from the experience. Students talked about a variety of subjects such as cultural learning of their host culture and of Canadian culture; personal growth; and about how the direction of their lives were influenced by the experience. One common element for all of the students was that they viewed their time in conversation with other exchange and international students as a way to learn about culture, both the culture of their host country and about one another's cultures.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section focuses on transformative learning and looks at the personal changes that students underwent, and the skills they gained as part of their exchange experience. The second section is focused on knowledge gained about culture.

Transformative Learning

Students participating in exchange programs gain knowledge, but they also gain valuable experience that can have an influence on their lives beyond the exchange experience. Transformative learning theory could explain many of the changes that may occur in students because of their participation in the student exchange program. In transformative learning, meanings and meaning making are important concepts and refer to “the structure of assumptions within which new experience is assimilated and

transformed by one's past experience during the process of interpretation" (Mezirow, 1990, p.2). The way students make meaning out of their exchange experience could lead to transformative learning if they take the opportunity to critically reflect on their experience. According to Mezirow (1990) to interpret or to critically reflect on an incident or experience, is to make meaning of it. Cranton (2006) goes further to say that exposure to social norms other than those to which we ascribe can provoke critical reflection. Critical reflection can lead to change of perspective and also to changes in behaviour. When experiences change how someone thinks about something and consequently how they behave, then transformative learning has occurred. Exchange students are exposed to new social norms which provide opportunities for critical reflection.

Students who completed their questionnaires answered whether or not they had had the opportunity to reflect on their experiences. Nineteen out of twenty-one respondents answered positively that they were able reflect on their exchange experience. However, it is the changes which occur that provide evidence as to whether transformative learning has actually occurred.

Students who spend time living and studying abroad learn many things about the cultures they visit and the cultures they encounter while away from home. Much of that learning is in the way of gaining knowledge and gaining new information about the world. Learning that qualifies as transformative learning is based on changes in a person's way of thinking and behaving. All questionnaire respondents indicated that they experienced personal change while participating in an exchange.

According to Hoffa (1998), some of the benefits of living abroad include the enrichment of one's education, gaining a global outlook, acquiring an additional language or fluency in an additional language, gaining a greater level of career preparedness, undergoing personal growth, developing independent thinking skills, and increasing self-confidence. Bossard & Peterson (2005) echo some of these findings, their participants felt they had undergone personal growth, gained a broadened perspective, and improved their communication skills. Responses of participants in this study are consistent with these findings.

Students participating in interviews shared various areas of personal growth and change that they felt they underwent as part of their exchange experience, and potentially because of their exchange experiences. Some areas of personal change that participating students discussed in the interviews were gaining a greater sense of independence, developing a feeling of accomplishment, increasing their level of confidence, and gaining a greater willingness to seek out challenges and face risks. Students also mentioned that they became more outgoing, developed the ability to see things in new ways, gained better decision making ability, and developed a stronger level of faith in their own judgement. Some students made changes to their academic programs and found new career paths to pursue.

Independence and accomplishment.

Students participating in exchanges gain a greater sense of independence and a sense of accomplishment through their experience. Most of the questionnaire respondents said that they became more independent since participating in the exchange program. One respondent indicated that he was unsure if this was the case, and only one student

disagreed with the statement adding that she was already independent prior to the exchange.

Many of the students who participated in the interviews had never lived on their own prior to going on exchange. They found the experience of living on their own so far from their families and friends, to be a key component of gaining independence. The experience of having to do things on their own also contributed to their independence.

Emma: I'm a lot more independent, a lot more able to take care of myself in difficult situations; making decisions on my own.

Ted: I hadn't lived on my own before going to Japan, I had always lived with my parents. So that was my first time living on my own; which is maybe not the normal first step... I didn't necessarily get into a lot of situations where I didn't want to be on my own, but you know, just taking that step helps with feeling that I could be independent or that I am independent.

Susan: I had never lived on my own before. I know I could survive. And my parents always say; oh you wouldn't be able to live on your own, you wouldn't know that you need to change the toilet paper, and you wouldn't know that you need to buy food. I was able to survive on my own.

Lisa: Before I went on exchange I was living at home, so it was like the first time for little more than a month that I was living on my own; buying my own groceries and doing all the grown up things. Even the day to day life of not being accountable to anyone but yourself was kind of liberating.

Lynn: I've lived at home since I was a kid. I haven't moved out and gone to university, and not had to change residences, and move to the city.

Financially is the reason I haven't, but I've always wanted to be one of those people so being able to have not only where I was. It was really fun to just look after myself, make my own meals, and plan my own life a little bit more. That was basically the idea, that finally I had my own, my own life going on.

Kerry saw the experience of living on her own while on exchange as a way to move out and try out her independence without hurting her parents' feelings.

Kerry: So living somewhere not at home; I've done it before but never more than six or seven weeks, and that in itself is unique. But I have no problem cooking, eating, washing dishes and all that stuff... I feel independent minded, so that's not really the issue. In a more pragmatic sense, like especially since I've always lived at home, and because I am for the most part a very good kid, I also have very conservative parents despite the fact that they're very young; so getting on a plane, and going and living on another continent, it's just as much a challenge for them as it was for me. And to phone my mom and say I'm moving out of my apartment tomorrow because my lease is up; I'm going to travel around for a month, and I'm going to live with a total stranger for a bit, and then I'm going to fly home on a date I haven't picked yet. My mom said; okay, call us when you get to Canada...

It would have bothered them very much if I had decided to say move out; which I would have done had I not gone to Australia as opposed to going on a big trip, and having a school based reason. They were able to deal with that a little better.

Going to a foreign country alone without knowing anyone gave Esther a sense of accomplishment.

Esther: I think the fact that I went there, didn't know anything about Turkey; and I went there all by myself, and I had to make new friends, and learn a whole new world. I think that pretty much embodies my experience. And I did it.

I think that I went there by myself... I think that's the biggest thing. I would go to the bazaar by myself during the day.

Confidence and seeking challenges.

Students who participated in the exchange also gained confidence in their own abilities. After the challenges of the exchange experience, most students felt more willing to seek out other challenges and take risks.

Emma shared a number of examples of things she learned, all of which made her more confident in her ability to meet challenges and to pursue opportunities that in the past she might have allowed to pass by because they seemed too difficult.

Emma: Being able to be alone and not be insecure; a lot more confident. So just really do what I want to do, and not be afraid, and not make excuses for not doing what I really wanted. Now I am more aggressive in going for what I want. Not in a bad way, but if there's an opportunity its like; okay I'm going to do that. Not afraid. Before it was like; Europe that's so far away, and it's going to be hard, and where am I going to stay, and all of these different obstacles to travel. But now I see that once you're out there it's so easy.

To not be afraid of new things and big changes. It wasn't the first time I moved somewhere where I had no friends. To not worry about details. Get the big things worked out. You're accepted into the program; mostly you have a place to stay... I don't worry so much about the details. Even now, with other things in my life, things will work out; I'm a lot more optimistic. Cuz I've had different experiences now where things have worked out. You know I took a big risk but it's worked out... I feel more willing to take risks now.

Ted talked about some of the things he has done since going on exchange that he felt he would not have done without the confidence he gained through his experience abroad.

Ted: I think I'm more likely to put myself in situations that are more difficult now. So since going to Tokyo, I've gone to Edmonton twice for work things, and I'm prepping right now to go somewhere.

I think it's mainly confidence. Just having been through that stuff, it's like if I can handle that, I can handle whatever they've got to throw at me in English. No problem. I think as far as the ability to think on your feet and assess situations and read body language too.

Susan took the opportunity to join a hiking and climbing club while on exchange. This was something she would never have considered trying at home. For Susan, the act of climbing mountains represented her newfound sense that she could do anything she set her mind to doing.

