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Change through Exchange

The Effects of Student Exchange on Students' Attitudes

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1Introduction

The fifty years since World War II could well be named the Period of International Exchange. Exchange programs of all kinds have sprung up in every part of the world and between all parts of the world. Teenagers from France go to school in Brazil, American college juniors spend a year in Italy, and British professors lecture in Japan. The programs are not limited to academic exchange, however. In fact, the first exchange programs the American "Government in Occupied Area in Germany" (GOAG) enacted after World War II included trainees and prospective leaders as well as students at the high school and university level.

These programs were certainly not the first cultural exchange programs. Some scholars go as far back as two thousand years when studying the origins and history of the subject (Klineberg, 21. For further historical information see Brickman). The American Field Service (AFS), one of the world's largest exchange organizations today, traces its history back to the volunteer work of American expatriates in Paris who helped care for wounded soldiers during and after the First World War (Kinhead, 11). Despite these long traditions, however, AFS did not begin to grow as an exchange program until 1948. Shortly thereafter the State Department granted AFS money to bring more than a hundred German students to the U.S. for a year (20). Fostered to a large extent by the efforts of the State Department, the 1950s became a period when the number of participants in international exchange programs as a whole multiplied. This was also the time when the "intrinsic and political value of such exchanges was suddenly discovered" (Kellermann, 141). The exchanges sponsored by the American government were not meant as exciting field trips, after all, but rather as a conscious effort to reeducate the German people and aid in the democratization of Europe.

1 Scope of this Paper

The extent to which such programs have increased over the last fifty years has of course lead to questions about their value and effectiveness. Klineberg grouped the possible goals according to which they could be evaluated under four major headings: "the individual, the university, the nation and the international community" (14). Among the questions he identified were

1. the students' academic success, growth in experience, and influences on their further career (both concerning choices and opportunities)
2. the foreign students' involvement in the education of the native students, other points of view they contribute, and expenses for the host university,
3. the knowledge transferred between countries (esp. to developing nations), and
4. the fostering of international understanding and friendship among nations.

Another argument could be made for the distinction between academic and non-academic goals of international exchange programs. The persons involved, whether teenagers, college students, or visiting professors, all have interests regarding the "professional", education-related side of their sojourn. These interests will certainly often be different from those of natives in their host country, the basic nature of these interests, however, will not differ fundamentally. The student wants to learn, and the professor wants to teach and do research. Therefore, while there may be many academic aspects of exchange programs deserving further attention, the *uniqueness* of international educational exchange certainly lies elsewhere. This paper therefore concentrates on the non-academic side of exchanges, and it focuses on the exchange of *students* rather than *faculty members* because studies show that the higher the rank of the exchangee, the less likely he is to go abroad merely for the intercultural experience rather than to teach (Klineberg 105).

The long-range objectives of the exchange programs administered under the auspices of the U.S. Department of State were named as "to promote better understanding of the United States" and "to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries" (Smith-Mundt-Act), and similar objectives are usually claimed by other programs. While it may seem obvious to someone unfamiliar with international exchange that such programs will foster international understanding and friendship, this view may turn out to be somewhat naïve. In fact, some studies seem to indicate that a significant number of participants return to their home country with even more negative views of their hosts than before they left!

To study this topic in more detail, this paper will try to find answers to Klineberg's fourth set of questions - the impact of student exchange on international understanding. Such impact should occur mainly through changes in the students' attitudes. We will therefore have to investigate claims that such changes do indeed occur. Since modifications in students' attitudes toward greater worldmindedness and a greater belief in democratic processes and away from authoritarian and ethnocentric values seem desirable, this study will further try to identify characteristics of exchange programs that may be favorable for such changes.

1 Previous Research on Student Exchange

International student exchange is a very complex phenomenon, a fact that makes scientific study of the subject cumbersome. The programs often run for twelve months and more, and either the students' home or their host country is most likely situated far away from the prospective researcher. Both factors raise the costs of studies and increase the attrition among its participants. More importantly, however, the number of variables involved that might influence the students' future is countless, making interpretation difficult.