Susan: This past weekend I was in a climbing competition and I actually did not very very terrible at it. If you had asked me a year ago, if you told me I

would have climbed mountains, and hiked up things, and been to places, and walked on glaciers; done all these things; I would have told you you were crazy. Totally I was the couch potato from Manitoba climbing mountains.

Lisa found confidence in her ability to deal with unplanned events and circumstances. She shared about all of the unknowns that she had been forced to face in starting out her exchange experience and how it affected her.

Lisa: It was all about pressing my boundaries. I'm a kid who doesn't like change, I like to keep everything the same. So going out of my comfort zone was what that was all about. It's like ripping off a bandage; you don't want to do it, but once you're there its pretty cool.

I think I've always been a slightly neurotic person. I like to know what to expect when going into any circumstance. Like going into a building I want to know where the washrooms are, or I want to know what floor the office I want to look for is. I'm just slightly obsessive. And I think going off to where you have no idea what to expect... So it was kind of a leap of faith. You kind of plan and research as much as you can. Getting there makes you more confident, even in a thing like travelling by yourself, and navigating your way around... Everyday getting from one location to another. Definitely the confidence. Before I had never travelled anywhere except to Quebec City by myself, and that was within a few provinces away.

Things that would have seemed a lot more scary and daunting if I hadn't been on this side of the world finding my way before. Okay well I did that, and I

lived by myself for six months, then like, just finding this bus station is no problem. It makes things a little less scary.

And I think that seeing the benefits of stretching myself and stretching what I want to do has paid off. I'm more apt to look for it, and I'm also apt to look for more adventurous things since then, things that stimulate you more. I know what's out there and I need to keep going and finding it.

One of the students who went on exchange to Turkey talked about how unprepared she was for the experience she had. She commented that learning to deal with the unexpected had given her confidence in her ability to think on her feet.

Lynn: I feel that I am more capable of being put into extreme situations and handling it with a cool head, because I was very unprepared for everything that was going to happen. But I; how can you unprepared for these things that are going to be thrown at you? So I had a lot of moments where I had to kind of think on my feet and I think I'm better at that now.

I think it's still the confidence, it has affected my personality. The fact that I am less timid, and I want to meet a lot of people from different places more, and I am more interested in international things. And I wouldn't say that I'm more aggressive or anything like that. My personality was that I was quite shy, and that if someone brought me a meal, and it wasn't cooked completely, I probably wouldn't say anything, and now I would actually assert myself more and go out and... Often I am the one in my group of friends that would do that kind of thing, and they look to me to be more, of a leader; but you know.

One of the students who went to Australia spoke about the potential for things to go wrong while traveling. As a result, her confidence in her ability to solve problems changed and her attitude when they don't go her way has changed as well.

Kerry: Well I'm great deal more confident that almost anything that goes wrong can be dealt with. Like people who freak out when things are delayed, or when money they're expecting, their pay check doesn't come for something. You know, you'll be able to deal with it. It's tough, however the world is still turning and will probably continue to do so. That sort of; oh well, we'll fix it. That's one thing that is very helpful and that's one thing I got from being away. Like basically anything that goes wrong you can probably fix it.

By the same token, confidence in my ability to deal with stuff, like if it goes wrong I'm sure I'll be able to find a solution.

More outgoing.

Students who participated in the interviews also commented that they felt they had become more outgoing or extroverted since their exchange experiences.

Ted: I found that I was so excited to speak English again that I was taking any opportunity to talk to people, which is something I don't really do. I would classify myself as an introverted, perhaps less so now than before I went on exchange. Talking to people isn't something that comes naturally to me. Through going through those more different experiences where you try to make yourself understood in a really tough situation, it makes you appreciate the ability to speak in a language you know pretty well.

Since coming back I have been more; whenever there's a class presentation or an opportunity to give a presentation I'm always eager to do it for some reason. That's something I never liked to do before, but now it's like, oh I get a chance to talk.

Susan: The thing that changed about me is that I'm definitely more of a partier and a drinker. More outgoing and more social.

Lynn: I'm a lot more extroverted than I was. I used to be a lot more shy.

One of the students who went to Turkey commented that she was more likely to take leadership in situations and that she viewed herself as less timid after participating in the exchange program.

Personal judgement and realistic expectations.

Students also felt that they gained more of a trust in themselves. Participants became more confident in their ability to assess situations, make decisions, and set realistic expectations in general. Ted talked about his ability to judge situations and that he felt more able to assess people quickly.

Ted: I think I'm more realistic, and maybe better able to judge situations, or questioning of situations when I'm faced with them. I think one of the things I got better at was judging people on first or second impressions.

Lynn talked about learning caution as well as learning to better prepare for situations that she might possibly encounter.

Lynn: I've learned caution. That's something that I was not really thinking that much about. I'm already very cautious and good at taking care of myself. It was a lot of family friends and people telling me; are you sure about this?

Are you sure this is where you want to go; close to an area that having some problems is right now. I did a lot of research, and I felt fine about going, but still I wasn't quite prepared for everything that I experienced. And so now, it's not that I'm cold about travel, I would totally do this, but I've learned to think a little bit now.

Alice shared that she learned to think about the safety of a situation before jumping in. She also felt that she gained a greater level of common sense through her experiences abroad.

Alice: I wasn't ever in a situation where there were; because I always had parameters within which I had to live, and now I had to make those parameters. I decided who I spent time with, when I spent time with them, where I spent time with them. You really have to use your judgement if you don't know the country, if you don't know who is safe, and who is not safe, where it's safe to go, and what kind of group. And that's something that if you don't have the experience in judging it, then you've got to be careful. Once or twice at the beginning I was like, oh, these are people I probably shouldn't be spending time with. And I learned that common sense life skills.

Communication skills.

Most of the questionnaire respondents stated that they were better able to communicate with people from other cultures since going on exchange. Four of the respondents were unsure as to whether or not this was the case for them and none of the respondents disagreed.

Esther commented that she had gained the ability to communicate across cultures and was able to apply those skills to some challenging situations when she returned to work back in Canada. Emma, Ted and Alice all gained valuable second language skills and a general ability to communicate more effectively. Lynn commented that she was more willing to speak up in situations where she would not have made the effort to communicate her feelings prior to her exchange.

The ability to communicate with people from other cultures is a valuable skill in any context. Students who participated in the exchange had to communicate with other students from a variety of cultures, not just other students from the culture they were visiting on exchange. After they returned from their exchange, students felt they were able to understand people from other cultures more easily because they had learned to pay attention to more than just the words others were using. It is likely that participants' ability to understand people with a variety of accents was also enhanced through experiences during their exchange.

Change in perspective.

Students also commented that they learned to think in new ways. They had been exposed to different worldviews, different sets of commonly held beliefs, and different ways of behaving. As a result, exchange students were mindful that there was more out there than just their own ideas and assumptions.

One of the students who went to Japan talked about learning to see how his culture had influenced the way that he grew up. He also commented that he realized that many things are more complex than they first appear on the surface.

Ted: I've never considered that growing up in Canada has changed me in any way. I figured that if I grew up anywhere I'd be pretty much the same person. I still kind of believe that, but seeing the way people in Japan are, it seemed like growing up in Japan changed them from what they would have been had they grown up somewhere else. Like being forced into a school system where they have these extremely stressful exams that really determine the rest of your life. It shapes them and turns them into these adults that do nothing that work.

Probably that you can't take anything at face value. The things that I had read about Japan before, I had assumed were the case, but the more you look into things the more you realise that sometimes it's like that, or on the surface it's like that. But the more you get into things the more different it is and the more complex it is. I've learned not to take things at face value, and to try to dig into what's important, and what's actually the case, rather than what people want to be the case.

Susan commented that she learned there was much more to the world than Winnipeg. This was a significant lesson for a student who had spent her entire life in Winnipeg and had never previously considered living anywhere else.

Lisa talked about learning to get along with people who were very different from the people she usually sought out or spent time with at home.

Lisa: I'm definitely more open to learning about other people. From the girls that I lived with; were very different personalities, very different cultural backgrounds; but then finding those common threads was easy once you got

to know people. And so I think I'm less quick to make assumptions based on other kinds of cultural expectations or stereotypes.

I think before I was a very opinionated and stubborn girl. I would think before the idea of living with six completely different people, and having it be a harmonious thing, well I would have to be on very good behaviour the whole time. It shows that you can work well with others and you don't always choose who you're surrounded with.

Alice also talked about learning to get along with people who were very different from the friends she had back at home in Canada. She also shared how she learned to see things from other perspectives as a result of being exposed to people from different countries and cultures.

Alice: It's really different when you're in Japan, and you're the foreigner, and you have to find common ground with other foreigners whom you might not necessarily ever be friends with on another continent. So a lot of being open minded. You don't have to like other peoples' cultures, you don't have to understand other cultures, you just have to respect it, remember that that's their way, and this is my way... Actually opinions are really not encouraged in Japan. They really don't want people to; it's bad to express your opinions. For that I was often given a funny look. I'm a little more careful before I state an opinion now because of that. I try to consider other angles now, even though I thought I was doing it before.

I was really surprised when our teacher asked our class, if you could have cosmetic surgery right now, would you do it. All of the Asian students said

yes and all of the western students said no way, it's better to just be happy with yourself than pay to fix it. And those are things we're taught when we grow up, and they're taught when they grow up, things that are fundamentals to western society. And it was often east and west split... The death penalty was completely okay for a lot of the Asian people. Of course there were things I didn't consider, like Malaysia is a poor country and they don't have the money to support prisons. Things I never thought about because Canada doesn't have that problem. Different perspectives...

Now I make a lot of friends that I think I probably wouldn't have made before, I spend time with pretty radically different groups of people that I don't think I might have spent time with before.

One of the students who went to Turkey on exchange was exposed to people who knew more than one or two languages. Her perspective about the importance of knowing more than one language changed as a result of her encounters while on exchange.

Lynn: I learned a more European mindset. Where just the understanding; you know you want to learn the language when you're there, you want to know more than your own, not that the North American egocentric kind of English speaker language idea. All of the people that I met there know one or two other languages, it was an expectation. And I became really close friends with one girl from Finland who spoke about four or five different languages; and I was really impressed, and it kind of made me look at my own education, and made me think that maybe it's something that I should take more seriously for myself.

Exposure to new ways of thinking and different sets of values can be challenging for students. These challenges set the stage for transformative learning to take place. Interview participants confirmed that they learned to consider other ways of thinking. They also learned to acknowledge other values and beliefs because they had encountered these things while abroad.

Kerry shared about her unhappiness with the academic program she had been pursuing prior to her exchange. She also talked about giving in to expectations that she felt were imposed on her and how these things changed through her exchange experience.

Kerry: So by leaving, sort of; especially the people who tended to travel, they weren't the ones where tunnel vision on particular goals. A lot of them were really open minded to the point of being aimless. And that, sort of okay; well there's other people who don't know exactly what they want to do, and there's other people who change their mind and are doing different things; maybe I should give it a shot. So yeah, a change of perspective in that I don't think I would have acknowledged any of that had I stayed here. It would have been easier to continue on the path that I was on if I hadn't left.

Being exposed to different sorts of people. The adaptability that you gain. And for example; just experiencing another school system where they have different ways of doing things was good, because if the only experience you have in the school system is the University of Manitoba, in the city you grew up in, in the country you grew up in, with the school system you've always known. It's not an enormously different system where I was, but it was different enough.

Esther: But I think it definitely broadened my worldview and I have a lot of experiences that I can still relate to.

Career benefits and academic focus.

Some of the participants gained more direction in terms of their career plans. Other participants gained skills that were beneficial in their chosen career direction. The student who went to France felt that she was able to land a career position in a school because of the experience and skills she gained while on exchange.

Emma: And they recognized how beneficial to me, how much my French had improved. Now that's obviously helped me get a job at a French immersion school which I would never had been able to do had I not left.

Like I said, I wouldn't be able to have the job that I got and so soon, had I not had those experiences, I think it really showed on my resume that I'm outgoing and adventurous, had things to offer to a school that maybe I wouldn't have had before. Definitely getting a job.

Ted gained language skills, but also discussed how he gained other skills that he would not have gained without his exchange experience.

Ted: I gained some Japanese language skills. And that exchange did more for developing my soft skills than anything else could have. Just because it puts you in such a situation where you're forced to either gain these soft skills or just go home basically.

Soft skills being like; just the ability to interact with people, whether that be face to face or in writing. The ability to put yourself in other people's situations.

Other students commented that they now felt they had more options open to them in terms of pursuing their goals. They also felt more confident and willing to travel outside of Winnipeg or even outside of Canada in order to pursue their goals. Some of the students talked about how they had not previously considered living anywhere other than at home in Winnipeg, and that now they felt there were more options open to them.

Susan: Before I never thought of myself living anywhere other than Winnipeg, but now I'm open to the idea of moving and relocating once I graduate from university. I know I could live anywhere.

Lisa also added that she felt that the accomplishment of going on an exchange made her more ambitious in her pursuit of other goals.

Lisa: I think it makes you a little more ambitious. Going through the application process, applying for the exchange, and getting in. Having one more thing to put on your resume that sets you apart from other people, a pat on the shoulder, okay I did this. And there's other things and goals that I'd like to do.

I'm starting my masters knowing that I might be going away to do a PhD at some point. We'll see how ambitious I get after this degree. But I think that going on exchange had definitely opened up the idea of living other places. Whereas before I would have been quite hesitant to go abroad or go other places even within Canada. Just being outside of your social network and comfort zone, that support and family. But now I think at this point in my life if there was a job opportunity in another province or another country I would be much more willing to take it. Now I'm interested in doing internship within

an international development agency with regards to my agricultural background. And I think that's something that would be interesting, and it would be much more daunting if I hadn't had the experience where I knew that I could live away from home for six months.

Ted: I don't think I would have gone outside Winnipeg for my coop if I hadn't already been confident in my ability to live on my own.

One of the students who went to Turkey on exchange shared about a desire to do more and bigger things in her life.

Lynn: And also I'm more interested in cultural exchange and ideas. I do a lot more volunteering now than I did before.

But I want to do bigger things, like I don't want to just go on smaller journeys. It inspired me to do more.

During her exchange abroad, Kerry found the time to work through a number of issues. She also was able to make decisions about the direction she wanted to take in her life because of the distance she had from her life back in Canada.

Kerry: So in getting a certain amount of distance, the exchange let me resolve a lot of stuff; and have an independent experience, and have a while to make some of my own decisions, and actually when I came back from exchange I switched faculties. I switched areas of study and I just took off in a totally new direction, which is where I am now. And so it wasn't where I had started at all, and it wasn't exactly that I was on exchange that caused all that to happen, but it all happened when I was on exchange, so there was a lot of reflection, and contemplation, and resolution of some stuff.

Especially at school; I totally switched directions, and I hit the ground running, and took off to do something completely different. And the academic year started four weeks after I got back. I actually took thirty-six credit hours so it was very busy. But the fact that I made that dramatic change, that was probably another reason I never got that same old same old feeling.

And then when I came back I started in linguistics, which is what my degree is in; so I switched from science into arts... So I definitely did change directions, and I'm in a place where I'm really excelling and where I'm enjoying it. And I probably wouldn't have done it if I had stayed where I was.

Another student who went to Turkey on exchange learned valuable communication skills. She was able to put those newfound skills into practice during her job immediately following her time on exchange.