As a result, international student exchange is still a subject that has been largely neglected by the research community, and the existing studies are usually only concerned with a comparatively small group of students. The lack of attention devoted to the topic is lamented by most of the authors. In addition, many of the existing studies limit themselves to short-term programs to gain quicker results, even though the effects of such shorter programs remain in doubt. Most of the printed material devoted to student exchange thus takes the form of guide books for students seeking advice before they apply for participation. They are of no scientific value, however, and often even of dubious value regarding their original intent.

An exception with regard to the number of people studied are the reports sponsored by the U.S. Department of State in the two decades following the war. These studies have been the subject of heavy criticism for their alleged superficiality, however, and been qualified as "of little or no value in any analytical appraisal of exchange programmes. In fact, they may be harmful in giving the illusion of knowledge based on empirical evidence" (Breitenbach, 86).

In recent years, two teams have compiled valuable bibliographies on the study of exchange programs (Altbach/Kelly/Lulat; Weaver). Both help by giving an overview over the material published so far and formulating questions for necessary further research. Yet, within the last forty years only two larger periodicals have devoted special issues to the topic, and both are collections of unrelated essays. There is, however, no lack of such collections. Especially the Fulbright-Program, involving lecturers and advanced graduate students, has produced a score of such material (Dudden; Arndt). In contrast, the present study will attempt to draw conclusions by evaluating as much of the available material as possible.

Another group of researchers has been concerned with questions pertaining to the sub-field of exchanges between Third World countries and the developed world, such as the transfer of

technology and the "brain drain" problem. The UNESCO, for example, has mostly limited its resources to the investigation of this facet of international exchange (McKnight). A third topic is the study of foreign language acquisition in a native-speaker environment, which recently has been the subject of a valuable collection of studies (Freed). Both are entirely different questions, however, and will not be at the center of this paper.

1Possible Effects of the Participation in Student Exchange Programs

Klineberg relates the story of an Australian political scientist illustrating the consequences of the exchange of persons:

"In Australia, he said, the leaders of organizations and activities devoted to strengthening the bonds between members of the British Commonwealth and encouraging friendly attitudes toward the United Kingdom, were all returned Rhodes Scholars who, after spending two years or more at Oxford, came home full of enthusiasm for the mother country. He then added that the leaders of the movement for more complete independence for Australia were also returned Rhodes Scholars."

(67)

Klineberg goes on to say that, if anything, this anecdote proved how little we understand the effects of international exchange.

1Changes in General Attitudes

Naïve proponents of international exchange often claim that increased international contact will automatically lead to more understanding and cooperation across national boundaries. These hopes include a political understanding based on the common grounds of humanity rather than national superiority, more support for democratic ideals and consequently behavioral changes. A closer look reveals these beliefs as just that - naïve.

The objective study of this effect was greatly aided by the development of a standardized scale of affective change in global awareness by Sampson and Smith in 1957. They distinguished between worldmindedness, defined as a value orientation favoring a global view of the problems of humanity, which requires an understanding of cultural relativity, and international-mindedness, which is interest in or knowledge about international affairs. It is noteworthy that one can occur without the other; a clear-cut distinction is often difficult, however. This advancement on the theoretical level has yet to see more use.

One of the largest studies on this subject was conducted by Carlson and Widaman who sent questionnaires to 450 junior-year-abroad students and a control group of 800 students. They found a strong impact of the experience abroad. However, since these findings were based on self-evaluation by the students rather than on objective tests, their validity has to be questioned. It does not seem unlikely, after all, that the students believed they *should* have become more worldminded and thus (consciously or unconsciously) answered appropriately.

Other studies show the same results, however. Watson and Lippit studied 29 German visitors who spent six to twelve months at the Political Science Department of the University of Michigan, and they reported an obvious increase in more international beliefs and values. This was evidenced both through reduced German nationalism as well as critical evaluations of America as "imperialistic" (51-54, 73). Scott reports similar findings based on his research about Swedish exchange students to the U.S. (101).