Esther: And I think I've learned that you don't need to have such an extensive vocabulary to articulate stuff. The really interesting experience I had when I came back to Canada; I had a job in Thompson working with Manitoba Hydro. And I worked with a lot of people that were from the reserve communities in the area. And a lot of them were older and grew up with Cree as their first language. It was a different culture. And I found that I could relate my experiences in Turkey to this situation, where people that didn't grow up with English as their first language. I could still communicate with them very effectively, and work together. And I had, I was aware of this. I had an awareness of more of the cultural influences on a particular job and an individual. It really made me reflect on my time in Turkey and now I had this

skill set to apply here. Maybe I would have had patience, maybe I would have been able to communicate effectively, but it really added to it.

She also discovered that where she really wanted to live was right here at home rather than somewhere abroad. The exchange was a chance to try living in another country which allowed her to make her future choices based on her own experiences.

Esther: I did my degree in international relations and I love and am really interested in the world out there. And when I got there I realized I liked it, but I loved my home. I didn't necessarily want to live in Kenya or Finland. I discovered that the most important things to me are right here.

I know that I want to be in Manitoba, that I want to make my career and my life in Manitoba. I learned that being home is really important to me. I mean I said that a couple of times. That's not something I knew about myself.

Alice made many valuable connections and gained knowledge to help her in her academic as well as career goals. She has everything mapped out; including a return to the university she attended while on exchange.

Alice: Before the exchange I had changed my major into Asian studies. And I am continuing that, and if everything goes well I am going to do my master at Kokugakuin University in a few years. So things, I made a lot of good connections and I had a really good experience. It's a bigger part of everyday life than it was before.

I'm studying, hopefully teaching Japanese as a second language. After I graduate this year I'm planning to go the University of Alberta to prepare myself for grad studies.

While I'm there I'm; I can apply for a scholarship to do my masters in Japan. I have an advisor at Kokugakuin who is willing to take me for the TJSL program. There's a really big government scholarship that depends on the exact program that you do. This one is called research studies, but I won't technically be doing research... Everything I'm doing is towards eventually going back. It's not that I; a lot of people think oh you're going to Japan and you're never coming back, but that's not the case. As much as I like Japan; it's just that at this time in my life it's a good time to enjoy being there. But ultimately I want to end up in Winnipeg.

All of the participating students were readily able to give examples of the ongoing benefits they felt they had gained through their exchange experiences. They were all enthusiastic about student exchange programs in general. At the end of the interview they were asked if they had any additional comments they wanted to make. Most of the participants said that they highly recommended that everyone should go on exchange because of the valuable experience that it had been to them.

Summary of transformative learning.

Based on the interview responses and the questionnaire responses, the time on exchange was a transformative learning experience for participants. The students in this study gained independence by being away from their families and living on their own. They felt a sense of accomplishment by meeting the daily challenges of life in a foreign country. Most participants expressed their willingness, and in some cases, their desire to seek out new challenges in life. Some participants commented that they felt they had become more outgoing and had gained leadership skills through their time abroad. Other

students commented that they felt they gained better judgement abilities and had more realistic expectations in situations. Most students commented that they had a broader perspective and were more able to view situations from a variety of points of view. Many students also noted that they had renewed focus in their academics, and that they had also gained valuable career skills and contacts. One student changed academic direction after returning from her time on exchange.

Cultural Learning

In addition to transformative learning, participants also learned many things about culture. This section examines the cultural learning of exchange students in two areas: learning about other cultures; and learning about Canadian culture.

Learning about other cultures.

According to Hoffa (1998) students learn about their own cultures as well as the culture they visit. All students who participated in the questionnaire indicated that they felt they had learned about the culture of their exchange country. All students, except one who was undecided, felt they had learned about other cultures as well. There were a number of things that students who participated in the interviews learned about their host cultures. Although not all students highlighted learning about the same types of things, most of their learning related to various social aspects of the cultures they came in contact with while on exchange.

Food and eating.

Attitudes towards food and eating differ from culture to culture. Some of the students commented on the things they learned about food and eating from other cultures.

The student who went to France on exchange noted cultural differences around food and attitudes towards mealtimes.

Emma: French people I found, they liked routine, in particular with meals. At mealtime was always a big deal, there was no just grabbing a sandwich like we do. We're going to sit down, we're going to eat a salad, and we're going to have meat, and vegetables, and bread, and baguettes; always eating baguettes, and cheese, and wine, and dessert, and coffee, and it's like an hour and a half. Especially at the school where I worked, they had a two hour lunch break. So I found that at lunch time, all the doors would be closed. The bank, you couldn't do any banking at lunchtime, the bank would be closed for an hour and a half. I found that it was just a very different set up of the day. It was cultural it wasn't just like one or two people did that, it was just everywhere.

The student adjusted her mealtime routine to fit with the cultural in France. She mentioned that this routine was something she missed after returning to Canada.

One of the students who went to Japan commented on the large amount of food that Canadians consumed compared to the amount of food people consumed in Japan. She commented on the large serving sizes at American restaurants such as Boston Pizza, and also at the Costco sized foods that a past Canadian exchange student had purchased and then left behind.

One of the students who went to Australia noted that a fellow exchange student from Hong Kong was unfamiliar with peanut butter, and that she had never thought of peanut butter and jam sandwiches as being culturally Canadian before.

Clothing and dress.

Attitudes towards appropriate clothing, fashion, and ways to dress can also be very culturally based. The student who went to France noted the cultural attitude towards dress and clothing.

Emma: Something very cultural about French people, they will never walk outside in a pair of sweats. You will never see a French woman in sweats walking down the street. In the second year of living there, by the time I got to the second year, I realized that everyone dresses to the nines whether they're going down the street to the store, or going to town, or they're going to work. They're always dressed nice. My friend came, I met her there she was teaching in the second year. We were going to go buy some stuff from a store, and she put sweats on and a hoodie, and I said are you going to leave the house like that, I'm kind of embarrassed. We're going to get treated meanly if you dress that ugly. I realized if I dress nice people treat me better, if I dress ugly people treat me worse. So that's something that stuck with me. That I don't, I wasn't really a big sweats person before, but now to go to university classes, like never, even to go to class people would dress up like heels and the full deal, and I think that I really caught on to that dressing better makes you feel better. Maybe not for everybody, but that's what I found.

Stereotypes.

There are many stereotypes that exist about different cultures. In some cases, participating students found that those stereotypes held true in various ways. The students

who went to Australia commented that some of the stereotypes they held previously were quite accurate.

Lisa: You think of all of the different stereotypes. That you think like, they're going to put a shrimp on the barbie and the zinc on the nose. So it's funny when they really do have lots of barbeques and they really are laid back. It's funny when those positive generalities seem to be quite accurate.

Kerry: There were a few stereotype moments or else stereotype breaking moments. For example, I ate kangaroo meat. Oh this is perfectly normal here, but everyone at home would think this was scandalous. You know kangaroos are cute, but actually they're pests, that sort of thing.

Not all of the stereotypes held true for the students. The student who selected Turkey as her destination was surprised that the Turkish people seemed to be searching for their culture. She had gone expecting to find a strong traditional Turkish culture because of the country's lengthy history. In this case, she had to let go of her expectations based on the stereotype that she had previously held.

Acceptable behaviours and taboos.

The interview participants also commented on the way people behaved in their host countries. The student who went to France was initially offended because she felt she was being treated rudely, but later changed her interpretation of those behaviours after spending more time observing people's behaviours.

Emma: I think that there was an aha moment for me. When I realized that French people, the way they treated me wasn't because I was an international student, they were like that to everyone. They were not very

friendly at the beginning. Like they were mean to each other. And that really helped me. And I realized that if someone was cutting me off in the grocery line it's not because they hear that I have an accent. They're just really rude. And not that everyone's rude. They just have a much more aggressive culture than we do.

One of the students who went to Japan reminisced about one of the acceptable behaviours he encountered and compared it to a social taboo from that country. He found their coexistence to be difficult to reconcile.

Ted: Exactly, we were told pretty early on that feet is a big deal. They can shave each other naked, but if you have your feet exposed and you put your leg up to relax, it's all quite wrong.

Many students noted how helpful people were to them as foreigners and strangers in the communities they lived in while on exchange.

Lynn: But I found that they were people that went out of their way to help me in a lot of different situations. Complete strangers or people at school, more so than people here would go out of their way to help me. I always got lost a lot, especially at the beginning, and I would have people, complete strangers, that didn't want anything from me, try and help me, and I was really surprised by that. I didn't think that anyone would pay any attention to one girl in a back pack trying to catch a ferry or running. And I can't read the sign that says go here or do that, so I'd have women come over and try to mime to me where I should go and help me.

Alice: Most people were pretty friendly. Some people were a little scared because they were worried that their English isn't good enough, or that we didn't speak enough Japanese to understand. A couple of restaurant owners would look at us in horror; I don't speak English, this is going to be very difficult; and we would speak a few words in Japanese and they would relax.

One of the students who went to Japan shared a story of one of her learning moments about something that was common in Japan but not usual for Canada.

Alice: Actually it's kind of a funny situation... I went to the washroom at the university when I first got there, and two other girls happened to go to the washroom at the same time. It was identical, everyone goes to the same washroom, same set of stalls, leaves at the same time, washes their hands at the same time. And I'm standing there looking for paper towels everywhere. And these two girls had pulled out handkerchiefs out of their back pockets and were drying their hands. And I'm going; nobody told me I needed a handkerchief. It wasn't in all washrooms, but it was in probably 75 percent of the washrooms didn't have paper towels, or hand dryers, or anything. Just one of those, I'm not in Canada anymore, and I'm going to have to start learning the rules, but nobody is going to teach me. So that was a big one. Even though it was something so small, I didn't want to have to wipe my hands on my pants every time I went to the washroom. That was my big, okay, it's a big difference. It's a small thing but it becomes a part of everyday life.

Academics.

Students also commented on some of the similarities and differences in cultural attitudes and approaches to academics and university life. The student who went to the United Kingdom on exchange was challenged by the different approach to learning and academics in their university system.

Susan: Also trying to get adjusted to the schooling system, cuz they had a very different way of going to classes and studying. Exams were brutally hard, because they were a completely different mentality. Their exams are; know everything about a topic. Our exams are; as long as you know the gist of things. Our exams are twenty multiple choice questions. Their exams are; here's a one line topic, write everything you know. So you have to be able to write three fully referenced essays from memory on one of twenty topics in three hours. So for my first exam I studied as if I were here and I got to my exam and I was like what do I do? Plus they only have one hour of class each week. So I only had three hours of class per week. So I had a lot of time to myself. I only had classes on Wednesdays and Fridays. I had a five day weekend every week. So it's hard to keep yourself motivated to work when you only have one essay in the whole year and then the final in April. I guess they told us but you didn't really expect it to be just like that because it would be so different. Oh well, it's an exam, I can do exams. And you get there and it was like oh, that's very different. Also my professors, one of my professors; I asked what's the format of the exam. And he's like; well haven't you done the old exams. And I was like; no I don't usually do them until I'm ready. And

he just kind of made me feel like why don't you know this already, why haven't you looked it up.

Yet the students who went to Australia found that the laid back culture they encountered on exchange extended into the academic venue as well.

Lisa: They were very lazy which sounds really awful, but I think about even their speech, like they shorten everything so understanding their; what is in, because they can't be bothered to finish any actual words. Which was kind of interesting. I think they just have a very relaxed society, like much more laid back. When they say 'no worries' they really mean it. Even in school.

The students who went to Turkey noted that, in the university they were studying at while on exchange, there was a laid back attitude towards academics. They felt that they were the only students in their classes who were actively engaged in the classroom learning experience. One of the students who visited Turkey hypothesized that this might be because the university they attended was a private university, most of the students were from rich families, and that it was possible that students from other universities in the Turkey might be more studious.

Gender and class.

Some of the students going to Japan and Turkey also commented on gender roles and gender expectations in the countries they visited while on exchange. Other students noted differences in the class structure of the countries visited.

The student who went to Japan felt strongly about the different expectations and rules for women compared to men. She noted that in restaurants with all you can eat

buffets, women were charged less than men. She also commented on different rules in co-ed basketball.

Alice: There's a lot about Japan that I was; women's rights in Japan were not totally equal so I had to struggle with that a little bit. For example, there was a sports day that they had. And they had team sport basketball. I had to watch because my friend was playing. And if men scored a basket it was one point and if women scored a basket it was two. I just remember thinking, you're kidding me. It was generally accepted that women weren't as good at sports so their baskets were worth more.

The student who went to Turkey was struck by the prevalence of men only establishments. Not knowing how to tell which places would only cater to men led to some embarrassing moments for her and her friends who were also on exchange.

Esther: There were times when we would walk into a café and sit down, and then realize there were only men in the café, and we weren't supposed to be there. And so we would get funny looks.

Another student noted the attitudes of male students towards female students. She felt that as an outsider who was able to befriend some of the male students, she was able to gain some insights to their attitudes directly and challenge some of those attitudes as well.

One of the students who went to Turkey was surprised by the clear division between rich and poor.

Esther: And that there was no middle class. That was something in most developing countries, you hear about this, but I didn't really know what it

meant. There were so many poor people in Turkey. And I went to; Yeditepe is a private school so there's a lot of rich kids because their parents are paying for them to be there. But there was nothing in between. The Turkish students I met there would tell me too that there was no middle class.

Tradition and religion.

The students who went to Japan noted the coexistence of modern and traditional ways of life. The students were also struck by Japan's vast history in contrast to Canada's youth and lack of traditional ways.

Alice: So when people have; this is the traditional way, but they're also interested in the modern way. They don't mix them so much as just let them exist side by side. And to say this is the traditional way of doing things, and there's this other way of doing it, and it's just separate, not mixing it. It's interesting how Japan deals with being really modern but also really traditional at the same time.

Ted: One of the things that Japanese people stress is the history of the country and that religion is a part of their history. And we don't have that kind of thing. We don't have a whole lot of history, we're not even a hundred years old, well barely. So we don't have a lot of history to us, and our history doesn't influence our life right now. It's not like our historical religion has to keep going.

AL: I think because Canada is a young country, having a long history was something that I couldn't relate with. And so once I had to learn about this, and realizing that Japan's history is short compared with China, and India,

and a lot of other Asian countries. There's a lot going back, they have traditional clothing, traditional music, traditional everything, dance, we can't relate to that. There's no such thing as traditional Canadian clothing, it's jeans and a t-shirt really. The country's not even two hundred years old I don't think.

The students who went to Turkey also commented on the calls to prayer that happened throughout the day. They noticed that religion had a much more visible place in culture in comparison to Canada.

One of the students who went to Japan shared about some of the traditional cultural things she learned.

Alice: We did a lot of; our culture class had a lot of field trips that were things that Japanese people would never do, but were really interesting. We went and learned how to make oodle noodles, soba noodles, like buckwheat noodles. They're not hard to make, they only take thirty seconds to cook, we got to make them ourselves. If we wanted to we could make them at home after that. We learned about tatami, the traditional mats in the rooms. They used to measure rooms by how many mats you could fit in them. The room I had, using tatami, was a six mat room, and everyone knew what I was talking about. We also learned how you were supposed to take care of it, and how they act as an air conditioner, they absorb moisture in the summer and release it in the winter. All this interesting stuff. Well we have central heating so we don't worry about it, air conditioning. It was different.