More extensive empirical studies following Sampson and Smith's scale are more costly than questionnaires asking for a self-evaluation or interviews with just a few subjects. They are therefore generally restricted to shorter programs. This could explain why empirical studies so far

have shown little evidence for change. One example are Smith's studies in the early 1950s. He looked at groups of high school and college students who spent the summer of 1950 in England, France or Germany under the auspices of the exchange organization Experiment in International Living (with host families), in a volunteer work program, or as tourists and compared them to a control group. Smith found no significant changes in general attitudes in any of the groups during the exchange period ("Do...?", 471). His follow-up study four and a half years later did reveal an increase in international orientation, but in both the students who had been abroad and the control group. This suggests that other influences after the experience were more important than the summer abroad ("Effects", 267). Hensley and Sell reported similar results based on their observation of a study program for American undergraduates who spent five months at the UN offices in Geneva, which resulted in little measurable attitude change (406/407). Not surprisingly, they concluded that foreign study was overrated. One should keep in mind, however, that their program had little to do with student exchange. Hensley and Sell offer no description of contact with Swiss nationals. It will undoubtedly have occurred, but it seems not to have been a primary objective of the program. Based on their report alone it is not possible to tell what set the stay in Geneva apart from a program that were held at the UN headquarters in New York. Such contact with the UN might still provide insights resulting in a more worldminded attitude among the students; here the inhibiting factor could have been the professors own attitudes, however, which seemed to be quite critical.

Carlson et al. mentioned another reason for failure to find an increase in internationalism: In their study of American junior-year abroad students they found that the only recognizable difference between the exchange students and the control group was that the former scored higher with respect to "Peace and Cooperation" and "Cultural Interest and Respect" factors *both before*

and after the year. They were unable to measure a significant effect of the exchange experience itself, which they explain in part with the fact that "the study abroad group tended to score toward the top of the scales on both factors" and that therefore "ceiling factors undoubtedly limited the change that could be observed" (60).

An exception to these rather disillusioning results is provided by the second of McGuigan's studies of students spending the second half of their sophomore and the first half of their junior year in France. He reported that they developed comparatively strong xenophilic tendencies, a change that did not occur in the control group ("Further", 247).

When looking at the students' attitude towards democracy, Watson and Lippit again found an obvious increase (54-56, 73). They were able to measure a steady increase in the internalization of democratic values that even continued after the return home. Other reports have not looked at this issue in detail.

Even though the topic of democratization seems to be of less importance today when compared to directly after the war, it should not be overlooked. The State Department saw its programs (part of which Watson and Lippit used as an example) as a direct measure to help in the democratization of Germany. Such large-scale reeducation measures might not be as pressing today, but even citizens of democratic societies need specific examples and experiences to strengthen their belief in democratic procedures.

1Changes in Behavior

Changes of behavior as a result of the new attitudes are again hard to measure. The most obvious example was picked up by the many studies that report examples of returnees who introduced "American" work methods pertaining to their professional field upon their return (Kellermann, 219-221). Changes motivated through political beliefs are harder to observe. In their

very small case-oriented study, Kaufmann et al. found that the increased interest in international affairs led the students to an increased involvement in international activities and organizations (85-87). Changes in this direction seem to be less than one would hope, however.

1Changes in Personality

Another example of changes reportedly induced through a year abroad are personality changes, ranging from increased self-esteem and self-confidence to higher autonomy. Such changes are again hard to measure, however. Scott cites the Swedish students he interviewed extensively to describe the subtle changes that took place (96-102). He cannot offer any measurable data, however.

Other scientists using personality tests have therefore not been able to pinpoint any change. McGuigan thus concluded that modifications in the personality are relatively rare ("Psychological", 60). Based on a comparison of college juniors spending a year in France and a control group in which he studied the effect of the foreign experience on the student's self realization, Nash reports that he found almost no personality changes that persisted after the return home (191). He suggests that this should give reason to question the general procedures that rule many of the American junior-year-abroad programs: "One cannot be very sanguine about the hypothesis of increased autonomy in an overseas situation where most of the problems of living are resolved by a director and assistants and where the student spends a good deal of time with other Americans" (196).

1Changes in Attitude toward Home- and Host-Countries

More obvious are changes in attitude toward the countries involved. This is also the area in which the naïveté of overly optimistic assumptions surrounding exchange programs becomes most obvious.

The best descriptions of a feeling of closeness are to be found in transcriptions of individual interviews and essayistic reports. Fiedler describes this "feeling at home abroad" very eloquently in his essays about his stay in Italy. They offer a statement of his love for Italy, describing it as "a land which I have never left in spirit and to which I dream always of returning in the flesh" ("Fulbright", 92). Such statements should be viewed with caution, however, since they are highly selective. There is reason to believe that contradicting reports may just be published less often.

Empirical studies usually find conflicting results. An initially favorable impression of the host country may be followed by increased alienation and hostility (Watson, 52/53). Nash reports that his subjects became "more French", visible in less alienation from their body and an increase in the number of people who claim to occasionally act like Frenchmen and eat French food (197).

The most significant changes toward a more positive perception of the host country were reported by Bicknese. He was the resident director for a program that brought U.S. juniors to the University of Marburg in Germany for a year and conducted extensive studies before, during and after their sojourn. The changes he observed were largely based on an increased knowledge about Germany and politics (Bicknese I, 327-330) and can thus be seen as a direct consequence of the experience abroad. This conclusion again turns out to be too simplistic, however. Kaufmann et al. remind us of the importance of the kind of experiences the students make abroad. Only students who came into close contact with natives changed their attitudes in favor of their hosts. Others showed strong negative feelings (58-68).

Attempts have been made to link the students' attitude toward both their home and the host culture to their perception of the relative status of both countries. In his two studies Morris has not been able to find much support for this thesis, however (Morris "Two Way", 78-97; "National"). There is some evidence, on the other hand, "that attitudes toward the host culture and home culture

may be conversely related; increased appreciation for the host culture is usually accompanied by more critical views toward one's own culture and vice versa" (Kaufmann 69). In his refined second study McGuigan was able to measure a strong increase in positive feelings toward the (European) hosts during the second half of the year. It was accompanied by a more negative attitude toward America. This was a reversal of the trend he encountered in the first six months, signifying that the students needed an initial adjustment period to their new surroundings before they could start to appreciate what it had to offer.

Not all studies report this effect, though. Kumagai found a significant increase in favorable attitudes toward America in Japanese graduate students spending one or two years in the U.S. (46). The attitudes toward Japan remained largely unchanged, however. The effect may be of less relevance today, since in early studies the fact that the U.S. offered far more luxurious living environment in the years following the Second World War may have contributed to an overly negative impression of the home country upon return (Kellermann 213, Watson and Lippit 64-69). In addition, many of the studies may just detect a more realistic view of the home country. This could result in lower scores on an attitude scale without necessarily resulting in a lower appreciation for the country.

1The Exchange Program as a Variable

1Length of the Sojourn

The examples mentioned above already established that time is an important factor that determined the impressions generated by the exchange experience. Watson and Lippit found a greater increase in the appreciation of American culture in his first of three study groups, which

stayed a whole year. The later two groups returned to Germany after only six months (60/61). Likewise, the results reported by Smith suggest that shorter stays in another culture have only a limited impact on general attitudes. Bicknese points in the same direction, saying that the students' language proficiency did not increase significantly until six months into the year-long stay (II, 338). Kaufmann et al. thus cite studies performed by the Council on International Educational Exchange, which suggest that six to twelve months may be the ideal length of a stay abroad (63).