Getting things done.

The student who went to France found that there were differences in how things got done. Out of habit she went to a pharmacy to mail a letter, but was made fun of for doing so. Pharmacies in France only sell medication, unlike pharmacies in Canada. She also noted that things seemed much less efficient at the university she attended while on exchange. She commented that the process of registering for classes there was particularly disorganized. Other students, such as one of the students who went to Australia, commented that everything was just organized differently.

One of the students who went to Turkey was struck by the corruption in Turkish bureaucracy. She found that people weren't as organized, and things didn't seem to work as efficiently in Turkey as she was used to here in Canada.

Esther: And also found surprising how much corruption there was in the bureaucracy, and that's the political culture. People just know how to get things done. You get stopped on the side of the street with out your passport and you give the police officer fifty bucks to let you off, and you're okay. I was always stuck in this; where I would compare Turkish political culture to Canadian political culture, and it was just so different. Our institutions function much more efficiently.

Another thing about the Turkish culture that I found interesting was the work ethic. Everything was very relaxed and casual until things were due, and then it was just chaos. And there was no long term planning, it was here and now, and we have to get this done now. And I found that very hard to deal with. Because we as international exchange students; they grouped us together and

tried to get things done for us, like our residence permits. And we could comprehend much more efficient ways to get things done than they did. But they waited until the very last day, and took all of our passports at the same time, and it was complete chaos. And we couldn't understand how something we knew had to get done months ago was not planned properly.

Getting around.

A few students commented on how it was different to get around in the countries they lived in while on exchange. They had to adjust to taking public transportation and walking more than they had done at home in Canada and in Winnipeg in particular.

Emma: I think at the beginning having to walk everywhere and taking public transportation; cuz here, everyone has cars. Well not everybody, some people have to take public transportation. I never had to take busses or had to know a bus schedule ever in my life. All of a sudden it becomes very important while you're out there.

Alice: It's really easy to get around. The train system is amazing. It's like everybody took lessons on how to give directions growing up. Everybody knows how to tell you where you need to go. They all have maps, they all want to show you.

Susan noted that everything she needed was within close walking distance of where she lived while on exchange, and that she missed being able to walk everywhere when she returned home.

Learning about Canada.

Living away from home in a new country will often reveal as much about a person's own culture as it does about the new culture they are living in. This is especially true when students make comparisons between what they are used to and what seems strange in their new homes. Sixteen out of twenty one questionnaire respondents answered positively that they increased their awareness of Canadian culture through their exchange experience. Four students were unsure if this was the case. Only one student disagreed and felt that he did not increase his awareness of Canadian culture through the exchange. Students who participated in interviews shared some of their learning about Canadian culture. They raised topics such as attitudes of foreigners towards Canada, they discovered unexpected feelings of patriotism, they developed a greater appreciation of Canada and Canadian culture, and they discovered certain characteristics that they felt were unique to the Canadians they interacted with abroad.

Attitudes towards Canada.

Some of the students commented on the attitudes they encountered of foreigners towards Canada and Canadians.

Lynn: I definitely also learned that other people look highly on Canada. And when they found out; I didn't try and say where I was from, but when I would have dinner somewhere, I would have the waiter come up to me and ask, oh you speak English where are you from. And I would say Canada, and they would come back in a few minutes with a magazine or something and ask me more about my country. And I became more comfortable with promoting where I was from which was really odd for me.

Lisa: Well, everyone liked us. So going out and playing the Canadian card worked every time. It kind of; that stereotype that everyone thinks of Canada as being a peacekeeping nation, and hockey, and all the stereotypes.

Esther: Everyone loves Canadians. I met that everywhere.

Feeling patriotic.

Some of the students also noted that they felt more patriotic while they were abroad. Some of the students were also conscious of being representatives of Canada while they were on exchange. One of the students who went to Australia spoke about the climate and how it became a badge of honour.

Kerry: But I do notice as a general rule, when I travel that I am much more enthusiastic about where I live than when I'm actually here. So for example, the cold weather buys you a lot of bragging rights, and you learn to be really really proud of it, because it's something people identify, and it's so strange to them, that you savour your uniqueness. No one else can believe all the things that you say. So things like that become really definitive.

A few of the students found themselves promoting Canada more than they expected to. They also gained a greater appreciation of Canada and Canadian culture.

Lynn: But I found myself trying to promote Canada more than I thought I was going to. That's not really in my nature. Oh I come from such a wonderful place!

Esther: Again, when I was there I was always comparing what I was discovering to what I know. So I gained a new appreciation for Canada, for

how things work. Things work in Canada and I gained an appreciation for that, and for coffee. They didn't have good coffee.

One student mentioned that she was more aware of being Canadian and what that meant since participating in the exchange.

Alice: I think I'm more aware of being Canadian now that I'm back. Yes I am. But maybe Canadian with a better understanding of what is not Canadian. It never would have occurred to me that peanut butter and jam sandwiches are unique in any way, but they are.

Open and accepting.

The students who participated in interviews commented on a number of things about Canadian characteristics and culture that they became more aware of, or found significant during their times on exchange.

The student who went to France commented on Canadians' openness to trying new things.

Emma: I think being really friendly and open to trying new things. I found that other people weren't necessarily willing to do that. Like if they were going to go do some activity we were like, sure we'll try that, we'll try anything once. And I found that with my other Canadian friends, they were really open. Like they're going to try some new recipe, okay we'll eat some of that, or we'll drink some of that, or whatever. We really wanted to go see the places. We were a lot more enthusiastic about travelling.

One of the students who went to Japan talked about Canadians' acceptance of other cultures. They also felt that culture in Canada was very multicultural compared to culture in Japan.

Ted: But we're pretty accepting of other cultures, I'd like to think. Maybe not totally deep down, but certainly on the surface. There's people from a lot of cultures living here. That's a good thing.

Susan: And all the Canadians we were with got along really well, and they thought we were very friendly. They liked to make fun of our accents.

Summary of learning about culture.

Participants in this study shared many things that they learned about culture. They learned about food and eating habits of people from other cultures. Participants learned about other views on clothing and what one should wear in public. They also learned that there are a variety of acceptable behaviours and taboo behaviours that exist in other cultures, and that many of these acceptable behaviours and taboos are not part of Canadian culture. Students noted differences in traditions, gender roles, class structure, and how things get accomplished in other cultures compared to in Canada. Students also learned about other countries' attitudes towards Canada. They had the opportunity to compare themselves to people from other cultures and many students found that they developed a sense of patriotism while away on exchange. Learning about other cultures and seeing those differences helped provide opportunities to think critically about their own culture, and also provided opportunities for transformative learning experiences.

CHAPTER 6

Implications and Conclusion

Implications

There has been very little research into Canadian students' experiences of short term study abroad and there is much room for further study. Current research centres mainly on international students who have completed degrees abroad and are returning home, people who have completed work terms abroad, and students from universities in the United States who have participated in study abroad programs. This study begins to fill in the huge gap in literature on Canadian students who participate in study abroad programs.

It is clear from the responses in this study that students' experience of participating in an exchange has a positive impact on their levels of independence, confidence, and their interest in what happens in the world at large. The results of this study add to knowledge about how students experience the cultures of their destination countries. This study also adds to knowledge about the types of things students learn, apart from academic subjects, while abroad on exchange.

This study looked at the lived experiences of University of Manitoba students who had participated in a short term exchange program. It also looked at the learning that occurred for students as a result of participating in an exchange abroad. The participants shared many areas in which they experienced personal change. The data provided by participants gives future researchers a starting point to explore in depth, what happens to students when they go on exchange. The data provided in this study also shows areas of learning which future researchers could further examine. A long term study based on

participants' responses could also be conducted to see how the study abroad experience influences decision making and life choices as time passes.

The destinations that participants in this study visited while on exchange were generally developed and more westernized countries. Although this is consistent with typical destinations for student exchange programs, students going to less developed countries might have different responses to the questionnaires and interviews than the participants in this study provided. Future research could focus on specific destinations in order to see if the outcomes of student exchange programs change when the destination has a greater number of cultural differences.

This study did not look specifically at the types of students who choose to participate in student exchange programs. Other future areas of study that could come out of this research would be to explore what the characteristics of students are who make a decision to study abroad; what leads them to make the decision to spend a semester or two in another country on exchange; and what leads other students to either decide not to participate in an exchange or withdraw from the exchange program after initially applying.

Another area of study could include looking at past exchange participants to see what types of careers or extra curricular activities they choose. Do past exchange students choose occupations that have an international component to their work? Do past exchange students travel more or volunteer abroad more? These are questions that future researchers could look at in relations to student exchange programs.

The findings in this study are consistent with literature on different types of sojourns abroad. Similar to students who had completed degrees abroad, participants in

this study experienced difficulty in adjusting to being home (Bossard & Peterson, 2005; Choi, 2003; Sussman, 2002; L.Cox 2006; Shougee, 2000). Similar to Shougee's (2000) study on exchange students, the participants in this study found that they had changed and their relationships with people back home required effort to renew.

Many of the findings regarding personal change in exchange participants were also consistent with previous research. Participants in this study experienced personal growth, a broadened perspective, and improved communication. These findings were also present in research by Bossard and Peterson (2005), and Shougee (2000).

It is exciting to hear students share about their experiences of being on exchange. It is also exciting to hear about the changes they felt they underwent as a part of the exchange experience. As a practitioner in the area of study abroad and student exchange programming, I am most interested in what the implications of this study are for participants and program administrators on a daily basis. These results can be used to promote the exchange program to other students, and to those who have influence over students' decisions to participate in an exchange such as university faculty and administrators, and the parents or guardians of the potential participants.

Interview participants were glad to have an opportunity to share about their experiences abroad in detail. The interviews became a time for students to reflect on their time abroad, which is a key component of the transformative learning experience. There is a need for practitioners to consider ways in which we can make space for students to reflect on their exchange experiences. The questions used in this study could also be used as a starting point for returning students to reflect on their experiences.

Interviewees also shared that discussion times with friends had been a key piece of their learning about culture. Some went further to say that they were disappointed by the lack of interest or opportunities to share and debrief about their experiences after they returned. It would be beneficial for students to be provided with opportunities to discuss their experiences with others who share those experiences. Developing a re-entry or debriefing session using the comments of study participants may assist students in adjusting to being back at home.

Some of the data gained from this study also suggest areas in which students might be better prepared prior to the exchange experience. Some of the students talked about their difficulty in adjusting to the new culture, and others talked about some of the things they were unprepared for or not expecting. Pre-departure orientations that provide more insight to specific cultures and countries would help to temper students' expectations prior to arrival in their destination countries. Past exchange students could become key informants in this process and would allow them opportunities to share their experiences in addition to providing vital information to future participants.

It is important for student exchange program administrators to be able to show what the outcomes are for participants of exchange programs. This study provides a starting list of possible outcomes for participation in exchange programs. This information could be used to develop a questionnaire or survey for returning students, so that program administrators can more accurately assess what the outcomes are for their participants. This information could also help program administrators find areas in which they need to provide more support in order to achieve those outcomes.

Conclusion

University exchange programs offer students the opportunity to live immersed in another culture while continuing to work towards their degrees by taking courses at a foreign university. Having worked with the University of Manitoba's International Centre for Students exchange program since 2004, a number of anecdotal patterns emerged in regards to the nature of exchange program experiences and what participants had to say about their experiences. This study explored the experiences and stories of University of Manitoba participants in student exchange programs, and looked at the lived experiences of exchange students who have returned. This study also examined the learning experiences of exchange program participants in a more methodical and in depth manner than has previously been available on a practical basis. One of the challenges to providing quality pre-departure as well as re-entry or debriefing programming is that there has not been significant research done to explore the experiences of exchange program participants in a Canadian context. There are orientations provided by organizations that offer internships, work, or volunteering abroad such as WUSC (World University Service Canada), CUSO, and the Centre for Intercultural learning. However their participants generally visit less developed countries and are not participating in academic exchange. Pre-departure orientations that provide the best preparation for exchange students need to look at what returning students say were areas that they needed information or training for. Any re-entry or debrief program that is to successfully address the needs of returning exchange students needs to be based on something more concrete than the assumption that services are needed in some form or another. This study provides a foundation for pre-departure and re-entry programming.

In promoting student exchange programs to students, staff, and parents at the University of Manitoba, many benefits are listed by program administrators. Some of the benefits I have used in promoting exchanges are that students may learn another language, they can learn their course material from a new perspective, they will increase their employability after graduation, they will grow personally, gain independence, and acquire valuable cross cultural skills. The results of this study provide confirmation that going on exchange can benefit students in a number of ways. Students learn about other cultures as well as their own cultures when they participate in an exchange. Students' interest in world events also increases as a result of participating in an exchange. Students increase their level of confidence, develop better communication skills, gain independence, and come back with a willingness to pursue other opportunities and challenges after participating in an exchange abroad. These are all benefits that exchange program administrators can point to when promoting the value of participation in student exchange programs.

There is a real need for student exchange program administrators in Canada to be able to be able to share the experiences of students in their programs with university faculty and staff, and with other students at the university. Often continued or increased funding depends on the ability to communicate the beneficial outcomes of a program. There are many benefits to an exchange, but very little research showing those outcomes in Canadian contexts. This study shows what the outcomes were for students who had participated in a short term exchange program.

As the focus on internationalization of universities grows, and as participation in exchange programs grows, there is also an increased need to have a better understanding

of student exchange program experiences. As more students participate in programs, there will also be a need for more services to help students adjust; first to their universities abroad; then back into their lives at home. This exploratory, qualitative study helps to provide a greater understanding of the phenomenon of student exchange experiences.

Exploration in this study focused on the areas of the exchange experience as it relates to participants adjustment to the new culture, learning about the new culture, and learning about Canadian culture. Exploration also focused on the personal changes that participants had gone through as a result of going on exchange. This study also looked at the participants' experiences of returning home.

Students gained independence and became more outgoing and confident. They became more willing to accept risks and face challenges, their communications skills improved, and they became more interested in world issues. The students also became more able to accept and appreciate differences in other people. These findings indicate that the student exchange experience was a transformative learning experience for participants in this study.

Students faced difficulty when returning to Canada. They had a difficult time sharing what their experience abroad meant to them. Students were also eager to look for ways to integrate their experiences and learning into their lives at home. These findings indicate that there is a need to develop ways to help students through the process of returning home. Findings also suggest that there is a need to help students find ways to continue to use what they have learned after they return home.

This study provides a significant start to research about the experiences of participants in student exchange programs in Canada. However, there is always more room for further study and exploration especially in the area of student exchange programs, and especially from a Canadian perspective.

Appendix A

Student Exchange Program Questionnaire

1. What country did you go to for your exchange?
2. What year of study were you in while on exchange?
3. What were the dates of your exchange?
4. Were there other students from the University of Manitoba with you during your exchange? If so, how much time did you spend with them?
5. Had you visited your destination country on some other trip, prior to your exchange? If so, how many times and for what lengths of time?
6. Had you ever spent time living in another country (other than your home country) prior to participating in the exchange program?