Time alone is not the crucial variable, however. In a study of volunteers at a summer work camp, Riecken found that they became significantly more democratic and less authoritarian and ethnocentric despite the short length. These changes were still evident 10 months after the experience (122-124). This could suggest that the close contact with other workers induced by the common activity might be more beneficial in a short program than a stay with a family, much of which a student could spend sulking in his room. Another measure to make shorter stays more beneficial can be to accompany them with effective predeparture and postreturn orientation (Sikkema and Niyekawa). These should be differentiated from study abroad programs that have little to do with a true intercultural experience. For example, Salisbury describes a month-long course held during the intersession in January. The participants, students at the University of Wisconsin at Green Bay, travel to Yucatan, where they stay in a coastal town and are given group assignments in which they study the surrounding villages and improve their Spanish. Such a setup may allow the students many experiences they would have never experienced in the classroom in Green Bay. It cannot be said to provide an intercultural experience, however, since the design almost certainly excludes close personal contact with Mexicans.

In many cases, shorter programs will be the only possible alternative to no exchange program at all, however. They are less expensive, present less of a burden for prospective host families and

disrupt the participants' schooling less. A successful approach to such shorter programs may be modeled after any other learning experience: A repetition of several short exchange programs may prove to be more successful than a single long one. This approach could be especially cost effective in border regions.

1 Closeness of Contact with Natives

Nobody would doubt that establishing personal relations with the host nationals is of utmost importance to the success of the program. Nevertheless, many researchers seem to forget this aspect of exchange. A very vivid description of the surprises such contact might bring is given by de Zayas, an American graduate student who joined a German fencing fraternity in Tübingen.

Empirical studies support this belief. Hofman and Zak, who studied a group of American teenagers at a summer camp in Israel, found that close personal contact with natives led to a more positive attitude toward them and their host culture, in this case Israel and Jewishness. In their study, the group with high contact scored significantly more positive on *all* questions, whereas those with little contact scored unchanged or more negative (169). Likewise, Salter and Teger report that the attitudes toward the culture of the hosts only improved if the contact to them was under satisfying conditions and "genuine" (i.e. of "the type that leads people to do things together") rather than superficial (213/214).

Kelman argues in the same direction. He found that close personal relations are an important factor in predicting the attitudes of the students. He clarifies that it is important that the sojourner is recognized as a whole person. He should not just be seen as a foreign exchange student but as a friend, a colleague, a teammate, a son, or a brother.

Not all researchers have realized the importance of this topic, as mentioned above. Kumagai, for example did measure the interaction of his Japanese subjects with their American hosts, only to

report that it increased steadily throughout the sojourn, however. He failed to provide information about different attitudes of students with varying degrees of contact. Other reports do not mention the type and intensity of contact at all.

Living Arrangement

One would expect the differences in living arrangements provided for the students to have an effect on the outcome of the experience. Youth exchange programs usually include a stay with a host family. This is certainly the most appropriate choice for the teenage students involved in such programs, and students placed with families often attest that the family experience was one of the most important aspects of their exchange experience (Kaufmann et al., 63-66). It can, of course, still be a risky choice, since nobody can predict how student and family will get along. However, conscientious exchange organizations with several decades of experience in selecting host families have learned that the best way to prevent horrible misplacements as described at length by Garraty and Adams (85-87) is to not reimburse the families for the expenses incurred. The program thus becomes a true experience for both which the family seeks as much as the student.

Elder students may be too old to readjust to living with a family, especially if they just recently moved out of their parents house. Garraty and Adams (88) as well as Kaufmann et al. (14) cite statements pointing in this direction. Weaver on the other hand reports of college-age students who spoke very favorably of their Japanese host families and who had enjoyed their stay with them very much (24-32, 48).

So far little attention has been devoted to this aspect, and therefore it is not clearly established that living with a host family really makes an important difference. Only Marion, who looked for statistical correlations between biographical data, the exchange experience, and the changes it

caused, clearly found that the impression of U.S. became more favorable for students placed with American families (63).

1Orientation

The most important factor that can be influenced by those designing the exchange program seems to lie elsewhere, however. When looking at the studies that reported few attitude changes it becomes obvious that the programs involved provided only very little orientation. The program studied by Bicknese placed a strong emphasis on intercultural seminars - and it produced significantly different results. It provided more of a "guided experience" that also included that the students were never left alone emotionally during the year. This is different from the mere "pampering" that is found in many of the junior-year-abroad programs and which might even be counterproductive as described by Nash above. Fighting to overcome technical difficulties is part of the exchange experience, "part of the adventure" (Watson, 156). However, left alone with the task of intercultural interpretation, the students will hardly be able to succeed. Studies show that a thorough orientation process "in which intercultural understanding and a change in personal values become individualized goals of the students" should precede the experience (Leonard, 174).

The consequences of a lack of any meaningful orientation are well illustrated by the findings of Miller et al. In their study of graduate exchanges between East Asia and the U.S. a large percentage of students in both groups reported to *never* have come in pleasant and enjoyable contact with natives.

"There are [...] differences in style easily misunderstood. Americans tend to come on strongly, offer a "big hello", become enthusiastic about the undertakings of the moment, think big, make plans, and then perhaps forget it all the next day. East Asians would say this is "superficial". Boldness, bragging about the self is, in the Oriental

tradition, in extremely bad taste. Yet to Americans "Oriental style" restraint seems to present a frustrating lack of candor, and an unwillingness to say what is on one's mind." (130-131)

Most programs will not be able to go as far as the one by Sikkema and Niyekawa. It was effectively a two-term college course in intercultural communication and relations supplemented by a two-month-long "field experience" in another culture during the summer. While this sort of orientation process seems to be very effective in securing maximum benefit from the intercultural experience, such an effort would certainly be impossible for most exchange programs. When compared to the minimal orientation meetings offered by most programs, however, it becomes obvious that some middle ground should exist. Especially university-level exchanges and commercial exchange programs often only include one afternoon of practical tips but no introduction to dealing with problems of intercultural communication.

Extensive orientation programs seem to be well established at the level of high school student exchange. Large non-profit organization like American Field Service (AFS) and Youth For Understanding (YFU) have been developing and refining such programs for several decades (see Grove for a general introduction). The orientation measures vary from country to country, since both organizations rely mostly on local volunteer work from former participants. The German YFU-students going abroad, for example, receive one week at a seminar designed to let them experience cultural differences and to make them aware of the fact that they will have to adjust to new modes of (verbal and non-verbal) communication):

"Während der gesamten Zeit ihres bisherigen Lebens haben die zukünftigen Austauschschüler die Elemente ihrer eigenen Kultur, Regeln, Werte, Normen, Institutionen, deren Funktionen und vieles andere mehr, kennengelernt. Jetzt stehen sie bereit, um diese Kultur gegen eine vollkommen neue, fremde einzutauschen. Dort

leben sie als fast Erwachsene, ohne eine der Kindheit vergleichbare Zeit, in der sie sich in die neue Umgebung "hineintasten" können.

"Die Goees brauchen also eine formalisierte Vorbereitung und Einführung, die sie in die Lage versetzt, im Gastgeberland zu kommunizieren. Dabei geht es weniger um technische Kleinigkeiten, sondern vielmehr darum, das Bewußtseins allgemein zu schärfen, um sie erkennen zu lassen, daß weit jenseits von *Sprachbarrieren* noch *Verständigungsbarrieren* bestehen können." (Vorbereitungstagungen, 6)

The goal of such orientation is summarized in a handbook for the American students coming to Germany: "Such understanding will turn them from a helpless object of communication and adjustment problems into someone who can master such problems" (Zahlten, 5).

1The Participant as a Variable

It is clear, however, that a good exchange program alone cannot lead to the same results in every student. The student himself is an equally important variable, if not the *most* important. When studying the effects of student exchange, one must therefore take the students into account as well.

1Age of Participants

There have been few attempts to understand the influence of age on the effects of international exchange. As mentioned in the introduction, older participants may not be as motivated to encounter entirely new experiences. Their interest may be of a more professional nature, thus giving themselves less freedom to change. A study cited by Kellermann supports this theory (221-22): High school and university students were found to be not only the most impressionable, but their acceptance of more democratic and egalitarian values was also found to be more permanent than that of older exchangees.