Please rate your answers to the following questions:

7. I had a difficult time adjusting to the new culture.
 a. Strongly Agree
 b. Agree
 c. Undecided
 d. Disagree
 e. Strongly Disagree
8. I developed a greater understanding about the new culture.
 a. Strongly Agree
 b. Agree
 c. Undecided
 d. Disagree
 e. Strongly Disagree
9. I developed a greater understanding of other cultures in general.
 a. Strongly Agree
 b. Agree
 c. Undecided
 d. Disagree
 e. Strongly Disagree
10. I am now better able to communicate with people from other cultures.
 a. Strongly Agree
 b. Agree

- c. Undecided
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

11. I increased my awareness of Canadian culture.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Undecided
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

12. I experienced personal change while participating in an exchange.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Undecided
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

13. I am more independent since participating in an exchange.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Undecided
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

14. I am more able to accept differences in others.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Undecided
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

15. I had a difficult time readjusting to being home.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Undecided
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

16. I have been able to reflect on my experience abroad.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Undecided
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

17. I am more interested in world events.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Undecided
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

18. I have been able to talk about my experience with others.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Undecided
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

19. My time on exchange continues to have an impact on my life.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Undecided
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

20. Are you willing to be interviewed in more depth about your experiences on exchange? If so, please provide your name and contact information.

Appendix B

Interview Guide

Questions to establish the context of the exchange:

1. What country did you go to for your exchange?
2. What year of study were you in while on exchange?
3. What were the dates of your exchange?
4. Were there other students from the University of Manitoba with you during your exchange? If so, how much time did you spend with them?
5. Had you visited your destination country on some other trip, prior to your exchange?
6. Had you ever spent time living in another country (other than your home country) prior to participating in the exchange program?

Questions about adjusting to a new culture and new country:

7. What were some of your first impressions of the country you visited?
8. What were some of the things you learned about the culture of the country you visited?
9. What was an event that was significant to you in teaching you something about the culture of the country you visited?

Questions about awareness of Canadian culture:

10. Describe something about Canadian culture that you have become more aware of since living in another country.

General exchange experience questions:

11. What are some phrases or statements that would help me understand your experience of being on exchange?
12. What were some highlights of your exchange experience?
13. What were some challenges of your exchange experience?

Questions on personal change:

14. In looking back on your time on exchange, are there ways in which you changed or grew as a result of being abroad?
15. Did you become more independent? How?
16. Did you become more able to accept differences? In what ways?

Questions about returning home experience:

17. Tell me about an event that has happened since your return home from your time abroad that would give me an idea of what it was like to come home.
18. How have people back home responded to your experience?
19. What impact does having participated in an exchange program have on you today?

Appendix C

Informed Consent for Questionnaire

Research Project Title: The Experiences of Student Exchange Program Participants

Researcher(s): Ms. Robin Dirks, MSW Student and Student Mobility & Exchanges Coordinator (ICS)

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

1. Purpose of the research.

This study proposes to explore the experiences and stories of University of Manitoba participants in student exchange programs, and to discover what the common experiences of returned exchange students are. The results of this study could be useful for the development of both pre-departure and re-entry or debriefing programming. Results could also help student exchange program professionals to better understand the needs of their returned students, and to help them to better prepare future student exchange program participants.

2. Procedures involving the subject.

Participants are requested to respond to questionnaires and return them to the researcher. Respondents are asked to provide their names and contact information if they are willing to participate in a follow up interview.

3. A description of risk.

The researcher does not expect there to be any potential harm beyond what one might experience in normal conduct of one's everyday life.

4. Degree of confidentiality that will be maintained.

The researcher will have sole access to the information collected and to the identity of the subject. Key identifying information will be kept separate from the questionnaire responses. All identifying information will be destroyed one year following completion of the study.

Questionnaires will not contain student information beyond destination country, duration of study abroad, and length of time since their participation in the

exchange program. This identifying information will be removed prior to dissemination of the findings and will not be included in any reporting.

5. Feedback to be provided to subjects.

Participants will be invited to attend a presentation on the research findings at the completion of the study.

6. Credit or remuneration.

No credit or remuneration will be provided to participants.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Principal Researcher: Robin Dirks

Telephone: [REDACTED]

Faculty Advisor: Prof. Don Fuchs

Telephone: [REDACTED]

This research has been approved by the [insert full name of appropriate REB]. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122, or e-mail margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher and/or Delegate's Signature

Date

Appendix D

Informed Consent for Interview

Research Project Title: The Experiences of Student Exchange Program Participants

Researcher: Ms. Robin Dirks, MSW Student and Student Mobility & Exchanges Coordinator (ICS)

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

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This study proposes to explore the experiences and stories of University of Manitoba participants in student exchange programs, and to discover what the common experiences of returned exchange students are. The results of this study could be useful for the development of both pre-departure and re-entry or debriefing programming. Results could also help student exchange program professionals to better understand the needs of their returned students, and to help them to better prepare future student exchange program participants.

2. Procedures involving the subject.

A small number of individuals have been selected to participate in an interview to further explore their exchange experiences. The researcher may contact interview participants following their interviews for further clarification or details on comments if needed. The study is expected to be completed by August 2010.

3. A description of risk.

The researcher does not expect there to be any potential harm beyond what one might experience in normal conduct of one's everyday life.

4. Recording devices to be used.

A small tape recorder may be used in the interview. The interviewer will also take written notes throughout the interview.

5. Degree of confidentiality that will be maintained.

The researcher will have sole access to the information collected and to the identity of the subject. Key identifying information will be kept separate from the interview responses. All identifying information will be destroyed one year following completion of the study.

Interview responses will be identified by destination country, duration of study abroad, and length of time since their participation in the exchange program. This identifying information will be removed prior to dissemination of the findings and will not be included in any reporting.

6. Feedback to be provided to subjects.

Interview participants will be contacted by email or phone in order to provide them with an opportunity to respond to the researcher's interpretation of their statements. Participants will be invited to attend a presentation on the research findings at the completion of the study.

7. Credit or remuneration.

No credit or remuneration will be provided to participants.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Principal Researcher: Robin Dirks

Telephone: [REDACTED]

Faculty Advisor: Prof. Don Fuchs

Telephone: [REDACTED]

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Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher and/or Delegate's Signature

Date

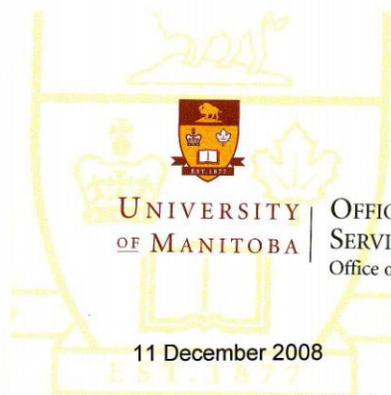
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11 December 2008

TO: **Robin Dirks** (Advisor D. Fuchs)
Principal Investigator

FROM: **Bruce Tefft, Chair** *Bruce Tefft*
Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board (PSREB)

Re: **Protocol #P2008:103**
"Impacts and Outcomes of Participation in Student Exchange Programs"

Please be advised that your above-referenced protocol, as revised, has received human ethics approval by the **Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board**, which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement. This approval has been issued based on your agreement with the change(s) to your original protocol required by the PSREB. It is the researcher's responsibility to comply with any copyright requirements. This approval is valid for one year only.

Any significant changes of the protocol and/or informed consent form should be reported to the Human Ethics Secretariat in advance of implementation of such changes.

Please note:

- if you have funds pending human ethics approval, the auditor requires that you submit a copy of this Approval Certificate to Kathryn Bartmanovich, Research Grants & Contract Services (fax 261-0325), including the Sponsor name, before your account can be opened.
- if you have received multi-year funding for this research, responsibility lies with you to apply for and obtain Renewal Approval at the expiry of the initial one-year approval; otherwise the account will be locked.

The Research Ethics Board requests a final report for your study (available at: http://umanitoba.ca/research/ors/ethics/ors_ethics_human_REB_forms_guidelines.html) in order to be in compliance with Tri-Council Guidelines.