Among participants who have not completed their education, however, the youngest ones do not necessarily have to be the ones most likely to change. The same author reports the findings of

one study that the degree of acceptance of democratic values increased with the age of the exchangees (213-14). The youngest participants, ages 18 through 23, even showed declining acceptance. Kellermann links this to the fact that the most of them

"[...] had spent their formative years under the Nazi regime [...]. Their concept of democracy rarely went beyond theoretical definitions and scarcely ever included notions of a way of life. [...] Prepared to embrace the virtues of democracy, their criticism of the United States was often directed not so much at the United States or its political system as at its failure to live up to its promises and to their own expectation." (214)

If nothing else, these studies show that effects on the participants' attitudes are possible even after the students have graduated from high school and left their families. Further insights certainly would help to tailor programs more directly to the needs of an age group.

1Foreign Language Skills

Expected language problems rank among the worst fears students have when preparing for a year abroad. They are certainly the most *obvious* problems. Therefore, to improve their foreign language skills or even to become fluent in the language of the host country is the single most important goal for most people going abroad (Nash, 192). Most students do indeed improve their proficiency of the language; however, even after a year many will return without having attained the desired level of competence.

Language problems do not only serve as a reason for disappointment with *this specific* side of the sojourn, however. Many studies agree that they will affect the *entire* experience (Garraty and Adams; Bicknese, II).

"Students with only fair or poor foreign language ability become more nationalistic and more positive toward the U.S. [their home country] compared with

those who had good language ability. This implies that difficulty with the language may have resulted in negative experiences in the host country and a reaction toward a more nationalistic, pro-U.S. viewpoint." (Marion, 61)

It could also mean that many of the students with poor language skills never had a chance to come into close contact with natives (or did not actively seek it). In one of the few truly international studies of the cross-cultural problems that exchange students face, Klineberg and Hull came to the conclusion that language proficiency was one of the primary variables that determine the likelihood of positive cross-cultural contact. This contact in turn diminishes the effects of what has been referred to as the "cross-cultural isolation factor" (Altbach/Kelly/Lulat, 25). Viewed from this perspective, Marion's findings appear in a different light: Students who go abroad with poor foreign language skills (and, for whichever reason, do not improve them) will most likely not get to know many people and therefore always feel lonely. This feeling of loneliness and the fact that they will not get to know the host culture if they shy away from its people will lead them to feel alienated in the new culture. Thus, they spend their whole year looking forward to returning to the safe haven of their home country.

This could also explain an anomaly found by Smith. According to his first study, only the students going to England returned home with a more favorable attitude toward England, whereas the students in France and Germany thought more negatively of their host country. Smith reports that the unfavorable comments were predominantly nonpersonal ("Do...?", 472). He did not investigate in how far language problems were responsible for this effect, but they could be a likely reason why the students in France and Germany failed to establish more personal relations to their hosts, which could have improved their impression of them.

1Preexisting Attitudes

A few researchers have tried to link the resulting change in students' attitudes to their scores on the pretest. Their hypothesis was that the preexisting attitudes influence the future attitudes of the students much more than the exchange experience. While that may be so there is no agreement over the direction in which these preexisting attitudes influence the outcome. Leonard for example found that while change toward a more liberal attitude could be measured in both groups, it was greater for students who had a more conservative score on the pre-test (174). He notes that this result seems to contradict earlier studies. Smith had found

"that the person who benefits most from intercultural experiences, in the sense of becoming more world-minded and less ethnocentric, is the individual who, prior to the experience, is relatively (but not extremely) authoritarian, conservative in his political and economic views, antidemocratic, ethnocentric, and more nationalistic." ("Do...?", 474)

Leonard seems to have failed to recognize the importance of the qualification in brackets, for Smith goes on to say that in the case of "those who were extremely ethnocentric and nationalistic, there is some evidence [...] that they found, or perhaps actively sought, reinforcement for their prejudices in the European experience" (475). Students with such extreme beliefs should already be excluded from participation for other reasons. Their inflexible opinions are likely to offend the hosts, which would certainly impair the future prospects of the program.

1Conclusions

1Findings

This study has turned up a considerable amount of previous research on student exchange. In general, the problem does not so much seem to be that *little* research has been done on the topic, but rather that many of the existing studies are unrelated to each other. Nevertheless, they still give

some important insights into the factors that affect exchange students' experiences and the resulting attitude changes.

In conclusion it must be stated that the question whether the existing cultural exchange programs do indeed foster international understanding cannot be answered easily. An answer depends on what one would accept as *sufficient* proof to make a positive statement. It is certain that the mere act of living and/or studying abroad does not in itself break down cultural barriers. There is quite some evidence that such exchange programs have a positive effect, however, not the least of which can be found in many enthusiastic statements made by participants. Such effect seems largely to depend on the individual student. His motivation and personal effort set forth to overcome obstacles such as the language barrier and seem to have a much greater influence on the outcomes of the program than any other single individual factor.

This finding does not release the exchange organizations from their responsibility to provide a well-designed program, however. Such a program must include an extensive orientation period in which the students are introduced to the intricacies of intercultural communication. The tendency to neglect such orientation measures in programs for post-secondary students and faculty members proves to be short-sighted. While many seem to understand that an unhappy and lonely teenager will not be a successful exchange student, few realize that an unhappy and lonely scientist will rarely become a successful scientist. An orientation program *before* as well as guidance and available counseling *during* the sojourn could greatly enhance many exchange experiences. It could be expected to improve the results for both the program's primary and secondary goals equally (the reader may ascribe "academic value" and "improvement of international understanding" as he wishes).

Other recommendations are harder to put forth. The level of proficiency in the foreign language certainly affects the experiences during the year. The existing studies do not show a clear enough dependency of good results on good language abilities before the year to justify barring such students from participation. Such students do need to be offered special language courses before or at the beginning of their stay abroad, though.

Many valuable exchange programs have been developed. A prime example is certainly the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange Program between the United States and Germany, which began in 1983. It incorporates well-designed orientation programs dealing with personal, intercultural, and political implications of such a program, language training (at least for the American participants, who usually arrive with very limited German skills), available counseling during the year and extensive post-sojourn seminars. On the level of university exchanges, much needs to be done, however. It can be said that American colleges are far ahead of most other educational institutions when it comes to integrating an intercultural experience into the curriculum at home, both theoretically and in practice (Burn). Their programs often still provide for too little contact with the population of the host country, however - an element already criticized by Garraty and Adams almost forty years ago. It may be nearly impossible to combine the freedom and close contact with natives of a more independent program with the ease with which students in a larger, more regimented program receive credit for the work done abroad.

1Recommendations for Further Research

The fact that the field of intercultural exchange has not been as neglected by the research community as it may seem does not mean that the search for answers is over. Several questions still await further study, and virtually no aspect has been covered extensively enough to resolve the considerable confusion.

So far it has not been possible to clearly establish the effects of exchange programs on interand intrapersonal development (group interaction, ability to make friends; self-confidence, self-reliance, autonomy), for example. To gain more insight in these processes it would be necessary to compare students going abroad to a control group of students who move and/or change university within their native country. Much of the gain could prove to be related more to the change in surroundings in general and less on the *international* experience. There has also been very little research on the effects of the foreigners' presence on his host community, especially the host families. So far there is only one such study by Moose.

But even conclusions about exchange programs that seem quite warranted are often based on more on the "experience" of seasoned administrators than on hard data. One example would be the importance of orientation programs. Even though much evidence seems to suggest that it cannot be valued to highly, nobody has indeed attempted an empirical comparison of similar programs with and without such orientation phases. Likewise, more information about the value of homestay-programs would seem desirable. Such research might also yield valuable information about the maturation process and interpersonal relations in general.

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